



Current Newsletter

July 2007 Newsletter

Ice Cream Social at Penguins!

Every month we're going to plan to do something outside the yoga studio, so you can get a chance to interact when you're not drippin in sweat. We spend all this time getting hot and sweaty together doing yoga, this month let's cool off by heading down to Penguin's after the 6:15pm class on Monday, July 30th.

Then in August, we're looking at a Friday night outing to the Standard Hotel in Downtown LA where Hobey DJ's in a suit--as in pin-striped, not Speedo.

Let us know what Friday night in August works best for you. We can carpool for those who don't like to drive, so think about what Friday works for you to get your yoga groove on, Downtown Standard.

Southern California Regional Competition Comes to La Canada!

That's right, this year, our studio will be hosting this year's SoCal Regional Yoga Competition! It'll be on October 27th from 11am-6 pm.

Bikram himself founded the Bishnu Ghosh Cup competition in 2003, and past winners have included two of our former teachers-- Ashley Hooper (2005 World Champion) and Jeff Rangel (2006 3rd place).

For those of you not familiar with a yoga competition, it's more like a demonstration, where contestants are judged on not only how well they perform and hold postures, but also how they carry themselves and how much fun they have doing it.

It's a great honor to host the competition, which will bring Bikram and his wife Rajashree and senior instructors from all over the area to La Canada. It's also a chance to inspire all of us in our yoga practice, so we'll be having our own student competition in August for anyone interested in competing to get ready for the October Regionals.

Even if you're just curious, it's a great way to focus and improve your practice. It's been Bikram's and Rajashree's dream to make Yoga an Olympic sport, and we're proud La Canada's an even bigger part of that dream this year!

My Bikram Yoga Testimonial: Vilma De Leon

"Hello! My name is Vilma De Leon. I can't believe it was 3 years ago that I started Bikram Yoga in La Canada. I am 48 years old and I have suffered from migraine headaches since I was 14 years old! Yoga had a great change in me mentally, physical and emotionally. For me it was the best discovery ever!! My first Bikram class was May 15, 2004, and I practice as often as three to four times a week. Over this period of time I lost about 40 pounds and reduced my stress level.

I used to suffer from shoulder and neck pain as well as migraine headaches. I would go to a chiropractor three to four times a month to align to my spine so as to reduce the amount of discomfort I would experience. As a result of my regular yoga practice, I have reduced my visits to my chiropractor to once every six weeks and my migraine headaches have almost absolved.

"My first year practicing Bikram's Yoga I was awarded the Bengal Tiger Strength Award in acknowledgement of my commitment to my practice. The Bikram Yoga La Canada community has been very supportive and inspiring in my dedication to improve myself in my practice--thank you!"



The Heat: If You Can't Beat It, Join It

With summer here, it's sometimes hotter in the parking lot than it is inside the studio! Still, if there's one thing that can throw those of us new to Bikram Yoga for a loop, it's the heat.



So why IS it so hot? Well, it's really not. It's 105, with, ideally, about 50-60 percent humidity. Just like, as anyone who's been there will tell you, India, where yoga comes from. Bikram asks that all studios be 105 so the Bikram Yoga experience is consistent, and more importantly, that you get all the benefits that come from the heat.

On a metabolic level, the heat stimulates blood flow and sweating, which speeds up detoxification and make you more flexible. It also can make you breathe more mindfully and rhythmically. And, yes, it can make the class more challenging, because your body does use calories cooling itself--that's one of the ways Bikram Yoga helps you lose weight and tone so fast. But the heat is not an end in itself. In fact, doing any exercise in heat higher than 115 degrees can become anaerobic, which means your body can't replenish its oxygen supply and nobody wants that. In 105 degrees, it can seem more challenging to breathe sometimes, but that's part of how this yoga works: you have to breathe better and more mindfully.

Now, some days 105 degrees can seem hotter or cooler, and that depends a lot on you. How hydrated you are is the biggest variable. If it seems like the room is crazy hot and you're thirsty, the room isn't too hot, you're just already dehydrated. Other variables can be if you've been in air conditioning all day, how stressed-out you are, which of course, is something Bikram Yoga can help with. There are hotter and cooler parts of the room (in the far top corner and by the doors, respectively), but the key is understanding how and why the heat is not only good for you, how it's necessary for you to get the most out of your yoga practice.

Nutrition Spotlight: What Should I Eat?

Bikram's fond of saying that when do you yoga regularly, you can eat whatever you want. And he's right. Your body will learn to metabolize foods better and faster. More importantly, you'll find yourself drawn to healthier eating: you WILL eat anything you want, you'll just want healthier foods.

