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AUSTRALIAN

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5

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to LOVE**

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An Emotional
rescue

**LOVE
THY SELF**

ISSN 1837-2406

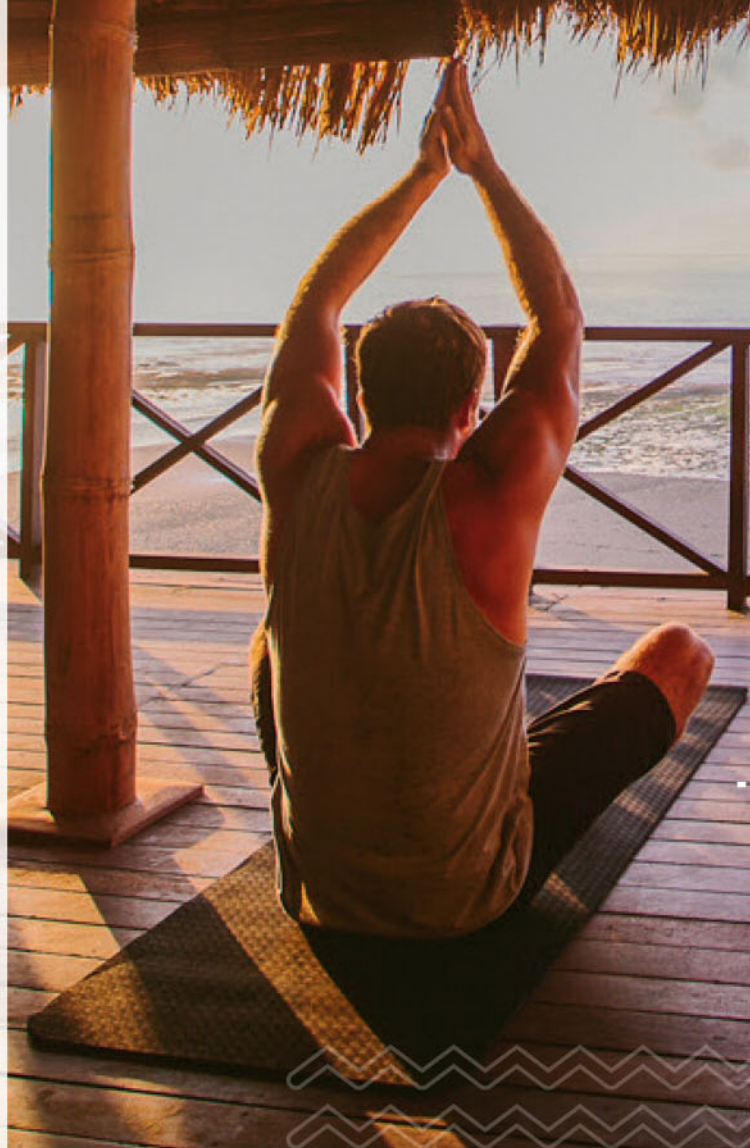


ISSUE 58

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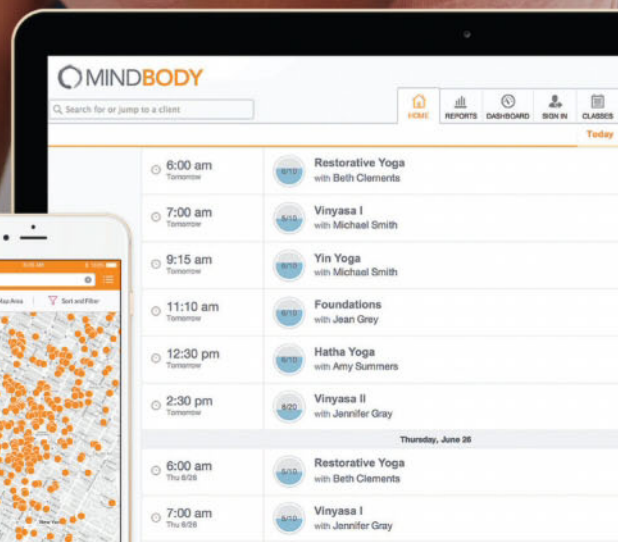
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Love UP



ROMANCED BY ALL THINGS relationship and self-love, for months I've been flirting with the idea of creating an edition inspired by

love, and seeing it come to fruition has left my heart wide open.

What I value most in life is my relationships. My dad still tells me the story of when I was "a little girl" and I ran crying to him because the other kids wouldn't play with me. I remember my mum helping me craft coloured love hearts to give to my friends, and I remember boldly handing them out, confused by their shy responses. I've always felt comfortable with that kind of vulnerability — I love to love. At times this open-heartedness has been accompanied by great shame and a fear of rejection, but over the years I've learned to embrace this part of myself. I continue to seek out this openness in others, leading to some beautiful connections. Along the way, and through studies of yoga and meditation, I've delved deeply into the most important relationship of all: the one with my Self. Throughout that exploration, I've come to

understand the importance of that relationship in cultivating harmonious, loving connections with others.

The journey is never-ending, and I'm delighted to share some inspiration to guide you on your own path of navigating the world of relationships, with yourself and with others. Enjoy a look into the lives of open-hearted Bryony and Harry, owners of Sydney's Egg of the Universe, who tell us some of their secrets to long-lasting love (p.28), discover how to teach children the art of self-worth (p.36), and dive into the heart of body love (p.48). Get cheeky with Rosie Rees' Nude Yoga (p.71) and savour some seriously delicious recipes to help you share the love (p. 66). We're giving you our best-loved self-care practices through Ayurveda (p.34) and loving rituals (p.54), plus all of the regular goodness and more.

Treat yourself to your favourite beverage, sit back, relax, and let yourself drift away into this indulgent issue filled with love.

JESSICA HUMPHRIES
Editor
jess@yogajournal.com.au

AUSTRALIAN yoga JOURNAL

ISSUE NO 58. APRIL 2017

AUSTRALIAN YOGA JOURNAL

Contact Media PTY LIMITED

ABN 20 097 242 807

PO Box 582 Robina Town Centre Qld 4220

Tel: (07) 5508 2787

www.yogajournal.com.au

EDITOR

Jessica Humphries

jess@yogajournal.com.au

SUB-EDITOR

Louise Shannon

louise@yogajournal.com.au

ART DIRECTOR

Angela Reeves

ang@yogajournal.com.au

NATIONAL ADVERTISING MANAGER

Alison Cole 0411 623 425

alisoncole@yogajournal.com.au

PUBLISHER

Todd Cole todd@yogajournal.com.au

CONTRIBUTORS

Loraine Rushton, Diana Timmins,
Caitlin Nowland, Lorian Waldron, Briann Boal, Chris Dixon

PRINTER

Printed by Webstar Print

Australian Yoga Journal is published and distributed eight times a year by Contact Media Pty Limited, under license from Active Interest Media, 2520 55th Street, Suite 210, Boulder, Colorado 80301, United States of America. Copyright © 2016 Active Interest Media. The trademark YOGA JOURNAL is a registered trademark of Active Interest Media. All rights reserved. Vegetarian Times content, which appears in this magazine, is copyrighted © Cruz Bay publishing Inc. All Rights reserved, reprinted with permission. Subject to national and international intellectual property laws and treaties. Vegetarian Times is a registered US trademark of Cruz Bay Publishing. This publication may not be reproduced in whole or part without the written permission of the publisher. Copyright of all images and text sent to *Australian Yoga Journal* (whether solicited or not) is assigned to Contact Media upon receipt. Articles express the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Publisher, Editor or Contact Media Pty Limited. Distributed by Gordon & Gotch. ISSN 1837 2406.

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CHAIRMAN & CEO Efram Zimbalist III

PRESIDENT & COO Andrew W. Clurman

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT & CFO Brian Sellstrom

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Dayna Macy

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DIVE DEEPER

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– Noelle Connolly, Head of Yoga at BodyMindLife

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⌘ October 4 - November 5, 2017

Part-Time: April 1 - August 28, 2017

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connect TALK TO US



Thanks to everyone who entered the competition to win a free pass to Bali Spirit Festival. We asked you to tell us about what makes your spirit soar, and we loved all your comments.

Here are some of our favourites!

@_christinehall Doing my morning practice – sun salutations – with my one-year-old joining in on the fun. He holds onto my legs or hugs me on the back as I flow.

@bethpearcefit My spirit soars when I look up at the sky on a clear night and it's covered with a blanket of stars. My spirit soars when I feel the wind of the storm and hear the hum of the ocean as I fall asleep. My spirit soars when I am atop a snow-capped mountain in winter and I take a deep breath, the cold air filling my lungs.

@yogarealm Oh, how my spirit soars when I'm thrown into the unknown, to share simple moments with locals in foreign lands, having a full heart at the end of my practice and being able to ignite that same burning spark in my students.

@_hollic_anne Getting lost in nature, new experiences and adventures with my favourite people. Bali adventures are calling my name.

CONGRATS @_hollic_anne_ for winning this amazing experience. We can't wait to share in the adventure with you!

If you still haven't got your ticket to this inspiring and fun-filled yoga event featuring some of the world's most knowledgeable yogis and fantastic performers, check out the website and join us at this incredible festival in beautiful Bali!
www.balispiritfestival.com



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pretzel-ing through life!

CONGRATS

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Email us to claim your prize.

@cavesyoga was very inspired by our recent yogi guide to India.

@be_naturallyyou love seeing their products in stuff we love! And we love seeing you enjoy the mag.



We share so much yogic goodness via our Facebook page, but nothing beats the quirky animal yoga we stumbled upon on the www. Introducing the latest fur-friendly practice — goat yoga! What will they think of next? Check out the adorably quirky clip via our page.



Email

Inspirational reads

Reading through your current Dec/Jan issue, I am finding new inspiration from the interesting and varied topics covered and I felt compelled to email you and say thanks. I was happily surprised to see Richard Miller's input and really enjoyed the topic of mantras. I have to admit, firstly, that I had allowed my AYJ subscription to lapse. I am happily on board the AYJ train again and loving accessing it from my tablet, which is allowing me to click the web links and follow your content up so easily, all the while making notes and plans for the New Year.

Emily

Thanks so much Emily. So glad you're connecting with the content and embracing the online edition. — Ed

Connect and win

Your contribution to our community is so valuable. Email us or connect on social media with your ideas on how we can make the magazine even better. Your feedback doesn't have to be positive — just constructive. Send us an email to editor@yogajournal.com.au, join our Facebook community [facebook.com/australianyogajournal](https://www.facebook.com/australianyogajournal) or follow us on Instagram [@yogajournalaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/yogajournalaustralia)



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SPACES ARE STRICTLY LIMITED!





What's On

Your essential guide
to what's on in the
yoga world

Byron Spirit Festival

Mullumbimby (Byron Shire) **March 31–April 2**

Celebrating the unique character of the Byron shire, this annual festival is now in its fifth year and features workshops and panels on yoga, music, culture, healing and world music. A truly delightful and spiritual celebration that connects like-minded beings. www.spiritfestival.com.au

Bali Spirit Festival



Ubud **March 19-26**

This highly anticipated event is an essential stop on any yogi's journey. Held in the beautiful Balinese village of Ubud and attracting more than 7000 participants, this is a true celebration of yoga with many world-renowned teachers and spiritual gurus. www.balispiritfestival.com

Ignite Yoga Summit



Sydney **April 28-30**

Bringing together some of the world's most experienced and well-known teachers for connecting and sharing the joys of yoga. www.igniteyoga.com.au

Mind Body Spirit Festival

Brisbane **March 17-19**

Australia's biggest health, wellbeing and natural therapies event, with more than 200 exhibitors, psychic readings, body pampering, meditation and more. www.mbsfestival.com.au

Rise for the Reef



Gold Coast-Byron Bay **April 30**

Yoga, meditation, sound healing, speakers, music, slack lining and more, in support of saving the environment and protecting our sacred country. Facebook events – Rise for the reef – Gold Coast/Byron Bay.

Creature Yoga 200hr teacher training



Byron Bay **May 1-27**

The ladies at Creature Yoga have put together a long-anticipated, comprehensive course with an impressive faculty. www.creatureyoga.com.au

Elemental AcroYoga Immersion



Sydney **March 4-9 (one day drop-ins available)**

Join AcroYoga experts for in-depth study into the therapeutic and acrobatic elements of this increasingly popular, fun practice.

www.bodymindlife.com

Byron Yoga Centre Easter Retreat



Byron Bay **April 14-17**

A special four-day retreat that gives guests the opportunity to refocus on health, immerse in yoga and wellness sessions, relax at the beach and unwind in tranquil surrounds.

www.byronyoga.com

Got an event on? Send your event details to jess@yogajournal.com.au along with a high-resolution image.



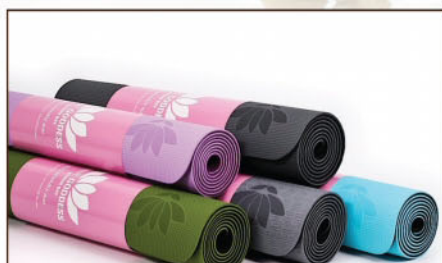
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SPACES

SOUL CENTRE

You may have noticed that Essence of Living in Southport on the Gold Coast has had a little makeover ... introducing Soul Centre, a loving space offering an incredible range of classes from pilates and barre to all styles of yoga and the new *50 poses of grey*, a specialised class for the over-50s. Owner Libby Wever says the boutique yoga studio aims to provide an unforgettable student experience, educating and empowering practitioners to understand movement and embrace the many lineages of yoga. She says, "We encourage our teachers to be themselves and structure classes in a way that reflects their personalities. Your experience begins the moment you enter the studio, by leaving the outside world behind and immersing yourself in the good vibes." www.soulcentre.com.au

THE RABBIT HOLE ORGANIC TEA BAR

We stumbled upon this luxuriously peaceful space while on a visit to Sydney's Humming Puppy Yoga studio. Just next door is the delightful Rabbit Hole Organic Tea Bar – a serene space within the hustle and bustle just perfect for yogis! The sweet bar serves tea lattes, tea sodas on tap, more than 20 original tea blends and a delectable range of sweet and savoury (but healthy!) goodies. The teas are delicious, and this is the perfect meeting place for like-minded yogis to catch up before or after class. Owners of the cute cafés decided it was time the city offered a unique meeting place serving something other than your usual coffee, wine and glutinous treats. The Rabbit Hole has two tea bars in the heart of the city. www.therabbithole.com.au



COLLABORATIONS

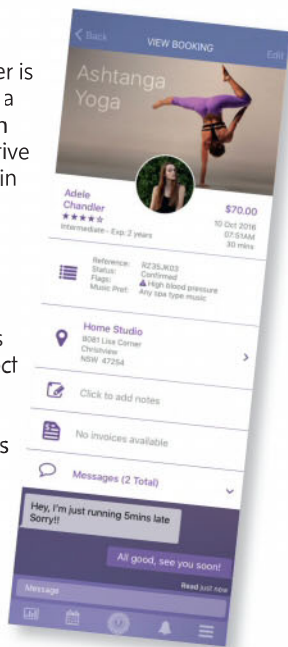
OM PEOPLE

Om People is a new community of like-minded yogis which has been created to share the transformative power of yoga and meditation. They're all about connection: to each other and to self. The collaboration's mission is to bring together yogis and yoginis to deepen their study of yoga, unveiling truth and authenticity. So far, Om People's offerings include immersions, retreats and teacher trainings that are hosted in Victoria, Bali and India. Co-owner Josh Blau says, "Om People is about true yoga and true love. Ultimately it is love that guides us, drives us and enables us to be free. Once we can connect to the love we have within ourselves we can share that with each other." www.ompeopleyoga.com



OMM COLLECTIVE

A Gold Coast-based yoga teacher is on a mission to make the life of a yoga teacher more efficient with this new platform. Omm Collective has been created with teachers in mind, and takes care of all the admin (advertising, scheduling and everything in between, including auto-generating invoices). Using the new app, students can search for teachers and classes, teachers can connect with new and existing clients, studios can widen their teacher database and so much more. It's still in the development stages and is set to launch mid-2017. Contribute your vital feedback for the final production at www.ommcollective.com



LANGUAGE

5 WAYS TO INFUSE YOUR SPEECH WITH LOVE



- 1 **Swap disempowering self-talk for empowering affirmations.**
Disempowering: "I'm overwhelmed."
Empowering: "I'm in demand."
- 2 **Choose presuppositions that inspire possibility.**
Presuppositions are embedded assumptions inherent in communication that signal your brain to find things in alignment with what you declare. Focus the presuppositions in your language in the direction you're inspired to flow. Instead of asking, "Why is my relationship failing?" ask "What is really happening here? What is more important to me in this relationship?"
- 3 **Transcend "need" and "try".** The word try introduces the possibility of defeat and need presupposes absence or lack. There's a big difference between "I'll try" and "I will".
- 4 **Practice embodying empowering states at will.** If you're feeling in a funk, simply think of a specific time when you accomplished something that inspired you. Go back to that time in your mind as if it's happening now and use that to inspire you towards success in the future.
- 5 **Create your own personal mantra.** The words you choose influence how you see yourself, how others see you, and what's possible for you. Speaking the words "I am" means you are invoking the power to create.

