

# Chris Acosta

## - Builds Bridges with Yoga

By Sharon Lee Schroeder

**When asked what gift he wanted for his birthday, the yogi replied: "I wish no gifts, only presence."  
~Author Unknown**



Photos top to bottom:  
- Cris's X Ray before Yoga  
- Emma in the Yoga Kids class  
- Max Linn - a private client



December 1, 2007 – My second yoga class at St. Petersburg Yoga. There's something reassuring and peaceful about stepping into a room where yoga is about to commence. In the space of a small room with wooden floors, soothing music, and ohms – a rejuvenating empowerment takes place many times a week. St. Petersburg Yoga, founded by Chris Acosta is the epitome of the yoga experience.

Chris's journey is inspiring; a testament to what a person can overcome. At the age of 8 or 9, he began having unusual pain and was diagnosed with scoliosis, with a severe curvature of 45 to 48 degrees. Scoliosis also creates sideways curves, which can be exceedingly painful as well. Above 30 degrees, surgery is strongly advised. The pain became so unbearable, causing great difficulty in doing things most of us take for granted. He became the kid that sat at the window watching the other kids play.

Out of desperation, at the age 14, he agreed to radical surgery. Extremely hesitant because many people he had talked to who had the same type of surgery, have told him they remained in pain afterward, some worse than before. A difficult and medieval procedure, at best, and with the odds against any real improvements, he changed his mind at the last moment. Rationalizing that technology would catch up with making improvements in the procedure, he set about finding a doctor who would prescribe a body brace. With strong reservations, the seventh doctor gave in. For the next four years, ages 14 through 18, he wore the body brace at all times, even during sleep, except for one hour a day for physical therapy. This is where he was introduced to a few of the first posture positions of yoga.

When the body brace was removed at 18, he couldn't sit up; had a herniated disc at L5, and literally had no muscle strength. And now the window of opportunity for surgery was gone. With no hope and not knowing where to turn, he sought out professional yoga instruction, finally finding the right instructor, Claude Griffin, a long time yogi, in Clearwater. After working together for a few months, Chris began to notice small periods of no pain, often in posture. With each session, his spine began to open up and straighten. "It was *transformational and powerful*", Chris tells us.

Pain free living became Chris' goal as he developed a love for yoga that was soon to define a way of living. He wanted to give back, to help others find that better place, that 'presence'. Making a living at other things, he taught for free, but eventually realized he needed to turn yoga into a business. St. Petersburg Yoga was born, and he has been helping others to awaken self through yoga for 17 years now.

Chris is doing what he loves and is where he is meant to be. Known as a teacher's teacher, he has taught tens of thousands of classes and hundreds of thousands of students over his career (private, group, corporate) and holds a RYT 500 level certification and has just been voted "**Best Yoga Instructor of the Tampa Bay**" by DuPont Registries (July 2007). He instructs from many influences, as do his staff. He works with the full spectrum of students from the injured and very beginner to intermediate through to the most advanced. Chris says "*Yoga is the science of Techniques*". Listed below are the current instructions being offered.

- Meditation
- Hatha: Gentle thru Advanced
- Ashtanga
- Iyengar
- Vinyasa
- Yoga Philosophy • Asana
- Mantra • Monthly workshops
- Kripalu • Kids Yoga
- Corporate Yoga
- Kriya Therapeutic
- Yoga Traction Therapy
- Pranayama
- Restorative

St. Petersburg Yoga is the only full-time yoga studio devoted exclusively to the ancient and far reaching practice of yoga. Chris Acosta and his staff are truly dedicated to the re-integration of the more recently separated aspects of the practice staying true to yoga's more traditional past. Open classes, private instruction, kid's yoga, prenatal, postnatal, corporate yoga, Yoga Traction Therapy, and monthly yoga workshops/intensives are offered. Chris says he will continue to add more classes as he receives feedback on specific needs from students.

"I wish I had found it earlier", Chris tells me at the end of the interview. You may just say that too! St. Petersburg Yoga meets you exactly where you are with the perfect fit in class style and instructor helping you to maximize your over all yoga experience. My yoga experience is just beginning but I feel taller and calmer already.

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