

pose



PHOTOS: PASCAL WEIS

# YOGA OF TRUST & TOGETHERNESS

AcroYoga takes you beyond the limitations of fear. Practiced along with a partner, it's centred on faith and fun as it leads you both through a mid-air dance of union and surrender. For **Sandy Rubin**, it breathes life, soul and community into her yoga

rust. What does it mean to you? This one simple word can be defined in so many ways and for everyone the answer will be different.

Reliability, truthfulness, loyalty, friendship... the list goes on. But could you feel it? Like, really feel it. Would it feel like flying through the air with your eyes closed, knowing that someone would catch you should you fall? Would it feel like letting go, like surrendering completely to another and knowing that they have your back? Would it feel like the world stopped, just for a moment, to witness the beauty and respect that comes from mutual trust.

For me, trust is a practice. Just like yoga. It's not always something that comes naturally. Yet every time I get on my mat with one of my AcroYoga partners, I make the decision to let go, to surrender, to trust. And we fall into the beautiful dance of union and partnership where communication happens through breath, through touch and the occasional verbal cue when necessary. To me, this is divine. Play. A space where we let go into each other and create a physical bond that is both sacred and safe. For trust doesn't always come easy, but it sure is worth it.

When was the last time you really let go? You really relinquished control and put your trust entirely in someone else's hands (or feet as the case may be!)? This can be a huge challenge, even with someone you know and love. »



**{ Trust and empathy }**  
guide this yoga form

AcroYoga asks you to do this with people you may have just met for the first time. In this sense the practice is such a powerful mirror and has the ability to be very healing.

It works like this: you have a base (person on the ground), a flyer (the person in the air) and a spotter (the safety officer, who doesn't usually make it into the photos). The base lies on the floor and the flyer is lifted up onto their feet or hands and experiences the exhilaration of 'flying' (and sometimes a healthy dose of fear). As you progress in the practice the transitions between postures become faster and faster, and soon you are spinning through the air, communicating with very few words.

AcroYoga is centred on communication, clear role definition and fun. It requires teamwork and commitment to succeed and teaches you to stay calm in situations that are rather usual. This last point comes in handy a lot in regular life too. It is a very reflective experience; you will

soon learn whether you like to lead or follow, if you find it easy to trust or are afraid of falling and how much you are prepared to let go of limiting beliefs. It's designed to bring you out of your comfort zone and face your fears with the support of your partners.

While it looks very impressive and seems to be defying gravity, AcroYoga is actually very easy. We work with the principles of bone stacking. Once the bones are aligned at a perpendicular angle to the ground they become like strong steel structures and it's very easy to hold the entire body weight of another person on them. In these so-called 'power lines' the muscles can release and the bones can do the work. It is also incredibly healthy and nourishing for the bones to bear this weight.

I started practicing AcroYoga nearly three-and-a-half years ago when a guest teacher was visiting Dubai. I attended her workshop, she flew me and that was it, I was hooked. Since then I have practiced a few times a week, attended countless trainings including my AcroYoga Teacher Training and started to teach the practice in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and South Africa along with my teaching partners at our company, Phoenix Rising. We now host regular AcroYoga trainings, Thai massage trainings and weekly workshops and classes.

There is a growing demand and we feel this is because more and more people are looking for a way to forget about stress, do something out of the ordinary and come back to what we knew so inherently as children: it is fun to play!

What I find so beautiful about this practice is that it puts the principles of yoga into a real life scenario. It is extremely meditative to base or fly and you really have to be in the present moment. If you are not 100 percent focussed then it's likely you will fall or drop somebody (hence the spotter). While it requires concentration and attentiveness, it also requires equal amounts of tenderness and understanding. It teaches me constantly that in softness there is a lot of strength, in allowing yourself to be afraid there is so much bravery and in trusting there is always freedom.

There are many physical benefits too: improved bone strength, improved flexibility and longer, leaner muscles. We do a lot of partner stretching

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before our sessions and in the practice itself. Basing lengthens the hamstring muscles in the back of the thighs and strengthens the quads, belly and arms. For the flyer it's a full body workout. And, AcroYoga is not just for the super fit yogis. Using the right technique, it can be done by everyone. But don't just take my word for it, try it for yourself. If you walk away feeling less than empowered I will be surprised.

There are, no doubt, many paths to enlightenment. Is AcroYoga one of them? Is it real yoga? For me, absolutely. It breathes life, soul and community into my yoga. It lights a fire within the belly that is contagious. And, it's more. It's a tool for allowing adults to act like kids. To throw caution to the wind, to dance the beautiful and delicate dance of trust. To come alive. And, ultimately, to surrender into togetherness. ❀