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DVD REVIEW

Big Yoga: Beginner's Hatha

With Meera Patricia Kerr

Reviewed by Tim Noworyta

If you or others you know have wanted to do yoga but are afraid to take a regular class because of your weight, age or lack of flexibility, here's an alternative way to try it out. In this DVD, Meera Patricia Kerr, a full-bodied, middle-aged woman, takes the viewer through a one-hour practice designed for people with plus-sized bodies or other conditions that might limit their ability to participate in a regular yoga class.

The practice is adapted from the beginning hatha 1 program of Integral Yoga, founded by Sri Swami Satchidananda (Gurudev), with whom Meera studied years ago. After a brief introduction about the benefits of yoga and an opening chant, Meera leads viewers through a series of eye exercises (done sitting) and then a "wall salutation," an adaptation of the classical sun salutation done near and up against a wall. For example, instead of downward-facing dog, she does "wall dog" (table pose) with the hands against the wall. And instead of crescent moon pose, she does a pose that resembles warrior 1, with the chest and front knee moving into the wall and the arms stretched up against it.

The rest of the asana practice consists of prone backbends, seated forward bends, half shoulderstand, fish pose, seated twist, yoga mudra (cross-legged forward bend) and corpse pose (savasana). Meera then leads the viewer through several basic breath exercises (pranayama) and concludes with a truly beautiful "Om shanti om" chant and wishes for peace and love.

Throughout the DVD, Meera's clear, pleasant voice and calm, friendly demeanor--as well as the presence of fresh flowers, a candle and spiritual décor--create a comfortable atmosphere filled with the love and peace she wishes to have large-bodied people experience through yoga. Her devotion to the practice and concern for the health and well-being of people with bigger bodies radiate throughout the program. And while, as Meera says, "You don't have to be thin to enjoy the benefits of yoga," you don't have to be big to be inspired by her sincere desire to share the benefits of yoga with those who otherwise might not do it.

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