



MAGYAR GERONTOLÓGIA

12. ÉVFOLYAM KONFERENCIA KÜLÖNSZÁM

2020. 12. évf. Különszám

On-line verzió: ISSN 2062-3690

www. <https://ojs.lib.unideb.hu/gerontologia>

Ageless quarantine yoga

Escape to Yogaland in the time of pandemic

Zsuzsanna Varga

Key words: life quality, physical activity, elderly, online yoga class

Nowadays it is expansively recognised that practicing yoga can improve the quality of life by providing appropriate physical training exercises which can be performed by every age group. Yoga practitioners of the older generations beside maintaining their physical activity can heal their sense of balance which decreases the hazard of off-balance and fall.

During the years of my yoga teaching I met the representatives of every age group at my classes. I led kids yoga courses for preschool children, dynamic flow sequences for trained yoga practitioners, but I did have students over 70 years old who insisted to join an intermediate level hatha yoga class even if they had gone through serious illnesses and operations in the past and they were not able to hold each postures.

I have experienced that the elderly people are very grateful for the healing that yoga gives them and for the careful attention whereby the yoga instructor tailors the yoga asanas and sequences according to the physical conditions, state of health and capabilities of each individual.

At the yoga instructor courses the contraindications of asanas and defining the anatomic and physiological background of injuries and the physical limitations of each practitioner are emphasized intensively. This comprehensive teacher training and the continuous monitoring guarantee the safety. The instructor faces the mutations and the loss of physical and psychical balance in the the reality, at the yoga classes. Practice makes the master! It is more than true is yoga. Gaining practical experience the instructor can handle the special situations and needs with growing confidence applying yoga props (strap, yoga blocks, chair etc.), modifying the asanas, and using the power of words to motivate the students.

Supported by my friends I created The Force Yoga Group Facebook site in April , where I have been leading yoga classes since then. It is a great place to meet my yoga practicing friends, my family members, my elderly parents and in defiance of quarantine and lockdown to practice yoga together, at the same time. Our magical yoga carpet is a tranquil island to where

we can escape from the raging pandemic, where we can start our inner journey in the time of the outer movelessness.

The online practice team has already more than 100 members. It is an intercultural and intergenerational group. I knew I had no information of the health conditions, the perfection of yoga practice of each group member, and with many of them I had not practiced together in person (offline), so I had to call their attention to the rules of safe yoga practice constantly and acutely. At the beginning and at the end of the online sessions I dedicate some sentences to it, during practice I try to instruct precisely to protect them from the injuries. The verbal correction plays here a very important role.

My online students can be informed about the topic from the scientific articles I share on our page from time to time.

I am aware of the fact that an average home is not a well-equipped yoga studio, so I show online how to use the furniture, fixtures and everyday objects as yoga props.

A shorter, 30-45 minute Chair Yoga Class is the part of our weekly program as well, especially for those members who struggle with balance poses or get weak easily.

In private messages the students send me their observations, remarks, questions and requests. Some of them experience pain or tension in certain asanas, so we try to find out together the reason of it and to correct and to set the posture. A 75 year-old student of mine asked me to build a yoga sequence of simple breathing exercises and stretching asanas which can be performed by anyone.

Many feedbacks speak about how big inspiration is to watch my everyday practice and my enthusiasm is pushing the spectators to their yoga mat. There are older practitioners who perform the breathing and warm up exercises sitting on a chair, and it means already 15-20 minutes of physical training.

During lockdown there are 4-5 online yoga sessions weekly, the videos are available anytime. The regular practice becomes a sure point in the life of the members, there is something to look forward to, even if there is no stimulus to receive from the outer world. In this online yoga space you can get new friends, through the comments you can share your ideas and suddenly you belong to a yoga community.

The stress relieving classes I close with Yoga Dream (yoga nidra) relaxation which is an at least 20 minutes of visualization, an imaginery journey interlarded by positive affirmations while body and mind are calming down. Such a mini meditation does not require any intensive

physical activity but breathing. I could mention many other positive increments that occurred creating The Force Yoga Group, but quoted the great yoga master, **B.K.S. Iyengar**:
“Words cannot convey the value of yoga – it has to be experienced.”