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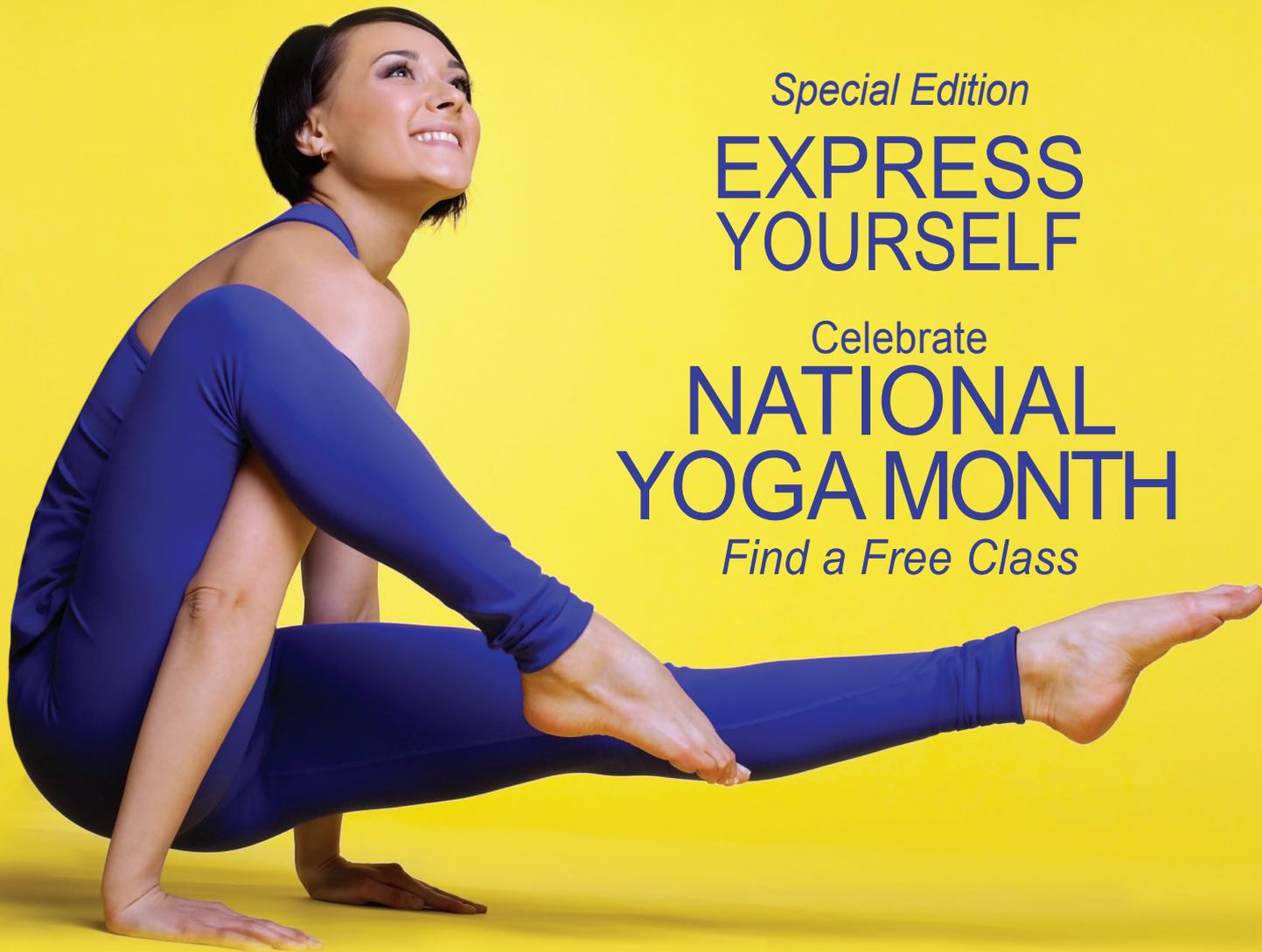
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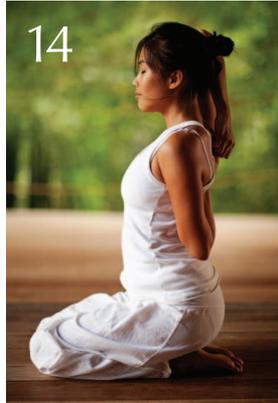
EVERY ISSUE IS
A GREEN ISSUE

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Natural Awakenings is your guide to a healthier, more balanced life. In each issue readers find cutting-edge information on natural health, nutrition, fitness, personal growth, green living, creative expression and the products and services that support a healthy lifestyle.

