

SUZZETTE TAMEZ-CRUZ

# THE BASICS OF KUNDALINI YOGA

UPLIFT YOUR MIND, BODY,  
EMOTIONS AND SPIRIT  
WITH THESE TECHNIQUES

# THE BASICS OF KUNDALINI YOGA

- Awaken the Power Within -

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# INTRODUCTION

Kundalini Yoga is one of the original and most powerful schools of yoga. There are many forms of yoga available, from traditional Hatha to the more modern inventions of Bikram and hybrid yoga style like Dahn, a combination of yoga and the martial art of tai chi.

Kundalini (pronounced CUNH-dah-LEE-KNEE) yoga is the only form of yoga that is specifically designed to quickly awaken the power within everyone who practices it, for a healthier mind, body, and spirit.

Kundalini Yoga is designed for the active person with responsibilities in school, work, family, and the world.

Regular practice of Kundalini yoga awakens a “dormant” energy, and the awakened energy is then harnessed and directed to achieve specific goals. There’s no need to feel ‘stuck’ anymore once you start to practice Kundalini yoga sets for the areas you wish to work on in your life.

## **Where does Kundalini Yoga come from?**

Kundalini Yoga has been practiced for centuries in India. It was brought to the West by in the late 1960s by the teacher Yogi Bhajan, whose father had been a medical doctor. Yogi Bhajan began to study Kundalini yoga at a very young age. At that time, and the centuries prior, the practices and techniques of Kundalini yoga were passed down in a very secretive way from teacher to well-selected student. This is one of the main beliefs behind traditional Indian medicine, Ayurvedic medicine.

Yoga has been around for more than 5,000 years, it does not belong to any one single religion, or school of thought because Yoga pre-dates religions.

Having said that, if you see pictures of Yogi Bhajan, you will note that he had a turban and beard and wore white clothing. Yogi Bhajan followed the Sikh religious tradition. Sikh means student, and their teachers were known as Gurus, which means teacher rather than 'expert' as many people believe because the word is now so common in the West.

Accepting an invitation to teach Kundalini Yoga at the University of Toronto in Canada, Yogi Bajan arrived in the West from India in 1969. He soon moved to Los Angeles where he began giving lecture series through UCLA, University of California, Los Angeles. Within a few years, the ancient teachings were attracting thousands of people and Yogi Bhajan created the foundation of the Kundalini Research Institute.

In his capacity as a Director, Yogi Bajan started to train teachers. Now some 200,000 teachers and students in the United States who have been influenced by these dynamic teachings. Yogi Bhajan died in 2004, but he left a legacy of health and healing through noting down the kriyas that had been passed down for generations.

In this guide, I will outline the essentials of Kundalini yoga, its history, methods, and why it is so powerful. I will also outline a set of Kundalini yoga exercises, known as kriyas (KREE-yah), to awaken the power within and boost health and vitality.

Let's get started with what Kundalini yoga is, and why people practice it!

Some people at the Kundalini yoga classes will wear turbans or wear white clothes, but most students are regular people of all ages, physical abilities, and religious persuasions. It doesn't matter what clothes suit you better for practicing Kundalini yoga.

As we become more technologically dependent, our world becomes more demanding in many ways. The demands of everyday life have an impact on our physical and mental health. Our body's nervous system enters in increasing stress. Kundalini yoga is available to us to help us cope.

Most yoga practitioners will agree that Kundalini yoga will make any student very strong in a short amount of time. It is a great workout even if you are not interested in concentration and meditation.

## **Chapter 1 - What is Kundalini Yoga and Why Do People Practice It?**

Kundalini yoga is a combination of breath, movement, and sound. It derives from the Sanskrit word *kundal*, which translates to "coiled energy." We all have energy gathered at the base of our spine and, through the practice of Kundalini, we bring that energy up our spine through the seven chakras, and out the crown of our head.