Written by Niukra for Yoga Journal online

Yogis have better sex

Ask the experts and you'll see it's true — yogis do it best!

"Yoga may be able to improve sexual performance in both men and women. Studies our research group has published in The Journal of Sexual Medicine suggest that practicing yoga for an hour a day increases pelvic and abdominal muscle tone, which can improve stamina and performance. We've also found that yoga calms the mind and stabilises the autonomic nervous system, which can decrease anxiety, allowing for a more satisfying, relaxed time in bed." — **Vikas Dhikav, PhD, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Indraprastha University, New Delhi, India.**

"Yogis can be better lovers because of their breath control, flexibility, and ability to be present. Tantra Yoga is a path to increase sexual energy, which is not just the energy of passion but also the energy of creativity and of the animating life force that keeps us young and vital. Just through breathing at the right time, all yogis can take an ordinary orgasm, add pranayama, and quadruple its length, power, and ability to awaken the brain and upper chakras. So, yogis can make better lovers, and Tantra yogis can become masters of the art of love." — **Charles Muir, Founder of the Source School of Tantra Yoga, pioneer of conscious sexuality, and yoga teacher.**



EVENTS

THE TASTE OF LOVE FESTIVAL

We are feeling renewed, open-hearted and fully empowered after a luscious experience at this festival. Held in Byron Bay, Tantrikas, yogis, new age hippies, couples, singles, along with all gender identities and preferences came from all over Australia and beyond to explore the transformational path of tantra: the yoga of intimacy and love.

The full three-day extravaganza featured discussions about relating, sacred sexuality and consciousness. There were workshops on boundaries, erotic dance and orgasmic energy, and an evening program with performances, guided intimacy exercises and sacred love rituals. We loved the Shamanic Breathwork with Elaine Young, Sexuality and Divinity with Nityama, experimental Yoni Yoga with Roxanna Minnona and Orgasmic Yoga with Elaine Young. A love buzz grew through the crowd over the weekend, with so many local and international presenters sharing their expertise.

It was at times challenging, but moments of courageous vulnerability were rewarded with profound realisations and experiences that have transformed our relationships to self, others and the divine. If you feel ready to open to the full power of your sexuality and direct it towards your growth and expansion, then this is the festival for you! Don't be surprised if you leave feeling high on love and life. We can't wait for next year. www.tasteoflove.com

— Written by Sarah Michael



IGNITE YOGA SUMMIT

Ignite Yoga Summit was born to create a platform for yoga teachers from all walks of life to formally come together, share ideas and expand their teaching skills. This three-day symposium has been designed to cater to the needs of yoga teachers with all levels of expertise, and from all walks of life. The Ignite program offers sessions that focus on a wide range of topics from asana, meditation and pranayama right through to anatomy and teaching skills.

The inaugural event will offer workshops and masterclasses with some of the world's leading yoga educators and teachers, who will travel from all over the country and the globe to come together in sharing their skills and knowledge, and help create a unique space where guests can belong, connect, share and grow. Early bird rates for Ignite finish on 8 March www.igniteyoga.com.au



Just one drop

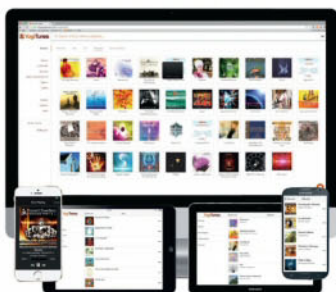
If you're a fan of the sweet sounds of Snatam Kaur, you'll fall in love with Radharani's debut devotional album,

Just one drop. The album draws

upon Radharani's many years of study and practice in India, and expresses the sacred moods of divine love. This intimate, relaxing and pure album is the perfect accompaniment to a slow yin flow or your evening meditation. From \$12 www.whiteswanrecords.com/all-music/product/320-just-one-drop

Yogitunes

We've only just stumbled upon this app, offering an abundance of tunes perfectly suited to yoga – from meditation to flow, as well as playlists for chilling with your yogi friends. It's the Spotify of the yoga world, containing a huge catalogue of yoga tunes with all your favourites. \$13.99/month www.yogi-tunes.com



HOPE HOW YOGA HEALS THE SCARS OF TRAUMA

After many years of teaching yoga to war veterans, Hobart-based Helen Cushing has written a book on the topic of yoga and trauma. This is a great resource for yoga teachers and students experiencing their own healing. With case studies, plenty of research to source and a four-week yoga plan for survivors, the book covers everything from "What is yoga?" to "Conscious reconditioning" and more. \$34.95 www.lifebeyondtrauma.com

Small Souls Meditations for children

A beautiful book of positive meditations, affirmations and visualisations for the little ones, written by Roxanne Paynter, a mother inspired by the birth of her son. From \$5.24 (e-book) www.booklink.com.au/smallsouls



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While hands-on adjustments are often the best way for a teacher to help students access proper alignment, they can also feel intrusive to those who are injured, have experienced trauma, or simply don't like being touched. But publicly telling a teacher, "Hands off!" can feel daunting, invite unwanted attention, or cause hurt feelings. That's why some yoga studios are finding more discreet ways for students to express their wishes concerning physical contact. By placing a stone, card, or a handmade note or sign with words such as "assist" or "no assist" on their mat at the start of class, yogis can make their comfort level with physical contact known in a subtle way. Some yoga teachers are getting creative and making their own cards which students collect at the start of each class to use if they wish. **JESSICA DOWNEY**



Dear Carrie

Need some yoga advice?
Long-time student and teacher
Carrie-Anne Fields is here to help.



Got a question for Carrie?

Send them to editor@yogajournal.com.au

Dear Carrie,

If my intuition guides me away from my family responsibilities, how do I manage the conflict within myself that arises? For example, my family environment feels toxic and I am trapped in it. My obligation, my duty, as a parent is to stick it out, and I want everything to get better, and to stay. How do I know what is truly *right*? I'm worn out, and at my wits' end.

A Hello and, firstly, I am sending you a big hug of love and support. Take the time every day to breathe, meditate and find acceptance in your current situation as it is sent to you to assist your soul to grow and gain wisdom. Each day imagine a *heavenly portal* opening which contains a peaceful solution to your problem. Trust that this solution will come to you and will create positive change in your family life. As much as possible, create a harmonious environment within your family home by playing calming music and perhaps burning lavender oil. Speak your truth calmly yet

with authority — ask for your needs to be met without escalating into conflict. Don't feel guilty about taking time for yourself to sleep, meditate, bathe or just sit outside with a cuppa to reflect — you need deep rest so you can remain centred. Use this time to visualise how you would like your family dynamic to look and FEEL. It is very important that you do this and focus every day on how it FEELS to have resolution and peace at home. If you don't find it easy to visualise, write your family wishes/goals in your journal — do this every day and trust in this process.

Carrie-Anne Fields

Carrie-Anne founded My Health Yoga in 1998 to specialise in yoga, counselling and healing. She has a degree in psychology and is certified in yoga, acupuncture, kinesiology, reiki and Ka Huna Bodywork. Carrie-Anne is an accredited Level 3 Senior Yoga Teacher and represents Australia as a board member of the World Movement for Yoga and Ayurveda.



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THE POWER of one

Embrace these Kundalini reflections on the immense power of unconditional love and allow your compassion to inspire others.

By HarJiwan

MANY YEARS AGO I READ A BEAUTIFUL STORY ON THE POWER OF LOVE. I read about how it is through love that we activate divine intelligence, human potential and the highest capacity in all of us. The story was about a group of under-privileged children from the same community who were being researched and were considered to be unable to “succeed” in life due to their impoverished, crime-ridden upbringings and unfortunate environments. Decades went by and the files of this group of children were found by a professor who decided to investigate and find out if, indeed, all the children in the reports were victims of their

circumstances. Amazingly, more than 90% of the children who had been reported as having “no chance to succeed” turned out to be highly successful. The professor was astonished and went to ask each of the individual children (who were all now middle-aged) what had helped him or her become “successful”. Each person said, “Well, there was this one teacher I had who had changed my life and gave me the ability to succeed.”

The professor finally tracked down the one teacher who had changed the lives of all these children. She was now over 90 years old and frail. The professor asked her how she had possibly taken those impoverished, broken children and turned more than 90% of them into happy and successful individuals. The old woman gazed at the professor, smiled and said simply yet profoundly, “I just loved those children.”

Is it intelligence, potential and talent that gifts us success? Or could it be the power of love? Is it that the so-called naughty child simply needs love and tenderness rather than “grounding”, time out or a stern discussion? Is the teenager who is acting out in violent retaliation really crying out for acceptance, love and connection?

Yes! Love is the power of the highest, to carry us to our highest path.

This story
illustrates

that success and happiness don't come from a special skill, program, particular lesson or activity, but that having even one person who loves you unconditionally, believes in you and cherishes you, is enough to transform a person's thoughts, behavioural patterns, lives and thus their destiny.

All love begins with the ability to love ourselves. We can then begin sharing this love with others and we can learn how to love them unconditionally for who they are — the divine, perfect and complete soul that is a brilliant spark. Perhaps this brilliant spark is cloaked with layers, and it is through the power of love that we can penetrate the most dense cloak to allow the light within to shine out. Just as flowers blossom under the rays of the radiant sun, our children, our community, our partners, our family and all those around us also blossom only under the warm rays of our love. But, first, we must love ourselves.

Use this affirmation to practice and invoke self-love so that you may shine your light and love onto all.

“I accept the beauty within me as who I really am. I am not my weakness. I am not my anger. I am not my small-mindedness. I am much, much more. And I am willing to be reminded of who I really am.” – *A Return to Love* by Marianne Williamson



HarJiwan is a long-time Kundalini teacher, healer, mother, wellness facilitator, spiritual teacher, speaker and founder of HarJiwan Yoga. She is creator of WOW, the WOW Project

and WOW Vortex (an online mentoring program for women) offering specialised mentoring programs for women online and in person assisting women to live in self-empowerment, vitality and happiness. HarJiwan teaches workshops, master classes, intensives and retreats nationally and in Byron Bay. To find out more about her WOW programs and HarJiwan's work go to www.HarJiwan.com. To connect with HarJiwan go to Instagram @HarJiwanYoga and Facebook HarJiwanYoga



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BOOST *your breakfast*

Sure, a steaming bowl of steel-cut oats is a great morning meal, but if oats are the only whole grain in your morning rotation, you're missing out, says Kat Brown, RD, RYT, a dietitian and yoga teacher in Menlo Park, California. "There are so many other surprising grains that you can turn into delicious breakfasts," she says. To avoid oatmeal burnout, try one of these simple, tasty recipes:

BARLEY In a bowl, top ½ cup cooked barley with nuts, seeds, and a drizzle of maple syrup – or whichever toppings you usually add to your oatmeal.

BROWN RICE In a bowl, combine 1 egg, ½ cup cooked brown rice, and ½ cup cauliflower rice – grated raw cauliflower. Form into pancakes and fry in olive or coconut oil.

FARRO In a frying pan over medium heat, add 1 tablespoon coconut oil, ½ cup cooked farro, ¼ cup each chopped onions and tomatoes, and a handful of scallions. Cook for 10 minutes and top with a fried egg and half an avocado, sliced.

MILLET In a bowl, mix ½ cup cooked millet, 1 cubed apple, and a dash of cinnamon. For a creamier texture, cook the millet in almond milk instead of water. **MEGHAN RABBITT**



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Everlasting LOVE

The practice and teachings of yoga have helped Sydney couple Harry and Bryony navigate the highs and lows of their work and their relationship. Jessica Humphries talks to the owners of Egg of the Universe – a yoga studio and wholefoods café — about their passion for spiritual growth, respecting each other and the importance of following your dreams.



I first met Harry and Bryony when I was completing a teacher training six years ago. I remember, at the time, admiring them and the effortlessness in which they interacted with each other and their children. They were a young family indulging in the deliciousness of a special time, and yoga-ing through the journey. Our second meeting was more recent when I visited their beautiful studio, Egg of the Universe, in Sydney's Rozelle. We practiced in a class together in one of the large and inviting upstairs shalas before enjoying a scrumptious

meal at the studio's on-site café. We sat in the garden surrounded by vibrant yogis enjoying their lunch, and chatted easily about love, life, yoga and everything in between. The pair met 20 years ago in London over dinner with mutual friends, while Australian Bryony was travelling to Harry's homeland. They connected instantly and have been navigating the journey of life together ever since, building a bustling business and sustaining a loving connection which has been facilitated by the practice and teachings of yoga.

AYJ *How did Egg Of The Universe come about?*

HARRY We had been running the yoga studio for many years already when the nextdoor building became available. I had always been drawn to the food business and, in particular, wanted to share my passion for wholefoods, and together we had always dreamed of running an integrated wellness space. We decided to jump at the chance to create something unique.

BRYONY We had always dreamed of having a centre like Egg. It is a combination of all our greatest loves: yoga, good food, meditation and meaningful connections. Everything we offer at Egg Of The Universe stems from our personal practice. We will experience something ourselves on or off the mat and then, once we have embodied it to the best of our abilities, we want to share it with our teachers and students.

AYJ *It's uncommon for a yoga studio to serve meat at a café, but yours does. What is your philosophy around living a yogic life off the mat, and how does diet come into this?*

HARRY Ultimately, all the yoga teachings were designed to imbue life in its totality with meaning. A lot of what I would call my practice isn't even on a mat anymore and I try to bring consciousness of how I am, whether I'm in a class, drinking wine, surfing, cooking, or trying to wrangle the children into the car!

In terms of a yogic diet, my formula is simple. Eat mostly what you desire but be mindful of where it came from, how it's cooked and connect to how it makes you feel. Over time my diet has thus been refined from a very standard Western-style diet to one that embraces wholefoods and regular periods of cleansing. One of my favourite things to do is cook good food for friends and family, and I love good wine. For me a yogic diet is about celebration and connection to self and the natural abundance that we are lucky to have surrounding us in Australia.

BRYONY There is no corner of our life that is excluded from our practice. Every decision and choice that we make goes through the filter of our understanding of our teachings. Of course, we make many mistakes and we are always learning, too, but it's not like we ever switch off the teachings. For me, a yogic

diet means listening carefully to my inner world for feedback around what's right for me. I feel now that I am over 40 and have finished growing and feeding babies that I am transitioning into a new chapter of nourishing my body. I remain interested in different ways of eating as I transition into this new chapter. My diet continues to be seasonally inspired and defined by the cycles of the year and month and what my body needs at the time.

AYJ *It's interesting that we're always asking the question of how couples met, and not the (much more important) question of how they manage to sustain their love and respect for one another over time. How have you stayed together for as long as you have, what challenges have you come across along the road, and how has yoga helped you on the journey?*

HARRY Our relationship recipe is based on good raw ingredients: we were naturally drawn to each other, shared similar values, were inspired by the same things and dreamed similar dreams. Beyond that you have the complicated task of learning to love and live together, which seems to continue to unfold until this day. In this never-ending dance we have been lucky that as we have grown as individuals, we have continued to grow together and are often inspired by what the other may be uncovering with a new text or teacher. The simple practice of learning to energetically open the heart — which we both learned from Kevin Farrow of AcuEnergetics — has had a profound effect on my relationship with myself and has opened up how I relate to other people, including my wife.

There have, of course, been rough patches along the way and these will continue to come up every now and then but, focus too hard on the little difficult things, and you will be perpetually stuck in mental recriminations about minor things, rather than opening to the beauty of the whole. The fact that the recycling hasn't been taken out doesn't actually matter!

BRYONY One of the most enriching things has been watching Harry grow within himself in the 20 years we have been together and that has sustained my love for him in huge amounts. Mutual self-development for us has been really important and has allowed for continued deep respect and allows us to keep seeing

each other in new light. Watching him, for example, prepare for his recent TedX talk was amazing. It was a huge privilege to be asked, and I am so impressed he said yes! There were times he was overwhelmed and vulnerable and rather than pushing me away, to my surprise, he leant in to my support. We worked together to prepare and, in that time, I fell into such a place of love for him, deeper than ever before because he had gone to a new place within himself and had invited me there with him. It was a turning point for us in our love and connection. I was so happy his talk went well, but I was even more happy with the growth it invited for him as a man and us a couple. Growth has been very important for us both within ourselves and together.

One thing that also helps sustain our connection is consciously choosing each other again and again. If I ever go away for a training or extended time, I find again my inner ability to be alone and feel so strongly that I don't need a partner; I am content, complete on my own ... and yet when I am home again I relish choosing Harry anew. My life feels richer with him, it's more fun and there is more opportunity for joy, laughter and intimacy.

