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Yoga, change of diet lead to weight loss

SANDRA VALDEZ GERDES
Tucson Citizen

Name: Aric Mokhtarian

Age: 35

Occupation: Self-employed



Height: 6 feet

Weight now: 185 pounds

Weight when started: 223 pounds

Fitness accomplishment: Lost 38 pounds and adopted a healthy lifestyle that includes Bikram yoga.

Background: Mokhtarian grew up in Tucson. He left for about 10 years to attend college, then lived abroad before starting a CD/DVD replication business based in southern California and an import/export business that deals in plastic calendar cases. He returned to Tucson in 2001 and his weight gradually started to increase over the next four years

because he was "overeating and had an unhealthy, sedentary lifestyle." His first change was in April 2005, when he quit smoking. Over the next few months he made several healthful changes, including going to his first Bikram yoga class late that August.

What was your goal or vision for yourself?

My ultimate goal was to create a healthy and sustainable lifestyle that revolved around doing hot yoga, walking, eating sensibly and doing the things I love - travel, learning languages and photography.

What was the turning point?

A friend showed me a yoga posture called "half-moon" and I was amazed by her flexibility. Several months later I had routine blood work done and my triglycerides were off the charts. That was a real wake-up call.

How did you get started?

I first made dietary and lifestyle changes. I stopped having sugary drinks and quit smoking. I stopped eating red meat, fast foods and processed food. I ate a mostly vegetarian diet - lots of veggies, fruits, nuts and grains. A few months later I went to my first yoga class. I went sporadically, then something clicked and I went five to six days a week. When I hit the one-year mark, I knew it was something I'd do for the rest of my life.

What appealed to you about Bikram yoga?

That it's in a hot room. I love to sweat - whether it's in a sauna or on a basketball court.

What have been the greatest benefits that you have received from yoga?

My immune system is stronger - I haven't had any colds for three years. I am more comfortable in my own body, my mind is clearer and my concentration is greater. I feel like a better, healthier, happier person. I have confidence now that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to it by applying the yoga principles of self-discipline, patience, concentration, physical and mental flexibility, all coupled with a steady, regular practice.

What motivated you to keep going?

Seeing subtle physical and mental changes and getting positive feedback from my instructors and friends.

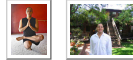
Do you have anything to say to men about yoga or Bikram yoga?

I have noticed a lot more men doing yoga than when I started. It's a bigger challenge than they might think. University of Arizona football players, tri-athletes, boxers and gymnasts have all come and said it was a real challenge.

How flexible were you in the beginning versus now?

PHOTOS & IMAGES

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RENEE BRACAMONTE/Tucson Citizen

Mokhtarian has lost 38 pounds in three years by adopting a healthy diet and doing yoga at Bikram Yoga College of India, 6261 N. Oracle Road.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR SUCCESS STORY!

E-mail details of how you did it to features@tucsoncitizen.com. Include your full name, age and anytime phone number.

Editor's note: Body Plus neither condones nor endorses sample workouts and diets. Consult your doctor before you begin any fitness regimen.

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I couldn't touch my toes then. Now I can almost touch my elbows to my toes, but there is so much more flexibility to achieve, particularly in my spine and back. You don't have to be flexible to do yoga. It comes with time.

ARIC'S SAMPLE DIET

Breakfast: Oatmeal, granola or fruit

Snack: Raw nuts or vegetables

Lunch: Veggie sandwich, salad and soup or quinoa

Snack: Raw nuts or fruit

Dinner: Brown rice, homemade soup, salad and stir-fry with a little chicken.

ARIC'S SAMPLE WORKOUT

Bikram yoga five to six times a week

Daily walking about 45 minutes

Basketball once or twice a week

Hiking once a month

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