



Williamstown Yoga Centre Newsletter

Term One - 2008

*There is a wisdom which knows when to go and when to return,
what is to be done and what is not to be done,
what is fear and what is courage,
what is bondage and what is liberation
- Bhagavad Gita*

Greetings and welcome to the first edition of the Williamstown Yoga Centre Newsletter. This newsletter will be published each term, filled with interesting articles and inspiring stories about the practice and philosophy of yoga. In this edition, you will find:

- Information about our forthcoming 'Free Weekend of Yoga' (14-16 March 2008)
- 'Teacher's Profile' – Susanne Calman
- Information about a new Yoga CD by Susanne Calman
- Information about Active Birth workshops for 2008 with Jodie Gregson
- Information about a 'Gayatri Mantra' early morning intensive with Deb Robertson
- Two 'Art for Life' workshops
- Breakthrough Studies: Laughter Yoga Reduces Stress and Peaks Performance
- Book Review by Jenny Rock – *Autobiography of a Yogi*
- A Meditation Practice
- A 'Student Questions' Column
- An advertisement for second hand yoga mats

Many of you will know that Susanne Calman, Principal of Williamstown Yoga Centre, recently asked me to join her in partnership. Shortly after this announcement, the Centre was flooded with water due to a burst hot water system. Susie and I, with the enormous support and assistance of all the teachers, our friends and families, worked day and night to have the Centre up and running before Christmas. We hope those of you who have seen the new look, love it as much as we do!

As part of the new partnership, Susie and I have committed to making a number of changes to strengthen the direction of the Centre, one of which is this newsletter. We hope you enjoy the offerings contained with these pages and we welcome feedback. All comments/ideas may be directed to the co-ordinator/editor of the newsletter, Fiona Hyde - fiona_hyde@hotmail.com

Namaste...

*Every moment should be a beginning
and nowhere in the heart of time
should we reach our end
- Swami Satyananda*

ॐ Free Weekend of Yoga ॐ

On Friday 14 March 2008, Yoga Centres around Australia will throw open their doors and offer yoga to everyone, free of charge. Toby Wallace, principal yoga teacher at *The Land of Yoga*, Melbourne, has developed the initiative – 'National Free Yoga Day' – as a means of promoting health, generosity and yoga. "This is a day dedicated to a healthy world, a generous environment, encouragement, enthusiasm and positivity."

Williamstown Yoga Centre is offering a variety of free yoga classes on Friday 14 March, Saturday 15 March and Sunday 16 March 2008. Established for 14 years, Williamstown Yoga Centre is renowned for offering the local community a broad and rich variety of dedicated yoga teachers, styles and traditions.

This free weekend of yoga provides an opportunity for many in our local community to try yoga for the first time, for others to return to yoga, and for regular practitioners to try a different style of yoga. The practice of yoga is appropriate for everyone, regardless of age, gender or physical ability. Specialty classes include yoga for children, teens, pregnant women, mother and baby, and those with specific health conditions.

If you would like to try a different style of yoga, or you know someone who you think may be interested in attending a free class, see below for schedule.

Friday 14 March 2008

1.30pm-2.30pm	Yoga for Women	Susanne Calman
6.00-7.00pm	Healing Meditation & Relaxation	Fiona Hyde
7.30-8.30pm	Body, Breath, Mind	Deb Robertson

Saturday 15 March 2008

1.30-2.30pm	Laughter Yoga	Josie Penna
4.30pm-5.30pm	Power Yoga (Introduction)	Emma / Gabor

Sunday 16 March 2008

11.30am-12.30am	Gita Style Yoga Class (Introduction)	Jenny Rock
1.00pm-2.00pm	Introduction to Hatha Yoga	Sue Wright
2.30pm-3.30pm	Children's Yoga (to be confirmed)	Pam Harrison
4.00pm-5.00pm	Teen Yoga	Pam Harrison

Bookings are recommended, as classes will fill quickly. Contact: Fiona Hyde – 9399 9690 or e-mail: fiona_hyde@hotmail.com

To locate other neighbouring centres offering free classes as part of National Free Yoga Day, go to the website: www.freeyogaday.com or contact Toby Wallace at *Land of Yoga* on 0432 921 818.

ॐ Teacher's Profile ॐ

This is a transcript of an interview with Susanne Calman, Founding Principal of Williamstown Yoga Centre...

How did you come to yoga? When did you start practising yoga?

I have been practising Yoga since I was in my mother's belly - they came to get her for an emergency caesar & she was in headstand!! From the age of five, I began attending a weekly yoga class with my mum. My favourite were the relaxation classes. In my wild misspent youth travelling the world – I always found a yoga class – in those days I just wanted to be flexible – but I always knew I felt better when I walked out and life looked a lot brighter too. Yoga has been a part of my life for 45 years – I don't question it – it is just part of my being. My favourite element of yoga is still relaxation...

