

INDUSTRY NEWS

FITNESS INDUSTRY NEWS FROM IHRSA

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For Many, Yoga Is Good Therapy In Our Stressed-Out, Over-The-Top World

“Janell Hartman walked out of her first yoga class 10 years ago. She was used to pushing herself running and lifting weights, and yoga seemed way too easy. When the teacher told her students to sit with legs out straight and reach for their toes, Hartman stood up and left. She figured she could stretch on her own. Yet here Hartman is now, a yoga teacher herself, weaving among her students in a candlelit room on Capitol Hill in Seattle, gently pushing one's back, readjusting another's leg. Guilt brought her back to a second class after she ran into the teacher, who urged her to give yoga another try. But before long, Hartman kept going because yoga made her feel so good. Not physically so much. Emotionally. Yoga must soothe something that ails us. How else to explain how popular it's become? Sure, it's a form of exercise, but there are faster, cheaper ways to get fit. **Yoga -- with its Indian roots and thousands of years of history -- now seems nearly as assimilated into U.S. culture as pizza. Nationwide, an estimated 15.8 million people practice it.** Just 15 years ago, most people weren't quite sure what yoga was, much less what to make of it. Now just about every neighborhood boasts at least one yoga studio. It's hard to find a health club that doesn't offer yoga classes. And the variety of styles is dizzying: the 'hot" yoga done in 100-plus degree rooms, the strenuous Ashtanga, the alignment-focused Iyengar. There are yoga classes for pregnant women and prisoners, for toddlers, scientists and barbers. Yoga's still largely a middle- and upper-class pursuit. With classes that cost roughly \$5 to \$16 each, that tends to limit who shows up. And no longer does every new yoga class fill to the brim. **Still, yoga has never been more mainstream. Or such big business -- about \$5.7 billion a year, according to Yoga Journal. For awhile, Gucci sold a \$600 yoga mat.** Nowadays, the average shopper can pick up one for less than \$20 along with toothpaste and shampoo at the local grocery store. So what's so great about spending a few hours a week stretching and straining on a thin piece of plastic, cheap or expensive? **It's easy to view yoga as the latest fitness craze for those of us who don't want to run marathons or climb mountains. Or dismiss it as a pastime for women seeking a sexy 'yoga butt.'** Yet when yoga believers like Janell Hartman talk about what they gain from yoga, they could just as easily be talking about church. **It centers them. Makes them calmer. Yoga, they say, makes them better people.”**

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