Sustaining love is an ongoing practice for us; there are days when it really works and days when it's more challenging. One thing that has helped a lot since having kids is bringing mindfulness into simple moments. If Harry brings me a tea or puts down an amazing meal he has made, I take a moment to check in with the gesture and receive it. Or if we are out with friends, I like looking across the room to notice him or really listen to his words if we are having a good chat. To stay present to each other, to our gifts and our challenges, helps keep us in a space more often of moment-to-moment togetherness rather than taking anything for granted.

Yoga has been great over the years for a stretchy body and feeling strong and grounded, but it's been absolutely extraordinary as a tool for life, to apply to the everyday and transform all that we do into an extension of yoga. There isn't a corner of our lives that is without the light of awareness.

Follow Harry and Briony's studio and café at @eggoftheuniverse @bryonyalancaster, and keep up to date at www.eggoftheuniverse.



Lean into **Love**

By Bryony Lancaster

Turn toward the challenges and difficulties in your life, your relationships and your yoga practice and notice deeper connections with yourself and those you love.

“For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation.” – Rainer Maria Rilke

THE GIFTS AND CHALLENGES of long-term relationships can present the most beautiful opportunities to put into practice all that we learn so we can enjoy a deep sense of lasting love. Long-term relationships can also be confronting and difficult at times and they can provide many reasons to want to flee that relationship. It's so easy for us to run when a relationship struggles, feels difficult or becomes uncomfortable. Often, when a situation challenges us, it is a natural instinct or desire to want to move on and leave that situation behind. Difficult situations can include many testing scenarios including not wanting to face challenges during a yoga class, a business relationship, a long-term friendship or a marriage.

I have developed a mantra over the last few years which is, “If you want out,

dive in.” I use this mantra in a tricky yin pose, a distracted meditation session and when difficulties inevitably arise in relationships.

We are hard wired for seeking happiness; much of the wellness industry is built on selling our right for happiness. However, by constantly turning away from challenges and towards the many promises of happiness, we can miss out on the chance for further intimacy with ourselves, with each other, and a more genuine connection with the world around us. When we learn to turn in towards and heal a difficult situation, conversation or relationship, we often find deeper connection and, ultimately, a more realistic experience of love.

When I met my husband, Harry, in London more than 20 years ago, we fell

quickly and deeply in love. It was a passionate and intense connection for the few months while I was on holiday, but then the holiday ended and I returned home to Australia. Harry and I stayed together – bound by love expressed through regular emails and phone calls. What began as a holiday romance turned into a long-distance relationship that spanned two years and more than half the world. Harry and I met up again in Thailand on Valentine's Day having not seen each other for all that time (there was no Facetime or Skype) and I had forgotten the details of what he looked like, how tall he was next to me and all those delicious memories that begin to fade over time. We fell in love again, but this time we knew it was forever.



Since that time we have had a family together, run a yoga studio for 10 years and, more recently, opened a café. We have climbed to the peaks of such divine moments together and have sailed through stormy seas in the journey of life. There have been arguments, especially in the beginning, and moments where (especially tired with little ones and running a business together) we wondered if we might find greater happiness elsewhere.

Each time a crack appeared, the feeling for us both was the desire to *lean in*. We chose to lean in to the discomfort, get curious about the argument, see where we could talk it through or argue it out, and always, after each chat, after each disagreement, we would find a greater connection with each other. We would always find a more honest way of relating to each other, seeing each other, and trusting that we saw more and more of each other's true selves, and we loved each other all the more because of that. Slowly we would peel away the layers of self and dive into greater intimacy. Luckily, the willingness to lean in to difficult situations in this way was there for both of us.

I have had similar experiences in leaning into difficult situations in my yoga practice, especially yin yoga and meditation. I know how easy it can be to run from a long, hard hold or to get up from a particularly restless meditation, to give up when the mind pulls at us and the heart resists. But, through many years of practice, I have learned that when we lean into the pain and the restlessness and gently inquire into what is behind that pain, we inevitably find more freedom because we stayed and faced the challenge, rather than fleeing from it. So often the inner restlessness is a call for love, to be seen and heard. By looking into the resistance with curiosity and applying our teachings, we grow deeper in our relationship to self and, when we can do that for ourselves, we also learn how to strengthen our relationships with each other in the same way. We become less afraid of the challenging moment or conversation and, over time, we are capable of building more resistance and a deeper sense of trust.

Our mind, our ego, does not like to be revealed. It likes to stay distracted, avoid pain, keep moving and seek happiness. And while there is nothing wrong with

this in theory, the sensation is never long-lasting. Eventually the cracks begin to re-appear and we need to attend to the pain and find more peace. If we avoid meditation because we realise how restless the mind is, or we keep moving on in relationships when the hard conversations inevitably arise, we miss the chance to grow deeper.



“So often the inner restlessness is a call for love, to be seen and heard.”

In Buddhism, we are encouraged to inquire, to unpack and to lean in. This strength is so useful in a yin pose, a meditation practice and long-term relationships.

Once we have liberated ourselves as much as we can from our own pain and suffering, we are able to love another and be content with another in the inevitable lights and the shadows of life.

Without these inner resources, when the honeymoon period is over in a long-term relationship, we become filled with disappointment and frustration and our hearts can close to the other person. If we leave the door of growth and deepening of intimacy open, the journey is one that never ceases. It goes deeper, becomes closer, more refined and freer, because we can lean into discomfort and see the blocks as opportunities for growing closer together.

Having been together with Harry for nearly 20 years, sharing so much of our practice with each other and applying it into our lives and love, I feel so full of intrigue and excitement as I look into the future.

A yogi's guide to staying happy in long-term relationships

When you want out, dive in

When cracks appear, lean in, inquire, talk and dive deeper. Sometimes a therapist or a teacher can help guide you if you're not used to this level of communication.

Choose yes

Keep choosing each other, not because you have to, but because you see the ways you love each other.

Find your own happiness first

Our partner can't be expected to be the magic pill. Our happiness needs to come from within us first and then shared – so do what makes you strong, happy and content and then enjoy your love.

Be mindful, present and connect

Listen to each other, see each other, and be together like it was the first time. Remember to see the parts of your partner that you love.

Grow

Both parts of a couple need to keep growing, evolving and seeking their own contentment so that as a couple you're evolving and changing.

Keep arguments to the present situation

Don't bring up years and years of problems when you argue. Try to talk about what's going on in that moment to take some of the charge out of it.

Bring your practice to your relationship

This helps if both people have a practice to apply, but it's not essential. Some of my friends' partners have never set foot on a yoga mat and yet bring such awareness and 'yoga' to the relationship.

It's not what you do, it's who you are

It really doesn't matter what our partner does for work or if they practice yoga or meditation or not; what matters is how their heart is, how they are in a relationship and how they are in the world.



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Rituals to LOVE

Integrate these Ayurvedic self-care practices into your life to nourish your soul, enhance greater self-love, and help you create presence, beauty and inner peace in your daily routine.

By Lorien Waldron @wholesomelygoodness

By Lorien Waldron

“It is through the alignment of the body that I discovered the alignment of my mind, self, and intelligence.”

— B.K.S. Iyengar

TO HAVE LOVE TO SHARE, we first must cultivate a juicy bank account of love inside ourselves. Sometimes this is easier said than done as when there are a million things to be done including children to feed, emails to respond to, appointments to fit in and a plethora of other activities surrounding our day-to-day routine, it can sometimes feel impossible to make time for self, not to mention the practice of some juicy self-care practices to cultivate greater self-love.

This is where the power of setting yourself up with a few simple daily rituals to support you, your yoga practice and your self-love bank account can make your life a lot easier, more abundant, more fulfilling and delicious! There is no limit to the amount of daily rituals you can seamlessly weave into your day. You most likely already have a whole bunch such as showering, brushing your teeth and making your morning cup of tea, coffee or green smoothie. Rituals are everywhere in our life. Often times we can view the things we have to do each day as chores, rather than seeing them as daily devotions.

Everything we do – from taking the rubbish out to dropping the children at school to brushing our hair – all of these seemingly mundane daily tasks are necessary for optimum function in life, therefore they are equally as sacred and important as lighting incense and candles for morning meditation. To find the sacred in the mundane in life allows each waking moment of our lives to be experienced as a meditation and divine gift, rather than just the moments when we are on our meditation cushion or yoga mat.

Your body is a miracle and through viewing your daily self-care practices as sacred rituals rather than chores, your ability to cultivate lasting self-love will be increased ten-fold and, before you know it, your self-love cup will be bubbling over the edges with beauty, love, abundance and inner peace, all over the place!

Rituals are magical as they allow us to honour what is sacred. Devoting 10-20 minutes of your time, morning and night, to some sacred *you time* is all it takes. Your body is a sacred temple. When you love your body, it will love you back ten-fold. Try these simple rituals for cultivating more self-love on a daily basis.

The seven-minute morning massage

Warm a small bottle of cold-pressed black sesame oil or coconut oil in hot water and massage your whole body for 5-10 minutes before having a shower to move your lymphatic system, boost your immune system, hydrate your skin and give your beautiful body some juicy self-care and love.

Daily devotion

Nourish your mind and spirit daily with stillness, surrender and connection. A daily practice of your own form of prayer and meditation is nourishing, nurturing and powerful for cultivating a deeper relationship of understanding and compassion with yourself and life.

Create your day

Set intentions at the start of each day to create a direction that inspires you. We attract what we put out. Start your day with clarity and focus for your body, mind and spirit. Explore and discover what it is you wish to bring about in

your life and start each day with that in your focus.

Massage your feet

Make a habit of massaging your feet with an organic non-toxic body cream, body butter or sesame oil each night before bed. The reflex points in the feet have the power to relax your whole nervous system, which leads to a deeper sleep and soft beautiful feet. Giving to yourself through loving touch is a great way to deepen your connection with your body.

Journal and let go

Mental digestion is just as important as physical digestion. Write your thoughts down, expressing your feelings and reflecting on the day before you go to bed. This practice is powerful for receiving guidance that will assist you and prevent stress from building up. Treat your journal time like having a conversation with your best friend. To cultivate a long and lasting relationship with your self, communication is so important.

Finally, choose to be your own best friend. Spend time with yourself, give love to yourself and choose to nurture your body, mind and spirit with your own kindness and love. Just like any new relationship, it can take time to build a solid connection of deep understanding and love. Be patient, be generous and create time for this new relationship in your daily life. The most important relationship you will ever have in life is with yourself so have fun with it and choose to make your self-love rituals a daily, sacred devotion.



Lorien Waldron is an Ayurvedic health and lifestyle consultant who works on physical and energetic levels, believing in a holistic

approach to health. She is a yoga and cooking teacher with a passion for organic wholefoods, plant-based nutrition, digestive health and intuitive eating. She is the founder of Wholesome Loving Goodness and author of e-Book, *Simple Ayurveda in the Kitchen*. www.wholesomelovinggoodness.com

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Self promotion

Teach children the precious art of self-love from a young age and watch them reap the benefits of increased self-confidence and self-belief.

By Loraine Rushton

SELF-LOVE, just like happiness, is not something we find outside ourselves. It's not something that is created; it is within us and can be accessed any time. The best time to develop self-belief, self-worth and self-love is in early childhood. The problem is that it can be eroded by our misconception, a forgetting of who and what we truly are. As parents and children's yoga teachers, our purpose is to share with young people ways to navigate through life while maintaining a strong sense of self.

These five simple practices, done daily, will ignite the flame of self-love and self-esteem in children and keep it burning strong.

1. Daily affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements that program the mind. Feelings of self-doubt, self-loathing, worry or unworthiness begin in the mind as a thought. By using affirmations, we start to plant new seeds in the mind that will grow into positive thoughts and feelings. Affirmations work wonders for children suffering from worry, anxiety, fears or self-doubt. Affirmations I love are: "I can", "I am powerful", "I am confident" and "I love myself totally and completely". Say these together on waking in the morning and at bedtime for a restful, deep sleep.

2. Scaffolding asana

Develop self-confidence and a feeling of achievement in children by building them up to a pose, rather than giving them a pose that is too difficult or too easy. Break it down into small chunks. For Tree Pose, start with the child's foot against their ankle, then build up to their foot on the calf and, lastly, take the foot to the inner thigh. For a beautiful heart-opening pose, try Fish Pose. Firstly, build their lower-back strength, then core strength, then open the upper chest and shoulders. You are now ready to move into Fish Pose.

3. Celebrate wins

What better way to foster and boost self-esteem than to celebrate when you have a success? In my classes, we call this the "big yes!" Ask your child to write down or say out loud all the successes they have had that day or week. It might be that they remembered all their school books, or they completed their homework on time, they got a good grade, tidied their room, helped a friend or spoke up for themselves. Once they have created their list, it is time to celebrate. You can do this with a high five, a fist pump, a dance break to an upbeat song, or my favourite is jumping in the air and shouting, "Yes!"

4. Acknowledgement

Now it's your turn. Acknowledgment is a powerful tool for building self-love in children. When acknowledging, don't just limit it to what they do, but remember to include who they are. It would sound like, "You are so brave", "I love how kind and caring you are" or "I love your dedication and persistence". The positive emotion that this evokes will anchor this self-belief for years to come.

5. Focus on loving qualities

The important last step is for children to verbally acknowledge who they are and all their positive qualities. An exercise that cements this level of self-worth and self-belief is called: "What I like about myself is ...". Ask your child to complete the sentence with one word or one sentence. To affirm that the statement is true, you would typically reply, "I like that about you too."

An important factor in a child's self-worth is how much presence they are given by those closest to them. One of the biggest gifts we can give to children is our complete attention and presence. One of my yoga students taught me this. Henry has autism and spends most of the class locked in his world with little interaction. However, there is one special moment for Henry when he connects with me and gives me his full attention and that is when we say goodbye. He bows forward and says, "Thank you Loraine" and looks straight into my eyes. One day, the class had to pack up early and we never finished the class with our ritual goodbye. Henry lined up at the door with the other children, and on his way out turned to me and said, "Thank you Loraine." I quickly replied, knowing they had to rush off. But Henry knew he hadn't received my full attention or the presence he wanted, so he stopped, turned to look at me and slowly repeated, "Thank you Loraine." This time I got it.

Hold children to who they truly are, so they see it through your eyes and continue to believe it for themselves.



With 20 years of experience, Loraine Rushton is a leading authority on yoga for children and teens. Worldwide, she has trained thousands of people how to teach children's yoga in a way that is educational, meaningful and fun.

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THE YOGA of give and take

By Sally Kempton

Practicing the art of accepting a gift – be it a material item or something less tangible like a compliment, favour, or piece of wisdom – can help us live, and give, with more meaning.

MY GENEROUS MOTHER could never accept a gift. On Christmases and birthdays, my brothers and I would each offer her something we thought she'd like – a jumper, a piece of jewellery, a certificate for a massage. She'd say, "Thank you," of course. But she'd put the jumper in the bottom drawer, bag the jewellery, and never call the massage therapist. The same thing happened when we tried to tell her something nice about herself. "Oh, come on," she'd say. "That's too much." We used to tease her about how she always had to be the giver. But we also found it frustrating, because we couldn't express our affection for her in ways that she would accept.

I thought about this recently after a friend I'll call Dylan busted me for not accepting a compliment. He had called to tell me how much he appreciated something I'd done. Without thinking, I answered, "Oh, it wasn't a big deal. Anyone would have done that." Dylan went quiet for a minute. Then he said, "Do you realise you just rejected my compliment?"

"No, I didn't," I protested. "I just told the truth. What I did really wasn't a big deal."

"Maybe not to you, but it was to me," he replied. "I was trying to tell you something nice. You basically didn't receive it."

His words stopped me cold. I had just exhibited my own version of my

mother's behaviour, turning aside a loved one's offering out of false modesty or a kind of reverse pride. And this got me started on what turned out to be a long contemplation on the nuances of receiving. What I finally realised is this: Most of us have never learned how to fully take in a gift.

We know about gratitude, of course. We make gratitude lists and write thank-you notes to friends, teachers, and others who have helped or inspired us. But even when we're expressing gratitude, we often haven't fully received, taken in, and assimilated the gift we've been given. Receiving is a yoga in itself – one that demands a high degree of sensitivity, awareness, and even skillfulness. For one thing, we need to recognise that we're being given a gift – whether it's a birthday present, a compliment, a teaching, a helpful piece of feedback, a genuine service, a loving gesture, or a blessing from the invisible realms. Second, we need to cultivate enough stillness and openness to take it in. Third, we need to appreciate it, to value it, or, at the very least, to value the giver's intention. And fourth, we need to feel that we deserve it – that the gift is neither too much, too little, nor too out of line with who we are. In fact, the word *receive* comes from the Latin *recipere*, which means "to take back". This implies that what we receive is already ours in the sense that we do,

Receiving is a yoga in itself – one that demands skillfulness.

indeed, deserve it; that it completes something within us; or simply that we've attracted it by the nature of our being.

