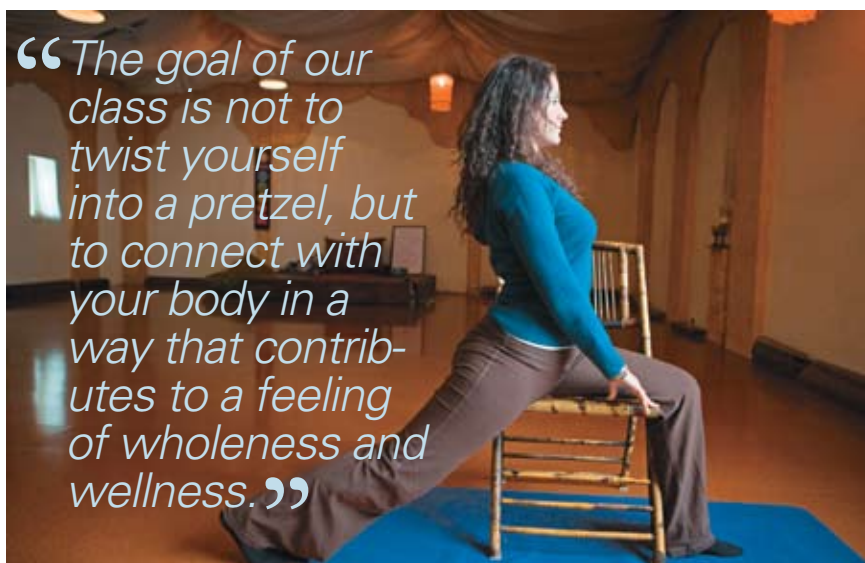


Centering  
Full  
Body  
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YOGA CLASS OFFERS  
PATIENTS CALM



MARTHA VANDER KOLK IS A 42-YEAR-OLD SOFTWARE BUSINESS ANALYST FROM PITTSFIELD TOWNSHIP. LIKE MANY, SHE SAYS SHE HAS “50 GAZILLION THINGS THAT HAVE TO HAPPEN” IN HER LIFE. ONE OF THOSE THINGS IS COPING WITH THE EFFECTS OF A BREAST CANCER DIAGNOSIS.



Since having a lumpectomy in June 2006, Vander Kolk has had problems with nerve regeneration and sometimes feels like her armpit has fallen asleep.

So with that in mind, she signed up for the Cancer Center’s new yoga class, which runs 3:30–4:30 p.m., on Fridays, in space donated by Sun Moon Yoga Studio in Ann Arbor.

“On the physical side, it’s a nice, gentle way to expand my range of motion with my arm,” Vander Kolk said, “but for me, the primary benefits have been non-physical. The class helps you find the quiet center of yourself. You come back to yourself.”

Led by Sarah Schneider, a certified yoga instructor and a social worker in the U-M Depression Center, the class is designed specifically for cancer patients. Traditional yoga poses are modified for people with a variety of physical considerations. Chairs and other props are used to make sure the class is safe and satisfying, Schneider said.

Focusing on breathing is the foundation of yoga.

Schneider said learning to breathe properly for yoga isn’t complicated. It just requires some attention.

“The goal of our class is not to twist yourself into a pretzel, but to connect with your body in a way that contributes to a feeling of wholeness and wellness,” Schneider said.

“With each yoga posture, we encourage relaxation and deep breathing. Each nourishing inhale and each cleansing exhale add to the fullness of the experience.”

In addition to increasing strength and flexibility, yoga can help to combat fatigue, improve immune functioning and contribute to a better sense of balance, calm and well-being.

The goal of the class is not endurance, but healing, Schneider said. It also can be empowering.

“Oftentimes, when someone is diagnosed with cancer, it can feel like a mutiny of the body. You can’t control what’s going on, and treatment can make you feel like a pin cushion,” she said. “Yoga is a way to actively participate in your own healing.”



*Sarah Schneider’s yoga class offers gentle poses for people who are coping with cancer.*



For more information or to register for the class, please contact Donna Murphy at **734-615-5216**. Before starting any new fitness program, talk with your physician first.