

# SEATTLE YOGA ARTS NEWS

ISSUE #41

DENISE BENITEZ, EDITOR

NEW YEAR, 2007

## THE FINE ART OF BREATHING IN AND BREATHING OUT

by Denise Benitez

**O**n my bookshelf, I have many books about breathing: *The Art of Breathing*; *Science of Breath*; *Ways to Better Breathing*; *Conscious Breathing*; *The Breathing Book*; *The Yoga of Breath*; *Light on Pranayama*. Why would one need to study this instinctual habit? Isn't breath automatic?

I have devoted as much of my energy and focus to the art of breathing, as I have to the art of asana and mediation. Becoming aware of and changing our breathing patterns is one of the most immediate and powerful ways to change the chemical balance in our blood stream, the way our brains fire, the tone of our muscles, our energy, our mood, and our general overall health. And breathing practices are available to anyone at any time. You can practice endless varieties of pranayama in your meditation and yoga practice time, or you can simply learn how to take a few deeper breaths when you are sitting in traffic. Taking a few deeper natural un-forced breaths will transform your life, I guarantee it.

In our daily lives, we breathe with about 30% of our lung capacity. If you sigh, yawn or often feel out of breath and fatigued, your body may be poorly oxygenated. The ancients considered breath magical, an avenue for spirit to enter and leave the body, something that is naturally inside you, but that needs wise attention and guidance to fulfill its' potential for radiant health.

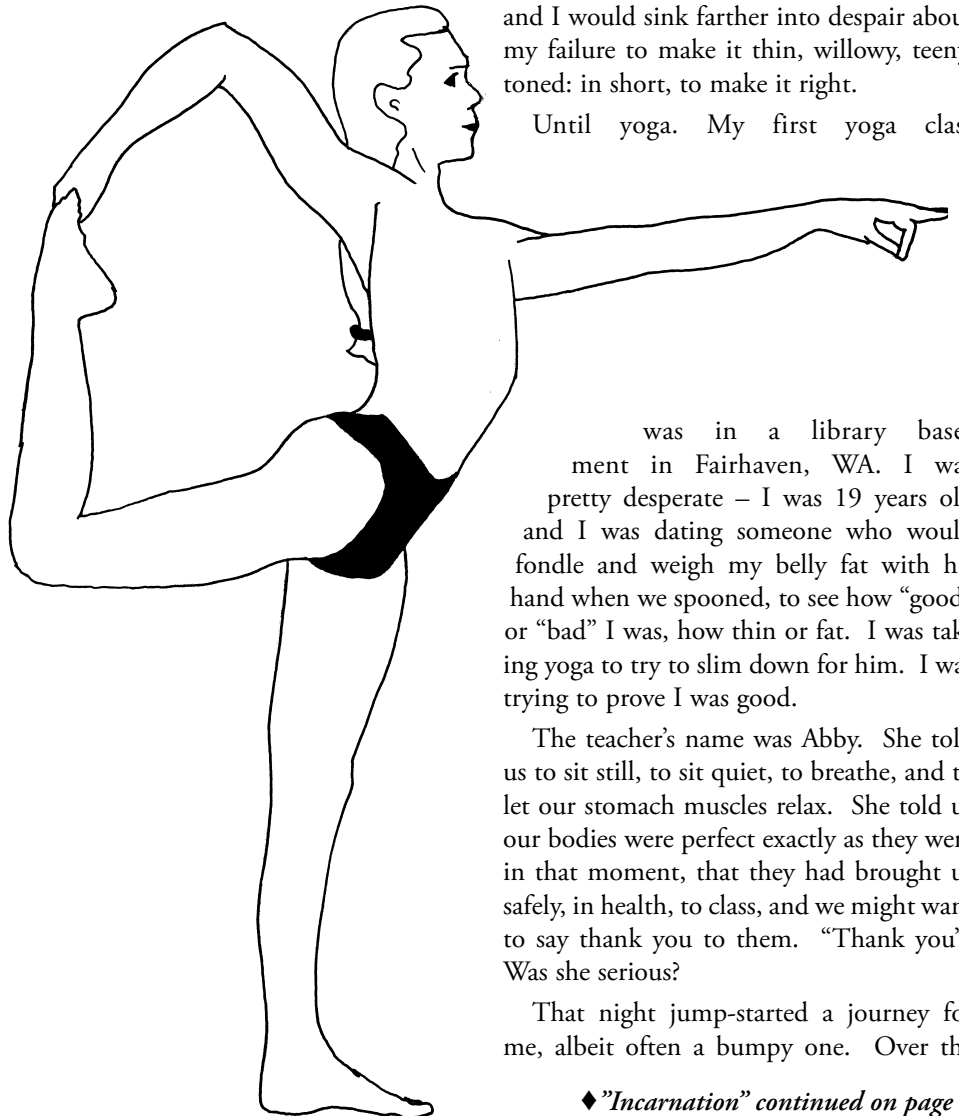
BKS Iyengar says this about inhalation: "Inhalation is the intake of cosmic energy by the individual for her growth and progress. It is the Infinite uniting with the finite. It draws in the breath of life as carefully and gently as the fragrance of a flower might be indrawn and distributes it evenly throughout the body."