Of course, one reason we may feel resistant to receiving a gift is that it isn't "meant" for us. Not everyone's energy is a match for ours, and some gifts come with so many strings and expectations attached that they resemble bribes. So, as you practice learning how to receive, begin by looking at the meaning behind any feelings of resistance. Sometimes they are messages from your discerning Self telling you that it isn't wise to accept the offering. For example, Linda, a popular yoga teacher I know, gets lots of offers for bodywork from her students. Much of the time, the energy behind the offering is ambiguous – sometimes the student wants to get closer to her or wants to give her something in return for her teaching. She's learned to listen to her inner "no" when an offering makes her feel uncomfortable, and to politely decline.

But if the gift is appropriate – and genuine – then the question becomes, "Can you take it in?" Because, of course, it doesn't matter how many favours and gifts you receive from other people and the universe. What really matters is how much you can receive and assimilate. Think about it: When your digestive system won't assimilate food, you don't receive nourishment, no matter how much you eat or how many supplements you take. In the same way, when you can't (or won't) receive the love and support that a real gift represents, you never quite feel nourished by life. And there's an obvious corollary: If you can't fully receive love and support from other people, you'll probably have a hard time receiving the subtle help being offered to you by the cosmos itself.

THE FAILED EXCHANGE

An extreme example of the consequences of not receiving a gift is described in the Puranas, the sacred mythology texts of India. Durvasa, a particularly irascible sage, finds a garland that he recognises as the material embodiment of auspiciousness itself. But when he offers it to Indra, the king of the gods, Indra

carelessly takes the garland and flings it over the head of his elephant. Durvasa is so insulted by Indra's inability to receive the offering that he declares that, henceforth, good fortune will depart from Indra's worlds. And, voilà, Indra's worlds turn dim and grey. Things come out all right in the end, of course, but not without some superhuman effort on the part of gods and titans.

Durvasa isn't just being touchy: His reaction points to a truth about the way the cosmos works. When we aren't able to receive a genuine and heartfelt gift, we subtly upset the cosmic balance. One of the core Vedic understandings is that life is based on exchange, the dynamic interaction of giving and receiving. In the classic yoga text the Bhagavad Gita, the interdependence between human beings, the natural world, and the invisible world of spirit is captured in the image of the cosmic sacrifice. In the sacrifice, the earth receives the gift of rain, and crops begin to grow. Moisture evaporates from the earth and is received by the atmosphere. Similarly, as humans, we receive gifts of food, shelter, knowledge, and many other forms of support from the earth, from our parents and ancestors, from the accumulated wisdom and technology of our culture, and from our fellow humans. We carry these gifts in our genes, and they themselves carry unspoken obligations – most often through all the ways we "pay it forward," helping others materially or energetically by sharing our own gifts, skills, and support.

But if others don't receive our offerings, there's no true exchange. That means we can't give our gifts, or, on a deeper level, repay our implicit obligations. Any teacher knows that without a receptive student, she can't really teach. A friend can't share intimacy with you if you're not able to be present for it. Even a philanthropist needs an appropriate receiver for his wealth. Whatever gift you want to give is essentially fruitless when it's not fully received; it's like a seed that doesn't germinate and sprout – something you can sense, even on a very subtle level. You might wonder if there was





something wrong with the gift. You might feel frustrated or hurt, like my friend Dylan did when I rejected his compliment. If you're energetically sensitive, you will feel the person's hesitancy or resistance to receiving as a wall, a block in the flow between you and that person.

WHY CAN'T WE RECEIVE?

There are many reasons we don't fully receive gifts, favours, and compliments – ranging from feelings of guilt or insecurity (“I don't deserve it”), to a sense of entitlement (“I deserve it, so what's the big deal?”), to a fear that we don't have the wherewithal to reciprocate, to a sneaking suspicion that the gift has hidden obligations. Another reason we don't receive help is that, on a subconscious level, it can make us feel inferior. Our culture tells us that a giver is in the power position, while the receiver is making a tacit confession of neediness. Even when we're truly in need, our ego will often resist the discomfort of fully receiving a gift.

One of our biggest problems with receiving has to do with what I call the holes in our bucket. If you try to hold water in a container with holes in it, the water will leak out. In the same way, when we feel chronically needy or deprived, or when we don't take care of what we already have, it can be hard to hold onto or feel happy about the new gifts we are being given. We might want desperately to feel loved, to be offered a thoughtful gift, or to receive a helping hand, but the love and help that come our way never feel like enough – or the right kind of – love. Someone praises us for being smart, and we wonder why she doesn't appreciate our good looks. A lover gives us a book, and we wonder why he didn't realise that we instead wanted a jumper.

So, what can we do to become better receivers? There are a few core practices that can help us fully receive, take in, and assimilate whatever gifts our loved ones – and the universe – are offering.

1. Cultivate presence

When you're feeling rushed, distracted, or preoccupied, you are much less capable of fully receiving a gift. So when someone offers you something – a kind word, a present, a favour – begin by noticing your state of mind. If you're feeling distracted, resistant, or

OPEN UP

Just as each yoga posture you practice affects you psychologically as well as physically, these hand and arm gestures, combined with an intention to be receptive, can help you cultivate a receptive mode.

THE CUP

Form a cup with your hands – wrists, thumbs, and pinkie fingers together, letting the other fingers splay open.

Place your cupped hands against your chest, over your heart centre, with the sides of your thumbs touching your chest.

Close your eyes and breathe deeply, with the sensation that the breath is bringing energy and light into your body through your cupped hands.

ARMS TO THE SKY

Standing with your feet shoulder-width apart, hold your arms at your sides about 15cm from your body, with your palms out and your elbows relaxed. With an inhalation, gently let your arms float up until they form a wide funnel, fingertips pointing at the sky. Keep your arms relaxed as your face tips slightly upward.

Let yourself embrace the space, with the sense that you are opening to and welcoming the energy of the universe.

Slowly draw your arms down the front of your body, with your palms open, until your hands are about 35cm from your body. Then, let your arms relax at your sides.

Repeat 2 times.

disconnected from them, try a quick, simple yogic practice that can help you bring your energies into the present moment. First, take a deep breath and notice where it lands in your body. Then, feel the sensations of the breath meeting your inner body. Another way to cultivate presence is to work with these Five Recognitions of Perfection. The practice is very simple. You say to yourself: *This is the perfect time. Right now. This is the perfect place. Right here. This is the perfect person. This is the perfect gift.*

I am the perfect person to receive it.

The first three thoughts will help you fully enter the present moment. The last two will help you create an internal environment that will help you hold the gift with sincere appreciation.

2. Avoid judgment

Often, when someone offers us a gift, our mind judges, evaluates, and summarily approves or rejects it even before we've taken it in. This is what Indra did with the garland. It's what my friend Ellen did recently when her boyfriend came over on her birthday and washed all the dishes in her sink. To him, it was a loving offering. Her reaction was, "Thanks, and you should be doing this every time I cook for you instead of always expecting me to cook and wash the dishes." To which he replied, "I would, but you're so compulsive about having the dishes clean five minutes after the meal ends that you don't give me a chance!" And then, to

their dismay, the couple launched into a 30-minute argument instead of celebrating Ellen's birthday.

When you are being given a gift that doesn't feel like a perfect fit, resist the urge to think about what kind of offering you would have preferred and reject the impulse to make a "You never know what I really want" move. Instead, consider that the giver might have had a loving intention – no matter how inapt his or her gift seems.

3. See the gift as a message

When I lived with my guru, he would often give us little gifts that we received with great excitement, because we recognised that they were filled with his blessings. Sometimes the gifts were absurd: He once gave me a gigantic pair of blue, foam-filled nylon après-ski booties with yellow cloth soles. Not only did the booties look ridiculous, but they were also miles too big. (And besides, it was high summer!) But it didn't occur to me to wonder why he'd given me something so silly because I saw that his gift was imbued with his unique spiritual energy. Though I didn't exactly walk around wearing them, I do still have the booties, and they always remind me of his kindness.

Try this practice when your friends and family give you presents during the holidays. Take a moment to feel the inherent holiness in the giver. You might even consider the ways in which the

giver – your friend, your child, your partner, or your parent – is actually a teacher for you, a kind of guru. These insights will help you look at the gift he or she is giving in a new way, as prasad – traditionally, a food offering made to a deity during a temple ritual and then shared among others present, but often defined as anything offered to a holy being – which is filled with the energy of blessing. Then notice how different the exchange feels.

4. Consciously open yourself

We said earlier in this article that being receptive is a spiritual practice, a kind of yoga. This understanding is especially important when the gift you are wanting to receive is wisdom, love, or help from another person or from the subtle world. Sometimes, just reminding yourself to open up to whatever form love takes will let you receive not just the affection that other people are offering you, but also the actual grace that comes with it – the beneficial energy that pours through the universe.

One way to practice this level of receptivity is to take a moment – right now or at any other time – to breathe in and imagine that you are taking in subtle energy, tenderness, and grace from the universe. Or imagine that your heart is open like a funnel, so that love and energy can pour into it from the atmosphere. Rather than trying to draw in that energy, simply hold your heart open and allow it to enter as it will. (See *Open Up* on this page for two related practices.)

EVERYDAY OFFERINGS

The power of these simple but highly effective practices is that over time they will seep into your being. By improving your ability to fully receive, you will begin to notice how many gifts are being offered to you at every moment. The wind in the trees, a stranger's smile, the wagging tail of a dog will all feel like personal offerings of affection – gifts of beauty and wisdom. Whatever you give back becomes part of that same dance, the dance of giving and receiving, in which we're all one another's partners.

Sally Kempton is an internationally recognised teacher of meditation and yoga philosophy and the author of *Meditation for the Love of It*. Her website is sallykempton.com.

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Rescue *remedies*

Create mindfulness with yourself and harmony with the world around you by meditating on your feelings and learning how to recognise, accept and respond to your vast array of emotions.

By Richard Miller, PhD

OUR EMOTIONS CAN hold us hostage when their stormy winds of intensity and disharmony blow through the body. For example, when you're angry, your belly can tighten, your heart might pound, and agitating thoughts can plague you for minutes, hours, or even days. This is because emotions – be they angry, peaceful, anxious, sad, or happy – activate your nervous system to release chemicals into your bloodstream that can pull your focus and energy away from other matters. When emotions are that strong, we may be tempted to label them the “enemy”. But refusing to accept how you feel only postpones the inevitable; every emotion you deny will always return, trying to convey important information.

Research on emotional resiliency shows that in order to successfully navigate life, you need to be able to both name the emotion you're experiencing and describe the feelings that make up your experience. This is where meditation can help, by teaching us to observe, identify, and respond instead of just react. For instance, anger can arrive to help you recognise an expectation you're holding that's no longer viable. When correctly understood, this information helps you respond to your circumstances in ways that keep you in harmony with yourself and the world around you.

I'll give you a more specific example, from my own life. Recently, I was running late for a flight. When the door

to my gate closed just as I arrived, I of course felt angry. But when I stepped back to observe my anger, I quickly realised I had had an expectation that the flight attendant would not close the door on me. This acknowledgement allowed me to refrain from yelling at her and instead ask if another flight was available. She said, “Yes. Two gates down.” I made that flight, while another passenger continued reactively throwing a tantrum at my prior gate, unable to hear the flight attendant tell him that another flight was available. My second plane took off without him, with empty seats to spare. If he'd stopped to listen to his anger as a messenger, he could have been sitting next to me!

Meditation can create the mindfulness



you need to welcome and experience your emotions, helping you recognise that they are not the enemy, but rather quite the opposite! They, like you, want to be seen, heard, felt, and connected with. They want your attention so they can help you stop and access the information you need to not just survive, but to thrive. For instance, when you see a bear, fear arrives as a messenger to help you stop, back away, and remain safe. When a friend or co-worker is being overly demanding of your time, anxiety or anger can arrive to help you set the appropriate boundaries that enable you to stay on track.

I will walk you through meditations that focus on welcoming the emotions you are feeling. Then, we'll start to

introduce focusing on the opposite of those emotions – like welcoming a feeling of peace when you're angry. This is a surprising way to connect to your emotions and help you shift from being stuck in negative or destructive reactions to recognising more positive and constructive responses.

When you're open to welcoming and experiencing each and every emotion, as well as its opposite, anxiety and fear no longer control your life. Self-judgments lose their grip. And self-love, kindness, and compassion blossom. Simultaneously welcoming opposing emotions deactivates your brain's default network and limbic system, which are responsible for holding you hostage in negative emotions. It also activates your

brain's defocusing network and hippocampus, which enable you to gain insight and perspective and break out of conditioned patterns of reactive behaviour, such as throwing a tantrum when you're thwarted.

ENGAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Take time to do the following practices which will develop your ability to welcome emotions and respond to them with empowering actions.

Practice 1:

Proactively welcome your emotions

With your eyes open or closed, welcome the environment and sounds around you: the air on your skin, sensations where your body touches the surface that's supporting



“Emotions are messengers, here to deliver information about empowering actions you need to take in your life and relationships.”

it, the feeling of an emotion that's present in your body. Now note where and how you feel this emotion, and describe the sensations that best represent this emotion.

Now, imagine this emotion walking in through a door. Go with the first image that arises. What does your emotion look like? What is its shape, form, size? If it's a human being, how old is he or she? How is he or she dressed? Take a few moments and welcome the shape and form your emotion takes.

Next, imagine this emotion standing or sitting a comfortable distance in front of you.

Ask it, “What do you want?” Listen to what it has to say.

Ask it, “What do you need?” Listen to

what it has to say.

Ask it, “What action are you asking me to take in my life?” Listen to what it has to say.

Take a few moments to reflect on what you're experiencing in your body and mind.

When you're ready, open your eyes and return to a state of wakefulness, thanking yourself for setting aside time to meditate.

Take time to write down actions that came to mind that will help you process this emotion, and make a commitment to follow through with them in your daily life.

Practice 2:

Welcome opposite emotions

Every emotion comes paired with an opposite. Anxiety can't exist without

peace. Fear can't exist without courage. Sadness can't exist without happiness. And helplessness can't exist without its opposite, empowerment. When you experience only one half of a pair of opposites (sadness but not happiness; anxiety but not peace), you remain stuck in your one-sided experience. Yet when you stop trying to rid yourself of your experience and instead open to the full range of emotions, you can break free. Of course, suffering from something like severe anxiety is not so easy, but this exercise can often provide the relief you need to realise actions that can help you feel empowered to make change.

With your eyes open or closed, welcome the environment and sounds around you, such as the air on your skin and sensations

where your body touches the surface that's supporting it.

Now, welcome an emotion that's currently present in your body, or recall an emotion that you're working with in your life, experiencing where and how you feel it in your body. Welcome your experience just as it is, without judging or trying to change it. Next, think of an opposite of this emotion, noting where and how you experience this opposite in your body. If helpful, recall a memory that invites this opposite more fully into your body, like that time you were on a holiday and felt nothing but serenity.

When it feels right, move back and forth between these opposites, sensing how each emotion impacts your body and mind. When you're ready, sense both emotions at the same time, while experiencing how this feels in your body and mind.

Now, move between experiencing a feeling of general wellbeing and the two opposing emotions: First, experience wellbeing then each opposite in turn, and then experience both opposites plus

wellbeing at the same time. Note how your body and mind feel as you do this.

When you're ready, open and close your eyes several times while sensing deep relaxation, ease, wellbeing, and peace throughout your body. Affirm that as you go about your daily life, sensations of deep relaxation and wellbeing will accompany you in every moment.

When you're ready, open your eyes and return to a state of wakefulness, thanking yourself for taking this time to meditate.

Write down your reflections and any intentions that you agree to follow through with in your daily life.

MOVING FORWARD

Emotions are messengers, here to deliver information about empowering actions you need to take in your life and relationships. Just as it takes time to strengthen muscles, it also takes time to strengthen your ability to welcome and respond to your emotions, rather than avoid them. Lean on them to find creative solutions and successfully navigate life.



Richard Miller, PhD, is the founding president of the Integrative Restoration Institute (irest.us) and co-founder of the International Association of Yoga Therapists. This is his sixth in a series of 10 columns to help you create a meditation practice.

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BODY & soul

Many women struggle daily with poor self-image and an unhealthy approach to food. The 'body conundrum' is widespread and can have devastating consequences. How can women avoid its pitfalls and learn to nurture and celebrate life in their own skin?

By Sarah Ball

YOURSELF

THE FIRST TIME I WENT ON A DIET, I was eight years old. At the end of this two-week effort, I ploughed through far more food than my body really wanted, in what I now understand was my first binge. I was thus initiated into the world of the yo-yo dieter — an initiation that took me more than 20 years to emerge from, as I plunged into the swamp of eating issues and body obsession borne of this early launch into the seductive world of diet culture.

This first dieting effort was a project that I shared with my childhood best friend. She and I decided, “just for fun”, to try out the “game” of dieting. For us, it wasn’t weight-related, but more like a project. Like making a papier-mâché volcano for a school science assignment, we were playing at the game we saw often played by the adult women around us: dieting.