### **Kundalini Serpent Energy**

You have probably heard about the Kundalini energy awakening or arising. It is also known as the "arousal of the serpent energy". According to William F. Williams, Kundalini is a type

of religious experience within the Hindu tradition, within which it is held to be a kind of "cosmic energy" that accumulates at the base of the spine.

When awakened, Kundalini is described as rising from the muladhara chakra, through the central nadi channels (called sushumna) inside or alongside the spine reaching the top of the head. The progress of Kundalini through the different chakras is believed to achieve different levels of awakening and a mystical experience, until Kundalini finally reaches the top of the head, Sahasrara or crown chakra, producing an extremely profound transformation of consciousness.

*"The inner science of the mind is the tool that will enable us to cope with the pressure of these changes. It is the mind that interprets our outer and inner world and it is the mind that we must train to guide us through the flow of change". – Yogi Bajan.*

Kundalini Yoga is designed to activate you from the inside out.

The practice is active, dynamic, and powerful. The emphasis is on breathing, meditation, mudras (hand positions), mantras (chanting), and spirituality. Based on specific series of exercises, which are very precise and dynamic.

Kundalini Yoga practice amalgamates all the aspects mentioned before. As a result, you feel the benefits much faster and in a much greater way compared to other yoga types and random postures.

In Kundalini Yoga, each kriya was design with a specific purpose, ranging from a specific illness, organ(s). Also, there are kriyas to work on metabolism regulation, chakras, emotions, aspects of the mind. In Kundalini Yoga, there is a specific goal of practicing a kriya, which allows you to target specific areas and concentrate on

exactly those aspects of yourself that you choose to focus, and work on at any point in time.

Kundalini is a safe and very effective practice. It is ideal for people who want to experience an immediate feel good effect while enjoying the long-term benefits. The long-term benefits are experienced through your more relaxed and uplifted consciousness and a consistent practice.

Although some of the advanced kriyas can be physically demanding and intense, in my classes you will find I offer modifications to the postures that result more suitable both for beginners, and for others who need to follow a moderate/less intense practice.

Some people may need a more personalized kriya: if you are looking to work on a specific area of the body or the mind or are experiencing chronic pain or an emotional imbalance. Something you have been “carrying” with you unwillingly and want to let go of.

Whatever your challenge might be, I offer one-on-one consultations to focus on those areas that are important and relevant to you.

Many people refer to Kundalini yoga as a Technology. The reason becomes apparent once you have experienced the benefits of continuous discipline practice. You become a person that it's more capable of living life and enjoy it. When you practice Kundalini yoga you feel extra strength, clarity, vitality, mobility.

Kundalini Yoga was maintained as a secret oral tradition for thousands of years which protected the techniques from being changed over time. Kundalini Yoga can be practiced by anyone if it is done gradually and according to the instructions.

Try to take one to three yoga classes a week to establish a firm foundation for an effective program that fits your needs, goals, capacity, and lifestyle. Wear loose exercise clothes to class, preferably of cotton or other natural fiber and if you wish, bring a yoga mat, bottle of water and a shawl or blanket.

## Chapter 2 – Is Kundalini Yoga for everyone?

Whenever you choose the right exercise for you, safety should be paramount in your mind. This is particularly important if you have not worked out for a while. One of the beauties of yoga is that it uses your own body weight to give you a good workout. Yoga can be done anywhere, and Kundalini yoga can be done anywhere at any time to awaken the power within and transform what you wish in your life once you have mastered a few basic poses and sets (kriyas).



Standing Forward Bend

There is no need to look like a bendy pretzel to get real results in Kundalini yoga. There is also no real emphasis on being as thin as a twig, or in working out to attain the 'body beautiful' as there is with other forms of yoga like Hatha. There are no levels as there are with Hatha and Bikram, no emphasis on competition as there is with Bikram, and no emphasis on perfection as there is with Bikram and Iyengar.

