

Town introduces chair yoga for seniors

When you hear the word, yoga, does it conjure up thoughts of slim bodies bending and twisting into pretzel-like positions, with the sound of a waterfall trickling in the background, and the scent of incense wafting in the air?

Yoga is a misunderstood practice, viewed by many as a series of awkward stretching exercises designed to release us from our day-to-day stressors.

In the earliest form of yoga, which can be traced back 5,000 years, the focus was on contemplation and meditation. Very little attention was paid to the body. Yoga revolved around the idea of reuniting the visible material world with the invisible spiritual dimension. The practice involved long rituals of mind focus as a means to enhance human ability and to heighten the senses. Although this continues to be the root, the physical aspect was added to keep the body strong enough to be able to engage in long periods of meditation and remains a key component of modern day yoga.

Over the last decade, yoga has grown tremendously in popularity. Today, it is estimated that over 30 million people worldwide are practising. As a society, our attitudes towards our health, spirituality, way of life, and our purpose continue to evolve, as people search for answers and understanding. Yoga is much more than an exercise program. It is holistic in nature, uniting the body, mind, and spirit (or body, brain, breath). Yoga

combines conscious breathing (pranayama), and postures (asana) with calming meditation, awakening the external and internal self while at the same time creating an overall feeling of calmness.

The movement into the position is equally as important as achieving the posture itself. The mind is challenged to concentrate on each movement of the body, and then the body is challenged to hold each of the postures, which are usually done in a repetitive pattern. It is a non-competitive individual practice, guided by a trained instructor.

"Although most commonly practised on a mat, chair-based yoga can be equally beneficial" according to Margaret Taylor, Active Living Co-ordinator for the Town of Halton Hills. "Both physically and psychologically, practising in a seated position is a safe place to start. Many people are hesitant to try yoga because they have difficulty getting onto a floor mat, or feel uncomfortable once down there. The seated postures are effective in building both physical and emotional strength while at the same time increasing circulation and flexibility."

Starting this fall, Chair Yoga is available at the Seniors Centre in Acton on Tuesdays, 1-2 p.m., and at the Seniors Centre in Georgetown on Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 120 pm, starting the week of Sept. 20th.

For info: Taylor, 905-873-2601 ext. 2360 or email MargaretT@haltonhills.ca



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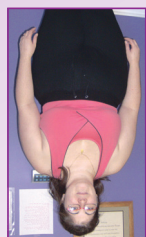
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