In the midst of our innocence, we had so much fun creating our diet plan. Ever the dedicated student, I vividly remember the ring-binder folder I used with Daffy-Duck on the cover, in which, at the end of each day, I conscientiously marked ticks in the columns against each glass of water I drank, each meal I ate, and each minute of exercise I completed. Of course, both my friend and I were utterly oblivious to the monstrous preoccupation we were inviting into our lives.

Perhaps worst of all, we planned in advance — because it was just a game — that at the end of our diet challenge, if we were successful in adhering to our plan, we would save up our combined pocket money and buy a bucket of hokey-pokey ice-cream to share and devour in one sitting. Bliss! This plan was our naïve way of congratulating ourselves for our discipline, since the magazines assured us that discipline is the most revered characteristic of any good dieter.

A few years later our innocent game of dieting took hold of me and carried me directly to the lair of anorexia. Following my plunge into severely restrictive eating, I then spent most of my young adult life living with the shame and frightening confusion of bulimia and compulsive overeating patterns, trying desperately to find my way back to a body, and a life, that felt like home.

The body image conundrum

Why are so many people in our society in so much pain about what we eat and how much we weigh? Why on earth do we put so

much time and energy into this whole business of monitoring the size of our body? What are we really looking for in the idea of perfecting our body or of losing weight? Why are so many of the women I meet plagued by an underlying sense that if they were just a little thinner, life would be more joyful? Even the women I know whose bodies tick all the apparent criteria of the “ideal” woman’s figure regularly face this self-criticism daily, often hourly, sometimes minute-by-minute.

Surely it’s not that those of us preoccupied with this issue are just vacuous creatures who have nothing better to think about than what we ate yesterday or how strong our yoga practice will be tomorrow. Or whether we’re losing weight or gaining it. Or how many calories are in an apple. If nutritional knowledge is the key to this dilemma, then why are people in droves — intelligent, generous, kind-hearted humans — able to tell you precisely which nutrients are in your salad, or how many calories are in a chocolate bar, all the while continuing to obsess over the size of their body, even if they’re already at a healthy weight? Surely this is not simply an issue of biological imperative. Or willpower.

Yet this awareness that it’s not “normal” to obsess over food and weight, doesn’t assuage the anxiety of living with this preoccupation. Because, if this obsessive approach to the body is not biologically normal, then we are led directly to the idea that there is some kind of abnormality of mind that makes a person obsess about their body. Some Western psychological approaches would have us believe that when a woman becomes obsessed with food or the size of her body, she is fundamentally unwell in crucial ways that need to be fixed. A psychological investigation of this “abnormal” preoccupation with the body often leads a woman to the conclusion that she is neurotic, broken, disordered.

That’s just great, isn’t it? According to these two sides of the same coin of possibilities, either we’re unconsciously pursuing biological impulses to be attractive enough to find a mate. Or we’re psychologically unstable and the problem is some deeply inherent issue within our own psyche.

Like many women, I have known for years that the pursuit of the “perfect” body is in direct and violent opposition to my heartfelt belief that women should

have the right to celebrate their bodies. Yet even though my conscious mind believes that the dominant culture of idealised bodies is absurd, this rational argument has made me neither exempt from, nor immune to, the powers of seduction and lure of the ideal life that the cult of the “perfect” body promises.


Isn’t there another possibility? Isn’t it possible that there’s something else we are really longing for when we think we just want to be thinner? Isn’t it possible that those of us preoccupied with the body are sane and that there is something else causing this obsession? Isn’t it possible that there is a way of living a life free of this body dilemma?

These are questions that I knew I needed answers to, if I was to live my life in any kind of meaningful way. The Body Love Yoga workshops I’ve been facilitating since 2012 on this subject, along with years of conversations with other women, have revealed that I am far from alone in these dilemmas. It turns out that countless others are searching for the answer along with me.

How healing happens

It seems to me that we are each longing for permission to inhabit our own lives and bodies with confidence and enthusiasm. Instead of waiting until we tick all the boxes of our health regime, lose a few kilos, or gain cultural praise in any number of other ways, to feel validated to enjoy our lives and our bodies.

Over the years, even the most healing aspect of my life — my yoga practice, which has been with me since I was 12 — became part of my effort to detoxify and “purify” my body. It wasn’t until recent years that the whisperings of yoga’s healing possibilities became an inner beckoning, and later, a clear calling back to my own truth. Eventually, I found teachers who could ignite in me a way of practicing yoga not from a place of fixing what was broken, but of celebrating and nurturing what is innately whole, and focusing on experiencing my yoga practice from the inside out. Through this process, I discovered the freedom of living in my own skin with reverence and a primary focus on healing rather than transforming my body. Finally, through embodying love on my yoga mat, I have come home to myself and ended the war with my own form. Which, as it turns out, is all I ever wanted from the pursuit of changing my body anyway.

A full-page photograph of a person with long brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and blue denim shorts, jumping joyfully with arms raised high. The person is seen from behind, and their hair is blowing in the wind. They are on a concrete pier or walkway that stretches into the distance. The background is a bright, hazy sky and a body of water. The overall mood is one of freedom and happiness.

“It seems to me that we are each longing for permission to inhabit our own lives and bodies with confidence and enthusiasm.”

Veggies du jour

Let's celebrate cruciferous veggies! The mighty members of the Brassica family are rich in glucosinolates, plant chemicals with anti-cancer properties. Plus, eating them often may help you maintain a healthy weight, thanks to their high fibre content. Relish the goodness of these vegetables and enjoy our tasty serving suggestions. By Rachel Begun, MS, RDN

Build a better salad

To upgrade the healthiness of your starter course, opt for leafy greens from the Brassica family – arugula, kale, and mustard greens. All contain glucosinolates, plus fibre and vitamins A, C, and K

CAULIFLOWER

While you might not expect great things from a veggie lacking vibrant colour, cauliflower is actually rich in vitamin K, an anti-inflammatory, and antioxidants like vitamin C, beta-carotene, and quercetin, which help reduce oxidative stress to cells and support your body's natural detoxification system.

GOOD FOR Low-calorie, low-carb mashes and puréed soups

CAULIFLOWER MASH In a large pot, boil florets from 1 head cauliflower in salted water until tender, 6–8 minutes; drain, reserving cooking water. In a blender, purée cauliflower with 2 tbsp olive oil and up to 2 tbsp reserved cooking water to achieve desired consistency. Season with salt, pepper, garlic powder, grated Parmesan, and dried rosemary.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

All Brassicas contain glucosinolates, but Brussels sprouts top the list of sources. Besides lowering your cancer risk, glucosinolates may also play a role in reducing inflammation in your body, according to research.

GOOD FOR Baked and roasted side dishes; pasta salads and green salads

CHEESY BAKED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

In a bowl, toss 500 g trimmed, quartered Brussels sprouts, 1 cup halved chestnuts, 2 tbsp olive oil, ½ tsp salt, and ½ tsp black pepper. Spread onto a baking sheet and cook at 200°C until sprouts are tender, 20 minutes. Sprinkle with 2 cups grated Parmesan; bake until cheese melts, 2 minutes.

RED CABBAGE

Give your meals a colourful twist and a boost of anthocyanins, powerful antioxidants that give red cabbage its bright hue. One cup also provides 16 per cent of your daily fibre needs, which helps reduce blood cholesterol and keeps your gut healthy.

GOOD FOR Slaws, stir-fries, and nutrient-rich wraps

RED CABBAGE SLAW In a bowl, toss 3 cups shredded red cabbage, 2 cups shredded green cabbage, 2 julienned carrots, 1 julienned red capsicum, 2 finely sliced scallions, and ¼ cup chopped coriander. Serve with Asian-style vinaigrette.

It's all in the SEASONING

With the right pairings and spices, cruciferous veggies can be downright crave-worthy.

VEGGIE	PAIR WITH	SEASON WITH
Cauliflower	anchovies, pine nuts, raisins	cumin, curry, parsley, red pepper flakes, apple cider
Brussels sprouts	almonds, celery, hard-boiled eggs, hazelnuts	vinegar, garlic, onions, thyme
Red cabbage	apples, blue cheese, walnuts	balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, lemon juice



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Iyengar
Yoga

Creating Calm

Find serenity and learn how to enjoy the benefits of making time for yourself with peaceful rituals and relaxing routines.

By Hillari Dowdle

LIFE has a way of spinning out of control. Even when you have organised your calendar and allocated clear spaces of time to dedicate to your practice, work and family duties can multiply and compete for your attention until every day feels like a race to get things done. Your practice gets postponed for a day or two – and then indefinitely – because your schedule is so packed and you just don't have the time.

But you do. Instead of scrolling through your Instagram feed a few times today, pause to reconnect with yourself with one of these seven simple ways to reset. The result? A calmer, more content you.



1

Start your day right

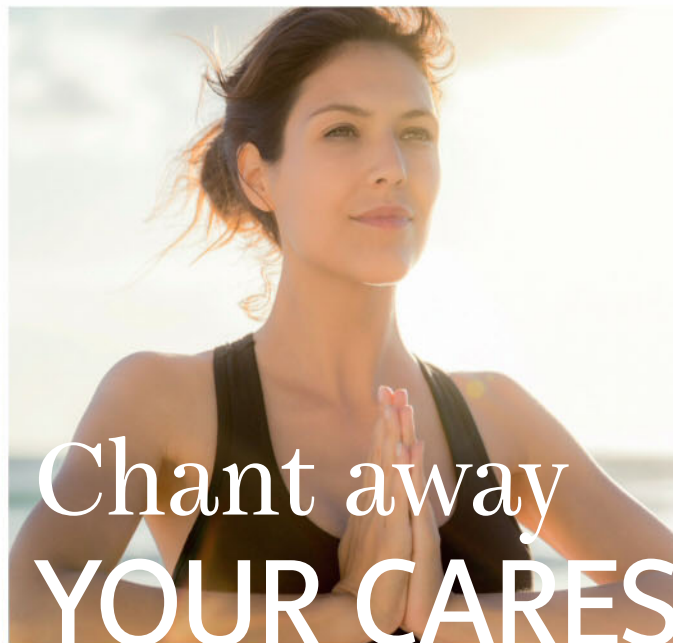
Adopt a morning ritual that allows you to celebrate yesterday's successes and set a positive intention for today. "I've found that if I don't do my ritual first thing in the morning, my day consumes me," says Amy Ippoliti, a Boulder, Colorado-based yoga teacher. "If I do it, I remember that the point is to love my life. I can approach the day and its stresses with a positive attitude."

Ippoliti's morning ritual: Sit on a meditation cushion or even at the kitchen table with a pen, notebook, and a deck of inspiring cards. Be still for a minute and imagine breathing through your heart. With every inhalation, call to mind something you're deeply appreciative of. It could be anything – your cat, your car, your job, your family. After a few breaths, write down in your journal what came to mind. Then, choose a card and take in the image or message. Finally, close with a few minutes of meditation. "I do some Ujjayi Pranayama and think about the kind of day I want to have," says Ippoliti.



crack a smile

Most of us think of asanas as poses that involve the precise placement of limbs, spine, head, and torso. What we don't typically consider in the practice is our faces, or how one simple exercise – the smile – can be highly effective off the mat. "Smiling is one of the most powerful things you can do for personal transformation," says Mirka Kraftsow, co-founder of the American Viniyoga Institute. "Choose to smile and bring the same awareness to your smile that you would to any other pose. Even if you're not feeling particularly happy, this practice will pick you up because the brain doesn't know the difference between a spontaneous smile and an intentional one." Several studies back up Kraftsow's advice, with research citing an expression-emotion feedback loop that produces feelings of calm and pleasure when triggered by a smile. Try it, and notice how you begin to cultivate friendliness toward everyone around you, says Kraftsow. "You'll begin to notice all the sources of happiness that surround you, even on your worst days," she says.



Chant away YOUR CARES

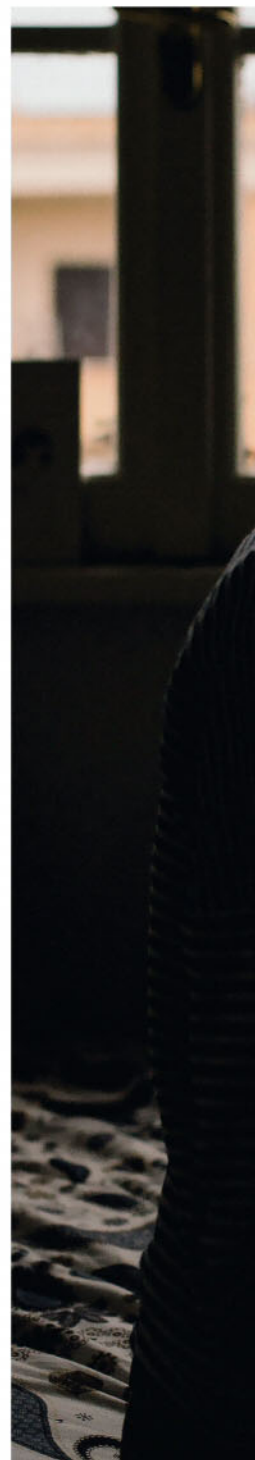
At any point in the day when things feel overwhelming, try practicing this simple vinyasa taught by A.G. Mohan, a longtime student of Krishnamacharya and the author of *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind*: Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose), with your hands in prayer position in front of your heart. As you inhale, raise your arms overhead into Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute), silently chanting Om as you move. As you exhale, bring your hands to the earth in Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend), silently chanting Namaha (roughly translated to "It is not about me"). Repeat this movement and message 10 times, breathing deeply throughout.

"When you chant Om, imagine connecting with your highest self and your ability to face any challenge or solve any problem," says Mohan. "When you chant Namaha, allow yourself to surrender to a higher power, realising that it's not up to you to take care of everything." When you're done, take a moment to commit to being fully present for whatever life dishes up next.



Turn on some tunes

"Music is medicine," says Frank Lipman, an integrative physician in New York City. "I prescribe it all the time." Your body responds to the rhythms of your environment which is a good thing if you live at the beach or in the country. But it can work against you if you're in a city surrounded by sirens, screeches, and honking horns or, for example, if you're dealing with the frenetic buzz of a crowded shopping centre. "Internal and external rhythms are linked," says Lipman. To synch up with a more relaxing rhythm, put on music that plays at about 60 beats per minute (Lipman suggests Bob Marley). "Close your eyes and stay very conscious of your listening, and the music will begin to affect the rhythms of your bodily processes," he says. Expect your breathing to slow, your heart rate to come down, and a sense of calm to take hold.





6 let the world in

To reap the benefits of meditation – which include improved health, better focus, and inner calm – you don’t have to commit to a rigid 5 am date with your meditation cushion. Instead, simply try paying more attention to what’s around you, says Vasant Lad, founder of the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico. “Pay attention to anything your ears are hearing and listen completely,” says Lad, whether it’s a barking dog, a crying child, or the wind rustling the leaves. Rather than blocking out this noise, Lad says, “Allow these sounds and sights to penetrate you, and you’ll begin to experience true inner peace and silence.”

five

Brew a little bliss

In contrast to the high-octane coffee break, a cup of freshly brewed tea offers a more mellow pick-me-up, and the Kundalini Yoga tradition offers a ritual for mindfully brewing a cup of spiced black tea that begins even before you gather your ingredients. When you approach this tea-making task with focused attention, it becomes meditation in motion, says Dharma Singh Khalsa, MD, a neuroscientist and author of *Food as Medicine*.

To a pot filled with a little over one cup of water, add four black peppercorns, four whole green cardamom pods, a 2.5cm slice of fresh ginger, half a cinnamon stick, and three whole cloves. Boil the mixture for 10 minutes, then add a half cup of almond or cow’s milk, along with one bag of black tea; steep for five minutes. Take a moment to enjoy the aroma and meditate on your breath or repeat a simple mantra such as *Sat nam*, which means, “Truth is my identity.” When the tea is ready, sit and enjoy sipping it with your full attention.

7 Pamper yourself to sleep

A short, soothing routine at bedtime can signal to your body and mind that it’s time to let go of the day and rest. Renée Loux, yogi, organic chef, and author of *Easy Green Living*, suggests giving yourself a nightly facial massage with a homemade blend of organic oils, to end your day on a nurturing note. To a small bottle containing 60ml of almond oil, add two drops each of lavender, chamomile, and rose essential oils. Shake gently and put six or eight drops in your palm. Rub your hands together to warm the oil, breathe in the relaxing scent, then apply it to your neck and face using gentle, upward strokes. Use your thumbs to draw the skin on your cheeks and forehead up toward your hairline, and to gently pull apart any visible facial lines, especially on your forehead, at the bridge of your nose, and around your mouth. Do this for 5 minutes (or longer, if you like), and finish by placing your palms over your eyes for a few seconds. “There is something profoundly healing about making the commitment to show up every day for self-care,” says Loux.



