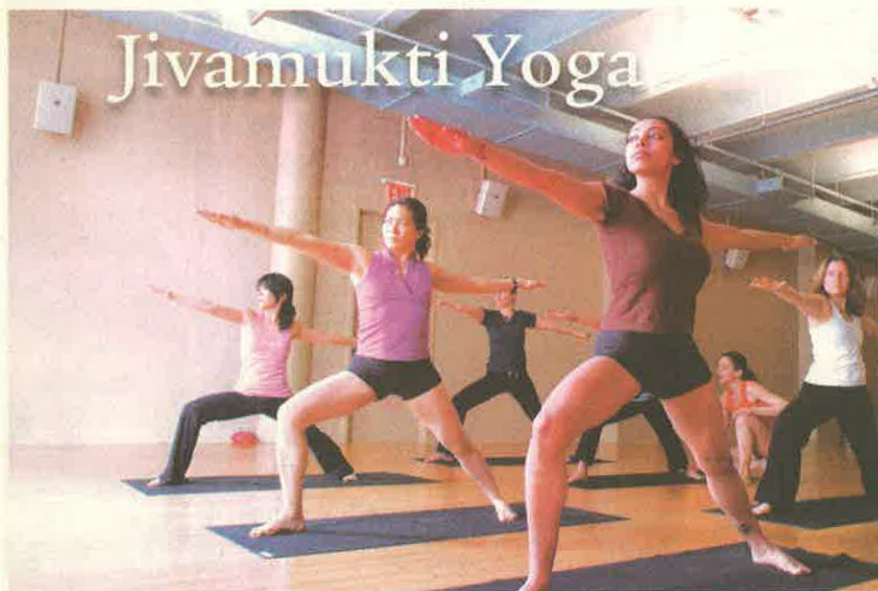


# SPIRIT READER

## yoga in the city



JIVAMUKTI YOGA MAY BE SYNONYMOUS WITH THE GLAMOUR CROWD, but what I discovered behind its doors was anything but superficial.

The polished downtown setup was tintured with creative accents. Such as the Jivamuktea Café with its picturesque stained glass windows, overlooking Broadway. Chic yoga-wear hung on the racks of the boutique, along with and beauty products: While dabbing a hint of natural Goddess perfume on my pulse points, I flipped through books—including some written by Jivamukti founders, David Life and Sharon Gannon, affectionately known as “Sharon & David” by the staff. As for the actual Yoga space? There are three separate rooms for your body-mind workout.

Julie Kirkpatrick has been with the school since the 80's, and is a senior teacher. She was careful to emphasize the spiritual side of yoga. “We have a ‘Focus of the Month’ as a way to deeply study a topic, including asanas, classes and special events.” Her wizened expression, remembered former students, “A lot of people come here to be in shape or lose weight, but after they take classes they discover something much deeper.”

Pertaining to the Jivamukti method, Julie explained, “Sharon and David are both artists.” She proudly spoke about the humanitarian work they do for animals, and their new website, [www.animalmukti.org](http://www.animalmukti.org). David is a visual artist and Sharon a dancer, Julie describes their teaching as a “dynamic fusion of their love of music, art, dance, movement, and their commitment to peaceful coexistence.”

The yoga here is very creative. Teachers, read spoken word in class. It's not uncommon to hear all sorts of music playing during your sun-salutations. “Even hip-hop,” says Eddie Teboul, another teacher here. He's manner was poetic, and I could detect a slight French accent when he spoke, “all the music must have a positive message or it won't be played.”

Eddie studied the method for seven years before making the leap to become a teacher. He recalls his early days humbly, “Sharon and David brought a nugget of wisdom into my life. More happiness. And I thought, ‘how can I share that with others?’” When I asked Eddie how a new student should approach begin, he told me, “We have a Basics class which are more fundamental and prepares the student for an open class. They are not easy, if someone is coming from a place of no yoga at all.” He assured me that in a basics or fundamental class a new student learns tools to make yoga easier on their body.

by Danielle Winston

I just had to ask about the bevy of models and actors who've made Jivamukti a household name. Eddie said, he too stemmed from the fashion industry, and felt that world was overrated. Referring to models, “They are slim but often their appearance is damaged from holding unnatural poses. What is aesthetic is not necessarily healthy.”

With international studios in London, Munich, Berlin and Toronto the teachers tell me, their founders are very busy bringing the Jivamukti method to the yoga community. But even so, Sharon & David still find time to return to NYC, and were just at the downtown center last week.

Carolyn Keeler, a student and expectant mother, who regularly attends classes at the center passed by. I asked her, “What makes you come here?” Interestingly enough it wasn't the pretty bodies strolling the corridors that she admired, instead her smile glowed about something else, “the chanting and in class discussion drew me in.”

No matter where I looked, I got the same message: depth dwelled inside the walls of Jivamukti. Beyond the artistic vibe, there was an attitude of openness, and learning: a family, welcoming all to join their spiritual-home.

### Q&A with Julie Kirkpatrick, senior teacher at Jivamukti Yoga School

**How did the center come about and its history? How did the style originate? What styles are taught?**

David Life and Sharon Gannon, the creators of the Jivamukti Yoga method began teaching in a basement on Avenue B in the East Village in 1986. Their classes became crowded and students asked them to open their own school. So in 1989 they did! But it was back in 1985 that the Jivamukti method was developed.

**What is the attitude when you enter the institute?**

There is an attitude of welcoming and assurance that yoga is for everyone.

**What types of people come here?**

A wide variety of people come to Jivamukti, which truly is a school. Some people come to practice asana; others come for special events, and classes on ancient yoga texts,