

Wellness



Feeling Welcome at any Size

Spas are often considered havens of relaxation, self-care and rejuvenation.

However, for many individuals, especially those in larger bodies, the spa experience can lead to feelings of exclusion, discomfort or even shame. This reality has spurred a growing movement toward body inclusivity in the wellness industry.

Advocates like Sky McLaughlin and Sherilyn Trompetter, Canadians who have traveled to more than 80 countries, found that, while spas around the world promise luxury, they often fall short in accommodating a wide range of body types. Their own experiences with fat phobia in spas sparked a passion to change the industry for the better.

A CALL FOR CHANGE

In 2022, Trompetter's visit to a spa with friends underscored the need for body-inclusive practices. After multiple requests for a robe that fit, she was left feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable, casting a shadow over what should have been a restorative and celebratory experience.

"I felt bad about my own body, but I also felt bad for the other person, because it's the system. They were not empowered," Trompetter explained. "They're not at fault. That was a procedure they had and the intake process. We want to let people know there are simple



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fixes for this."

This experience prompted Trompetter to avoid returning to the spa, and discouraged her friends from returning as well. The situation was a stark reminder that without more inclusive practices, spas risk alienating clients and damaging their reputations.

After creating a course and an ebook on inclusive marketing strategies for spas, McLaughlin and Trompetter delved deeper into international best practices. They discovered that while many

spas follow protocols like offering robes and towels in lockers upon arrival, these practices don't always account for diverse body types.

Their research led to simple yet effective solutions for spas to create more welcoming environments. One suggestion is revamping the intake process to include sizing options, ensuring that every guest has the proper robe and towel waiting for them. Another idea is to clearly label extra robes and towels and make them easily accessible in changing

rooms, so guests don't have to ask for larger sizes in a vulnerable state.

SPA GOING IN A LARGE BODY

Finding the right spa can sometimes be a challenge for people with large bodies. A call ahead might help avoid embarrassment. Look for spas that have larger massage tables with high weight limits. Some spas will offer extenders on a bed to provide more comfort.

When making a reservation, request a robe size — or bring

a personal spa bag with your own robe in it.

Scout a spa out before you book an appointment and ask for a tour. Are there therapists of all sizes? Does the artwork and marketing material display people of all sizes? Does the furniture accommodate larger bodies?

Many spas are committed to welcoming people of all body types into their spaces, even while some have been thoughtless about accommodating people who do not fit beauty standard stereotypes.

Floating for Wellness

Imagine closing your eyes in a quiet, dark room and floating on salt water. At many wellness centers and spas, they invite you to do more than imagine.

Float pods and float rooms are popping up all around the country as a treatment that induces deep relaxation and promotes wellness.

Some athletes swear by it as a way to recover from sore muscles and injuries and it is popular among NFL players.

Float therapy, also known as sensory deprivation or flotation therapy, involves lying in a float tank or pod filled with body-temperature water infused with a high concentration of Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate), creating a buoyant environment that mimics the sensation of floating on the Dead Sea. By eliminating external stimuli like light, sound and touch, float therapy offers an unparalleled experience of serenity, with both physical and mental health benefits.

HOW FLOAT THERAPY WORKS

At the heart of float therapy is the concept of sensory deprivation. In a float tank, the absence of noise, gravity and visual distractions allows your body and mind to enter a deeply meditative state. The water, typically heated to



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match your body temperature, feels almost imperceptible, creating the sensation of floating weightlessly. The magnesium sulfate in the water helps relax muscles, reduce inflammation and soothe the skin.

Because the concentration of salt is so high, even people who say they are unable to float in normal water have no difficulties doing so in the float tanks.

Float sessions typically last between 60 and 90 minutes. Many spa-goers report that after the first 20 minutes of initial adjustment, their minds begin to drift into a peaceful

state, similar to the feeling of meditation or sleep. The calming effects of sensory deprivation make float therapy ideal for people dealing with stress, anxiety or chronic pain.

Most people float naked, but because of the high concentration of salt, users are encouraged to cover any scratches or sores with petroleum jelly, which the spa typically provides. Do not shave 24 hours before floating for the best experience. Showering beforehand is typically required and recommended afterward. Wear earplugs (again, usually provided by the spa).

Many spas ban people from floating if in the 14 days prior they have dyed their hair, gotten hair extensions or used tanners or bronzing lotions.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Float therapy offers a wide range of benefits that extend beyond relaxation. Physically, the zero-gravity environment relieves pressure on the joints and muscles, making it an effective treatment for individuals with conditions such as arthritis, fibromyalgia or chronic back pain.

