WELL-BEING

YOGA 2.0

Striking a pose takes on new life thanks to innovative celebrity-approved practices

Yoga is thought to have been around for 5,000 years, but it's far from old-fashioned, especially given the new crop of spinoff classes on the market. These happening hybrids incorporate principles of yoga (postures, breathing and the mind-body connection) with workouts from dance class to spin.

Shaking up your downward dog and sun salutations may mean you will see results on and off the mat, say proponents. "[Benefits] range from saving time for the student who desires a workout and a yoga practice [in one], to calming the mind and increasing focus, and strengthening the body and mind to push through and overcome obstacles in everyday life," says Michael DeCorte, founder of Jock Yoga.

Need further motivation to throw a class into your weekly workout mix? "Every [exercise] complements the other. The more you mix up your workouts, the better results you're going to have," says Jennifer Cohen, author of *Strong Is the New Skinny.* – CARLI WHITWELL

PICK YOUR POSE

What's in a name? For yoga, a lot! There are dozens of styles, which means before you find serenity, you'll have to decide which one works best for you. Most yoga practices (including many of these new hybrid classes) fall under the umbrella of Hatha yoga. Consider it the tree trunk of the yoga family and the variations, the branches, says Debbie Fung, co-founder of Yoga Tree. With 500 poses and flows from gentle to vigorous, there are a lot of options!

Debbie always asks new students whether they prefer heated or unheated classes. Trendy hot yoga (variations include Bikram yoga or Moksha yoga) is best for the athletic set. "When your body heats up, your heart pumps the blood more… When that happens, you're actually exercising your heart," says Debbie's co-founder, Jason Lee. The heat also helps with flexibility.

Another favourite is Ashtanga yoga, which uses a set sequence of postures moving in a rapid sequence, while Yin or Anusara yoga offer slower paced practices and Kundalini yoga is more meditative.

FOR THE DANCING QUEEN …

If the thought of a quiet yoga practice has you wanting to cut right out of the room, these dance class variations will be music to your ears.

As with most hybrid classes, there are a lot of options to choose from, such as hip-hop yoga set to rap songs and programs such as Barreworks, which incorporates yoga, ballet and Pilates into one sweat fest. (Typically, Hatha yoga is used in these types of classes; for a quick tutorial on the different types of yoga, see *Pick Your Pose.*)

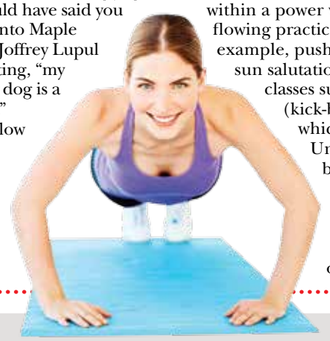
The energizing combination is a great full-body workout, says Jason Lu, co-founder of Yoga Tree.

"When combining yoga with dance, every muscle in your body is working. The dance moves help increase cardio, which leads to more calories burned, as well as an increase in the release of endorphins, which in turn helps improve one's mood."

FOR THE SPORTS FAN …

Many NHL players incorporate yoga into cross-training to prevent injuries and to stretch and strengthen muscles. "If you were to tell me four years ago I would be doing yoga and Pilates, I would have said you were crazy," Toronto Maple Leafs left-winger Joffrey Lupul (left) said, admitting, "my downward-facing dog is a work in progress."

Joffrey and fellow fitness fans and athletes may want to give Jock Yoga a try. This fast-paced practice, which has been described as "power yoga on steroids" builds strength and endurance and works areas often overlooked by athletes (such as flexibility and smaller, supporting muscles). It combines cross-training within a power vinyasa (fast, flowing practice) – for example, push-ups within sun salutations. Similar classes such as Koga (kick-boxing yoga, which is in the United States, but may make its way to Canada) offers another energetic option.



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FOR THE BRAINY BUNCH …

Why say "ohm" when you can giggle it? Laughter yoga, which is guided by the principle that laughter (real or forced) can relieve stress, combines gentle stretching, deep-breathing exercises and hearty chuckles for a workout that's geared to the brain. Karaoke yoga is another out-there option, one that allows you to sing while you stretch.

