



Susan Bernhardt, Esq.:

Simple Changes Lead to Amazing and Profound Effects

She sneaked out during her lunch hour. Sometimes she went after work. If nothing else, she became the weekend warrior to get it done. These were her workouts at the gym.

Susan Bernhardt, a CTLA member and an attorney with Ogborn Mihm LLP, remembered the grueling hours she spent dedicated to the elliptical trainer, the Stairmaster, the bicycle and then lifting weights and stretching. Until one day, she tried yoga.

“It has changed my life dramatically,” Bernhardt explained. “Physically, I am just as strong. Weight training often targets one muscle at a time while yoga integrates several muscles at once. I didn’t realize some of my stretches were actually ancient yoga poses – like the butterfly stretch or in yoga – Baddha Konasana or bound angle pose,” she added.

People typically do not control breathing with weights and cardio machines. “When you run and get out of breath, this is a stress situation,” she said. “This causes your body to release stress hormones. In yoga, you typically breathe through the nose with the mouth closed. It coordinates breath and movement resulting in a calm, relaxed, energized state,” Bernhardt clarified.

“I also used to think there are things going on with my body and there is nothing I can do about them,” she mentioned. “You go to the doctor and he or she writes a prescription. It might have side effects. It might address the symptoms but it does not address the underlying cause.”

Bernhardt suffered from allergies before learning about various yoga practices. “I had no idea I could eliminate my allergies by changing how my body works through diet and cleansing practices,” she explained. Bernhardt also had flat feet affecting her knee. Today, she no longer has to wear orthotics because yoga is performed without shoes to strengthen foot muscles.



Bernhardt provides CTLA members a special session of “Yoga at Your Desk” during the 2012 Convention in Steamboat Springs.

“I have seen people get rid of heartburn by changing the temperature of water they drink and when they drink it. There are simple and natural things you can do to address the underlying causes,” she said.

“In yoga, you will hear an instructor say not to judge,” Bernhardt told CTLA. “Notice it and be aware but do not judge. It creates an awareness. Once you start observing and developing an awareness, it becomes a lot easier to change things. For example, when there is a difficult situation with opposing counsel, you can step back, watch the situation and really make a decision about how you can react to something. Or do you even want to react,” she questioned.

All too often, attorneys and other people sit at their desks with poor posture. “A computer screen seems to have magnets in it attracting our nose towards the monitor,” Bernhardt said. “Our ears come ahead of our shoulders, which curl in towards our chest. This is a recipe for neck and back aches. You see seniors whose backs hunch over. This didn’t just

happen one day. It happens over long periods of time of being stooped over.”

Yoga can be simple. “You don’t have to set aside huge amounts of time. There are some practices you can do in a few seconds while waiting for a computer program to open. With some targeted types of yoga movements, you can help correct posture issues.”

Bernhardt noted that attorneys typically have more stress than those in other careers. They suffer from digestive issues. They take less time to care for themselves. Many have posture issues in addition to family stress and issues outside the firm. Yet, they like to be in control.



Bernhardt shows her yoga student how to do a standing side bend pose.

According to Bernhardt, yoga is very empowering. It teaches people they have the power to control what is happening through daily routines, diet, physical practices and even breathing.

“All of us know how to breathe because we have been doing it since the day we were born,” explained Bernhardt. “But, there are more effective ways to breathe. Full yogic breathing or belly breathing can actually change the body from undergoing a stress response –

fight or flight – to a relaxation response. Attorneys can use this technique during a court hearing, preparation for trial, or deposition when the opposing counsel interrupts,” she added.

Full yogic breathing can change someone’s mindset and give him or her the ability to handle this situation more clearly and more calmly.

Inspired by her personal yoga experiences, Bernhardt undertook training as a yoga teacher, a yoga therapist and a practitioner of yoga’s sister science, Ayurveda – India’s 5,000 year old system of wellness and healing. After receiving her certifications, she wanted to share her knowledge and opened Essence Ayurveda, offering Ayurveda, yoga therapy, yoga and Tibetan Cranial services.

Bernhardt can modify yoga for clients who have limited mobility, injuries or lying in hospital beds. “At the same time, these clients face anxiety,” Bernhardt shared. “They question, over and over again, how things are going to turn out with their health or their lawsuit? Yoga breathing, meditation and other yoga practices can help relieve anxiety and aid in the healing process,” she emphasized.

Her Ayurveda practice includes herbal formulas, daily routines, diet and nutrition, and cleansing practices. Many of Bernhardt’s clients tell her they have experienced positive results from customized guidance in yoga and Ayurveda. They range from increased energy and elimination of digestive system discomfort to decreased asthma symptoms and relief of other chronic complaints.

Her Tibetan Cranial practice involves pulse readings and touch on the neck and head, leading to relaxation as well as balance in the mind, body and spirit. For instance, Bernhardt provides Tibetan Cranial services to a competitive mountain biker who went over the handle bars

on her bike and banged her head on both sides. The woman suffered from a constant headache and blurry vision in both eyes ever since the incident. After receiving Tibetan Cranial with Bernhardt, her headache vanished and her vision cleared up.

Bernhardt explained that yoga and Ayurveda can produce amazing and profound effects because they are customized and adapted to meet each person’s needs. She is committed to guiding her clients toward the dramatic changes she experiences in her own life through these practices. ▲▲▲

For more information about Essence Ayurveda, visit www.essenceayurveda.com or contact Bernhardt by email at susan@essenceayurveda.com or call 303-578-8732.



Bernhardt prepares a meal to improve digestion.

Susan Bernhardt, attorney with Ogborn Mihm LLP, practices alternative dispute resolution, business litigation and securities litigation. She has litigated cases in a number of state and federal courts and arbitration forums, including handling complex matters pending simultaneously in multiple courts, class actions and shareholder derivative actions.