

# Yoga

## - Integrate Body, Mind and Spirit

by Linda Dillon



teaching on and off ever since. “I’ve always thought of yoga as a parallel with my medical training and my medical practice,” Kay said. “I’ve always held it close to me.”

One of her yoga instructors found out she was a medical student, and she said to her, “You have to meet this other yoga teacher who has Crohn’s disease. He has been in remission for ten years because he eats well, practices yoga, and meditates. “So while I’m learning in my books about medication and surgery, that intrigued me and led to a lot of reading about yoga and this spiritual lifestyle,” said Kay. She picked up the book, *Anatomy of the Spirit*, by Caroline Myss. Caroline says in the book that **all illness is related to emotional imbalance.**

That caused her to question, “Why am I giving all these medications, and spending so much time studying about surgery when there’s this deeper layer?”

She had this knowledge base of yoga, all the underlying emotional components and how they affect the physical body, as well as the practical western allopathic way of practicing medicine.

After medical school, Dr. Corpus learned about Andrew Weil, MD, known as the father of integrative medicine (using the best of both worlds - alternative and complementary medicine with conventional medicine). She completed a fellowship in integrative medicine with Dr. Weil and trained in functional medicine with Dr. Mark Hyman, all while incorporating yoga as a key part of her approach to health and wellness.

Dr. Corpus now uses yoga as the front of her practice, and as a physician prescribes yoga to keep her patients and clients active. “This is the thing that keeps people sustained, moving and agile,” said Kay. It’s not good for the mind or body to be stuck, and if it’s true that emotions affect our physiology, negative emotions that stay in the body will start to wreak havoc.”

**“If you stick with it long enough, yoga becomes an interface between the outer and inner worlds—a portal to something much deeper inside, something happens,” she said. “It feels like a dream state to move energy and emotion out of your body, allowing peace and stillness in.”**

“Any kind of movement, whether it’s gardening or cycling or running or yoga or whatever, all has the ability to heal because it gets the tissues moving and blood circulating; keeping you from staying or becoming stuck,” said Kay. **“We have to learn to let negative stuff go; that which is not serving us.”** That’s what yoga practice is.

Dr. Corpus has a variety of classes and teachers on her weekly schedule. She has a beginner’s and even a grief class, which is one of her most popular. Kay trained all her teachers in-house and they know how to use props such as chairs,

blocks and pillows—options that make poses more accessible.

Dr. Corpus notes her clientele is predominantly seniors. One of her students has been with her for almost eight years and she’s in her 70s. “One of our teachers is in her 60s—Diane Kolb—who is amazing,” said Kay. Diane’s classes consist mostly of seniors, 50 years and above.

She goes on to say that age is one of the many misconceptions about yoga—that people need to be a certain age, have a certain body type, be mobile, or already have strength and flexibility to begin practicing yoga. “The Yoga Loft has a wide range of clients—some beginners just starting out, some are post-injury and others are in great shape,” said Kay. Sometimes yoga is just about learning how to sit, be still and breathe. “We’re teaching functional movement: understanding what is this particular movement, why we’re doing it and how we integrate the core and our muscles; not just leaving people hanging in their joints and ligaments which could lead to injury” said Kay. She describes balance, core strength and learning to breathe as some of the main benefits of yoga.

**“We’re all aging and living longer, and there has to be this way we learn to move with proper bio-mechanics, so that we don’t end up as fall risks or prone to injury.”**

“We teach people how to stretch appropriately, how to use muscles properly and how to move as the body was intended, but also to be still.” Kay said.

“My classes are slower paced and mindful, which can potentially be challenging in a good way,” said Kay. “To me it’s not healthy or sustainable to do all those crazy contorted and hyper mobile poses anymore.” At 48, she’s not old, but she’s about to enter that senior group and she’s more focused on down-regulating the nervous system, as this is how we heal.



Dr. Kay Corpus, owner of The Yoga Loft in Owensboro, is a board-certified family physician and integrative and functional medicine practitioner. She has also studied the natural holistic side of health and wellness and joins the two approaches in her own practice, as she believes it is essential to integrate body, mind and spirit. “Whereas traditional models of care focus on running tests and prescribing medication; functional medicine considers alternative treatments and seeks the root cause of illness,” says Corpus.

Dr. Corpus was introduced to yoga in medical school while she was working out in a gym. “The thing I remember about that class was at the end, where you lay in what we call Corpse Pose, or Savasana, and you basically take a nap.” She remembers thinking, “this is so amazing...and it was the first time I actually felt peace in my brain, and peace and stillness within, especially in contrast to the rigors and stresses of medical school.” “I think it was the first time I had slowed down, probably in my whole life, and something shifted while I was on that mat,” Kay said.

She tells people, “It was a short moment, only like 10 minutes, but there was something in that space where I felt like I could breathe and be really present.”

Kay has a gymnastics background and enjoyed all the flexi things that are cool, but laughingly thought, “Can we just get to that nap part.... at the end!”

Dr. Corpus has always been into fitness—was a fitness instructor in college, and did aerobics and kickboxing, but noted there was something different about yoga. She went off to get her certification twelve years ago and has been