The magnesium in the Epsom salts is absorbed through the skin, further

helping to relax tight muscles, reduce inflammation and aid recovery after workouts or injury.

Mentally, float therapy can help alleviate symptoms of anxiety, depression and insomnia. Research has shown that float therapy can lower cortisol levels, the hormone responsible for stress, and increase endorphins, the body's natural mood enhancers. Some users describe a heightened sense of clarity, creativity and focus after a session, making float therapy a go-to for professionals seeking mental rejuvenation.

Hydrafacials on Trend

It's nearly impossible to peruse a spa's facials menu without encountering hydrafacial treatments.

Hydrafacials have taken the skincare world by storm, offering a non-invasive, customizable treatment that addresses a wide range of skin concerns.

Known for delivering immediate, visible results with no downtime, the treatment is popular in spas and dermatologist offices alike. But what exactly is a hydrafacial, and why are so many people turning to it for glowing, rejuvenated skin?

A hydrafacial is a medical-grade facial that combines deep cleansing, exfoliation, extraction, hydration and antioxidant protection in one. The treatment uses a specialized device to perform these steps in a seamless process that's gentle on the skin while providing powerful results. It is suitable for all skin types and addresses concerns like fine lines, wrinkles, elasticity, firmness, even tone, vibrancy, texture and congested or oily skin.

There are now several different patented systems that estheticians use to cleanse, exfoliate and hydrate the skin more effectively. These technologies allow the treatment to gently vacuum out impurities while simultaneously delivering nourishing serums, which



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helps improve the overall texture and appearance of the skin.

TYPES OF HYDRAFACIALS

Nearly every spa seeks out a way to customize their hydrafacial offerings to set them apart from their competitors and offer a unique experience for their guests. Many offer several different types of hydrafacials tailored to specific skin concerns.

Basic options focus on deep cleaning, exfoliation and hydration. Other treatments add boosters to address concerns like hyperpigmentation, fine lines or acne. Deluxe

treatments add lymphatic drainage therapy to reduce puffiness and improve detoxification. LED light therapy might also be included to further enhance skin healing and boost collagen production.

BENEFITS

The benefits of hydrafacials are numerous. These treatments offer deep hydration, helping to plump the skin and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. They improve skin tone and texture, making the complexion appear smoother and more even. Because the treatment includes exfoliation and extraction, it

unclogs pores, reduces acne breakouts and minimizes the appearance of large pores.

Hydrafacials are known for their gentleness. Unlike many other skin treatments, there is no peeling or irritation afterward, making them a popular choice for those with sensitive skin. The non-invasive nature means there's no downtime, and clients can resume normal activities immediately after treatment.

WHAT TO EXPECT

A hydrafacial treatment typically lasts 30-60 minutes, depending on the type chosen. A deluxe treatment that

combines a facial with massage might last 90 minutes. It starts with a deep cleansing step, followed by a gentle exfoliation using a mild glycolic and salicylic acid peel. Next, a vacuum-like suction removes impurities from pores, followed by hydration using special serums filled with antioxidants, peptides, and hyaluronic acid.

Most people find the experience relaxing, and the results are visible immediately. Skin appears fresh, glowing and healthier after just one session. Depending on skin concerns, treatments can be done monthly or seasonally to maintain optimal skin health.

Invigorating Sea, Cold Therapies

As more people look for unique ways to practice wellness, such things as cold treatments and thalassotherapy are experiencing a surge in popularity.

Wellness seekers embrace such experiences as invigorating cold plunges and book visits to Nordic spas as they look for ways to boost their circulation, reduce inflammation and improve overall well-being.

NORDIC SPAS

A Nordic spa is inspired by Scandinavian wellness traditions, particularly the concept of hydrotherapy, which uses contrasting hot and cold treatments to promote relaxation and recovery. The typical Nordic spa experience involves a cycle of warming up the body, cooling down with cold exposure and resting.

This cycle is repeated several times and can include saunas, steam rooms, hot tubs and most notably, cold plunges or showers. The sharp shift from hot to cold stimulates blood circulation, relaxes muscles and helps remove toxins from the body. Nordic spas often feature serene, nature-inspired environments, enhancing the calming and restorative effects of the treatment. The ritual can improve both physical and mental



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wellness, leaving participants feeling refreshed and invigorated.

COLD PLUNGES

Cold plunges, another growing trend, are frequently included in wellness routines for their energizing and restorative effects. Typically, a cold plunge involves immersing the body in water between

50-60 degrees Fahrenheit for a few minutes. This practice, rooted in ancient cultures like the Romans and Japanese, has been found to increase circulation, reduce muscle inflammation and speed up recovery from exercise or injury.

