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GROUND • CENTRE • STRENGTHEN

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3 LIFE
CHANGING
QUESTION

**YOGIC
ENERGY BODY**

5 *dharma*
ARCHETYPES

**YOGA BY
DOSHA**



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Has Yoga jumped the Shark?



CONTENTS

ON THE COVER



PHILOSOPHY

- 64** **YOGA BY DOSHA: WHY ONE PRACTICE WAS NEVER MEANT TO FIT EVERY BODY**
Discover how Ayurveda's three doshas can transform your yoga practice, helping you choose movement, breath and rhythm that suit you.

- 38** **THE ENERGY BODY: YOGA BETWEEN EVIDENCE AND EXPERIENCE**
Is the yogic energy body a lived reality, historical idea, or something science may one day measure? Two perspectives meet.

- 22** **DISCOVER YOUR DHARMA ARCHETYPE: THE GIFT BENEATH YOUR PATTERNS**
Discover five Dharma Archetypes and the hidden patterns that can obscure your gifts, purpose and most authentic way of being.

- 60** **WHO AM I? THE THREE LIFE-CHANGING QUESTIONS THAT HELP YOU LIVE A MORE AUTHENTIC LIFE**
What does it really mean to be authentic? Explore three powerful questions that can help you understand yourself and live more intentionally.



38

FEATURES

- 34** **FROM PCOS TO PMOS: WHY WOMEN NEED MORE THAN A NEW NAME**
Could renaming PCOS change how women are understood and treated? Explore the case for a broader metabolic and hormonal perspective.

- 72** **YOGASIS: MUSE — HIGHLAND YOGA**
Amid life's relentless pace, the yoga mat becomes a sanctuary where breath, movement and sweat restore presence, peace and perspective.

- 50** **HAS YOGA JUMPED THE SHARK?**
From kangaroo yoga to breathwork, Jennifer Cordero asks whether yoga has lost its essence—or simply found new doors to seekers.

- 12** **THE BAROREFLEX LOOP — YOGA'S LESS KNOWN MECHANISM**
Discover how slow, steady breathing may influence the baroreflex, supporting cardiovascular regulation while offering intriguing connections between yoga, stress and mood.

PRACTICE

- 08** **WHY YOGA BY THE SEA CAN BRING A NEW DIMENSION TO YOUR PRACTICE**
Take yoga beyond the studio as sea, sand, breath and shifting surroundings invite deeper awareness, balance and sensory connection.

- 74** **FIGHT NICOTINE ADDICTION**
Explore a traditional yogic approach to overcoming nicotine dependence, combining breath awareness, kriya and asanas to support the journey.

- 16** **YOGA FOR EVERY BODY: BREAKING MYTHS AND EMBRACING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE**
Yoga was never meant for one body type. Discover how inclusive, adaptive practice can make its physical and mental benefits accessible.

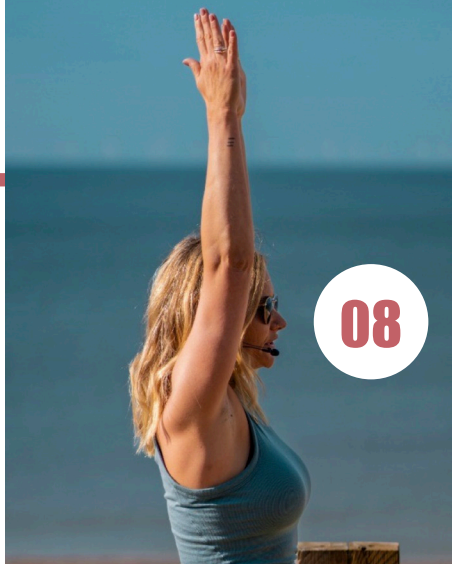


22



Ardhachandra Asana

74



08

SERIES

44 YOGA FOR EVERY ABILITY: HOW TKV DESIKACHAR ADAPTED YOGA TO SERVE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (PART 10)

Discover how TKV Desikachar replaced promises of cures with humility, collaboration and personalised yoga that helped children discover new possibilities.

68 ARIEL'S ADVENTURES IN THE CHINE: THE GIRL IN BLUE AND THE SPIRITS OF THE BAY

Chapter 10: Ariel faces magical trials of tides, wind and song, discovering the power of harmony, courage and her ancestral heritage.

84 THE KUNDALINI: MEMOIRS OF A YOGI — CHAPTER 46: THE VANISHING OF THE DEVI OF DELHI

Ariel faces magical trials testing courage, perception and harmony, unlocking ancient knowledge as she moves closer to the golden Key.