The main point is to awaken the Kundalini energy within to enhance your health and well-being of body, mind, and spirit in each of your yoga sessions. Most of the poses are ones anyone can do if they concentrate and try their best. Some of the poses are standard as you would find in Hatha, others are, interesting or might seem a bit odd, or are just plain fun.

Some kriyas will be mostly physical, and others predominantly meditational. Most will be a reasonable balance of both.

Kundalini yoga sessions lasts 90 minutes. Each class will start with a warmup and cool down. To begin the practice, there is a 'tune in' to quiet the mind and body to get ready for the work ahead. At the end of the class, there is also a deep relaxation session.

The tune in is a chant in Sanskrit repeated 3 times: ONG NA MO GURU DEV NAMO. It means, "I bow to the teacher within and to divine wisdom." It is thought to be a way of awakening the energy channels in the body. At the end, you will tune out with "SAT NAM," I am truth.

As with all exercises, warming up the muscles at the start of your session and cooling them down at the end of your workout are important to avoid injury. So too is hydration, bring your own water bottle or have water handy. At presential classes,

I will offer Yogi tea at the end of each class for students to drink as they socialize with one another and relax. It is a tea like the Indian drink chai and is made with Yogi Tea chai-style bags, soy milk and a splash of pure maple syrup to sweeten it.

I will work with you to find adjustments for the pose if you have knee or back issues. There are also several things you could have handy at the classes, such as cushion, blocks, and yoga straps to help you find whatever is comfortable for you.

You will find people of all ages at a Kundalini yoga, from young to senior. If you have not worked out for a while, you might feel very nervous about starting, and be especially scared at the very idea of putting on (fashionable) workout clothes and going to a gym full of fit 20-somethings.

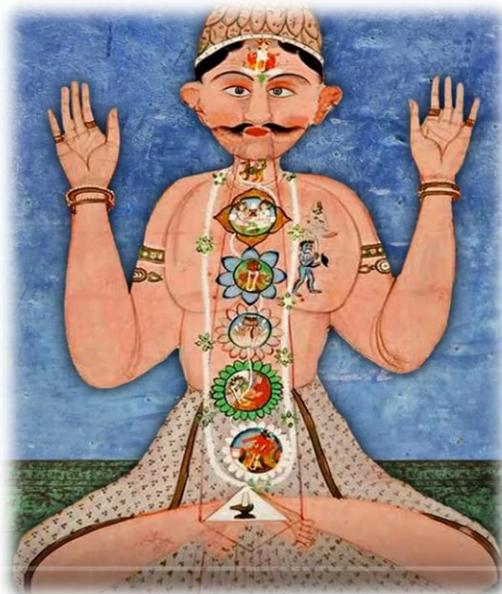
With Kundalini yoga, all you need are comfortable clothes such as a tee shirt and shorts or yoga pants. A head covering like a scarf or bandana can keep the hair out of your eyes and is said to lock in the energy so it does not dissipate through the top of your head, your crown chakra, too quickly.

So, what are the chakras, and how can they help with health and healing? Let's look at this topic in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3 - What are the Chakras?**

The word chakra means wheel, or vortex. Each chakra is considered an energy center in the body that spins. In most illustrations of the chakras they had make them to look like a round ball at each location, but this is not accurate. Rather than sitting on the front of our body, chakras spin from front to back like a dinner plate

twirling. If we think of a whirlpool, we will also get an idea of the way chakras are positioned and function in our bodies.



Chakras as envisioned by ancient yogis

Each chakra is the seat of a particular form of energy. There are 3 lower chakras and 4 higher chakras. If we use the comparison of the whirlpool again, our energy can remain at or sink down to the lower chakras unless we make a conscious effort to move our energy up to the higher chakras. In this way we can live a balanced and complete life.

Once you know where each of your chakras is, you can work on the health of each. When your chakras are balanced, you can practice moving the energy upwards, endowing everything you with a whole new power and purpose.

