

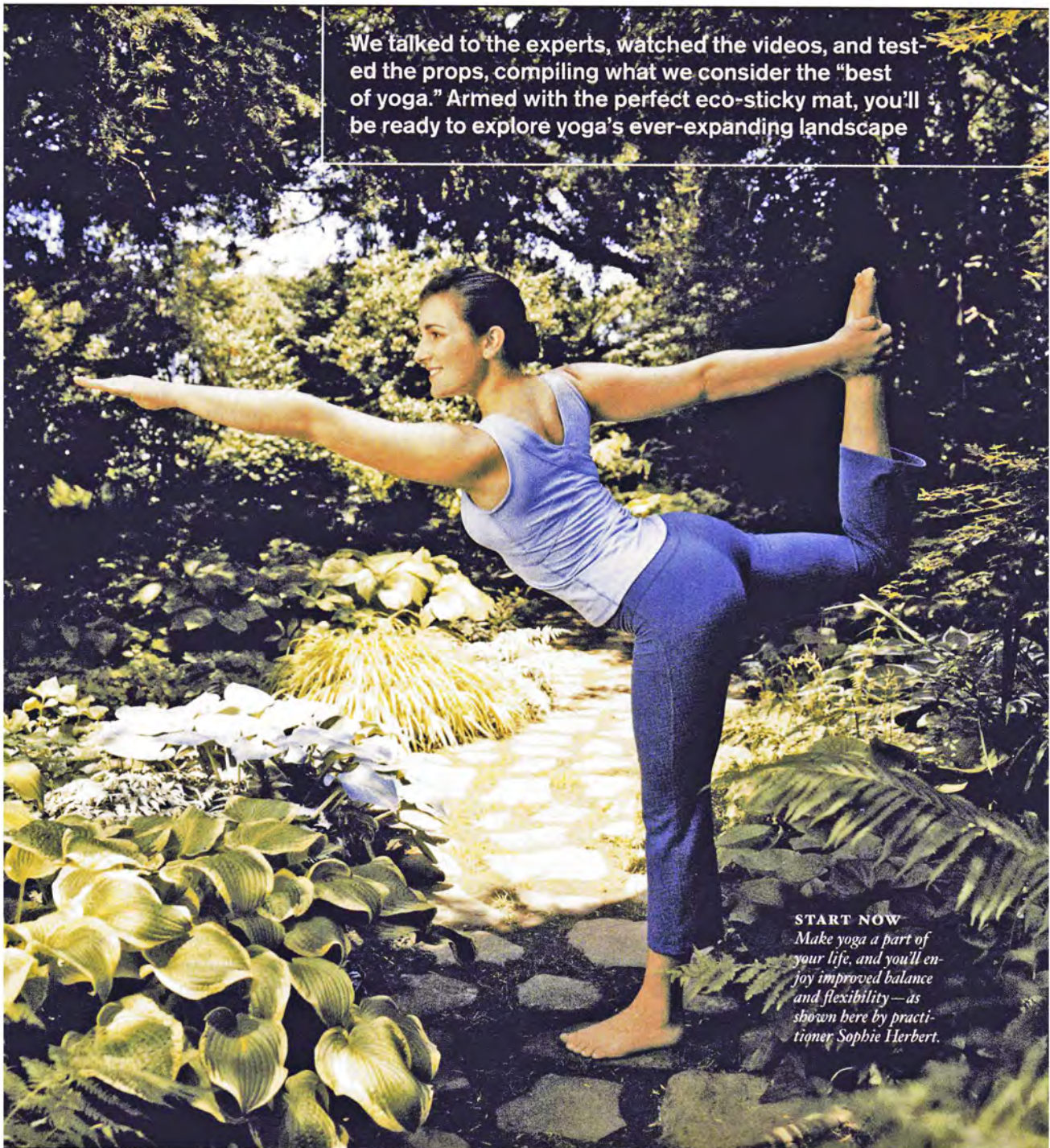


Preventive Health Specialist

The Best Yoga for You

By Abbie Barrett

We talked to the experts, watched the videos, and tested the props, compiling what we consider the “best of yoga.” Armed with the perfect eco-sticky mat, you’ll be ready to explore yoga’s ever-expanding landscape



START NOW
Make yoga a part of your life, and you'll enjoy improved balance and flexibility—as shown here by practitioner Sophie Herbert.



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The Best Yoga for You, *continued*

When its popularity in America first began to soar—along with the celebrity endorsements—you wouldn't hear yoga mentioned without the word "trend." For sure, commercial interests continue to fuel this misnomer (for a mere \$24, you can purchase Diet Coke yoga pants). But yoga has long since proven its staying power, in part because of its success as both a physical and emotional therapy. "Trends come and go, but yoga is popular because it works," says Richard Faulds, former president of Kripalu and author of *Kripalu Yoga: A Guide to Practice On and Off the Mat*. "Science is studying it," he adds, "and frankly? It's kicking butt."

From relieving carpal tunnel to helping cancer survivors with recovery, yoga's benefits have made news in various medical publications, including the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Nearly half of the hospitals surveyed for the American Hospital Association provide an Eastern method of exercise or therapy, including yoga. Even some insurance companies have gotten on board, helping their clients pay for classes.

As rosy as the yoga scene looks, the future holds even more promise. "As younger people see the difference in mobility between older people who have practiced yoga and those who haven't, yoga will continue to grow in popularity," predicts Sandy Blaine, a 14-year veteran teacher, cofounder of the Alameda Yoga Station in Alameda, California, and author of *Yoga for Healthy Knees*. "We've started to see yoga crop up in schools and PE classes; perhaps we'll someday witness a widespread acceptance of its philosophical foundation."

With millions of Americans practicing yoga—these days, it's not so much a question of who does yoga, but who *doesn't*—it may just be a matter of time. From preschoolers to senior citizens, new moms to Navy SEALs, everyone seems to find something to like in this ancient Eastern discipline. Some expect (and get) a deeply spiri-

tual experience, enriched by chanting, prayer, and meditation; others are in it for the ripped abs and glutes of steel. Regardless of what draws a person in initially, yoga has a way of delivering rewards that go well beyond the expected. "The key," says Faulds, "is learning how to enter the practice in a way that works for you."

Top 10

Teacher Pet Peeves

From flirting to poor hygiene, veteran instructors share some of the yoga class *faux pas* they could do without.

- 1. Cell phones** "People come to yoga to get away from their stress," explains Sandy Blaine, "and it just follows them in the door unless they remember to turn off their phones."
- 2. The in-class caffeine fix** "The worst?" says Seane Corn. "When students sip on lattes between poses."
- 3. Arriving late** "People should look in and check to see if it's okay to enter so that they don't disrupt the class in progress," suggests Baxter Bell.
- 4. Chewing gum** "In addition to the obvious safety issue," explains Blaine, "it interferes with the natural flow and rhythm of the breath in practice."
- 5. B.O.** "It's an intimate atmosphere," says Judith Hanson Lasater, "so take a shower before the class if you need to."
- 6. Leaving early** "Teachers are left wondering if you're leaving because of scheduling—or dissatisfaction with the class," says Bell.
- 7. Ogling** Corn explains: "I've seen students literally twist around mid-pose to check out other classmates."
- 8. Talking** "This disregards the rights of every other student to have a quiet practice," says Bell.
- 9. Withholding info** "I've had women come up and tell me at the end of a class full of backbends that they're pregnant," Bell says.
- 10. Loose shorts and no underwear** "I can't tell you how much genitalia I've seen in my lifetime," says Corn.