

BEGINNERS CAN SIGN UP FOR BRO-GA AND OTHER CLASSES AT MIDTOWN COMMUNITY YOGA'S WEBSITE: WWW.MIDTOWNCOMMUNITY.YOGA/CLASSES/



From left: Lucas Feger, Katie Brouner and Ellie Girdis practice a chair pose.

lost mobility from previous injuries—although he was originally inspired to take up practicing after a couple he met at a music festival told him it was the key to their impressive dancing.

"I separated my shoulder, and I've had ankle surgery so I can't really move it the way that I would like," Feger said. "Certain positions hurt, so I'm just trying to get past that and get it back to normal. I have really bad back pain, too. I have really bad scoliosis. I don't take painkillers or anything like that."

He also said the eclectic playlist—which includes the likes of Metallica, Pink Floyd and the Wu-Tang Clan—is a welcome distraction for his often over-active mind.

"It's really helpful because I have a hard time shutting my brain off," Feger said. "So, the music helps me not think of the shit that I am always thinking of and just be able to disconnect for a little bit."

It just so happened that the speakers shorted out during our class ("Just one of those nights," Girdis laughed from the front of the room) and so we had to go without for the last half hour. I didn't mind, though, as I found it easier to focus on my breath. Individual motions are synchronized with inhalations and exhalations in yoga, meaning breath control is important to maintaining rhythm—something I lack naturally.

After we finished the class lying flat on our backs in the traditional *shavasana*

("Corpse Pose"), Girdis told me that Bro-Ga has changed slightly since it's inception in 2015. Many of the original practitioners have had to leave for various reasons, and some newcomers are unsure of the class' accessibility.

"As we get more and more new clientele, we want them to know they're welcome," Girdis said. "And so, it's one of those things where we're like, 'We've got to change the name because everyone thinks it's for bros.'"

As this was my first class at Midtown Community Yoga, the usual \$10 drop-in fee was waved as per their policy—also helpful for newcomers who might see cost as a barrier to entry. I may return to Midtown Community Yoga in the future, but regardless of whether it's for Bro-Ga or a different class, Girdis said it's more important to approach yoga at your own pace.

"You don't need to have any, you know, rigid ideas about what your body should be able to do, which we all have," she said. "It's just better to be like, 'OK, I'm going to do what my body can do right here.' And maybe that's different than yesterday. Maybe it's more than yesterday, or less, and that's fine. Like, whatever, you know. Nothing's permanent."

Not even Bro-Ga. □

"OUR CATCHPHRASE WAS, LIGHT YOGA, HEAVY JAMS—AND YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TOUCH YOUR TOES."

ELLIE GIRDIS
FOUNDER, MIDTOWN
COMMUNITY YOGA

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