

Nude yoga for men in Canberra way before women's nude yoga

by Georgia Curry | Canberra Weekly
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There's been a lot of attention around emerging nude yoga workshops for women in Canberra, however for the past 14 years, nude yoga for men has been quietly taking place each week with no fanfare.

Yoga instructor Gregory Barnes started nude yoga for men in Canberra in 2007 and says he had to change class venues 14 times because of the public's "taboo" perception of the practice.

"I eventually decided to just tell people we did yoga, they didn't need to know it was in the nude," he says. "I had heard about nude yoga and originally I thought, 'why would you take your clothes off to do yoga', I was taught in the traditional way. Then I did it at home by myself and I thought, 'yeah, it is quite good'."

Nude yoga first came to Australia (Sydney) in 2002 but in India, Sadhus (a holy person who renounces worldly life including clothes) have been doing it long before westerners. Ironically, yoga was founded in India by men and traditionally only practised by men. In Western society today, it seems more popular amongst women.

"Indian Sadhus devote their whole lives to yoga," Gregory says. "Some are naked all of the time. Sadhus renounce all possessions, including clothing, to limit suffering. By comparison, Westerners own many possessions. Everything we own takes up space in our minds. All our stuff needs cleaning, storing, maintenance and eventually replacement.

"Consider all the time we can waste, and how stressed



Nude yoga for men classes have been held in Canberra for the past 14 years.

we can get trying to find our stuff when it gets misplaced. Sadhus believe freedom from possessions brings freedom of spirit. In nude yoga, freedom from clothes brings freedom of movement and a host of other self-imposed beliefs around body image, attractiveness and social standing. Nudity is the great leveller."

Gregory handed over the nude yoga for men classes to local yoga teacher Andreas Anthony in 2020, who is continuing the Canberra classes fortnightly Mondays at 6.30pm – even through winter.

"Some of my students have been going for the entire 14 years," Andreas says. "There was prejudice around it, there were assumptions around that it was a sexual thing, it certainly isn't. It's always deeply rooted in the yoga practice," Andreas says.

"You're free from all of the restrictions of clothing. Most of the benefits of nude yoga are far beyond physical, they're all emotional and spiritual. Shared vulnerability makes a connection like no other."

The men in Canberra's nude yoga classes range in age from 22 to 75 and class numbers vary between nine and 14 people.

"It's really changed my life, my body confidence and how I perceive myself and my body in this world," Andreas says. "That's why I took over from Gregory. I wanted to make sure that Canberra men could continue to enjoy the benefits of this practice."

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