

It Took 20 Years, But I Finally Learned to Like Yoga

I took a trip never expecting to change my mind about something I had hated for so long. But I finally discovered what was holding me back.

By **Judy Koutsky** | August 06, 2018



Photo: Judy Koutsky

I've been taking yoga classes-and hating it-since my early 20s. I've hated everything about it: I'm not flexible. I can't do the poses correctly. The instructors always seem to find me in class (and adjust my every move). And, to be perfectly honest, the room always smelled like feet.

But I knew, as a Type A New Yorker, that yoga would be good for my mental and physical well-being, so I kept trying and failing to like it. In addition to classes all over the city, I tried yoga classes when traveling (Costa Rica, Tanzania, Italy) to no avail. But I always tell my kids to keep trying things that they think they don't like and one day they may actually like it. This is usually in reference to Brussels

sprouts. So on a recent solo trip to the [Four Seasons Resort Lanai](#) in Hawaii, I was up at 4 a.m. (thanks, [jet lag](#)) and thought, why not try sunrise yoga-and it changed my life. Here's what **finally** made the difference.

Gaining the Confidence I Needed

Everyone always told me things would change when I found the right yoga instructor. But how many teachers do you try before you think: The problem isn't them, it's me? (After all, I'd been in dozens and dozens of classes) Then I found Will Donnelly. I told him right off the bat that I hated yoga, but I was willing to give it another try. He thanked me for trying it again and told me to let him know if anything felt uncomfortable. Then he led me through an amazing hour of stretching that warmed up my body and calmed my mind.

I found out later that Will is a nationally recognized yoga teacher with more than 17 years of experience teaching meditation and wellness. His yoga practice and teachings emphasize a variety of styles, including Hatha yoga, [Vinyasa](#), restorative yoga, [mindfulness meditation](#), and the healing art of White Tantra Yoga or yoga for the spirit. (BTW, [Headspace just launched a meditation series dedicated to mindful eating](#).)

He started his career teaching yoga to the staff at Cedars-Sinai Cancer Center and the City of Hope Cancer Center-and I think to teach in that kind of setting, in which terminally-ill people are looking to find peace, you're into yoga for its meditative and restorative properties and not just to do a perfect tree pose.

What I think I liked about Will is that he was the first yoga teacher who didn't correct me. I know I'm bad at yoga (my downward dog is a bit of a disgrace). But if I like it, and I'm feeling peaceful doing it, isn't that what matters? Will walked me through the basic moves and let me do them in a way that felt most comfortable to me. By not being constantly corrected, I felt confident enough to keep going. Other instructors were always adjusting my hips, legs, or hands, or telling me to soften my face (thank you very much). It was a subtle judgement, but judgement nonetheless-and I didn't need more of that in my life. Will didn't judge; he just spoke in a beautiful, calm voice as he led the class through a series of moves. I took that sunrise yoga every morning I was in Lanai. Even after the jet lag passed, I set the alarm because it felt great to start the day that way.

Continuing to Expand My Horizons

From my surprising experience with yoga came even more evolution during my trip. I was at a turning point in my life, and I was trying to incorporate more mindfulness in my days. So after morning yoga, I took a meditation class. Another day, I took [Tai Chi](#). Then I went horseback riding. In between, I took long walks around the resort. Then, I decided to take my new love for yoga up a notch and try [antigravity yoga \(or aerial yoga\)](#), in which I practiced in a silk hammock

hanging from the ceiling. I actually felt pretty flexible and had some nice, deep stretches. Like traditional yoga, the main takeaway was a more Zen mindset; I quite literally felt the stress oozing out of my pores.

The next day I took a hike along Kapiha'a Trail, also known as the Fisherman's Trail, which hugs the southern coast of Lanai and offers gorgeous views. The 90-minute hike offers a glimpse into ancient Hawaiian life with signage along the way explaining ancestors' traditions. I walked alongside one of the largest blow holes on Lanai-with water shooting high above-before ending the hike at the ruins of 600-year-old Kapiha'a Village. I didn't listen to music, I just stayed in the moment, listening to the sound of the waves and taking in the stunning scenery. (Related: [I Hiked the Koko Crater Trail In Hawaii During My Layover and It Was Life-Changing](#))

Another day I hiked up to the summit of Pu'u Pehe, also known as Sweetheart Rock. I didn't exactly plan for this trip to be a [wellness vacation](#) or [yoga retreat](#), but that's exactly how it was shaping up. I wasn't upset about that at all.