READER'S ASHRAM

80 ASK YOGI MAHARAJ DR MALIK

94 VEDIC ASTROLOGY

WHAT'S HOT

88 NEW BOOKS, ACCESSORIES AND PRODUCTS

INTERVIEW

54 WHY YOUR FACE BELONGS IN YOUR YOGA PRACTICE

What does your face reveal about your inner state? Explore the surprising connection between facial expression, breath, emotions and authentic presence.



54



12



80



44

WHY YOUR FACE BELONGS IN YOUR YOGA PRACTICE

A Conversation with
Renée Ambarees Isermann,
Founder of Yoga4Face®

At 42, Renée Ambarees Isermann could no longer open her mouth without pain. Her jaw was locked, her face tight, and the woman in the mirror was one she did not recognise. Eleven years earlier, after 22 years in competitive sport, she had rebuilt her body from the feet up. Now she asked herself the question that Yoga4Face® grew out of: if that works for the body, why not for the face?

The former Allianz Senior Inspector is the founder of Yoga4Face® and the developer of the structured four-step Yoga4Face® Method, a head-to-toe approach that connects facial movement, posture, breathing, body awareness, communication, leadership and professional presence. She has worked with more than 10,000 people in courses and at events, is the author of the Amazon bestseller Yoga4Face, first published in German in 2018 and later released in English, and divides her time between Europe and the Caribbean.

In May, a randomised trial in *Frontiers in Psychiatry* found that daily facial training reduced symptoms of mild to moderate depression significantly more than a plain relaxation exercise. A conversation about muscles, the nervous system, and what separates a real smile from a polite one.

1 What led you to face yoga, and what inspired you to develop Yoga4Face®?

At 31, after 22 years in competitive sport, I had to rebuild my body completely, from the feet up, until I could move without pain again. Yoga and Pilates helped me do it.

At 42, it was my face. My jaw was locked, I could no longer open my mouth without pain. I had it medically assessed first, that always comes first. And in that moment I understood every woman who can no longer bear to look in the mirror and started thinking about Botox. I know that pain.

But I had already rebuilt my body once. If that was possible, it had to be possible for the face too. Nobody showed me how, so I found my own way, drawing on everything I had learned from competitive sport, corporate performance and rebuilding my own body. That became Yoga4Face®.

Right before my first workshop, I had a serious accident. I slipped off a pull-up bar and badly injured my ribs. In that pain, I understood the smile differently. The problem was never the

jaw itself. It was everything I had been swallowing for years.

My own story is part of this too. I lost my children early in pregnancy, and family never happened for me the way I had dreamed. At 42, all of that was written on my face. Today I know what my work is for: to bring hope, whatever has happened in a life. I dedicate it to the children who guide me from above.



2 Many people associate face yoga with facial gymnastics or beauty. How is Yoga4Face® different?

It is not gymnastics, and it is not a beauty routine. It is the way back to yourself.

Yoga4Face® is a professional methodology, not a set of isolated facial exercises. It connects facial movement with posture, breath, body awareness, communication, leadership and presence. The face is the most visible part, but never the only one.

I have never met a woman whose real problem was her jawline. What I have met are women who spent years swallowing things that were never said out loud.

I do not believe in the ageing process. Beauty asks how you look. Yoga4Face® asks where you are still lying to yourself.



3 You describe the face as part of the whole body. How are the face, breath, posture, nervous system and emotions connected?

The body does not lie. Whatever you do not say, it says for you.

The breath goes shallow, the jaw tightens, the shoulders rise, the gaze narrows, none of this happens in isolation. The jaw is the most honest witness of all; it absorbs tension long before you notice you are tense.

It also works the other way round. Release the jaw and the breath follows. Once the breath follows, the nervous system settles. You do not have to become calm on the inside first in order to let go on the outside, going through the body gets you to the same place.

4 What does it mean to “learn the language of the face”, and how does greater awareness of our face change the way we communicate?

The face gives away more than you would like, before a single word is spoken. Learning its language means knowing what you are communicating right now without words: what is tense, what you are holding onto, what you actually want to show and are not allowing.

In professional life, your face and body often reveal more than your LinkedIn profile. Your profile tells people what you do. Your face and body show them how you carry it.

I know this from my own life. I once put everything in one relationship, and it fell apart publicly. That, too, is a way of losing your face. Learning to read

what your own face is saying, before anything else, changes how you show up for everyone else.



