



## Monthly Newsletter

### Open House Saturday September 15!

Saturday, September 15 is our annual Open House. We'll be serving a continental breakfast after each of the morning classes. Later on from 6-9 pm, we'll have food, festivities and frolicking! Plan on stopping by and see what everybody looks like with their clothes on!

There are also two special Open House discounts good now through the 15th. The first is our Back To School Special: Sign up for the 12-month EFT membership and we'll waive the start-up fee--and your last month's free!!! You save over \$150 and you make the commitment to a year of yoga that will change your practice, maybe even change your life! We're also offering 10% off any class package, but only until the 15th! See you at the Open House! Plan on stopping by to say and introduce a friend to our Bikram Yoga La Canada community!

### Posture Highlight: Tree and Toe Stand

Tree Pose and Toe Stand conclude the standing series and transition the body to the floor series. The end is indeed the beginning; Tree Pose is meant to encapsulate the whole standing series in one pose that celebrates the now-open hips and the ever-straightening spine. In fact, Bikram is quick to point out much of Tree builds on the same principles of Triangle; the same internal hip rotation, the same challenge to stretch up with the upper body as you stretch down with the leg.

### Yogi Q&A: Naomi Heller



Bikram Yogi since: February 2005

#### What inspired you to start Bikram Yoga?

I was turning 40 and seeking a form of exercise. A friend and I went to the South Pasadena studio for our first class and liked it. Three months later I started coming to La Canada because it was closer to home and my daughter's school.

#### What are your favorite things about Bikram Yoga La Canada?

Plenty of parking. A clean and spacious studio. Great Instructors.

#### Why Bikram Yoga?

I'd done Iyengar Yoga in the past. But my body was--and still is--so stiff. I had trouble doing most of the poses. I loved the quietness of yoga, but it never gave me enough of a physical workout. Bikram Yoga works for me because the heat relaxes the muscles. Even someone inflexible like me can move deeper into poses. And at 90 minutes, it's a great

### Extra! Extra! Special Interview with Rajashree Choudhury talking about the SoCal Regional Competition Coming to La Canada October 27!

As a young girl in Calcutta, Rajashree Choudhury was drawn to yoga the same way little girls in the United States are drawn to dance or boys are drawn to martial arts. And just as girls in the US grow up competing in gymnastics, she began competing in Yoga winning several national titles in India.

These days, she's the wife of Bikram Yoga founder Bikram Choudhury and the mother of two teenagers. She's made it her passion to bring Yoga Competition to the United States as way of promoting the health benefits of practicing hatha yoga--yoga done as exercise. Here, Rajashree explains her vision of bringing yoga to a wider audience by introducing Yoga as a competitive sport. Her dream is to make yoga an Olympic event. Now in its fifth year, the Southern California Regional Championships come to La Canada's Lanterman Auditorium this October 27; this year marks the first children's competition.

#### First of all, to people who may not know a lot about yoga, or if they have heard the term, they equate it either with meditation--or being really, really flexible--what is a "yoga competition"?

It's easy to see why people have a misunderstanding about "yoga," because it is a very vast subject. But the postures--the

Now the Bikram Tree is different from other forms of yoga in that it is more active, which is why the bent leg foot comes all the way up on the thigh. Bikram cautions us to be mindful of the knee, and if your hips just aren't open or your thigh and ankle are too tight, they can and do transfer their share of the effort to the knee, which is why alignment is so important to stretch out everything around the knee.

Keep the hips and shoulders square first and foremost, and then open the hip and push the knee down so long as you can keep your torso squared-off and supported. In this sense, you literally open up your hips and stretch your spine. Only difference is that now, at the end of the series, we "focus, concentrate, meditate." Take stock. You've come a long way in an hour. Maybe even far enough to go into toe stand. Toe Stand completes tree pose. It is a deeper expression of the same range of motion. The key to toe is letting your body get into it. First things first, the floor is not that far away. Just bend at the waist and put your hands on the floor. If you can, keep the bent knee pointing down to deepen the stretch. When your hands touch the floor you're close enough to come up on the toe, bend the knee and sit down; if not, it's a good stretch until you are.