And about exhalation, he says, "Exhalation is the outflow of the individual

energy to unite with the cosmic energy. It quiets and silences the brain. It is the surrender of one's busy mind; it immerses one in Infinity."

In working with the breath, it is wise, before launching into formal yogic breathing practices, to discover your own natural breath. Before placing the form and control of pranayama into your breathing, see if you

◆ "Breathing" continued on page 2



## INCARNATION

By Shelly Lynn Fayette

**I**n the Bible, every time an angel shows up, they always say the same thing, right off the bat: "Fear not."

Fear not. Do not be afraid. For as long as I can remember, I've been afraid of my body, petrified of its jiggles and arcs. I've done awful things to it, convinced it was betraying me. I've force-fed it until I was dazed and numb, starved it, induced it to vomit, made it choke down speedy pills and laxatives, tried to forget about it with alcohol. None of this worked, of course. It would, inevitably, return to its Marilyn-Monroe-circa-Some-Like-It-Hot curviness, and I would sink farther into despair about my failure to make it thin, willowy, teeny, toned: in short, to make it right.

Until yoga. My first yoga class

was in a library basement in Fairhaven, WA. I was pretty desperate – I was 19 years old and I was dating someone who would fondle and weigh my belly fat with his hand when we spooned, to see how "good" or "bad" I was, how thin or fat. I was taking yoga to try to slim down for him. I was trying to prove I was good.

The teacher's name was Abby. She told us to sit still, to sit quiet, to breathe, and to let our stomach muscles relax. She told us our bodies were perfect exactly as they were in that moment, that they had brought us safely, in health, to class, and we might want to say thank you to them. "Thank you"? Was she serious?

That night jump-started a journey for me, albeit often a bumpy one. Over the

◆ "Incarnation" continued on page 2

## ◆ “Breathing” continued from page 1

can unfold, from the inside out, the natural freedom of your own breath. Here are some suggestions and images from Donna Farhi’s book, “The Breathing Book”, which may help you free your breathing pattern. In just reading these images, you may notice your breath deepening naturally.

