

# The Kino effect



As the youngest woman to be certified by ashtanga founder, Sri K Pattabhi Jois, Kino MacGregor devotes her life to the practice. Cheryl Parsons catches up with Kino before her Dubai visit to find out the secrets to her success



People often mistakenly assume Kino has a gymnastic background.

I first came across Kino MacGregor when I was googling the ashtanga ‘jump back’ transition on YouTube. Here was a girl, just 5 foot 2 inches in stature, dressed in tiny shorts, pressing effortlessly into handstand and floating back to chaturanga as though she had been doing it all her life. Not a bead of sweat broken, nor a grunt of exertion omitted. I was intrigued. Surely she was born this way, given the grace of her practice? It just didn’t seem accessible for ‘regular’ huffing and puffing yogis like myself.

“So many people assume that I was a gymnast, a dancer or just naturally gifted when they see my regular practice of advanced ashtanga, but I was none of these,” says Kino, who is now working through ashtanga’s immensely challenging fourth series. “I never imagined that I would ever be strong. The first time I tried to put my leg behind my head, it didn’t go, and the first time I tried to stand up from backbend I hit my head on the ground. When I tried to lift up in any strength posture, I faced the fact that I was a weakling who could not get any part of my body off the ground. It’s through years of practise that I have the strength and flexibility in my yoga today.”

Ironically, Kino didn’t even like her first yoga class at the age of 19 because she thought it was too relaxing. It took an ankle injury to bring her back to the mat for healing purposes, and it was not until the age of 22 that she felt that real frisson of yoga ‘magic.’ She took a guided full primary series ashtanga class and from that moment she was hooked. Within a year, Kino travelled to Mysore, home to ashtanga’s creator, the late Sri K Pattabhi Jois, or ‘Guruji’ as he was >>



## Kino’s CV:

Kino MacGregor is an internationally renowned yoga teacher, author of two books, creator of numerous DVDs, blogger, vlogger and more.

Visit her website [www.kinoyoga.com](http://www.kinoyoga.com) for yoga tips, retreat dates, podcasts and a good selection of resources to help with your ashtanga practice.



WORDS: CHERYL PARSONS. IMAGES: SUPPLIED

affectionately known to his students. It was a trip that she would make repeatedly over the next seven years, before becoming one of a few teachers to be certified by Pattabhi himself, at the young age of 29.

"It was such an honour to be certified by Guruji, one that has transformed my life beyond anything I could ever imagine. It brought meaning to all the years of hard work and dedication that I put in. Now when I teach and practise, I feel both Guruji and his grandson Sharath in everything I do. What I love about the ashtanga yoga method is its perfect balance between strength and flexibility and the constant awareness of a new challenge. My teachers' faith in me gave me the courage to keep going and now I am much stronger than I ever dreamed possible."

It is this strength and passion for the practice of ashtanga yoga that has undoubtedly led Kino to where she is today. With a background in life coaching, a PhD in holistic health and a Masters in interdisciplinary studies, Kino founded the highly successful Miami Life Center in 2006 with her husband and fellow ashtangi, Tim Feldman. She has produced five ashtanga yoga DVDs, a

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chanting CD and is currently penning her third book – achievements that she believes were all made possible through an unwavering commitment to her ashtanga yoga practice. "With daily practice you will tap into a limitless place within yourself. Once you touch and experience that divine place within, you will know that there is nothing you cannot accomplish. Every impossible possible is a mirror pointed at the indefinable experience of the limitless inner-self. Use the tool of asana to experience this subtle reality and your journey will be filled with meaning beyond any asana."

Take a look at the apparent ease of many of Kino's yoga postures today and it is hard to believe that this journey has been anything short of smooth sailing. But just like us all,

she says there has and continues to be times when she is pushed to the point of doubt, panic and confusion, when she wanted to throw in the towel and roll up her yoga mat.

"I am not above all of this. In fact, as a student of yoga I am right in the middle of it. As I am learning the ashtanga yoga fourth series, there is a posture called parivrttasana A and B that causes the suffering animal inside of me to cry out," Kino writes in her Elephant Journal blog. "A student asked me once if there was a posture that 'broke' me. If so, this is it. These poses broke my conception of spatial orientation, challenged what I believed possible for my body, disturbed my breathing and destroyed my boundaries for what I thought the practice is."



**YOUR CHOICE**

"Let go of this 'all or nothing mentality,' where you feel that if you don't have time to do a whole practice, it is not good enough," Kino says.



**Kino MacGregor**

will be at the Yoga Room, Dubai, from February 6 to 8 to lead an inspirational series of workshops. For more details, check out [www.yogaroom.ae](http://www.yogaroom.ae).

A quick search for this asana brings up a contortionist's view of a headstand in which you are asked to hold while walking your feet in a full circle around your head. It is a pose that doesn't even register on many of our yoga radars and a challenge that would knock the stuffing out of me before my toes even touched the ground. "Learning this movement has brought up deep emotions that have, at times, frightened me, but I kept going and now feel much more clarity," Kino continues. "Yoga is the process of training the mind to remain steady through whatever arises, and through that freedom gain control over the direction and the flow of consciousness."

Kino is also not afraid to admit to taking a few outsider tips along the way. Last year she recruited the help of a circus hand-balancing master to improve her handstand prowess and is constantly searching for new tools and techniques to improve her strength and her yoga practice. But besides a walk on the beach, yoga makes up her primary physical activity, making her a clear advertisement for Pattabhi's motto: 'Practise and all is coming.'

So, with such a high level of commitment, does Kino have any down time? As a regular globe-trotter with a packed list of workshops and classes to lead, articles to write and online videos to film, does she ever have a typical day? And what is her advice for those of us who struggle to squeeze in a practice when the chaos of daily schedules take over?

"A typical home workday is getting up, drinking water and then tea. After a little time to wake up, I have sitting meditation and my ashtanga

yoga practice, which I devote up to two hours to. Then sometimes I have business meetings, video filmings or photoshoots, some writing or teaching privates that usually lasts a few hours. In the evenings I might take a walk by the beach and then my husband and I eat dinner together and watch some TV. When I'm teaching a workshop or a retreat away, however, it is yoga all day.

"Let go of this 'all or nothing mentality,' where you feel that if you don't have time to do a whole practice, it is not good enough. If you know you have a busy few days ahead, let yourself off the hook. Continue your 'yoga' throughout your daily life, being present in everything you are doing. If you can spare five minutes, take a run through your sun salutations and let that be your practice. If you miss a few days, don't worry – yoga is a lifelong practice, you will always pick it up again."

And Kino's final message for aspiring yogis? "Be strong. Be happy. Be beautiful. Let yoga show you the way through suffering into truth, freedom and peace. Believe in yourself through the power of yoga." ❄