



*“...the low key
vibe of summer
camp and the
big time goal of
creating a more
perfect life.”*

HELEN
STUTCHBURY
YOGA ENTHUSIAST

IN 2008 HELEN STUTCHBURY RAN A LARGE CORPORATE YOGA SCHOOL IN DALLAS, AN “INTENSE” JOB WITH “BIG-BOX START UP ENERGY” THAT SHE FOUND “WONDERFUL.”

BUT STUTCHBURY COULDN'T RESIST LEAVING DALLAS FOR A SLICE OF THE SWEET LIFE AWAITING HER IN WIMBERLEY. WITH HER HUSBAND ONLY NEEDING AN AIRPORT FOR HIS JOB, THEY MOVED ON SOME PROPERTY THERE.

STUTCHBURY'S PARENTS FELL IN LOVE AT A CANADIAN MILITARY BASE CALLED *CAMP UTOPIA*. THE NAME REFLECTED THE ATMOSPHERE SHE WANTED TO CREATE FOR HER WIMBERLEY-BASED YOGA TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM OF THE SAME NAME: “THE LOW KEY VIBE OF SUMMER CAMP AND THE BIG TIME GOAL OF CREATING A MORE PERFECT LIFE.”

FOR THOSE SEARCHING FOR HARMONY INSTEAD OF TEACHING, THEY CAN DIAL INTO COMMUNITY THOUGHT AT STUTCHBURY'S SANCTUARY IN THE VILLAGE, A FORMER BAPTIST CHURCH NOW USED PRIMARILY AS A YOGA STUDIO.

WHEN DID YOU BEGIN PRACTICING YOGA?

My mom took a yoga course when I was three and she was suffering from cabin fever. When she went back to work for a while, her yoga teacher became my baby sitter. She is a little whitehaired old lady in my memory, and we are upside down in plow pose. I played in the poses all my life without really knowing I was doing yoga, and then dipped in and out of classes whenever I could afford it as a young adult.

WHY DID YOU BEGIN PRACTICING YOGA?

It makes my body feel fantastic all the time. I have tons of energy and I never get sick. I eat mostly organic real foods, but I can also eat whatever I want. I just hate to be in pain it's worth it to me to do yoga to earn that freedom.

WHAT TYPE OF YOGA DO YOU PREFER TO PRACTICE AND TEACH? WHY?

I love teaching and practicing hot powerful yoga classes where everyone sweats like mad and works super hard and leaves feeling bright and pure. I also love to teach aging and injured people with a really safe lowkey power version of yoga I call “The Yoga You Need.” It keeps the focus on what makes us feel best and avoids all the more dangerous poses. And I love teaching teachers. Helping other people be good and get gigs is important to me.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON YOGA MISCONCEPTIONS?

That everyone can do every pose if they just work hard enough; that American teachers are gurus; that yoga is a religion. It started that way, and it can be and is for some people, but it doesn't have to be. Yoga is a program for living. It includes

ethics, like most religions, but trying to be a good person isn't inherently religious. If we are good people, we are always going to be happier, and happiness is the end goal of yoga. Usually it makes them better, happier people.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO TEACH YOGA?

Love. Pure love. When you are doing what you love your life becomes pretty easy pretty fast. The best part of my day is teaching.

WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART ABOUT TEACHING YOGA?

Good verbal instructions. Some people look amazing in their poses but can't tell you what to do in a way that makes sense. When a teacher can explain, in clear and simple language, what to do with your feet, your legs, your butt, your belly, your back, etc., you are more likely to do it right. But this is very hard for lots of teachers.

WHAT IS THE YOGA TEACHER CERTIFICATION LIKE, WHAT STEPS?

Each weekend we learn a little bit of history, a little bit of anatomy, a little bit of teaching skills and a lot of practice. No one feels overwhelmed and the info can sink in during the week between training. There is not too much homework; I like people to do lots of yoga classes because it takes a few years to really get to know the poses deeply and they do better if they practice their teaching assignments in advance, and they practice different breathing techniques and so on.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHING YOGA AND TEACHING PEOPLE TO TEACH YOGA?

To me, teaching yoga is poses and breathing and relaxing and

loving ourselves. Teaching teachers is about making other people good at doing the same thing.

“YOGA IS ABOUT ETHICS” – HOW DO YOU APPLY THIS TO YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE AND TO CAMP UTOPIA?

To me, it begins with being a good person for real, not just for show. Nobody's perfect, but we have to keep trying. I practice and teach yoga because I want other people to feel good like me, not because I want to be good at yoga. I want to make the world a better place.

WHAT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF YOGA/ANATOMY DO PEOPLE NEED TO HAVE PRIOR TO PRACTICING YOGA AND TEACHING YOGA?

Most people can start practicing with no knowledge at all. For teaching, it's good to have at least six months of pretty consistent practice because we all fall in love with things that don't necessarily become our life path. It's good to know for sure before you jump in.

WHO SHOULDN'T PRACTICE YOGA, TEACH YOGA?

Anyone can practice. Crazy, mean people should not teach.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD YOGA TEACHER?

Passion, intelligence, good verbal skills (and) authenticity.

IN WHAT WAYS IS YOGA “USEFUL IN LIFE OFF THE YOGA MAT”?

In every way. More balance on the mat means more off. We don't have the same big mood swings and disasters over and over. We make less mistakes. Everything works better because we are paying attention to ourselves.