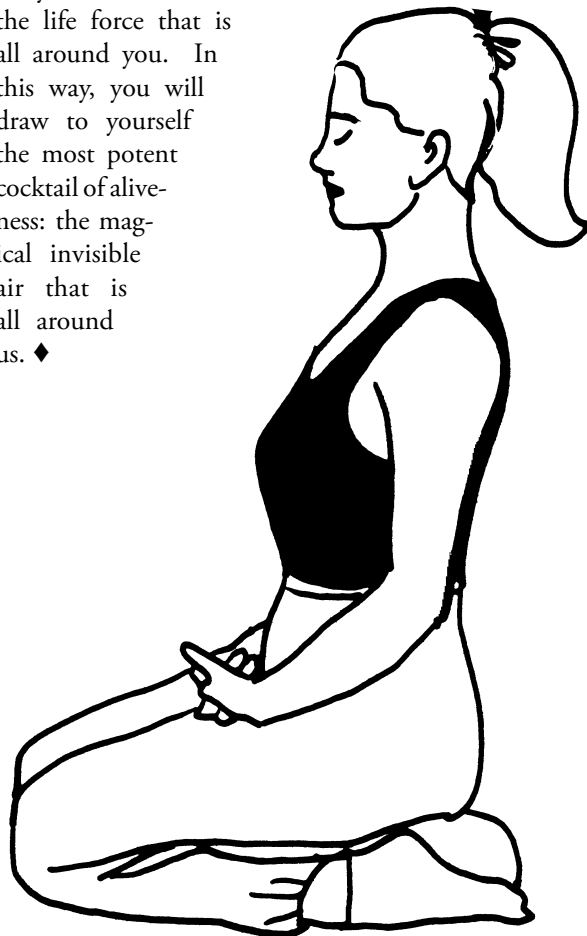
First, notice that with each breath, your entire body naturally and effortlessly moves slightly, and that this movement tends to travel from the center to the periphery. Notice also that the breath arises more through the center of the body than through your neck or upper chest. Your natural breath arises from within; instead of breathing, you are breathed. The breath radiates in all directions, and has a feeling of being and creating calm in the body. Its rhythm is regular most of the time. During normal breathing, it’s natural for your exhale to be a little longer than your inhale, and for there to be a slight pause after your exhale. As you become more attuned to the movement of your breath, you will notice that the breath arises with endless variation; your breath changes your thoughts (and your thoughts change your breathing), feelings and movement. True natural breathing is filled with a sense of ease and relaxation.

One way to bring more awareness to liberating your natural breath is to intentionally turn toward it at times of slight stress: if you are yawning a lot, if you are in your car in traffic, if you are in line, if you are waiting when you don’t want to be waiting, if you are feeling impatient. These are all times to bring your attention toward one of the ideas in the above paragraph. As we say in yoga, the subtle body really responds to imagery, and breathing is a major aspect of the subtle body.

When you begin to feel more intimate with your breath (this can take months or years), you may want to begin some yogic breathing patterns, also known as pranayama. For many years now, I have practiced a simple alternate nostril breathing in the mornings. I have noticed that my mind is calmer, my breath capacity has increased tremendously, which has allowed me to hike and bike with more stamina, and my body has become so accustomed to my morning breathing, that it is like missing a little bit of sunshine when I can’t practice.

The most simple alternate nostril breathing pattern is this: Take your right hand and tuck your index and next finger under your thumb. With your thumb and ring finger, lightly touch the top of your nostrils. With your ring finger, close your left nostril and inhale through your right. Then close your right, and exhale through your left. Inhale again through your left, exhale and inhale right. Switch. Just five minutes a day of practicing like this will make gigantic changes in your biochemistry and mood. Never force or pull the breath in, but imagine you are imbibing a fine scented nectar through your nostrils. Imagine your breath being like a fine silk, that you are touching and feeling with your nostrils. Imagine that the air is very abundant, and you can actually relax to breath in, as if your body is a gigantic magnetic attraction to the air.

In both yoga tradition, and Chinese and Japanese healing traditions, the breath is seen as the elixir of health and long life. And it’s so very simple. Breath is always abundant and available, you are simply invited by life to open your own beautiful body like a flower to the life force that is all around you. In this way, you will draw to yourself the most potent cocktail of aliveness: the magical invisible air that is all around us. ◆



## ◆ “Incarnation”, continued from page 1

past 6 years, I’ve continued to commit some ugly sins against my body. But slowly, slowly, inch by inch, I’ve let other messages and habits creep in, like thieves in the night. I’ve had some angels along the way, each of them whispering, “Do not be afraid.” And “Breathe.”