Cold exposure causes blood vessels to constrict and then dilate, which stimulates

circulation and brings fresh, oxygenated blood to the skin and muscles. This process helps relieve pain, reduce swelling and speed up healing. Beyond the physical benefits, cold plunges are known to increase mental clarity and elevate mood, as they trigger the release of endorphins and other feel-good chemicals in the brain.

Spas are offering them in a number of different ways from showers that dump large amounts of icy water on the guest with the tug of a rope to pools that guests immerse themselves in for anywhere from several seconds to a few minutes.

THALASSOTHERAPY

Thalassotherapy originated from the Greek word “thalassa,” meaning sea. This therapy involves using seawater and marine products like seaweed and algae for their therapeutic benefits. Practiced for centuries in Europe, especially in coastal areas, thalassotherapy is believed to nourish the body with essential minerals, improve circulation and promote skin health.

Often found in wellness centers by the sea, thalassotherapy can include treatments such as seawater baths, wraps and cold-water jets. Many people seek thalassotherapy for its detoxifying properties and its ability to improve skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis. Medical News Today reported that a few studies indicate it may help with such conditions as fibromyalgia and musculoskeletal disorders when used in combination with traditional medical treatments.

Some common forms of thalassotherapy treatments include bathing, swimming, hydromassage, aquatic exercise and applying sea products (such as seaweed or sea salt) to the body.

Pros and Cons of Vampire Facials

Vampire facials, known scientifically as platelet-rich plasma (PRP) facials, have gained popularity in recent years as a cutting-edge cosmetic treatment.

Celebrities such as Kim Kardashian and Gwyneth Paltrow brought it into the public eye and beauty enthusiasts got on board with the promise of rejuvenated, glowing skin.

However, recent warnings from health authorities have raised concerns about the safety of these facials when performed improperly. Even some of the procedure's biggest promoters have said they won't repeat it because it is too painful.

A vampire facial involves drawing the patient's blood, separating out the platelet-rich plasma (PRP), and then injecting or applying it topically to the face. Platelets contain growth factors that promote cell turnover and healing, theoretically helping to improve skin texture, tone, and elasticity. The term "vampire facial" was popularized by celebrities, most notably Kardashian, who brought attention to the procedure by sharing post-facial images of her blood-spattered face.

PRP therapy has roots in medical treatments for wound



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healing and joint injuries. By using the body's natural elements, the procedure aims to boost collagen production, reduce fine lines and give the skin a more youthful appearance. Some medical spas use it to treat skin on more intimate body parts.

WHY DO PEOPLE GET VAMPIRE FACIALS?

Many people opt for vampire facials due to their perceived benefits, which include:

- **Skin rejuvenation:** PRP can

stimulate collagen production, leading to smoother, firmer skin over time. It's often used to target fine lines, wrinkles and sagging skin.

- **Scar reduction:** PRP has been shown to help reduce the appearance of acne scars and other blemishes, making it a go-to treatment for those with skin imperfections.

- **Natural ingredients:** Since the procedure uses the patient's own blood, it is considered a natural alternative to other facial treatments that

rely on synthetic substances.

- **Minimal downtime:** Compared to more invasive procedures like facelifts, vampire facials have minimal recovery time. Patients can typically resume normal activities within a day or two.

RISKS AND WARNINGS

While the potential benefits of vampire facials are enticing, there are significant risks, especially when performed by unlicensed practitioners or in unsanitary conditions.

A new investigation led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns of potential HIV transmission through cosmetic services that involve needles, including vampire facials. An April 25 report linked three cases of HIV transmission in New Mexico to women who received the procedure at an unlicensed medical spa. In these cases, the spa used improper sterilization practices and shared needles between clients, leading to the infections.

Other potential drawbacks to vampire facials:

- **Bruising and swelling:**

Because the treatment involves injections, some patients may experience temporary bruising, swelling or redness at the injection site.

- **Not FDA-approved for cosmetic use:** Although PRP is widely used in the medical field, it is not FDA-approved specifically for cosmetic facial treatments, leaving a gap in regulation.

- **Cost:** Vampire facials can be expensive, with treatments ranging from several hundred to over a thousand dollars per session. Since multiple sessions may be needed for optimal results, the financial commitment can be significant.

To avoid complications, hire only licensed, qualified professionals who perform the procedure in a sterile, regulated environment. Thoroughly vet providers and be aware of the potential dangers, especially in light of the recent CDC investigation.