Everybody's nutritional needs are different, but in general you can think of foods as being oxygen-rich. Processed foods have literally had the life sucked out of them. Fresh fruits and vegetables are oxygen rich, and they hold a lot of water, too. A banana, for instance, has potassium, a major electrolyte we sweat out in class, and about a cup of water.

You will find your own nutritional rhythm of what works and what doesn't--like that rich dessert or glass of wine at dinner the night before that makes yoga the next morning a little tougher. Or the time you had that lighter lunch and not only were you not hungry in class, you seemed to have more energy in it!

In teacher training, Bikram talked a lot about food and eating. "The best food is no food," he would say. His point was that Americans can and do eat too much, out of habit, super-sized portions, mistaking dehydration for hunger or just because we can. "Half the food you eat is converted to waste, half of what's left over is stored as fat," he would say. "The body only really uses the other half [about a quarter of what you started with]." This might seem like an over-generalization, but the reality is a dish you might order for yourself at, say, a Chinese restaurant, might actually feed a whole family in China! Thing is, your body spends a lot of time and energy breaking down and digesting food. Less can be more. Try giving up dairy for a month and see if you don't have more energy, because dairy, for all it's nutritional value, can be tough to digest. Remember--cows have, what, four stomachs to do it?! Something to talk about when we head down to Penguin's after class this month.

The point is that food is work for the body, and you can teach it to work smarter rather than harder. Like reaching for a piece of fruit instead of a sugar-packed nutrition bar those two hours before class. Snacking on almonds are good; they satisfy hunger, and are an excellent source of protein and fiber. Eating more salads, because they can stimulate digestion and the absorption of nutrients. A lot of it is common sense, sure, but it's also oxygen-rich. Yoga's about the breath, your diet can be too.

Bikram Yoga Advanced Seminar, Hawaii, Aug. 18-25

Bikram himself hosts this exciting, immersive, week-long seminar in Waikiki for anyone interested in deepening their practice and understanding of the Bikram series as it is derived from the classic 84 asanas. [Click here for more information.](#)

Posture Highlight: Camel



Camel is the deepest backward bend we do, which is why we wait until class is almost over to do it. Cobra series, see, strengthens the spine with a supported back-bend; the Floor Bow in fact, is pretty much Camel, only before we've added gravity.

The big thing about Camel is though it is indeed a backward bend, it is meant to even more a front-side stretch. Which is why we build the posture so mindfully and purposefully--first by standing on the knees with the tops of the feet flat--which Fixed Firm and Half-Tortoise have warmed us up for. Then we put our hands on our hips to support the lower back and to encourage the stretch of the front of the thighs and hips that Floor Bow and Fixed Firm have warmed us up for. Then we lift the chin and chest up, again to create length in the front, so we can round back halfway, and only then, supporting the back with one hand, reach for the heels with the other.

When we've got both heels, we keep lifting the chest, dropping the head back and pushing the hips forward. The posture actually stimulates your nervous system because it's meant to stretch your front. Something as simple as just trying to look back a little further, from the back wall to the floor, from the ceiling to the back wall even, means the front is stretching

more so the lower back is bearing less of the weight. That's why the idea is not to pull on the heels, but instead to think of them as the only thing preventing you from flinging forward! Camel can be a very challenging posture for a lot of different reasons, but it's essential to bringing balance to a lifestyle of forward bends--over a steering wheel driving, over a keyboard at your computer, carrying around kids all day.

Obituary

In Memoriam of Rod Leonard
1944-2007

LEONARD, Roderick Walton

Rod Leonard, of La Canada, was born June 12, 1944, in San Jose and died June 29, 2007, in Rapid City, SD, from a brief illness (meningococchia).

Rod grew up in Westwood. He attended University High School, UCLA (active in Project India and UniCamp) and Boalt Hall Law School. After Peace Corps in Venezuela, he joined the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office. He was known nationally for his expertise in Professional Responsibility.

Rod leaves his wife Kathy, sons Chris of Mammoth Lakes and Scott (with Trina) of Carlsbad, grandsons Shea and Matthew, brother Fred of Tucson, and friends from so many varied activities. br> Services are Tuesday, July 10, at 10 a.m., All Saints Church, 132 N. Euclid, Pasadena.

Donations suggested to UniCamp, 900 Hilgard, Los Angeles 90024.

Rod was a faithful and dedicated yogi here with us at La Cañada and he will be greatly missed.

To send condolences the address is:

Leonard Family
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