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Get a firmer profile with face yoga

Exercise is the latest wrinkle in looking younger

BY LIZ DOUP
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
March 26, 2008

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His mouth forms a long O as Gary Sikorski folds his upper lip over his front teeth.

He smiles to make his cheeks lift, then lightly places his index fingers on the top of each one.

He relaxes his smile, then smiles again to lift his cheeks.

You've just witnessed a cheek "push-up."

It's all part of Sikorski's Happy Face [Yoga](#), a series of toning and strengthening exercises for the face.

"You exercise your body to keep looking good," says Sikorski, who's offering a free class in [Fort Lauderdale](#) on Saturday. "You can make your face look better and younger, too."

Though many in the medical community say you can't beat Father Time by exercising your eyebrows, our insatiable quest to look younger keeps us racing after answers.

But if you think funny facial movements are a new path to the Fountain of Youth, you haven't been paying attention.

Women's magazines have touted facial exercises for years. In the mid '90s, beauty expert Carole Maggio wrote *Facercise*, featuring exercises for the face.

Today this old trend is new again. Authors recently have given their fingers a workout writing *The Yoga Face* and *The Yoga Facelift*.

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Sikorski studied with a Houston instructor, then started classes in Atlanta last year before recently moving to [Wilton Manors](#) and bringing Happy Face Yoga to South Florida.

Like other facial exercise programs, Happy Face Yoga purports to help smooth wrinkled faces and firm sagging jowls and down-turned mouths.

"You feel better," says Sikorski, who's 50. "You look better."

The [Crow's Feet](#) Smoother involves forcing your lower eyelids up while your fingers pull gently at the corner of your eyes.

The [Chin](#) Press, to firm the jaw line, requires pressing the jaw down while your palms, under your chin, apply pressure upward.

Sikorski says his exercise routine helps plump sagging muscles by increasing their volume and that the workouts help restore [muscle](#) tissue, elasticity and tone.

But many in the medical community aren't buying it.

"This doesn't restore muscle tissue any more than normal facial activity — laughing, crying — would," says Dan

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Kapp, a West Palm Beach plastic surgeon and member of the [Palm Beach County Medical Society](#).

Because some facial lines, such as [forehead](#) wrinkles, result from muscle movement, repeatedly raising your eyebrows and doing other facial contortions can, in fact, make lines worse, he says.

If you want healthier, younger-looking skin, "exercising" it isn't the answer. Avoiding too much sun and wearing sunscreen is, says Steven Rosenberg, a professor of dermatology at the [University of Miami](#) Medical School who practices in West Palm Beach.

"That's the most effective way of reducing wrinkles or the appearance of wrinkles," he says.

The "yoga" in Happy Face Yoga refers to breathing deeply and holding the "pose" for 20 to 30 seconds.

You're not doing traditional yoga — no Downward Facing Dog while doing The Forehead Smoother.

In five weekly 75-minute classes, Sikorski teaches 33 exercises. Cost is \$250.

"It's not as easy as it sounds," says Wanda DeVaughn, 55, who runs a yoga studio in suburban Atlanta where Sikorski taught. "It's intense."

Adds another Atlanta student, Patti Hart, 60: "At first you feel weird, making all those funny faces. You're in a room with all these people, but you get into it."

It took about four weeks but Hart says she sees a difference.

"My cheeks lifted back up," she says. "My eyelids aren't as droopy."

Teaching facial exercises is just the latest job on Sikorski's resume.

He ran a ballroom in Hallandale in the early '80s and owned a juice bar on [Miami Beach's](#) Lincoln Road in the mid '90s.

In and out of the restaurant business for years, he's been an owner and a server, working seasonally from Cape Cod to [Key West](#).

He gravitated to facial exercises when "I felt like I was looking old," he says. About the same time, he caught a TV commercial about facial yoga and decided to learn more.

Every day he does a few exercises and says he can see the difference.

"It's only temporary if you don't keep it up," he says. "The more you do it, the better you look."

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