Where/who did you do teacher training with? Do you continue to attend classes?

I attended regular classes at Bette Calman Yoga Centre, Adelaide, for 25 years. When I lived in America, I practised with Renee Taylor, Redondo Beach, California, and then I trained with Val Daikos, Cairns School of Yoga for four years as I prepared to undertake teacher training. When I came to Melbourne, I undertook two years of teacher training with Joy Spencer, who ran the Sivananda Yoga School.

Nowadays I attend two classes per week – one with Deb Robertson at Williamstown Yoga Centre. I find Deb's classes help with my breath awareness and I love the gentle flow style yoga. Deb is very knowledgeable and she always has lots of teachers in her classes.

I also attend a weekly class with Andrew Mournehis (Chapel Street Yoga). Andrew brings in the spiritual aspect which I adore and I soak it up...

What type/style of yoga do you teach?

I am Hatha based & trained but I have stepped away a bit recently. Hopefully I now offer classes that are healing for body, mind and spirit.

Do you specialize in certain areas?

I specialize in Yoga for Survivors of Sexual Abuse & Post Traumatic Stress Disorders due to trauma. I also love to teach women yoga who are trying to fall pregnant.

I am proud to say that a survivor of 911 was given my Relaxation CD as a gift and she wrote me a beautiful note to say thank you. She believed that it was the daily use of relaxation that helped her to begin the slow process of healing.

Other skills/experience you have that add to your teaching?

I am a Reiki Master and have studied other styles of energy work also. I have studied *Touch for Health* (Kinesiology) and I bring my love of crystals, aromatherapy and the metaphysical into each class. I also practise as an Intuitive Healer – and often draw upon this gift within my classes.

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

My children are older now and one is a parent herself – but teenagers present a whole new list of issues & grey hairs!

The last few years have been incredibly challenging but it never stopped me from going to Yoga because I needed to – in class I could forget and just be present with myself. During these challenging times, Yoga supported me, nurtured me, nourished me and kept me going when all I wanted to do was give up. I also practised daily relaxations for restoration and to give me the energy to keep going.

As a teacher I think everyone knew there was a lot of stress in my life – but I think they saw that Yoga was my lifeline...and if I could use that lifeline they could too...and if I could get through the challenges and come out smiling – so could they...Most classes I would think to myself – 'thank god for Yoga'...

When did you set up Williamstown Yoga Centre? And how have you found running the Centre?

I always wanted to teach Yoga in a nice clean space...and I always wanted to offer different styles and teachers at the Centre. When I was little, I would sit in my mum's Yoga Centre and think 'in my centre I am going to do this or that' so it was just a matter of time....

The Williamstown Yoga Centre is no longer my baby – she is a 14 year old teenager and like any teenager she needed freedom and space to develop further and to reach her potential....and I needed a stronger support to let it go and let it grow....

Towards the end of last year, I approached Fiona Hyde to become co-principal and business manager...and I suppose I am the Founding Principal – so I think together we can take the Centre to the next level. I love the new look of the Centre...and feel a deep sense of happiness and pride that Fiona and I have done this together...

Any other hobbies/interests you have...

Ummm – a yoga teacher with hobbies??? I have let hobbies slip over the years – but I am going to rediscover some this year! I love movies...and I am getting married in April, so that's a fun thing to organize and once again 'thank god for Yoga'!

ॐ '*Santosha*' CD - *Deep Relaxation for body & mind with Susanne Calman* ॐ

Santosha (Sanskrit for contentment) is 79 minutes of guided relaxation accompanied by the soothing sound of the harp. This CD will help to induce deep relaxation of body and mind insuring a wonderful night sleep...and allowing you to awaken and embrace each new day with a fresh vitality...

Susie: "I am really proud of this CD & I can personally recommend it – I used it daily in the weeks after the stress of the Yoga Centre flood. Although I was sleeping I was waking up exhausted on every level..."

Then the CD arrived – so I played *Santosha* every night – I felt the quality of my sleep improving, my energy was returning & that I was more grounded which enabled me to continue doing what was needed...On certain days I also had an afternoon siesta & played either *Santosha* or *Mandala* (healing & transformation CD) & that was when I felt my spirit return."

A wonderful gift you can give your body, mind & spirit...and it only costs \$30.00.

