



Williamstown Yoga Centre Newsletter

Term Two – 2008

Greetings and welcome to the second edition of the Williamstown Yoga Centre Newsletter. I'd like to commence this newsletter with a special passage someone sent me recently. The piece was written by a man called George Carlin who was a comedian during the 70's and 80's. George wrote this piece following the death of his wife and his precious words are worthy contemplation for us all:

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints...We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbour. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete...

Remember; spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your hart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember, to say, 'I love you' to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again. Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

With these thoughts in mind, yesterday afternoon was a very special and joyous time at Williamstown Yoga Centre, with the founding Principal of the Centre, Susanne Calman's marriage to Richard McCrae. It was a beautiful wedding, set in the gardens of a boathouse in Frankston as the sun set in the distance. I'm sure all of you will join with me in congratulating them on their union and wishing them a wonderful and very happy future together.

In this edition, you will find:

- A Review of our Free Weekend of Yoga
- Teacher's Profile: Jenny Rock
- Yoga in the tradition of Krishnamacharya by Deb Robertson
- 'The Breath in Yoga' by Sue Wright
- Laughter Yoga with Josie Penna
- Information about new courses / workshops / intensives & classes for Term 2
- A Book Review: *Wings of Power* by Margrit Segesman

Having just re-read all of the pieces in this newsletter one final time, I must say I feel incredibly honoured to be working with such an amazing & inspiring group of yoga teachers. Deb's view of yoga as 'an endless field with many beautiful flowers' and Jenny's raw honesty and integrity and authenticity, are precious gifts for us all to share, here in Williamstown. How lucky are we!

We hope you enjoy the offerings contained with these pages and we welcome feedback. Due to the lengthy size of this newsletter, the meditation practice and student questions column have been withheld until term three. I have also altered the font of the newsletter to 'Arial', following feedback from a couple of dyslexic students that they could not decipher 'Times New Roman'. Please feel free to change the font if you do not like the present format. All further comments/ideas may be directed to the co-ordinator/editor of the newsletter, Fiona Hyde - fiona_hyde@hotmail.com

Namaste.

ॐ Free Weekend of Yoga: Review ॐ

On Friday 14 March to Sunday 16 March, Williamstown Yoga Centre offered a variety of free yoga classes for new and existing students to attend. It was an extremely hot weekend and we had a few cancellations due to the heat. However most classes were enthusiastically attended and teachers received some positive feedback from new students.

One participant sent us the following e-mail after the free weekend:

"I just wanted to touch base with you to say how deeply I appreciated the opportunity to take advantage of and participate in the weekend of yoga. I was touched that the teachers gave up their time and were willing to share their wisdom with us. My best wishes and gratitude to all the teachers at the Williamstown Yoga Centre...I'm also quite excited to see that the centre is going to be offering kirtan in the second term - yay!" (Claudia).

Williamstown Yoga Centre's free weekend of classes coincided with National Free Yoga Day, an initiative fuelled by yoga teacher Toby Wallace in Melbourne. You might be interested to read an e-mail that Toby sent all teachers who taught for free on this day:

Hi, this is a group email to all of you who have participated AS A COMMUNITY of Yoga Teachers in International Free Yoga Day together offering something loving and healthy to the larger community! Thank you for joining, and for doing all that you did.

This email is to give you some feedback...In summary, the best thing this year - in my mind - is that the event has now spread around the world. It was great to think on Friday that this was happening not only in Darwin and Melbourne (two opposite ends of Australia), but also in Canada and Macao!

I paused for a second on this day and knew that other teachers might just at that moment be freely offering their knowledge and love of Yoga to some welcome ears, some of which were new to Yoga. This was one of the main aims.

One woman rang me, after seeing a story and photo in my local paper, saying she had depression for years, felt there was no hope, she'd tried everything. She came to the free class and was so happy afterwards, she now saw a possibility...

A special mention goes to all the Centres who found great joy in giving their regular students a free class as a thank you. This type of love is divine. It was never just a business exercise. We all know that. Thanks again, Hari Ommm (Toby Wallace, Land of Yoga).

ॐ Teacher's Profile: Jenny Rock ॐ

How did you come to yoga?

From a very early age I have always known that one day I would do yoga. I don't know how or why I knew this, which is to say that it was something that came from within. I don't ever

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remember discussing it with anybody - my only exposure was Swami Sarasvati on the television (who, by the way, is not all that accurate!). At the age of six, my father, who was passionately anti-religious, convinced me that God didn't exist, and, since I knew about death, I became haunted by the meaninglessness of life. Each person responds to his/her circumstances in very individual ways. Although I didn't know it at the time, I was and am a very deep thinking person - a person who is always seeing beneath the surface of things. This factor, combined with extreme childhood circumstances, turned me into a tormented person. I did not understand how people could blithely go about their business on a daily basis acting as if they were going to live forever, when they were ultimately going to die, and, perhaps even worse than that, grow old and decrepit first.

