

Lifestyle

Weight concerns can benefit by exploring spiritual side

Dear Joan,
I'm a fat girl who has been interested in yoga for some time now (for the record, my doctor has confirmed that I am in good health).

I don't eat junk food, and I am trying to quit smoking. I have ordered some books, but I wondered if you knew of any classes that address yoga for larger persons in particular or if you had any comments on what special problems a larger person might encounter when beginning yoga.

Thank you,
Kat

Thank you, Kat, for bringing me this question to start off the new year. So many people make a New Year's resolution to lose that extra 10, 20, or 30 or more pounds.

The health clubs are filled to the brim with attendees these first few weeks of the new year: people anxious and desperate to change their physical forms. This large attendance quickly levels off within a few weeks, when old habits reappear and/or disillusioned minds resume their wellworn place of authority.

I encourage you to keep writing back to me over the next few

Yo
Joan

Joan
Budilovsky



months to help you through these difficult times and struggles.

The first step to weight loss is to be happy exactly where you are now. That means to be happy with exactly the weight you are now. It may seem incredulous to you, but this is the only way to a life that is truly healthy.

Instead of directing you toward a quick weight-loss program, I would encourage you to read books that address and cause you to question and explore your emotional and spiritual sides.

Yoga means "union." The study of yoga is a study of uniting the emotional/spiritual/physical self into a balanced state of existence.

You are fully conscious, Kat, of the uneven weight distribution — this means you are unbalanced on the physical side of your being. In order to find balance, you need to

bring more focus into the other sides of your being. More energy needs to be directed to the emotional and spiritual sides to bring the physical side into balance.

Certainly, if you are dangerously overweight, a physician may be able to help you in a more immediate weight-loss program. However, recognize that these types of programs rarely effectively address the deeper imbalances that exist.

It is the karmic pattern that needs to be broken. Karma involves the lessons we have to work through in this lifetime. If we can work through, solve, and/or come to peace with the problems we are faced with this lifetime, we will not have this karma (lesson) to take to the next lifetime. In the next lifetime the lesson will be even more complicated and submerged: like a snowball down the mountain that develops into an avalanche.

Whether or not you believe in multiple lifetimes, working through the karma of this lifetime will make this very lifetime less troubled and more satisfying.

So, now, where do we begin with your dilemma? First of all, watch your self talk. Do not denigrate yourself though the way you refer to yourself. This verbal talk may be within your own mind or shared

outwardly with others.

Even if others use debasing talk toward you, watch the ways you respond and rise to a higher level of contemplation. Wake up in the morning, look into the mirror, into your own eyes and say, "You are beautiful. I am beautiful." Say this slowly and with depth of feeling. You may not believe these words at first, but in time you will. The key is to be consistent. Say this upon rising every single morning. You may also want to say this upon going to sleep at night. This will encourage a restful and peaceful sleep.

There are numerous books on the market that address eating behaviors. In fact, diet and cookbooks are the two best-selling books on the market! I would suggest to avoid these types of books right now.

I would instead recommend Susie Orbach's best-selling book of the 70s, called "Fat is a Feminist Issue." I would also recommend "Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda (who, by the way, was quite a large man).

Organizations like Overeaters Anonymous also help to inspire people to look past the physical for deeper levels of fitness. Whether or not you are overweight, this free organization (list-

ed in phone books) can encourage you to have a deeper understanding and respect for all sizes and shapes of people. Most importantly, it will help you to have a deeper understanding and respect for your own size and shape.

Through studies and reflections from the above-recommended books and possible involvement with an organization like Overeaters Anonymous, you will be on the road to a deeper respect and understanding of the beauty where you are right now. This very moment. Whatever physical size, shape, or health you are in, your body is the temple of your soul. A soul that is magnificent, beautiful, and in perfect health.

Yours in Peace,
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is the author of numerous best-selling books on yoga, massage, and meditation. Her latest book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, 2nd Edition," was released this month to bookstores nationwide. She is a local area resident. She is also on faculty at the College of Dupage, where new classes are beginning this very week. Write to Joan via her "Yoyoga" Web site at www.yoyoga.com

Yoga poses can aid bone density

Dear Joan,

I love yoga. I practice yoga at night with your "Yoga with Joan" audio tape, and I do some sun salutations in the morning.

I just found out today that I have osteoporosis in my lower back and early stages of it in my hips. My doctor is prescribing medicine. Does this mean I have to stop yoga?

Ann Wakefield

Dear Ann

I would recommend for you to follow your doctor's orders. However, you and your doctor should understand that yoga poses can help to build bone density.

Many of the poses are weight-bearing. It is an excellent program for seniors who are losing bone mass through aging. Because you have already been diagnosed with osteoporosis, you must be especially cautious of lifting too much weight to prevent any bone breakage. Your own body weight (which is what yoga works with) may be too much for you to handle now.

Take yoga classes with knowledgeable yoga instructors who can give you the personal attention you need. In large classes, the teacher can not always attend to the spe-

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cial needs of individual students. If you choose to go to larger classes, tell the teacher of your concerns, but still go very slowly into the movements and poses.

Joan

Dear Joan,

I am an acting major at a small private college in downstate Illinois.

Recently, during my dance classes, I have been experiencing muscle cramps in my feet. We have tried loosening my shoes, eating more bananas, and I've even been to the doctor. Nothing seems to help.

My teacher and I believe that the problem is more of a circulation problem than anything else. Are there any stretches or poses that may help increase blood flow/circu-

lation in my feet?

Thanks!
Joe Herman

Dear Joe,

It sounds like acupuncture could be quite helpful for you. It improves circulation. It has been well-respected and utilized in hospitals in China for hundreds of years now. (In some ways our American life is behind the times!)

In this procedure, tiny little needles (that you hardly feel) are placed on your body at strategic locations to open up what is called "chi" or energy. It is amazing. It works.

Perhaps your doctor can refer you to a practitioner? I know of some great practitioners in my area, but am not familiar with downstate.

Foot massage is also something to explore. You can even do it yourself. Foot massage for body, mind and sole. Standing yoga poses are also recommended for cold tootsies. However, these other modalities I have mentioned should be explored, as they expand on the benefits of the standing yoga poses.

Yours in peace,
Joan

Joan Budilovsky is the author of

numerous books on yoga, massage, and meditation. She is also an area resident and teacher. Write to Joan via her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com, or visit her Sunday, Jan. 21, for a book signing of her latest book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" (2nd edition), at 2 p.m. at Borders Bookstore, 336 South Route 59 in Naperville.

Yoga is for people of all shapes and sizes

Dear Joan:

I am so surprised with the response you gave to Kat, who asked for information on yoga classes for larger people.

If I read her questions correctly, she was looking for class information and special problems a large person might encounter when beginning yoga. She did not ask for a lecture on her weight and for information on eating behaviors.

She said she was healthy, yet you discussed what she could do if she is "dangerously overweight." Kat appeared to be comfortable with her weight, yet she was instructed on how to approach her "dilemma."

I weigh over 200 pounds (5 foot 8 inches) and have taken

yoga for four years. Granted, I cannot move into some of the postures like a person of smaller stature, but I certainly get a lot of benefit from yoga. I always keep in mind that yoga is not a competition.

Two years ago, my instructor approached me about teaching classes. Yes, all 200 plus pounds of me. I started teaching one night a week, and increased it to two nights. I believe that I was able to help many people while teaching. Imagine my pleasure when a student told me she was able to stop taking her arthritis medication because of participating in my classes.

I have found many people intimidated when starting a yoga practice, and can sometimes relate better to someone

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who is physically similar. I enjoyed teaching so much that I am now pursuing my teacher certification. I am hoping to eventually gear my teaching to individuals of larger stature or mobility impaired.

Yoga is for ANYONE, Joan, and one should not have to feel the need to lose weight before starting classes.

I guess your attitude is one of the "special problems" Kat fears she might encounter.

I am more than happy to discuss this with you further.

Laura
Countryside

Gee, Laura,

I am only human ... then again, I am magnificently human! Yes, Laura, I agree that yoga is for ANYONE. I teach yoga as a holistic approach to health and as a complete lifestyle for all shapes, sizes, ages, and health conditions.

I am sorry I offended you by my response to Kat's letter. I may very well have read more into her letter than what her questions to me were. I get many letters regarding yoga as a weight-loss program and perhaps I get carried away sometimes in my response that yoga is a lifestyle approach and not a weight-loss program.

Although many people do end up losing weight, some gain, and most all come to a comfortable weight through a steady practice of yoga. Yoga is for all shapes and sizes. I encourage you on your path of teaching, Laura. I am also ever a student and learn much from the many letters I receive.

Thank you for sharing your concerns and may we continue together in peace and an ever-increasing sensitivity to others, and to ourselves, along this yoga (uniting) path.