Available at Williamstown Yoga Centre, on line www.williamstownyoga.com.au, or phone Susanne – 93973015 or susanne@williamstownyoga.com.au

ॐ *Active Birth Workshops for Pregnant Women and their partners / support people* ॐ

Jodie Gregson is a qualified and experienced Childbirth and Early Parenting Educator. She teaches Yoga for Pregnancy and Childbirth and Mother and Baby Yoga at Williamstown Yoga Centre. Jodie offers a one day positive and practical workshop to ensure the mother, partner and support person feels confident and empowered in labour.

Each workshop runs from 10.30am-4.30pm and covers:

- Understanding the birth process - normal physiology of the stages of labour
- Positions and movement for labour and birth - working actively with your body to birth your baby
- Practical ways to help and support the labouring mother
- Practice relaxation skills, breath awareness, massage, visualisation techniques for use in labour
- Learn about natural forms of pain relief
- Creating a calm and reassuring birth environment
- Helping the mother to become more informed, empowered and confident in her own ability to give birth naturally.

Dates for Active Birth Workshops in 2008:

Sunday Feb 3 2008
Sunday March 16 2008
Sunday May 4 May
Sunday June 22
Sunday August 10
Sunday September 28
Sunday November 16

For more information, contact Jodie on 9391 5667.

ॐ ‘Gayatri Mantra’ Early Morning Intensive – Deb Robertson ॐ

Bring vitality, clarity and light into your day and into your heart. Chanting with movement. Call and response. Working with the classic Vedic Gayatri Mantra. All welcome!

Monday 18, Tuesday 19 and Wednesday 20th February
Time: 6.30 - 7.45am.
Contact: Deb on 9397 8818.

ॐ ‘Art for Life’ Workshops ॐ

Kate Casey and **Anne Holland** are experienced counsellors who specialise in Rudolf Steiner's approach to art, spirituality and personal development. In 2008 they are pleased to be conducting drawing and clay workshops at the Williamstown Yoga Centre.

The initial workshop is an afternoon session focusing on drawing. The second workshop will use clay as the artistic medium. In both workshops there is a focus on using artistic expression in order to express and explore the inner life. Participants will learn safe, effective and playful ways to understand the interior landscape of memories, emotions, unconscious patterns and the heart's wisdom.

Kate and Anne will share practical activities that participants can take home to use as ongoing tools for their own development and self-care.

Kate brings to the workshop a strong interest in literature, poetry, creative writing, spirituality and education. Anne, a mother and grandmother, has worked as an educator for many years. 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! They welcome everyone regardless of their experience with art.

Participants will:

- Use artistic mediums to express meaning
- Understand your inner life using the colours of crayons and textures of clay
- Express your inner voice (which in a busy life often gets silenced)
- Engage and develop with a sense of beauty
- Use drawing to focus on the interior landscape of memories, emotions, unconscious patterns and the heart's wisdom.

Cost/Booking

Drawing workshop: **Sunday 10th February, 2.00pm-5.30pm**
Clay workshop: **Sunday 9th March, 2.00pm-5.30pm**
Cost: \$80 per workshop, \$140 for both
Venue: Williamstown Yoga Centre, 109 Douglas Pde, Williamstown

For information/bookings please contact Anne 9387-0931 or 0407-324-593
anneholland@optusnet.com.au

☸ *Breakthrough Studies: Laughter Yoga Reduces Stress and Peaks Performance* ☸

The world's first studies on the effects of unconditional laughter confirm that laughter yoga sessions at work can significantly reduce stress and increase work effectiveness.

Two studies, one in America and one in India, examined the effects of unconditional laughter using a technique developed by Dr Madan Kataria, an Indian physician known as the founder of Laughter Yoga. This exercise technique started in 1995 in India and has swept the world, with more than 5,000 laughter clubs meeting in more than 50 countries including the USA.

“I have always believed that laughter sessions were beneficial” said Dr Kataria, “but I was surprised how conclusive the results of this scientific research are. One study shows improvements in work effectiveness of more than 100 percent, and the other confirms major stress reduction and a remarkable increase in emotional intelligence skills, which are required for career and life success. It is significant that these results were achieved in just three weeks” says Kataria.

Scientists have long known that laughter causes the body to reduce stress levels and become healthy, but until now there has been no reliable way of prescribing or delivering laughter to give patients these benefits.

Dr Kataria's technique approaches laughter as a form of body exercise and enables extended sessions of hearty laughter on demand without the use of jokes or humour. Because the brain is not involved in deciding to laugh this is known as ‘unconditional laughter’. Participants claim to feel benefits after just one session.

“This exercise is fun and easy to do” says Kataria “and it makes you feel joyful as well as provides a great aerobic workout. People enjoy it so much they keep coming back for more.”