Daily survival was a tremendous struggle for me - suicide was never far from my thoughts. I would fantasise about smashing windows in order to go to jail which was one way I naively conceived my ticket out of a bad place. But somewhere inside I knew that if I could get by until I was 24, things would fall into place. And, I suppose to my credit, I never stopped asking why, and seeking to understand and to find a way out of the pain that was my milieu.

I was the 5th of 6 children born within 7 years of each other, and even though I was not the youngest because there was a brother 10 months junior to me, I was at the bottom of the pecking order. My younger brother was over-indulged and spoilt with the consequence that he became a bully. As the only person physically weaker than him, I became the recipient. What was interesting is that there was always a part of me that remained quite detached from these episodes. I never ever felt vengeful. There was a simple and compassionate understanding that he would have to deal, at some point, with the consequences of his behaviour. It is here that I first identify an innate 'yogic' understanding of things, that wasn't able to flower and produce in the first part of my life.

When did you start practicing?

My first attempt was at 16 out of a book called unisex yoga. It felt impossible. I was simply trying to copy the static positions I saw in the book and 'get there' - not at all rewarding.

My next attempts consisted of enrolling in a series of introductory courses here in Williamstown. But these were not very satisfying either, so I would never continue. Some of the younger teachers were nice but then I ended up with the person they had trained under. Her relaxations were like chalk scraping on a blackboard for me - "eyes relaxxxxxxxxxxx, nose relaxxxxxxxxxxx, mouth relaxxxxxxxxxxx, and on it went ad infinitum like a snake under assault, and irritatingly predictable and formulaic. Somehow that sibilant sound does not draw me within. Combined with that I found this teacher to be quite rigid in my personal dealings with her which made me feel yoga was not working for her, so how could she make yoga work for me.

There was one inspiring teacher that I experienced as a student at the University of Melbourne. She told her story of being in a terrible accident in which a massive number of bones in her body were shattered and the doctors did their usual "You will never be able to...". She reported lying in hospital and healing herself to everyone's amazement simply by using yogic breathing techniques. I was a troubled soul at that time, and she treated and responded to me as an individual, but she was only there for a term before being replaced by someone who was grossly overweight. I rather judgmentally took this to mean she was not practicing what she preached and so I stopped formal classes once again.

Then there were the early morning 'experiments' in the Williamstown Gardens. I would drag one of my friends out of bed at 5.30am and jog to the gardens for a yoga session - but these

promptly ended when we found ourselves attempting to lie in corpse pose for relaxation and getting wetter and wetter as the sprinkling system inundated the grass.

It wasn't until I was 24, and started yoga with Gita International in the city, that I encountered a teacher who blew me away with her joyful, innovative, entertaining and intelligent approach to yoga, making it come alive; taking all the drudgery and discipline out of it. She was vibrant and exuberant and passionate and she brilliantly addressed the multiplicity of different needs in the class and integrated us and really seemed to be yoga in action. For the first time the outer reality matched the inner model and so from then on, I stuck with it.

Where/who did you do teacher training with?

Needless to say I did teacher training with Gita, completing it in 1989. Gita was the first school to run formalized courses, and they pitched their training to a level that I found utterly inspirational, imparting a profound sense of the privilege and responsibility of teaching. One of the directors at the school often cites the stalactites/stalagmites principle - ie to form those beautiful shapes, it takes drip after drip over a long, long period of time and at the end of it there is something very beautiful and solid which is far more difficult to smash than simply pouring water into a mould that was the same shape and putting it in the freezer. These days, it is very easy to become a yoga teacher, apparently - there are three week, even weekend courses! But the training at Gita takes place over a two year period and during which you become part of an amazingly committed team of teachers, and mentors and staff, and you do loads of classes during the week and on the weekends, and this does indeed lead not only to your own transformation, but to everyone else's as well. So I did it twice more because there is so much in it that it is great to keep coming back to it, and then started to teach components of the course.

Do you continue to attend classes?

One of the strong standards at Gita is that "you forfeit the right to teach as soon as you cease to learn". For 20 years I trained and trained and trained at Gita - I have more than 45 certificates, diplomas and post-graduate diplomas in teaching. I really believe in this principle. I have also trained in many other places and styles of hatha and have done several courses overseas. Sometimes, however, you can take something too far - I had ended up being all yoga teacher and not much else, apart from a mother. It's interesting in life how we tend to fall back on what we know - I would say it was vitally transformational to train to the extent that I did. But, ironically, one of the reasons I could so commit to it was because it was something I already new form deep within myself. Although I started life under a great cloud, it was there just needing to be uncovered. When you overdo something, then you need a break - I was so disciplined in my attendance of classes at Gita as a student and as a teacher - I would attend or teach come hell or high water, and for me, this eventually had to give way to other things so that further growth could occur. I love to do my hatha in a group with others, but at this stage, I need to choose when I come and go, and, in some ways, because of the level of my own experience, I find it hard to enjoy classes where the teacher has not trained to that same extreme extent!!!

