

# Spinning toward success

By KYLE GORDON

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Combine downward dog and cobra pose with a high-intensity cardio workout on a stationary bike and you have the recipe for Spynnga.

The 60-minute workout that harmonizes the traditions of yoga and the art of cycling is the inspiration behind Toronto's Spynnga studio, which opened last month.

Brought together by a shared affinity for the monkey bars at Thornhill's Westminster Public School in Grade 6, Sari Nisker and Casey Schacter, both 32, have been best friends ever since.

In 1997, Schacter moved to Los Angeles to pursue an acting career. To counter the stress of Hollywood, Schacter became a regular at RPM studio, where she took six to seven cycling classes a week.

"L.A. is a crazy city. When I moved there, I only knew one person and cycling really helped me get through some stressful situations," she said.

In 2000, Nisker moved to New York to attend a merchandising program at the Fashion Institute of Technology. She began her career in marketing at L'Oreal, but resigned from the corporate world to pursue her true passion for fitness and teaching yoga.

A few years later, Nisker convinced Schacter to leave Los Angeles and join her in New York.

"She said she would try it for three months, and she ended up staying for over two years," Nisker said.

Both in New York and passionate about fitness, the girls encouraged each other to participate in their respective exercises of choice.

"She would beg me all the time to teach me and I'd say, 'But Sari, I can't do yoga.' Finally, she got me on the mat, and I really enjoyed her teaching, methods and began to see the benefits," Schacter said.

"People don't realize that yoga and cycling have a lot of similarities and how they can balance each other out. So, that's when we came up with the idea of Spynnga," she added.

"Both cycling and yoga are journeys. When you're practising yoga, you get into a flow and you're in your own zone and that's the same for cycling."

They are about being in the present, being aware and being with your breath - your life force," Nisker said.

With the goal of sharing Spynnga with the public, the girls decided to leave New York in 2005 and return to Toronto to focus on their dream of opening a private cycling and yoga studio, and after years of hard work, they are starting to enjoy the studio's acclaim.

Still, Nisker and Schacter remain humble. They feel honoured, privileged and lucky for the support they have received from friends and family.

"Sari and I have been so fortunate. Our family and friends, who we've grown up with, have really come through for us in ways we didn't imagine," Schacter said.

"Growing up Jewish, coming together is part of the culture. It's the spirit part of Judaism that really came through for us during this process," she added.

When it came to designing the Spynnga studio, located at 1415 Bathurst St., Nisker and Schacter drew inspiration from their years in New York and Los Angeles, respectively.

"We wanted to create a beautiful environment that is unpretentious and calming. We want you to walk in, leave your world and relax," Nisker said.

Designed to resemble a contemporary art gallery, the white walls serve as a blank canvas to showcase the art of Patrick Kerney, this

month's featured artist.

A black chandelier in the cycling room and a white chandelier in the yoga room establish the yin and yang of the space.

Many of the appointments in the studio are round, like the studio's logo, to symbolize the cyclical nature of life, Schacter said.

Except for the co-ed change room, the Spynnga studio intentionally does not have mirrors.

"We want people to turn inward. It's not about the external and the material. And by not having the option of mirrors, it allows people the time to just be with themselves," Nisker said.

Debbie Drutz, 31, has been spinning for the last six years, both as a student and as certified spinning instructor. She met Nisker and Schacter more than 15 years ago when they were campers at Camp Northland-B'nai Brith.

After bumping into the girls a year ago, Drutz was encouraged to join the Spynnga family. She teaches cycling to riders of all levels twice a week at the studio.

"What Sari and Casey are doing is amazing," Drutz said. "Casey is an avid spinner... she's an animal on the bike - it's phenomenal. And Sari is so passionate about people and promoting harmony through yoga. They are an incredible match and are truly

going after their dream," she added.

Some of the workshops that will soon be available at their studio include beginner, kids and prenatal yoga, boomer boot camp and learn a language on a bike.

One of the more intense workshops offered at the studio is smoke-free Spynnga. The six-week program is designed to help people quit smoking by integrating Spynnga, nutritional counselling and message therapy.

With the launch of Spynnga complete, these Toronto entrepreneurs

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are focused on sharing this new culture with as many people as possible.

"You have to dream big if you're going into business," Schacter said.

For more information about Spynnga, please visit [www.spynnga.com](http://www.spynnga.com).

Sari Nisker and Casey Schacter, friends since they were 12 (above), hang out in the lounge (below), and demonstrate cycling and yoga in tandem in the cycling studio.

[Kyle Gordon photos]