We call it toe-stand but for most of us it starts out as heel-sit. Bikram says the big thing to overcome in toe isn't just what you perceive as your physical limitation, but the fear of bending forward, of getting out of the safety of your tree into some more challenging range of motion. Remember, the posture isn't the object, your body and your ability to understand, challenge, change and accept its limitations, that is the posture. Even trying toe can go a lot farther than hanging out in tree. Either way, they are two of the most calming, peaceful and graceful postures of the standing series. What they seem to lack in physical challenge, they make up for by challenging to "focus, concentrate and meditate" on where your body is now, and how far you have come in just an hour, as you bring your practice inward for what's to come in the floor series.

workout!

### What's your favorite pose?

Tree pose and toe stand. It's a very calming pose for me.

### Your hardest pose?

Rabbit, bow, half-locust, to name a few, because I don't have a flexible body!

### What changes has doing this Yoga brought to your life?

I've gained physical strength, some flexibility and balance. I feel more focused, patience and peaceful.

### What keeps you motivated?

A wonderful feeling after working out for 90 minutes.

### Any words of wisdom to new students?

Be patient with yourself and enjoy each class. This is the best form of exercise there is so don't quit.

### Any tips for your fellow yogis?

See each class as 90 minutes of mental practice!

## Nutrition Spotlight: Feed Your Joints and Muscles

Bikram says doing yoga lets you eat anything you want, and he's right--because the more yoga you do the more healthy foods you'll want to eat. In fact, you can eat specifically to enhance flexibility and minimize joint pain and muscle cramps. Broccoli, cherries and pineapple especially can help feed the joints. Broccoli triggers your body's antioxidant defenses, which can also minimize inflammation. Cabbage, cauliflower and brussels sprouts do about the same. Cherries are a bit tastier and contain anthocyanins that can reduce inflammation and lower the level of uric acid in your blood, which is a by-product of digesting, say, red meat, which accumulates in your joints and causes pain. Pineapples contain what's called bromelain that cleans up dead protein cells that result from the micro-tearing that occurs in muscle when they stretch and repair. Again, this can reduce inflammation and soreness.

Food that can minimize muscle pain include bananas, white beans, oats and even drinking tea. Potassium-rich bananas are perfect yoga food; they help your muscles both contract and relax. Potatoes are another good source of potassium. White beans are another potassium-rich food, but with the added protein bonus for muscle-building. Oats are simple food, but support cell repair and relieve soreness with zinc and protein. And tea has the antioxidant compounds that can block the production of prostaglandins, which cause inflammation and pain.

(Special thanks to Many Hands Magazine and the Dole Nutrition Institute's Jennifer Grossman's "Eating For Yoga" article for inspiring this month's Nutrition Spotlight.)

physical practice of yoga--that's what comes first and that's something everybody can do as a form of exercise, but also as something that can bring balance to their lives.

Now the whole idea of competition, well, that is just a standardized set of guidelines where people practice the same postures the same way. Like gymnastics. Yoga's benefits are to find balance between strength and flexibility--the same thing you'd see in a gymnastics competition.

### You yourself grew up competing. What drew you to the idea of competing?

I wanted to be the best I could at it. It gave me something to achieve; I just had that pride in myself.

### This year is the first one with a children's category for kids 11-17. Why?

In India, people practice yoga from childhood. But here, it hasn't really reached out to kids. But the same way it's good for adults, yoga can be even better for children. It builds focus and concentration, it teaches you to take pride in yourself, it teaches you to make sound choices. Nowadays, kids have a lot of choices--all the technology they have access to, the world is so open. It's easy to get a good education but also to make bad choices. The kind of discipline yoga promotes gives children the perspective to make better choices. If they can practice yoga, then they can find out for themselves what's good and bad for them. They won't resent having to hear it from their parents. [Laughs].

Kids are stressed out too! It's hard growing up!! Yoga's another way to learn about acceptance and tolerance and the connection between the strength of mind and body.

It can balance their emotions. You can't tell a kid to meditate--they really need to be active and burn off that energy; they have more energy than adults!!

### Next Month: Rajashree talks about making Yoga an Olympic Sport!



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