Dear Joan,
I love your response to Kat

who mentions that she wants to practice yoga but doesn't have a trim body.

Many years ago in yoga class, the teacher, who was a heavy-set woman, gave me and another beginning student a private demonstration of the sun salutation. As we watched quietly, she flowed through the poses with little effort and it was so beautiful. Her body was so flexible and could flow so smoothly from one pose into the next. We students were so moved that we found ourselves in tears — which surprised me very much.

To this day, that memory is an inspiration to me. She was at home in her body. Someday I hope to have such grace and beauty when I do my asanas.

Thank you as always for "yoyoga." It is an oasis of peace that I love to visit.

Lori Erickson

Dear Lori,

Teachers can be inspirations in many ways, as well as students can be. Om, shanti, shanti, shanti. All, peace, peace, peace.

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky be sent to her Yoyoga Web site at: www.yoyoga.com. She will do a book-signing of her new book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, 2nd Edition," at Barnes and Noble, Old Orchard, Skokie, at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 4; and at Borders Bookstore on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 19.

Lifestyle

Yoga can help one achieve healthy lifestyle goals

Yo Joan,

Thank you, on behalf of Overeaters Anonymous, for your article in the Jan. 7 issue of The Suburban Life Citizen Newspaper about exploring the spiritual side of weight problems.

I have been a member of OA for 16 years (since 2/7/85) and have been relieved of overeating since the first day by following a food plan. The physical evidence of my addiction to food was gone within the first six months. The emotional and spiritual recovery is and will continue to be a lifelong process. The 12 Steps and the fellowship of OA have taught me that my dependence on a higher power is the key to the recovery process.

I appreciate your efforts to carry the message.

Peace and all good things,
Janet

Yo
Joan



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Budilovsky

Dear Janet,

I believe in Overeaters Anonymous. This is an organization that explores and supports deep healing of the many dimensions of eating disorders. This is a nationwide organization that is completely free and has local chapters in most every town.

Simply check the phone book. Thank you for the opportunity to mention OA again, Janet!

Dear Joan,

I am starting my first yoga class next Thursday. Last year I lost a lot of weight for my wedding, and I have noticed that I am starting to gain some back. Will yoga help me to lose weight or maintain? Should I accompany my yoga class with another form of exercise to increase weight loss?

Thanks in advance for any help you can offer.

Carey

Dear Carey,

Yoga will help you to uncover where the weight issues stem from. Yoga will help you to be more

conscious of an unhealthy diet and help you toward a path of healthy eating, of proper exercise, proper breathing, proper relaxation, and meditation.

I would recommend exploring different forms of exercise for weight loss. I recommend yoga for balance. Yoga is a total lifestyle that will help you learn to feel comfortable with every step and pound along the way.

Through this process of acceptance, one's perfect weight is realized. It may not be the same weight that appears in fashion magazines or from long-gone school days ... but through a yoga (uniting) lifestyle you will come to the weight

that is healthiest for you. A weight that you will feel comfortable with and will permit you to shine in your magnificence!

This has been quite a weighty issue. This big/little yogini is ready for some carob cookies... Yours in peace,

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to her Yoyoga Website at: www.yoyoga.com. Budilovsky will be doing a book signing of her new book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, 2nd Edition," at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 19, at Borders Bookstore on Michigan Avenue in Chicago.

Lifestyle



Photo courtesy of Kathie Huddleston

Author Leona Turlo Budilovsky (left), formerly of Westchester, and her daughter Joan Budilovsky, also an author, spend time together at a book signing.

Written from the heart

Former Westchester resident shares mother's life

By **Melissa Rubalcaba**

Staff writer

After the loss of her mother Helena, Leona Turlo Budilovsky found herself filled with sadness, often going off to her room to cry.

But one day instead of crying, the former Westchester resident began writing about her mother. Her tears turned to words and she would go up to her bedroom, close the door and pour out her recollections of her mother on paper: a memory, a lesson, a story she had told her.

What began as writing therapy for Budilovsky, an Oak Brook resident, turned into a book, "My Mother, Helena." The book begins with Helena in Poland in the late 1800s as a little girl who lets a beggar predict her future for her.

"Helena came a little closer to the beggar and looked him straight in his eyes and insisted that he predict her future. 'I want to know ... I am not afraid of what you'll tell me ... Please ... read my palm.' "

The beggar studied Helena's hand and face and made these predictions: "You will marry a stranger. You will marry two times. You will have five children, two of which will be twins. You will travel a long and difficult journey to America. You will be wealthy in your later years. You will live to the age of 85."

Helena's family told her the predictions were crazy, but as the years passed young Helena began to understand the meanings.

The book takes readers through Helena's life and how the beggar's predictions came true, beginning with her childhood to how she met her future husband.

Budilovsky beautifully describes the wedding of her parents Helena and Ludwick as though she were by their sides. From the stories she

heard from her mother, Budilovsky is able to describe life in Poland at the onset of World War I and how Helena endured many struggles while holding onto the hope of reuniting with her husband, who had already emigrated to America.

Readers can journey with Helena to America and listen to descrip-

tions of an immigrant's life in

Chicago during the Depression.

With Budilovsky's birth the

story changes from Helena the young girl to Helena the mother of American-born children.

"Mom and I did a lot of talking together. She should have lived longer, to tell me more," Budilovsky said. Her daughter, Joan Budilovsky, responded, "She'll live forever in this book."

The writing and the stories prove

that Budilovsky and her mother did indeed share many stories, including some that many mothers and daughters might not normally share.

Budilovsky writes of her mother's doubts in the Catholic faith as well as her mother's acts of defiance against the Catholic Church, actions that would be considered extremely controversial for most Polish Catholics during the 1930s and even today in 2001.

Budilovsky wrote about her mother over several years, scribbling down notes when she had time or when something came to her. In 1998 she began putting the notes in the form of a handwritten book, later typing the story out and letting her husband Johnny edit her work.

Later that year, Budilovsky suffered a stroke. Two months later, she lost her son, John. She continued writing her mother's story, using the work as therapy for her loss and to help her heal.

"Maybe it made me well, thinking about the good old past," she said.

See **Helena** on Page 20

'Mom and I did a lot of talking together. She should have lived longer, to tell me more.'

Leona Turlo Budilovsky

Former Westchester resident

Lifestyle

Helena

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With the help of her husband Johnny and daughter Joan as well as the rest of the family, at the age of 78 Budilovsky saw her dream come true when the book was published by Writers Club Press.

This past fall, along with celebrating her and Johnny's 50th wedding anniversary, she had her first book-signing.

Budilovsky and her husband have taken a writing course at the College of DuPage's Older Adult Institute and she has already begun work on a book about her son John.

"I'm going to have a book about everyone in the family. Pretty soon they're going to tell me to put that pencil away," she said.

While Budilovsky works on books about her family, she is not finished with the work for her mother's story

to Massage" and "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Meditation."

Her column, "Yo Joan," appears twice a month in the Suburban Life's Lifestyle section, and she has a Web site, YoYoga.com.

This winter, mother and daughter will both be signing their books at Barnes and Noble and Borders book stores.

Joan will be signing "The Idiot's Guide to Yoga."

Helena's story is similar to many tales of European immigrants who built a new life in Chicago. Those who enjoy history will find a character who brings that history to life.

For those who never had a chance to hear the stories of their grandparents and great-grandparents, here are stories to help the younger generations understand their lives.

The older generations will smile, remembering days from the past.

And for everyone,

'I'm going to have a book about everyone in the family. Pretty soon they're going to tell me to put that pencil away.'

Leona Turlo Budilovsky

Author



First-time author Leona Turlo Budilovsky, formerly of Westchester, is happy to share her mother's story.

work for her mother's story. She wants to bring the story to the big screen.

"It's my dream to make it into a movie. It will happen. It will make a good movie," Budilovsky said.

Her daughter Joan smiled and said, "I think dreams come true."

Writing and storytelling seems to run in the genes of these women. Joan has written plays and short stories, although she is more well-known for her writing on yoga, including co-authoring "The Idiot's Guide to Yoga," "The Complete Idiot's Guide

and for everyone, Budilovsky's work and accomplishments are an inspiration. She reminds people to "Write while you can, otherwise you'll forget."

And as she proudly talked about her daughter's talents and accomplishments, she turned and said, "She's the writer, I'm a story teller."

Leona Turlo Budilovsky will sign copies of "My Mother Helena" at 7:30 p.m. Thurs. March 8, Borders Bookstore at Danada Square East in Wheaton, 101 Rice Lake Square, Wheaton.

Melissa Rubalcaba's e-mail address is: mar@libertysuburban.com



Photos courtesy of Kathie Huddleston

Thanks to Budilovsky, her grandchildren Richard and Josephine can read about their great-grandmother.



