

SEANE CORN

FINDING A YOGA STYLE AND MAKING IT MEANINGFUL

by Kim Childs



Seane Corn, a yoga superstar featured on magazine covers and *Oprah.com*, has been practicing yoga for 23 years and teaching for well over a decade. She has also taken her yoga “off the mat,” inspiring activism and raising funds for programs around the world that serve at-risk youth and AIDS/HIV treatment and prevention. *Natural Awakenings* asked this renowned teacher to share her advice on choosing a style of yoga and creating a home practice.

Corn observes that personality may initially predispose a student to prefer one style of yoga over another. “For example, the style of yoga I teach is Vinyasa, a fluid form of yoga,” she says. “It tends to draw people who are more athletic and perhaps more goal-oriented or self-competitive—those who prefer a practice that feels more like a workout.” This style of so-called flow yoga can also be very emotionally therapeutic, she adds.

Students who want to try more vigorous yoga styles like Vinyasa or Ashtanga should have a basic understanding of how to build yoga *asanas* (postures), integrate the breath and work with their body’s flexibility. “In my dream world, students would know that there are techniques they need to understand before they approach a more challenging or fluid practice,” says Corn. “That would mean either going to a very beginner-level class or an Iyengar class. For some students, that may feel too slow, but it’s providing the appropriate information that’s going to give them longevity in their practice.” Likewise, she recommends Iyengar if an individual is recovering from an injury.

Without proper technique, students can compromise their knees, lower backs and necks, Corn counsels. She explains that while Iyengar is quite a methodical and precise style for teaching fundamentals, styles like Kripalu, characterized as “meditation in motion,” can be more forgiving.

Once people begin to practice, physical and life changes may lead to the exploration of other styles. This is true for Corn, who has studied many traditions over the years. “When I was younger, I wouldn’t have considered an Iyengar or a Kripalu class,” she recalls. “It was only Ashtanga or Vinyasa. Now that I’m in my 40s—or even back in my 30s—I’ve wanted a deeper practice that has more space and more areas of stillness and connection, which seems to match my growth as a person.”

For those who are grounded in yoga fundamentals and want a home practice, Corn recommends setting aside 30 minutes to an hour at least three days a week. “If you have a half-hour, I would recommend 10 minutes of sun salutes, 10 minutes of standing poses and 10 minutes of backbends, forward bends and a resting pose.”

Turn off phones and other distractions, she advises, and focus. The more sacred, intentional and meaningful a

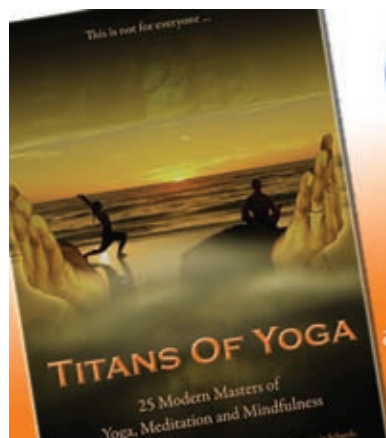


home practice is, the more likely one is to regard it as more than an exercise routine. “I set up an altar with things that are important to me,” remarks Corn. “When I put my palms together, I’ll set an intention and ask Spirit that the practice be a reflection of my devotion, a dedication to something greater than myself.”

At 43, Corn credits her yoga practice and diet (avoiding meat, fish, dairy, sugar, alcohol, caffeine and chemical additives) with maintaining her good health. “My bones are strong, my muscles and joints are quite supple, and my hormonal system is in really good shape,” she reports. “I don’t have PMS or other [premenopausal] symptoms and my skin looks good and clear. More importantly, I’m just very comfortable in my body and confident on my feet.”

As with any physical undertaking, anyone with a pre-existing injury or medical condition should consult a doctor before beginning a yoga practice. Corn advises students to, “Find a teacher who can meet you where you are.” Once on the mat, she says, explore what feels right and allow your practice to evolve as you do.

Kim Childs is a Kripalu yoga teacher in the Boston area. Connect at KimChilds.com.



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