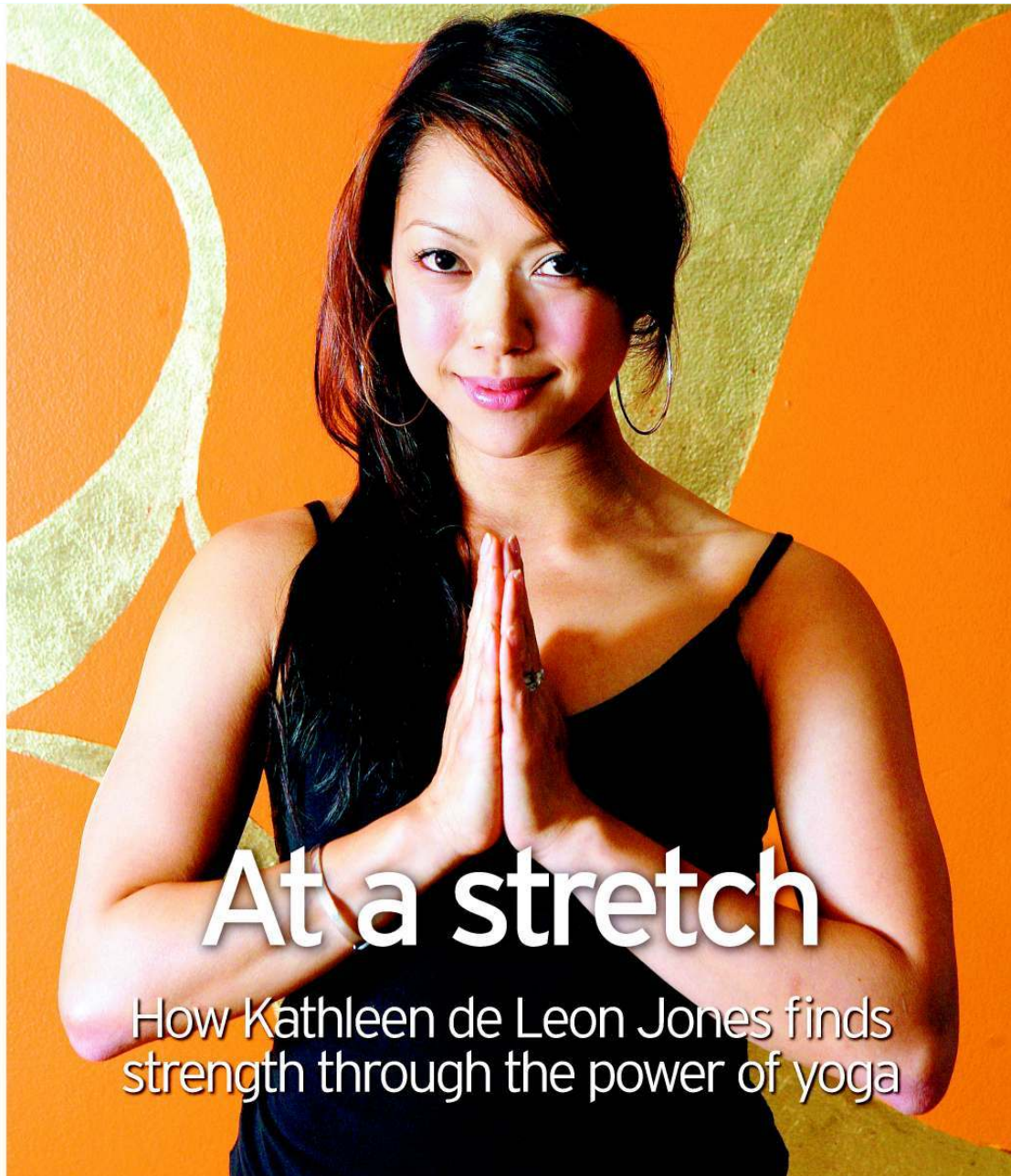




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Brief: POWER YOGA
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Power practice puts gym gurus on tiptoes

YOGA has long held a fascination for Westerners but has boomed thanks to stars such as Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow, who credit their physiques to its practice.

