

Resolutions? It's all about 'E'

By Sarah Marshall

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AS CHRISTMAS festivities come to a close and we welcome in a new year you might be contemplating resolutions for 2015.

Perhaps a new diet or exercise regime are on the menu? Well there is one thing you could try which encompasses both health and well-being - yoga.

According to Stafford instructor Claudia Brown, 42, it is one of the best things you could do and it doesn't matter what size or ability you are.

"So many people told me they couldn't come to my class because they weren't flexible enough or they were too fat," says the county council employee.

"I just say to them 'Hey, look at my cake tummy. I'm hardly a skinny minny, don't be daft, just come along and give it try'. Yoga is for everyone, it doesn't matter what size."

Claudia discovered yoga in her late 20s. Prior to that she freely admits she had started so many well-meaning new year's resolutions only to give up at the end of the first week of January.

She says: "I've joined a swanky gym and paid £500 a year for the privilege. I went twice, so each thrash on the treadmill cost me £250. That still grieves me to this day. I've been unrealistic with diets, cleanses, in fact anything that is related to cutting down on my food intake. I have the appetite of a small army, so a diet of any kind is torture for me."

Claudia eventually decided to train as a yoga



instructor. "When people ask me why I became a yoga teacher I usually say I was getting old and fat and yoga was the only exercise I didn't loathe," she laughs.

She runs weekly classes at Oddfellows Hall on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. And people of all ages and abilities attend, including two women who are registered as deaf.

Rowan Robinson, 45, works in adult social care in Stafford, is profoundly deaf and communicates through lipreading and sign language.

She said: "I've always wanted to do yoga. I did a little bit when I was young as my mum used to do it. I shied away from learning in classes



YOGA FOR ALL... Claudia with Rowan Robinson and Nicky Large. Inset, Claudia demonstrates a yoga move.

thinking I would not be able to hear. I found out about Claudia becoming a qualified tutor and thought this was a great opportunity that I couldn't miss.

"Yoga has helped me to be more flexible and able to relax. I feel at ease in the classes knowing that Claudia will ensure I can follow. It has helped me to learn about my body, balance and I love the challenge. It has given me strength and I'm starting to tone up more. I just have a simple aim - I want to be able to touch my toes."

In January Claudia is planning to launch Friday lunchtime sessions at Stafford College. She held a taster session earlier this month.

Claudia says: "I do sometimes catch myself, mid cobra, chuckling to myself and thinking, me, a yoga teacher, actually running an exercise class, but I know that my students enjoy it and they keep coming back so I must be doing something right.

"I've got a few ideas which people might find helpful and at the very least might stop them from making the same mistakes that I have made in the past."

Claudia's tips:

- Be kind to yourself. If it doesn't excite you, energise you or provide you with enjoyment then have a rethink. Life is too short for giving ourselves a hard time.

- Be a planner. How often do you eat rubbish, miss your yoga class, forget the school play, feel

out of control because you haven't sorted out your daily schedule. Write lists and plans of where you are going, what you are doing and what you are eating, as well as chill-out time.

- Don't do a cleanse. Not sustainable, enjoyable or compatible with daily living. You could do some juicing to help the digestion and speed up the expulsion process but, really, solid meals are always the way forward.

- Do 10 minutes of exercise. Lie on the floor and begin with some gentle stretches, or go outside for a quick walk and some fresh air.

- Cut portion sizes a little for every meal. Have one chocolate bar a week instead of one a day. Plan a big blow-out cheat meal each week.

- Self-gifting. After being good all month reward yourself with something nice.

- Set yourself a challenge. Do something in 2015 that you have always wanted to do. Write it down. Plan it. Research it. Save up for it if you need to. Make it happen.

- Remember the three Es - excite, energise or enjoy. If new year's resolutions don't provide one of the Es then have another think.



What resolutions have you kept or achieved?

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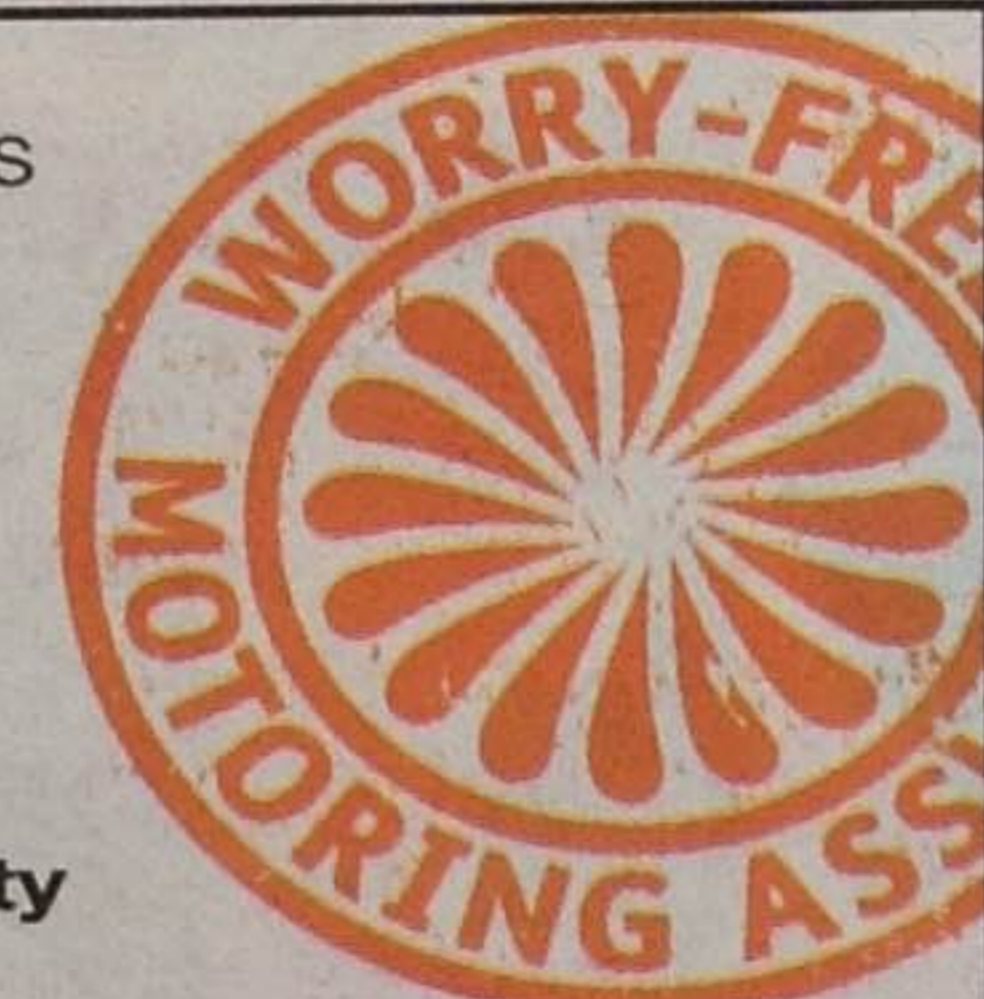
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