One thing I really enjoy, however, is to go to Gita on a Monday night where there is a special class just for teachers. It is a very simple class, but because of the maturity of the people in the room, I find an amazing depth and rejuvenation from all working together.

What type of yoga do you teach?

Well I think we all hopefully start off teaching some 'type' of yoga and the one that impressed me obviously was Gita and I still follow its wonderful organic approach. This involves limbering

the body (the foreplay before sex), followed by 10 postures done in a specific sequence (the sex), and uses a wide range of different pranayamas each week according to what seems relevant, along with visualization and meditation, and the important component of not just relaxing at the end of the class, but also pausing to process, after each movement. However, you do reach a point where you stop teaching what you have been taught, and start to teach what you 'know'. I have been a full-time university student for the past five years and that takes a lot of my time, these days. But I am looking forward to when I finish, next year, and can let the cat out of the bag. It's certainly making a lot of noise and trying to break free. In other words I am bursting with things to share, but, at the moment have to do so in a 'suitably constrained manner'!

Do you specialise in other areas?

Well I have taught everything, it seems to me - from beginners to general to intermediate and advanced, and certainly specialised in prenatal and post-natal programmes that are as much for the foetus/baby as they are for the mother in the making. I have taught esoteric classes and pranayama courses and run workshops in meditation and conducted meditation sessions ongoing. I have run childrens' yoga and indeed ran a school based on yoga principles, for two years that was for 0-6 year olds and their parents. As mentioned earlier, I have taught a component of the Gita Teacher Training course and been strongly involved in the general training of teacher trainees, and, like many of its teachers, facilitated many of the all day weekend sessions. I have often formally mentored the trainees as well as sitting on the exam panel each prior to each graduation. And most of these things have been done concurrently as distinct from consecutively!!

Other skills/experience that you add to your teaching?

Counselling has always been a huge component of teaching and another strong aspect in my teaching, which I have come to more and more because of ongoing feedback as to its usefulness is my astrological insights. When there is time, I do charts for people, not because I have ever set out to do this, but because people have constantly requested it. As years go by, my insights here just seem to deepen. Astrology for me, is another way of being able to describe the weather and therefore what people might need to wear - as such it is not at all predictive - it rather says, there's a gale force wind about to start blowing, and then it remains up to individuals as to how they choose to respond to it, but, knowing about it ahead of time, or even being able to name it, helps.

My other skills pertain to what I have overcome and dealt with in my own life - the particular ways in which I have demonstrated the way in which the "the boulder which became an obstacle in the pathway of the weak, became a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong". It is easy to succumb to the "who am I?" questioning of one's right to teach. In the everyday what tends to dominate is an awareness of all the things you need to address in yourself, not those aspects you may have mastered. But I have learned that for all my current faults, relative to myself, I have indeed come a long way in this life and therefore, like all of us, have things that are worth passing on and issues I have faced which give me my "authenticity" stamp!!!

How have you found juggling family/kids with your role as a yoga teacher?

This is an interesting and useful question in a climate in which 'mothering' is that thing you do in a hidden corner when no-one is looking. My child is 15 now, and doesn't require so much of me, but looking back, I would say that I succumbed a bit too much to the notion of trying to be all things to all people. I don't think this would have happened if mothering were recognized as the momentous and valuable and demanding undertaking that it is, and **if it were collectively**

supported. It's so easy for mothers to be confused today because 'mothering', if it happens at all, is the hidden background thing. Little value or recognition is given to it which means that mums don't know why they are struggling and tend to internalize the fact that they are struggling as a secret deficiency that must be kept hidden. Good mothering takes as much aplomb, courage and energy as mastering Mt Everest. I ministered to my child and worked hard to be available to him emotionally - along these lines, one night out a week at Gita from when he was four months old, made a huge contribution. But I would say I worked too hard at also ministering to many others, and had long sustained periods of not feeling sufficiently supported myself and feeling on some level drained and empty, which my child would have picked up and felt/absorbed. And I guess this was more relevant in my case because I was a sole parent from the time my child was six. What I would say now with hindsight, is that we need to not participate in a societal lack of realism about what is achievable. At uni, currently, I have a fantastic teacher who puts so much into the class; almost immediately answers any e-mails that she is sent in the evenings; does lots of preparation and brings stacks of materials to class. This is in the field of 'education'. The question that runs through my mind is - this is great for us, but what about her two year old? What quality of care can he possibly be receiving? You so often experience some amazing woman being introduced on the radio or TV or whatever with a long list of her achievements, one of which is mothering. It just makes me doubt the quality of what has gone into her children - and in general on a societal level, we tend to boast about all the amazing things we have squeezed in. To me, increasingly, this seems 'glamoured' (it is definitely portrayed as desirable in the media) and dangerously insidious in that we all take it on board without even realizing. I think we are so out of touch with what we need for ourselves that we can't begin to support giving it to children. So what we may now have is perhaps an entire generation of small people in institutions (crèches) that are going to need a lot of repair work (yoga?) when they grow up, if they're not hell bent on drugs, alcohol, gambling and endless pursuit of sexual escapades which ultimately never satisfy.

