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# YOGA party on!

By Amanda N. Wegner

Three times a year, Jodi Goldbeck gets together with four other women, all who have been friends since the third grade. Madison is their gathering place, and Goldbeck, who lives here, is the hostess.

In planning the group's most recent outing, Goldbeck says she was "motivated to plan something more than the 'same old.'"

So she planned a yoga party with the help of Faith Dey, co-owner of Siren Fitness.

As people continue to look for new and exciting ways to celebrate and spend time together, a whole slew of unique "party" options have cropped up. Yoga parties have been around for a while, first gaining ground on the coasts, but an increasing number of local studios and instructors now offer yoga parties in their lists of services.

"It was something we were getting more requests for," says Dey, noting that Siren Fitness offers "fitness parties" and organizers can choose from a slew of class formats, including yoga.

"A yoga party ... offers a special kind of healthy treat for people who live busy, often

stress-filled, lives," says Jules Wolf Stenzel, RYT, a local, independent yoga teacher who has been offering yoga parties for over three years. "Instead of heading out to the bar for relaxation and rejuvenation, something that may take a toll on your health, how about soothing your body and spirit with a yoga session?"

### A sneaky surprise

Goldbeck didn't tell her friends she had scheduled a yoga party, and when they arrived, Dey had already set up the room. When Goldbeck first arranged the party with Dey, the co-owner took the time to find out what Goldbeck was looking for. Did the ladies have any yoga experience? Did she want something energizing or relaxing? What about afterward?

Tailoring a yoga party to the group is paramount to the party's success. A strenuous class with little guidance might turn off (and injure!) new yogis. For a baby shower, a class that includes inversions would be contraindicated for the mother-to-be.

For Goldbeck and company, the class was relaxing, with a good mix of instruction and independence, as several ladies in the group had never done yoga before. Afterward, they had lunch in Siren Fitness' lounge space.

Goldbeck says the best part of the experience was that it motivated most of the ladies to become more active. Goldbeck joined Siren Fitness. Two friends bought yoga videos on the trip home, and another started a regular exercise program.

"It was a good jumpstart we all needed," says Goldbeck.

### Know and consider

When planning a yoga party, some important things to know and consider include: **Who's invited? What's their experience? What is the instructor's training and experience?** Completion of a 200-hour training program is fast becoming the new standard for yoga teachers. (RYT, which means Registered Yoga Teacher, is an optional designation that instructors who have completed approved training programs of at least 200 hours can apply for.)

Stenzel says: "You need a confident instructor who can gently draw people together without losing sight of the fact that this is a party — a celebration. You want an instructor who can keep people feeling good about themselves if they've never tried yoga. Also, if there are people attending the party with different yoga experiences — newcomers, long-practicing yogis, children, people with physical limitations, etc. — then you should have an instructor who is capable of dealing with that."

She also suggests taking a class with the instructor before paying them to lead your party. Are you comfortable with her and her style?

**What will the instructor provide? What will you need to provide?** This includes everything from mats, to the practice space, to any post-yoga party planning, including food, drinks, etc.

"The best part about yoga," says Goldbeck, "is that it's just you and your body. It really helps you understand you don't have limits. And that's a fabulous experience to share with others."



*Amanda N. Wegner, awegner@writerscrampcommunications.com, completed her 200-hour yoga training last summer. Her mat is always within arm's reach, and she loves to share yoga with others.*

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