For those looking for a traditional outlet for anxiety, restorative yoga maybe the prescription. In this practice, six poses are held for five- to 10-minute stretches, says Jason, often using props such as pillows or blankets.

Sweet dreams!

FOR THE SECRET CIRQUE DU SOLEIL STAR …

Indulge your inner trapeze artist with the topsy-turvy practice of aerial or anti-gravity yoga. It's passed the Goop test – Gwyneth Paltrow featured it on her lifestyle blog in 2013 – but you don't need to be a health goddess like Gwyn to join in.

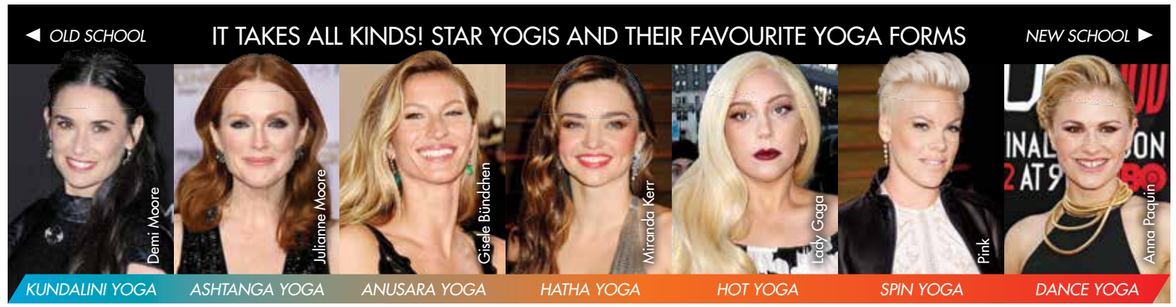
This easy-on-the-joints workout – in which yoga poses are practised in the air using the support of hammocks made of silk – is ideal for beginners and experts alike. "The aerial silks [help you] to get deeper into certain traditional yoga postures which may not be accessible to students in a regular floor yoga class," says Ariel Whittaker-Brown, an instructor at Toronto's Fly Studio, noting the silks can also help make poses easier for beginners. Other benefits of this upside-down approach include lengthening of the spine and increased circulation thanks to the inverted poses.

Acrobatic yoga also offers an up-in-the-air experience. Instead of using swings, practitioners rely on partners. "We use the other person's weight and energy to actually be the supporting props and to help you get into the pose," says Yoga Tree's Debbie, who recommends this workout for couples. "There's a lot of trust and communication involved."

FOR THE PEDAL PUSHER …

The A-list has hopped on to this spin-and-yoga combo. Julia Roberts is said to be a fan and Jennifer Aniston got fit for *We're the Millers* with Mandy Ingber's Yogalosophy, a combination of spinning, yoga and strength training.

At Toronto-based Spynga, classes consist of a 30-minute spin – a cardio workout that can burn up to 500 calories – followed by 30 minutes of yoga to stretch and strengthen muscles (and the mind). It's a perfect match, says co-founder Sari Nisker-Eox. "Yoga enhances muscle flexibility and range of motion in addition to carving a long lean body. The breath work in yoga is said to enhance your lung capacity, which is a wonderful benefit to cycling." H



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ISTOCK (3); KGC-11/STARMAXINC/IMAGECOLLECT; ISTOCK; PAUL FENTON/IMAGECOLLECT; HOLLYWOODNEWSWIRE/IMAGECOLLECT; KGC-146/STARMAXINC/IMAGECOLLECT; BYRON PURVIS/ADMEDIA/IMAGECOLLECT; SONIA MOSKOWITZ/IMAGECOLLECT; HOLLYWOODNEWSWIRE/IMAGECOLLECT; RE/WESTCOM/STARMAXINC/IMAGECOLLECT; JAMES MCCAULEY/FEATUREFLASH/IMAGECOLLECT; HOLLYWOODNEWSWIRE/IMAGECOLLECT; ISTOCK; MJT/IMAGECOLLECT; ISTOCK; D LONG/IMAGECOLLECT; ISTOCK; ISTOCK