Stay in touch!

Do you have an idea for a story? Is there a topic out there that begs to be explored? Do you have a story idea for our community columnists? We want to know! Send your ideas or stop by the office at 922 Warren Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60515, fax us at (630) 969-0228 or send us an e-mail message at jlt@libertysuburban.com

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Deadlines: Material should be submitted by noon Thursday for the Wednesday issue
Material should be submitted by noon Wednesday for the Sunday issue

Follower questions nausea, cold sweats

Hi Joan,

I am a beginning yoga student who is having difficulty because of nausea and cold sweats in any posture requiring that my head go backward, even if it's just in transition such as tilting the head back off the pad before going into a shoulder stand.

Anything resembling a back bend is impossible without getting sick. I have solved the problem by taking Dramamine (sea sick pills) before a yoga session.

In your experience with other students, is this a permanent situation or will my body eventually adjust, and is the Dramamine a good solution in the meantime?

Gene

Dear Gene,

This is a question that is better for your medical doctor to answer. I am not a pharmacist either, and I do not know the repercussions on your yoga practice of the drug you are taking.

Your pharmacist may be able to help you further on your Dramamine questions too. What you are experiencing in your yoga practice is not usual. Please consult your physician before continuing your yoga practice.

Joan

Dear Joan,

I had back surgery two years ago for a herniated disc. I think it was pretty successful and continue to do exercises given to me in physical therapy post-surgery, but I was left with nerve damage and I sometimes experience pain from that.

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Usually this is relieved by doing my PT exercises. Could you suggest yoga exercises that might help too? Thank you.

Mary

Dear Mary,

I would suggest a meditation and breathing class to work with the pain. I would suggest you follow the advice of your physical therapist on the exercises to do for your condition.

Find exercises to help you deepen the breath. Let your breath join the pain instead of battling it. Here is one exercise for you. Inhale deeply for four counts, exhale deeply for eight counts. Continue this silently counted inhale/exhale for at least five minutes a day.

Make this exercise your complete focus for this five minutes. Turn off the answering machines, the computer, the phone, and focus on this exercise. Write me back after you have been working with this exercise daily for at least a few weeks.

Yours in peace,

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be addressed to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com, or e-mail her at joan@yoyoga.com. New classes with Budilovsky begin this month at the College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn. Call (630) 858-2800 to register.

Lifestyle

Writer presents yoga, massage updates

Dear Readers,

As you know, two subjects dear to my heart are yoga and massage. The column today is information that you may find helpful in these areas.

First of all, I get many letters regarding specific health problems and how yoga and/or massage can be of help.

It is often difficult to answer specific questions in a letter, although I try my best. Both yoga and massage are personal journeys that are to be personally practiced to experience the results. They are truly hands-on approaches to health.

A new book I worked on that just came out this month is called, "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health." The author is BKS Iyengar. He is an internationally recognized hatha yoga master. He is from India and has written many books on the subject of yoga. He is now in his 80s and still teaching and lecturing around the world. Many schools and hospitals have been highly influenced by his teachings.

I have never met Iyengar, nor am I paid royalties on the sales of his book. I was hired by the publisher as the U.S. consultant on the book. I

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reviewed the text and offered my suggestions and comments. I highly recommend this book to you.

"Yoga the Path to Holistic Health" is an encyclopedia of hatha yoga. It offers a series of poses to work with yoga as therapy for a wide assortment of conditions or ailments.

The conditions in the book are wide and varied. Many of the conditions are conditions that Suburban Life readers have written to me about. A small sampling includes: headaches, insomnia, colds, indigestion, alcoholism, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, fatigue, epilepsy and cancer.

The book is quite extensive and thorough. The yoga therapy theory is based on the massage of the internal organs.

Holding yoga poses for a series of breaths can condition the organs and create a healthier body. This book is a treasure chest of information.

On the massage therapy front, new House Bill 2271 is being presented for state law. This bill will regulate the practice of massage therapy through licensure requirements.

Massage has come a long way in the past two decades in the United States. Although massage has been successfully used in hospitals and healing associations within other coun-

tries for centuries, it is only recently that massage therapy has been recognized as a legitimate healing profession here in the U.S.

Our national government's Office of Alternative Medicine has been supporting numerous recent studies and research into the documented benefits and healing aspects of massage.

For more information on this bill and the advancement it will do for the massage therapy profession, contact Dennis Hill of the Advanced Anatomy Massage Academy in Villa

Park at (630) 832-4217. AAMA is a school for massage therapists and Hill, its founder, has been a strong advocate for the advancement of this bill.

Whether or not you are interested in the political ramifications of this bill, you might still be interested in calling the school to book a student massage. I get no royalties from this school either. I simply believe in the benefits of massage and in the benefits of yoga. And, I sincerely wish the very best for you.

Yours in peace,
Joan

Lifestyle

Writer seeks help with digestive concerns

Dear Joan,
I came across your wonderful Web site while searching for yoga, and it turned out I owned your book "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga" all along.

I've got a question about yoga routine. I've been suffering from digestion problems (diarrhea, constipation, nausea, etc.). I have gone to GI doctors and been checked inside out and they found NOTHING wrong with my GI tract, not a single bacteria, virus or any other physical disorder.

I wonder if there's any yoga asanas that can help me deal with the indigestion, or any food/diet that you know might help. Thanks a lot for your help! Sincerely,
Ayeesha

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Joan

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Dear Ayeesha,

I would recommend a vegetarian diet with lots of clear water and juices. This is gentle on the system and will help to purify it.

I would recommend using a neti pot to clear the sinuses and open the nasal passages. This will make the smell of healthy food more tempting and appealing. A neti pot is sold in most yoga magazines and many health food stores, and also on the Internet on

the Himalayan Institute Web site at www.himalayaninstitute.org.

A neti pot is a small pot that you fill with lukewarm water with a pinch of salt. The spout is shaped to fit into a nostril. You tilt your head forward and let the water enter one nostril and angle your head so the water comes out the other open nostril. This neti pot is also wonderful for those suffering from various nasal and breathing problems, such as allergies and hay fever.

Before your breakfast in the morning, slowly sip a cup of lukewarm water with a pinch of lemon and honey. This will gently start the digestive system. After spending many hours in sleep, it is best to gently wake your system up instead of shocking it with caffeinated beverages and heavy foods.

I would also suggest regulating

your eating to breakfast like a king, lunch like a queen, and dinner like a pauper. This means, make your lightest meal in the evening and do not eat at least a few hours before going to sleep.

Yoga therapy can be done to help heal the parts of the body affected by your ailments. Yoga therapy involves using body postures that stretch and stimulate affected organs or parts of the body, while blocking others.

As BKS Iyengar states in his book, "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health," "The aim is not to cure but to target the cause." Some of the poses specifically recommended for your conditions are the Butterfly (where the body is seated with soles of feet pressed together and knees falling out to the side), Bridge (body lying with back on floor with knees bent and hips and buttocks lifted off the

floor), and Shoulderstand (back on the floor, legs are rolled up and raised over the heart — an alternative is simply to lie on the floor and place the legs up against a wall. Rest here as long as you comfortably can.), and Squat (sit on your heels and try to keep your tailbone and knees off the floor).

These are simply some suggestions to get started. I would highly recommend your taking a yoga class to experience the effects of a more regular yoga practice. In time you may very well find that your eliminating problems will become illuminating. For in yoga terms, elimination is the key to illumination.

Yours in peace,

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be addressed to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com.

Lifestyle

What to expect when getting a massage

Dear Joan,

I have heard that massage is good for you, but I am nervous about getting one. What EXACTLY happens when you get a massage? How much do you have to undress?

Thanks,

Sandy

Dear Sandy,

It depends on the type of massage. Some massage like shiatsu and seated massage can be done fully clothed. For other forms of massage, like Swedish and deep tissue, one usually removes clothing. In a professional massage, you undress to your level of comfort. Some people completely undress, some leave on their undergarments, and some leave on their clothes. You can leave on whatever you do not feel comfort-

able taking off.

A professional massage therapist will be sensitive to your concerns and will not push you to take off anything you do not want to. The massage therapist leaves the room while you remove whatever clothing you choose to and then you get under the covers of the massage table. Once you are comfortable and fully covered on the massage table, the therapist returns to your room. Your modesty is respected at all times.

During a traditional Swedish massage, which is the kind most professional massage therapists advertise, your body will be fully covered by a sheet or blanket throughout the massage. The massage therapist will undrape only the specific area to be massaged. For example, she or he will undrape one leg and mas-

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Joan

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sage that leg. Then the massage therapist may undrape the back and massage the back, etc.

