

Yoga Co-op celebrates 20 years on the near east side



Driving along East Johnson Street, you may have noticed the sign on the brick wall of the building that straddles the 800 block between East Johnson and East Dayton. Walking on East Dayton, you may have seen the neon sign on the second floor of the building. Intrigued? For a better view of the Yoga Co-op, come on up the stairs and take a look at the gorgeous space that has been home to the yoga co-op studio for the last twenty years.

With light pouring in from three sides, and a gleaming maple floor, the space feels airy and bright. Attracting attention is a ropes wall and neatly stacked blankets, bolsters and blocks, essential for the practice of Iyengar yoga. The Yoga Co-op (YCOM) is the only studio in Madison solely dedicated to the study and practice of Iyengar yoga.

We reached out to Camilla and Deb, current members of YCOM, to learn more.

What is Iyengar Yoga?

Iyengar yoga is a method of hatha yoga developed from the lifelong practice of its creator, BKS Iyengar. Classes consist of poses (*asanas*) arranged to help each student develop strength, stamina, and balance, all to enhance well-being. Aligning the body correctly is fundamental to this practice. Another distinguishing feature is the use of props to increase awareness of one's own body and to make the poses accessible to people of all abilities.

Why are alignment & props so essential?

When muscles are aligned properly, this creates a symmetry in the body leading directly to experience balance, and greater clarity. Props are helpful to experience the benefits of each pose. With props, you can stay longer in poses, and get a better sense of areas of your body that are dull or just tired.

Is Iyengar yoga appropriate for everybody?

Yes! The studio caters to students of all ages and all conditions. The teachers at YCOM are trained



to observe the body and adapt poses to the need of individual students. I would say teachers at YCOM offer personalized and precise instructions. You feel that the teacher “sees” you in class.

What is an Iyengar Yoga class like?

In other types of yoga there might be a consistent sequence repeated day to day. Even though we do repeat some of the same poses, there is a lot of diversity in the sequencing. In my experience, that really helps prevent injury and overuse. Sometimes, we hold the poses longer than students might be used to in a flow-style class. There is an emphasis on movement, but also on learning how to feel the pose calmly from inside the body.

If you are new to yoga, and especially new to Iyengar yoga, is it OK to just pop in to any class or is there a curriculum to follow?

The co-op offers several options to fit different experience levels. Brand new students often start with a Beginner Series, a set of classes offered every month that can be repeated. There is also a Returning to Yoga Series, for folks who have done yoga before but need a refresher to boost their confidence before returning to the studio. You should check the website to see all the other levels that are offered.

Since YCOM is a co-op, do you have to be a co-op member to take classes?

Membership is encouraged but not necessary to attend classes. Many students do become members after attending a few classes and realizing that the discount on class pricing makes it worthwhile. As a member, you are invited (if you want) to participate in making the organization hum along: become a member of the Board for example. Anyone –member or not-- can sign-up at yogacoop.com/contact to receive a monthly email with information on upcoming classes and events. See you in class!

