

Good Life

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Men strike a pose at one of Vinyasa Yoga's broga classes.

Picture: GREG TOTMAN

Broga: it's yoga for bros

Yoga for men is taking off in Fairy Meadow, writes **EMMA SPILLETT**.

Scan the room at a typical post-work yoga class and you're likely to spy a sea of women.

Despite the discipline originating as a technique for men, by men, it is women who are responsible for yoga's popularity, spruiking the practice's physical and spiritual benefits.

But Fairy Meadow yoga school Vinyasa Yoga is keen to allow Illawarra men to reclaim some mat space, running bi-monthly "broga" classes, exclusively for blokes.

Teacher Steven Hinchliffe said the classes were designed to encourage male first-timers to try yoga in a non-threatening space.

"Lots of guys don't feel comfortable in a class that is mostly full of women - some of them feel very intimidated," he said.

"I think a lot of them find the classes really challenge their egos - they can struggle with something physically that women can do

relatively easily. They become more competitive and think: 'I'm a guy, I'm strong, I should be able to do this', so it can be quite confronting."

The men's-only classes follow a similar routine to regular sessions, beginning with breathing exercises and a light warm-up.

Participants are then put through a series of simple standing poses and static floor moves and stretches, designed to target the Western male body.

"Men and women tend to have different things they're good at," Hinchliffe explained.

"Women tend to be more flexible but aren't initially as strong in their upper body, whereas men have a good exterior upper body but often lack core stability so the classes are a good chance to work on those areas."

While nailing the downward-facing dog is a common goal for budding yogis, mastering the breathing and meditation exercises are also important.

Hinchliffe said his classes focused on spirituality and mindfulness, giving men a space to have

much-needed "mental time".

"A lot of guys have very busy minds, they're always thinking about stuff," he said.

"Women do too, but men tend to have difficulty expressing it; this gives them that mental time out to really just sort through their thoughts and process things without needing to communicate with someone else."

“Lots of guys don't feel comfortable in a class that is mostly full of women”
Steven Hinchliffe

Along with the mental benefits, men often find regular yoga classes improves their strength, posture and flexibility.

The practice has become popular with high-level athletes, including surfers and mountain bike riders, who work it into their high-cardio or weight-based exercise regime.

"We have a lot of athletes who use yoga for its strength and

mobility, they find it really works in with their other training," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"People find they like yoga's more integrated way of working with the body; they see it as a holistic practice with that real focus on creating a sense of well-being and calm."

Vinyasa has been running the men's-only classes for about five months and has already experienced an influx of gents, keen to test out their poses.

"We've had quite a few people come to the broga classes and then start attending our regular sessions, so that's great to see," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"Some people regularly teach men's-only yoga classes - I'm not a fan of that gender segregation; our intention is just to give guys a chance to try out yoga and feel comfortable in the technique so they can integrate into our regular classes."

The next broga session will be held on Saturday, September 6, from 2pm to 4pm at Vinyasa Yoga in Fairy Meadow - info@vinyasayoga.net.au.



What's on

THEATRE

The Arcadians theatre group celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2014 with a production of the seven-time Tony Awards winning musical *Phantom of the Opera*. At IPAC from August 15 to 24. Times vary. Tickets \$42-\$48.

ART

The *Life on Flinders* exhibition is on at the Old Courthouse, Cliff Road, Wollongong, from Friday until Sunday with life drawings from local artists.

REUNION

Woonona High School's 50th anniversary reunion is on Saturday at Woonona/Bulli RSL Club. All ex-students and teachers are invited. Cost: \$50. Tickets available from the club or proticket.com.au.

OPEN DAY

Rankins Funerals will hold an open day on Saturday to demystify the process that occurs after death. Guided tours, information packs and JPs will be available and staff to answer any questions you have. At 270 Cowper Street, Warrawong, 10am to 2pm.

THEATRE

Wollongong's Black Box Theatre Company presents *Trainspotting* based on the Irvine Welsh novel. It is an electric, gripping and bold retelling of the cult classic at The Vault, Port Kembla, until Saturday. Tickets: \$30, concessions \$25, groups \$20. Details and bookings: blackboxtheatre.org

MARKETS

Kiama Sea Side Markets - Inspect the array of country craft, artisan and antique ware on display, as well as bric-a-brac, collectibles, plants and beautiful homemade items. Sunday 9am - 3pm at Black Beach, Kiama. Further information 4232 3322.



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