The chest and genital areas are never massaged. Some massage therapists do or can massage parts of the chest area, but never around the nipple area. Many massage therapists avoid the stomach area too. If a stomach massage is included, the chest and the lower part of the body are

draped while the stomach is massaged. Remember, only the part of the body that is being massaged is uncovered. Professional massage therapists are trained in effective draping techniques.

A standard full-body Swedish massage takes one hour, although some sessions may vary in length. A massage therapist will usually ask you about pressure as the massage is being given. Never hesitate to express that you would like more or less pressure. Every person is different in their sensitivity levels.

The health benefits of massage are numerous. Massage increases circulation, which helps your organs, muscles and bones run more smoothly. It helps connective tissue become more elastic. Massage increases the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood.

Because decreased levels of oxygen are related to stress, and to diseases such as cancer and heart disease, regular massages can help to prevent stress and disease. Massage breaks up toxins in the body and helps these toxins eliminate from the body more effectively. Massage bal-

ances the nervous system. It helps balance the emotions too. And on top of all these wonderful things, it feels absolutely fantastic.

If you are uncomfortable getting a massage, ask a friend for a referral of a trusted therapist. Or call the American Massage Therapy Association in Evanston at (847) 864-0123 for a referral of a certified therapist in your area. The AMTA has professional referrals all across the country. Go with a friend to your first session. The friend can wait in the waiting room while you are getting your massage. Maybe your friend would even want to book one too!

All in all, massage is a wonderful way to expand your self-awareness, increase your sensitivity, and improve your overall health. Once you get in touch, you'll want to stay in touch ...

Yours in peace, Joan

Questions to Joan can be addressed to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com.

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be addressed to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com.

Letter writer seeks prenatal yoga classes

Yo Joan,
I ran across your column in The Suburban Life Newspapers and wondered if you might have any information on prenatal yoga (a video or class in a close suburb.)

I live in Lombard and just finished my first trimester ... a friend of mine saw a class downtown but I haven't had any luck finding any in my area. Can you help?

Laura
Lombard

Dear Laura,
"Yoga Among Friends" Yoga Studio in Downers Grove recently offered a prenatal yoga day workshop taught by a yoga teacher and registered nurse. You may want to call them to see where they can direct you for more classes and information. Their number is (630) 960-5488.

You may want to also check with your local hospital, as many nurses are now becoming yoga teachers and may offer classes there. If not,

Yo
Joan

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maybe you could suggest they should?

Dear Joan,
I have just begun practicing yoga and wanted to know if yoga is sufficient for weight loss. I have always been a health-conscious person, but my lifestyle changed so significantly this past year that I have gained about 40 pounds.

I am getting back on track with my eating and am enjoying the benefits of yoga. However, I wonder if I still need to do cardiovascular or aerobic exercise in addition to yoga to lose these pounds as quickly as possible. Thank you for

sharing your wisdom and expertise!

A New Yogini

P.S. Another question I have is whether some tingling in the feet is normal after practicing certain poses. I notice my feet feeling as if they fell asleep at times.

Dear New Yogini,

Yoga is a lifestyle approach. Yes, yoga can assist you in weight loss, if you see it as a lifestyle approach. But, most people see it as a series of exercises. In that case, I would also include some extended aerobic activity with your yoga exercise.

The lifestyle approach is a process of change. If you want

to lose weight quickly, it is necessary to do other types of exercise. Yoga, whether viewed as exercise or lifestyle, is a process and is not a quick fix.

As to the feet tingling question, I do not know what postures you are doing. Inversions can cause this because the body is turned upside down and blood drains out of extremities and rushes back in when upright. These inversions flush impurities out of the body and aid in effective circulation.

Inversions are not for everyone, though, especially those with heart problems or detached retinas. Check with your physician if your tingly feet continue.

Yours in peace,
Joan

Lifestyle

Joan offers suggestions for breathing techniques

Dear Joan,

I have been trying to improve my energy and also my digestive system by trying the breathing techniques outlined in the "Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga." I am unsure, however, which one is best to pursue and how long each day I should practice the technique.

I have also been using a neti to clear my sinusitis; again, how long do I need to do this for each day? Thank you for your help,

Darren

Dear Darren,

For those reading who are not

familiar with the neti pot, it is a special pot used for a nasal cleansing technique in yoga practices. It can be purchased at health food stores. It is part of what is termed shat kriyas, which are purification rituals of hatha yoga.

Neti pots are shaped to fit close to the nostril so that you can pour the water in one nostril and tilt your head slightly forward, down, and angled so that the water will come out the other nostril. It takes some practice to get it to come out, but once you get the right angle — it's smooth saline. The pot is filled with lukewarm water and with a pinch of salt to it.

It is recommended to use one full pot for each nostril. Some people

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use half a pot for each nostril. It is really personal to your taste and nose. Pour the water slowly and evenly through the nostrils. It is important that the water be warm (not hot) so that it is soothing to the nose.

Regarding what techniques are

best for your particular digestive system and energy: Shitali, or cooling breath, is considered a particularly effective yoga breathing technique for digestion. This breathing technique involves drawing in the breath through your curled tongue as if you are sipping through a straw. (If you can't curl your tongue, just pretend you are and maybe someday you will be able to! I have been trying for years, though, and I still can't curl it. Some people can curl their tongues immediately!)

When your lungs are full, bring your tongue into your mouth and close the mouth. Lower your chin slightly and hold the breath for as long as you comfortably can. If your ears begin to pop, this is a sure sign it is time to exhale. Exhale comfortably through your nose.

This yoga cooling breath technique is also quiet effective if your body is overheated. With summer coming up, it's a good cooling technique to know about. Other hatha yoga postures (like fish, child, and sun salutations) fan the digestive and respiratory organs through compressions and extensions. These postures are held for extended periods of time to reeducate the body on a cellular level and to improve circulation. Once you have started your yoga practice through the guidance of a book, then you need to study with a teacher to refine your practice

and tailor it more to your specific body.

A final comment on how long to do postures — yoga time is measured by breaths, not years. Let the steadiness of your breath guide you in and out of poses. If your breath becomes uneven or difficult, you know it is time to come out of the pose.

Dear Joan,

My wife and I have been interested in studying yoga for years. Saw your column and hope that you could recommend a great teacher in our area. We live in Western Springs.

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Bob

Dear Bob,

I would recommend Kathleen Wright who teaches at Garden of Yoga in La Grange Park. She has many years of experience in teaching an Iyengar style of yoga which is very focused on proper alignment in postures.

Garden of Yoga is at 928 Barnsdale Road, La Grange Park, (708) 802-1329.

Yours in peace,

Joan

You can write to Joan Budilovsky via her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com.

Focus is key to meditation

Dear Joan,

How long each day should I practice breathing techniques to improve energy? What is the best thing to focus the mind while meditating. Mine keeps reminding me of all the chores I have to do! Finally what is the best way to relieve anxiety, using yoga?

As always your advice is greatly appreciated!

Darren

Dear Darren,

There are wonderful books to refer you to, for responses to these questions are lengthier than my column permits. First suggestion: Read "Path of Fire and Light" by Swami Rama. He goes into detail about specific breathing meditation techniques. There are two volumes of the book. Both volumes are very well-worth reading.

The best thing to focus on while meditating is something uplifting and something that can keep your focus. It brings to mind a wonderful story the director of the Chicago Sivananda Yoga Center told this past Memorial Day weekend at a yoga retreat I attended at the beautiful LaSalle Manor in Plano, Ill.

Here's how the story goes ...

Once upon a yogi time, there was a man who was having a very difficult time focusing his attention in meditation. He implored upon his teacher, "Teacher, I am quite discouraged. My mind cannot stay still in meditation. What should I do?!"

The teacher replied, "Focus on the light of the steady candle for

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one hour and then come back to me."

The man did the practice and then ran back to his teacher, "I could barely sit for five minutes, let alone one hour with focus on the candle! It was torture. My back hurt. My thoughts raced. My mind was everywhere but on the candle!"

The teacher replied, "Try focusing on your breath. Do not let your mind stray anywhere else. Simply focus on the breath. Work with this today, and come see me again tomorrow."

The man came back to his teacher the next day out of breath. "Teacher, this was so difficult. I do not want to stop breathing, but I definitely want to stop focusing on the breath. It brings up memories of all sorts that I cannot shake."

The teacher replied, "Tell me, dear student, what do you love?"

The man was a farmer. He deeply thought of what brought him the most joy. Finally he replied in earnest, "What I love the most in my life is my ox. He helps me every day in the field. He is with me every step as I tend to my crops. I would not eat if it were not for him. He never complains.

He is a sturdy and simple support in my life that I treasure dearly."

The teacher replied, "I want you to go now to your meditation room, close your eyes and meditate on your ox."

The man did as he was told. A day passed, two, then three ... the man did not come out of the meditation room. The teacher began to worry and went into the room to see what was happening.

