

Bikram Yoga Giving Students Relaxation

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Yoga student Lisa Jover first found the idea of Bikram yoga ridiculous. She could not fathom why people would do yoga in a 105 degree Fahrenheit room.

"When my girlfriends pressed on [me] trying, I told them that my body does not need such a heavy [load]," Jover reflected to the days before her love for this type of exercising evolved.

"When I finally gave in," Jover remembered, "I recognized immediately after the first class that the demanding series of 26 postures (asanas) works the entire body. The heat and the stretching of muscles paired with incredible concentration results in cleansing and the refreshing of one's self."

PCC offers Bikram Yoga through the Extended Learning Program at an affordable price through the La Cañada Bikram Yoga Center.

Several different yoga styles are available. They all meet different needs. Experts say you can find restorative, gentle yoga that relaxes and renews, as well as others like Lyengar Yoga that uses props. Some Vinyasa styles, like Ashtanga and Power Yoga flow from one pose to the next.

"Of course I had to choose the hardest one of all yoga styles," said Rose Malmberg, owner and head instructor of Bikram La Cañada.

Bikram Yoga became the most recent trend among western yogis according to popular wellness and



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Bikram Yoga is experienced in extreme heat and features multiple postures.

lifestyle magazines. Bikram Choudhury, former weightlifter is the founder of the Yoga College of India.

Choudhury started his westernized yoga teachings in Los Angeles, 30 years ago. Now, enthusiasts can find Bikram Yoga almost everywhere, with 350 studios worldwide.

Popular celebrity followers include Gwyneth Paltrow, Cameron Diaz, Madonna, Meg Ryan and many more.

During the 90-minute uniquely therapeutic yoga sessions, participants have to endure 26 postures and two breathing exercises. The series of exercises requires concentration, focus and determination, but the results are rewarding.

"Bikram Yoga's 26 posture exercises systematically move fresh, oxygenated blood to 100 percent of

your body, to each organ and fiber, restoring all systems to healthy working order, just as nature intended. Proper weight, muscle tone, vibrant good health, and a sense of well-being will automatically follow," promises Choudhury in his book.

"I started to lose my hair due to the amount of stress I was under, when I had a full-time job and was a full-time student, six years ago," said Ken Tilley, a yoga instructor.

Now students see a Tilley with a relaxed smile, toned body and dark brown, slightly curly hair when he leads the hour and a half sessions on Thursday afternoons.

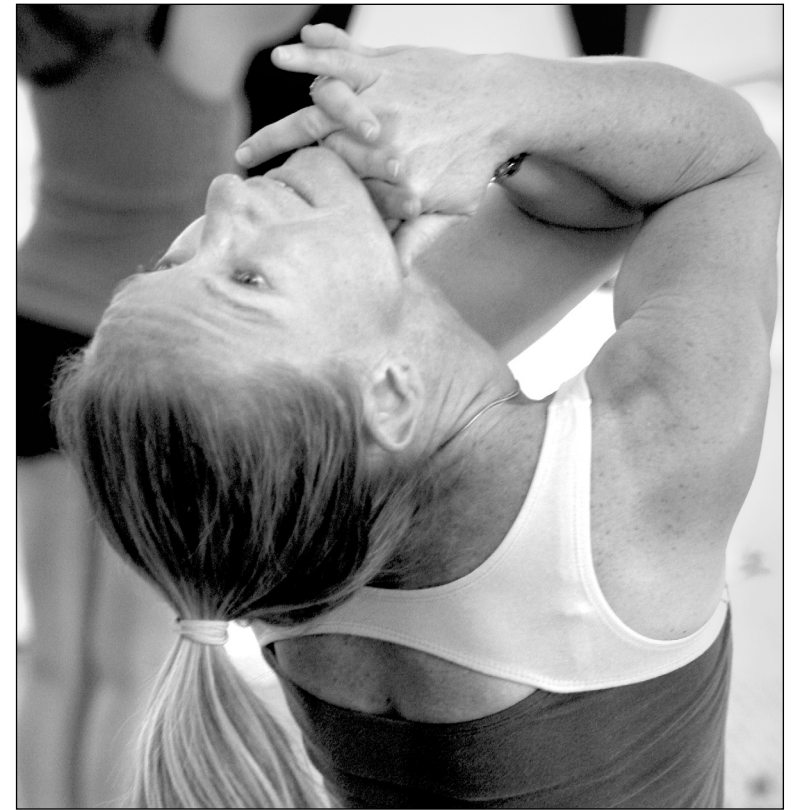
"Yoga will help achieve balance in your life," Tilley said.

There are numerous different instructors teaching at Bikram La Cañada. They are all leading the same 26 asanas, but they have slightly different ways of approaching them.

"My favorite is Tilley," said Jover, "because he pushes everybody to their limits and creates a great energy in the room."

According to co-workers, Andrea Hatton, one of the many yoga teachers, is a well loved, warm-hearted, always smiling instructor. She makes everyone feel at ease. Students always crowd the hot room when she is leading a session. Hatton always explains tirelessly to new yogis why they should not drink water before the Eagle Pose or how swiping one's body with the towel between exercises makes it feel hotter.

"The class is a 26 asana series



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A yogi performs a "backward bend" posture as a warm-up exercise, before engaging in more challenging Bikram Yoga exercises.

designed to scientifically warm and stretch muscles, ligaments and tendons, in the order in which they should be stretched," Hatton repeated Bikram's words when a potential student made an inquiry at the yoga studio last week.

"It is practiced in a heated room, usually up to 105 degrees Fahrenheit. The heated room allows your

muscles to warm up quickly and improve circulation, help eliminate toxins, and significantly reduce the risk of injury during deep muscle stretching," said Hatton.

For more information visit PCC's Extended Learning site at www.pcclearn.org or Bikram La Cañada at www.bikramlacanada.com.

