

PCVs are Practicing Yoga on Every Continent ...



Women in Kazakhstan taking a summer yoga class taught by Volunteer Leah Forlivo, a university-level English teacher.

In seeking stories related to yoga from Volunteers around the world, we received an overwhelming response. From Costa Rica to Bulgaria, and from The Gambia to Morocco, Volunteers gave us their stories describing why yoga is uplifting for the mind and body.

In the Africa region, Volunteers told us about how they used yoga to improve their own mental outlook. In the Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia region and the Inter-America and Pacific region, PCVs shared stories about using yoga to promote health and physical education for women, youth, and disabled students. All regions pointed to the importance of yoga in developing life skills.

Here is what Volunteers and RPCVs had to say:

Yoga as a Process for Overall Well-Being

"Yoga is a really good way for me to get my day started. Even if I am extra tired and am lacking sleep, it doesn't take that much effort to roll myself out of bed and begin.

"My usual morning routine is a simple 15- to 20-minute 'mind and body awareness' stretching and breathing exercise that I can do with my eyes closed. Face the window when you do morning yoga, so when you finish and finally open your eyes, you're greeted by the morning sun.

"Doing some sort of exercise routine in the morning jump-starts your metabolism, and many yoga positions actually purify your digestive system, making yoga directly beneficial to your physical health as well."

—PCV Francesca Po, Kazakhstan

Yoga for Everyone

"My assignment [in the Philippines] was business advisor to a workshop for adults with disabilities. As business advisor, I had little to do with the vocational and life-skills training aspects of the workshop.

"Since I have no background in special education, I asked my supervisor if I could spend Tuesday mornings at my yoga session. She then showed me a presentation that discussed the experience of introducing Yoga to mentally challenged children.

"I wondered out loud whether we could do the same at our school, and the principal agreed. I started a [yoga] pattern that was repeated for all my classes, which were held about once a week. The students asked for yoga class more often, so clearly something was reaching them.

"It did [a lot] for me too because it gave me an avenue into relating to the students personally since I hadn't the background to help in the classroom."

—RPCV Judith Ahrens, Bulgaria, 2001-03; Philippines, 2005-07

Jordan Mallah

The Practice of Yoga

"The practice of yoga allows us as Peace Corps Volunteers to find steadfast freedom so we can align with nature and serve the universe fully. Each day during service, I would steep myself intensely in the practice, especially focusing on my breath.

"With a clear intention, on each inhale, I would shine out and offer blessings to the people in my community, and on each exhale, I would bow to the beauty in my own heart."

—RPCV Jordan Mallah, Peru, 2003-05

Yoga for Life

"One day we discussed the idea of how to help the girls create a new ideology and to show them a new model for women in a leadership capacity. We discussed how to show them another way to see themselves as women in society in the 21st century.

"So we have started a project that is about that: helping women, through the practice of yoga, to understand that there are more opportunities for them, more choices, and we believe that with more choices, they will find the one that makes the most sense for them and their families."

—PCV Leah L. Forlivo, Kazakhstan