

The Yoga Way

Jamie Constable
Reporter

The benefits of yoga go deeper than stretching out muscles, it is an activity that can help people, especially students, with everyday problems.

This is a 5,000-year-old practice that is gaining momentum in the exercise world which combines physical postures with specific breathing techniques to help reduce stress other medical problems.

Ruth Richman has been a yoga teacher in PEI for over 25 years. She teaches Astanga Yoga and another style which she calls Ruth's Blend, an eclectic collection of the many styles she has studied.

Richman said yoga has several key benefits. Astanga Yoga works to improve spine alignment and to condition all parts of the body, from the muscles right down to the organs. The breathing techniques work to help the body and mind achieve a meditative state throughout the series of poses.

"The breath is a path to meditation," says Ruth. "This meditative state helps to release stresses related to the financial, social, work, and school pressures that students face. It relaxes and clears the mind, and just five

minutes a day helps put all these worries in perspective."

It has also been proven that breathing in a methodical way improves health throughout the entire body and can even lower high blood pressure in just five minutes.

Astanga yoga, sometimes known as power yoga, has been found to be so effective that many professional athletes and even some Pro Football teams across the U.S. have included it in their regular training.

Studies have shown that people who do yoga, or meditate in some way, do better on tests. This is likely due to the fact that it relieves stress and increases brain cell activity, Richman said.

Ten minutes of Yoga practice a day will have life-altering benefits, Richman said. She offers classes twice a week in Charlottetown, and charges \$10 a class for a series (8-10 classes) and \$14 a class for a drop-in. For more information on upcoming classes contact Ruth at 902-583-2674.

Mary McPhee is also a local Yoga teacher who has taught Astanga Yoga since 1997 and has been offering

classical Hatha Yoga classes since 2002. She focuses primarily on pre and post-natal Yoga.

"Hatha means Sun/Moon, Yin/Yang, or Male/Female," explains McPhee.

"It is a combination of breath and movement."

She said that while yoga initially starts with work on the body, it develops a growing awareness of all aspects of the self.

"First you may be aware of how your body feels or moves, and then you may become more aware of your thoughts and emotions, and gain greater control over these," said McPhee.

"Yoga is a full life management system. It is deeply rooted in philosophy and encompasses the whole person."

Both McPhee and Richmond speak of Yoga as having 8 parts or limbs. The first limb is related to guidelines such as kindness, truthfulness, and causing no harm. The second limb is more focused on the self, like cleanliness of thought and self care. The third limb holds the physical aspect, or poses, of yoga.

The fourth limb involves the awareness of proper breathing. The fifth limb helps develop control over the senses, and the ability to be aware of one's thoughts and actions, and their consequences. The sixth limb involves the skills of concentration. The seventh limb is about deep meditation, and the eighth limb (samadhi) is known as the enlightened state.

McPhee has taught classes out of Birchwood School and students were offered a Bring a Friend discount of two for the price of one. For more information about Hatha Yoga in Charlottetown, contact Mary at 902-892-4658.

Yoga does indeed have something to offer everyone, whether merely in terms of physical benefits or for the mental and philosophical aspects. It is up to every individual to take the practice as far as they want to go. If you are thinking of trying Yoga, you should try a class in several styles and choose the one that feels right.

Benefits of yoga according to abc-of-yoga.com

- Concentration improves
- Memory improves
- Attention improves
- Learning efficiency improves
- Mood improves
- Reaction time improves
- Posture improves
- Strength and resiliency increase
- Endurance increases
- Energy level increases
- Weight normalizes
- Sleep improves

Stacey Murray
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MacLeans Review of UPEI

UPEI received the second lowest approval rating in overall quality of student services, a recent survey revealed.

The Maclean's University Graduate Survey 2006, which ranks UPEI among 14 primarily undergraduate schools across the country, found only twenty-six per cent of students rated student services as 'very good.'

The university also scored low in extracurricular activities. Twenty-five per cent of graduates polled said the quality of the extracurricular environment was very good, the fourth lowest percentage from schools in their category.

Students polled were graduates from the classes of 2002, 2003, and 2004.

Vianne Timmons, Vice-President of Academic Development at UPEI, said new plans have been implemented since 2004 that graduates polled would not have been aware of.

"Student Services has designed and implemented a new format for student advising, programs for students at risk, support for students with learning disabilities, and international students," she said in an e-mail last week.

Timmons was also critical of Maclean's polling in general, saying it lacks data about practical issues such as finances, convenience, and it offers few results concerning specific programs.

She also noted that the National Survey of Student Engagement found

that ninety-one percent of fourth-year students rated their university experience as 'good or excellent.'

The university did score better in other areas of the Maclean's survey, including the overall quality of teaching, and the quality of the learning environment. Most notably, 56 per cent thought the teaching experience was very good, and seventy-three per cent saw a significant benefit in attending the university.

Although Timmons didn't receive any student feedback as a result of this particular survey, which is published on Maclean's website, she does hear compliments and complaints often.

"Our data shows that students feel very positive about their educational experience, their professors, and the university overall. We do get complaints about specific issues such as parking, as does every university."