



sessions to their specific needs and requirements.

We interviewed Audrey Bartle, aged 95 years who has been doing yoga for 40 years and continues to enjoy practicing her moves with our Yoga instructor Sally Worth. 10 years ago, Audrey moved house and found herself missing yoga due to there being no class in her area.



She continued to practice at home but approached Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire and asked us to consider holding a yoga class here. Fortunately, we were able to facilitate this and have been running the class ever since.

Audrey tells us that she has experienced many benefits from yoga, including improved balance and mobility. One of the main benefits personally for her is the friendships she has developed through a mutual love of yoga –



“it’s the friendliest thing I’ve ever done”. Enjoying a well-balanced diet is also key to Audrey’s health and wellbeing and her secret weapon is a teaspoon of honey and apple cider in a morning! “Yoga arrived in Britain in the 1970’s. Today we see it being offered in some hospital facilities, nursing homes and here at Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire. I began my practice in those early days, when I was in my late 20’s when it was the new kid on the block! Today I still feel very privileged to have discovered it so early on in my life, as it has become my mainstay for the past 40 years.

The yoga I practice now is very different to what I did in my 20’s and 30’s and 40’s. I think it has become softer, more intuitive and I listen more to my body’s needs from my heart and not my head. In many ways it has become deeper, simpler and more effective.

Initially it was about learning the different postures or asanas as they are called and seeing what my body would do. The pose was the focus or goal. Over the years, I have noticed that this is not necessary and it is more about letting go of wanting to ‘do’ the pose and instead ‘feel’ the pose! I work from a more receptive frame of mind and focus on letting my body release into the pose, letting it grow more organically from the inside so it feels more natural. I am learning not to dictate what I, the ego, wants my body to do, but rather feel what the body is able to do today. This is the way I tend to practice and therefore teach nowadays.

The sages say that all we need to do is learn how to stand well, walk well, sit well and lie well. Most of the time we do all of these badly! Yoga gives us the means to cultivate an awareness of how we are



using or misusing our bodies and our mental abilities. All of us have tight and sometimes painful areas and this can be due to many factors, but particularly to the stresses and strains of everyday life.”

How can we release these tensions and tightness and discover a more relaxed and so a more fluid way of moving? How can we rediscover our potential to move and be fully alive?

“For me, the way of achieving this is through Yoga and this is what I hope to put across to my Yoga students. My aim in my classes is to help people discover through Yoga movements a way of freeing up the body that will release pain, tension and stiffness. We find that in freeing up the body, we also free up the mind. Mental blocks dissolve as we dissolve the physical ones. When you teach someone a new movement you are a catalyst for them to connect to the brain, to notice an unhelpful, old, outworn habit and try something new. We forget that, it is the brain that controls the muscles and thereby movement.

Every class is different. Every student’s needs will be personal to them and those needs can change from week to week. With patience, persistence and regular practice, things can and do

improve. The best reward for a yoga teacher is when someone says at the end of a class things like “I can lift up my arm easier!” or “My back doesn’t hurt anymore!” or “I feel stronger and freer and lighter.” or “I slept really well after class.”

I start my classes here at Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire with some breathing practices sitting in a chair. This starts the process of turning or “tuning” inward. We call it Golden Thread Breath. It is a short practice focusing or concentrating on lengthening the out-breath and feeling a longer slower deeper in-breath. This also helps relax the mind.

I then start with some simple joint releasing movements, maybe seated or standing. We gently move joints and muscles so we can connect the mind to the body. As one lady said to me in her first yoga class “It is about knowing where all your bits and pieces are!”

We need to be able to sense where we are able to move and where there are restrictions. It is only in being aware of something that we can do something about it. If we are aware, we can choose to learn a different habit or different way of approaching the challenges we face in life. The definition of insanity is

doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. Having an open mind and open heart is essential if we want to expand and grow. Experimenting with different movements, having an inquiring mind and being prepared to make changes is necessary for progress to be made. Shift can happen!

We work on Yoga mats, so sometimes we will be coming down into a kneeling or seated position. For people unable to get down on the floor or up from the floor, I always adapt the postures to movements from a chair. I will always find a way round an injury or difficulty. No-one is left out. I finish the class with a relaxation, either lying on the floor, with knees bent if more comfortable, or again seated on a chair. The relaxation is the icing on the cake, my yoga students tell me.

The benefits or rewards of consistent Yoga practice are manifold. It helps with not just physical pain and tension but also with mental pain and tension, depression and anxiety. It helps realign the spine and gives more freedom to movements that we perform regularly in everyday life, such as walking or getting up a flight of stairs. The techniques you learn on your yoga mat, you take into everyday life. You have a better quality of sleep for longer the night of your daytime yoga class. Breathing is improved. Every cell of the body needs oxygen. By exhaling deeper which means bringing awareness to the

diaphragm, the body takes in more oxygen which helps with tissue repair and makes us feel more energised.

As students learn how to move the body in a more creative aware way, they feel more alive, and awaken to new possibilities. Yoga is a process of empowering people to find



means and ways of helping themselves improve their own health and well-being.

In my 20’s, after only my second or third lesson of Yoga, I knew this I wanted to do with my life, to share with others the benefits and joy I felt, in being able to move my body and expand my consciousness. I decided to train with the British Wheel of Yoga and attained a Teaching Diploma which took several years. I continue to attend workshops and teacher training to develop my skills and hone my knowledge of the different ways and approaches to achieve the very best we can be today. It is awesome to discover how marvellous our bodies and minds are, and what they can achieve given the right tools and information.

Om Shanti.



YOGA

YOGA FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN OUR LATER YEARS

Yoga – a practice for mind and body, for any body, any age and any ability.

We asked our Yoga teacher Sally to share her experiences and her love for teaching Yoga.

Yoga teaches us to stop and be present, to be “in the moment” and to check in with ourselves our bodies and our emotions. It increase our mobility and suppleness and just 10 minutes a day can make a significant difference to body and mind.

Our Yoga class at Park Street is one of our most attended classes. Yoga is inclusive and each person attending the class can take it at their own speed and to their own ability. Yoga can be performed sitting, standing or lying down, with a variety of positions (Asanas). “Yoga can help with a range of ailments including, poor

digestion, disturbed sleep and it can help to keep joints steady and flexible, maintain healthy bones and muscles and regulate blood pressure.”

Yoga has grown in popularity in recent years and many older people don’t come to yoga until they are in their 60s/70s and many say they wish they had started sooner. There are yoga classes for every age group. Here at Park Street, we have a range of ages from 50 to 95! Our groups are suitable for complete beginners, and Sally our yoga teacher has 30 years of experience. She gets to know all of her class as individuals and tailors all