Ancient Wellness for Modern Times

Spas looking to provide authentic experiences for their guests are turning to treatments rooted in the ancient traditions of India. Vedic treatments are one source of holistic approaches to wellness.

These treatments are based on principles from the Vedas, a collection of ancient Indian scriptures that offer wisdom on how to live a balanced and healthy life. Vedic philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit, aiming to promote harmony and well-being through natural, time-tested methods.

PHILOSOPHY OF VEDIC WELLNESS

Vedic treatments are often based on Ayurveda, the 5,000-year-old system of natural healing derived from the Vedic texts. The word “Ayurveda” translates to “the science of life,” reflecting its holistic approach to health and well-being. Ayurveda focuses on balancing the three doshas — vata (air and space), pitta (fire and water) and kapha (earth and water) — which represent different energies within the body.

According to Vedic philosophy, when these doshas are out of balance, illness and



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discomfort can arise. By restoring balance, Vedic treatments aim to prevent and treat various physical, emotional and spiritual ailments.

COMMON VEDIC SPA TREATMENTS

Several types of Vedic

treatments can be found in spas, all of which work to align the mind, body and spirit using natural, herbal remedies and therapeutic techniques.

• **Abhyanga (ayurvedic massage):** This full-body oil massage is one of the most

common Ayurvedic treatments. Warm, medicated oils are chosen based on the individual's dosha and massaged into the skin to nourish, detoxify and promote circulation. Abhyanga is believed to calm the nervous system, reduce stress and improve

overall vitality.

• **Shirodhara:** This deeply relaxing therapy involves the continuous pouring of warm oil or herbal liquids onto the forehead, or “third eye” area, followed by a gentle head massage. Shirodhara is designed to balance vata dosha, reduce anxiety and promote mental clarity. It's particularly effective for stress relief, insomnia and headaches.

• **Udwarthanam:** This invigorating treatment uses herbal powders or pastes in a deep, dry massage that is intended to detoxify the body and improve circulation. Udwarthanam is often used for its slimming effects and to reduce the appearance of cellulite, as it helps break down fat and promotes lymphatic drainage.

• **Swedana (herbal steam therapy):** Swedana is a form of heat therapy where the body is exposed to herbal steam to open pores, remove toxins and promote sweating. It's often used with Abhyanga to enhance detoxification. Swedana helps balance the doshas, especially Kapha, by promoting weight loss and boosting metabolism.

• **Nasya (nasal therapy):** Nasya involves the application of medicated oils into the nasal passages, which is said to clear sinus congestion, improve breathing and support mental clarity. It is particularly beneficial for individuals with respiratory or allergy issues and helps balance the kapha dosha.

Expressing Rage in a Mindful Way

If yoga has never been your vibe because it is too calm and peaceful, you may be a candidate for rage yoga. While it is very mindful, there is nothing demure about it.