So to come back to the question, juggling yoga teaching with motherhood. Mothering, in my mind, needs to come first because it's something the mother generally speaking 'contracted' to do, and mother, with her love, knowledge, connectedness and 'vested interest' in the child, is not replaceable. Teach a little, mother a lot, then, as time goes by, the order changes and you can teach a lot and mother a little. If we were to shirk one responsibility to take on another, perhaps less demanding and more immediately rewarding, responsibility, then we are not properly facing the issues that 'authenticate' us to teach, in my opinion. What you learn from what you endure and sacrifice determines the caliber of what you can 'teach'. More than anything, we teach by who we are.

So to summarise, my yoga practice has taught me to value balance, and to recognize that I am part of the equation of life, which means it is important to say 'no' at times, to put small dependent people first, especially the ones that I brought into the world, because that is an intelligent investment that pays fantastic dividends, to be glad that it is no longer the lofty mountain top that will create a teacher of worth in me, but rather how I handle the thick and fray of life, just like my students have to do.

ॐ *Yoga in the tradition of Krishnamacharya - Deb Robertson* ॐ

Yoga is an endless field with many beautiful flowers. The Yoga of Krishnamacharya is a bountiful tree, offering me shade, strength, stability and deep roots when I need to be quiet and the joy of sparkling leaves reaching for the golden sunshine and the endless, open blue sky when I am more at ease with myself and the world.

Some of you know that I have been studying Yoga Therapy with The Krishnamacharya Healing Yoga Foundation (KHYF) for the last two years, as part of a four year, internationally accredited course, running concurrently in Europe and North America. This course includes two periods of intensive study each year in Australia, with two separate periods of internship at the Mandarim in Chennai. This course also requires a research project on an aspect of yoga and healing

I feel so blessed to be studying yoga therapy. Learning from my respected teachers how to apply the healing tools that will help each individual is a great honour, as well as plenty of study, reflection and practice. It feels I have embarked on a long journey. My own health and well being have benefited so much from the ever evolving personalised practices I have received and the work I have done over the last years. It is wonderful to be learning to offer this gift back.

Kausthub gave me my first chant to learn. Ayur Dhehi gave me comfort when nothing else would in the difficult recovery from my hip replacement. I had no idea this would develop in to learning to chant the yoga sutras or that there were so many forms of the Gayatri. After that, my practice evolved over time.

My next study block is fast approaching - Anatomy and Physiology with Dr NC and Kausthub Desikachar from 15 – 31st May.

However, for me, the real gift has been the work on the inside. This is also the most challenging aspect and it never ends.

The following courses I am offering at Williamstown Yoga Centre, are based on this tradition:

Gayatri Mantra in Autumn

Reap the harvest.

Tuesday mornings, 6.30 - 7.40am, 29 April, 6th and 13th May

Bookings are essential.

Relax and Refresh

Wednesday Evenings, 6 – 7.15pm,

Linking body, breath and mind through flowing movement, developing steadiness to stay. During the course we will reflect on the yamas and niyamas - our attitudes to others, our environment and to ourselves as presented in yoga sutras 2.29 – 2.32. The astanga, or eight limbed path of yoga offered to us by Patanjali is as relevant and helpful now, as it was when written by the sage Patanjali over 2000 years ago.

This class will be offered for 10 weeks from Wednesday, 14 April to 18 June and is suitable for beginners or any students who enjoy a gentler more reflective practice, alleviating the busyness of the day so we can move into the evening refreshed.

This class is also beneficial for those managing an illness, injury, suffering stress or anxiety. Modifications and individual support is offered where appropriate.

Yoga and Relationship

This course will run over five weeks and offer students an opportunity to experience and reflect on relationship, the ground of our yoga practice. We will begin with our relationship to ourselves and our gross body and move through the layers to the “heart as our hub” (TKV Desikachar, *What are we seeking* 2001).