The first was a therapist named Janet Edlefsen. I was very lonely when I came to her and it was the first instance of admitting the purging was not making me happy (or, for that matter, thin). She listened for a long time, and then began to talk. She taught me, bit by bit, with the sometimes excruciatingly slow grace of God, to trust my body, to trust that my body would tell me what it wanted. I realized that I needed more rest than what I was giving myself. I realized that sometimes my body needs three packages of M&M’s and half a bottle of red wine for dinner, but more often it needs fish, milk and mind-boggling amounts of baby arugula.

The second was Lisa Holtby, my yoga teacher at SYA. Lisa brought her whole divine, gorgeous, present self to her classes, and was the first person to suggest that I could feel *strong*. She wanted us to feel “sparkly”; she urged us to shine. She gave directions not about shrinking our thighs or toning our arms, but about how to make a pose feel “juicy”. She also let me rest. For the first couple years of classes, I would feel the tears rise in gratitude in the dark silence of savasana. I had never felt my body so complete, so heavy and so able to let the earth hold me. I had never let myself feel my hips or belly, safe and warm. She taught me that I could live in my body from the inside out, that my feelings about my body could come from my internal sensation of ease or strength, fatigue or energy, rather than from what pants fit or whether I ate dessert the night before.

The third was my personal trainer, Susan Chace. It’s impossibly bourgeois to have a trainer,

◆ “Incarnation” continued on page 3

## ABOUT OUR TEACHERS

**Denise Benitez, B.F.A. (206.440.3191)** is the founder of Seattle Yoga Arts and is a Certified Anusara Yoga Teacher. She has studied and practiced yoga since 1973, when she was drawn to a yoga class for relief from chronic low back pain. She has taught since 1987.

Denise is a great believer in the transformative power of yoga to create optimal physical, spiritual and emotional health. She is known as a teacher of “gentle strength,” who encourages students to work deeply, but with great awareness and compassion. Her teaching arises from a lifetime of investigation into creating nourishing meaningful movement, and a commitment to cultivating curiosity, spaciousness, and soft-heartedness in life and practice.

**Meg Agnew, M.A. (206.525.9349 mtagnew@comcast.net)** is an Affiliated Anusara Yoga Teacher who has enjoyed teaching at Seattle Yoga Arts since 1993. With carefully sequenced instruction and a light-hearted approach, Meg encourages students to experience in their own bodies the powerfully affecting principles of Anusara yoga. Classwork is eclectic and may incorporate partnering, propwork, vinyasa (flow), pranayama (breathing) practices and brief periods of meditation. Yoga is a process of self-exploration and acceptance. We have a tremendous capacity for health, healing and freedom that yoga helps us to discover.

**Lisa Holtby, M.A. (206.932.2939 www.lisaholtby.com)** I am an Affiliated Anusara Yoga Teacher and have been privileged

to teach at Seattle Yoga Arts since 1995. My classes are supportive, nurturing, challenging, safe and fun. I offer students what I’ve gained from my own experience: the skills to build physical self-confidence and a strong, flexible, graceful body and, more importantly, skills to calm the mind. In a quiet mental state, we can see ourselves more clearly, choose to live with more aliveness, and so show up more powerfully for our lives.

**Rainey (206.499.8255 www.elizabethrainey.com)** Rainey is a Certified Anusara Yoga Teacher and sees her extraordinary life as a testament to the transformational power of yoga. She has practiced yoga over ten years and has taught since 2000. Her practice and teaching is infused with her fascination and study of the world’s mystical traditions and her passion for self-exploration. Her intention is to create a fun, safe and sacred space for others to nourish their spirit, connect with their bodies and explore their infinite potential. She is known for her humor and clarity and she relishes sharing this beautiful journey called Yoga with her students.

**Bianca Raffety LMP (206.322.0212)** started studying and practicing yoga in 1990 in an effort to cultivate a stronger positive voice in her life. She is graced with the guidance and support of her mentor, Denise Benitez, and other fabulous teachers. She is a dedicated student of Anusara Yoga and a practicing massage therapist. Teaching in a style both nurturing and playful, she uses her knowledge of anatomy, physiology and kinesiology to support each student as they explore their physical boundaries and needs.

