

# Yoga Moves Winter Newsletter

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Hi everyone - I hope you have enjoyed the classes this term and that you made some interesting discoveries along the way. Thanks to those of you who sent me their responses to the 'homework' contemplations and exercises – I loved reading about your experiences and learning how you were making use of them. Thanks too to everyone who asked questions during the term or pointed something out in class – it is so useful for me. Many, many times one question becomes the basis of a whole series of explorations that we do in class...A state of interest or being interested is an act of great

kindness and generosity to oneself and others that has enormous power in its rippling effect.

As you will see below, there is a lot going on over the next few months at the studio ... happy moving ☺

Be well and happy – from all of us Usha, Deb, Claire and Eithne.

**Why inversions?:** I am repeating the explanation below about the benefits and reasons for inversions in this newsletter since the intensive during the school holidays and the 9.15am Saturday morning class next term, will be investigating various forms of the inverted poses in more depth than usual.

**Inverted poses are one of the six classical poses yoga philosophy recommends we do daily for good health and mental well-being. The other five are forward bends, backward bends, side bends, balancing poses and twists. (My teacher, Namgyal Rinpoche, added to this by saying we should move ourselves in ten directions daily thereby adding the four diagonal ways of lengthening oneself in addition to the above six).**

There are many ways to do an inversion or get your head below your heart – some of them almost everyone can do with little effort or risk (lying on your back with your pelvis raised on a bolster, legs up the wall) and other ways, which are more challenging, such as downward dog, handstands and headstands. And – like everything else we do in class or in life – some conditions or injuries will mean that you will need to exclude inversions from your well-being or movement toolbox temporarily or permanently. C'est la vie ...



## General benefits resulting from the practice of inversions (3-5 minutes):

- Improves the flow of blood and cerebrospinal fluid to the brain, stimulating mental functions. May improve memory and concentration and can relieve some headaches.
- Nourishes and rejuvenates facial skin, scalp and hair roots.
- Increases flow of blood and fluids to the neck and throat, balances the function of the thyroid and parathyroid glands which help to regulate metabolism (poses where chin is pressed towards chest).
- Encourages diaphragmatic (deeper) breathing.
- May relieve prolapse of kidneys, stomach, intestines, uterus and bladder.
- Strengthens abdominal muscles, stimulates and decongests the abdominal organs and relieves constipation.
- Tones reproductive organs.
- Improves venous circulation, allowing blood from the legs and trunk to flow to the heart with less effort. Regular practice may also reduce varicose veins and haemorrhoids.
- Improves lymphatic and fluid circulation in the legs, relieving oedema.

**Holiday classes:** During the school holiday break, the studio will be in use by the students of the Feldenkrais Training and Lizzie Morter, who will be running a children's programme in the mornings (see end of newsletter for more details). Should you be interested in coming to classes over that time, I invite you to be brave!! ☺ and join

us in for an early morning intensive to deepen your movement practice but ultimately, your degree of self awareness.

**July early morning Feldenkrais intensive with Usha: the Headstand series.** In actual fact, we will really be moving towards the pose known in yoga as 'tripod pose' (kapalāsana) not the headstanding pose traditionally taught in Iyengar yoga (sirasana). The Feldenkrais Method emphasizes the exploratory nature of the journey over the goal above all else and it's amazing what we can do when we approach something with the internal attitudes of patience and self-care prioritised over our ambition to achieve a result or our innate fear of falling ...



Having said that, there are some conditions which will preclude you attempting this piece of the work, including unmedicated high or low blood pressure, ear conditions (i.e. infections), vertigo, those with any eye disorders (glaucoma, detached retina, weak eye capillaries, conjunctivitis, severe sinusitis), pregnancy, injuries or disease to the neck, spine and/or head.

**A special note for those with neck problems:** before enrolling please have a discussion with me about your neck – for some necks this series will be a revelation - for others it will be completely unsuitable (e.g. old neck injuries).