FUEL YOUR

WILLP

If kicking bad habits was easy, we'd all be perfect. So, what's the secret to making change stick when things get tough? Our cover model, Heather Lilleston, shows us how to harness discomfort and transform it into personal power through our yoga practice.

STORY BY KATE SIBER
SEQUENCE BY HEATHER LILLESTON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF NELSON

IN THE YOGIC TRADITION a key to following through with your intentions is *tapas*, or self-discipline. Derived from the Sanskrit root *tap*, which means “to heat”, *tapas* is about burning off your bad habits through restraint and even purification. It's all about lighting a fire under – and within – you.

Sometimes, *tapas* can literally be felt as heat in the body— like the burn of a deep *Utkatasana* (Chair Pose) that transforms weakness into strength. On a psychological level, *tapas* can be interpreted more metaphorically: It's the friction or resistance that arises when we go against the overwhelming momentum of our ingrained habits. “*Tapas* is the discomfort generated when one habitual pattern rubs up against a new one,” says Nicolai Bachman, a Sanskrit scholar based in Denver and author of *The Path of the Yoga Sutras: A Practical Guide to the Core of Yoga*.

The yoga greats, including B.K.S. Iyengar, knew the power of the seemingly simple concept that self-discipline allows for growth and transformation. As Iyengar wrote in his seminal book *Light on Yoga*: “The whole science of character building may be regarded as a practice of *tapas*.” The good news is that you can easily tap into *tapas*, which is one of the five *niyamas*, or principles that guide behaviour in yoga philosophy. For example, perhaps 2017 is the year you want to start a daily morning meditation practice. The first few weeks or even months, there may be days you wake up and immediately hit snooze. But the more you force yourself to get up, sit on your meditation cushion, and reap the benefits of your practice – despite the friction between your new habit and the old, less demanding one of sleeping in – the easier it becomes and the sooner the new, healthier habit sticks. The same persistent process, always applied gently, can also help us shed undesirable patterns like negative self-talk, binge eating, and unhealthy

ingrained reactions, says Marla McMahon, a clinical psychologist and yoga teacher in Sacramento, California. “Being able to be with that suffering, ultimately, that's where we grow,” says McMahon. “I see growth and transformation when clients are able to put *tapas* into daily practice even if I don't use that term specifically. And it does get easier the more you practice it.”

There are few better tools than *asana* practice to help you hone your *tapas* training. Holding a difficult-for-you pose on your yoga mat can prepare you for staying with discomfort in your daily life, helping you to launch into serious self-study and not be controlled by that which makes you uncomfortable. (“Discomfort” in this case refers to situations in which you're not in imminent danger, not extreme situations like abuse.) “When we practice *tapas* on the mat, we practice sitting with whatever sensations and conversations arise for us, without running away,” says Heather Lilleston, a Los Angeles-based yoga teacher and co-founder of Yoga for Bad People, an organisation that hosts international retreats that aim to help you shift your perspective. For instance, for a yogi with tight hips, staying in Pigeon Pose for an extra 10 breaths may mean experiencing a truly transformative hip stretch. For a practitioner of intense *Ashtanga Yoga*, moving through the discomfort of a slow, restorative class, knowing that it will eventually breed clarity and calm, could be considered *tapas* training. “Sometimes what we need to see is that if we stay, we are actually OK, that we do have the strength and are able to get through it, and in that way the world slowly becomes less scary,” says Lilleston.

On the following pages, Lilleston offers a heat-building practice to help you create *tapas* – physically, mentally, on the mat, beyond the studio walls, and on into 2017.

BUILDING HEAT

YOGA BECOMES the training ground for making lasting change when you can meet any resistance with mindfulness, responding wisely instead of giving up. This sequence will cultivate the curiosity, stamina, and strength you need to move deeper into your yoga practice and make lasting change in other areas of your life. Lilleston recommends holding each of the following poses for at least 10 breaths, eventually working up to 3, 5, or even 10 minutes in each posture. Practice overcoming any physical or mental resistance and sticking with the pose (but not if you feel sharp pain). At each step, listen to how your body responds and to any thoughts that appear.

1. UTKATASANA Fierce Pose, a.k.a. Chair Pose Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose). Inhale as you bend your knees and sit back, lifting your arms alongside your ears and gazing overhead between your thumbs. Reach through your fingers and lift your chest. Utkatasana activates the legs, realigns the pelvis, lengthens the waist, opens the side ribs, and honours the natural curves of your spine. As you lower your hips, keep your tailbone lengthening toward the floor. Your natural inclination will be to come out of the pose because it activates muscles we generally don't use, but that's even more of a reason to stay. Exhale to come back to Mountain Pose.

1





2

2. PLANK POSE

From hands and knees, exhale to extend your legs back, keeping your hips and shoulders in one long line, engaging your legs, broadening your collarbones, and drawing your navel toward your spine. Keep your shoulders over your wrists. Plank builds heat in the body by teaching us how to distribute our weight evenly. It tones the abdominal, leg, and arm muscles and can be a nice combo of stillness and strength when you commit to relaxing into the pose for a minimum of 3 minutes. Exhale to release back to hands and knees.



3

3. VIRABHADRASANA II Warrior Pose II

From standing, extend your arms out to your sides and step your feet out so your ankles line up with your wrists. Turn your right foot out so the toes face the front of your mat. On an exhalation, bend your front knee so the thigh is parallel to the ground, and the knee is above the ankle. Reach the centre of your front knee toward your right second toe. Most of us meet physical and mental resistance in this pose. Stay here for at least 1 minute before inhaling to straighten the right leg and switch sides.

4

4. SALAMBA SIRSASANA

Supported Headstand

From Balasana (Child's Pose), interlace your fingers, keeping your elbows shoulder-distance apart.

Press your forearms into the floor and place the crown of your head on the floor between them, maintaining a natural curve in your neck. Inhale to lift your hips, and then walk your feet in a few steps. Bend your knees as you draw your heels to your seat, then extend your legs overhead.

For newer practitioners, simply walk your feet toward your face with your head on or off the floor. Make sure there is no pressure on your neck.

If there is, come out; if not, stay as long as possible, gradually building

up to 5 minutes. Wait for your internal dialogue to kick in, and sit with what arises. Whatever comes to the surface, stay still. When you are

ready to exit the pose, slowly lower your feet to the floor and rest in Child's Pose for several breaths.



5

5. PASCHIMOTTANASANA Seated Forward Bend

Sit with your legs extended in front of you. If you have tight hamstrings, place a blanket underneath your sitting bones. Flex your feet, lengthen your waist, and on an exhalation, reach for the outer edges of your feet. (If you can't reach your feet, bend your knees as much as needed.) On your next exhalation, bend your elbows out to the sides to draw your rib cage forward, moving further into the fold. Take your time entering the pose, not forcing anything. Focus on paying attention to each incremental movement in the posture. Inhale to return to seated.



6

5. VIRASANA Hero Pose

From hands and knees, bring your knees together and sit between your feet, heels to the outside of your hips. If this causes pain or pressure in your knees, or you can't get your sitting bones to the floor, sit on a block. Make sure all 10 toes face straight behind you. Interlace your fingers, and on an inhalation, reach your arms overhead, turning your palms toward the sky. This pose stimulates digestion, re-centres your pelvis, lengthens your waist, and activates your arches and opens the tops of your feet. Stay for 3–5 minutes, sitting with the resistance as it arises. (That resistance shouldn't be felt in your knees.) Exhale to release your arms and come out.

7. HANUMANASANA

Monkey God Pose, a.k.a. the splits
From Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose), step your right foot forward into a lunge, then lower your left knee to the floor. Flex your right foot, and gradually slide your heel forward. Press your right thigh down and draw your outer right hip back. Start to straighten your leg. Extend your legs only as far as you can without pain – if you go too far, you risk a hamstring tear. To modify, place one block or blanket under your right thigh, near your hip and high enough that you can relax and comfortably lift your hands off the floor, or use firm blocks under your hands and alongside your hips. For the first few moments, you should feel comfortable. After that, resistance will come up. Try to stay for 20 breaths. Even with proper support, people commonly want to exit this pose early. Remain in the posture, letting the initial layers of inner dialogue pass. Eventually, there will be a release into the asana in which the body begins to let go of gripping. To release, gently push back to Down Dog and switch sides.

7



8. URDHVA DHANURASANA

Upward Bow Pose, a.k.a. Wheel Pose
Lie on your back and bend both knees, placing your feet hip-distance apart and parallel on your mat. Place your hands by your ears, fingers facing your shoulders. On an inhalation, press your hands and feet down, and lift your hips and chest into a backbend. Drop out of it the tiniest amount, slightly internally rotate your legs, lengthen your tailbone, and reach your armpits toward your wrists (8A). Try to stay for 20–30 breaths and pay attention to where along your spine you feel either fluidity or resistance. Develop an evenness of effort in your whole body. If Wheel causes back pain or isn't available to you, practice Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) or Dhanurasana (Bow Pose) instead. To release, exhale and lower to the floor.

8A



To neutralise your spine after Wheel Pose, gradually lift your feet off the floor and hold your knees, letting your lower legs dangle; allow your lower back to lift off the floor slightly (8B). Finally, rock your pelvis from side to side. Stay for 30–60 seconds.

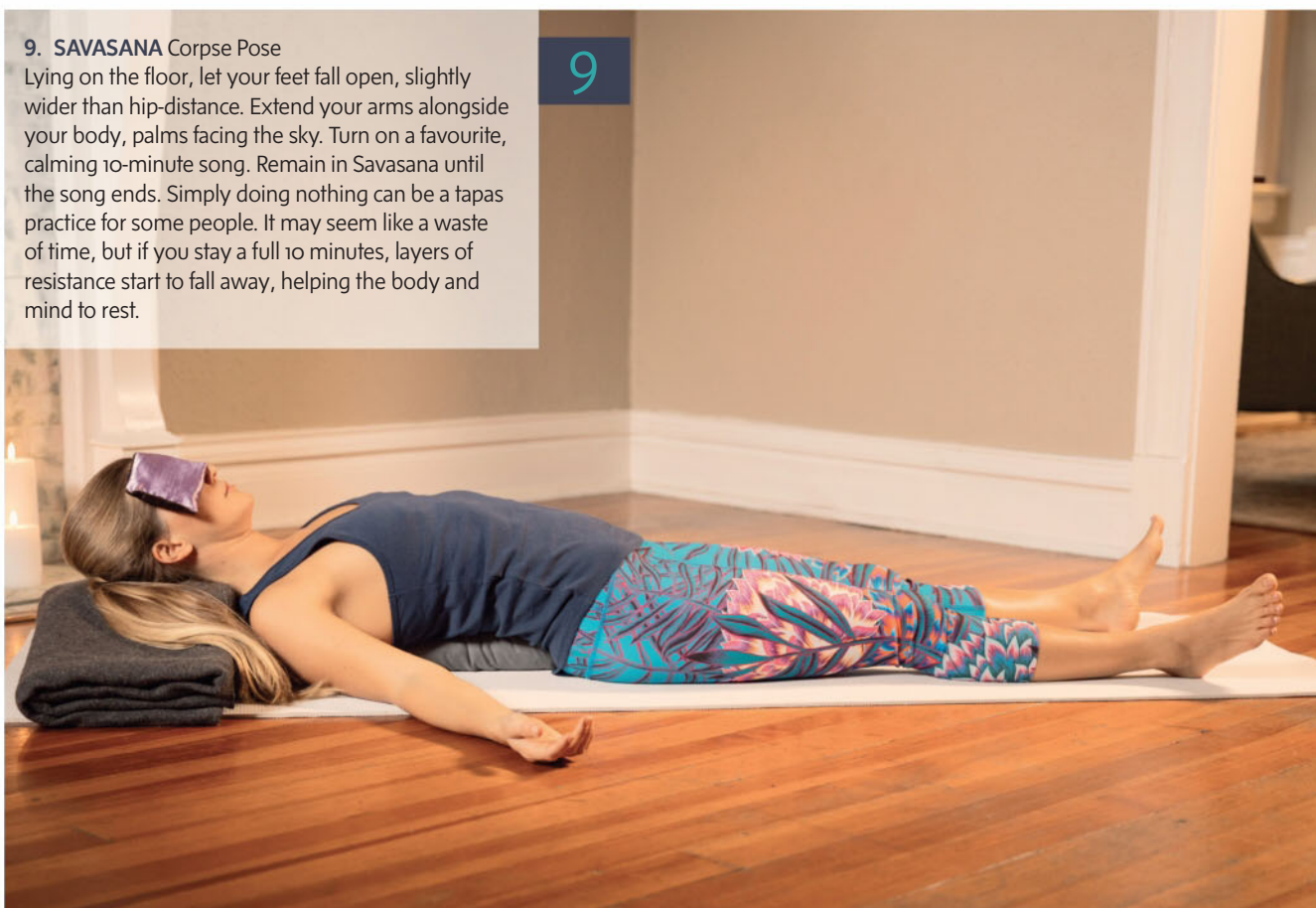
8B



9. SAVASANA Corpse Pose

Lying on the floor, let your feet fall open, slightly wider than hip-distance. Extend your arms alongside your body, palms facing the sky. Turn on a favourite, calming 10-minute song. Remain in Savasana until the song ends. Simply doing nothing can be a tapas practice for some people. It may seem like a waste of time, but if you stay a full 10 minutes, layers of resistance start to fall away, helping the body and mind to rest.

9



10

10. SIDDHASANA Adept's Pose

After Savasana, take a comfortable seat. Make sure your knees are slightly lower than your hips. You can sit on a blanket or cushion to help. Place your hands on your thighs, palms facing down if your mind is active, palms up if you are tired. Close your eyes and remain still for 20 minutes. Focus on watching the breath enter and exit through the nostrils. Respond to everything that arises with stillness. It is normal to want to move or adjust; the discipline is to remain physically still. Eventually, the mind catches up and quiets. Notice which excuses and fantasies arise and simply watch them pass.

Our Pros Teacher and model Heather Lilleston is a vinyasa-teacher-training and retreat leader based in Venice Beach, California, and New York City. She has studied extensively with Rodney Yee, Colleen Saidman Yee, Sharon Gannon, and David Life and now travels the world teaching yoga. You can find her schedule at heatherlilleston.com. Writer Kate Siber is a yoga student and freelance writer based in Durango, Colorado.



Dairy-free double chocolate chunk biscuits

MAKES 14 BISCUITS

Plentiful dark-chocolate chunks and vegetable oil make these chewy biscuits rich and satisfying. No milk chocolate or butter is necessary.

- 14 g. unsweetened baking chocolate
- 2 Tbsp. olive or canola oil
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup unbleached flour
- 1/4 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup sweetened dark-chocolate chunks

Heat oven to 175°C. In a double boiler over medium heat, combine baking chocolate and oil. Heat, stirring, until chocolate melts and mixture is smooth. Let cool to room temperature. Whisk in egg and vanilla.

In a bowl, whisk together sugar, flours, cocoa, baking soda, and salt. Stir in the chocolate mixture. It will be stiff, so use your hands to knead it all together. Mix in chocolate chunks.

Divide dough into 14 pieces and roll into balls. Place 7cm apart on 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Dampen hands with water and gently flatten the balls to 2-cm thick.

Bake biscuits for 5 minutes. Exchange the position of the baking sheets and bake until biscuits are slightly puffed and darker around the edges, 5 minutes. Cool on sheets, 5 minutes. Transfer to racks to cool completely.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 141 calories per serving, 7 g fat (3 g saturated), 21 g carbs, 2 g fibre, 2 g protein, 137 mg sodium



Baker's *delight*

Sharing desserts with family and friends is a treat to love and cherish. But these days, more and more people are avoiding traditional staple baking ingredients such as wheat flour, butter, and eggs. Fortunately, your favourite sweets can be just as delicious without them. Sceptical? Our easy tricks and recipes will convince you.

By Robin Asbell

FOR VEGAN BAKING

ANIMAL-FRIENDLY SWEETENERS

Instead of honey, which vegans leave to the bees, you can use agave, maple syrup, or a fruit-based honey replacement.

REPLACING EGGS

To bake without eggs, you need to replace the binding power of egg whites. Use binders made from ground flaxseeds or starches, such as arrowroot, potato starch, or tapioca. To replace 1 egg, whisk 1 tablespoon of finely ground flaxseeds with 1/4 cup water. Or whisk together 1 teaspoon arrowroot, 1/2 tsp baking powder, 1/4 teaspoon guar gum, and 3 tablespoons water. A shop-bought egg-replacer powder combines a few starches with some leavening. For moisture and body, use a purée of banana, pumpkin, or tofu. Silken-tofu purée is great in cheesecakes and can replace half the fat in biscuits and muffins.