Doctors can now start to prescribe laughter session to patients who will benefit.

US Laughter Study

The US study shows that short daily laughter sessions significantly improve work performance. A group of thirty-three employees in a behavioural health centre laughed together daily for 15 minutes for 15 days.

Researchers measured self efficacy, a term used to describe a group of twelve characteristics that reflect overall work effectiveness. Participants' self-competency scores more than doubled, relational competencies increased by almost 50% and role competency also doubled during the study.

All participants improved from being classed as ‘having potential for growth and development’ before the laughter sessions to ‘company assets with enhanced abilities who can perform under stress’. The improvements remained significant in further tests 2-3 months later.

India Laughter Study

The second study focused on measuring changes in stress levels before and after three weeks of unconditional laughter sessions for staff at three separate IT companies. Researchers carefully measured physical, psychological and emotional indicators of stress.

The laughter group showed a significant decrease in stress levels reflected in reduced heart rate and blood pressure, reduced cortisol levels and an 11% decrease in perceived stress levels. Other indicators confirmed that all participants showed significantly lower stress levels after three weeks of laughter sessions.

Laughter Yoga at Williamstown Yoga Centre

If you would like to experience the benefits of Laughter Yoga for yourself, Josie Penna is now offering classes at Williamstown Yoga Centre on Monday evenings, 7.30-8.45pm. For more information, give Josie a call on 0409 357 757.

❧ **Book Review by Jenny Rock – ‘Autobiography of a Yogi’** ❧

In the business and intensity of our modern Western lives, we are often only able to do things in great haste at a superficial level, and therefore giving just the most cursory attention even to those things which compel and draw our deeper interest. This can affect the presentation of yoga as much as any other sphere of life whereby it frequently devolves into little other than physical exercise and loses its potential for the deeper transformation that many who come to it, sense is possible.

Firstly, though, to clarify the confusion about terms - ‘yoga’ is a Sanskrit word which means ‘union’, coming from the root word ‘yug’ which means ‘to yoke’ or ‘join’. Therefore, technically speaking, yoga refers to *any undertaking in any realm of life* that generates the feeling of ‘Humpty Dumpty being put back together’! However, traditionally, there are many branches of what is formally thought of as yoga, ONE OF WHICH IS ‘HATHA’. ‘Hatha’ is another Sanskrit word. ‘Ha’ means ‘sun’ while ‘tha’ means ‘moon’. Hatha is *one* of several branches of yoga and refers to the path of utilizing *physical exercises* and *postures* (asanas) to accelerate growth on all levels: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, through maximizing potential. Thus all the various forms of yoga offered at Williamstown Yoga Centre are all different types of hatha yoga because they are all based on physical techniques.

While people may come to a hatha yoga class for all kinds of practical reasons such as reducing stress, developing flexibility or strength, along with stamina and body tone, and the exercises do, indeed, facilitate this, what hatha is ultimately aiming at is the union (yoga) of the polarities that are part of every individual. The yogic practices, which down through the ages, have been based on intense inner exploration, reveal a person at an energetic level to be much like a battery and hence operating on currents: having a main negative current (symbolized by the moon) and a main positive current (symbolized by the sun) and that these need to be constantly brought back into balance. The hatha techniques seek to do this as much as they seek to reestablish a commonly obscured relationship between the inner self and the outer self, ie body/spirit, or personality/soul. But part of their capacity to do this, and not just work simply at a physical level, depends on a *deeper understanding* of *how* and *why* they work and the inner constitution of the body. Thus the focus and understanding that each student brings to his or her practice determines the depth and effectiveness of what is generated. “Yoga is 50% physical, 50% mental”.

It is not realistically possible for the teachers at our Yoga Centre to be able to deliver the depth of understanding required in a once weekly class. However there are countless wonderful books that illuminate the yogic path in all kinds of ways. For that reason, we are going to be ‘profiling’ one of these books in each newsletter. If you are able to take the time to read some of these books (most of which

could be obtained at our local *Back to Basics* bookshop in Nelson Place, Williamstown), it's highly likely that your practice will become far more inspired and dimensionalised, as it becomes amplified with deeper meaning.

It is important to bear in mind, that what you can absorb in terms of information and understanding, is very much determined by the state of your physical body, because it acts as your 'lens of perception'. It is part of the course that a person who is first starting out on the path of yoga, and whose body is toxic and tense and permanently in high rev, will easily dismiss or ridicule information to which six months of hatha practice would later make her/him receptive. It is part of a yogic framework, then, to treat everything as alluding to some aspect of truth, even if it is currently obscure, and to understand that each person, and what they believe and say, reflects some element, no matter how infinitesimal, of a larger truth. As we go along, we each collect some parts of the jigsaw and gradually assemble them into a coherent picture. It is important, therefore, when you are holding a piece that you don't yet recognize and can't yet place, that you don't throw it away but position it nearby within eyesight range to be put into place once you have enough other bits to contextualize it.

