

# Talking *yoga* lifestyle with *Meghan Prior*



Compiled by Jesse Burkhart • Photos by Melissa Melvin-Rodriguez

*Why should you adopt a yoga lifestyle for 2013? We asked Meghan Prior, yoga instructor at Inner Strength Pilates, for the answer. Then we asked her how to get started, and she not only told us – she showed us. Here's to discovering your inner yogi in the year ahead.*

**T-F:** What does it mean to live a “yoga lifestyle?”

**MP:** The yoga lifestyle is the ultimate lifestyle for wellness. It considers the five “yamas” and five “niyamas,” which are basically ethical precepts to live by. Vegetarianism is also very central to a yoga lifestyle because a plant-based diet is nutritious and light. The yoga lifestyle isn't about depriving yourself. You can come to yoga with some very unhealthy lifestyle habits, but if you're sincere and have a good teacher – not just with yoga poses, but in larger ways – then you can gradually embrace lifestyle changes that feel right.

**T-F:** What's the first thing people should know about adopting a yoga lifestyle?

**MP:** There's an element of self-acceptance. You start where you start, and that's the perfect place to begin. Accept where you're at and commit to developing a practice and integrating a lifestyle based on where you're at in the present moment.

**T-F:** What health benefits does yoga offer?

**MP:** The first thing my students tell me is they say they sleep better. People not only find it easier to fall asleep, but they experience a better quality of sleep. The second thing people tell me is they notice their posture has improved. They begin to develop physical awareness and recognize negative postural alignments. The other important thing that yoga teaches – which is key for performing in any sport – is internal focus. For people who develop a decent practice, their minds become steadier. Yoga teaches you to stay centered in the present moment.

**T-F:** What is one misconception people have about the yoga lifestyle?

**MP:** There's a prevalent notion in our culture that you have to be young, fit and beautiful to do yoga, which limits yoga in a negative way. As long as a person is breathing, they can do yoga. There is a type of yoga for everyone –

from a person who is bed-ridden to a person with multiple sclerosis. Yoga serves every population.

**T-F:** What services do you offer as an instructor at Inner Strength Pilates?

**MP:** One of the things I feel is a specialty for me is my 12-week beginner course. Over the years, I've created a “beginner's yoga syllabus” that provides a firm foundation in yoga. In the course, my students practice safely and learn the basic alignments and techniques that are the underpinnings of the practice. Safety is first; I always do an extended and appropriate warm-up. Especially for adults who may have been sitting in an office all day, you've got to be warmed up properly. I've seen students who are very limited in strength, stamina and flexibility develop a whole new body after 12 weeks. If they really commit and are serious about learning, they can make radical changes in their lives.

## • • • • • *Poses* • • • • •



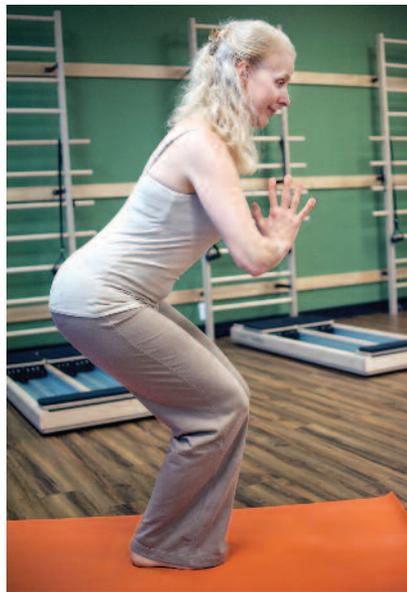
**Sphinx Pose:** Strengthens the back, shoulders and neck. Prevents back ache and stimulates the kidneys.



**Bow Pose Preparation:** Brings strength and elasticity to the back and spine. Stretches the abdominals and thighs. Stimulates the kidneys and adrenals.



**Low Lunge:** Strengthens the hips and the pelvis. Increases flexion and extension.



**Chair Pose:** Strengthens the legs and abdominals. Helps balance the tilt of the pelvis.



**Tree Pose Variation:** Improves balance by teaching how to shift weight and stand on one leg. Releases tension in the back and activates the hip flexors.



**Standing Side Bend:** Creates extension on one side of the body and compression on the other side. Tones and strengthens the abdominals.



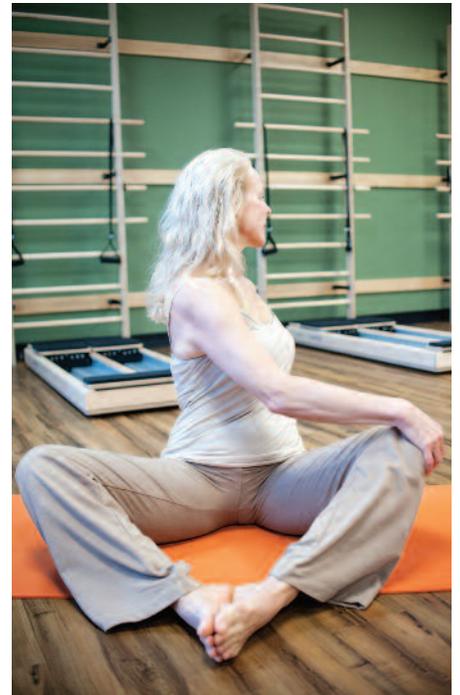
**Head-to-Knee Pose:** Relieves tension in the lower back and elongates the spine. Stimulates and improves circulation through the spine and abdominals. Opens the hips, knees and ankles.



**Bridge Pose:** Strengthens the thighs and the feet. Relieves back discomfort, stretches the shoulders and opens the chest.



**Fish Pose:** Stretches the chest, shoulders and neck. Releases tension in the middle and upper back. Powerfully opens the lungs and improves upper respiratory conditions.



**Seated Spinal Twist:** Strengthens the spine and small muscles that link the vertebrae. Improves mobility and releases tension in the back muscles. Trunk rotation activates abdominals and kidneys.



**Downward-Facing Dog:** Stretches the hamstrings and calf muscles. Creates traction in the spine. Opens the chest and tones the abdominals.

Thank you to Amy Dickson and Inner Strength Pilates for the use of their studio. [innerstrengthpilatesnc.com](http://innerstrengthpilatesnc.com), 336-813-5320