**Days and dates:** 10 days, Monday to Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> July – 18<sup>th</sup> July

**Time:** 6.15am – 7.45am

**Cost:** \$150/\$120 (10 lessons over 10 days).

**Bookings:** 16 places available only. Please fill in the registration form and send full payment to Yoga Moves, P.O. Box 7191, Shenton Park by **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July**.

## Winter term dates: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July – Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September

**Nepal Retreat 2008:** The Nepal retreat is now fully booked and twelve of us will be heading off on a Nepal adventure in October ☺.

**Bali Retreat 2009:** The Bali retreat dates for next year are Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> – Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April (7 nights, 8 days). Please note that the final day of the retreat Friday 10<sup>th</sup> is Good Friday and also the first day of the school holidays. There are 12 places available only and places are allocated on a first come, first served basis. Details will be available early next term.

**Fee increase:** Each year, at this time, class fees rise by \$1 to keep pace with the annual increase in running costs.

**Timetable changes:** There are some small changes to the timetable for next term. I have adjusted the fees for my classes to reflect this.

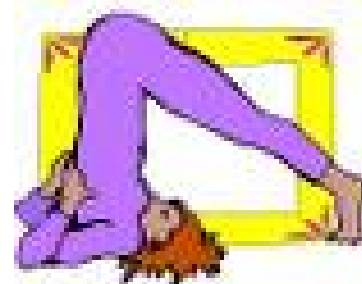
1. Next term will begin a little differently from usual. For most of the first three weeks of term, I will be attending part 8 of the Feldenkrais Training. Deb and Eithne will be filling in for me when I am unavailable. I will, however, continue to teach the two Wednesday Feldenkrais classes and the two Saturday morning classes.



2. **Saturday mornings 9.15am – 10.45am:** For next term, the Saturday morning 'Open' class will become a special Feldenkrais class and will have more of a workshop or 'intensive' feel to it. We will be exploring 3 yoga poses in depth using the Feldenkrais method over the 10 weeks. These classes will require some level of committed attendance (e.g. weeks 1-6 will have different themes from weeks 7-9 and 10). Essentially, I will be teaching a series of classes that are related to the headstand series but are also clearly separate explorations. For more information about the benefits of doing such movements please see the information above on inverted poses and the article by Feldenkrais Practitioner Lavina Plonka which follows, 'Rolling with It'.

- Weeks 1-6 will investigate the themes of rolling, improving plough pose (halasana) and the seated forward bend (paschimottasana)
- Weeks 7-9 will be based on improving the shoulder bridging pose (setu bandhasana).
- Week 10 will revert to an open yoga class.

**Note 1:** These classes are for anyone – beginners or more experienced students (see note 2 for guidelines for those with injuries). However, for those who have



done the Feldenkrais headstand series these classes are related to the work you have already done and will further improve your headstands. For those of you who have yet to try the headstanding series, weeks 1-9 are also considered to be the 'warm up' series for the head stand series.

**Note 2: Weeks 1-6 are unsuitable for those with unmedicated high or low blood pressure, ear conditions (i.e. infections), vertigo, those with any eye disorders (glaucoma, detached retina, weak eye capillaries, conjunctivitis, severe sinusitis), pregnancy, injuries or disease to the neck, spine and/or head. Weeks 7-9 may be unsuitable for those with severe eye disorders. Week 10 is open to all.**

**A special note for those with neck problems:** before enrolling please have a discussion with me about your neck – for some necks this series will be a revelation - for others it will be completely unsuitable (e.g. old neck injuries).

**Days and dates:** 10 classes, Saturdays, 26<sup>th</sup> July – 27<sup>th</sup> September

**Time:** 9.15am – 10.45am

**Cost:** \$171/\$141 concession or the usual casual fees for Usha's classes (see fees page).

**Bookings:** You may book for the whole series or part thereof however please note that weeks 1-6 should be done sequentially where possible. Please chat to me about missing classes before registering.

## Rolling With It by Lavinia Plonka

When Steven first came to see me, it was about his yoga practice. He explained to me that he had been born with spondylolisthesis (horizontal shift of one vertebra relative to the next). This, he informed me, gave him lots of back pain, short hamstrings and an inability to do good forward bends. As we worked together, we both learned about how determined his lower back was to remain in an arched curve, and how his pelvis preferred stability to any kind of movement.



