



Students demonstrate the Dancer Pose in a hot yoga class at the Princeton Center for Yoga & Health.

Your yoga

Find an array of studios and encouraging teachers in New Jersey

THERE ARE MANY MISCONCEPTIONS about yoga: you have to be flexible, you have to be trendy, you have to be spiritual, etc. The truth is there are more than 20 different styles of yoga, and New Jersey has a wonderful array of studios and even more encouraging teachers to guide novices and seasoned students along their way.

"Yoga is 'too something' for everyone," says Jillian Pransky, director of restorative training for YogaWorks, who also leads a weekly class Monday mornings at Van Vleck House & Gardens in Montclair. "People need to know their personality type. Yoga is worth trying several times."

At the Princeton Center for Yoga &

Health, people can try different yoga styles on for size. "Yoga is a way for people to get to know themselves. It works on many different levels," says Deborah Metzger, the center's director and founder. She says for some people it's the day of the week that works for them, for others it is the style. "I think of flavors of ice cream — chocolate, vanilla or swirl."

Benefits of yoga

Yoga is not only a way to bring balance to your life, but also a way to complement your current workout. Pransky has always been an athlete and even ran a marathon. She also taught aerobics and personal training. On top of all her physical endeavors, she had a high-stress job she loved working as a marketing manager for a publishing company when she saw a sign for yoga at a local studio. For a



Cheryl Delaney demonstrates the Villar Scorpion Pose.

Finding a studio

- Check how long the studio has been in business.
- Sample a studio with free classes.
- Find out the training level of the teachers and the level of experience the teachers at the studio have as a whole.
- Make sure that teachers are willing to work with the needs of their students.
- Assess your comfort level at the studio. Can you go to the class dressed casually or show up dressed as you are?
- Is the studio conveniently located?
- Inquire if the studio offers workshops. If so, it shows the studio has the interests of its students at heart.
- Find out if the studio has a teacher training program. This indicates the studio's commitment to continuing education.

instructor makes a point to bring novices along during the class. All-level classes can be a difficult place to start because the terminology used during class may be unfamiliar to newbies.

Do not start with advanced practice even if you exercise on a daily basis. Take a beginner class for a solid foundation. Without good instruction, yoga can injure you. Pransky says spending time learning the basics will ensure longevity in your yoga practice.

Also be sure to let the teacher know why you are taking the class when you arrive and communicate what needs you may have. If you had a hip replacement or an injury, the instructor should know because certain poses will be different for you. Also, a pose may feel uncomfortable at first but may eventually become your favorite.

In addition to trying different classes and styles, it is also important to try different teachers. Some may have a new enthusiasm for yoga while others may bring experience to the class. "Give a class three tries, then move to another teacher," Pransky says.

A student should feel that their needs are being met by the teacher. If a teacher doesn't respond, it may be best to try another teacher. The program that Pransky started at Van Vleck House & Gardens is special because Pransky works with each student to make sure everyone is having their personal interests attended to. It is not a competitive atmosphere but a place for people to grow. Some people also enjoy taking walks around the grounds before or after the class to connect with nature.

For more information on Deborah Metzger and the Princeton Center for Yoga & Health and its classes, workshops and teachers, visit www.princeton-yoga.com. For more information on Jillian Pransky's classes and workshops, visit www.vanvleck.org for her class and retreat schedule there, or visit www.yogajillian.com. **NJC**

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