

YOGA

'THE MISSING LINK'

By Janine Lear

I was 22 years old when I attended my first yoga class. I came out of that class feeling 'holy', although at that time I wasn't at all sure what I meant by that! Looking back what I should have said was that I felt 'whole'. I continued that class for about a year.

I came back to yoga after my first child was born. I enjoyed the classes and would always come out with a feeling of well-being, but at that time I still looked upon yoga as simply a form of exercise which helped me to de-stress and feel calmer. I stayed with this class for a couple years. Then life got in the way, yoga got put on the back-burner and it wasn't long before I started to 'slide down a very steep hill'!

I had entered a phase in my life when I not only lost yoga but I also lost 'my way'! Caught up in materialism and swept along mercilessly with the dissatisfaction and discontent that goes with it, I found my whole world (or so it seemed) falling apart. Normal family problems grew out of all proportion in my eyes, and it wasn't long before I hit the bottom of that hill with a great thud! I had reached the point where there was 'no point', I was simply a body with 'no soul'!

I found myself listening to a doctor telling me that anti-depressants might be an option, and it was at that very moment that I knew I had to take responsibility for myself, I had to 'rise up'. Now, don't get me wrong, there are people who have been helped by anti-depressants but at that moment in my life, I knew they were just not the right thing for me.

It was then that yoga came to mind. I joined a class at the local sports centre and at the same time I took up Tai Chi. I enjoyed the yoga class but I knew there was something missing. By chance, (actually I don't believe in coincidences any more) I overheard someone talking about a really good yoga class in the area. I decided to give it a go.

The day I joined Debbie's class my life changed. It's quite hard to describe my feelings that evening, so I'll just say, I felt like I'd 'come home!' Debbie was everything I had ever aspired to be. Her class wasn't just about exercising and de-stressing it was about 'life' itself, she was truly my first 'guru'! All the jumbled thoughts I had had about life started to unravel over the following months, my negativity soon faded into the distance as at long last I felt I had a purpose. It was just as if a little flame had been lit within my very core and that flame was ready to grow!

It was about 6 months later that Debbie approached me after class one evening. "Have you ever thought about teaching yoga?" she asked. I remember my reply. "You must be joking, I'm not nearly good enough to do anything like that. I can't even put my hands flat down when I do a forward bend!" Debbie laughed, "Yoga's not about tying yourself up in pretzel shapes. Sure we do postures and breathing exercises but ultimately, it's through these that people can learn to take control of their lives," she said "and, I think you'll be a natural."

All that seems a long time ago now. I'm now a qualified teacher with The British Wheel Of Yoga and have been teaching for several years, and yes yoga is the love of my life (of course that's after my husband and children!)

My classes are suitable for all ages and abilities with emphasis on safe practice. Each class consists of: 1) **Posture Work**, which works not only on the body's frame but the internal organs as well, keeping the body in radiant health. 2) **Breathing Exercises**, which revitalise the body and help to control the mind, leaving you feeling calm and refreshed. 3) **Relaxation**, which relaxes the mind and body, allowing tension and stress to be released.

Each of my classes consist of a variety of people, yes, some are fit and flexible, while others are not flexible at all. Some have very good health whilst others come with an array of restrictions, including high blood pressure, back and joint problems, mild depression and many other ailments. Some are young and some are 'less young' and some are slim and some are 'less slim'. You see it really doesn't matter, yoga is truly for everyone, and if my class does not suit you, I can usually put you in touch with a class that will. For instance, if you want more powerful and stronger postures, then Ashtanga and Iyengar classes may be more suited to you, in place of the more general Hatha yoga.

Now, I could go on writing page after page telling you how yoga has benefited many people. In fact after a recent class one of my newest members compared yoga to "blowing her nose"!!! Intrigued by this somewhat strange comment, I asked her to explain. "Well" she said "when you blow your nose you clear it all out and when I leave my yoga class I feel as if I've just blown my whole body, I feel so clear headed, refreshed and alive, it's like taking a 'total-body' decongestant!"

As I said, I could go on and on giving you the benefits of yoga, but it really isn't until you've experienced it for yourself that you start to become aware of a subtle change in your life. By persistently toning and relaxing the body, and stilling the mind, you will begin to glimpse a state of inner peace.

So why not give Yoga a go, who knows, it might just be your missing link too!

Please see Janine's ad for more information