



Illustration by Christoph Niemann

BALANCING ACT

A political pro finds peace bringing yoga under the tent

By Lesley Bargar Suter
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Julie Buckner doesn't talk like a yogi. Each consonant is struck with the sharp precision of a seasoned public speaker—or in her case, a hard-nosed political consultant. “I just ran into a friend at my kids' school,” Buckner says. “She said to me, ‘I hear you're opening a yoga business. Wow, that's really a 180-degree turnaround for you, isn't it?’” To which Buckner replied yes—and no.

For decades, long before she gave birth to her two sons and even as she worked on a slew of fast-paced campaigns for candidates and ballot initiatives, Buckner was using yoga to stay fit and focused. But after she turned 40 and went through a divorce that same year, her life felt out of whack.

“A lot of working women,” she says, “struggle with this idea: I have this full-time job going to work, and I have this full-time job as a single mom—I feel like I can't do either one right.” Then it hit her. What if she stopped treating her recreational yoga and her political career as disparate parts of her life? What if the two did not just complement each other but were mutually beneficial?

When she looked at it that way, Buckner discovered that the principles she learned from yoga were enhancing her skills as a strategist. She became more patient, less reactive, more clearheaded, and less controlling. Next she set about realizing the yin to that yang: She used her organizational skills to open a yoga studio.

Launching this month in Valley Village, in the space once occupied by Dutton's bookstore, InYoga Center will also house a boutique (shopping is one of Buckner's favorite activities) and eventually a café (she fancies herself a foodie). A structure out back is now headquarters for her political consulting business. The complex is within 8 blocks of her home, 12 blocks from her older son's school, and barely more than a mile from her younger son's school. “It's my Valley Village nest,” she says.

Buckner reports that by eliminating the barriers between the compartments in her life, she has found balance. She knows she may appear lucky. Not everyone can do as she did—arranging jobs, passions, and families all within skipping distance. But Buckner says that the first step was allowing herself to imagine a future she had never thought possible. “It's only recently,” she says, “that I have ever been able to say to myself or anyone, ‘I'm happy.’”