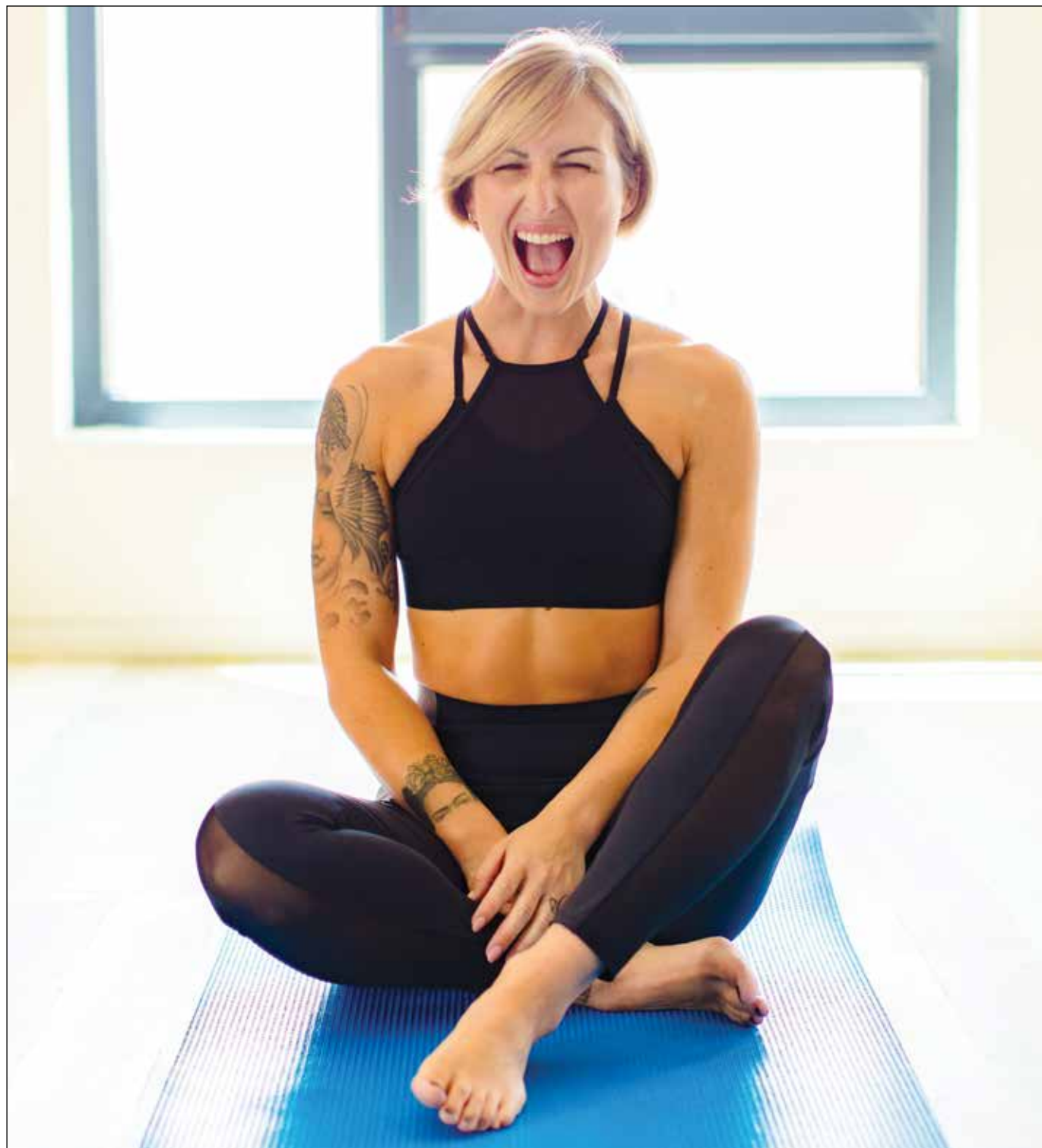
Rage yoga, an unconventional approach to yoga that blends traditional poses with loud music, cursing and primal screams, helps people release pent-up anger and stress. Founded by Lindsey Istace in 2016, rage yoga takes the calming practice of yoga and flips it on its head — inviting participants to yell, swear and even sip on a beer as they flow through their poses.

While it may sound unorthodox, the goal of rage yoga is the same as any other yoga class: To achieve mindfulness and relaxation, albeit through unconventional methods.

“Everybody always pictures a bunch of people just screaming F-words and blasting metal and for sure, that can absolutely be a feature,” Istace said. “But honestly, the flow of rage yoga is very similar to that of a regular yoga class.”

WHAT IS RAGE YOGA?

Rage yoga encourages emotional release and empowerment by allowing participants to fully express their anger, frustration or stress. Classes



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typically feature loud rock or metal music, free-flowing curse words and an emphasis on cathartic movement. Instructors lead students through a series of yoga poses, breathwork and stretches, but unlike

traditional yoga, there’s no pressure to maintain inner peace. Instead, participants are encouraged to shout, growl or curse whenever they feel the need.

Despite its edgy exterior, rage yoga maintains many of

the core elements of traditional yoga. It focuses on mindfulness, breath control and flexibility, while offering a therapeutic outlet for emotions that can often feel stifled in everyday life.

“There is a lot of energy

behind your curse words,” Istace said. “Culturally, we’ve put such focus on them for a long time, that there is power in just owning them.”

BENEFITS OF RAGE YOGA

Rage yoga is particularly appealing to those who might not connect with the calm, quiet atmosphere of a typical yoga studio. For some, the practice of traditional yoga can feel too restrictive or emotionally stifling. Rage Yoga offers an outlet for those who need to release built-up tension in a more vocal and physical way. Some practitioners even offer it in breweries or other non-traditional spaces.

By combining physical movement with emotional release, rage yoga helps participants de-stress, improve flexibility and boost mental clarity. The inclusion of humor and irreverence makes the practice more approachable, especially for beginners.

One example of rage yoga are “fist unicorns.” During class, participants are encouraged to raise their fists to the sky with the middle finger extended, making an expression of defiance and power.

Rage yoga isn’t for everyone, but for those looking for a nontraditional way to release stress, it can be a transformative experience. Whether you’re yelling through your warrior pose or laughing with fellow participants, rage yoga provides a space to let go, unwind and feel empowered in your own skin.