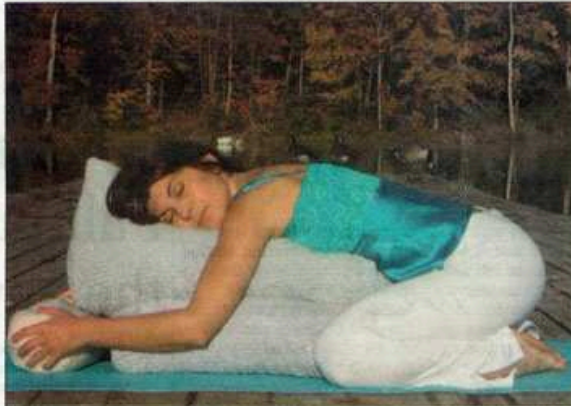




Stretching to grow



Photos courtesy of Miguel Rivera

This relaxation pose helps for tense back muscles, extends the spine and helps dealing with back and neck pain. It releases fatigue. Place pillows on top of each other lengthwise and sit on your heels right in front of them. Separate your knees so you can pull the pillows towards yourself and release your torso on top of the pillows. If you do not feel comfortable with your knees, increase the height.



This pose helps especially correcting poor habitual posture. It stretches all your back muscles, hips and hamstrings. It releases accumulated fatigue and tension from the body and lengthens the spine. Place your hands on the kitchen counter or a table and lean forward until your head is in between your arms. Your hips, feet and knees should be all in one line. Same thing with hands and shoulders. Gently press your chest towards floor as you press your hips back until you feel the elongation/stretch on your arms, shoulders and all your back muscles.

Yoga instructor draws strength in wake of turmoil

By EMILY BROWN
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Maybe it's hard for a majority of people to relate to a best-selling author, especially one whose book is published in Turkish. But Elvan Demirkan said she's never felt closer to people than she does now.

When Demirkan moved to the United States from Turkey in 1992, she couldn't relate to anyone, she said. And that had little to do with her accent.

She lived her life always expecting more: more happiness, more success, she said. "I was just living my life by expectations. I wasn't living my moment."

She learned to be in touch with others, she first needed to be in touch with herself. Her decision led to a passion for soul searching through stress management and yoga, and to a book published in Turkish. In one month her book, with a translated title of "From surviving to living," sold 20,000 copies, which took it to No. 3 on Turkey's bestsellers list, she said.

For the past two months Demirkan, 40, who lives midcounty off Davis Ford Road, promoted her book to leading Turkish newspapers, news-magazines, magazines and television programs. The book focuses on dealing with negative emotions, choices for dealing with stress and applicable techniques to physically distribute stress.

"Once you're motivated to be with yourself, to be in tune with yourself, then you start growing in every single way," she said.

But the growing success of her book didn't surprise her too much. Demirkan's yoga classes and relaxation techniques have gathered a local following for the past 10 years. She's instructed classes and seminars at local fitness centers, Prince William Hospital in Manassas, and out of her home. The U.S. Defense Department and major corporations hire her to give instruction to employees.



Joe Brier/News & Messeng

Elvan Demirkan, a native of Izmir, Turkey, gives Yoga lessons out of her home in Manassas. Demirkan has been teaching for the past seven years and works with 16-17 classes a week.

She teaches yoga as a stress management course at American University in Washington, D.C., and substitutes at the White House fitness center when needed.

In Turkey, Demirkan wrote columns for national newspapers before releasing her book.

"People can relate to me because I don't talk about philosophy I don't intellectualize," she said. "I've had the same experiences as everyone else."

Her experiences include being overwhelmed in a new place, marriage and divorce, childbirth and tragedy.

Just as her career as a yoga teacher was blooming, Demirkan was in a car accident at the intersection of Davis Ford Road and

Prince William Parkway. The accident in 1999 fractured her hips, among other damage to the right side of her body, and led to two surgeries.

After she was over the initial shock, her experience with yoga helped her heal, she said. Physical pain can cause mental stress, which leads to emotional stress, she said. People try and beat stress, but need to learn to release. Instead, Demirkan used the breathing techniques to work through the pain and relax tense muscles.

"Something so negative taught me so much I