The man was so happy to see the teacher ... "Teacher! I am so glad you are here ... my horns are so large and my body so big, I cannot get out of the door of this room!"

And so ... what you focus on is very important to your meditation practice. Let this focus be something that takes you into deeper and ever more beautiful aspects of your being.

For some of us, focusing on a candle takes us deeper within ourselves. For some of us, focusing on our breath does. For some of us, focusing on a representative or aspect of our divinity takes us into deeper states of consciousness. In yoga this is called, "Ishvar Pranidhana."

Finally, regarding the release of anxiety. The entire study of yoga is devoted to a more balanced state of consciousness. A balanced state of consciousness involves less anxiety and stress. Simply open your heart and let your studies guide you in this inevitable direction.

Yours in Peace,

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to her Yoyoga Web site at <http://www.yoyoga.com>.

Lifestyle

Reader struggles with lotus position

Dear Joan,

I am in a bit of a pickle right now. I have been practicing yoga faithfully now for a while. I do sessions with around five warm-ups and 13 asanas.

I have one problem. When I meditate (I only meditate two or three minutes a day), I feel uncomfortable. This is because I am unable to do the lotus pose, the suggested meditation asana. I, of course, can do the half-lotus, but I think it might be easier if I did the full lotus.

When I lift one foot onto the opposite thigh, my other leg barely moves, even if I pull on it with my hand. I know I shouldn't strain myself, and that if I can't do something I should be patient, but I want to know why.

Every yoga book, Web site, and video seem to make it seem like anyone can do it. It is possible that, since my body is not fully developed, and my legs have not grown entirely (I am an 11-year-old boy). Is this the problem? Please help me.

Namaste,

Frustrated Without
a Good Reason

Dear Frustrated

without a good reason,

You have a good reason to be frus-

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trated. The judgmental mind is a very frustrating thing. The more judgmental it becomes, the more frustrating it becomes.

Lotus pose is an advanced yoga meditation pose. It's the pose we often see describing yoga. It appears as the person is sitting cross-legged with the feet on the thighs. If it looks like everyone is doing it, do not be fooled by appearances.

For example, someone could be in this pose and also be in agony

over their hurting, twisted ankles in this case, they are sitting strangely and not doing yoga. Yoga is uniting the body and mind into a balanced state of consciousness. When commercials tell us that everyone drinks milk, or eats pork or loves McDonald's - does this mean it is true?

Your age is a very good age to begin a serious study of the physical postures of hatha yoga. I hope your parents will find you a good yoga teacher to help guide you in your personal studies. A teacher that will encourage you and explain that half-lotus is not half a posture. It is a full meditation pose. The Buddha sat in half-lotus. The Buddha was an exceptional mediator.

Through the study of the hatha yoga postures, your hips will open and this will bring your knees closer to the floor. This will help to bring the feet up on the thighs comfortably. Some people spend many years in hatha yoga practice and still do not have their knees touching the floor when seated with crossed legs. Does this mean they are not advanced yogis? No. They may even be enlightened.

You are right. You know patience is part of the yoga practice.

You are wise. Your body will slowly adjust to the practice. There is no rush. Simply continue your practice.

Joan

Dear Joan,

I am a modeling and acting teacher for the past 10 years, I am interested in yoga and massage; how do I get started? Please help. Love and Light Christiana

Dear Christiana,

There are numerous schools in the Chicago area offering training programs in yoga and massage. When I started years ago, there were very few...now they are every-where!

Both yoga and massage training programs can be quite expensive. The schools are usually separate for these subjects. In fact, I do not know of a single school that offers certification in both yoga and massage. It is usually either/or. Do not judge a school by the

expense of the classes. Determine the best school for you by the quality of the instruction and by the years of experience in the field of the instructors who will teach you.

Although national certification is possible for massage therapists, it still is not mandatory. There are no national certification requirements yet for yoga teachers either.

Massage is coming close to mandating national standards in train-

ing.

Yoga appears to be on a similar path of mandating national certification requirements. Although ancient in origins, body work still is new to the political arena.

Even within the body work field standards still are being formulated. For example, just a couple short years ago, the AMTA (American Massage Therapy Association — a union for massage therapists) did not recognize yoga as a legitimate body therapy.

Today, it does.

My suggestion is to find a local massage school that is accredited by the State of Illinois (and preferably for you, one that also offers yoga classes) and continue to study and practice, study and practice, study and practice. Times progress, as we do.

Yours in Peace,

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be addressed to her Yoyoga Web site at <http://www.yoyoga.com>

Lifestyle

Yo Joan explores benefits of massage

Dear Readers,
It's amazing to me that many people still see massage as a luxury rather than as a part of their regular health-care routine. Insurance companies now are recognizing the importance of massage.

If you are under stress, or are suffering from a stress-related condition or illness, ask your doctor about massage as a part of your health care.

Here is a partial list of the many benefits massage can offer you (and your doctor who most probably needs a massage too):

- Improves circulation;
- relieves congestion;
- increases red blood cells;
- releases muscle tension;
- relieves muscle spasms;
- increases blood supply and nutrition to muscles;
- reduces lactic acid build-up in muscles;

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Joan

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- improves muscle tone;
- delays muscle atrophy;
- eases strain of blood circulation on vital organs;
- prevents formation of

scarring in muscle tissues;

- improves nervous system functioning;
- can help burst fat capsules in subcutaneous tissues;
- heightens healthy tissue metabolism;
- reduces or eliminates edema;
- lessens pain and facilitates joint movement;
- aids stagnant elimination system; and
- helps to retain nitrogen phosphorous and sulfur necessary for healing bone fractures.

Just one of the above is reason enough to get a massage today. We also have some wonderful schools in our area that offer certification programs to become a Massage Therapist:

- National University of Health Center, Lombard, Phone (630) 629-9664;
- Advanced Anatomy Massage Academy, Villa Park, Phone (630) 832-4217;
- Wellness and Massage Training Institute, Woodridge, Phone (630) 739-9684; and
- Chicago School of Massage Therapy, Chicago,

Phone (773) 477-9444.

These schools also can give you referrals of Massage Therapists in your area. Clip this column out of the newspaper and put it on your refrigerator or bulletin board. If you still are hesitating to get a massage, keep reading about the many benefits. Maybe someday the many benefits of massage will sink in ... skin deep.

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com

Lifestyle

Yo Joan recommends yoga books for interested writer

Hi Joan,

My name is Michael and just recently my father had a heart attack and triple bypass surgery. I know that this sort of thing runs in my family, and being 19 years old I figure that now is as good a time as any to start being healthier.

I am really interested in yoga, as I have heard a lot about how good for you it is, and I'm starting a vegetarian diet. I don't have time to take a class because I'm in college, but do you think you could point me in the direction of a good book or give some other advice to help me in my "self-improvement?"

Thank You,
Michael

Dear Michael,

There are so many good books out there. I would recommend

reading a book by one of the founders of the main yoga centers in the United States: Sivananda, Iyengar, Rama, Satchidananda, Kriyananda, Yogananda, Beyondananda (the last one does not have a yoga center, per say, but he is one of my favorites authors. I suggest first reading books by one of the first six authors mentioned, and then definitely including Beyondananda to your reading list).

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Are there not any yoga classes at your college? I teach at the College of DuPage and yoga is offered as Physical Education credit. I teach the yoga philosophy and the postures in the classes, however, many yoga classes simply teach the postures. So complement your posture studies by increasing your understanding of yoga as a lifestyle approach through one of the well-known authors I mentioned.

Joan

Dear Joan,

About a year ago, I suffered a severe back injury. The doctors cannot explain what happened to me, nor have any of drugs and/or physical therapy they have subscribed had any effect on relieving my pain.

About six months ago, I began practicing yoga daily (as

opposed to the occasional approach I had previously had). Lo and behold, the pain began to gradually melt away. Finally, I had something that could help me, and I was ecstatic.

Several months have passed now, and I'm still relatively pain-free for the first time in a year. Thus, there are two reasons for my writing to you now. The first is that I am constantly in search of new asanas to practice to strengthen my mid-lower

back. The second is that I am about 50 pounds heavier than I would like to be. Although I am gradually losing some of the weight I have accumulated during my time of injury, I am experiencing an incredible frustration at not being able to sink as deep into some postures due to my "gut."

Any suggestions you could offer would be very much appreciated!! Namaste,

Overweight and Ouchie

Dear Overweight and Ouchie,

The large gut can bring on back pain, so you are wise to want to work to reduce tliis. A large percentage of our society over 40 has back problems, and a large percentage of our

society increases the gut size as we age as well.

First of all, I commend you for gradually losing some of the weight. Let this time of extra weight help you increase your sensitivity to life. Do not hurry throw your body/mind even more off balance.

