

# Lake Forest's Dena Dodd Perry paves a mindful path to health and healing.

words by **Rochelle Newman Rubinoff**  
photography by **Robin Subar**  
styling by **Theresa DeMaria**  
hair & make-up by **Leanna Ernest of Distinct Artists**

## A JOURNEY TO WELLNESS

**Y**OU WOULD BE hard pressed to find someone who embodies all things health and wellness more than Lake Forest's Dena Dodd Perry. Describing herself as a healthy lifestyle engineer, Perry works as both an integrative health coach and a certified yoga instructor. Over the years, she has incorporated her wealth of

knowledge in a variety of ways, most recently becoming the author of the newly released *Detoxelicious*, a ten-day powerful yet practical self-help book providing guidance for detoxing.

While this multi-tasking woman has now devoted her life to helping others on their food-fitness journey, she graduated Northwestern University with a degree in engineering. But she was always drawn to the sciences, which definitely comes into play now.

Growing up as one of four children in Detroit, she majored in biology in high school. "That gave me a leg up when I got to Northwestern," Perry says, especially when she began tutoring other students. "I've always been a huge STEM advocate." The pride is obvious in Perry's voice when she shares that many of those students are now doctors themselves.

"I thought about med school," Perry says, but she was put off by it being cost prohibitive, and instead decided to become an engineer.

That fortuitous choice led to Perry meeting her husband, Jeff, when they both worked in the management consulting industry. They have three children—two sons in college and one daughter in high school.

Motivated to find solutions to some of her personal health challenges, Perry is now able to help lead others on their own wellness journey.

Perry has always been physically active; she golfs, plays paddle tennis, and runs. And during one of those activities, most likely running, she ended up getting a fragment stuck between her L4-L5 vertebrae, which was excruciatingly pain-

ful, causing severe sciatica.

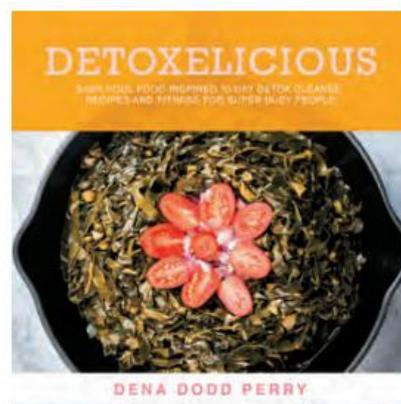
Perry shares that when she saw neurosurgeon Dr. Jonathan Citow, "He said 'I can definitely fix this. You should be able to return back to your all your normal activities. Just don't repetitively lift anything over 45 pounds for the rest of your life.' So basically, that's life changing, right? But during the exit interview he said, 'You know, as long as you keep stretching and watch your weight, you should do well.' And I said, 'What about yoga?' He said yoga would be great."

This began Perry's yoga career. "I've been teaching for five years. I did 200 hours of yoga certification in addition to 300 more hours of advanced training, culminating in my yoga thesis."

Prior to the pandemic, Perry had many corporate yoga clients. She would go to various companies and teach classes. One of her long-time students is Tony Asghari, a principal mechanical engineer at Continental Automotive in Deer Park. "Her classes are fantastic," Asghari says. "She always comes prepared. Also, Dena is very athletic and brings athleticism to you in a calm, relaxed, consistent manner. She's an energetic person and she is really well grounded." Some of Asghari's favorite aspects of Perry's classes were "the way she spoke, her intonation, her flow, her level of intensity, and her character, her jovial nature. I try never to miss a class."

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Perry is unable to teach in person right now. She currently teaches virtually at [vivaya.live.com](http://vivaya.live.com).

"My account is @DenaDoddLife on Instagram Live, and there I try to emphasize that we are on this journey. You look and feel better based on both the food you are eating and your yoga fitness routine. I'm a big advocate of yoga fitness





“I think [*Detoxelicious*]  
speaks for itself. It is  
beautiful, well written,  
and easy to follow.”

—DR. VESNA SKUL

just because of the situation I was in. And I believe through healing my own body that my gift to the community is to share my journey to inspire them to heal their own bodies in whatever way or fashion they deem appropriate.”

Yoga and exercise are just part of the equation. Perry is also committed to embracing a healthy diet. Several years ago she attended a workshop run by Dr. Vesna Skul, a functional medicine doctor based in Chicago. “My yoga business is important. But what I’m eating matters, too. I had already completed a cleanse from the blueprint cleanse, which is all liquid for two days, but found that I got severe headaches. And I would lose three or four pounds, but I didn’t like that side effect.”

Perry prefers what Dr. Skul proposes—a vegan, organic plant-based plan for 10 days. This cleanse seeks cellular restoration and is highly potent in antioxidants.

“So, in a sense, the book is a 10-day mindfulness, food, and fitness detox program where we encourage people to order the detox cleanse. That is supported by *U.S. News & World Report*. The process is called Recognize, Reset, and Realize. Recognize what is going on with your body. Get a check-up with your doctor. Then, you Reset. This is on page 32 of my book, and you reset by detoxing with support of supplements that have been tested. And then, you Realize results and evaluate your cholesterol, your blood pressure, and so on and so forth.”

Dr. Skul says that she and Dena instantly clicked when they met. “She asked about what I think my patients should be doing. And that is taking charge of one’s own health and your family’s health by doing the best you can. We live in such a polluted environment, that rather than curling up in a fetal position and calling it a day... accepting the need for specifically targeted cellular detoxification through foods and supplements is what I have been advising my patients for decades.”

Dr. Skul is thrilled with Perry’s book, *Detoxelicious*. “I think it speaks for itself. It is beautiful, well written, and easy to follow. I think that having it as a tool, and then having conversations either with a fitness lifestyle coach or a medical professional who can embellish and personalize, is very valuable.”

“Even if you are addicted to fast food or a carnivore, you can be vegan for 10 days,” says Dr. Skul. “Especially when—usually by day four or so—the clarity comes, and you can see really noticeable and fantastic results from that kind of eating. Then you can reintroduce some clean animal protein into your lifestyle, while staying away from the clear culprits of what make up a lot of people’s diets and causes the most trouble health wise.”

Looking back on her own journey, Perry says, “These things in life happened for a reason and I believe it took me on a more mindful approach. It took me on this path of open-mindedness with infinite possibilities, including food and fitness.”

*Learn more by visiting [denadodd.com](http://denadodd.com).*

Perry, wearing a black tulle top and skirt by Akris Punto, Neiman Marcus Northbrook Court