If you are interested in finding out a bit more, please send me an email - debyoga@bigpond.net.au

ॐ *The Breath in Yoga* ॐ

Hatha yoga teacher Sue Wright wrote the following piece for our newsletter. Sue may be running some pranayama/breathing workshops at Williamstown Yoga Centre later in 2008. Stay tuned for further details.

When we are feeling agitated and rushed, a friend may tell us to “take a deep breath”. Taking this deliberate and slow breath helps us to pause and perhaps reflect before we speak or act unwisely. It also helps to bring our awareness right back into our physical body and serves to “ground” us. We may then notice that we have been holding our breath (or breathing tightly in the top of the chest) and along with it, a whole lot of tension in our muscles. Yoga teaches us that the breath is a reflection of our physical, mental and emotional states. When we hold the breath, we seek to protect ourselves from the effects of strong emotions, although in reality we block the flow of soothing and healing prana (life force or vital energy).

If we listen to the breath it lets us know how we really are, in that moment. Then, if we need to, we can let go of whatever thought or emotion is holding us tight, and free the flow of breath to create a smooth, replenishing flow. As we do so, the nervous system is calmed and quietened. Of course this is not always a simple exercise with instant results, but awareness is a necessary first step and the breath is a truly powerful tool.

As yoga teacher Donna Farhi puts it: “The oscillation of breathing is a perfect mirror of the fluctuations of life. Life is like a swinging pendulum, some changes bringing with them difficulties and pain and other changes bringing with them ease and joy. If we are open to this process, life *will* move us. If we are unable to integrate life’s changes, we begin to resist by restricting our breath. When we hold the breath and try to control life or stop changes from happening, we are saying that we do not want to be moved” (*Yoga Mind, Body & Spirit*, p. 30).

In yoga classes, you will often hear your teacher make reference to the breath. Sometimes this is a request just to be aware of your breath. This helps us to stay present with our practice, so that we are not planning dinner while we are holding our bodies in cobra pose, for example. Focus on the flow of breath is what distinguishes yoga from other, purely physical, forms of “exercise”. The breath can provide an anchor for the mind while the body is immersed in asana (postures), making it literally a “mind-full” practice. It can also help us understand with what intensity we should be practicing – once the breath becomes strained and jagged, the pose is unlikely to be beneficial.

At other times, you will be asked to notice the breath as a way of drawing the mind away from the chatter in which it likes to engage. This is often done at the beginning of a meditation practice or relaxation. Simple observation of the breath is a naturally calming and steadying practice.

Eventually, practice of breath awareness in class begins to spill over to your life off the yoga mat. You may have moments of spontaneous awareness of your breath, or feel compelled to spend a few moments practicing a simple breathing technique or pranayama. Each time you do this, you are practicing yoga, or union.

ॐ *What's So Funny? Laughter and the Yoga Connection* ॐ

'Yoga' means 'union' (between the left and right brain, the masculine and the feminine, the mind and the body) and aims to create balance & harmony in all aspects of human life. Laughter (Hasya) Yoga shares the same goal (hasya means laughter in Sanskrit).

Laughter puts us intensely in the moment. The ability to fully live and experience the 'now' is of utmost importance. Yoga teaches that the mind and body mirrors one to another and that the breath is the link between the two. In Laughter Yoga, 'Laughter' is used as a form of breath work and an excuse to breathe deeper into the abdomen. It gently expands the lung capacity by increasing abdominal breathing. It effectively flushes the 2/3 of 'stale air' that most people unknowingly keep inside. Repeated practice teaches us to become more and more consciously aware of our own breathing pattern, bringing one into the fearless, trusting and loving 'here' and 'now.'

Awareness is the first step to improvement. Mastery of the breath (in due time) is effectively mastery of the mind and the body.

The majority of types and forms of the laughter exercises practiced are directly connected in one way or the other with the principles and maxims of yoga. These yogic exercises include:

Pranayama - an important yogic exercise which involves deep and rapid breathing. It has been liberally introduced between Laughter Yoga sessions as a pause and to increase lung capacity. This basic and important yogic exercise is further used as the underlying foundation of the hearty laughter pose in Laughter Yoga, where the arms are raised up and a cycle of rapid inhalation/exhalation ensues.

Kapalabhati - a famous yogic exercise which entails contraction of the throat and palate muscles and entails a jerky and rhythmic movement of the diaphragm to expel air in a series of bursts. This is precisely the foundation of the HO-HO HA-HA-HA breath work between each Laughter Yoga exercise, used as both a warm up and to charge the atmosphere with cheer and festivity.

Bhastrika & swash shuddhi - are similar yogic exercises used to clean the respiratory passages in forceful jerks of breathing and the rhythmic contraction of lung and throat muscles - the very same muscles and actions used in Laughter Yoga per the HO-HO HA-HA-HA exercise and various other playful laughter exercises.