Autobiography Of A Yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda

Yogananda lived from 1893 to 1952. His story is a good place to begin because his journey reflects the classic almost stylized and even stereotyped image that the West typically has of the East, and helps to plug us in to the heritage that has come from India. While the mystical and amazing experiences Yogananda reports can sound implausible in today's age which is dominated by technology and logic and places a high premium on all that is tangible via our five physical senses, truth and sincerity with which he writes have a calibration that can be distinctly perceptible.

In this entertaining autobiography, Yogananda describes his early encounters with numerous saints and sages during his youth while he was seeking an illumined teacher, his ten years of training in a hermitage with a revered yoga master, and the thirty years that he lived and taught in America, becoming influential on a global level. The transposition of his insights and experiences into a totally alien Western culture is edifying as its account helps to bring into clearer focus those subtle laws and scientific bases behind events that occur around him which appear miraculous, when this understanding is otherwise absent. Yogananda's life story demonstrates yogic principles in action in a powerful and inspiring way and signals to people their possibilities and yoga/hatha techniques as a means of awakening to them!

While there is a need for the way forward to present itself in new guises ever appropriate to changing times and places, it is equally important to look back on, and stay in touch with, the roots out of which current understandings have germinated and to contextualize one's knowledge. To the questions "Where can yoga take me? What are my possibilities?" Yogananda's narrative delivers some compelling options.

ॐ *Meditation Practice on Stealing* ॐ

*Yoga is the ability to experience what
we have not experienced up to now
- Swami Satyananda*

Each newsletter will contain a short meditation practice for you to experiment with at home. Our first meditation focuses on one of the *yamas* – *asteya* (not stealing). *Steya* means 'to steal'. *Asteya* is the opposite – to take nothing that does not belong to us. This practice has been chosen because yoga is not just about becoming strong and flexible in body and mind, it also involves us leading an ethical life. See if you can find five minutes in your day, to sit and contemplate the following...

Whether we take someone else's possession by force, deception, secretly or by borrowing and not giving back, the karma created by the action will result in some form of suffering for us in the future.

It may seem that some objects are too insignificant or will not be missed but if we are unable to cultivate the correct attitude in relation to small things then the chances are we will not be able to act correctly with regard to bigger, more significant objects.

Unfortunately, the actions of some business people these days are not at all helpful in setting an example. Getting away with what you can is sadly a widely accepted practice. By acting honestly we can influence family, friends and work colleagues and be of great benefit to them as well as ourselves.

Contemplate that material wealth is not a real source of happiness, especially when obtained by stealing. Material objects are impermanent and will be of no use when we die.

Recall an incident when you may have stolen something of value and the possible motivations of greed or desire.

Develop a sense of regret for causing inconvenience to someone else and creating the causes for your own future suffering.

Resolve to avoid stealing when the opportunity presents itself again and to practice generosity towards others.

When meditating on the idea of 'not stealing', it is extremely important to avoid feelings of guilt regarding past actions. Guilt is destructive and plays no part in our practice. Developing what can be called intelligent regret can be beneficial. We need to accept that we have faults and are not perfect. By contemplating past actions and the associated motivations, we can intelligently admit that we were not so skilful, but given a similar situation in the future we now have the insight to act differently.

To stop negative actions is beneficial, but to take the further step of avoiding committing them in the future is more so. To then take up the opposite, positive actions, is extremely skilful and beneficial, resulting in not only less suffering in the future but also creating the causes for great happiness.

Good luck...I welcome any feedback in relation to how your practice manifests...Fiona.

ॐ Student Questions Column ॐ

When you come to practise yoga in a Yoga Centre, you may have found that there is often not time to ask your teacher an in-depth, perhaps very personal question related to yoga. As a result, we recently placed a box in Williamstown Yoga Centre for you to place any questions you have about the practice of yoga. If you would like your yoga question answered in person – via e-mail or phone call – you can specify this. Alternatively, your question(s) will be included in our regular 'Student Questions' column of this newsletter.

If your question is related to a specialised yogic field, we will endeavour to have your question answered by a teacher at our Centre who specialises in that field.

We look forward to your questions...

ॐ Yoga Mats for Sale ॐ

Williamstown Yoga Centre has 12 second-hand purple yoga mats for sale - \$5 per mat. For more information, phone Susanne on 9397 3015.

*May peace be with you always
Om shanti, shanti, shantih...*