

STRIKE A POSE

ANTIGRAVITY AERIAL YOGA Fitness Three Feet above the Floor

[WRITTEN BY HEATHER KW BROWN]

DANGLING UPSIDE DOWN FROM THE CEILING isn't normally how I spend my Sunday afternoons, yet I recently found myself channeling an inner Batgirl I didn't even know existed. With my legs curled around a u-shaped silk swing tethered to carabineers high above me, and my face hovering 3 feet above the floor, I reminded myself that this soft, trapeze-like apparatus, better known as a hammock, is designed to hold more than 1,000 pounds. My safety assured, I then tried to "center myself and focus," but as the blood rushed to my head, the only thing I could do was laugh. And hard. It didn't help that the friend I had recruited to try AntiGravity Aerial Yoga with me was laughing, too.

In other scenarios, we might have been booted from the class, but as it turns out, laughing is not only healthy, it's expected.

"Most people feel some sort of cathartic release when they are inverted," said Jane de Albuquerque, who co-owns Launch Awareness Yoga Centre (LAYC) with Kelli Carraway. "Some laugh and some cry; that's okay ... it's good for you."

"Inversions are the number one pose used to treat depression. [They] stimulate the pituitary and pineal gland, refresh the circulatory and lymphatic system, and increase mental alertness and concentration," de Albuquerque said, adding, "AntiGravity Yoga goes a step further by offering zero

compression inversions. Our clients can elongate and create space between vertebrae without causing pressure and stress on their spine, especially the cervical spine ... and because the hammock is supporting us, we can hold inversions much longer than in a traditional yoga practice."

Though these inversions are touted to positively affect so many systems, my motivation for trying this floating fitness class was purely because it sounded like so much fun. A playful patchwork of calisthenics, dance, gymnastics, Pilates and yoga fused together, AntiGravity Aerial Yoga is the brainchild of Christopher Harrison, a former gymnast and Broadway dancer.

And then there's me — a far-from-graceful runner who shamefully admits to stretching rarely (bad athlete, bad athlete) and barring rabid dogs and emergencies, I typically shy from any kind of dramatic movement. Despite my penchant for being grounded, my curiosity would not be deterred and I eagerly showed up for class at the 2,000-plus-square-foot LAYC studio in Kennesaw.

The hardest part for me was adjusting to being airborne, but I quickly realized just how great this style of yoga can be, and when words like bat, peanut, cocoon and womb are converted to poses, the effort tends to feel less like work and more like play, reminiscent of hanging from the monkey bars as a



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF
JESSICA LAYNE | THE PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



**LAUNCH AWARENESS
YOGA CENTRE**

3450 Acworth Due West Road
Suite 390
Kennesaw
770-975-4795
www.launchawareness.com

kid on the playground. Only now, the environment is peaceful and controlled, the motions are slow and methodical, and the result is a full-body workout that improves flexibility, muscular tone and cardiovascular health, while also realigning the body.

“Most people leave here taller after the first class,” said de Albuquerque, a competitive athlete and former runner herself. “I practiced yoga as a way to rehabilitate my knees after surgery and I fell in love with the practice. I became a certified yoga instructor and met Kelli [who] introduced me to AntiGravity Yoga. I was able to work out and tone muscles without creating stress, pounding, compression in my joints, and I still received some of the benefits of a yoga practice.”

AntiGravity Yoga has a number of classes within its curriculum, allowing it to be accessible to all people regardless of age, fitness level and prior yoga experience. Classes include low impact cardio, strength and flexibility training, balance, agility exercises and inversions. Private Sessions are also available.

Launch Awareness, which celebrates its one-year anniversary this month, offers traditional yoga, restorative yoga, pre- and post-natal yoga as well as kids classes, in addition to AntiGravity Yoga, and is Georgia’s first AntiGravity Yoga franchise. Don’t be surprised if you see a LAYC studio pop up in your area soon.

HOT YOGA

Breathe, Sweat and Don’t Forget Your Water

[WRITTEN BY BRADEN DANBURY]

“OH MAN, I’M GOING TO THROW UP on my yoga mat and embarrass myself in front of all of these women,” I thought to myself, looking around Mind Body Heart (MBH) Yoga Studio. There were 11 people in the class — 10 of them women. I was the lone man and the only student in danger of vomiting.

I decided on the slightly less embarrassing option of sitting on my mat to catch my breath. Calmer and more settled after a couple of minutes, I noticed the squeaking of feet shifting on the mats had grown louder while the instructor’s voice faded. My chin fell to my chest, and I passed out. The instructor and a physical therapist in the class awoke me moments later and pressed a cup of water into my hands.