## ◆ “Incarnation”, continued from page 2

I know, but I was making some serious decisions about the next ten years of my life, and I wanted to go into my transition really physically capable and aware. Over the past few months, she has taught me that I can push myself, that I can be fit, hot, alive and fierce. She also helped by taking my measurements, a part of the training process I had dreaded. But what she told me shocked me: I’m not fat. I’m 20% body fat, my hip-to-waist ratio is perfect, and I’ve got great upper body strength. Imagine my surprise! I am 26 years old: after 15 years of dieting, 10 years of living with and in recovery from bulimia, this is news to me. I’m 5’4” and 144 lbs. I will never look thin. But I’m solid. I know this now. And it’s given me incredible freedom. I can run a 5K in less than half an hour, and my times are dropping. I can bench press 95 lbs. I can come into headstand in the center of

the room with straight legs, hinging only at my hip creases. I am with a man who loves my body, treats it carefully, and rushes up to kiss my tummy when I change my clothes.

Angels. I think about Jesus, healing people. “Go in peace,” he always said, “Your faith has made you well.” And Jesus knew from bodies. He healed bodily. He healed women who were considered unclean, marked, ugly, evil. And he understood about being made whole, or, perhaps, Being-Made-Whole. I am preparing to leave for seminary in NYC in a month. God willing, in four years, when I am thirty, I will be wearing a white collar and a black suit to work in the morning: celebrating all rebirths in every baptism, celebrating the cycle of life in every funeral, celebrating every meal with our holy meal. I am thrilled and terrified. And I know I could not do it without the good grace of my angels, urging “Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Breathe.” ◆

YOU DO NOT NEED  
TO LEAVE YOUR ROOM.

REMAIN SITTING  
AT YOUR TABLE  
AND LISTEN.

DO NOT EVEN  
LISTEN, SIMPLY WAIT.  
DO NOT EVEN WAIT,  
BE QUITE STILL AND  
SOLITARY.

THE WORLD WILL  
FREELY OFFER ITSELF  
TO YOU UNMASKED,  
IT HAS NO CHOICE,  
IT WILL ROLL  
IN ECSTASY  
AT YOUR FEET.

*Franz Kafka*



## SCHEDULE OF YOGA CLASSES

January through April, 2007

Session A – 7 week session – January 2 through February 18

Session B – 7 week session – February 26 through April 15

DAY	TIME	LEVEL	TAUGHT BY
Monday	7:00 - 8:15 A.M. <i>Sunrise</i>	I-III	Lisa
	10:00 - 11:30 A.M.	I-II	Lisa
	5:30 - 7:00 P.M.	I-II	Denise
	7:15 - 8:45 P.M.	II-III	Denise
Tuesday	8:00 - 9:20 A.M.	I-III	Rainey
	10:00 - 11:30 A.M.	I-II	Denise
	5:30 - 7:00 P.M.	I-II	Meg
	7:15 - 8:45 P.M.	II-III	Meg
Wednesday	7:00 - 8:15 A.M. <i>Sunrise</i>	I-III	Lisa
	10:00 - 11:30 A.M.	II-III	Rainey
	5:30 - 6:45 P.M.	Gentle	Denise
	7:00 - 8:30 P.M.	I-II	Denise
Thursday	8:00 - 9:20 A.M.	I-III	Rainey
	10:00 - 11:30 A.M.	I-II	Meg
	12:00 - 1:40 P.M.	II-III	Meg
	5:30 - 7:00 P.M.	II-III	Denise
	7:15 - 8:45 P.M.	III	Denise
Friday	10:00 - 11:30 A.M.	I-III	Bianca
Saturday	9:00 - 10:30 A.M.	II-III	Lisa
	10:45 - 12:15 P.M.	I-II	Lisa
Sunday	9:00 - 10:30 A.M.	III	Denise
	10:45 - 12:15 P.M.	I-II	Denise
	4:00 - 5:30 P.M.	Gentle	Bianca
	6:00 - 7:30 P.M.	I-II	Bianca

### Location, Parking and Bus

We're at 109 15th Avenue East near E. Denny (across from Group Health). The #10 bus comes right by the studio, as well as the #8 bus from lower Queen Anne and the #43 bus from downtown. You may park in the Group Health Credit Union parking lot to the north of the studio (free) after 5:30 P.M. on weekdays, Saturday afternoons, and all day Sunday.

