

Yoga

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"I've been doing it ever since."

Yogi Population Boom

Duran is in good company. More and more people are taking note of the benefits of yoga as Americans have embraced it in ever-increasing numbers over the past decade.

The **Sports & Fitness Industry Association** says that more than 24 million U.S. adults practiced yoga in 2014, up from 17 million in 2008. That makes it as popular as golf, and it's now a \$27 billion industry fueled by people from all walks of life.

"The practice of yoga allows students to be still in a world consumed with chaos," said yogi **Jodi Theissen**.

The private yoga instructor works with business owners and executives. She also conducts a quarterly Sound & Healing yoga class at **Chapman University** that emphasizes the use of musical instruments, such as the dulcimer, gong, pan flute, and singing bowl, to help students release pent-up emotions through sound.

"Yoga's deep breathing and meditation practices help foster an inner shift from to-do lists, kids' and spouses' needs, financial concerns and relationship struggles to something bigger," she said. "Yoga helps relieve stress and unclutter the mind and helps you get more focused."

Executive **Janine Lombardi** agreed.

"Yoga has transformed my life," said the

founder and chief executive of **J9 Leading Solutions**, a leadership development company in Newport Beach.

The self-described Type A personality said yoga has taught her how to let go of things people often get addicted to.

"Not just material things," she said, "but the 'thing' of being busy, the 'thing' of being stressed. We're addicted to the 'thing' of thinking that we have to do everything, perfectly, all the time."

In the Boardroom

A 2015 survey by **Yoga Journal**, a media company that produces conferences devoted to yoga, fitness and wellness, found that C-suiters from dozens of Fortune 500 companies, including **Apple**, **Motorola**, **Google**, **Forbes** and **General Motors**, said yoga has made them better leaders.

Among the best-known devotees in OC is **Bill Gross**, the "Bond King" who now runs a fund for **Janus Capital** from an office in Newport Center. "From a business owner's standpoint, yoga has been a tremendous help," said Lombardi, who like Duran practices the vinyasa form of yoga.

The discipline, she said, teaches people how to be present in every moment. "When you're in a certain position—say 'downward dog'—you have to focus on what you're doing, how you're breathing, and let everything else just flow out of you."

Yoga's emphasis on deepening and lengthening the breath helps to initiate the body's relaxation response.

It emphasizes the concept of "intention,"

or mindfulness, a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations.

"In the past," Lombardi said, "I would have been irritated if a client cancelled a meeting at the last minute. Now when unexpected issues arise, I employ the deep breathing techniques I've learned through yoga and refocus my energy on the positive potential of a situation."

"For example, I can use the time I would have spent with that client to work on another project. I am no longer reactive; I'm responsive. I'm a more mindful human being."

Dr. **Ramin Baschshi**, chief operating officer at **Make-A-Wish Foundation of Greater Los Angeles**, has been regularly practicing various types of yoga for over 10 years.

"On a personal level, yoga has helped me tune into what is really important in life," she said, "like taking care of myself so I can be a better wife to my husband, a better mom to my two kids, and a better leader at Make-A-Wish."

At the start of most yoga classes, Baschshi said, the instructor reminds the students to be intentional about that day's class.

"This translates to the office, as well. Before I start my day, I think about what I want to accomplish."

Benefits Beyond the Mat

Another aspect of yoga that Baschshi values is how the practice cultivates focus.

"You need to concentrate on each move in order to make sure you do it the way that it is supposed to be done. You have to let go of all the other distractions. Imagine the self-discipline that takes. I apply that same focus to my career."

The discipline also has helped Duran outside the yoga studio.

"Yoga teaches us that we can go beyond what we thought we could do," he said. "When I started yoga, I watched what the other students were doing. I was inspired to push myself."

"It's a mental thing, too. You hold these poses for a minute. That's a long time to keep other thoughts from clouding your mind. Mental endurance—not just physical stamina—is tested through holding postures for an extended time. That same mental endurance helps you accomplish your business goals."

Darlene Dearen, owner and yoga instructor at **Radiant Hot Yoga** in Newport Beach, said she sees many professionals benefit from incorporating yoga into their lives.

"We have many Type A-personality students," she said. "Yoga resonates with them because of the challenging nature of the practice. People walk in initially for the physical, but what they find is so much deeper and more satisfying. It is the mental stillness and the soothing of the soul that occurs and touches them in a way they have never experienced before."

Duran agreed, "Yoga changed my view of the world." ■

grandPad

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now controls nearly 49% of the company, according to a regulatory filing with the London Stock Exchange.

The investment provides growth capital and deep connections to Asia's PC supply chain, according to co-founder **Scott Lien**.

"We have access to hardware design, manufacturing capabilities and worldwide distribution," said the former **Intuit** executive, who launched the company about two years ago with his son **Isaac**, an undergraduate at **Chapman University** studying computer information systems. "There's also an opportunity to work together strategically."

Acer sold more than 19.6 million PC units last year, down 18.1% from 2014, according to Framingham, Mass.-based market tracker **IDC**. The decline was felt by every major PC maker last year besides **Apple Inc.**, though Acer closed the year as the world's fifth largest supplier, with a 7.1% market share, according to preliminary data.

Beijing-based **Lenovo** was No. 1 with 57.1 million units sold, down 3.6% from 2014, and a market share of 20.7%.

GrandPad will use the Acer proceeds in a sales and marketing push, adding to its employment count of 25.

"We've been in the market for over a year. Now it's about scaling up on customer acquisitions," said Lien, who wouldn't disclose user numbers.

A recent distribution deal with **Comfort Keepers** should provide a boost.

The brand, operated by Dayton, Ohio-based **CK Franchising Inc.**, this month began integrating the grandPad tablet into its core services for older people.

CK Franchising is a unit of French conglomerate **Sodexo Group**, a professional services provider with annual sales topping \$28 billion. Its U.S. unit posts annual revenue of \$9.2 billion.

GrandPad tablet users can view photos and videos on social media, play games, check the weather, listen to music, send voicemails, video chat, or make phone calls through voice



In touch: tablet helps older people connect with loved ones at the touch of a button or by voice command

activation or the touch of a button.

The device and service, which allows users to stay connected with family, friends and caregivers, costs about \$60 per month, per user.

Comfort Keepers serves more than 30,000 customers through 700 franchise offices in the U.S.

"Over time it will be integrated over their whole program," Lien said.

The deal's recurring revenue model could provide tens of millions in sales for grandPad, which is targeting the fastest growing demographic in the U.S. and the world.

The U.S. is home to about 22 million potential users, and the global market tops 300 million, according to Lien.

"Most technology is designed for 30 year olds. It's not designed for 90 year olds," he said. "[GrandPad] can really transform their lives."

The company is targeting the U.S. market, then moving into Canada, Ireland, France and several other countries.

GrandPad, which in January made its debut at CES, the world's largest technology trade show, has raised \$2.1 million, including a \$1 million investment from **Tech Coast Angels of Orange County**. ■

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