Strike a Pose

January 1, 2004 By Rebecca Minnich

HIVer Per Erez “spent so much energy worrying about when I was going to die, I forgot to live.” Then he loosened up—literally. “Yoga helped me understand that this moment is my whole life.” Positive since 1992, Erez taught free HIVer group classes at Test Positive Aware Network in Chicago. Now he ministers privately: in his studio, First Person Healing, and in clients’ homes. “It’s like the difference between seeing a psychotherapist and going to a support group,” Erez says. “HIVers are starting to burn out on the group approach. They’re tired of discussing diarrhea, liver toxicity and facial wasting. They just want to live a healthy life.” The price is healthy, too: Erez has a sliding scale and doesn’t reject those who can’t pay.

Using a “diagnostic process laid out in ancient yogic scriptures,” Erez tailors yoga postures (asanas) and breathing techniques to each student. “You may have five clients with peripheral neuropathy,” he says, “but they may require five different approaches to it.”

Get your asana in gear:

Hit the mat: Find a yoga class in the Yellow Pages or on the Web: www.yogafinder.com or www.self-realization.com. Most gyms offer yoga, or practice at home with a videotape (Erez recommends Living with AIDS Through Yoga and Meditation, www.yogagroup.org).

Be flexible: If group classes aren’t for you, go one-on-one. But “if you’re thinking of individual instruction as a substitute for taking meds or seeing a doctor,” Erez says, “you’re wrong.”

Hold the pose: Erez recommends at least one year of steady practice to grasp yoga’s healing wonders: “It took me five years to master Downward-Facing Dog.”

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