

HEALING LIGHT YOGA AND MASSAGE

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Photos by Ben Carlson

Steve J. Davis has always been interested in healing. But for many years, Davis' profession was to train corporate and government personnel how to safely climb communications towers, high-rises and other elevated structures, here and overseas.

After Sept. 11, Davis decided that he wanted to do something different with his life: help people heal and live well. So he enrolled at the East West College of the Healing Arts, and graduated from its massage therapy program in 2006, after studying advanced courses in Asian massage.

"There is healing power in the hands," says Davis, who opened Healing Light Yoga and Massage, a yoga and massage studio, last May. Davis has studied a variety of massage modalities – Zen Shiatsu, Chinese, Thai, Swedish, Sports, Deep Tissue, Medical, and Hot and Cold Stone – which he integrates to arrive at an appropriate treatment for each person, given their unique condition.

Davis' 90-minute yoga sessions take place at the CoHo Theater three times per day, Tuesday through Friday, plus a Saturday morning session. (Call ahead to reserve a place in class.)

Davis, a registered yoga teacher who has been practicing yoga for more than 30 years, says that massage therapy and yoga are natural partners. Both reduce the effects of stress on the body and mind, decrease blood pressure, decrease heart

health, fitness and beauty

rate, increase circulation, tone the nervous system, increase strength, tone muscles, improve posture, increase energy, improve athletic and artistic performance, increase concentration and memory, boost the immune system, and offer many other lasting benefits.

Yoga can increase the benefits of massage. To better work on certain back muscles, Davis might help the client to move into a particular yoga "asana," or pose, that twists the spine. That position allows Davis to take a different, more effective approach to massaging those back muscles.

In turn, massage can help yoga practitioners on their path to discovering union in all, as Davis pointed out during his March appearance on KATU-TV's *AM Northwest* show.

After all, yoga is not just about physical fitness. To consider yoga as nothing more than another form of exercise is to miss out on its original intention, which was to facilitate spiritual growth.

That is particularly true of the form that Davis teaches, called Raja yoga, which places equal importance on focusing one's mind, emotions, physical well-being, and a code of ethical conduct in living well.

Raja yoga, also called Astanga yoga, is based on the eight-limbed path outlined in the Yoga Sutras, which were composed around 200 B.C. by the sage Patanjali. Raja yoga is yoga; all other yogas are derived from it.

Davis' yoga classes incorporate meditation, awareness of the chakras (energy centers), and bandhas (energy locks with the chakras); and emphasize controlled breathing (pranayama) throughout the practice of asanas (postures), including both holding poses and vigorous vinyasa flow.

The full eight-limbed path of Raja yoga is attained through dedicated, steady practice over time, resulting in health and strength of both body and mind, as well as a loving heart, and finally, freedom and total liberation (kaivalya, samadhi).

"It's a moving meditation, and your whole life is the same way. The more centered you are, the stronger you are, the less things bother you, and you are at peace," says Davis.

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