As you awaken the power within, you will find yourself feeling a renewed sense of vitality. Work will become easier, your stress will decrease, and relationships

improve. In terms of creating a great life for yourself, balanced chakras and an integrated mind, body, and spirit can be achieved through Kundalini yoga.

Each chakra corresponds to a color of the rainbow or spectrum. The healing energy pictured as coming in and out of the crown chakra is often shown as white light, that is, the combination of all the colors of the spectrum.

Starting from the bottom and working our way to the top, the chakras are:

- The Root Chakra
- The Navel, Sex or Sacral Chakra
- The Solar Plexus Chakra
- The Heart Chakra
- The Throat Chakra
- The Third Eye Chakra
- The Crown Chakra

The colors and the energies of each chakra are as follows:

### **1. Sahasrara: The Root Chakra – Red**

Key functions: Humility, vastness, stability, having life's essentials, such as food, water, and shelter. A balanced Sahasrara means prosperity and ease. Imbalance triggers hardship, greed, and possibly eating disorders.

### **2. Ajna: The Navel, Sex or Sacral Chakra - Orange**

Key functions: Intuition, wisdom, identity; passion, creativity, procreation. The union of opposites. A balanced Ajna will give confidence and sex appeal. Imbalance creates timidity and the feeling of being stuck in a rut.

### **3. Vishuddha: The Solar Plexus Chakra - Yellow**

Key function: Projective power of the word. Willpower and personal power. A balanced Vishuddha will give you the energy and motivation to achieve all your

goals. Imbalance means a lack of ambition or momentum. Think of the word solar, like the power of the sun, and you will get an idea of the importance of this chakra.

It is the highest of the 3 lower chakras. Moving the energy from here into the 4 upper chakras via the heart chakra is essential for awakening the power within.

#### **4. Anahata: The Heart Chakra - Green**

Key function: Love, compassion, empathy. A balanced Anahata will give you harmony in all your relationships. An imbalanced one closes you off to feelings and sensations and makes you jealous of others. It will help you move from the “me” to the “we”.

#### **5. Manipura: The Throat Chakra - Blue**

Key function: Action and Balance. This is the seat of communication in all its forms. A balanced one helps you with all your spoken and written communications and allows you to tap into your authentic self. An imbalanced one results in tendency to lie, perhaps gossiping, and being a bad listener.

#### **6. Svadisthana: The Third Eye Chakra-indigo, a kind of purplish - Blue**

Key function: Creativity, intuition, wisdom, especially spiritual wisdom. A balanced one helps you tap into your higher self and make connections with the spiritual. An imbalanced one makes you feel stuck or cut off from yourself. You have a hard time trusting your own judgment.

#### **7. Muladhara: The Crown Chakra - Violet**

Key function: Security, survival. the higher self. A balanced Muladhara leaves you open in mind, body, and spirit. A closed Muladhara cuts you off from your highest potential and make you close-minded and closed off to connection with others.

Now that you understand the chakras, let's look next at how the Kundalini yoga moves energy in the body.

## Chapter 4 - How Does Kundalini Yoga Move Energy in the body?

Kundalini yoga pictures our vital energy as coiled around the base of the spine like a serpent. It is focused on the root and navel chakras, the 'basic' instincts for humans for food, water, shelter, and sex. By moving the energy upwards to the other chakras, we can achieve our higher selves through accessing our mental power and wisdom within.



Camel pose

The 7 chakras are supposed to be connected through a white central channel that runs from the anus, the root chakra, to the top of the head, the crown chakra. The central channel is supposed to be just in front of the spine. The goal is to move the energy up or down the central channel through movement, meditation, mantra and mudra.

Keep in mind when we discuss the chakras and central channel, we are not talking about the physical body but our energy body, sometimes referred to as the subtle body, compared to the gross body.

The energy movement is also triggered by different breathing patterns and another feature only found in Kundalini yoga, locks, or bandhas.

