

has also taught Jools Oliver for eight years, who says, 'I was seeking the ultimate way to relax and Nadia was my answer.'


It's hard to ignore fan mail that good. So the day before Narain and I met officially, I went to her Triyoga class. And I *loved* it. There was a little 'om-ing' but not enough to put off the non-spiritual, like me. I found myself following her precise, subtle instructions almost easily and I didn't feel self-conscious, even when bum up in the downward dog pose, six inches from my neighbour. But it was the blissful feeling afterwards, that every desk-bound muscle was stretched out, that really sold it to me.

The next day, Narain and I met to talk about how to make yoga a life habit. Narain told me how she started. 'I was around 18, living in LA,' she says. 'I didn't plan to be a yoga teacher, but I wasn't in a happy place. And when I did yoga, I felt as if I could breathe again.' She ended up living in an ashram for five months.

I ask if yoga is really anti-ageing. 'I don't believe in anti-ageing,' she says. 'Now I'm 40, I'm not going to let everything go to pot, but I'm not going to try to look like a 25-year-old either. I'm not a big fan of Botox - why would I be when I don't even take Panadol? The more we see a Botoxed face as beautiful, the less we accept women for being smart or funny or clever. What you *can* have is a youthful spirit. One of my yoga teachers is 70-plus, and goes roller-skating and dancing.'

The classes Narain is best known for are for pregnancy, and she trains antenatal teachers, too. 'It's lovely that mums get together, can connect from that early stage with their baby,' she says. I ask her, being surrounded by pregnant women and babies, if she'd like to have that experience. 'The summer I was turning 39, I had a freak-out,' she says. 'I thought if I wanted a baby, I'd better get to it. I had all these options: doing it alone, doing it with my ex or accepting things as they are. And I worked out that I wanted to be happy; regardless of the outcome. I'm lucky, I love what I do, have purpose with my work, have lovely friends, family, godchildren. Women don't need to be in relationships to have a family or feel whole. We need to find it inside ourselves.'

Narain's daily life sounds exactly how you might imagine a yogi lives; meditation, wholesome food. But she's loosened up, she says, in the past few years - she drinks an occasional glass of red wine. She even likes Guinness. Now, her mission teaching yoga, she says, is life balance: looking after your body but not being *too* strict. And not too many difficult or 'fancy' poses. 'Yoga works. Last year I organised a retreat for a big corporation in the countryside, yoga with lots of relaxation, walking, cycling and fishing. The idea was to plant the seed that it's good to feel good.' The company saw a measurable drop in sick leave. Narain thinks yoga helps because it not only makes your body feel good, but clears a space for you to get out of your thinking brain. Laughing, she adds that yoga converts often get evangelical about yoga: 'They start doing it, then feel so great that they try to push everyone else into it. But I say, just do it.'

I feel transformed, too, just with a weekly 75-minute class. It's already been enough to stop the soreness in the knee I've had for years. Even though I can't do any fancy poses - or even some simple ones - I feel good! Or so I keep telling people. I must be one of those yoga evangelicals... 

For Narain's four daily post-work yoga moves, visit Redonline.co.uk/blogs. For classes, visit triyoga.co.uk. For retreats, Pregnancy Yoga and Gentle Yoga CDs, visit nadianarain.com

NADIA NARAIN'S YOGI LIFE

My yoga essentials

I wear J Crew leggings or shorts, with a vest or baggy T-shirt; I'm not into Lycra. I always burn one of my candles in class, scented with 100% pure essential oils and made in England (£30, thisisbeautymart.com; 1). On the box, it has my motto... 'breathe, love, laugh, be kind and be grateful'. I keep classes silent with no music; life is noisy enough.

My morning routine

My alarm goes off, and I lie in bed and try to be grateful. The power of doing this has been proven; you can't be depressed when you're grateful. I drink hot water with lemon, then Earl Grey. Breakfast is The Living Food Kitchen Granola (£5.99, Wholefoods; 2) with mango, papaya, almond milk and a spoonful of melted coconut oil. I take cod liver oil, vitamin C, iron and a probiotic, then meditate for 10 minutes.

My exercise

I do yoga most mornings, but if I don't have time, I don't beat myself up. I try to do another teacher's class at least once a week. I walk to all my appointments and, once a week, I do an XtendBarre ballet exercise class at Heartcore (heartcore.co.uk) in Hampstead.

What I eat

I was a die-hard vegetarian, at some points a vegan, until six years ago. But I got very thin and couldn't put on weight. I went to see a naturopath, who told me to try eating fish or meat twice a day for two weeks, as a trial. I did and felt much stronger. So now I eat sustainable fish most days. If I want pudding or chocolate, I have it.

My fail-safe everyday salad

I go to Marylebone Farmers' Market on Sundays, then make a huge salad (6) to go in the fridge, dressed with balsamic vinegar, olive oil, sweet miso, raw honey and Himalayan pink sea salt. Jamie Oliver liked one of my salads on Instagram recently!

My inspiring books

I learnt a lot about being kind to myself by reading *Self Compassion* by Kristin Neff (Hodder & Stoughton, £13.99; 4). On her website (self-compassion.org), you can test your own self-compassion levels. I read *There Is Nothing Wrong With You* by Cheri Huber (Keep It Simple, £9.99) a lot; it's also about not being hard on yourself.

My treatments

I go to Katie Phillips at Triyoga for massage and Charlotte Colwell (charlottecowell.co.uk) for her Skin Gym facial. I like natural products so use Sarah Chapman Skinesis Ultimate Cleanse (£40; 3), Dynamic Defence Day Cream SPF15 (£43) and Age-Repair Serum (£47). Lucy Bee Extra Virgin Organic Coconut Oil (£9.99, Wholefoods; 5) also makes a great moisturiser.

