

Week 1 - Mindful Living Yoga

Welcome

Namaste

Thank you all for choosing to attend this course. I trust that each of you have your own story to tell on how and why you chose to enrol in this term. I look forward to sharing with you some of my knowledge and experience in this wonderful life affirming practice.

This term I have decided to provide each of you with some notes so you can refer back to after each class.

My hope is that each of you receives whatever it is you are looking for during your journey over the next 8 weeks. Please know that I am here to assist you in whatever you require. Feel free to give me a call, ask questions and have a chat at any time. My mobile 0438 264 354.

What is Yoga?

Yoga is a mind, body and spirit art developed in India. Literally the word yoga means to “unite” or “yoke”. That is yoga is about bringing together the mind, body and spirit as one entity.

Generally, from a western view point, yoga involves a set of physical postures – asanas, breathing – pranayama and meditation techniques.

I enjoy yoga because it is multi-dimensional. As a practicing yogi we are able to put in and take out whatever it is that we need at any point in time. Your energy levels may ebb and flow depending on the seasons, the month or even the week, day or hour. The practice of yoga is non-judgemental and very forgiving. Yoga is about you.

While developing a regular practice is recommended there is also an emphasis on self-exploration. This involves connecting with and listening to your body. If you do not wish to practice yoga every day and you find that a once a week practice is suited for you then that is fabulous. You might find once a week is not enough and that doing a little yoga, breathing and meditation on a daily basis is right up your alley.

I believe once you start practicing yoga, you will find a style, teacher and routine that you can own.

My hope is that I can assist you on your path to whatever you are seeking on the yogic journey.

What to expect from Yoga?

One of the great things about yoga is that it is for everybody. No matter your age, your gender, your health or even your weight you can do yoga.

There are some general rules that all yoga practitioners / students should follow when doing yoga:

- If you are new to yoga, returning to yoga after some period of time, have injury or illness or are pregnant please consult with your Doctor AND inform the instructor of your current condition
- Wear loose, comfortable clothes being mindful that you will be bending, stretching and moving
- Never do anything you do not feel comfortable doing, your instructor can offer alternative asana or relaxation practice to assist you in developing a practice right for you
- Tune into your body and listen to what it is telling you. If it is painful don't do it. Of course do not confuse painful with laziness and don't allow a competitive nature to take over. One thing that often can occur in class is that our ego takes over telling us what we can and can't do. Sometimes we underperform in class because our ego has instilled a degree of fear (FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL) in our heads. This is where we fear doing an asana or yoga posture because we have a false belief we cannot do it. Other times we have the competitive proud ego whispering in our ear telling us to do something. For example when we see someone else doing asana and our ego makes judgement that we are better than them and therefore must be able to do the posture. Over time when you start to become aware of where the little voices are coming from you will begin to see them for what they really are. The unconscious egoic mind wanting to take centre stage in your life.
- Be prepared for emotions to rise. At times you may wish to release these emotions there and then. Other times you may not be prepared to release and wish to retreat from what comes up. Do whatever feels right for you. I encourage you to release if you feel it is okay to do so. Please realise you are in a safe environment, I am here to nurture you and assist you in your yoga journey. However if the time is not right for you to let go of that emotion then simply move to a posture that is comfortable for you – personally I find child posture a fantastic posture when I feel vulnerable.
- The most important tip I can impart on you is to remember to breathe and listen to your body. When you breathe you release, you can gain the best out of your yoga practice and you are filling your beautiful body with the life nourishing oxygen.
- AND one final thought – make sure you have lots of fun with your practice. Laugh, Smile and be happy when you do yoga. It is fun.

What are the benefits of doing yoga?

There are numerous physiological and psychological benefits to yoga including:

- Increasing your metabolism
- Weight loss
- Toning
- Strengthening
- Stress release
- Calming of the mind
- Increasing focus and concentration
- Improving sleep patterns
- Improving posture
- Increasing range of motion in joints and stretching muscles
- Self-awareness development
- Reduces anxiety, nervousness and signs of depression
- Mood enhancer – for the positive
- Much, much, much

Mindful Living

The concept for Mindful Living has grown out of my appreciation for conscious awareness. Over the years I have grown from an individual who paid little attention to the world around me to someone who now strives to live with mindfulness every day. With 10 years of Aikido practice and the last 3 years as a mindful yoga instructor I believe I bring together some durable philosophies and interesting lessons to share with my students.

I have a strong belief in harmonising with others, with the universe and with ourselves. Prana, Chi or Ki is all around us. We have the ability to harness that energy and utilise it for the benefit of ourselves and others. The universe gives us this energy freely therefore we should respect that and ensure that the energy we use is redirected wisely.

Naturally we cannot use it wisely if we do not pay full attention to the present moment. Mindful Living teaches us to live for the now. Through yoga, aikido and meditation I hope I can share what I have learned on how to live with conscious awareness in the present.

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery but today that is a gift.

Yogic Practice

Yogic Breathe

Learning to become conscious of our breath and then using breathing exercises we can help ourselves relax with real positive outcomes for our wellbeing.

Sitting in a comfortable position with excellent posture

As you inhale through the nose, expand the abdomen. This causes the diaphragm to move into the abdominal cavity as it flexes downwards, opening up the chest cavity, expanding the lungs. As the lungs are engaged and expand air enters through the nostrils filling the lungs with wonderful oxygen.

Gently pause being carefully not to hold the breath, on the ebb between the inhalation and exhalation.

Let the exhalation empty from the lungs first – starting at the top of the chest and working to the base. Notice that the diaphragm starts to flex back into the chest cavity and the abdomen naturally deflates also. Just as you think the last of the breath is completed, draw the navel back towards the spine completing the first round of breath.

Repeat this for at least 7 rounds.

Doing this as part of a regular daily routine when you first commence your yoga practice will be highly beneficial.

Foundational Poses

Here is the basic premise of the foundation poses discussed in the first class. Over the coming weeks we will expand on this and introduce other concepts to help you improve and build on the foundational poses. All of these need to be practice with correct posture and core stabilisation. We will be discussion core of the coming weeks and these poses will be explained again using core.

Sukhasana – cross legged position

- Comfortable seated position
- Find your sacred seat (find your sit bones and the area of perineum by leaning slightly forward – rock back until you find the spot in between)
- Ensure your pelvic bowl is level
- Sit up tall – lifting out of your hips, straightening and extending your spine from the top of your crown
- Draw your chin slightly in to elongate through the back of neck

Tadasana – Mountain Pose

- Stand tall lifting up from the crown of your head
- Allow your feet to be flat on the floor – either standing with the big toes together OR take feet out to hip width apart
- Ankles, Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Ears are in align
- Hands run down the seam of the pants
- Send your attention to “One Point” – that invisible area about two centimetres under the navel.
- Energy moves down the legs into the ground – as you send energy down strength and energy come back to you.

Savasana

- Pose of absolute relaxation
- Lying on your spin
- Body is in alignment from the top of your head to the base of your spin
- Thighs are naturally parted and should not touch
- The feet flop out in complete relaxation
- Hands are beside body with palms facing upwards
- The shoulders are away from the ears and relaxed under the body
- The chin slightly tucked