To tune in and start moving the energy in the body, most Kundalini yoga classes will start with you standing or sitting. Let's look at the main ways to sit in Kundalini yoga to start moving your energy.

## Chapter 5 - The Main Ways to Sit in Kundalini Yoga

There are 8 main ways to sit in Kundalini yoga.



Easy pose

**Easy pose** –a comfortable cross-legged position. Often seen with Gyan mudra, making an O of the thumb and index finger by tucking the first joint of the index finger under the thumb and pressing lightly. This helps improve concentration.

Easy pose and other seated poses may also be done with Prayer pose, hands touching in front of the center of the chest, thumbs pressing lightly against the breastbone/sternum to stimulate the heart chakra.



Prayer pose

**Full Lotus pose** – the typical position associated with yoga. Both feet are resting on the opposite thighs. If you can't manage this, either of the other 2 poses are fine. This is a great hip opening posture.

**Semi-divine pose** – one leg with the foot resting on the opposite thigh. Also known as half-lotus



Full Lotus pose

**Rock pose** – Sitting on your knees with your legs under you, your rear resting on your heels.



Rock pose

**Heel to Root Chakra** – Sitting on one knee with the heel of the foot pressing on the root chakra, around the region of your anus. Rest your hands on the tops of the thighs and sink into the pose.



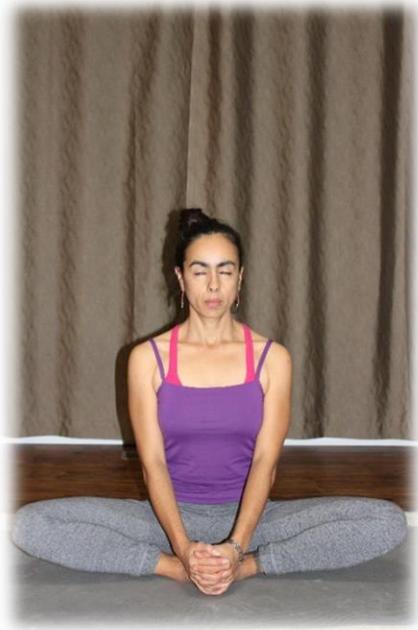
Heel to Root Chakra

**Celibate pose** – sitting with your buttocks on the floor but your legs parallel to one another, knees bent, calves parallel to the thighs and your ankles roughly parallel with your hips. This is another good hip-opening posture



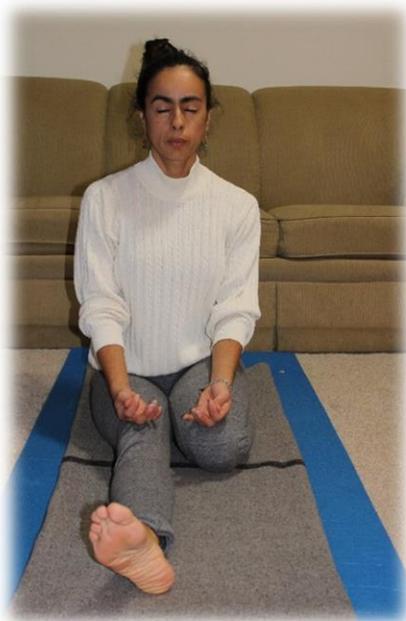
Celibate pose

**Butterfly pose** - sitting on the floor, knees bent, with the soles of your feet touching, legs spread wide at the hips. To increase the stretch, bounce the legs up and down gently. Never push down the knees. This is also a great posture for opening the hips to get the energy flowing.



Butterfly pose

Sitting one leg on your heel, as in rock posture and the other leg stretched out, to loosen the muscles.



One leg out

Now that you know the different ways to sit, in Kundalini yoga, it is time to look at the main ways to breathe in Kundalini yoga.

