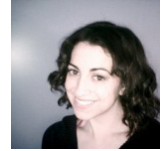


# Interview with Yoga in the Park's Däna Brown



by  
Amanda  
Lawrence

Yoga has been rapidly gaining fans over the past few years as a form of exercise and relaxation; however, while I see many excited individuals clutching their yoga mats, I also encounter dozens of people, myself included, who are still slightly reluctant to commit to yoga for one reason or another. Personally, I'm about as graceful as a rock, and still a little bashful about wiggling my chakras. But lately I've discovered something wonderful about my self-limits: I have none! So, when Däna (pronounced Donna, don't let that wonky little umlaut fool you) Brown approached me about bringing my butt back to her Yoga in the Park classes, I decided to take the opportunity to find out why she was so persistent before I relented. And I couldn't be happier that I did!

**Amanda:** So Miss Däna with the umlaut, what was your first introduction to yoga?

**Däna:** For as long as I can remember I always had an infatuation with flexible people... gymnasts, contortionists, and yogis. They always looked so free to me. In my mid twenties, when yoga seemed to just be hitting the mainstream, I picked up a video and went from there. My posture and back pain were getting progressively worse and I thought that trying yoga might bring some relief. It was a basic video from

Tracey Rich and Ganga White – straightforward with no bells and whistles. It did its job and it did it well.



Däna completed a 240-hour Hatha Yoga certification.

**Amanda:** So, how long after that did you decide to dedicate yourself to yoga, personally and professionally?

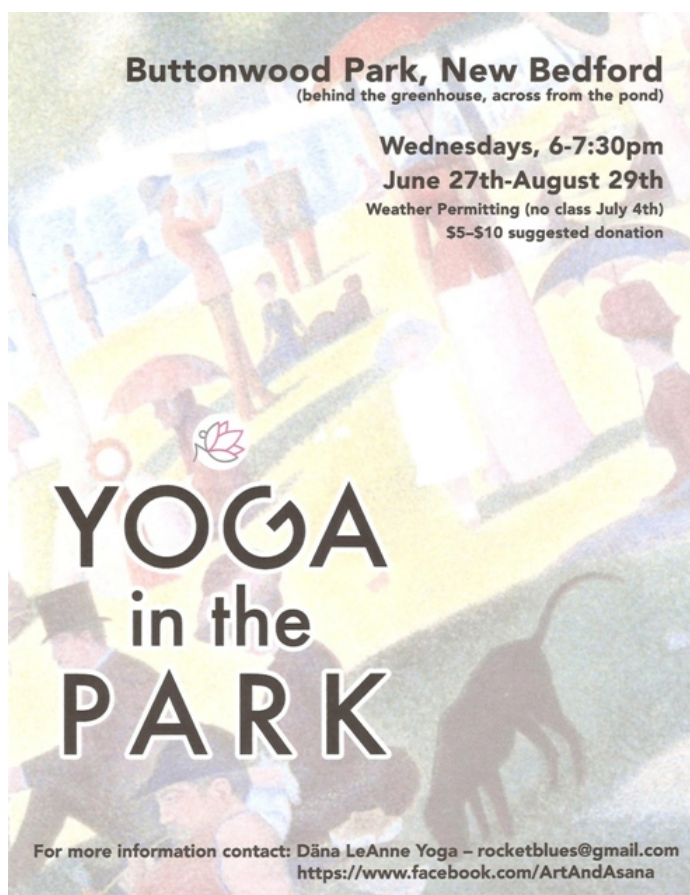
**Däna:** My personal practice was on and off for quite a few years, but you sort of get these little epiphanies throughout your practice. Even though I didn't practice, or even think about it on a daily basis in the beginning, the more epiphanies and little changes that came about, the more my dedication increased. My pains, my depression, my insecurities, all began to gradually fade. About eight years after I first picked up that video, a confident outgoing and genuinely happy person showed up. That's when I decided I wanted to help other people feel as good as I felt. Three years ago I started teaching some friends in my living room and out in the park. They would give me such positive feedback and tell me how their physical issues were starting to fade, too. They needed their weekly yoga.

