

little happinesses

YUKO MATSUDA-PELUSO'S YUKO YOGA IN ETNA

“TRIPUTI” IS A Sanskrit word meaning the triad, or union, of Dhyata, Dhyeya and Dhyana. Although somewhat complex to explain, Yuko Matsuda-Peluso of Yuko Yoga in Etna translates it as the union of body, breath and mind. “First, you need to concentrate your mind, or be mindful of your action and movement. Second, you must maintain a certain quality of your breathing because the breath represents your state of mind. Lastly, you must find your yoga pose which is both easy and steady. When all three aspects of your body, breath and mind are in harmony, you practice yoga correctly,” explains Matsuda-Peluso.

For Matsuda-Peluso, yoga isn't just a practice. It's a way of life. “I was stressed out working in the corporate world and found yoga was my retreat. I met a yoga teacher who always combined wisdom into her instruction. She became my role model and I started to believe that her power, which empowered me, had something to do with yoga. Yoga became no longer just a physical exercise to me, but rather a philosophy. So, I started searching for yoga training where I could learn what yoga is,” recounts Matsuda-Peluso. After graduating from a 200-hour course in Tokyo, Matsuda-Peluso began studying around the world, from Thailand to Santa Cruz. After getting married, she landed in Etna, where she's been teaching for nearly a decade. “I wasn't



really trying to become a yoga instructor, it just kind of unfolded.” Before Etna, population 700, Matsuda-Peluso laughs at what she once considered a small town. “I grew up about 60 kilometers (37 miles) from Tokyo in what we called a little beach town. It had a population of about 30,000 people.”

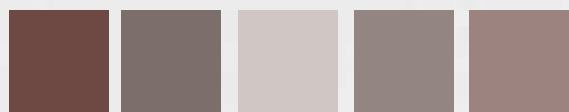
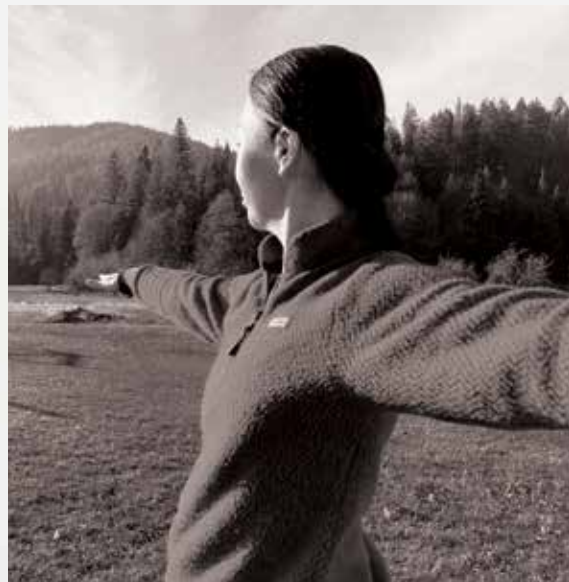
Although physical practice locations in Etna have shifted over the years, Matsuda-Peluso is celebrating Yuko Yoga’s 10-year anniversary by moving into her own studio on Etna’s Main Street. Offerings include everything from prenatal and youth yoga to relaxation and Vinyasa, a popular style of contemporary yoga that includes a certain set of movements that transition from one pose to another. “The goal of yoga is peace or to be happy, so when you look at your daily life, you can see every little bit of that happiness is actually around you. For me, that’s a high. I want people to find that happiness,” explains Matsuda-Peluso.

Even during the pandemic’s full lockdown, Matsuda-Peluso continued to inspire her students to keep up their practice by offering a free class online. “I wanted it to be a reminder of happiness, especially when things were uncertain. So, any means I could find to deliver that opportunity to people, I did. The class was recorded so they didn’t have to sit through the whole hour if they didn’t want to. They could even just lay down at the Shavasana (corpse pose), and just be reminded, oh yes, yoga! That’s happiness, right?”

The decision to put her class online also ended up creating additional opportunities for Matsuda-Peluso’s business. “Because I live in a town of 700 people, I thought there were limits to growth, but then you know suddenly it’s like, oh wow. Everyone wants to be online. I could reconnect to my own teachers, and friends anywhere in the world can invite me or I can take their class. COVID forced people to expand in a way that made the world really small in a comfortable way.”

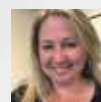
In the spirit of personal growth, Matsuda-Peluso is also celebrating 10 years of her studio with a brand-new teacher training course beginning in 2022. Having served previously as a faculty member for yoga schools in both Japan and Santa Cruz, she’s ready to do it on her own. “I always wanted to do a retreat or a teacher training so that I can help the yoga teacher or yoga practitioner grow. Then one day a student came up to me and said she really wanted to be trained by me, so I started to put things together. It led to me starting a course from January through March with a 200-hour teacher training.”

As for the future of her business, the pandemic or her life, Matsuda-Peluso is optimistic. “I’m not the half-empty person. I always see full,



because I have so much.” She also takes seriously the responsibility for bringing Triputi to her community. “If I don’t deliver, people might get caught up with their own daily life and then forget about all those little happinesses that make life better.” •

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