PANTRY STAPLES

Vegan sugar, ground flaxseeds, maple syrup, egg replacer, pumpkin purée, silken tofu, raw cashews

FOR GLUTEN-FREE BAKING

FLOURS

Most supermarkets now carry at least a few gluten-free flour blends. They typically contain four kinds of flours, including starches like potato or tapioca to help bind and tenderise. If you are trying to go low-carb, seek out nut- or bean-based blends, which are generally higher in protein, fibre, and other nutrients; use them in recipes with chocolate, spices, or other strong flavours that mask the flour's slight beany notes. For lightly flavoured cakes, such as angel food, choose a mild-flavoured blend with white-rice flour at the top of the ingredients list. Single flours like almond, coconut, and quinoa work well, too, but be sure to add a binder.

BINDERS

When baking without wheat, you need to add a binding ingredient to recreate the gluten-based structure that forms when wheat flour is mixed with liquid and that serves to hold ingredients together. Otherwise, your goodie will fall flat or crumble. Replace 1/4 cup liquid with one egg. For a vegan

alternative, mix 1 tablespoon ground flaxseeds with 1/4 cup water in place of one egg, or try xanthan or guar gum,

powdered binding ingredients sold at health food shops. For bread, use 1 teaspoon of gum per cup of flour; for cakes and biscuits, it's just half a teaspoon; any more and they turn out rubbery.

PANTRY STAPLES

Gluten-free flour blend, eggs or flaxseeds, xanthan and guar gums

FOR NON-DAIRY BAKING

VEGETABLES OILS

Replace butter with liquid plant-based oil rather than using margarine, which contains processed or partially hydrogenated oils. It's an easy swap in buttery biscuit recipes: Just use 10 tablespoons oil for each cup of butter. Choose a heart-healthy option like extra-virgin olive oil (rest assured, the grassy flavour bakes off), or walnut or canola oil. For flaky results in pastries, such as pie crusts, scones, and biscuits, chill the oil first and drizzle it into the flour slowly, then quickly add any remaining liquid and shape the pastry. Or replace butter in pastries with equal parts chilled and solidified coconut oil. To use, simply grate oil into flakes and toss with the flour. Try raw-nut purées or nut butters to add richness in baked goods: Replace half the fats with peanut or almond butter in granola bars, cookies, and cakes.

CREAMINESS

Replace milk or cream with non-dairy milks; almond and coconut are the most neutral tasting and have good body for baking fluffy cakes and muffins. Higher-fat canned coconut milk is more like cream, great for ganache or ice cream. To make "whipped cream," chill a can of coconut milk overnight. Pour off watery liquid and scoop solid cream into a chilled bowl. Add 1–2 tablespoons confectioner's sugar and whip until fluffy. Chill until ready to serve. For a stand-in for cream cheese or sour cream, make cashew cream: Soak 2 cups raw cashews overnight, drain, then purée in a food processor, gradually adding water until creamy. This yields 2 1/2 cups thick or 3 1/2 cups "pourable" cream. Sweeten with agave or maple syrup.

PANTRY STAPLES

Olive or canola oil, non-dairy milk, canned coconut milk

Robin Asbell, is a chef and author of eight cookbooks, including *Sweet & Easy Vegan*.





Vegan maple-pecan pie

SERVES 12

Cashew cream combined with a hint of apple and cinnamon creates a luscious filling perfect for tasty treats. A maple-pecan topping adds a sweet crunch.

- 3 Tbsp. refined coconut oil, plus extra for greasing
- 225 g. sweet biscuits
- 1 cup maple syrup, divided
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 1/2 cups raw cashews, soaked overnight and drained
- 1 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 3/4 cup raw cane sugar
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. arrowroot
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups pecan halves

Heat oven to 175°C. Grease a 25-cm springform pan with oil. In a food processor, grind biscuits to fine crumbs. Drizzle in 1/4 cup syrup and 3 tablespoons oil; add cinnamon, and process to mix. Sprinkle crumb mixture into pan. With damp fingers, press firmly into pan, leaving slightly thicker edges. Bake, 10 minutes. Let cool.

In a food processor, grind cashews until they form a thick paste. Gradually add almond milk, processing until smooth and creamy. Add sugar, applesauce, lemon juice, arrowroot, vanilla, and a pinch of salt, and process to mix. Spoon cashew mixture into crust, spreading it smoothly. Bake 30 minutes.

In a saucepan, bring remaining 3/4 cup syrup to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer, stirring frequently, 5 minutes. Arrange pecans on top of pie in concentric circles to cover the surface. Drizzle hot syrup neatly over nuts.

Bake until pie is slightly puffed and a toothpick inserted in centre comes out clean, 20 minutes. Let cool on a rack, then refrigerate to chill. Serve cold.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 465 calories per serving, 25 g fat (6 g saturated), 56 g carbs, 3 g fibre, 7 g protein, 161 mg sodium



Gluten-free cranberry upside-down cake

SERVES 10

In this luscious dessert, tangy cranberries are encased in just enough buttery cake, while a blend of spices and orange zest adds exciting flavour.

- 8 Tbsp. unsalted butter, divided
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 2 cups cranberries (thawed, if frozen)
- 1 1/2 cups gluten-free flour
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. xanthan gum
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3 large eggs
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Heat oven to 175°C. In a 28-cm springform pan, melt 4 tablespoons butter in oven, 5 minutes. Sprinkle pan bottom evenly with brown sugar and cranberries.

In a bowl, combine flour, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder, cloves, baking soda, salt, and xanthan gum. In a stand mixer, cream remaining 4 tablespoons butter. Beat in sugar, stopping to scrape down sides as needed, until fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Set mixer on low; add flour mixture and orange zest, and process to mix. Scrape sides. Slowly mix in buttermilk and vanilla until smooth. Set mixer to high and beat, 2 minutes. Drop spoonfuls of batter evenly over cranberries; gently spread to cover berries.

Bake until a toothpick inserted in the centre of the cake comes out with moist crumbs, about 40 minutes. Let cool in pan on a rack, 5 minutes. Place a plate over the cake and, holding firmly, flip to invert the cake onto the plate. Let cool.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 307 calories per serving, 12 g fat (6 g saturated), 49 g carbs, 3 g fibre, 4 g protein, 219 mg sodium

Baring *all*

Creator of Nude Yoga, Rosie Rees, shares her love of practicing yoga while wearing nothing at all, and explains how shedding our clothes can be symbolic of releasing the mind and letting go.

AYJ *Why did you create Nude Yoga?*

ROSIE My own body image issues and learning to love my imperfections inspired me to start Nude Yoga workshops. I found that when I did my yoga practice naked, I felt a deeper sense of self-acceptance, body love and freedom in my skin. Initially when I practiced naked, I felt insecure and embarrassed, but then a comfortability and a heightened feeling of both *presence* and *letting go of my mental chatter* came to me that didn't come as easy as when I was restricted by clothes. For me, shedding the clothes was symbolic of shedding the mind.

AYJ *Tell us more about the practice of nude yoga and the workshops you facilitate*

ROSIE The practice is not your typical yoga class. The first half of the immersion is getting to know the women through sharing, partner work and workshoping a topic like body image, self-love or vulnerability.

The second half is integrating through breath, sound and movement in a gentle, feminine yoga sequence designed for women to surrender their armour and fall in love with their mind, body and heart.

AYJ *What has teaching this taught you?*

ROSIE It's taught me that every woman could benefit from this workshop — women who already love their bodies *and* women who are resistant to coming. When I tour Australia I consistently sell-out, which demonstrates that women are becoming more open to stepping out of their comfort zone to be vulnerable, and they have a desire to love and accept themselves in ways they never thought possible. It has taught me that women of all shapes, sizes, ages and races are beautiful, and when I look around the candle-lit room at women in their most vulnerable, bare and raw state ... it's one of the most heart-opening, exquisite experiences of my life. More than anything, it's taught me that having courage reaps unbelievable rewards!

AYJ *What experiences have your students had during the practice?*

ROSIE For some women it's the first time they have sat in a circle of women, so they feel a sense of uniting and sisterhood. I have had women feel safe to be themselves and be "seen" for the first time. Women who have never been vulnerable, and for the first time can speak their truth. Women who have had babies come to a place of acceptance and gratitude about their belly and breasts and the life they have created with their body. A lot of women go home to have the best sleep of their life, or the best

love-making of their life, *with the lights on*, because they feel free in their body. Amazing things happen when women relinquish their armour, masculinity and barriers to love. When a woman feels safe, she can soften and surrender.

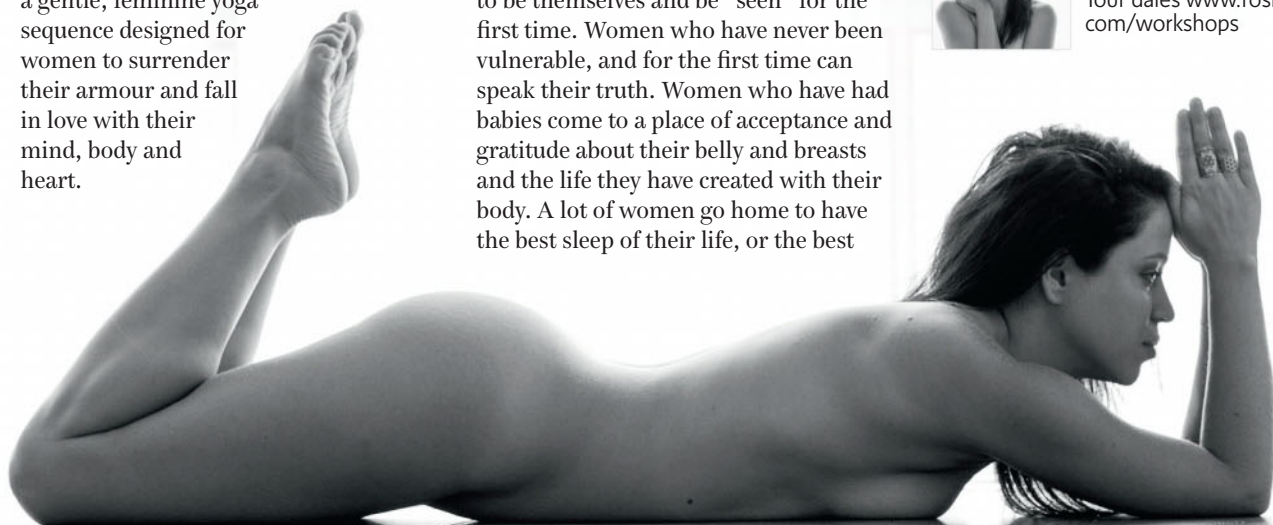
AYJ *What's the greatest lesson you've learned about relationships, and how has this influenced your teaching?*

ROSIE Relationships are where we implement our life lessons; without them we don't receive the fullest growth our soul needs to experience in this lifetime. As Yogi Bhajan says, "Relationships are the best form of yoga!"

Although I feel comfortable being naked on a yoga mat, my growth has been in allowing myself to be fully vulnerable in a relationship — the true test of vulnerability. Sharing my greatest insecurities with another person and them still loving me was such a powerful lesson. It is the essence of what I teach; come to me with all your scars, cellulite, rolls, and wrinkles, and I will still love you. This is unconditional love. I believe relationships to be the foundation of life, and the first relationship to cultivate is the one with our *self*. Since experiencing this unconditional love, my fear of commitment and intimacy (moving away from love to experience freedom) no longer runs the show, nor does my fear of rejection and abandonment (moving away from freedom to experience love). When my cup is overflowing with my own love, I have more to offer others, in relationships and in my life's work.



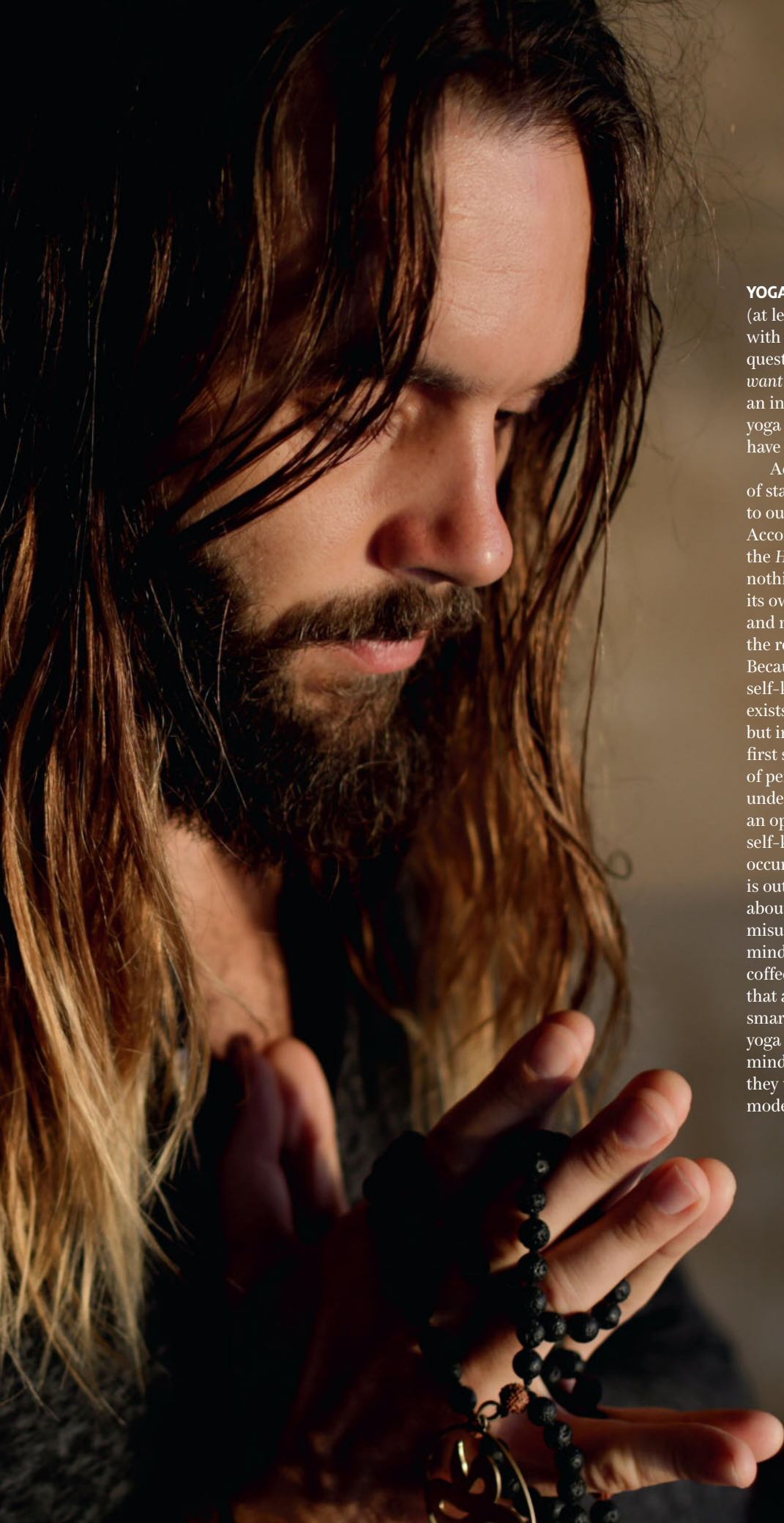
Keep up to date with Rosie at www.rosierees.com, Instagram @rosie.rees. Tour dates www.rosierees.com/workshops



THE Love of your life

Slow down, question yourself, find your path to self-knowledge and discover the source of love at the very heart of your being.

By Octavio Salvado



YOGA IS NOT ABOUT FLEXIBILITY. Yoga (at least in the traditional sense) begins with consideration of the following question: *Do I want to be flexible or do I want to be free?* This critical question is an invitation to a radical state-shift from yoga student to yogi. What does this have to do with love? Everything.

According to tradition, the cultivation of stability is paramount when it comes to our practice both on and off the mat. According to both the *Yoga Sutras* and the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, there is nothing that rivals stability. Each text in its own way claims that it isn't until body and mind have been made steady that the real world of yoga opens up. Why? Because stability is the precursor to self-knowledge. Tradition says that love exists at the deepest level of our being, but in order to access its quality we must first sift through more superficial layers of personality; only then can we understand what stands in the way of an open expression of love. Without self-knowledge, real self-love cannot occur. Without stability, self-knowledge is out of reach. The idea that yoga is about flexibility is a new one ... a misunderstanding birthed by modern minds — modern minds with legs under coffee tables nervously twitching, minds that are addicted to scrolling on smartphones, minds that find solace in yoga practices that distract those same minds from looking at how distracted they truly are. Don't buy into the modern yoga hype.



Yoga begins when we slow down, get steady and deal with what needs to be dealt with – namely, ourselves. Then, once the fluctuations of the mind have ceased, we can glimpse that aspect of self that exists beyond the mind and beyond all things that change. Then, we can sit in remembrance of our pre-Prakritik state of being, remembrance that we are the One beyond the many whose home (according to tradition) is the almond-sized flame within the heart itself, the *Vishok Jyotir*, the light that allows no suffering to enter. Love is our source point.