After a combination of private *Functional Integration*® and *Awareness Through Movement*® group classes, Steven's back and pelvis were allowing occasional moments of actually reaching his toes. That was when he confessed his true wish. It turned out that he had been studying Aikido for almost 20 years. In all those years, he had been unsuccessful at doing a forward roll. Because he had been at the same dojo (school) for many years, people assumed they could just throw him down and he would roll. But because of his back, it was always a painful crash. While Steve loved the martial art, he was getting weary of his injuries and frustration.

*Instead of trying to "fix" his lower back, I decided it would be more rewarding for Steven to work with the actual practice of rolling. Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais had developed many lessons around the Judo roll. One of the benefits of learning how to roll properly is that it offers an avenue of reversibility when falling. If your only option upon falling is to crash-land on the ground, fear of falling can interfere with every step – whether you are a martial artist or a person walking down a street. By discovering the option of rolling, there is less chance of injury when you do fall.*

*While the Judo roll is slightly different than the Aikido roll, the development of the soft, rounded back and the smooth diagonal movement across the back are the same.* I piled a bunch of yoga mats and blankets in the middle of the studio and Steven and I began to "deconstruct" the roll. We began very slowly, actually doing lessons lying on the back that explored the possibilities of flexion in the spine. This eventually led to variations on back rolls. For many weeks, each time Steven rolled back, we'd both feel the "thwack" of his lower back flattening against the floor. I noticed that as he rolled back, he held his breath and tightened his stomach. Slowly, these parasitic habits Steven had developed over years of pain and fear of re-injury began to release their hold.

Eventually we came to hands and knees, exploring lessons where Steven learned to bring his head and arm under the arch of his opposite arm. Each exploration proceeded with great slowness and care. Steven's alarm system was so finely tuned to danger, that the slightest stress would return the powerful tonus (tension) to his lower back. Sometimes, we would stop doing the movements completely, and I would return to *Functional Integration*, helping to remind him about all the different ways he had learned to bend and breathe.

The day Steven rolled without crashing was a complete surprise. He just rolled, without preparation, without anticipating failure or success. It was to be the reference movement for our lesson. From a standing position, he executed a perfect Aikido roll. He was so shocked, he couldn't repeat it that day. But we both knew that something had changed. He had learned a new way of moving with the whole of himself, without interference, without fear.

Although I moved away shortly after that, I heard from Steven that he is still enjoying his rolls, his practice and has continued to integrate the *Feldenkrais Method*® into his daily routine.

Lavinia Plonka is Director of the Asheville Movement Centre in Asheville, NC.



## Spiral Child Yoga with Lizzie Morter

During the school holidays, Shenton Park local, Lizzie Morter will be teaching children's yoga classes. Spiral Child Yoga is a school holiday program for kids (up to 12 years) which includes yoga, non-competitive games, drama, creative movement and sound. Yoga for kids improves postural alignment, coordination and concentration and increases awareness, self-confidence and joy.



**Dates:** 6 classes, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays of the July school holidays

**Time:** 10:30 – 12pm

**Venue:** Yoga Moves, 45 Evans Street, Shenton Park

**Cost:** \$90 for six classes.

**Lizzy Morter** has been a student of yoga for 12 years. She is a qualified Radiant Child Yoga Teacher with over 10 years experience working with children. In addition to working as a nanny, she has worked several times as the 'Kid's Club Co-ordinator' at the Long Island and South Molle Island Resorts in the Whitsundays and ran "Confident Kids" at Little Paddingtons, a child care centre in Melbourne. She is also a Reiki teacher and Transpersonal Counsellor. Lizzie is currently completing her bachelor of science at Notre Dame (includes Developmental Psychology). Her classes are full of games, fun and laughter and allow children to experience the strength, awareness and inner radiance that come from yoga practice in a non-competitive environment. For more information contact Lizzie on 0423 400 290 or email: [moonheartreiki@yahoo.com.au](mailto:moonheartreiki@yahoo.com.au)

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**The Feldenkrais Method in the Yoga Class by Ofer Erez:** Yoga classes have always been a gathering point for people with widely diverging abilities, interests, and states of health. Two of my yoga students with very different problems found benefits from *Feldenkrais*® work.

