

# Yoga Rebel

American model turned yoga instructor, Tara Stiles is a living, breathing embodiment of “sports luxe.” Bold and unapologetic, both in her style and her attitude to her practice, it’s no wonder she’s the star that Reebok Studio turned to for their latest collaboration, a line designed to reinvigorate both your yoga ability and your mindset...

**By Yi-Hwa Hanna**

Some could say that Tara Stiles is the original social media yoga celebrity. One of the first YouTube users to upload yoga videos and, subsequently, gain a large following, she is also largely responsible for helping to bring yoga to the masses. With her modelling background earning her some serious style cred, not to mention a truly modern approach to the practice that has, not without controversy, earned her the nickname “Yoga Rebel,” this is a woman who helped to make yoga trendy. And it shows: Since founding Strala Yoga in NYC in 2008, it’s now grown into a global studio, while she also has countless magazine covers, brand relationships—her latest, with Reebok Studio—and online videos with thousands of viewers to her name. Read on for an exclusive insight into one of the coolest yogis in town...

**What inspired you to make the change from fashion model to yoga superstar?**

I grew up interested in yoga and meditation. We had yoga classes in the dance conservatory I attended and I got really into it then, not planning on exploring it for a career, but as a process of helping people. When I moved

to NYC and was modelling a bit, I started leading yoga with friends super casually to help them out with any problem they had from stress to physical pain to life crisis. People saw my approach was pretty different and enjoyed it a lot, and started to gain a lot of benefits. One thing led to another. More people wanted to practice with me. I opened a small studio at the time and things grew quickly from there. I think now people take my picture more than when I was modelling, but it's for a good theme always now.

**What do you love about it?**  
The process of connecting to self.

**It has so many benefits—what's your favourite?**

De-stressing is the top one. It's the root cause of many other potential problems.

**Yoga has become so popular on social media nowadays, on channels like Instagram for instance. What are your thoughts on the trend?**

I made yoga videos for YouTube in 2007 and the yoga community thought I was crazy. Video is obviously a

great medium for sharing yoga. So is through pictures. Instagram makes sense. I still prefer video. I use Instagram to share what inspires me, moments in a day, travels, yummy recipes, and the occasional tip for a movement. Just showing a pretty pose each day isn't the top of my lists of interests, but it's still the perfect medium to do that.

**It seems to come hand in hand with meditation...**

For me, yoga is moving meditation. It's how we practice with Strala. I usually start the day with a bit of meditation as well. It is crucial for me to feel

connected and clear.

**How can it help you feel more in tune with yourself?**

It's a practice of sensitising to how you feel. The practice is designed to give you the space to pay attention to your mind and body, slow down your thoughts, and reconnect with yourself.

**What are your top tips for getting more out of your yoga practice?**

Practice regularly, whether it's at home with a video, or in a class. Stick with one method that inspires you. With Strala we move with ease. People get more out of the method when they practice regularly. Focus



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on the process over the goal. Whether you want to de-stress, achieve a pose, or simply feel good, keep practicing and your goals will be blown past. The more you sensitise yourself to what you are fuelling your body with, the better you'll feel. A great way to get started is getting in your kitchen, using fresh ingredients, and making your own meals, or at least more of them. Enlist your loved ones. Practise with your partner, your friends and family. When you make the practice something you do with those around you, you're more likely to keep it a regular thing and feel great fast!

**What do you do to keep fit?**

I lead a class every day when I'm in NYC, and I usually take a class also at Strala. I'm spoiled because we have the studio here. When I'm travelling I usually lead class as well and practice a bit in the morning on my own or with a group. I like to walk everywhere and if the weather is good, I'm up for anything outdoors.

**What about your diet—any particular philosophies?**

*Make Your Own Rules!*—the title of my diet and cookbook. Following how I feel is the key and guides me to eating what I need every day. Regular practice helps keep my intuition clear. I eat mostly plant based and love to cook and explore new recipes at home. I travel a ton and love the foods of all the cultures I get to hang out in. Finding healthy options in each culture for me is important, instead of ordering a non local cultural standby. I was just in Mexico City and I fell in love with plantains and hot sauce. I had a lot of mushroom tacos with all kinds of hot sauce. So yummy!

**What's your key secret to staying happy and healthy?**

It's important for me to spend my time doing what I love. If I have fun with [it], I stick with it. If something is dragging me down, I check in with it, and redirect back to fun. ■