## Chapter 6 - The Main Ways to Breathe in Kundalini Yoga

As we mentioned above, pranayama, breath work, moves the energy in the body in all yoga. Kundalini yoga has a few interesting forms of breathing, with the most notable being breath of fire. Most of these breath patterns will be done sitting up, so find a comfortable seated position such as Easy pose or Lotus and then you can concentrate on the breath work.

### **Breath of Fire**

Breath of Fire is almost exclusively used in Kundalini yoga. It works a bit like hyperventilating through your nose, that is, breathing in and out rapidly. The movement is pumping the navel chakra (the area around where the belly button) to awaken the Kundalini energy and move it upwards.

Breath of Fire can be a bit tricky to master, but if you picture yourself as a happy puppy breathing in and out through the nose only, you should be able to develop a natural rhythm. Some yogis claim that 1 minute of breath of fire is the equivalent of miles of jogging or hundreds of sit ups.

## Alternate Nostril Breathing



Alternate Nostril Breathing Hand Position

Alternate nostril breathing is used to keep the energies balanced in the body and to restore balance. We may not notice it, but our breathing can become uneven through both nostrils through things like colds, allergies and so on. This pranayama can help.

Sit comfortably with your spine erect and shoulders and face relaxed.

Place your left hand on the left knee, palm open.

Using the pinkie and ring fingers of your right hand, position your hand according to the diagram above. Press those 2 fingers to your left nostril to close it.

Place the tips of your index and middle fingers on the third eye chakra, that is, the forehead just above the bridge of your nose.

Place the thumb on the right nostril lightly.

Breathe through the right nostril, taking long deep breaths, for at least 8 breaths.

When you feel that the air is flowing freely, switch nostrils.

Now open the left nostril by moving the pinkie and ring fingers. Close off the right nostril this time using your thumb. Keep the index and middle fingers on your third eye chakra. Breathe in and out for eight, and then go on to the next activity, or repeat the cycle in each nostril 8 times each, for a total of 9 times (72 in total).

As part of a Kundalini yoga set, I will tell you exactly how long to do this breathing pattern and a more in-depth explanation about all the benefits and connections to the brain.

### **Long deep breathing**

This is done in a range of poses, and at the end of your yoga session. It can be a 1 to 1 pattern of 8 counts for the inhale or the exhale, or whatever length of time you can sustain, start with maybe 4 counts and practice holding the breath for 4 counts and exhale in 4.

## **Chapter 7 - The 4 Locks (Bandhas) In Kundalini Yoga**

Kundalini yoga is unlike other types of yoga because it uses 4 locks, or bandhas, to focus the energy at a certain chakra to drive it upwards through the central channel. All these locks should be done with a straight back and no slouching if you wish to gain the full energetic effect. The 4 locks are:

1. Root-squeezing the muscles around your anus and perineum. Women would be familiar with these as Kegel exercises, often done after childbirth. Pretend you are holding a piece of paper between your buttocks in the locked pose.
2. Solar plexus or diaphragm lock. Breathe in as if you are drawing the front of your body towards your back. The easiest way to do this is to pretend you are sitting in a chair. Stick your butt out, bend your knees, and put your hands on the tops of your thighs. This will put tension on the area. Once you are familiar

with the sensation, you should be able to apply this lock sitting down or standing upright as well.

3. Neck lock. Tuck your chin in to align the head and make the neck straighter and less curved. You can gently push your chin into alignment with your fingers to remind yourself not to let your chin or neck sag when you are doing Kundalini yoga.
4. Mahabandha. This translates as the great lock and is comprised of doing all 3 of the other locks at the same time, root, solar plexus and neck. Certain kriyas will use mahabandha to keep the body aligned to keep the energy moving.

Now that you know about the 4 locks in Kundalini yoga, it is time to look at a few of the main mantras.

## Chapter 8 - Mantras and chanting in Kundalini Yoga

There are a number of mantras and chants in Kundalini yoga. Depending on your tastes, you might find them weird, or fun. In many cases, they have also been set to music by various artists associated with Kundalini yoga, to make it more interesting and rhythmical.



