



Amy Conte (left) and Ellen Cleary (right) team up during yoga practice as part of a Creativity Yoga™ class at Body and Soul Fitness and Yoga Center in Huntington. Yoga instructor Jeff Logan assists the students in perfecting an asana (yoga posture).

Creative Movement

by Mary Stipe

Photography by Elizabeth Glasgow

When the press release announcing a one-day Creativity Yoga™ retreat appeared on my desk, I was intrigued. Having practiced yoga on and off since the late '60s, I was familiar with asanas (poses) and pranayama (breathing techniques). But this program promised more than a day of yoga practice; it promised personal insight: "a guided encounter with your own creative genius." As a writer and sometimes fiber artist, how could I resist such an invitation?

According to Rob Goldman, a photographer, teacher and personal coach who developed the concept, Creativity Yoga is a "proprietary process that utilizes movement, breathing, imaging and artistic exercises" as a means of self-exploration. The program had its roots in classes Goldman taught for photographers called, "Shooting from the Heart." But it was only after he began the serious study of

yoga with Jeff Logan of Body and Soul Fitness and Yoga Center in Huntington Village — and their ensuing friendship — that Goldman made the connection.

"I had come to an understanding from my own yoga practice that there were certain sequences, and certain poses



Creative Movement. . .

in particular, that ignited my creativity. I would walk out of a class and would just want to run and pick up my camera."

That insight led Goldman to the core of Creativity Yoga — asana practice, guided visualization and art activities that are all closely linked together.

"In doing the postures," explains Jeff Logan, a certified Iyengar yoga instructor, "listening to the teacher giving you the instruction in the pose requires that your mind be cleared of extraneous thoughts so you start to focus on the teacher's words . . . Your sense of awareness keeps moving inward. The more you do that, the more the mind becomes quiet and focused and indrawn. It refreshes itself that way. There's a sense of clarity that comes and that becomes useful to the artist also — that ability to cultivate

insight through attentiveness to your practice also elicits the creative response."

While the creative exercises involve art, "you don't have to be an artist to do it," says Ellen Fleury. Although she's a graphic designer, Fleury found new freedom of expression in Creativity Yoga classes. "It's non-judgmental," she explains. "The exercises are so simple and they're so much from the soul . . . I like the way the creative projects just spill out of you. You're not thinking; you're not intellectualizing; they just come out."

At the Creativity Yoga retreat I attended at the Siena Spirituality Center in Water Mill, there were roughly 25 students with various backgrounds and degrees of familiarity with yoga. Several segments throughout the day began with yoga postures led by Logan, then segued

Artistic expression takes many non-traditional forms during Creativity Yoga sessions, including free-spirited body painting.

into visualizations and creative expression exercises facilitated by Goldman, culminating in a game during which each member initiated a journey of self-discovery prompted by a series of words like confidence, compassion and honesty.

Not everyone was entirely comfortable with the process in the beginning. But by the day's end people were greeting each other like old friends, sharing words of encouragement and committing to a "next step" towards whatever personal goal they had recognized during the retreat.

Can a retreat or series of classes really change your life? Maybe; maybe not. What Goldman hopes his students come away with is a sense of control over their own lives. "It's not as if you're going



Rob Goldman, who developed Creativity Yoga, leads students (left to right) Rochelle Rubin, Amy Conte and Ellen Cleary in a guided visualization.

Creative Movement. . .

to walk away after a day or a week or a month and your life is going to be totally changed. But there are openings that happen, little switches that click on that haven't been clicked on in a very long time."

For Ellen Cleary, who participated in one of the first series of Creativity Yoga classes, it means approaching life and business with a new sense of calm. Cleary, owner of Comsett Services, a mailing service that by its nature is deadline driven, says she found the courage to part ways with a difficult, but important, client after the second class. "I finally realized that it had to come to an end with this client and if it affected me financially, well, that was the way it was going to have to be." The following week, she

landed a new client through a referral. "It was kind of an affirmation of everything that had come out of this class."

Anne Marie DeLuca, who has practiced yoga for years, found affirmation and encouragement for a long-held dream. DeLuca recently started Creative Explorations, providing expressive art workshops for children and teens. She considers it a step towards making art her livelihood as well as her passion, a step towards "creating the life I want," she says.

As for me, I followed the day-long retreat last fall with a series of classes at Body and Soul.

Will I continue with Creativity Yoga? When's the next retreat? ☯

Mary Stipe of Northport is managing editor of Distinction and a freelance writer.

Body and Soul Fitness and Yoga Center now offers weekly Creativity Yoga classes.

One-day workshops are scheduled for:

August 2 Body and Soul, Huntington
631-385-4664

October 18 Arbutus House, Greelawn
631-261-6186

November 9 Balance Yoga & Healing
Arts Center, Huntington
631-423-2055

November 29 Inner Spirit Yoga Center
East Northport
631-262-YOGA.

A three-day retreat is scheduled for March 12 to 14, 2004 at Siena Spirituality Center in Water Mill, 631-726-4740.

For more information about Creativity Yoga™, call 631-424-1650 or visit www.creativityyoga.com.