

THE BIG BEAR STRETCH

Q & A with yoga teacher and Animals Asia event manager Sarah Grant

- **what is the connection between Yoga and Animals Asia?**

"I feel like there is a strong connection between yoga and the animal suffering Animals Asia is working to prevent. The most obvious to me is the fact that in all 3 of our campaigns - end bear bile farming, cat and dog welfare and captive animal welfare - the animals are incarcerated sometimes their whole life. They often haven't even the space to stand up, turn around or stretch. Looking at our bears 'yoga-ing' in our sanctuaries or the shapes my cats get into I can't imagine how they must feel confined like that.

I also think how our rescued bears forgive is an important link. Despite all their years of torture they put it all behind them, learn to love and to trust and most of all savour every ounce of their new lives with such joy. That is a yoga lesson in itself. Then there is 'ahimsa' of course and having compassion for all beings which is important."

- **how does doing yoga help end animal suffering?**

"Well, quite simply, if you can donate a yoga class proceeds to Animals Asia then it directly helps with our campaigns. More than that though, I believe that yoga is a perfect way to bring people together to not only learn about our cause but also send out some much needed positive energy for those poor animals. Like the ripple effect"

- **what if people aren't good at yoga? can anyone do it?**

"YES anyone, yoga really is for everyone. There's a common misconception that you can be 'not very good' at yoga but it's not true. Improving flexibility is only a tiny part of yoga, a lot of it is about stilling the mind, working with the breath, and being more connected with nature and others around you but its a vast world to explore"





- **why is kindness to animals part of yoga philosophy?**

"I could delve into the philosophy of yoga all day long however the way I see it is yoga is to realise that all beings are connected as one, that means you, me, bears, cats, dogs and the bees buzzing around your garden. In yoga they would say if you harm another being you are therefore only harming yourself because we are all connected. I love this concept.

The great yogi 'Ramana Maharshi' had a cherished best friend who was a cow called 'Lakshmi'. He knew that animals should be given as much respect and love as we give other people.



- **who is the Big Bear Stretch event aimed at?**

"Animals Asia actually has quite a few yogis and reiki practitioners in its staff believe it or not but even those who don't realise they're perhaps practising yoga actually are...how often do we hear of the deep connection our bear carers have with the bears and how often do we feel there's something more special about Animals Asia. I certainly do. We are led by an incredibly compassionate person ~ Jill Robinson ~ and therefore she attracts compassionate followers. To answer the question, it is aimed at the holistic and compassionate community and those who feel that they can create change through their practice."

- **do you have advice for people holding their own Big Bear Stretch?**

"The best advice I was ever given was to be real. If you are honest in your intentions or if you are a teacher - honest in your teachings - then I think that shines through. Passion and compassion shine through and people can tell when you're not real. And also, just GO FOR IT. I think people have too much self doubt but if you believe you can create change then you can and you will. Decide to hold a fundraiser and then give it your all, with authenticity, people will join you!"

- **how do people get involved?**

"visit www.animalsasia.org/Yoga and order a free fundraising guide. It has all you need to host your event ~ step by step guide, poster, donation box, chant sheet and even some pose suggestion for a kids 'little bear stretch'

My hope is year on year this event will grow bringing more people together to make a stand against animal cruelty and create an unstoppable movement for change."