The extra weight was a balancing mechanism your body/mind used to deal with the pain you were experiencing. Our bodies are always looking for ways to find balance through difficult times. Thank your body/mind for helping you through this difficult time to the pain-free existence you are now experiencing.

Simple leg lifts are wonderful for increasing the strength of your back and toning the abdomen. To do this, lie on your back with the knees bent. Straighten one leg out on the floor and slowly inhale the

straight leg up to a right angle with the floor. Slowly exhale the leg back down to the floor. Continue slow inhales up and slow exhales down. Let your breath guide you in the movement. Continue for several breaths on one side and then do several leg lifts with the other leg.

As your strength improves, you will not need to bend the one leg. You will also be able to do more leg lifts comfort-

ably. As your strength improves further, you will be able to inhale both legs straight up together and exhale both legs together straight down.

Also, I would recommend reading the book, "Relax and Renew" by Judith Lasater. This book, along with regular yoga classes, and regular leg lifts, will help you continue on this beautiful healing path you are on.

Yours in peace,
Joan

Yo Joan explores benefits of massage

Dear Readers,

It's amazing to me that many people still see massage as a luxury rather than as a part of their regular health-care routine. Insurance companies now are recognizing the importance of massage.

If you are under stress, or are suffering from a stress-related condition or illness, ask your doctor about massage as a part of your health care.

Here is a partial list of the many benefits massage can offer you (and your doctor who most probably needs a massage too):

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- improves muscle tone;
- delays muscle atrophy;
- eases strain of blood circulation on vital organs;
- prevents formation of scarring in muscle tissues;
- improves nervous system functioning;
- can help burst fat capsules in subcutaneous tissues;
- heightens healthy tissue metabolism;
- reduces or eliminates edema;
- lessens pain and facilitates joint movement;
- aids stagnant elimination system; and
- helps to retain nitrogen phosphorous and sulfur neces-

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sary for healing bone fractures.

Just one of the above is reason enough to get a massage today. We also have some wonderful schools in our area that offer certification programs to become a Massage Therapist:

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Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to her *YoYoga* Web site at www.yoyoga.com

Letter writer seeks to change her career to massage therapy

Dear Joan:

I have educated myself and continue to read on massage. I give quite a few and the people who have had my massages say I have a gift. My daughter has fibromyalgia syndrome and I hope to find more information regarding massage therapy for this also. I am wanting to go to school and become a licensed massage therapist. My question, since you teach and may be aware, is do you know of any government funding for massage school? I'm a single, middle-aged woman and my financial situation is quite limited. Any advice you could offer would be much appreciated.

I also want to thank you for the section in "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Massage" on pet massage. It almost calms my dog (as calm as a Jack Russell can get I suppose!). My boss is a part-time estate planning attorney. On a few client visits while my boss has been discussing the client's estate plan with them, under the table I have been giving Fido neck massages. The clients have all commented on how well Fido took to me (they usually don't take that well to strangers). Fido and I just wink at each other.

Thank you for your time and your books. Any direction would be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Kimberly

Dear Kimberly,
First of all, there have been studies that have connected fibromyalgia syndrome to breathing constrictions. Many stress-related illnesses have breath associations, for when we are stressed our breathing patterns are constricted, causing our body to have imbalances in the oxygenation of tissues.

Fibromyalgia is like a constant state

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of a bad flu. The muscles constantly ache, sleep is disturbed, severe headaches are common and sufferers often become depressed. Certainly, these constant painful symptoms are enough to depress even Pollyanna!

Leon Chaitow, D.O., has written a wonderful book on this subject called "Fibromyalgia & Muscle Pain." In it, he discusses myofascial massage as a type of massage which focuses on releasing trigger points (points of severe muscle tension) in the body. By deactivating trigger points, the pain associations in the body can also quite often subside. This may take several massage treatments to reduce the trigger points. The book, "Fibromyalgia and Muscle Pain," can be helpful in introducing you more fully to these concepts and this type of massage treatment. Regarding funding for your studies, this is where your wonderful reference librarian at your local community college can be most helpful. Librarians are the greatest people. I love librarians! They are incredibly knowledgeable about research and resources.

There are many scholarships and

financial resources for people like yourself who are going back to school, it's just a matter of figuring out how to find them. Your reference librarian will point you in the right direction or into the right book, and you will surely find the applications for the appropriate funding organizations.

I know there are grants out there for women who are seeking career changes. These types of grants usually require an essay application and resume. Your college can help you to locate these grants. It would involve an afternoon or two of research in the library — an afternoon well worth your efforts. Also, the massage school you plan to attend might have some additional financial aid ideas for you too.

I was an actress for many years before my career in massage. The Actors Equity Union helped to partially finance my massage school studies through an actors' work program they offered union members. Perhaps you are a member of some union that may offer some help for you? These are just some ideas to help you get started.

I wish you the very best on your massage journey, Kimberly. It has been a most rewarding path for me. It is a wonderful, healing journey. Massage Therapy is a career that not only touches many lives, but also opens oneself to deeper levels of sensitivity and self awareness. Happy travels!

Yours in peace,
Joan

Letters to Joan can be sent to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com

Lifestyle

Yo Joan offers advice on practicing 'bandhas'

Dear Joan,
I have difficulty practicing bandhas. I attempt to do them simultaneously in a sitting position. Is this the correct way? Are they done only one at a time? Please help.

Dear Reader,

Bandhas are defined as "locks." These are difficult concepts to comprehend from a Western perspective of understanding reality through physical definitions. Bandhas are energy locks. Can you feel energy pulsating within you? Can you feel in what part of the body the energy is focused at any given time? Can you feel subtle shifts in the energy within various body movements?

When we become more aware of these subtle movements of energy, then we are on the road to beginning to work with bandhas, which direct the energy movements.

There are three main bandhas. They are jalandhara bandha located in the chin region of the physical body, mula bandha located in the rectum of the physical body; and uddiyana bandha located in the pelvic region of the physical body.

Energy permeates within and around our body, so defining these bandhas within the limitations of our physical body is not adequate. It does, though, give us a frame of reference in working with and releasing the vibrant energy that is within and around us.

Bandhas can be worked with sitting, standing, or in a yoga pose. The first step is to become more adept at the subtle shifts of energy within the body. Take a class in energy. For example, a Reiki class — a form of energy massage, or a Hatha Yoga class, like Kundalini Yoga, which puts an emphasis on breath work and energy concepts. Take a Reflexology class that focuses on reflex points in the feet and hands that energetically correspond to different parts of the body. Continue working with, feeling, sensing the subtle shifts of energy from various perspectives.

The answers you are seeking are subtle. They cannot be defined in a simple stroke of my keyboard. The answers lie in the depth of your experience. Which reminds me of a beautiful poem by Rumi, "Last night I asked an old wise man to tell me all the secrets of the universe. He murmured slowly in my ear, 'This cannot be told, but

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Joan

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only learned."

Yours in peace,
Joan

Dear Joan,

I have been doing yoga for 10 years, but now I am experiencing and thinking about varicose veins and what poses will help me.

I just feel aches from time to time in the back of my legs. My job is sitting all day for 10 hours, and before this I was standing on my feet for 10 to 15 hours a day. I do change positions from sitting now about every 10 minutes and get into various yoga poses.

Just to give you a little background, I am very active at body sculpting, body building and, of course, my yoga ses-



sions. I am a vegetarian, so I get fresh foods daily and have a clean diet. Is there any suggestions for poses to do while at my desk and then poses to do when I get home to relieve my body of the fatigue of sitting all day? Do the wall pose to reverse the flow of blood.

Thanks in advance,
Kai

Dear Kai,

Great that you are doing the wall pose. This pose has the legs up against a wall with your tailbone up as close to the wall as possible, and your back and head resting on the floor. This is very good for varicose veins and also for male or female reproductive problems.

Another pose to try is Butterfly Pose — seated on the floor with the back upright and soles of the feet touching, knees come out to the side. Place pillows under your knees so that you can relax into the pose. Keep your back straight. This pose also is helpful for sciatica.

One more pose suggestion, shoulderstand. Lying on your back, roll your legs and torso of the body up over your head. Steady your legs

straight up toward the sky. Chin is tucked in. Let your hands support your back, elbows on the ground. If it is difficult for you to bring your legs up above your head, use a chair for support. Let your sacrum (the large, flat triangular bone at the base of your spine) rest on the chair and your hands hold the back of the seat of the chair or the back legs of the chair. Legs straight up in the air. A pillow under your shoulders might increase the comfort too.

Those are three suggestions for you, Kai...three times the charm!

