

# Deepen Your Practice with Themed Group Classes

Posted on [February 8, 2013](#) by [Janet Muniz](#)

*A five-week focus on Ustrasana, the kneeling back bend camel pose, starts February 9.*



**Group Hug.** With a new schedule of classes and workshops, bringing a mix of styles to your practice at Maya is easier than ever before. And a whole lotta love goes out to our teachers, for offering us the opportunity to be the best we can be. Thank You!

**New Year Kudos to You!** And you have successfully re-kindled your yoga practice at Maya by attending a solid schedule of classes and sticking to it. Congratulations! Even if you're still working on this, kudos go out to you, as well -as you begin to live in the present moment. And now, you're ready to go deeper.

**Bring Your Attention.** One way to deepen your practice is to attend themed group classes, where we bring our attention to a certain alignment principle or area of the body throughout each class. For instance, last summer instructor **Tiffany Berry** dedicated four weeks to

explore [Vinyasa from the Ground Up](#), as part of her Vinyasa Vigorous Flow group [classes](#). "By learning the classic alignment in a pose, practicing the muscular action that supports the pose and experimenting with your body's needs," she explained, "you better understand how to stay safe in your practice."

**Explore Ustrasana.** On February 9, prAta yoga instructor **Michelle Peterson** begins a five-week focus on Ustrasana or camel pose during her Saturday morning [classes](#). "Back bends can be big and expansive, strong and exciting," she says. "We will build strength and suppleness of mind and body, so that we have the opportunity to safely experience openness."

The love of back bends came early in Michelle's yoga practice. But at the very peak of her studies, she came down with severe pneumonia, twice in one year. "It left me unable to practice the adrenalized, hot fiery asana I loved so much. For the next 18 months, my yoga was dominated by Pranayama, lying in child's pose as I learned to breathe again."

**Let it Work for You.** When she returned to the Hatha practice, she found her spine and its supporting muscles had not remained strong and supple. "We have a soft, sensitive, vulnerable side open to life. Because we are mammals, our body's reaction to fear, trauma or overwhelming experience is to protect that vulnerability by contracting, closing down and hardening." For Michelle, it has been in the chest and belly; back bending is one way she uses to help release the physical and emotional guarding that sometimes becomes too established.



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