



Yoga Off The Mat

by Andrea Blair Cirignano

Yoga is, by definition, 'a union.' When a student leaves his or her first yoga class, he or she might already feel a little more connected between mind and body. Continuing to practice will lead to more connections, in other areas of life, according to several yoga students in the Pacific Northwest.

"I think people in our area embrace the yoga mind-set in all areas of their lives, not just on the mat," says Jennifer Mycon, former front desk employee of Bala Yoga in Kirkland. Ali Valdez, founder and owner of Sat-tva Yoga Online, also said she notices

this progression in many students.

"Yoga tends to be the horse pulling the cart," she says, explaining that people tend to initially gravitate toward yoga because of fitness or diet goals.

Even the most novice yogis quickly realize their body's endless connections. For example, hand and wrist stretches can release a tense neck, so as a practice progresses, yogis start to treat their bodies as one whole, rather than a collection of separate parts and it only grows from there.

"Over time, people begin to reflect on other choices in their life [and] that is when the flower of yoga truly

begins to blossom," says Valdez.

A developing yoga practice can take on many forms. Asana, the physical portion of yoga, is only one of the eight limbs of yoga. A student might find interest in any of the seven other limbs or in Ayurveda, the science of nutrition and life that compliments yoga. Others simply start to see the bliss and connection between all living things. For the average person, what does this mean for practical, everyday life?

"Yoga can clean out the body and heal. We know this. But what if what we consumed enabled the yoga to go beyond maintenance and repair?" asks Valdez. "We can look younger, have unlimited energy, think clearly, and regulate our hormone levels that determine our metabolism, sleep needs, cravings, temperature and emotions."

In the end, each yoga practice is as individual as each student and the lengths a yogi can take his or her practice are limitless.

Writer Andrea Blair Cirignano is a local yoga instructor with a journalism background. She believes yoga is for everyone and that each member of the community could benefit from the practice in some way, shape or form. Her articles highlight the unique pairing of this ancient practice with a modern Pacific Northwest lifestyle. Find out more about Andrea at yogatone.net.

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