Yours in peace,

Joan

Joan Budilovsky can be reached via her Web site at www.yoyoga.com. New yoga classes with Budilovsky are starting in September: Wednesday mornings — Oak Brook and Westmont Montessori Preschool Yoga, call (630) 268-9439; Thursday mornings — York Center Park District Outdoor Yoga, call (630) 629-0886; Friday mornings — College of DuPage Physical Education Department, call (630) 858-2800; and Saturday mornings — Columbia College in Chicago - Dance Department, call (312) 344-8321.

Lifestyle

Letter writer seeks advice for TMJ pain

Joan,
I came across your Website in B.K.S. Iyengar's new book, "Yoga, The Path to Holistic Health" and I was hoping you may be able to give me some advice.

I am a sufferer of TMJ disorder (Temporal Mandibular Joint). I have had signs of TMJ since a very young age, but it didn't start affecting my life until I was in high school. Now I'm 22 and about four months ago it took a turn for the worse. It is now so painful that I am experimenting many different treatments to try to control my pain, knowing that this is something that I will have to deal with the rest of my life.

I've gone through physical therapy and I am trying to get in to see a TMJ specialist. But unfortunately my health insurance only covers \$2,500 lifetime. So I am trying to seek out other types of therapies that may control my pain. My mother introduced me to Yoga. Being new to it herself we are now learning together.

I am interested in maybe joining one of your classes, but I saw that right now you only have weekday classes, which I

am not able to do. So, I was wondering if you may be able to recommend some asanas that would be good for relaxing the shoulder and neck muscles (which are always tight and contributed to my TMJ pain) and also if there are any that are more specific to the jaw joint area. I'm not sure if there is such a thing.

If you could respond I would appreciate it greatly.

Kimberly
St. Charles

Dear Kimberly,

I get many letters regarding TMJ. I am sorry to hear of your pain and I hope you will be finding some relief for it, perhaps through some of my suggestions here today.

● 1. Do you have a mouth guard to sleep with at night? It's a soft retainer that is placed in the mouth to keep the teeth from grinding at night. Many people grind their teeth at night and are not even aware of it. We work out so many tensions in our dreams! Your dentist can fit you with a mouth guard made especially for your teeth, and which, unfortunately, costs a few hundred dollars.

● 2. Because your mother and you are wanting this together, spend

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some time each day massaging around each other's shoulder blades (scapulas). Gently move the shoulder blades around with your hands. Not big movements, gentle, subtle movements. Massage deeply around the rims of the blades where various muscles attach for the neck and shoulders. Tensions around the shoulder blades can cause tensions in the jaw.

● 3. Your posture can also affect the muscles and the tensions in your jaw. Have you explored the Feldenkrais Method of Movement Study or the Alexander Technique? These are forms of movement study that may help significantly with your posture. They explore old movements and breaking negative habits to form new, healthier movements and positionings of the body.

You can find a class by calling your local community college. Many est

ing schools offer classes in these studies of body movement. The beauty of taking one of these classes through an acting school is that a new world of understanding comes into play. For example, if you imagine walking in someone else's shoes — in a very physical sense by taking on their movements — you can begin to understand them on deeper emotional levels too. You begin to see the deep relationship between the body/mind. And so it is with studying your own movements. A deeper level of understanding develops within your self awareness through movement studies.

● 4. Massage your feet. The reflex points for the feet and your jaw are in the toes. Firmly hold your toes and rotate them slowly around a few times a day. Because our feet are often confined in tight shoes, they rarely get this type of movement. How are your shoes by the way? Are they really tight? Get good shoes. Shoes that are supportive yet give your toes some freedom.

● 5. Yoga poses — cow pose — arms behind the back with one elbow facing the sky with palm down on back, the other elbow facing the ground with palm up on back. Downward Dog — on your hands and knees, lift the tailbone and lower off the floor shoulders

come down, form a triangle to the floor. Upward dog, lying on floor, stomach facing floor, place palms by shoulders and lift your body up.

Let your body form a graceful "L" shape. Arms straight. These are all great asanas to help loosen up the upper parts of the body.

Do these movements slowly and with awareness. I repeat, do these movements slowly and with awareness. A personal yoga teacher can help to heighten your awareness ... so do take a class.

I look forward to hearing an update on how you are doing, Kimberly. With your open mind and family support, I have a lot of hope in your improving health.

Yours in peace,

Joan

Joan Budilovsky can be reached via her Website at www.yoyoga.com. New yoga classes are starting in September. Days and locations include: Wednesday mornings at Oak Brook and Westmont Montessori Preschool Yoga — call (630) 268-9439; Thursday mornings at York Center Park District Outdoor Yoga — call (630) 629-0886; and Saturday mornings at Columbia College Dance Department — call (312) 344-8221.

Local expert addresses various yoga 'traditions'

Dear Joan,

I recently took a yoga class offered at a local YMCA. I thought yoga was supposed to be relaxing, but I was in tremendous pain!

Was this instructor going too fast? Am I THAT out of shape? Am I expecting too much from yoga? Is there such a thing as "beginner's yoga"?

I am interested in learning the poses, but I don't want to hurt myself. Any ideas will be appreciated.

Thanks,
Alex

Dear Alex,

When I first started studying yoga, about 20 years ago, the classes all seemed to have soft lights, soft music, carpeting, candles and gentle approaches to the yoga poses.

Now when I enter a yoga class, the temperature may be more than 100 degrees inside (Bikram); belts, straps and blocks may be scattered around the room (Iyengar); loud, pulsating music may be playing (Jivamukti); there may be deep breathing and strenuous movements (power yoga, Ashtanga) or deep breathing and gentle move-

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ments (Kundalini); gentle joint rotations may predominate (Himalayan); or Sanskrit mantras resonate (Sivananda, Kriyananda, Yogananda) ... and the list goes on.

I imagine you are starting to get the picture, Alex, of the vast variety of approaches to the study of yoga.

Today, there are many yoga styles available to study; however, the word "style" is not always appropriate because some of these "styles" come from a lineage of teachers that could span more than hundreds of years.

In this case, the teachings are called a "tradition." Each style or tradition includes the unique twist of the person currently instructing as well.

So, in answer to your questions:

Yes, yoga can be relaxing. The instructor obviously was going too fast for you, but may have not been going fast enough for someone else in the class. You may be out of shape for the style you were studying, or it may simply have not been the right style for you.

You are not expecting too much from yoga. There is such a thing as "beginner's yoga." Speak to the instructor of the class before you attend it. Tell the instructor what you are looking for.

If he/she does not teach what you are looking for, ask for a referral of a teacher in your area who does. If you are looking for relaxation, say so.

Hey, I see nothing wrong with candles, carpeting, soft lights, soft music and yoga. In fact, that sounds perfect to me!

Yours in peace,
Joan

New classes of outdoor gentle yoga, amid hummingbirds, ducks and the glorious beauty of nature in autumn (doesn't that sound perfect, too?) begin next week with Joan Budilovsky. Call (630) 629-0886 to register. Letters can be sent to Budilovsky via her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoga.com

News

'Yo Joan' reflects on tragic events

An overwhelming tragedy has hit the United States last week. A tragedy so horrific that many loving minds and hearts have been thrown into chaos and confusion.

Many of us have had a hard time focusing and reflecting on our daily responsibilities and life plans. We have been torn asunder by what has happened. Many have lost their lives in very cruel ways, and many more of us remain to sort out this tragedy and work through the enormous grief and horror experienced in the process.

When tragedy strikes home, whether it is the home of the country we live in, or the home of our intimate experiences, we are torn apart and then, in time, brought together in reflective ways to actualize the reality of our connected consciousness. This connected consciousness can take various paths. It can be a path of further destruction, hate, and isolation, or it can be a path of

associated with the crimes of another. We live in a melting pot of cultural diversity in America. A diversity that offers us many opportunities to transcend external barriers of color and culture.

At a time when we are encouraged to run to the loving shelter of family and friends, we forget that loving shelter is the birthright of us all. If it is difficult at this time to open your heart to the varying cries among us ... then open your ears. This is a time



for us to listen ... really listen. Something we may not have been doing well ... and still not doing well by focusing on retribution rather than the cause

of the anger and hatred that would fuel this horrific event. And when we listen, give us the strength to listen with a nonjudgmental mind.

Before running to a corner of righteousness, let us listen to the depth of pain and suffering that is bellowing from the depths of those who are tormented and those who torment. As we open our ears, we must realign our hearts with the open hearts and minds of all who live as beacons of hope in our relentless journey of

healing.

For those of us living at the heart of this tragedy, the depth of feelings are first hand. Continue lighting the way, and recognizing those who are illuminating paths before us to help us through these difficult times. In this process, as our understandings and compassions deepen, each one of us has the ability to realize the transcendent power of love. om.