Many were drawn to yoga for stretching and relaxation, yet those who like to sweat when exercising were unconvinced — until they discovered power yoga.

Power yoga is a high-energy workout designed as a 60-90 minute routine to strengthen the body and mind. It is practised in studios heated between 28-30C. The temperature helps make the body flexible.

The building blocks of power yoga are posture and breath, where poses are held and synchronised with breath exercises.

Benefits include improved cardiovascular fitness and circulation, which speeds up sluggish digestion and gives better musculoskeletal strength as joints are put through movements to encourage mobility and ease pressure. Long-term benefits can include reduced back pain and improved posture, reduced stress and anxiety levels, and increased feelings of calm and wellbeing.

Former Hi-5er Kathleen de Leon Jones is a convert. She says it is as demanding as any dance workout she has taken.

Married to former Savage Garden guitarist Daniel Jones and mother to Mikayla, 2½, de Leon Jones says power yoga helps her balance a fun but chaotic home life.

“Power yoga is so dynamic — you get a lot of core strength, arm and back strength, and you sweat,” she says. “My husband encourages me to do it. He says I come back a different person — in a good way.”

Duncan Peak, the founder and owner of Power Living in Neutral Bay, does not fit the

stereotypical image of a yoga devotee.

A former army captain and competitive athlete, Peak has devoted the past five years to teaching power yoga and leads teacher training courses, retreats and workshops.

“On the surface power yoga looks different to most people but the language we teach in the classroom is very accessible. Westerners sit on chairs, so we need to open up their hip reflexes,” he says.

Women traditionally feel more comfortable practising basic yoga, but power yoga is drawing more males into the studio, he says.

“A lot of men feel more comfortable doing power yoga. They see a muscly ex-army guy doing it and it makes it more accessible. They think if he can do it it’s not so sissy.”

He says the open classes can be physical — “this is the most dynamic form of yoga, similar to how a gymnast would train” — but the basic classes are modified.

The goal of yoga is to still the mind, which Peak says is not easy in today’s society.

“It’s important to learn to still the mind, it’s about taking the negative mind and making it positive — the health benefits of this are enormous,” he says.

It is not recommended for people who are pregnant, hypertensive or at risk of a stroke, yet Peak promises gym fiends a workout, irrespective of what they think of yoga.

“You will have sweat pouring off you and you very rarely get injuries,” he says.

“What could be better?”

CNB

powerliving.com.au



Something for every body

THERE are different styles of yoga. All are based on the same physical postures.

Hatha: Slow-paced and gentle and provides a good introduction to the basic yoga poses.

Vinyasa: Starts with sun salutation, warming the body for intense stretching.

Power yoga and ashtanga: Physically demanding due to constant change in poses.

Iyengar: From the teachings of B.K.S Iyengar, its concern is bodily alignment.

Kundalini: Uses rapid, repetitive poses.

Bikram: Pioneered by Bikram Choudhury, and practised in a room heated to 38C.

Integral: Gentle hatha practice including breathing, chanting, kriyas and meditation.



Hot moves: Duncan Peak helps Kathleen de Leon Jones with a pose

Picture: Katrina Tepper



Travel meditation

A COUPLE of hours meditating can be more affective than sleep, according to Australian yogi Duncan Peak.

Mr Peak suggests listening to his latest release, *Power Meditation*, to ease the stress of travelling.

“Travel is exciting but can be very rigorous,” he says.

“Using time on a plane, train or bus or in a hotel room to be still and calm for just a short time can really recharge our batteries, dissolve anxiety, create new energy and balance.

“Meditating on a plane can mean the difference between a great flight and a really trying one — it’s more effective than hours of sleep.”

His CD features an introduction to meditation and two meditation tracks of different lengths, depending on the intensity you are after.

Details: www.powerliving.com.au