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UNM law professor practices yoga and meditation in stressful times.

By Maggie Branch

UNM Newsroom
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A professor at The University of New Mexico School of Law has become a very accomplished Yogi – someone who studies and is proficient in yoga. Nathalie Martin, who has been a part of the UNM law faculty since 1998, was featured in a magazine put together by the Property Brothers and HGTV regarding her Yogi status.

“It was fun to get that recognition, especially from the Property Brothers. I love HGTV. But doing this story means more to me,” said Martin.

Martin started practicing yoga after noticing she felt a bit stressed out about her work supervising students in the clinical law program at UNM School of Law.

“It is some of the most stressful lawyer work because you must balance providing excellent legal services while allowing students to learn, grow and do the work. You have to let them spread their wings a little, let them make a few mistakes,” said Martin.

Martin thinks many could benefit from practicing yoga and meditation, which can help people be less reactive, more in tune with interpersonal relationships. The practices can also beat stress, help people focus and get more work done in less time, develop healthy and happier routines, help people sleep better, and help them find their purpose in life.

“Yoga and meditation have kept me sane all these years and helped me create a safe, sacred space for all my emotions– good, bad and ugly. These practices also help me not be reactive but rather to put some space between my reaction to things and my actions in response,” said Martin.



But the key is one has to be willing to practice, to be calm, to just sit there and do nothing. This is hard for most people, but especially lawyers.

“It reminds me of my favorite New Yorker Cartoons. Two monks are sitting in meditation and the old one says to the young one, ‘Nothing happens next. This is it.’ Right now, especially during Covid, I am using these skills to stay present, to just ‘be.’ Of course, if I can share them with yoga students and law students, all the better. But in the end, it is always about taking care of yourself first before assisting others,” said Martin.

Part of the reason Martin puts so much faith into the practices of yoga and meditation is that they are ancient and, as long as one is practicing them, effective.

Martin, along with her students, has completed a lot of worthwhile work while at UNM. This semester, she and her clinic students helped someone get a deed to a home put into her name, after paying on it for 22 years. They helped several non-profits get off the ground. They helped residents of senior mobile home park enter into meaningful conversations with management about various health and safety issues. They also regularly help people with evictions and getting their security deposits back.

Martin conducts research focused on consumer law and bankruptcy, as well as elder law. Some of her recent research includes high-cost loans such as payday, title and installment loans, as well as the [Mindfulness in Law](#) movement.

She has had many empirical studies funded by the [National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges](#), including one that funded curbside interviews of payday loan customers and another that studied the credit habits of undocumented New Mexicans. Her works have been cited by the [New Mexico Supreme Court](#), the California Supreme Court and the [United States Supreme Court](#).

“This job at UNM Law School has been my dream job at my dream location. For many years, I wanted to be a law professor. We were willing to move anywhere. This was my husband’s first choice location, and he gave up a job in a big city law firm so I could realize my dream. I was glad I could come through for him by getting this offer. We came from back east and knew immediately that New Mexico was our forever home. The unique combination of the culture and the outdoors would make it very hard for us to ever leave. The University shares the same values I do, a deep love of learning, and a deep appreciation for diversity, inclusion, and meaningful dialogue. I feel incredibly lucky to work at UNM,” said Martin.

The author of several other books and dozens of law review articles, she holds what is thought to be the only endowed chair in the country dedicated to consumer law issues.

She is the author of “[Yoga for Lawyers: Mind Body Connections To Feel Better All The Time](#)” – as well as “[Lawyering from the Inside Out: Learning Professional Development through Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence](#)”. The Yoga for Lawyers book is sold on Amazon, but also in the U.S. Supreme Court gift shop.

Martin teaches commercial and consumer law, as well as the [Economic Development \(Business and Tax\) Clinic](#). In addition to her other courses, she runs a program promoting [financial literacy](#) in New Mexico high schools and teaches a two-day [financial literacy course](#) for law students and undergraduates.

She is also a member of the American Law Institute and the American College of Bankruptcy, and a former resident scholar at the [American Bankruptcy Institute](#). In that capacity, she has appeared on CNN, ABC, CNBC and other television networks. She has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and many other newspapers.

Her passions include several long-term life goals, including helping consumers avoid the many traps and pitfalls created by the current consumer credit world, and helping lawyers maintain balance in their lives.

Martin would recommend these tips to students who are feeling stressed or overwhelmed: “Try to just do less. Take time to just sit there and relax. Breathe deeply, a lot. Give yourself a break and when you catch yourself engaging in negative self-talk, yell out STOP! Develop healthy habits, especially by moving your body, but also have lots of fun!”