Joan Budilovsky may be reached at www.yoyoga.com

NEVER EXPECTED TO WIN. UNDERDOGS. WHY DO WE ROOT SO HARD FOR THEM? WHY DO WE FEEL SO GOOD

WHEN THEY BEAT THE BIG GUYS? IS IT THE UNDAUNTED SPIRIT THEY SHOW? THE EXTRA EFFORT THEY PUT

OUT? MOST LIKELY, IT'S BECAUSE WE'VE ALL BEEN UNDERDOGS OURSELVES. MAYBE THAT'S WHY WE LOOK AT SMALL

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deeper love and compassion for all.

As I taught yoga to the preschool children this week, I reflected on the beautiful diversity in the cultures around me. Palestine, Israel, Africa, Sweden — all countries were reflected in the loving eyes of the children surrounding me. We were joined by their teachers in Muslim garb. Beautiful teachers who daily demonstrate to the children, and myself, lessons in love and respect.

I am glad our country is not able to respond immediately to this tragedy by bombing another country. My heart ached to think that these beautiful teachers, or children, may in some way be mistakably

Local veterans seek support

Members of the Westmont Veterans of Foreign Wars and Ladies Auxiliary are asking the community to fly American flags Friday, Sept. 21, in memory of the nation's prisoners of war and veterans missing in action.

Each year, the third Friday of September is marked as POW/MIA Recognition Day.

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Yoga can aid stressful times

Dear Joan,

I am interested in getting into yoga, mainly for fitness reasons and my own personal spiritualness. I live in Oak Park and really want to attend a class that could help me learn and grow in this area.

This is a new undertaking for me, so I'm trying to find a good place to begin, especially in terms of fitness.

While I am relatively fit, I have no flexibility and I am searching for ways to blend fitness with spirituality and meditation. If you can offer any information, that would be great. Thanks,

Mike

Dear Mike,

I would highly recommend studying with William Hunt of Oak Park Yoga, phone (708) 445-0392. He is one of my teachers. He was the technical editor for several of my Yoga books. He is an experienced and extraordinary teacher.

Joan

Dear Joan,

I have been reading your column for awhile. I know I have to get my act together. I am out of shape, depressed, unmotivated. Needless to say, the recent events in our country haven't helped much either. I have a lot of anger in me that I don't really know how to get rid of. I seem to snap at people for the littlest things.

Your column is something different, and kind of gets me out of myself a little. I don't

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really have a question. I know what I have to do — pep up, get in shape, change my attitude, blah, blah, blah.

Dear friend,

These certainly are stressful times. For many of us, the national events have compounded many stresses that have already been overloading within us.

It sounds like you are recognizing the stresses within you and see them also as separate from the national tragedy. This is very good. This shows that you are aware.

Now, the next step is to take constructive action upon your awareness. And that, as you state so well, can be quite difficult to do.

I understand stress. I have a lot of it in my life too. With all the regular massages I receive, and all the yoga and meditation I do and teach, you would think I would have a regular handle on it all. Still, sometimes the stresses do get the best of me.

When I find myself over reacting emotionally to something or someone, I try to remove myself from the situation, if even for a few breaths. If that does not work,

then I try to physically remove myself from the situation for at least a few minutes. In that time, I run or do some deep stretching. I do something that engages my body, so that my emotions can have more room to untangle. When feeling down, I move around. When feeling great, I meditate.

I also watch my thoughts. I try to release the negative self talk that can easily creep into the corner of the mind and quickly bulldoze the whole mind-set. I release this negative self talk by first observing it. Only through awareness of its existence can I start to change it. I observe it as I would observe a sunset. I see this negative self talk as a movement through me, but not as "me."

However, the main point I would like to make, my friend, is that you are not alone. I join you in your struggles. I encourage you to take a class in yoga, meditation, massage, feldenkrais, aromatherapy, reiki, or any class that is involved with the healing arts. You may very well find me sitting in the class learning right alongside you! And along the way, as we continue to openly express our concerns, we will assuredly find more people joining us in our struggles toward a more peaceful existence. Together, we can create bridges to ease our travels through these difficult times. I hope you will continue to reach out. Thank you most sincerely for writing to me.

Yours in peace,

Joan

Letters to Joan Budilovsky be sent to her Yoyoga Web site at www.yoyoq.a.com

Yo Joan addresses yoga class queries

Hi Joan,
I got your Web address from the Life Newspaper. A good friend of mine and myself have been talking seriously about taking a yoga class together to help relieve some of the stress in our lives.

This stress has greatly increased in the last week, of course, with all that has happened to our great nation.

We are both 49 years old, work full time and try to manage a household at home while trying not to go crazy over all the demands and chores that pile up.

We live in Downers Grove and Westmont. Morning classes are out because of our jobs. Any chance you may be thinking about having a Saturday class in the suburbs? Thank you for your time,

Kathie

*Dear Kathie,
There is a good chance I may be thinking...but about teaching a yoga class on Saturday, I have already been booked at Chicago's Columbia College. Check out "Yoga Among Friends" in Downers Grove at (630) 960-5488 for an assortment of near-by classes offered over the week-*

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ends.

Hello Joan,

I am beginning to practice meditation along with my regular yoga practice, and I'm curious if you have found any particular vendors of meditation cushions that you prefer. Thanks in advance, and *Namaste*,

Lani

Dear Lani,

I simply place a small pillow under my tailbone. It helps me to sit comfortably longer. I do not have any special requirements for the pillow. I have seen meditation pillows filled with a sand like substance that seems to make adjusting on it easier. However, I have never really used one

Letters to Joan Budilovsky can be sent to www.yoyoga.com

Yo Joan on mantras and meditation

Dear Joan,

I have finished reading and rereading "Idiot's Guide to Meditation." I really enjoyed the book and feel inspired to make meditation part of my daily life. I especially appreciate your unbiased look at all of the world's meditation traditions and philosophies.

I do have a practical question. You offer many techniques and often say something to the effect of "do this when you need... or do this when you feel"... However, once we become more established practitioners, is it advisable to select one or two techniques and only practice them or is it OK to use different techniques whenever? I wasn't sure if jumping around caused one to be less proficient, so to speak.

Thanks again to you and Eve Adamson for a wonderful book.
Karyn

Dear Karyn,

By studying different cultures we begin to see that there are many paths one can travel in the study of meditation. Regarding following one technique, this is the way most often advised to become an established meditation practitioner. The study of yoga, and the process of meditation that hatha yoga (the study of the physical postures) leads to, is

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where I have devoted my heart for quite a few years now. If I kept jumping around without a central focus, you would not be writing to me with this question today.

On the other hand, my sincere belief that there are many paths, or ways, in developing self-awareness, has opened my consciousness into studies and books in massage therapy, healing arts, education, music, theatre, etc. So, in final answer to your question, it is perfectly all right to "jump around" exploring and discovering new techniques in meditation. When you find a technique that feels right ... that touches on a core of understanding, and glimpses into the deepest essence of who you really are...make it your home for a while and see what happens.

As for me, there's no place like om.

Dear Joan,
When I try mantra medita-

tion, am I supposed to say the mantra out loud, or in my head? And how slowly are you supposed to breathe? Darren

Dear Darren,

Mantra is a technique used in meditation. Mantra is the repetition of words or sounds to uncover a more peaceful state of existence. There are many mantras used in yoga. They are usually in Sanskrit. Sanskrit was the language used in ancient writings of India, where the study of yoga originated. A popular yoga mantra is Om Shanti. This means, "all peace" — all harmonious energies radiating in peace.

Mantras can be said out loud with the full resonance of one's body or silently within the depths of one's soul. When trying a mantra, breathe with awareness. Relax your body and let your voice, your deeper self, wrap around the sound. Try this now with the simple sound of a long "e." Take a deep breath and exhale, "Eeeeeeeeeee." Then silence. Close your eyes. Listen to how your body responds to the sound. Try this again silently. Take a deep breath and silently..."Eeeeeeeee." Silence. Listen.

Yours in peace,
Joan

Letters to Joan can be sent to her
Yoyoga Web site at
www.yoyoga.com.

Chant has more meaning than one might think

Dear Joan, I often hear the word or chant “Om, Om” associated with yoga and meditation. What does it mean?

Sue

Dear Sue,

OM is a common mantra because it's designed to invoke a universal perspective: You see your body/mind in relation to its place in the big picture. In the Sanskrit language (from which om stems from), “OM” is spelled A-U-M, and each letter is a sacred symbol: “A” represents the self in the material

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world. “U” represents the psychic realm. “M” represents indwelling spiritual light.

Chanting it unifies your per-

ceptions so you can sense yourself as an integral part of the universe. Gradually, the chant helps you shed everything that separates you from the universe — all your negativity, illusions, and misperceptions of yourself and the world. It is a great mantra for anyone. Don't be embarrassed! Give it a try!

Yours in peace, Joan

Letters to Joan on yoga, massage, meditation, or life in general can be addressed to her Yoyoga website at www.yoyoga.com