I DID YOGA IN A BREWERY (AND YOU CAN, TOO)

What the heck did I get myself into?

LEE BRESLOUER | JUNE 05, 2017

I'd never taken a yoga class before. Sure I'd *done* yoga by following along to a DVD -- and sure, I enjoyed it. But the thought of awkwardly stretching in front of 150 people who can "Namaste" way better than I can (that's a thing, right?) has always felt pretty damned daunting to me. If I was ever going to let my inner-suburban mom run wild and partake in her favorite physical activity, I needed to do it in the comfort of a very familiar setting: ideally, in the packaging hall of one of my favorite local breweries.

Fortunately, Great Divide Brewing Company in Denver, Colorado, offers just that. And naturally, I had to check it out.

It seems that Denver's yoga/brewery trend started with Shannon Berner, Marketing Manager for Great Divide, who had the idea to combine beer and yoga at Wynkoop Brewing Co., her former employer, four years ago. "Beer and yoga might seem common now, but at the time, it was two completely separate worlds of mine," she explains. "I had craft beer friends and I had yoga friends, and neither of them understood that there was any chance of an overlap. It started as a selfish thing. I wanted worlds to collide."

Even though the free classes started out small, it has since grown into an event that people show up for every month. Based on the few people I talked to before the class, most were yoga enthusiasts looking for a fun place to practice, not hardcore beer nerds trying to get a workout. But Melissa, one of the instructors from CorePower Yoga who led the class, says that those beer nerds shouldn't be nervous. "It's an atypical yoga experience," she says. "But we try to bring yoga to people who might be intimidated to step foot in a CorePower studio."

My class consisted of about 90% women, many of which were laughing and hugging one another before class began. I was intimidated by everyone wearing leggings. Especially the dude on a mat in front of me -- his purple and black leggings were tighter than the ones on his girlfriend. And I just knew he was going to bust out some crazy yoga handstands to make me feel inadequate.

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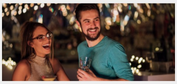

While I was on the phone watching an NBA playoff game, the instructor calmly got us started. I put my phone down. Within about two minutes, I forgot about the game. I also forgot about my nerves, and realized that coming to this class was one of the better things I could have done for myself all week.

Well, mentally, that is. Physically, I struggled like a *Biggest Loser* contestant on a beltless treadmill.

I mean, look at this posture. Then look at the girl behind me. Embarrassing.

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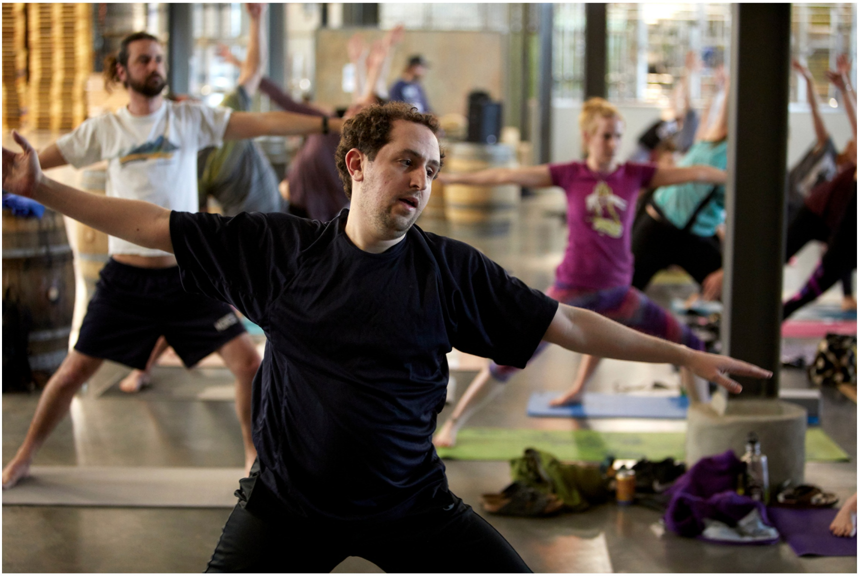

And I'm definitely regretting doing yoga in this photo.

Yep, yoga is still a mistake. Are arms even supposed to bend like this?

But despite all of my pain and suffering from holding these poses, there were some fantastic moments, too. Like when I was in a pose on my back, and I'd look up to see pipes labeled COLD WATER and GAS above me. I bet not many people who've done yoga in a studio have seen that!

Weirdly (as you can see in the next photo), the few guys in this class all somehow knew to cluster in the back corner. We banded together like a pack of groaning, almost flexible wolves. Subconsciously, we must have decided to pool our testosterone together -- a buoy of masculinity in a sea of estrogen. I dug the feeling overall. If you made me choose between the vibe of this yoga class or a bar showing a UFC fight, I'd pick this.

However, because the packaging hall was not meant for large group exercises, it was sometimes difficult to hear the instructor. So I'd have to copy the pose off of my neighbor, as if in a 5th grade math class that I hadn't studied for.

Then, in a blink, the class was over. I felt exhausted and energized at the same time.

Finally, it was time to have a beer! I ordered a refreshing (and well-earned!) can of Great Divide's hibiscus saison Nadia Kali from the bar, and chatted with my two CorePower instructors.

"What kind of class was this?" I ask.

"We offer options for our students," Melissa tells me. "This was based off of our C2 intermediate/advanced yoga class. When you're at a studio, they add heat and humidity, which takes it up a notch or two."

Kim, the instructor whose voice led us through the workout, chimes in. "It's more simple because some people might be coming for the first time," she says.

"Yeah, some amateurs, probably!" I laugh. "Probably a bunch of losers who don't know their downward dog from their warrior pose, AM I RIGHT?!" Kim and Melissa laugh at my joke -- but with that unique type of laughter that conceals pity. (I'll take it.)

I was happy it was over, but I was also glad I went. I picked up my beer with a sweaty paw, and brought the can to my lips: it tasted even better than usual. I'd earned it. (Plus, after checking my phone, I discovered that the Cavaliers had won.)

I have a good feeling I'll be back next month.

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