

Yoga and Spina Bifida

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The contents of this bibliography do not provide medical advice and should not be so interpreted. Before beginning any exercise program, see your physician for clearance.

Anderson, Erica. A world of yoga: Class to books, it's taking over. *J201*, Spring 2004. Author email: erkander@indiana.edu. Article available online: <http://www.journalism.indiana.edu/gallery/j201spring04/HealthWise/Casey/Index.html>.

“Alana Radecki, yoga and dance instructor of 13 years, had her way of life threatened when she learned 18 years ago that she had spina bifida. Spina bifida, an abnormality in the structure of the spine, can affect the nervous system, eliminate control of the bowel movement, and leave one crippled if not treated properly.

“‘I had intense lower back pain, and intuitively knew something was wrong. My doctor told me I needed to limit my activity, but I wouldn’t have it. Instead I used yoga as a treatment,’ Radecki said.

“Counseled by various instructors, she realized the key to healing was to stay strong by realizing the most important information in her life. She began to study the intricacies of the anatomy along with her continual yoga practice.

“‘After a year I was given the opportunity to teach yoga, and I realized that it was a method for me on an ongoing basis to healing. I rediscovered how to move through yoga,’ Radecki said.”

Australian Association of Yoga in Daily Life. URL: <http://www.yogaindailylife.org.au/community>.

Volunteer teachers provide free classes at Balmain High Support Unit for children with spina bifida.

Featured Student: Patrick Friend. Bikram’s Yoga College of India (Houston, Texas). Article available online: <http://www.bikramyogahouston.com/FeaturedStudent.html>.

“... 31 years ago I was born in Liberty, Texas, with spina bifida. Basically that means I was born with a big hole in my spine, so since birth I’ve had nerve damage that effects the use of my legs. I’ve had countless amounts of surgeries, years of physical therapy, and even tried martial arts. My sister suggested that I try yoga several years ago, but it wasn’t until I met Radi, who teaches at your school, that I came to class. I asked her if she thought that Bikram Yoga would help, and she was absolutely certain that it would, so I came to give it a try.

“My first class was kind of odd, as neither Tony nor I were sure of what I could do, but I just tried everything to the best of my ability. In future classes, and after classes, Jessica spent a great deal of time with me helping me to explore and develop my practice so I get the maximum benefit from class. For some of the postures in the standing series I sit in a chair, and for some of them I can now stand, without using my crutches, while using the balancing bar at the back of the room.

“While I have led a pretty active life, NOTHING has given me more benefits than Bikram’s Yoga. Since my very first class I felt a difference, like actually feeling soreness in my ankles when usually I only felt numbness in my lower legs. Right then I was committed to staying with this yoga. It has paid off. I got total feeling in my right leg for 2 days after my first month!

“Over this past year, it’s been random in where I get feeling in my legs, yet it has continued for over a year now. Muscles that I thought were deteriorated or atrophied are slowly beginning to develop. My family and friends are overjoyed with my results. My sister pointed out that my calf muscles had developed. Several of my friends have noticed that I no longer fall as often. My posture and my balance are much much better, and I can stand up much longer now without getting tired. I love this change in my life. I’m sure that Bikram’s Yoga will continue to open a world of opportunities for me that I never thought imaginable.”

Gold, Martha, DPT. Email: mhgdpt@yahoo.com

Incorporates Yoga in her work as a pediatric physical therapist at a New York public school in the South Bronx. Many of the children she works with have cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, spina bifida, mental retardation, autism, and other neurological impairments.

Harriman, Michele Rooney. Kidspiration Yoga & Physical Therapy, La Jolla, California. URL: <http://www.kidspirationpt.com>. Email: michele@kidspirationPT.com. Tel.: 619.804.1630.

Integrate Yoga and physical therapy in the treatment of children with spinal bifida.

Lundeen, Sudha Carolyn. Answers the question: “I have a good friend who was born with spina bifida and has paralysis from her knees down. Can you recommend a routine of seated and lying-down poses?” *Yoga Journal*. Article available online: http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/591_1.cfm.

Ong, Cherri. Adapted Yoga & Elastic Band Exercises for Individuals with Disabilities workshop. Spina Bifida Association Annual Conference, June 26-29, 2005, Minneapolis, Minnesota. URL: www.sbaa.org.

Workshop description: The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) believes that physical activity is for everyone. Two practical exercise options will be presented and discussed during this hands-on workshop. Participants will be able to learn a series of seated yoga “asanas” (postures) as well as breathing exercises. The second half of the session will focus on practicing strengthening exercises using latex-free Thera-Band elastic bands.