

YOGI WRITINGS: Marla Reyes

I love something I am not good at: YOGA. Brenda Proudfoot has completely turned my exercise life and outlook upside down. Literally.

When my friend Susan started encouraging me to do Yoga, I really didn't take it seriously. She was gently relentless, and I gently but firmly resisted. Finally she gave me a gift of a Thai Massage so I could meet Brenda, and that was extraordinary. However, I was still dubious about Yoga.

But, I finally thought I should give it a go. Here are the things I have learned:

1. Yoga is harder than any exercise I have ever done.
2. Brenda is the best teacher I have ever encountered in any class I have ever taken: period
3. If I could live my life over, the only thing I would change is to start Yoga at the age of 12, or maybe younger.

I've been a regular exerciser for years: Swimming, running, hiking, spin class, weight class, kick boxing, Zumba, skiing, etc. Nothing prepared me for the difficulties of Yoga. It is challenging because it asks you to use your body in a way that does not allow you to cheat. I was stiff, inflexible, and rigid. I could be all those things and still succeed at other exercises. Not Yoga.

I really did not like it for the first year or so. However, because I encouraged my friend Jennifer to take up Yoga, and she was naturally good at it, I really didn't want to give up. But, I watched the clock, and was thrilled when it was time to relax at the end of class.

The real reason I continued to go to class is because Brenda always made me feel as if I was improving and doing better. She knows everyone's weaknesses, strengths, and limitations. She encourages

all of us, and even though she is outstanding at the practice of Yoga, she often points out how hard the poses were for her when she started.



Brenda has the ability to correct our positions and still make us feel OK. She is extremely careful about people hurting themselves. The motto "no pain, no gain" is not part of her Yoga class. She works us hard, but does nothing to hurt us. She knows and teaches a zillion poses, and the classes are always challenging and fun. Because she knows everyone, we all get to know each other. The atmosphere in the class is one of friendship, helpfulness, and non-competitive work. I felt very inept for months, but I don't feel that way at all any more. It's not because I am proficient. It's because the class culture does not foster that feeling.

I no longer look at the clock. I no longer wish for the class to be over. I no longer think about what I have to do when I get home, and what my schedule will be for the next day. I am more fully present in Yoga class than anywhere else.

I can do Yoga moves anywhere: I stand on one foot while waiting in lines, washing dishes, brushing my teeth; I pull my toes apart when I'm watching a movie; I work on my deep breathing every day; I pretend I'm in Yoga when I'm pulling weeds and I save my back. As Brenda says, "You're always in a pose." I can't say that about any other form of exercise.

The best thing about Yoga is that I am stronger, have better balance, can move more easily, have better posture, get better sleep, and my attitude about life has improved immensely. I give Yoga credit for making my world much happier and more joyful.

I'm so delighted that I have started this Yoga journey and am lucky enough to be where Brenda is teaching. She has made all the difference.

