

Welcome to American Mosaic from VOA Learning English!

I'm Faith Lapidus.

On the show today, we play songs from the television show Glee, which recently lost one of its biggest stars.

We also hear about what life is like for stay-at-home mothers in America.

But first, we learn about how yoga is making a difference for people who are in need of help.

Millions of Americans take classes to learn the breathing and positions of yoga, the ancient Indian exercise for the mind and body. In recent years, yoga organizations have been attempting to serve needy people. Not just poor men and women, but homeless people, people who abuse drugs or alcohol and those with other problems.

VOA reporter Deborah Block visited Green Door, a mental health center in Washington, where yoga is helping change people's lives. Christopher Cruise has her report.

Ericpaul Clark has been taking yoga classes for several months. He had earlier spent time in jail and a psychiatric hospital after abusing drugs. Today, he says he no longer uses drugs and is looking forward to a better life. Yoga helps keep him calm.

“I have rather a bad temper, and I’m afraid that if I really get angry I might do something dumb that will cause me to go back to jail. When I do stretches and poses it relaxes my muscles and just makes me feel more comfortable.”

Green Door offers free, weekly yoga classes to help Mr. Clark and others deal with their problems and become more independent. Most of the students are poor. Many are homeless or in temporary housing. Social worker Miranda White says a lot of them do not exercise, but yoga gets them moving, even if they are sitting down.

“Their patience for doing any type of exercise is minimal at first, but once they’ve gotten involved with yoga, I’ve seen this love for it.”

On this day, Clarence Marble is attending his first yoga class at the center. He found the class was difficult.

“I had to pull both my legs up with both my hands.”

He says he hopes yoga will help him lose weight and ease his depression.

Studies have shown the helpful effects of yoga can ease a number of mental disorders. They suggest that yoga helps reduce tension, ease depression and lessen the signs of schizophrenia. People with that illness can see things or believe things that are not real.

Ernestine Jackson takes medicine to control her schizophrenia. But she says yoga helps her in several ways.

“It helps you get your self-esteem together, and most of all, it helps me with peace of mind.”

Social worker Miranda White says that is something these people really need.

“It’s a moment for their bodies to just relax because if you’re homeless, or if you’re struggling with symptoms of hearing voices or depression, it’s hard to find a calm place within yourself and your environment, and with a lot of them you can see it in their faces.”

Megan Davis is a specialist in yoga therapy. She says learning yoga helps her students feel more in control.

“Especially the breathing techniques, really invite people to not be reactive, so it comes up when you’re having a craving (strong desire) for drugs, for a drink.”

That is helpful to Charles Bradley, who suffered a mental breakdown as a result of drug use. He has now been clean of drugs for a year.

“You don’t always have to go running back to substances to make you feel good. You can make yourself feel good just by doing something as simple as breathing.”

Mr. Bradley started taking yoga because he wondered about it. Now he thinks yoga plays a major part in turning his life around.

I’m Christopher Cruise.

Making decisions about the best way to raise children is not easy. For many American families, finding a balance between work and childcare can be difficult. If parents have enough finances, one might choose to raise their children at home while the other works to support the family. The caregivers are called stay-at-home moms or dads.

A listener recently asked a question about stay-at-home moms in America. The listener wanted to know what their lives are like. To find out, we spoke to two women about their decisions on work and parenthood.

Sandie Angulo Chen is raising her three children in Silver Spring, Maryland. Before she decided to stay home, she had a full-time job in New York City. But she is not a traditional stay-at-home mom. She works from home as an entertainment writer, and operates a blog with other mothers in the Washington, DC area.

Sandie Angulo Chen may not go to an office for work every day. But she says she is busier than ever.

“I think that a lot of people don’t even recognize that it is incredibly hard to be at home, and that there is so much that goes on with keeping your kids’ schedules going and having that master schedule for your whole family in a way that even your partner doesn’t have.”

The Census Bureau estimates there were five million stay-at-home moms in the United States last year. The number of stay-at-home fathers has tripled in the past 10 years.

The economic recession in 2008 has also affected many parents. Rachel Mehta is a stay-at-home mom in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey. She decided to stay at home a few years ago after she lost her job in advertising. But now that her two daughters are getting older and the economy is recovering, she hopes to start looking for work.

“I want to show my daughters as well that I’m a contributor and I’m working and I have a career, and that’s important to me as well.”

Rachel Mehta has major responsibilities at home beyond just caring for her children. Her husband travels often, so she takes care of their household and finances, too.

For Sandie Angulo Chen, caring for her children and meeting work deadlines at the same time is difficult. Above all, she says, being a stay-at-home mom can be rewarding, but it is not easy.

“The idea that women who are home are doing nothing is really insulting and offensive, because that has not been my experience. It’s not just like you’re just vacationing and going to the spa.”

There was sad news from the show business world this week. The actor and singer Cory Monteith was found dead in a hotel room in Vancouver, Canada on Saturday.

Cory Monteith was just 31 years old. He was best known for his work on the popular television series Glee. Madeline Smith looks back at his time on Glee and lets us hear some of his performances from the show.

Glee is a program about a singing group called a glee club at an American high school. It tells the stories of the students and teachers involved with the club. On each show, Glee cast members perform their own versions of popular songs.

Cory Monteith played the football player Finn Hudson. Finn is tricked into leaving the football team for the glee club in the show's first broadcast. But he soon begins to make friends with the other singers, and he starts to enjoy singing in the group.

In Glee's second season, he performed "Just the Way You Are," a song made famous by the singer Bruno Mars.

Cory Monteith also met his girlfriend Lea Michele on the show. She has the role of Rachel Berry, one of the glee club's star singers. The two actors were a couple in real life and on the

show. They often performed together, like on the song “No Air” from season one.

Cory Monteith had spoken publicly about his past struggles with substance abuse. The actor spent time at a substance abuse treatment center earlier this year.

The British Columbia coroner’s office announced on Tuesday that he died from a combination of the drug heroin and alcohol. Cory Monteith will be remembered as a talented performer gone too soon.

I’m Faith Lapidus. Our program was written by Caty Weaver and Madeline Smith, who was also the producer.

Do you have a question about American life, people or places? Send an e-mail to mosaic@voanews.com.

Join us again next week for music and more on American Mosaic on VOA Learning English.