### LEVEL I

An ongoing class for beginners who wish to build a strong foundation in Hatha Yoga. Emphasis is on building strength, resiliency, flexibility, and stamina of the physical body, and cultivation of the inner qualities of persistence, mindfulness, and open-heartedness.

### LEVEL II

Deepening your intention and the ability to maintain focus throughout a practice (*dharana*), this level refines basic *asanas* with emphasis on gaining confidence in inversions and backbends, while deepening the qualities of sensitivity, courage, and softness.

### LEVEL III

For those who have at least two years of yoga *asana* experience. In this level, you increase your ability to be present in your practice, playfully challenging yourself with more advanced poses. The focus is bringing a joyful harmony to the strength and abilities of the physical body, the dance of breath, and an expansive, non-judging (*sattvic*) state of mind.

### GENTLE

A less-demanding and slower-paced class.

*Note: We will be closed for session breaks  
February 19-25 and April 16-22.*

### Can children come to class?

Children 13 years and older are welcome in class, provided that they are comfortable with and respectful of the yoga environment, which requires the ability to pay attention and to remain focused in their bodies. Our studio unfortunately does not have an area for children to wait for their parents during class, so we request that you not bring them with you to class if they are not able to participate.

**WHAT KIND OF YOGA DO WE TEACH?** \_\_\_\_\_

Our teachers are primarily influenced by the Anusara tradition of yoga, developed by John Friend. Anusara is a potent blend of an elegant, accessible and very effective system of alignment principles, an intention to connect the student with their highest motivations, and the cultivation of a supportive, friendly community of practitioners who support one another's efforts and successes.

In our classes, we emphasize a practice that works the physical body without losing sight of the transformative potential of yoga to touch all levels of our being. Classes consist of a short beginning meditation, followed by a vinyasa (flowing) style practice which builds heat and strength and leads to the particular focus of the teacher that day. The classes end with Savasana (relaxation) and a short meditation.

We believe that yoga is for everyone, not just those who are already physically fit or extremely flexible. Our goal is to provide a supportive learning environment that is sensitive to each person's needs, whether beginner or experienced, and to give students an experience of the breadth and spirit of yoga.

**FEES** \_\_\_\_\_

A 10% discount is included in the fees below if you register for more than one class.

<b>One Session</b>	
One class per week for seven weeks	\$ 84
Two classes per week for seven weeks	\$152
Three classes per week for seven weeks	\$225
<b>Both Sessions</b>	
One class per week for fourteen weeks	\$168
Two classes per week for fourteen weeks	\$304
Three classes per week for fourteen weeks	\$450
Drop-Ins (open classes only)	\$15

**MAKE-UP POLICY** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make every effort to attend the class for which you are registered. If you miss a class, you may make it up in any other appropriate level class *during the current term*.

**DON'T MISS THE WORKSHOP LISTINGS ON THE OTHER SIDE!  
FURTHER QUESTIONS? CALL DENISE AT 206.440.3191**

SAVE MONEY, TIME AND ASSURE YOUR SPACE IN BOTH SESSIONS. SIGN UP FOR *BOTH* SESSION A AND SESSION B BEFORE **DECEMBER 17**, PAY IN FULL, AND DEDUCT AN ADDITIONAL 5% FROM YOUR PAYMENT!

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT SEATTLEYOGAARTS.COM!**

**REGISTRATION FOR CLASSES & WORKSHOPS AT SEATTLE YOGA ARTS** 

**HOW TO REGISTER** \_\_\_\_\_

Send in the Registration Form, enclosing a \$25 non-refundable deposit for each class in each session – or full payment. Sorry! No phone registrations; balance is due at your first class. *Many classes fill quickly, so register promptly!*

Name (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (eve) \_\_\_\_\_

I am registering for:  Session A: Jan. 2-Feb. 18       Session B: Feb. 26-April 15       Both Sessions

CLASS OR WORKSHOP	DAY/TIME	TEACHER
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ I enclose:  A \$25 *nonrefundable* deposit for *each* class.  Payment in full.  
 Seniors & Students – Deduct an additional 10% from payment.