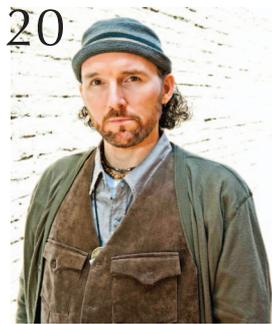
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The Science of Motion

An interview with author, dancer, kinesiologist and fitness guru Jo Ann Stugaard-Jones

by Susan Bloom

It seems as though today's fitness market is flooded with teachers and trainers claiming to be experts in the field of exercise, each asserting an authority based on a chosen area of specialty or certification. Jo Ann Stugaard-Jones's expertise, however, truly comes from a broad base of both academic knowledge and hands-on experience. Currently a yoga and Pilates instructor and formerly a professor of dance, exercise science, and kinesiology at the County College of Morris, the fun-loving 60 year-old resident of Cranberry Lake and author of several books on anatomy and movement has much to say about what she refers to as "the science of motion" . . . and why less can sometimes be more.

NA: What issues do you encounter in the fitness arena today?

Jones: There are many wonderful classes and instructors out there, but some are definitely not teaching the correct things. For example, there's so much focus on having six-pack abs these days, but in fact the "six pack" only represents the top part of that muscle group and is primarily an aesthetic pursuit. It's more important to work on strengthening the core and using it correctly, a discipline that involves the lower back, spine, psoas, and other muscles from the hip to the shoulder joint. The bottom line is, there are many different body types all trying to have the same look today, which can be unhealthy and promote injury.

NA: What is your approach to exercise?

Jones: I believe in natural exercise, or what I call "organic movement"—sound, anatomically supported exercises that feel good, help heal your body, and prevent injury. These exercises don't require expensive classes or equipment or the latest gimmick or prop. I would say that walking is the best form of organic movement, as it not only activates the working muscles but gives you a good cardiovascular/aerobic

workout at the same time. I would recommend walking at least three times per week for a minimum of 20 minutes per session, or daily if possible.

NA: What about running?

Jones: If it feels good for your body, do it . . . on a soft surface and with the right shoes. I would also recommend running outside rather than inside on a treadmill if possible—the added element of nature helps relax and refresh you as well as support the immune system.

NA: What other exercise forms do you promote?

Jones: I think yoga is one of the best conditioning techniques for stretching and strengthening. Many people feel that yoga poses are hard and are therefore not natural, but in fact it's very natural for muscles to strengthen in a held position—it's called isometric contraction. Breath, stretch, and flow of movement (vinyasas) are also organic to the human body, improving circulation and enabling an emotional and spiritual connection to the universe. In addition, and with the right teacher, mat-based Pilates can be a safe and effective way to strengthen the core and extremities.

NA: What concerns do you have for our culture relative to exercise?

Jones: I fear that we're becoming a "Hip Flexion Society" from sitting too much. It's critical that people take a few minutes out several times a day to stretch or walk in order to avoid becoming stagnant.

NA: You authored a book called *The Anatomy of Exercise and Movement* in April 2010 and are about to release a book on the psoas muscle in early 2012. Tell us about this new book.

Jones: The psoas is fascinating in that it's the only muscle that connects our upper and lower extremities; it's also known as the "gut feeling" muscle because it can actually hold emotions and trauma. The book explores the physical, emotional and spiritual components of the psoas muscle and its connection to the first three chakras and the energy system.

NA: Any last words of advice for readers?

Jones: Yes....keep moving!

The co-owner of Neat Retreats, a provider of fun and affordable yoga and spiritual retreats, Stugaard-Jones can be reached at JoJones3@verizon.net or by visiting NeatRetreats.com. Her books are available at LotusPublishing.co.uk.

Freelancer Susan Bloom writes weekly Health and Food features for New Jersey's Asbury Park Press and specializes in topics related to nutrition, fitness, and healthy lifestyles.