

This story has been printed in the some newspapers in Tucson, AZ; California; Ft Lauderdale, FL; Evansville, IN; Fort Wayne, IN to date. This shows national interest in the concept.

Enlightenment

By combining color therapy with yoga and cycling classes, followers feel a benefit in their workouts and their chakras.

By Nick C. Sortal
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Drivers look at a red light and think "stop." During Kmart's heyday, a blue light meant run like heck and grab that bargain.

And, if you're a yoga student, you associate white light with the top of your head.

In the thousands of years that people have twisted and turned to yogis' directions, many have assigned colors to each of seven vital areas of the body, known in Eastern philosophy as chakras. Visualize a green ball of light at your heart, yoga teachers would say, and improve your ability to love and balance.

That color-chakra business has become more concrete in the past year, helping yoga students glide into their happy place. Yoga students, including some in South Florida, are taking multicolored classes -- with lights shining directly upon them from the back of the studio.

"I'm amazed that no one has thought of it before. It really helps keep the idea of chakras in line," says Pete Stephenson, a computer programmer who has been taking classes since they started in February at Gold's Gym in West Palm Beach.

Others undertake indoor cycling classes in colored lights, working their bodies through the same palette. They progress in a metaphysical version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Darker for the lower body (the more physical), progressing to white for the crown (the more mental).

Christina Leon of Miramar created the system, which she calls Spectral Journeys, and has applied for a patent. The classes require a \$4,000 LED light system, which is programmed to change colors, and curtains to shield outside light.

Leon combined her 20-year background in the fitness industry (aerobics, spinning and kick-boxing) with her interest in colors (she's a color therapist) and therapeutic techniques (she's a reiki healer). The classes, which she calls "Colorgized," began last year at The Athletic Club at Weston and have expanded to nine sites, six in South Florida.

"After 20 years in the industry, it's good to know my brain is good for something other than just saying `C'mon, five more!'" says Leon, who teaches the classes when they debut at a new site while also leading local instructors through a certification process.

To add audio to her visual, she uses music specially written for the classes, coordinating the sound wave speed with the color-light speed. The pitch is lowest at the red (root) chakra, then is succeedingly higher, climaxing with white. It also follows, Leon says, because chakra is Sanskrit for "wheels of light."

Dottie Zevin of The Yoga Center in Deerfield Beach, hasn't heard of Leon or Spectral

Journeys, but supports the idea of connecting colors to both parts of yoga, the mental and the physical.

"There is a thought that there are frequencies we all carry, and if that is true, then you can start to heal through toning, color and breath work," says Zevin, director of a center that has been around for 38 years and trains many of the area's yogis. "It sounds like really good stuff."

The concept of color as a way to modify the mood and/or body is almost as old as yoga and includes using color to keep chakras active (what they call "spinning"). Chakra devotees say medical science supports their existence: each chakra is in line with a part of the endocrine system, which wasn't discovered until about 120 years ago.

Color therapy is being used to treat dyslexia, Alzheimer's disease and attention-deficit disorder, says Elena De Dionisio of Health and Harmony in Boca Raton, a New Age store.

"The medicine of the future will be color, sound and light," she says. "More subtle frequencies have to be used to repair imbalances and diseases."

Leon adapted the color concept to cycling (trade name "Spinning"), except instead of chakras, she speaks of "energy centers."

"If I used the word 'chakras,' they'd think it was a mellow cycling class and no one would take it," she says.

Leon uses affirmations to further cement the focus on a chakra.

Red light (the root chakra) ...

"All of my basic needs are met."

Orange (the reproductive organs and hips) ...

What gives you pleasure in your life? Is it an event? Is it a person? Is it just having coffee alone? You have the right to that time and that pleasure.

Green light (the heart) ...

"I love without judgment."

Judy Graham of West Palm Beach says she leaves each class better focused, and the stresses of her daily job melt away. She's an executive assistant.

"I come in to drain my brain, and this does it," she says.

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