

# YOGI WRITINGS -Pat Contraras

## Yoga Gave Me Hope

I had mixed feelings about retiring but after 35 years in education I made the decision. I was looking forward to starting a new adventure! My life had always been focused on others, my career, and family, but very little time for myself. In fact I didn't have any real hobbies. I began to collect ideas and make plans for my retired life.

My retirement had a rough start: three days into my retirement I broke my ankle and I spent that first Summer off of my feet. To my dismay my ankle did not heal properly and I had to have surgery on that ankle the next Summer. After the surgery, months of convalescing, and very little exercise, except for the physical therapy, I had reached the point where I knew that I had to do something. I began my quest to focus on my health and began searching for an exercise program that would fit my needs. My health was already compromised by the fact that I had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (M.S.) fifteen years earlier. This created an added challenge in whatever I would choose to do.

I found a workshop on M.S. and Health sponsored by the Southern Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society and my best friend and I attended it. It was there that I was introduced to the Yoga class

and succeed in my execution of the various Yoga poses. Alicia emphasized to us the importance of mindfulness in our actions and noticing our surroundings. I found myself looking forward to attending the sessions and I always came away with a feeling of calmness. I'll never forget the first time I successfully completed the Supta Padangustasna, and Alicia and my friend shared with me my sense of accomplishment and pride!



This Yoga practice was adapted from Eric Small's version of Yoga for people with M.S. and I am very grateful to Brenda Proudfoot, owner of Valley

at Valley Yoga and the instructor Alicia Buss. After hearing several accolades about the class my friend and I decided to attend. I had attended other exercise programs in my younger and healthier days. I was never very athletic or very coordinated; in fact I was rather klutzy! My expectation for myself was that I was going to be challenged and not able to participate very well. I was surprised to find that it was quite the contrary.

Yoga, for offering the sessions. Alicia presents in an artful manner when she instructs and leads her sessions. She individualizes her instruction to meet the needs of the various participants. Her ability to do so has given me a renewed sense of confidence and determination along with the realization that my search for an exercise routine was over. I have found the right exercise program for me and a renewed perspective to approach my illness



I recall that one of the first things that Alicia, our very talented instructor did was to show us how to sit and stand from a chair. That very simple modeling laid the ground work for trust and confidence in our instructor and in the practice of Yoga. Over the many weeks I began to gain confidence in myself

MS Class:  
Tuesday: 11:00am - 12:30pm  
Seniors/Gentle:  
Friday: 11:00am - 12:15pm



Photos: Kathy Prekoski