

Exclusively Yours Magazine, December 2004

Yoga a Balancing Act for Life By Jeannette Hurt

Excerpts of Interview with Bryant Mascarenhas

On yoga

Yoga is a systematic approach to peace of mind, balance and harmony. Yoga was started by the rishis, or sages of India roughly 5000 years ago and about 2,000 years ago it was systematized into eight principles of limbs. The paths or components include ethical discipline, self-observation, sense withdrawal, meditation and inner peace. The two components mostly commonly found in yoga classes focus on breath-work and poses or 'asana'.

Yoga's purpose and benefit

The deepest purpose of yoga was to help people to enhance their spirituality. People who weren't healthy couldn't easily pray for extended periods, so the forms and breathing of yoga helped them become healthy for pray. However, yoga is not a religion, and anyone of any faith or philosophy can practice it.

One of the biggest benefits of yoga is balance. Its helps balance the positive and negative polarity of the body and mind. There are days when you feel energetic, and there are days when you feel sluggish. Bringing those energy levels back into balance is the initial purpose of yoga. Another benefit of yoga is strength. People don't know yoga builds strength in the body, but it does. A lot of people think it's about stretching but there's is more to it than that.

Yoga also helps increase the joint-range of motion, and that can reduce the pain caused by arthritis and the more chronic problems that western medicine does not have the cure for.

Age is not the limitation

My oldest student is 76 and youngest is seven. You don't need to be in super physical condition, and instructors can modify and make postures easier for different body types.