

YOGA

Ancient form of Hindu meditation has a multitude of health benefits

By RICHARD MARSH

Special Contributor

Experts know best. Good advice has always been to use the same toothpaste as your dentist, and the same pain reliever as your doctor.

In April, a series of yoga classes were scheduled for the Sokol Center in Dearborn Heights. The response was so great that a larger space had to be secured in Farmington Hills with the sessions alternative between the two sites.

Dr. Kalpana Rajbes, M.D., took that class. She was so delighted with her personal results that she now highly recommends it to everyone.

"It totally changed my life," she said. "People I work with have told me that the way I express life has definitely changed. I now have more energy. I sleep less, but it's a deeper, more restful sleep."

She meditates daily for about 20-25 minutes in the morning and again in the evening. She now is able to work later into the evening without feeling the effects of a long day.

Among the effects of the meditations is it helps people have better concentration and not be troubled as much by everyday irritants in life.

The yoga class, sponsored by the Isha Foundation, will be offered



SACHIN GURU JAGGI VASUDEV

again next week.

A free introductory talk, open to everyone, will be held 2-4 p.m. Sunday at the Finnish cultural center, 30250 Eight Mile Road.

The class will run for seven days starting Wednesday at the center. Hours will be 6-9:15 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The cost is \$200 per person.

Participants are required to attend all seven meetings. Each day builds on what was taught the day before. If someone misses a session, that person is done for that run of classes.

Dr. Rajbes considers taking the class fully worth it.

"Some classes you take, you don't have much after it's over. This class you take with you. I use the techniques every day," Dr. Rajbes said. "You learn the art of effortless living."

The class is taught by Sachin Guru Jaggi Vasudev, who has taught sahaja siddhi yoga all over the world, including in the Middle East.

While some forms of yoga require achieving specific meditation positions, the sahaja siddhi yoga focuses on breathing and posture for proper meditation.

"This is the most effective yoga class I've found," Dr. Rajbes said. "Once you learn it, you have it for your whole life."

Dr. Rajbes now volunteers as an active promoter for the class. When the sages return to India next year to teach a class there, Dr. Rajbes plans to join that trip.

This is one of the least physically stressful forms of yoga, Dr. Rajbes said.

"I got a call from a 78-year-old Dearborn woman. She asked if she was too old to take this class," Dr. Rajbes said. "I told her no, no, no, that you're never too old."

Dr. Rajbes is well versed for that kind of question. Her medical specialty is geriatrics. She is the medical director for Henry Ford Health System-sponsored senior citizen continuing care facilities in Roseville and Harper Woods.

Dr. Rajbes's husband and daughter joined her in the last class.

"My daughter said it was like she was reborn," Dr. Rajbes said.

Five of her daughter's friends are planning to take the next class as are Dr. Rajbes's other children.

Dr. Rajbes's husband saw his blood pressure drop from a dangerously high 170 over 110 to a more healthy 130 over 90 after the yoga class.

Dr. Rajbes has found that this form of yoga helps people not be so reliant on many medicines.

"This yoga can help so many illnesses," Dr. Rajbes said. "With so many technological and scientific advances, many people have become comfortable with the medicines now available.

"Medicines shouldn't always be the first thing we turn to when we have a headache or pain," Dr. Rajbes said. "This, too, can help."

For more information or reservations for the yoga class, call (248) 678-4786.

The foundation also has a website people may visit: www.ishafoundation.org

Check with your doctor before you start yoga

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Considering yoga? In general, that is probably a good move for your health.

"Yoga can be very helpful to your health," said Dr. Clinton Greenstone, M.D. "Some yoga positions can improve your strength. It can increase your muscle tone and your body's efficiency in using oxygen."

Dr. Greenstone is a physician at Oakwood's Alternative and Complementary Medicine Center in Westland.

As with any other change in your physical routine, you should check with your doctor first, Dr. Greenstone emphasized.

"Your physician knows you and would know of any limitations you have to certain types of yoga," said Dr. Greenstone. "You don't want to choose one that could be potentially harmful to you."

"Yoga means in different forms it's important to find the right form for a person," he said. "If you have osteoporosis arthritis in the knees, then you probably do not want a yoga form that would put stress on your knees."

Another example Dr. Greenstone gave was that people with cardiovascular problems should not do power yoga, whereas yangar yoga would be more suitable since it is far less of a strain physically.

Negative effects from a poorly chosen yoga form may include headaches, nausea and joint pain.

Someone else to discuss the right form of yoga is the yoga instructor. That person, too, could guide a person to the best form of yoga.

Used in conjunction with other therapies, yoga has many potential health applications.

"It can decrease pain, it can help you control stress in your back, it can improve your posture," Dr. Greenstone said.