The View Didn't Hurt

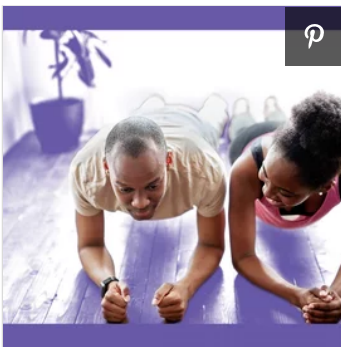
My now routine sunrise yoga took place on a beautiful piece of green overlooking Hulopoe Bay. I started to find more trust in myself with each morning and let go of the negative feelings I had for years-that yoga was beyond my grasp. I was able to tap into my inner strength and find my happy place. No wonder I kept coming back for more.

On the last day, Will taught the group [a kind of breathwork](#) called "breath of fire" from the Kundalini practice. He explained that I can practice this [breathing technique when I'm stressed](#) or tired. Now that I'm back home in New York, that's exactly what I do. I take a few minutes to practice it and to think of Will and my slice of green heaven in Lanai. My motivation for doing yoga hasn't wavered either. I'm still practicing-and not hating it.

Most people who see me do yoga would probably not consider me a yogi, but I do. Why? Because I no longer hate it. In fact, I enjoy and look forward to the stretching, the breathing, the clearing of my mind. It turns out finding my inner yogi was well worth the 20-year wait.

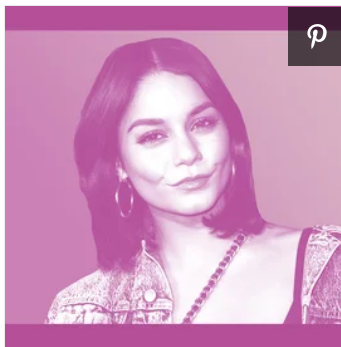
By Judy Koutsky

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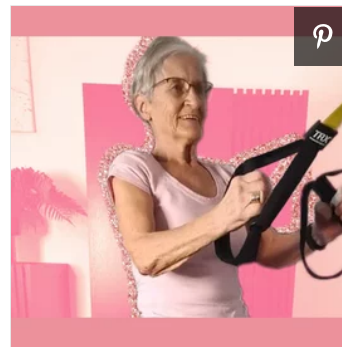
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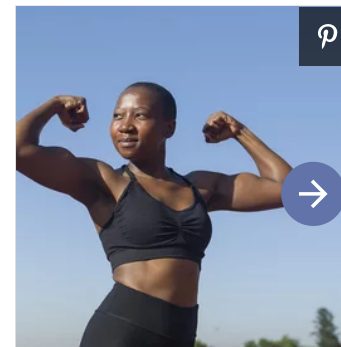
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Anonymous

January 13, 2019

Voluptatem asperiores culpa. ❤️ Ever heard of the Keto diet? I started using the advice at WWW.KETOCOOKIEBOOK.ORG and lost 25 pounds of fat in a month! I've never lost weight so fast!! The Keto Diet really is amazing because it forces the body to always burn fat for energy — so you lose the fat and keep it off. If you want to lose some weight, I highly recommend using that website :) Check it out! Best of luck to you! ❤️

Anonymous

August 11, 2018

I love this great, easy to follow, fat burning at home yoga program that is affordable. <http://bit.ly/2MH2dOd>

Anonymous

August 11, 2018

I started seeking for help when I was desperate to see the good in my life because I was blinded by deception, expecting loyalty from a man who can't be honest with himself. For 2 years' happiness seems overrated while depression and anxiety took over my life. One of the hardest thing I did was not not moving on because I trust my marriage will work again someday. During the search to regain my sight and improve my marriage, I came across this email dr.wakinalovetemple@gmail.com owned by Dr.Wakina love spell master. Immediately after a successful love spell was cast, my life was given a meaning, my husband changed his attitudes and started focusing on me and the family. He became my everything. We became truthful to ourselves. I appreciate the time and effort he (Dr. Wakina) put into giving our lives a meaning.

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