

Commentary

We tried it: Yoga with lights, music, scents -- and even an elixir shot

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By *Amy Schlinger* | *Special to espnW.com*



Courtesy of Woom Center The high-energy part of the class includes a light show, music and a challenging yoga flow.

Chances are you've been to a Vinyasa yoga class, a restorative yoga class and maybe even a hot yoga class. But what about a multi-sensory class? One in which you are not just flowing through the poses but also activating all your senses? These types of classes are popping up across the country -- from multi-sensory yoga to immersion cycling studios to guided meditation classes. When I had the chance to try one of these classes at [WOOM Center in New York City](#), I jumped at the opportunity.

What it is

WOOM Center focuses on bringing all five senses into your yoga practice. "The idea behind sensory exploration is to root the practitioner in the present moment, instead of allowing the mind to wander to thoughts that maybe aren't so positive," explains Elian Zach-Shemesh, founder of WOOM Center. "We use yoga as the primary movement format and bring a few

innovations of our own into the mix." Prices range from \$25 for a "single experience" to unlimited monthly packages at \$179, with many price variations based on your participation frequency.



Courtesy of WOOM center One part of the experience involves essential oils and soothing Xylophone-like music.

The experience

I read online a bit about the yoga class I'd be taking, but I still walked into the dimly lit "woom" (what they refer to the space as) not quite knowing what to expect. Soft music was playing in the background, our "guide" instructed us to put on our blindfolds ... and class began.

Our guide talked to us about intentions and brought some inspiration from the outside world into our consciousness as we moved into a verbal meditation. We did some breathing exercises and some "om" chanting and humming. It can be awkward chanting and breathing loudly in a room with others, but the blindfold helped mask that feeling.

We were then instructed to take the blindfolds off, and as we did, we were transported into a 3-D light show covering all the walls of the room. This is when the yoga portion began. Our guide had us begin with basic poses to warm up the body and joints before we moved into a flow. And let me tell you -- the yoga was no joke.

Sometimes with these types of experiences, the exercise portion can get lost in everything else going on, and I was afraid that might happen here, but that was not the case. The flow was challenging, and along the way, our guide gave modifications that we could do to make our practice what each of us needed. As we flowed along with the music, the lights around the room matched the mood and beat of the music. It was very cool.

When we ended our flow, we got into corpse pose with pillows propped behind our backs and blankets covering us. The light show also ended, and as we placed our blindfolds back over our eyes, the powerful surround system was replaced by our guide playing (actually playing!) what sounded like a type of xylophone. She played beautifully and came close to each one of us while wafting the scent of essential oil in front of our noses. Restorative it was -- I could have fallen asleep.

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We were brought back by our guide's voice instructing us to wiggle our fingers and toes and slowly make our way up to a seated position, ending with a group "Namaste." She then instructed us to make our way at our leisure to the cafe for the last part of the experience. Waiting for us was an elixir shot, homemade by Zach-Shemesh's husband, David, the co-founder of the studio. The shots are created with seasonal ingredients like carrots and ginger, and the idea behind them is simple: coming out together for a final drink and sharing thoughts with other yogis brings a sense of community to the experience.

"The inspiration for our space came from Burning Man, having gone four years and being immersed in that community here in New York City," Zach-Shemesh says. "We wanted to create a ceremonial type of setting where instead of going in and setting an intention, you go in loose, with an open-ended starting point, and let the intention find you."

Was it worth it?

I had a lot of thoughts after the class. The yoga section with the light show was almost trippy, and the rich music and light patterns added energy to my practice. I also enjoyed moving from a calm, meditative state in the beginning to a heart-racing yoga flow and then coming back to a restorative environment at the end. I felt rested and relaxed, but also that I'd gotten in a legitimate workout. And I can honestly say there was nothing on the "didn't like" side.

All in all, I really enjoyed the experience, and I'd recommend everyone try a multi-sensory type of experience if given the opportunity.