

# Yoga anyone? Edinburgh Yoga Festival is back

**Edinburgh's Yoga Festival returns with a focus on workplace wellbeing from 11<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

Stress-relieving, anxiety-reducing, mental-health improving and mood boosting yoga is coming to Edinburgh with the arrival of the 3rd annual Edinburgh Community Yoga Festival.

The organisers say that mental health issues, along with back pain, are the two most common causes of employees missing work. Statistics from the UK's Health and Safety Executive reveal that 12.9 working days are lost due to mental health issues and 8.9 million days to musculoskeletal disorders, including back and neck pain.

Studies show that yoga postures and mindful breathing can help alleviate those and improve productivity, as well as boosting staff happiness and wellbeing.

Throughout the 8-day long festival, which runs from 11-19 May, yoga classes will be held in work places across the city as well as many of Edinburgh's most popular studios with teachers from diverse yoga backgrounds.

Added to this is an exciting programme of workshops at the Serenity Cafe, which is run by and for people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, many of whom benefit from the classes offered by ECY. This years festival focuses on pairing up some of Edinburgh's favourite teachers each offering workshops that cover all aspects of the yoga practice, from chanting, meditation, breath work, movement, yoga sleep and even massage!

Among the teachers is John Arthur, who has his own inspiring story of recovery. John uses his experiences to teach yoga to

others working through addiction issues and he also holds classes for men.

John said: "You need to demystify yoga and show men all the benefits health wise. Men tend to want a quick return on their money and effort, so it's important to get the message across that's about wellbeing and not just physical exercise.

"I also tell men that yoga will mean they can tie their own shoe laces and cut their own toenails. Practical things that get more difficult as you get older.

"Sometimes I mention sports stars who do yoga, people they might not think of as yoga people.

"Most of all I make it accessible to everyone and make it fun. It's good to have a laugh and not take it too seriously."

With classes to suit all ages, backgrounds, shapes and conditions, ECY makes yoga accessible to everyone whether you've yet to set foot on a mat (but are intrigued to find out what all the fuss is about) or are an advanced practitioner keen to become involved in a welcoming and vibrant yoga community.

All the money raised from the festival will go towards offering the healing benefits of yoga to communities in Edinburgh experiencing mental and physical health issues, affected by addiction and trauma.

Laura Wilson, founding director of ECY explains: "with the popularity of yoga at an all time high it makes sense for us to us to bring the thriving yoga community together in the name of fundraising. The premise is really very simple; in doing yoga, we share yoga with others. At ECY we are driven by the idea that the healing benefits of yoga should be accessible to everyone. We currently have 19 outreach classes running across the city, which assist in helping people to develop emotional, physical and mental resilience. By

supporting this event the participants help us to continue this important work.”

Keith McKenzie, project manager for Veterans Community Café, one of ECY’s partner organisations comments. “The yoga delivered to the Veterans community has brought with it a sense of safety, trust and acceptance.

The community spirit, which has been built over the time the programme has been running, sees the veterans and their families’ return week after week with an energy to participate that has surprised everyone involved.

Each one taking part has made improvements in flexibility, balance and strength, which added to the grounding techniques delivered by the skilled yoga teachers leaves everyone involved feeling more at peace with oneself.