*If a class you are registering for has been filled, we will notify you and refund your deposit—  
If we don't call you, assume your registration is fine.*

MAIL TO: Seattle Yoga Arts, 109 15th Ave. East, Seattle, WA 98112

## WORKSHOPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

**The Fullness of Yoga: 2007 Anusara Yoga Immersion**

with Denise Benitez, Rainey, and Meg Agnew

Part A: Jan-April, 2007; Part B: Sept-Dec 2007

This Immersion is open to anyone who wants to deepen their exploration of yoga, and Anusara yoga in particular. What you will learn in this training will enhance all aspects of your life; although this series is highly valuable for teachers and teachers-to-be, it is equally enriching for yoga practitioners of all levels. You will learn more about the anatomy of your amazing body, delve into the major streams of yogic philosophy, understand more clearly the Tantric foundation of Anusara yoga, and refine your understanding of the Anusara Principles of Alignment. Each class will include lecture and asana practice. Find a PDF flier with dates, times, topics, and prices at our website at [SeattleYogaArts.com](http://SeattleYogaArts.com) or call 206-440-3191 to have a flier sent to you.

**Hearts on Fire with Rainey**

Dates: Jan 6, Feb 3, March 17, April 7 \$25 per class

Come set yourself ablaze with a challenging asana practice designed to open your heart and body alike. When we take a risk and try new things we expand our capacity and ability in all endeavors and we light up inside. In this led practice we will walk our edge while staying true to our essence. Come prepared to sweat, laugh and explore your perceived limitations!

This practice is open to all Level 2-3 students with no major injuries and the desire to expand your potential exponentially! This is a led community practice hosted by Rainey. Information...Rainey at 206.499.8255 or [www.elizabethrainey.com](http://www.elizabethrainey.com)

**John Friend: Anusara Weekend Workshop in Seattle**

February 16-18, 2007

Once again John Friend will honor us with a visit to Seattle. As anyone who has experienced his workshops knows, you are guaranteed

to learn new tricks, expand your potential, connect with the wider Anusara community, and have a lot of fun!

To pre-register for this workshop, go to [Anusara.com](http://Anusara.com). John's workshops fill immediately, so register early!

**Possibility & Potential - A New Year's Day Practice with Rainey**

Mon., January 1, 2007 10 a.m. to Noon, \$25

We each have within us infinite possibility and potential and with the dawning of a new year we have the gift of renewal. This new start is a perfect time to think about how we want to express and embody all we hold true. Come plant your dreams for 2007 with a fun and lighthearted yoga class. Enjoy the blessings of community and practice on this auspicious first day of the year, when the foundation of new beginnings can be powerfully established with intention and loving energy. All Levels Welcome.

**The Swell of Spirit: A Week of Anusara Yoga with Rainey**

April 14 -21, 2007

Haramara Retreat, Sayulita, Mexico

Double Occupancy: \$1350 Single Occupancy: \$1890

Come to where the land meets the ocean and the ocean opens up to the endless sky. This vast setting of natural beauty on the Pacific Coast of Mexico will be our inspiration to explore ourselves in new ways. We will investigate how we can locate a ground of being that is steady and reliable like the earth. How we can find the infinity of the blue sky within ourselves. And how we can ride the currents of life in such a way that our spirit can do nothing but swell with vibrancy. Each day will encompass two yoga sessions, three exquisite meals and time to explore the splendor around us and reflect on our own magnificent inner landscape. Checks preferred, MC/Visa accepted. Payment plans available, please call.

More info & registration...Rainey at 206.499.8255 or [www.elizabethrainey.com](http://www.elizabethrainey.com)

**Inside! Schedule of Classes – January Through April, 2007.***Return Services Requested*

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