Talāsana - the yogic stretching of arms and exercising the neck and shoulders while taking a deep breath. This is used in the Laughter Yoga poses and exercises.

Simha mudra - is the famous lion laughter of Laughter Yoga which entails keeping the eyes wide open, fully extending the tongue and roaring like a lion.

Laughter Yoga - consists of a blend of yogic deep breathing, stretching, simulated laughter exercises and cultivating child-like playfulness. Laughter yoga produces a unique physiological balance in our bodies, by connecting body, mind and spirit. The deep breathing in laughter yoga helps to stimulate the calming branch of our nervous system (Parasympathetic system) by rhythmic movement of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. Put simply laughter helps us keep healthy by enriching the blood with ample supplies of oxygen, and according to the science of yoga, life energy (prana) flows through the breath. Through controlled and deep breathing we can enhance our own well-being. Laughter helps to increase lung capacity, thus enhancing oxygen supply to the body.

Laughter Yoga activates laugh muscles. Yogic laughter exercise is not a substitute for spontaneous laughter. If you stretch your laugh muscles on a regular basis, it helps increase our capacity to laugh spontaneously and more often throughout the day.

The benefits of laughter are positively life enhancing. By embracing the spirit of laughter, it's possible to achieve a more positive outlook on life, as well as improved lung capacity and abdominal tone.

At Williamstown Yoga centre every Monday night at 7.30pm, you can laugh like you have never laughed before and leave feeling refreshed, relaxed and invigorated.

For more information contact Josie Penna on 0409357757.

ॐ *New Courses / Workshops / Intensives / Classes for Term 2* ॐ

We are delighted to be able to offer a wonderfully rich array of new classes and workshops for term two at Williamstown Yoga Centre. If you are interested in exploring a particular aspect of yoga/yogic philosophy in more detail, please let us know and we will do our best to organise a special class or intensive on the topic in term three. If this is not possible, we will endeavour to steer you in a direction where you might attain more information.

New Meditation & Relaxation Class

Tuesday evenings, 7.35pm-8.50pm (commencing 8 April)

*Quiet the mind
Balance the emotions
Ease the body
Open the heart*

Be guided on your journey to inner peace and serenity by learning how to quieten wandering thoughts, relieve stress and anxiety, promote positive thinking and experience a more focused mind.

Each class will commence with a warm-up session to prepare the body and mind for meditation. We will then practice a specific meditation technique each week, such as breath focus, mantra, chakra contemplation, creative visualisation, trataka and likhit japa. The class will conclude with a healing guided relaxation. Yogic philosophy related to meditation will be explored, and support will be provided to assist you to develop a regular home practice.

Everyone can benefit from the regular practice of meditation & relaxation. My classes are suitable for those with little or no experience, as well as those who have an established meditation practice. They are a tonic for individuals who experience anxiety and/or panic attacks, as well as those who are unable to practice yoga postures and are experiencing ill-health (you are welcome to lie down for the entire session). You may attend casually, although regular attendance is recommended.

TEACHER: Fiona Hyde has been teaching yoga for 11 years and currently teaches Meditation & Relaxation on the Advanced Diploma of Yoga Teaching. She is drawn to Buddhist mindfulness meditation techniques and she brings a gentle and grounded approach to her teaching. A mother of two small children, as well as co-owner of Williamstown Yoga Centre, Fiona is finding meditation to be highly beneficial in her own life and she is keen to share her passion for meditation with others.

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Enquiries: Fiona – 9399 9690 or fiona_hyde@hotmail.com

*We can never obtain peace in the outer world
until we make peace with ourselves (Dalai Lama).*

New Early Morning Hatha Yoga Class for Beginners

The aim of this class is to provide participants with an overview of the foundations of Hatha yoga and its practice. This is achieved by focusing primarily on each person's awareness of the breath and body while undertaking asana (postures).

Regular yoga practice encourages us to face the challenges of our daily life with internal balance. Morning practice is a class supporting participants to awaken the body through a guided sequence of asanas while solidifying our intent for the breaking day. This class provides an opportunity for participants to harness the innate mental, physical, emotional and spiritual intelligence that exists within us all.

TEACHER: Joy is a Registered Nurse having worked mainly in the areas of Drug & Alcohol and Psychiatric Nursing over the last 12 years. Joy holds an Advanced Diploma of Yoga Teaching and a Bachelor of Nursing. Joy is currently working as a Psychiatric Consultation Nurse in a Major teaching Hospital in Melbourne.

Joy began teacher training with a focus of using yogic practices as a complimentary therapy within the health system. She has a strong personal focus on creating a yoga practice supporting each person's expression of wellness and healthy living.