5 You talk about the difference between a performed smile and a real one. What makes a smile “real”?

A real smile cannot be produced on command. It shows in the eyes first, not in the mouth. That is the difference between performance and truth.

A performed smile protects you. A real smile shows you. People are more afraid of that than they admit, because being seen means being real.

6 What is the Smile Revolution, and why is this movement needed right now?

The Smile Revolution is not a slogan. It is a movement, and it costs nothing, it is open to anyone.

Why now? Because so many people are functioning and losing their expression while they do it. They get through the day and, at some point, notice they can no longer feel themselves. Be seen. Be felt. Be unforgettable. That is not a campaign. It is a decision, made fresh every morning.





7 What are the 4 Magic Moves, and how can people use them in stressful everyday moments?

They need no altar and no yoga mat. Four moves, four levels, each building on the last, the simplest public entry point into the Yoga4Face® Method and the Smile Revolution.

The first goes to the eyes: out of the tunnel, because when you are stuck in an emotion, your field of vision narrows. The second is Acceptance, perceiving what is actually there, and then deciding. The third is Boundaries, being able to say no, and bringing the body with you when you do. The fourth is the Liberated Smile, held for 60 seconds. The instructions are at the end of this conversation.

I see it even in women who have practised yoga for years: after the four moves, the voice changes, the expression changes, perception sharpens. The exercise itself is not the point. What opens up afterwards is a space, I call it Time4Me, and staying in it is where the real change

happens. People tell me that when emotion comes up, they no longer reach automatically for a glass of wine or a bar of chocolate. They stay in the moment instead.



8 You also speak about Face Language Mastery. What does that mean, and how does it relate to presence and authentic communication?

Face Language Mastery means reading yourself first, before you read anyone else.

I think of a client in her fifties, an entrepreneur going through a difficult separation, who arrived barely able to open her eyes, her jaw locked, collapsed in on herself. A year later, she stands strong. She has understood her smile as a key, and she uses it now in daily life. She recognises when someone is performing, and she is no longer afraid of it. At over fifty, she is stepping into her own life for the first time. That is presence: when body and expression no longer come apart.

This is where my work expands into Leadership4Presence: what your face, body, voice and nervous system communicate before words, in leadership and visibility as much as in private life. Your face is your business card. Your body is your message. Your presence is your leadership.



9 There is growing scientific interest in facial feedback and the connection between the facial muscles and emotional wellbeing. How do you view this?

Researchers call it the facial feedback hypothesis, and the idea goes back to Darwin. You smile because you are happy, and you are a little happier because you smile. It works in both directions.

A randomised trial published in May in *Frontiers in Psychiatry* found that people with mild to moderate depression who trained their facial muscles daily for six weeks showed a significantly greater reduction in

symptoms than a control group who simply sat and breathed. I have been in professional exchange with the lead researcher, Professor Axel Wollmer, since 2019, though I was not part of the study team and did not design its exercises.

What I find most interesting is that the training produced no cosmetic effect. That is not a contradiction, the programme was built for the muscles of emotional expression, so it changed how people felt, not how they looked.

This does not replace therapy or medical treatment, and the research is still small and preliminary. But it confirms something I have watched in my own practice for years: the face is not only a mirror of your state. It is also a way in.

Reader Invitation: The Liberated Smile, 60 Seconds

One of the four Magic Moves to try. A Duchenne smile, where the muscles around the eyes and the mouth work together.

1. Sit down, both feet on the floor, exhale calmly twice.
2. Lift the corners of the mouth and let the eye area come with it, until the cheeks below the eyes rise slightly.
3. Let the tongue drop, keep the teeth apart, and consciously soften the forehead.
4. Hold for around 60 seconds, keeping the jaw loose.
5. Let go and notice where something has shifted. For most people, the jaw reports back first.

Tip: Try it on a day when you feel least like it. That is when the effect is clearest.

Note: If jaw pain persists, have the cause assessed by a doctor or dentist before working with exercises.

This is one of four Magic Moves: eyes, Acceptance, Boundaries and this smile. The other three are available free at 4magicmoves.com.

10 Why does the face belong in our yoga practice, and what would you most like to pass on to yoga practitioners?

When life falls apart, the task is not to rebuild it exactly as it was. It is to inhabit your own body as your home, so that what is really in you can find expression.

From forty onwards, it is written on your face, not as a flaw, but as evidence. That is why the face belongs in yoga practice: yoga does not stop at the neck, and the face is the most honest part of the body.

Your smile is your key. Come home to yourself.