Om is the most common mantra (pictured above). The M sound can be quite nasal in Sanskrit, so in Kundalini yoga it is chanted as ONG. Some of the chants are in other Indian languages. Your teacher can do their best to translate for you if you wish to learn more.

As we have mentioned, most Kundalini yoga classes start with a tune in of ONG NAMO GURU DEV NAMO.

My classes will also start with:

**Aad Guray Nameh (pronounced NAM-AAY)**

**Chugaad Guray Nameh**

**Sat Guray Nameh**

**Siri Guru Devay Nameh**

It is a protection mantra that means you are bowing to the infinite wisdom of the universe. It is a bit like asking for all your efforts to be blessed and all your goals to be achieved.

An essential one in Kundalini yoga is SAT NAM (I am truth). This is the main chant of the powerful Sat kriya, which you will learn in a moment. Sat kriya is one of the best ways to align the chakras to harness the power within.

Some mantras have mudras or hand movements that go with them. Let's look at Kundalini yoga mudras in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 9 - Mudras (Hand Movements) In Kundalini Yoga**

Most people who know anything about yoga are aware of three things, the lotus position, the mantra OM, and the hand gesture or mudra that goes with it. The hand

is open to the sky apart from the index finger, the first joint of which is being pressed under the curled thumb to form an O-like shape. Gyan mudra is often used when chanting OM or meditating to improve mental focus and clarity.



Gyan Mudra

Mudras are also thought to move energy along certain pathways in the body known as meridians. They are also a good way to focus. One of the best ways to focus energy on the body, such as in relation to the chakras, is to touch the area.

For example, OM is the mantra of the Third Eye Chakra, said to control wisdom and intuition. When you are doing alternate nostril breathing, you are stimulating the chakra by placing the tips of your middle finger and index finger there.



Prayer mudra

Put your hands together in the center of the chest as if praying. Bend the thumbs and press them into the center of your breastbone at the level of your heart. This can be done standing, sitting, or lying down. Some people are even flexible enough to be able to do it behind their own back at the level of their heart chakra.

There are many other mudras in Kundalini yoga that you will learn as you go along, but these are the main ones to help you get started.

Now that you have learned about the breathing, locks, mantras, and mudras that are particular to Kundalini yoga, it is time to look at some kriyas or sets for specific purposes.

## **About your Kundalini Yoga teacher: Suzzette Tamez-Cruz aka Dhyan Navjot Kaur**

Mom of two, Biologist in eternal love with the Deep-Sea Ecology world. My specialty was deep sea invertebrates and of course you need an oceanographic vessel to explore such depths. I had the honor to have worked with amazing people in the Atlantis II (WHOI, USA) and Justo Sierra (UNAM, Mexico). Back then, the Atlantis II was the home of the submersible "Alvin", the same one that discovered the Titanic!

Later in life, I went across the ocean, all the way to Sweden to obtain a master's degree in Environmental Biotechnology. While I was there, I did a lot of cool experiments with mushrooms to decrease the cost of biogas production.

I love learning and teaching what I know. My teaching love has extended in the areas of Science, English (ESL Certified Teacher), Diving (Dive Master YMCA and PADI) and Kundalini Yoga.

Kundalini yoga has been my source of inspiration, energy, and guidance for 23 years. It has transformed my life in amazing ways. Practice and teaching kundalini yoga is to me a most precious gift.

Together with Sanjay Dorje (Peter Farquharson), we dance life together with our two kids, Evan and Sarah who we are Home-Educating.

If you feel ready to begin your journey, wait no longer! Book a class and have the saying on what do YOU want to work on for that specific session.

We offer one-on-one consultations with personalized yoga plans, nutritional plans, meditations for you formulated by Sanjay Dorje. Also, we are building complete courses with yoga kriyas, meditations and recipes that you can watch as many times as you need.