

is yoga the
to pick up?
U nlike most of her friends, Christle, 27, didn't meet her boyfriend in a bar or at work. She met him on a yoga retreat. "We both flew to Hawaii to do an eight-day program, found each other at the airport, and navigated our way to the venue together," she says. After a week of hanging out, they exchanged numbers. "It evolved into a romance really organically because we're both interested in yoga and wellbeing," she says.

Cleo
October, 2011
Page: 159
Section: General News
Region: National
Type: Magazines Lifestyle
Size: 1,073.03 sq.cms.
Frequency: Monthly

LOVE & LUST

is yoga the new place to pick up?

Score a date while doing downward dog.

U nlike most of her friends, Christle, 27, didn't meet her boyfriend in a bar or at work. She met him on a yoga retreat. "We both flew to Hawaii to do an eight-day program, found each other at the airport, and navigated our way to the venue together," she says. After a week of hanging out, they exchanged numbers. "It evolved into a romance really organically because we're both interested in yoga and wellbeing," she says.

(powerliving.com.au), also thinks yoga is a good place for people to meet. "At retreats, you always see romance blossom," he says. But he emphasises that yoga is by no means a meat market.

"At a bar, people are dolled up, there's an act going on. At yoga, it's more authentic. You're wearing comfortable clothes, you're sweating, you're working physically. There's no pretence."

Men at Duncan's studio have confessed to him that they relate to women in a

"at a bar, people are dolled up, there's an act going on. at yoga, it's more authentic."

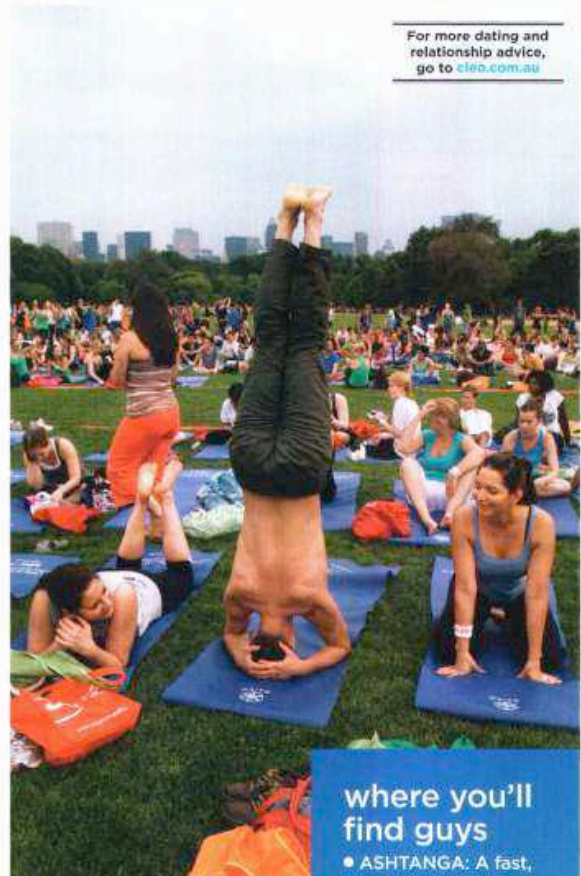
However, Liz, 28, scoffs at the idea of catching her future lover's eye while saluting the sun. "It's all women and chiselled gay dudes in my class," she says. "No chance!"

According to Leigh Blashki, director of the Australian Institute of Yoga Therapy, men make up 25 per cent of yoga classes and more are taking it up as we speak. Leigh met his wife at yoga, and says that a number of his students also found their partners on the mat. "In fact, two of them just got married," he says.

Duncan Peak, a former paratrooper who now runs Power Living yoga studios

different way at yoga class. "I think a lot of these guys are experiencing real friendships with women for the first time, and they're connecting genuinely in a way they never normally would," he says.

However, given that yoga skews female, it is easier for guys to meet girls, admits Duncan. "It also depends on the demographics of your area and the atmosphere in the studio," he says, adding that he's created a bloke-friendly space with male teachers and lots of very physical yoga classes designed to build upper body strength. His clientele includes *The Biggest*



For more dating and relationship advice, go to cleo.com.au

where you'll find guys

- **ASHTANGA:** A fast, physical style of yoga using challenging poses like handstands.
- **IYENGAR:** A slow, strength-based method that focuses on holding intricate poses for long periods.
- **YIN:** A gentler style of yoga designed to improve flexibility.

... and where you won't

- **BHAKTI:** A traditional method with a focus on chanting.
- **YOGA MEDITATION:** An imaginative style based on relaxing visualisation.
- **PREGNANCY YOGA:** Need we say more?

Loser trainer Shannan Ponton and the NSW Waratahs rugby union team. "Around 50 per cent of our students are men," says Duncan. "I do think guys steer clear of mystic styles that involve chanting, robes and incense. That freaks the average man out," he adds.

Even if you do find yourself in a yoga class that's full of women and unavailable men, Duncan and Leigh believe your romantic prospects are still likely to improve. "Yoga makes you beautiful inside and out," says Duncan. "It increases your positive energy, and positive energy is the most attractive thing in the world." □

TEXT: REBECCA WHISH. PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAPPER MEDIA. POSED FOR BY MODELS IN NO WAY ASSOCIATED WITH THIS STORY.