Joy has a deep interest in Yogic Philosophy and uses aspects of her classes to highlight the fundamental principles of this ancient practice and its relevance in modern daily life. Joy holds a deep belief that each individual holds within them a powerhouse of mental, physical, emotional and spiritual intelligence. She uses yoga as a tool to express and balance these facets of self.

Commences: Wednesday 9 April
Time: 6.30am-7.45am
Enquiries: Joy – 0439 368 417

Rags Chakra Workshop

Sensing..... Feeling..... Dancing
Sensing our way through the chakras, we acknowledge our deep & potentially transforming **Feelings**.
Feeling were that takes us now today through Movement & **Dance**
Dancing the expression of what we feel & **Sense**
Sensing our truth in the **Feeling**
Feeling the need to **Dance**
Dancing.....Sensing..... Feeling

Come & explore the many aspects of each chakra in a three hour workshop using guided meditation, movement, dance, sounding, drawing & writing. Maria has spent years facilitating Dance & Movement journeys for people who love to move, physically, spiritually, emotionally &

mentally. There is no right or wrong way – just your way...Maria holds the space for you to explore your own inner dance.

When: Friday 18th April
Time: 6.30-9.30pm
Cost: \$60 / \$50 conc
Bookings: Maria 0419523710 or Fiona 9399 9690

Yoga for Fertility – 5 week course

Embracing all of the gifts of asana, pranayama, chanting, visualization, relaxation & reiki to align your body & mind with the desires of your heart & soul

When: Friday 2nd May – 30th May 2008
Time: 6.30pm - 8.00pm
Facilitator: Susanne Calman, (over 20 years experience as a Hatha Yoga Teacher, Reiki Master, Intuitive Healer)
Cost: \$150 (includes guided relaxation CD for home use, blessed crystal & guest facilitator)
Enquiries/bookings: susanne@williamstownyoga.com.au or 93973015

Kirtan Chanting Session

Kirtan is said to be the easiest and most accessible form of meditation, drawing together mantra (the unspoken language of the heart*) and bhakti (devotional) yoga. In kirtan, we chant mantra as a group, creating a powerful and transformative energy, which can open and fill the heart with LOVE, be a channel for the expression of emotions, calm the mind, bring us to a place of peace and connect us with the DIVINE.

TEACHER: Linda Hunt first commenced yoga in the Satyananda tradition 21 years ago and she has been a yoga teacher since 1997. Part of her yoga practice included attending a weekly kirtan group. She says: "Chanting the mantras touched my heart so deeply. How beautiful that the kirtan group continues on today. We are honoured to have an evening at the Williamstown Yoga Centre to share our love and joy of kirtan with others and broaden the connections of the yoga community."

Linda will be joined for the evening of kirtan by her beautiful yoga family including Paula, Roger, Jenny, Helen, Niroopama and others – inspiring yogis, yoga teachers and superb kirtanists! Come and enjoy the celebration. Aum

* Swami Niranjanda Saraswati

When: Saturday 10 May
Time: 6.00-7.30pm
Cost: \$10
Bookings: Fiona 9399 9690 or fiona_hyde@hotmail.com

'Art for Life' Workshops

Please note that no previous experience with drawing or art is required!

Facilitators, **Kate Casey** and **Anne Holland** are experienced counsellors whose work is based on Rudolf Steiner's approach to art, spirituality and therapy. Kate has an interest in literature, poetry, creative writing and education. Anne, a mother and grandmother, has worked as an educator for many years. She finds inspiration from working with her clients, the arts and being with children. Kate and Anne believe we are all capable of meeting our challenges creatively and acting in a more conscious way in this life. Kate is experienced at working with artists and Anne is accomplished at working with clients who believe they are not artistic at all. We welcome everyone regardless of their experience with art.

Kate and Anne are committed to running ongoing 'Art for Life' workshops at Williamstown Yoga Centre during 2008.

In these workshops, participants will:

- Use** artistic mediums to express meaning
- Understand** your inner life using the colours of crayons and the medium of clay
- Express** your inner voice (which in a busy life often gets silenced)
- Engage** and develop with a sense of beauty
- Use** drawing and clay to focus on the interior landscape of memories, emotions, unconscious patterns and the heart's wisdom.
- Learn** practical activities that you can take home to use as ongoing tools for your own development and self-care.

Drawing workshops: **Sunday 20th April & 29th June 1.30pm-5.00pm**
Clay workshop: **Sunday 18th May, 1.30pm-5.00pm**
Cost: \$80.00 per workshop
Info/bookings: Anne 9387-0931 or 0407-324-593 anneholland@optusnet.com.au

☸ *Book Review – Wings of Power by Margrit Segesman* ☸

Sometime in the 1950s, a most remarkable person, on a boat bound for Sydney, disembarked on Melbourne's shores. Did she think "This will be the place for a yoga school..." because she refused to get back on that boat and went on to be the first person to establish yoga in Australia. She founded the 'Gita School of Yoga' which is still thriving till this present day.