I felt like I finally found the thing I was supposed to be doing! In 2011, I started my teacher training, in which I

completed a 240-hour Hatha Yoga certification. I chose not to take my training at a specifically styled school, such as Bikram, Baptiste or Kripalu. While I feel that all of these styles offer something wonderful, I didn't want to feel pigeon holed into teaching just one specific style. My classes are diverse, so you'll see different aspects of many styles blending together.

**Amanda:** Why do you think some people, you know, me, for example, feel so intimidated by yoga? Do you have any tips on how I, um, they can overcome these fears?

**Däna:** (Laughing) I get so opinionated when it comes to how intimidating yoga can come across. I'll try to control myself. When magazine covers, articles, and photos focus so much on pretzel poses, arm balancing, handstands, etc. it's no wonder I hear fear in people's voices when it comes to yoga. Don't get me wrong, I love the challenge of these poses; they're beautiful and DO have a purpose, but even after 10 years of practice I don't do many of them. They are not the focus of my practice, nor do they need to be the focus of anyone else's practice if they do not want them to be. Sometimes, I feel like that idea gets lost amongst mainstream advertising, and people feel like they can't do yoga if they can't be an arm balancing pretzel. Yoga meets you where you are. That's what makes it amazing! Eventually, our bodies and minds open on many levels, but how far is up to you. That is the ideal I try to present in my classes. Yoga



really IS for everybody. Take those magazine cover poses and look at them as inspiration for how amazing the human machine can be and then let it go and be yourself.

**Amanda:** What are some of the benefits of incorporating yoga into your life and fitness routine?

**Däna:** I'll start with the positive things that have happened to me. As I said earlier, my back pain and depression disappeared. My posture has been corrected. I keep sciatica flare ups manageable to most of the time nonexistent. Stress and anxiety are no longer a plague – it has just made me better equipped to handle the things that come my way in my life. I now know what joy really feels like.

Yoga increases flexibility, balance and strength, which keeps the aging process graceful. It keeps the body supple which decreases your chance of injuries in daily life, and also in other fitness activities you may engage in. It's a great way to balance your body if you do a lot of strength training, or other types of workouts that tend to shorten the muscles. It has helped people I know who have carpal tunnel issues and runner's knee issues. I wouldn't say Yoga is a cure all, but it definitely helps keep the body and mind in check.



The first Yoga in the Park class will be Wednesday June 27th and will go until August 29th.

**Amanda:** Being part hippie, I'm loving the idea of hosting yoga in the park. Can you tell me a little about how it's going to go?

**Däna:** I am absolutely excited to be offering Yoga in the Park classes again! It's like giving yourself permission to play outside. The combination of fresh air and organic ground under your feet is comparable to none. These classes will be an hour-long vinyasa style. We'll get moving in a nice flow for the first half and then slow it down for a mellower second half. All of my classes are for all levels of experience. I teach poses in stages so that beginners have a solid place to start and more experienced practitioners have a deeper direction to move. These classes are donation based with a suggested donation of \$5. My goal is to have every aspect of these classes accessible to everyone. The location is

Buttonwood Park. We'll meet behind the greenhouse across the road from the pond. I have a few extra mats that can be used on a first come first serve basis.

The first class will be Wednesday June 27th and will go until August 29th, weather permitting. Class will not be held on the fourth of July. Attendees should arrive at 6pm to sign in and settle. The class will start promptly at 6:15 and end at 7:15. I'm also hoping to have a treat of some acoustic music for a couple of classes.

**Amanda:** Do you have any additional advice for beginners who may still be a bit leery of becoming a yogi?

**Däna:** Yes. Jump in, the water's fine! You never know what you can do, or what you will like until you try. And don't worry, you can stop whenever you want, but I don't think you will.  
\*wink\*

**For more information on Yoga in the Park, check out Däna's Facebook page:** Art and Asana – Däna LeAnne Yoga (<http://www.facebook.com/ArtAndAsana>)

*Namaste.*

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**Yoga Location:** Buttonwood Park

**Payment Options:** Cash donations beginning at \$5 are appreciated