Yoga in Heels & On the Eco-Mat Everyone

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Sadie Nardini

These alternative yoga teachers and their custom mats are turning an ancient practice upside down

By Darrah Le Montre, staff writer

LOS ANGELES CA (RPRN) 6/05/09 – Jennifer Aniston has found solace with her yoga practice and in her expert instructor, Mandy Ingber, who Aniston says is responsible for her "spiritual and physical strength."

Brooke Shields, Helen Hunt, Minnie Driver, Madonna, Elle MacPherson, Sienna Miller, and Cindy Crawford also rely upon yoga to keep them sane during the rigors of Los Angeles life.

While Hollywood actresses have that extra pressure to look thin and maintain a certain glow, everybody and their mother (literally) has been seeking out the fountain of youth for eons.

Luckily, there are instructors that break the cookie cutter mold of this ages-old spiritual exercise, providing a forum for fashionistas, busy Wall Street investment bankers and stay-at-home moms that includes something other than the usual Reebok step and guilt over an ice cream binge.

Having practiced yoga and participated in a macrobiotic diet since the age of six, Los Angeles celebrity yoga and wellness expert Mandy Ingber is no stranger to the discipline it takes to reach career and fitness goals. However, what sets her apart from the slew of other teachers out there today is that she believes there isn't one way toward peace or enlightenment.

"Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional. With exercise, we express emotions we don't typically express. There's an emotional release through physical exercise. And it doesn't have to be yoga."

Perhaps this 'opt-out' attitude against the backdrop of so many die-hards is what keeps students flocking to her yoga and spin classes. A 14-year teaching veteran, she also has a DVD coming out with her own brand of "hybrid yoga" called "Yogalosophy."

Having been raised by a father who was "competitive" about his yoga practice, and often did yoga with the TV blaring, it's no surprise that with these environmental contradictions, Ingber would turn out to be a rock 'n' roll instructor. Known for her sense of humor, casual style and personal anecdotes, the Bel-Air native also has an infamous class playlist that includes U2.

But taking Jennifer Aniston's advice and combining class-time with private one-on-one tutelage, gained Inbger strong relationships with some of Hollywood's most elite female stars.
Though Ingber admits, "I love group energy in terms of motivation. I feel connected to the collective.

“We teach what we need to learn. In all of our difficulties, are our gifts. My gift is to take any situation and turn it around to benefit myself and others.”

A pioneering teacher, Ingber uses a Yogamatic.com customize-able eco-yoga mat.

Those familiar with the Laws of Attraction will go nuts for her Vision Board mat. A groundbreaking company, Yogamatic.com is waving *hasta la vista* to the sea of blue and purple mats that clutter studios, instead of inspire them. Yogamatic.com offers practitioners the ability to design their own one-of-a-kind eco-mat, made of sustainable materials and the cover image is printed using water-soluble ink, so it’s non-toxic. Practitioners can choose to upload their own image or find one in a unique gallery with over 200 designs from emerging artists to heavy-hitters like Donna Karan and Calvin Klein, who designed mats to benefit Fashion Targets Breast Cancer.

People Magazine will be hosting an “A-List Workout” event at 24 Hour Fitness on Saturday, June 13th from 9am-3pm with Mandy teaching yoga and spin.

Another highly sought after instructor is the fiery Sadie Nardini, who was pronounced by Time Out NY Magazine to be an “unconventional yoga guru.”

“I swear three times in every class at least,” Nardini admits. “I translate an ancient practice into real world situations.”

Co-owner of SoHo's garage studio The Fierce Club, Nardini is the creator of a unique method of yoga called “Core Strength Vinyasa Yoga,” which is designed to give you a "90-minute gym-strength, cardio and muscle-sculpting workout in just 60 minutes." A method New York Magazine called, a "calorie-torcher."

Sadie says this method, which infuses her own creative movements, is

designed to bring awareness to “mindful transitions and postures."

In touch with her Native American roots and Buddhist studies, Nardini says she uses Hara (root energy) and Tapas (transformational energy) helping “to generate power and direction” with a focus on alignment and creating heat.

A former nutritionist and part-time actress, Nardini found yoga during a particularly difficult time in her life.

“I was struggling with perfectionism. Starving myself and working out four hours a day. I stumbled into this weird class and the teacher had this long, lean, strong, graceful body. I asked her about her workout and she said ‘I teach yoga.’

The teacher invited Nardini to take the class, but because of her weakened state due to not eating and overexertion, she had to rest “after eight seconds of chair pose,” she says, laughing about it today.

Luckily, Nardini, author of “Road Trip Guide to the Soul,” found grounding in her yoga practice. Though she talks candidly about her fight with perfectionism, relating that at one time, even yoga became an addiction.

“I took a year off. I told myself, if you can’t handle this then you have to stop for a year.”
Nardini informs that “no one’s immune to destruction," noting that "postures can become coping mechanisms."

One of this edgy teacher’s biggest complaints with the yoga community is what she calls a “yogier than thou” attitude of divisiveness.

“I eat meat, I drink red wine, I’m a true yogi.”

Sadie Nardini’s Core Strength fitness video is ranked in the Top 10 on Amazon.

image of Madonna taken from DailyMail.co.uk

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