



A new initiative providing free yoga classes for people affected by cancer comes straight from the heart of a yoga teacher.

For Brisbane yoga teacher, Keren Cooksey, her sister's experience with cancer made a lasting impression. "My sister had leukaemia twice, at age 15 and 18. She was quite weak and couldn't do anything physical, so I started going to the hospital and teaching her the yogic breathing techniques I'd learned," says Cooksey.

The results were inspiring. "I saw yoga make a direct impact on her stress levels. When she started recovery she would come to very gentle classes; she still comes with me once a week," says Cooksey. "She's now been in remission for eight years and finds yoga gives her a sense of wellbeing."

In March, Cooksey launched Anahata Healing (www.anahatahealing.com.au), a coordinated effort by the yoga community to provide free yoga for those affected by cancer. "Studios are offering one free class a week for people affected by cancer—both patients and carers. The majority are also offering discounted private sessions," she says.

Teachers are stepping up to donate an hour a month to offer private classes for those in need. "People are really giving what they can," says Cooksey.

The non-profit program acts as a matchmaking service of sorts. "When someone contacts us we review their case to determine if they are a cancer patient, in remission or back in a career. We then match them to what they need. If they're in treatment they'll need yoga therapy; if they're in remission or are a carer they can go to a class," she says.

While early interest is mainly from South-East Queensland, Cooksey says Anahata Healing is ready to be rolled out across Australia. "There is no limit on how far it can spread. We're hoping that teachers and studios from other states will come onboard and offer what they can. The sign-up process is one quick and easy form on our website."

Cooksey's sister, Lisa, has put her own hand up to help. "She works in marketing now and is responsible for maintaining our website. She's pretty excited!" SUE WHITE