

# A Hula Hooping Movement Is Underway, And It Just Keeps Growing

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Daniel Krieger



When filmmaker Amy Goldstein first came across a hula hooping community near her home in Venice Beach, California, she was intrigued. Some of her acquaintances had adopted monikers and were dressing differently, she recalls, "and they seemed a whole lot happier." That was in 2004, and two years later, she began working on a documentary about this subculture, called [The Hooping Life](#), which came out last year.

Since her first encounter, she has watched the movement expand and evolve. "What's happening in hooping is just explosive," she says, "and it keeps growing and growing."

Now you can find vibrant hooping communities with gatherings, or "hoop camps," all over — from [California](#) to [North Carolina](#) to [Germany](#), [Japan](#), [Australia](#), [Bali](#). Participants can hone their technique, learn how to run a hoop business, and connect with fellow hooping travelers. There's even a magazine, [Hooping.org](#), covering all things hooping, and [Hoop City](#), a site that helps you find hoopers to meet up with anywhere for a "hoop jam." It's a means of fitness for some, while for many others it's an art form, a moving meditation, and even a way of life, which one hooping devotee in the film calls "the Hoop Path." Here's the trailer:

Hooping has been around at least since the ancient Egyptians, who fashioned hoops out of grapevines. Over the past few millennia, various cultures came up with their own takes on it, like the Native American Hoop Dance. In the late 1950s, Wham-O introduced its plastic "hula hoop," which became a huge fad for a while. Then in the mid-1990s, it emerged again when The String Cheese Incident, a jam band, would throw a bunch of hoops into the audience. According to [Hooping.org](#), this helped spark the modern

hooping movement, minus the trademarked “hula.”

"I think adults desperately need something that brings them together to play together — to be in their body, to move together, to be silly," says Amy Goldstein. "It's a sharing culture." One without the cease and desist letters and lawsuits that afflict the yoga business. "And it really seems to inspire people's creativity," says Goldstein, who hoops for 20 minutes every morning.

But some people still see hoops as toys rather than the centerpiece of an emerging art form. "They don't understand how serious we can get with it," says Amy Rogers, a former dancer who took up hooping in 2009 and went on to found the [Hoop Movement](#), a New York-based collective of hoop dancers that offers classes and performs in all manner of venue, from the New York City Dance Parade to galas, weddings and corporate events. They also host [World Hoop Day](#) events and hoop jams.



The Hoop Movement bringing hoop dance to the New York City Dance Parade 2015. Chris Fernando

In hoop dance, a so-called "flow art" that involves improvisation as well as choreography, the hoop is spun in joyful and creative ways that at times seem to defy physics.

"What we aim for is to get into a flow state," says Rogers, who teaches both basic and more advanced hoop dance classes. "You have to just let go and trust yourself more than anything."

Mary Pulak, who runs [Hooked on Hooping](#) in Green Bay, Wisconsin, approaches it from more of a fitness than dance angle. After discovering hooping at the National Wellness Conference eight years ago, Pulak, who had been a health and phys-ed teacher for three decades, was inspired to create an exercise program around the hoop. She designed her own two-pound weighted hoop — the extra weight works the

core muscles and makes for easier spinning — and started teaching classes. But she wanted proof of its benefits, so in 2010 she initiated a [study](#) with John Pocari, an exercise physiologist at the University of Wisconsin–Lacrosse. After monitoring a group of hoopers, they found, among other things, that a 30 minute hooping session burns at least 210 calories (7-12 per minute).

Other benefits include weight loss, stress reduction, increased energy and improved mood.



New York's very own hooping violinist. Daniel Krieger

In her class, she covers basics like good posture and how to prevent the hoop from falling. "I can literally get 99 percent of people hooping," she says. To make it a total body workout, she adds extra challenges like squats, lunges, arm circles, and reaching overhead. She also teaches some more advanced maneuvers, like spinning below your waistline and spiraling it up above your chest.

Many of her students have lost weight. One schoolteacher shed 30 pounds doing three 10-minute hooping sessions daily. At 64, Pulak credits hooping with energizing her and insists that people of any age can enjoy it. "I have three-year-olds hooping and I have 83-year-olds hooping," she says.

Whether for dance, fitness, trance, community, or just plain fun, hooping has something to offer just about anyone.

All you have to do is find your own flow.

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