

Each class operates a strict 'no-touching' rule

All classes are mixed gender, so you must not disrobe until instructed

Naked yoga aims to shed guilt and shame about all areas of the body

feelings as you're undressing.' I have gained weight recently, due to marathon days in front of the computer and copious takeaways, but surprisingly, I don't feel anywhere near as self-conscious as I had expected.

Isis stands at the front of the class wearing nothing but a dangling pendant between her breasts. I'm at the back of the room, surrounded by 14 naked men – my boyfriend will not be pleased. But within minutes, I've almost forgotten they're there: the beer guts, hairy bottoms and even the few six-pack abs melt away. Isis's calming cadence takes us through a succession of poses. I feel stronger and more confident in myself as I work through each movement, and

## TRIED & TESTED NAKED YOGA

*Annemarie Conte ditches her inhibitions – and her clothes – to brave the latest New York fitness craze: nude yoga*

Yoga is not usually my exercise of choice. In fact, I'll do anything to avoid a painful downward dog. But I've been under lots of job stress lately, so when I hear about naked yoga, which claims to plunge you into a deep state of Zen-like bliss in just one hour-long session, I decide to give it a go. Hell, I've seen naked ladies before at Turkish baths. What's the big deal?

Isis Phoenix, a 26-year-old 'tantrika, medium and sensual shaman' started Naked Yoga NYC last year after she got out of the shower one morning and forgot to put on any clothes. Yes, really. 'I rolled out my mat and practised yoga without dressing and thought, 'This is so amazing, I have to share this,' she says. On my way to the midtown Manhattan studio, I picture the class filled with earth-mother types. But when I get there

I realise, to my horror, that this is a mixed-group class – and I am the only female student. Gulp.

My heart is thumping as I lay out my mat (thank God it's bring-your-own) in the extreme back corner of the studio. I've chosen a location as far as possible from the mirrored wall. Isis dims the lights and places candles around the room, then instructs us to begin undressing. From my spot in the room, I can observe men discarding everything from business suits to T-shirts and jeans – there's even a man in a thong. 'Focus on the process,' Isis says, turning her attention to me. 'Think about your

when it comes to the downward dog, I manage to hold the position for 60 seconds – a first for me.

It seems counter-intuitive that the one thing which should make me feel self-conscious is, in reality, so freeing. After all, being naked in a room full of people is the stuff of nightmares. But it's not that I forget I am naked – it's that I no longer care. And that is what will bring students – including me – back to the class.

*For further information, visit [nakedyoganyc.com](http://nakedyoganyc.com)*