Kathleen Clute had been coming to my yoga classes for several months. Being in good health, she enjoyed the classes but found her lack of flexibility annoying. She had done yoga for years and regularly included the Salute to the Sun (a series of 12 consecutive movements, coordinated with breathing, that are repeated several times) both as a warm-up and to get in shape. One of the more difficult movements starts in a push-up position. From there a foot is brought forward and aligned with the hands. "I have been doing the Salute to the Sun for many years and have always found it difficult to bring my leg to the front," she said. "Do you have any suggestions?" I have noticed that this is a common difficulty for many yoga students and have done experiments myself in order to find the source. It seems to result from a lack of rounding in the lower back at the proper time. I immediately suggested she could bring the foot from the outside instead of from in between the hands, for increased comfort and ability. The suggestion proved helpful for Kathleen. She wanted to find out more about what the *Feldenkrais Method*® can do for her and decided to try a *Functional Integration*® lesson.

She came to the lesson saying, "I don't have any specific problems except some pain in one leg and one foot that is always pointing inward. Can you do something about it?" I noticed a connection between the in-turned leg and the difficulty in the Salute to the Sun. Both movements involve the lower back and ribcage in a direct way. If they do not participate well in the action, there is difficulty with most movements of the legs as well as with rounding the back. The muscles connecting the legs to the torso tend to become stiff and stubborn. Her *Functional Integration* lesson involved discovering the mobility of the hip joints and lower back. A lesson of this kind can be gentle yet powerful. It improves mobility of the legs and aids posture, balance and walking. After the next yoga class she sounded very excited. "I did it!! I brought my leg forward without any trouble ... the easiest move in 28 years ... better than when I was in college." Kathleen now comes to class with a new interest: looking for easier and simpler ways to do the Asana and other exercises we do in class. She is also continuing her *Functional Integration* lessons.

The second student, Marie Mollart, was very stiff due to the effects of Parkinson's disease. She started doing yoga in order to improve her situation, reduce the effects of the illness and return to the active life she had in the past. "I didn't want to use the drugs that are usually prescribed," she said. "They have unpleasant side effects. I decided instead to change my lifestyle." She had been attending yoga classes for about a year and her progress had been consistent yet slow and arduous. "Bending in any direction has been very difficult for me," she says, "But the backward bending Asana are the most difficult. I am improving but would like to improve faster." Seeing that her progress was frustratingly slow, in spite of her regular attendance in class, I decided to offer more specialized help - to try a *Functional Integration* lesson.

The first lesson I did had to proceed very slowly. Aside from the stiffness and tremors that are common to Parkinson's disease, I know there is also a slowing down of the reaction time of the brain which tends to cause general instability and discomfort with fast movements. Within these constraints, I developed a lesson relating to her interest in bending backward. I was careful to incorporate the legs, lower back and ribcage in a useful, functional action. The lesson helped Marie sense the lengthening that is possible through the thighs and chest in front while using the back for movement. This introduced the possibility of a more comfortable posture and faster movement.

At the end of the lesson she felt taller, had more space for breathing and her posture and walking were better. The change was clearly visible during the next yoga class. Considerable improvement could be observed in all of the asana that call for any sort of bending backward - even several twisting ones. Marie was very pleased with the improvement in the postures as well as the added ease with which she was able to perform them. She remembers how she felt after the *Functional Integration*. "It was a very surprising feeling! I felt taller and lighter. My posture and walking were easier, softer and seemed simpler. I quite hoped it would stay for a very

long time, and I still feel it now." She decided to come for several more *Functional Integration* lessons to continue her improvement in yoga and reduce the effects of Parkinson's Disease in her life.