Obviously, I underestimated the Power Max yoga class. Having taken some yoga classes previously, I decided to bypass MBH Yoga’s beginner-friendly classes in lieu of something more demanding. Mission accomplished. MBH Yoga practices the Power Vinyasa-style of yoga popularized by Baron Baptiste, and it is unlike anything I have ever experienced.

Mary Beth Howell, founder and owner of MBH Yoga, explained that what sets her studio and its style apart is the emphasis on intuition instead of tradition. While more rigid styles of yoga do not allow for changes to the selection and order of postures, Howell’s classes encourage instructors to adapt the tempo, poses and difficulty. Howell was quick to assure, however, that this does not mean making assumptions about the abilities of the students. It means that the classes, especially the Power Max class, are calculated to keep everyone moving and breathing at their peak levels to achieve the best possible results.

My previous experience with yoga was the exact opposite. Sure, all yoga has a lot of standing and bending, sitting and stretching, but in other classes, I had time to rest in child’s pose with my head on the mat or a couple of leisurely sun salutations to the ceiling. Not so in Howell’s studio, where the focus is “one breath, one movement.” When the class inhaled, we moved into one posture and held. Then as we exhaled, we shifted into a different pose and held.

It is a calming and enjoyable practice of meditation

Specialty Pool And Spa

- Complete In-House Landscape Design-Build Services
- Custom Pools, Spas & Water Features
- Total Restorations
- Specializing in Difficult Site Locations

770.664.2200
www.specialtypoolandspa.com

Fifth Annual Digital Graffiti

Friday & Saturday, June 8–9, 2012

Purchase tickets at www.digitalgraffiti.com or at Forville Press in Alys Beach

Expanded 2-Night Event
Digital Graffiti expands this year to include an additional evening on Friday featuring a “Gallery Stroll” where artists are available to discuss their work with attendees in an open air salon-style setting. On Saturday, end the night poolside at Caliza Pool for the after party.

Friday, June 8 · 8:30–11 p.m. | Saturday, June 9 · 8:30–Midnight
Digital Graffiti is a celebration of international digital artistry. Join Alys Beach as we showcase the fusion of design, technology, and architecture.

digitalgraffiti

Visit South Walton
FLORIDA 360.BLUE



THE FORUM ANNIVERSARY EVENT!!!
RACE, MUSIC, FUN, FOOD AND FASHION

8-9 AM



THE INAUGURAL
5K & 1K
RUN THE CORNERS
www.runthecorners.com

11-4PM



KIDS ACTIVITIES
FACE PAINTING, MAGIC,
FISHING IN THE FOUNTAIN,
INFLATABLES, KIDS MUSIC!

1-3PM



LIVE MUSIC
at the clock tower
ENJOY THE TUNES THAT REMIND
US OF SUMMER FUN!

2-4PM



TASTE OF THE FORUM
A COMMUNITY FAVORITE!
SAMPLE THE FLAVORS OF THE FORUM
TICKETS ARE 50 CENTS EACH



5155 Peachtree Parkway Norcross, GA



WWW.THEFORUMONPEACHTREE.COM

YOGA



PHOTO COURTESY OF ISTOCKPHOTO.COM | ©ERIC WOOD

through movement, but it also requires and builds strength, flexibility, balance and fitness. Whereas other yoga classes were used as a warm-up before moving to the weight room, these classes move quickly into a taxing core workout, and with the heat, very little time is spent “warming” muscles.

Yes, the heat. Most of MBH Yoga’s classes, which are open to students of any level, are held in a heated room where temperatures climb up into the 90s. The practice of hot yoga provides a number of benefits. Less time is spent preparing the body for exercise since it warms automatically with the room’s temperature, allowing the class to quickly ramp up to a fast pace and stay there. Those heated muscles also make it possible for students to stretch further and deeper into the poses. Finally, the heat causes students to sweat throughout the class, ridding the organs of toxins.

Students are instructed to bring towels and water bottles as well as their yoga mats to class. Ill-prepared for the heat and the sweat, I simply got dehydrated and the water bottle sitting in my car certainly didn’t help.

Asked for the most important advice she gives to students with no experience with yoga, Howell said, “Come with an open mind and come more than once.” Like any strenuous workout, most people are going to be sore after the first class or two of power yoga, but the pain recedes with patience and enough practice, leaving students with a newfound sense of peace and strength.

After successfully remaining conscious, I rejoined the class at the instructor’s suggestion. The women congratulated me on how gracefully

I passed out and complimented my bravery in not running to the car. I resolved to come back soon and make it through an entire Power Max class on my feet. **PN**

MIND BODY HEART YOGA

4320 Settendown Village Road
Cumming
770-862-1053
www.mbyoga.com

ONLINE *exclusive*

For a list of additional yoga studios around town and descriptions of the types of yoga they offer, visit us online at www.ptsnorth.com.