Her name was Margrit Segesman and she died at the age of 92, a feat that is quite extraordinary in itself, because at the age of 18 she had contracted tuberculosis and was packed off by her father to a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps from which few people, apparently, ever emerged alive. In those days the treatments were barbaric, with the consequence that years later, when she finally escaped, she did so with less than one third of her lungs. By the end of her life what 'lung' she had, did not even show on X-ray, so she literally kept herself alive through hours of daily refined 'breathing' techniques. Margrit also had suffered from a hideous degree of arthritis, said to have been brought on as a consequence of her relentless determination in carrying people to safety through the icy mountains to safety in Switzerland during World War II.

When she met up with Carl Jung, who she worked for briefly, he advised her to go to India to investigate yoga. It was in the 1920s, when such an undertaking, for a woman, was unheard of. Nonetheless she spent seven years training in the Himalayas one on one with her teacher, before he pronounced that she was to take the system of yoga to the West which is now known as Gita Yoga. He promptly disappeared and this left her few alternatives other than boarding that boat!

One of her students has written of her: 'Margrit Segesman was then a powerful combination of highly intellectual and cultured mind, cosmopolitan sophistication and the mystique of one who studied for many years with a Guru in the seclusion of the Himalayas. Her mission in life is to teach. She believes that there exists within man a power which he can use as wings to explore new dimensions of freedom and self-development. She believes also that there is a way by which people can free themselves from anxieties, fears, tensions and 'hang-ups', compulsions and addictions and achieve fulfilment of themselves by using all the potentialities of their unlimited minds.'

Margrit Segesman has written a book called *Wings Of Power*, in which she has outlined in very simple and powerful words, because they stem from a truth which she has lived, much of her vision of yoga and the power of progressive yoga relaxation which she first developed in the long nights at the sanatorium when she felt locked in a life/death struggle for each breath. Here is a sample from her book:

"I believe in Evolution; in the eventual spiritualisation of man and the whole universe; that there is a divine plan and that the universe is not just an incidental concurrence of atoms, but is planned to minute detail.

There exists within man the power to contact the universal forces by which he is capable of doing anything that he may aspire to do or be. This book sets out to explain the tuning in to the descending forces, giving man wings to ascend to unimaginable heights there to explore the fullness of his liberation.

I also believe in prevention rather than healing. The idea of the ancient Chinese of paying the doctor when healthy and fit and making him pay in the case of sickness, always seems so much more reasonable than our way.

Progressive Yoga Relaxation is one of the best methods of keeping fit by clearing out the subconsciousness what could cause hypertension now and sickness in the future.

With a positive attitude, life is limitless in its magnitude. Life is exciting; it should be a continuous adventure. Hidden deep within every human being are millions of wonderful new ideas waiting impatiently to be discovered. It does not matter whether it is a world shaking idea or the arranging of a miniature garden in a one room apartment.

A day without improvement is a day lost. From the moment of opening one's eyes in the morning until closing them in sleep at night, there should be a great love for life, willingness to meet new people, make new friends, consider new ideas and invite the expansion of universal awareness. To be in love with life is to enjoy all the heart-warming, insignificant happenings of everyday life.

If you are discontented with your life-change it! Do not plod on letting unhappiness seep deeper and deeper into your soul. Man is the architect of his own life. Every single human being has the free will to do what he wants with himself; this is his glorious birthright, regardless of whether he was born in the slums or with a silver spoon in his mouth. Even those born crippled or handicapped can still shape their lives. There are few without the necessary intellectual faculties to go to school or attend an institution for educating and training physically handicapped people. What you need is determination to use every little bit of what you have.

Get to know more about yourself; alter the blue-print of your self-image. Go ahead! And do not stop until the goal - the understanding of yourself – is reached. This will make you more perceptive of others and, in turn, increase your personal dynamism and creative living.”

In my own mind, Margrit Segesman has been to Australia what Parahansa Yogananda, about whom I wrote in the last newsletter, was to America. This is such a readable and inspiring book. It translates yogic wisdom into the language of today making it feel so relevant, practical, logical and accessible. This was one of the many ways in which Margrit was truly revolutionary.

Your physical hatha poses, breathing practice, relaxation and visualization, should take on new meaning after reading this book.

(It is most readily available at Gita International, 16 Hoddle St Abbotsford, or you could phone and have them send a copy out to you: 9416 3272. Another alternative would be the Theosophical Bookshop in Russell St in the city.)

Book review by Jenny Rock.

May peace be with you always

Om shanti, shanti, shantifi...

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