Self-knowledge is self-love and self-love is the source of all love. The system has been laid out for thousands of years. It's a shame that so few yogis nowadays follow it, instead choosing busy, *rajasic* practices over those that promote stability. Personally, I know first-hand the devastation caused by a *rajasic* mind amplified by *rajasic* practices. I have the divorce papers to prove it. Not all practices are good practices. Not all practices move us towards the light in our heart. Not all practices suit all people, because the forces that govern the universe and therefore us, calibrate themselves differently depending on our specific reasons for being here.

We are all here with a grand spiritual purpose to live out. Tradition is clear on that and also that every person's mission, set in motion by the indestructible essence of our own pure nature, is unique. This being the case, how could all yoga practices suit all people all of the time? This is not good science and yoga, to be clear, is humanity's oldest science, the science of awakening. In my opinion,

it is best we don't water it down.

Whether we like it or not, in this guna-bound dimension of manifest reality we are subject to universal laws, or laws that govern the turnings of our life. The first is the Law of Alternation which states that everything we do, say, eat, believe, think, surround ourselves with and expose ourselves to (including other people), affects us. The *gunas*, or attributes of nature, are in everything. There is nothing that they are not in, including our minds.

Heavy words, dense, lifeless foods, dark thoughts and habits will become us. They will not touch the truth of who we are, but they will become our conditional experience nonetheless. Likewise, fast-paced lives and habits will sculpt an agitated nervous system and a mind that will never find the peace afforded by the silence of meditation. It can be no other way. Mental clarity stems from clear choices, including practices that lead us toward meditation, which is considered the direct path to self-knowledge and therefore to self-love.

The second law, the Law of Continuity, can be summed up by the age-old axiom, "like attracts like". Whatever attribute is most dominant within us, be it clarity, momentum or inertia, will continue to be reflected in the things, people and choices that arrive within our orbit because this is what allows us to maintain the status quo. If we are out of balance then we will be drawn to the things that keep us out of balance: foods, people, practices, environments, professions and partners. The Law of Continuity states that the reverse is also true; being in balance

inspires us to make choices that keep us in balance.

The issue is that the majority of us do not know (or want to accept) that we are out of balance and so most of the time we know what we want but not what we need. Here is the inconvenient truth: the majority of modern yogis are *rajasic* in nature and therefore would benefit most from slower practices than the ones they most likely do.

The vast ocean of cardio-heavy yoga practices is evidence of an unstable, unbalanced yoga culture. The absence of meditation in daily drop-in classes only further highlights this point. Perhaps hard to hear but true all the same. The upside of this, however, is that we are at least up for doing the work. The will is there, just not the knowledge. Nor are the teachers that are willing to stand up and give students what they need, not what they want. Being a yoga teacher is a big commitment. It is not about making friends or being popular. It's about service and it's about serving the core of people, not the condition.

So, back to love and the path we must tread to access it. That journey must be a slow and steady one. When we humbly yet tenaciously address the fast-paced state of our practices and minds and choose freedom over flexibility, stability over style, actual work over just working-out, then we will arrive back to our self, a self that is primed for love because it is love. Love is our nature and to touch it we need to do less, not more. Don't take my word for it though; put down your phone, pick up the ancient texts, find a teacher that cares about yoga and cares about you, then sit still and remember yourself, your real self. The invitation has been there all along: slow down to the beat of love and everything else will fall into place.



Octavio's mission is simple: to share yoga with the world in the way that it was intended – as a spiritual science designed to awaken us to our highest potential. His greatest wish is to be

of service to humanity and simultaneously honour his teachers and the great tradition of yoga. Octavio believes that when practiced correctly, with the right guidance and attitude, the reach of yoga is limitless. Keep up to date with Octavio's mission at www.thepracticebali.com, enjoy online classes and philosophy at www.thepracticebali.com/the-practice-online/ or jump on board the next 200-hour teacher training from September 1-30 in Bali.

A beautiful mind

Our thoughts affect our own lives, the lives of those around us and our environment ... embrace the potential of a positive mindset, understand why a foundation of gratitude is crucial, and believe in the power of love.

By Laura Burkhart and Kassandra Reinhard





Laura Burkhardt



Kassandra Reinhardt

WE HAVE ALL HEARD the benefits of eating healthy food, exercising, practicing yoga and meditating, but what is equally (if not more) important, is how you use your mind. Throughout history, many great teachers, researchers and philosophers agree on the power and importance of developing a positive, loving thought life. Earl Nightingale said, “You become what you think about most of the time.” Buddha said, “What we think, we become.” The Bible says in Proverbs 23:7, “For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Marcus Aurelius stated, “A man’s life is what his thoughts make of it.”

Our thoughts not only affect our personal lives but, according to a number of studies, our thoughts affect those around us and our environment. Dr. Schilz’s research indicates that loving thoughts from one person towards another affects the blood flow of the person receiving the loving thoughts. Dr. Marsaru Emoto’s decade of tests reveal a significant difference between how positive, loving thoughts verses negative thoughts affect the crystalline structures of water. The bottom line is that our minds are very powerful and how we use them affects the outcome of our lives, and the lives and environment around us. The good news is learning to use your mind as a positive transmitter is a simple process that can produce big results. Over time, with regular practice, it can become your natural way of thinking.

Loving positive thoughts towards self

Since having a positive thought life is so important, what do you think about most of the time? Are your thoughts loving, understanding, accepting and forgiving toward yourself? What do you think about your circumstances and your future? According to the *Law of Attraction*, like attracts like. If you

harbour on negativity, you will get more negativity in you life, whereas if you focus on what is positive, you will receive back positivity. Although we cannot control everything that happens, adopting a positive, nothing is impossible mindset is what shifts you from pessimism to optimism, stagnancy to action and failure to success. Here are some ways to set your mind and keep it set on what is positive, loving and good, which will in turn give you positive, loving, successful experiences in your life.

Make a list of the things you are thankful for in your life

This is a great way to appreciate the wonderful things that have already happened and are happening to you right now. In order to receive new positive experiences, you must first learn the art of appreciating what you already have. “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was ‘thank you’, that would suffice.” – Meister Eckhart. Gratitude is the foundation of optimistic thinking yet we often overlook the blessings each day brings.

Start each morning with a positive affirmation or mantra

Such as “something good is going to happen to me today” or “I’m living an abundant life full of experiences and opportunities greater than what I ask, imagine or think”. Not only speak it, believe it! Believing and being positive is not wishful thinking, it’s a conscious shift in perspective.

See what can be done, not just what is Ask yourself, if there were no obstacles in your way, what would you want your life to look like? Create a list of all the

experiences, goals and opportunities you would like to bring into your life without judgement or doubt. Think big and write from the heart! From this list, pick the item that you are the most passionate about and would like to see happen in the next six months. Visualise it coming true every single day. Don’t get caught up in how it will happen, simply allow yourself to believe. As Napoleon Hill said, “Set your mind on a definite goal and observe how quickly the world stands aside to let you pass. Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe it can achieve.”

In an ideal world, plan out what you want to see manifest

In one-two years, three-five years, and ten years ... in every area of your life. There is power in writing down your vision and keeping it in front of you. Again, think big! Replace limiting words within your vision. For example, replace the word *enough* with words like *plenty* or *abundance*. According to *The Magic of Thinking Big*, how big we think determines the size of our accomplishments.

Take note of your influential environment

What television shows and movies do you watch? What music or radio shows do you listen to? Who do you hang around with? Author Jim Rohn states, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” The external influences you surround yourself with affects your thinking which in turn affects your life. Choose, positive, uplifting media, publications and friends!

Loving positive thoughts toward others

When you think about your friends, family, spouse, co-workers, neighbours, boss, homeless people, spiritual leader, politicians, and others, what comes to mind? Are your thoughts loving, compassionate and understanding, or

“Let the optimism, love and compassion you cultivate within yourself overflow and extend to every being on earth.”

hateful, jealous, judgmental or competitive? As I mentioned, our thoughts towards others affect them, which in turn affects us. Work toward thinking loving, kind, and positive thoughts toward others, no matter whom that person is. *“Where there is love, there is life,”* said Mahatma Gandhi.

Remember that no matter how easy or hard it is to get along with someone, we are all created equal. For the most part, we are all doing the best we can based on the information we have from our personal experiences and background. This doesn't mean you need to agree with everyone or allow injustice to go unquestioned. It means that no matter how great the differences are in opinions or character, you are able to see through these external circumstances and appreciate the humanity within them.

Practice compassion and empathy. Listen to and appreciate the viewpoints of others, try to understand their passions, experiences and the aspects

that make them similar and different from you. Look for ways you can help others, recognise their gifts, encourage them, believe in them and help them believe in themselves. The last thing we need in this world is cruelty and competition among our peers, fellow students, teachers or co-workers.

Last but not least, think loving, positive thoughts toward our environment and other animals living in this world. They, too, deserve a positive, loving, life-giving experience and happy existence. Think about what you can do on a bigger level to help make this world and all those who inhabit have the best experience and life possible. Let the optimism, love and compassion you cultivate within yourself overflow and extend to every being on earth. Practice thinking loving, positive thoughts on a regular basis and watch your life transform in ways you never thought possible. The possibilities are endless; all you need to do is take the first step in believing all things are possible.

Laura and Kassandra are co-creators of Yoga Business Secrets. Visit YogaBusinessSecrets.com to receive their free training video.



Laura Burkhart is a 500 E-RYT internationally acclaimed San Francisco-based yoga teacher who leads workshops, retreats and presents at festivals around the world. She

offers free online classes on her website, is a featured online teacher on Grokker, My Yoga Works and Yoga Vibes, and is a two-time cover model and columnist for Yoga Journal. LauraBurkhartYoga.com. See Laura at this year's Bali Spirit Festival, from 19-26 March www.balispiritfestival.com or join her on retreat from March 23-30 for a Balinese New Year celebration www.internationalyoga.com/retreats/yoga-culture. For your special, \$500 reader discount use promo code YJAUSTRALIA.



Kassandra Reinhardt, based out of Ottawa, Canada, is one of the world's leading Yin Yoga instructors online. Her Yoga with Kassandra YouTube channel has served as the introduction to Yin Yoga –

and the motivation – for thousands of people around the world to experience the benefits of a daily yoga practice. YogaWithKassandra.com

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A home practice to *re-energise and find greater joy*

By Alanna Kaivalya

THE HOLIDAY SEASON can leave even the calmest among us feeling frazzled, and now is the perfect time to refresh. This sequence will help you ease tension by putting your spine through its full range of motion. Not only will these poses stretch muscles that stress can leave stiff, they'll also boost your energy levels by increasing blood flow to

the large muscles that support the back, leaving you rejuvenated and energised. By moving your body around its central axis – the spine – you'll feel more supple and free: A flexible spine clears the lines of communication between mind and body, helping you stay calm and connect with positive feelings like gratitude and joy.



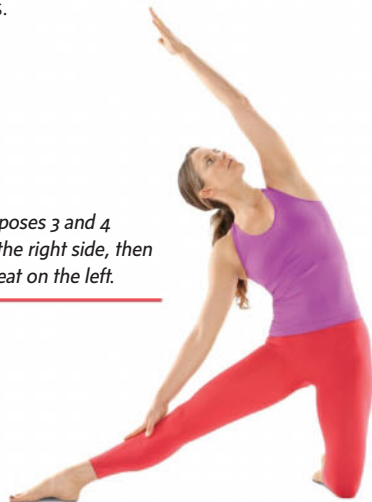
1 Sukhasana Easy Pose

Sit with your legs crossed and rest your hands on your knees. Place your left hand on your right knee and twist to the right. Inhale and lengthen your spine; exhale and tone your belly. After 5 breaths, switch sides.



2 Cat-Cow

Come into Tabletop – on your hands and knees, with your knees under your hips, and wrists under your shoulders. Inhale, drop your belly, and arch your back. Exhale, draw your belly in, and round your back. Repeat 5 times.



*Do poses 3 and 4
on the right side, then
repeat on the left.*

3 Parighasana Gate Pose, variation

Kneel and extend your right leg to the side. Reach your left hand to the sky as you slide your right hand down your right leg. Stay for a breath.



4 Ardha Chandrasana Half Moon Pose, variation

From Gate Pose, place your left hand on the floor. Extend your right hand and lift your right leg until it's nearly parallel to the floor. Stay for a breath.

OUR PRO Teacher Alanna Kaivalya holds a PhD in mythological studies, lives in New York City, and teaches at Yoga Journal LIVE! and the Kripalu and Esalen retreat centres. Her third book, *Yoga Beyond the Mat*, was released in October 2016.

Do poses 5–8 on the right side, then repeat on the left.



5 Adho Mukha Svanasana Downward-Facing Dog Pose, variation

Come to Tabletop. Tuck your toes and lift your hips up and back to Down Dog. Slowly raise your right leg to the sky, bend your right knee, and open your right hip. Relax your gaze.



6 Utthan Pristhasana Lizard Pose

From Downward Dog, step your right foot between your hands. Bring both hands inside your right foot, and keep your right knee over your right ankle. To go deeper into the pose, lower onto your forearms (or use a block).



7 High Lunge

Come out of Lizard Pose by bringing your hands back to either side of your right foot. Inhale, lift your torso, and reach your arms toward the sky.



11 Tarasana Star Pose, with side stretch

Sit with the soles of your feet together and knees open. Hold your ankles with your left hand and nestle your left elbow inside your left knee. Reach your right arm over your right ear, hold for a breath, then switch sides.



12 Purvottanasana Upward Plank Pose, variation

From Star Pose, lift your knees and put your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands behind your hips, fingers facing forward; keep your knees above your ankles, and your shoulders above your wrists. Inhale and raise your hips. Stay here for a breath, then rest.



13 Supta Baddha Konasana Reclining Bound Angle Pose

Lower to the floor and bring your feet together, knees apart. Turn your palms up and slow your breath. If your knees don't touch the floor, support them by placing blocks or blankets underneath them. Stay here for 5 breaths.



8 Half Moon Pose

Place your right hand on the floor in front of your right foot. Straighten your right leg as you lift your left leg and then left arm into Half Moon. To come out, step your left leg back softly to High Lunge. Then, return to Downward Dog.



9 Uttanasana

Standing Forward Bend

From Down Dog, step to the top of your mat and come into a forward fold, with your feet hip-width apart. Cradle your elbows in your hands and feel a release in your upper spine. Tuck your chin slightly to lengthen your neck.



10 Malasana

Garland Pose

Step your feet wider than hip-width, turn your toes out, and lower into a squat. Bring your palms together and press your upper arms into your thighs. If your heels lift, place a blanket under them for support.



14 Ananda Balasana

Happy Baby Pose

Hug your knees to your chest and take your hands behind each knee (or use your hands to grab the outer edges of your feet). Release your knees toward your armpits and relax your tailbone toward the floor. Stay here for 5 breaths.



15 Jathara Parivartanasana

Revolved Abdomen Pose

Bring your right knee into your chest and lengthen your left leg out in front of you. To twist, bring your right knee across your body to the left side of your mat; place your left hand on your right thigh, and extend your right arm to the right at shoulder height. Gaze at the ceiling or, if it feels suitable for your neck, toward your right shoulder. Stay here for 5 breaths, then switch sides.



16 Savasana

Corpse Pose

Roll up a blanket and slide it under your knees. Lie back and relax deeply. Feel free to place a pillow under your head for support, or cover yourself with a blanket for warmth. Stay here for 5 minutes or longer, if possible.

Poses of the month

How to move from Janu Sirsasana to Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana

By Aadil Palkhivala

Janu Sirsasana

janu = knee · sirsa = head · asana = pose
Head-of-the-Knee Pose



Benefit

Re-energises the body and aids digestion by stretching the ascending and descending colon

Instruction

- 1 Sit in Dandasana (Staff Pose) with your legs extended in front of you, toes flexed, quadriceps contracted. Place your hands next to your buttocks on the floor and lift the bottom of your belly and the sides of your waist.
- 2 Bend your right knee, placing your right foot against your inner left thigh, and your right heel close to your perineum, just below your pubic bone. Gently swing your right knee away from your left foot so your thighs form an angle greater than 90 degrees – preferably an angle of 135 degrees.

- 3 Fold forward over your left leg from the left hip crease. Reach with your right arm first and hold your left foot from the inside. Contracting your left quadriceps powerfully, use your left hand to grasp the centre of the hamstring muscles and – tipping your body to the right – pull toward your left sitting bone to release tension in the tendon that connects your hamstring muscles to your pelvis. Then, press your left hand into the floor near your left hip and push, lengthening the left waist. Keep twisting your body toward the left, working to bring your bellybutton over the center of your left thigh.

- 4 Hold your left foot with your left hand from the outside. Move deeper into the fold by holding your right wrist with your left hand. Make a fist with your right hand. Bending your elbows away from each other, pull your left foot with your arms,



DON'T drop your sacrum backward (posteriorly) or round your spine.

lengthening the sides of your waist. Rest your forehead on your shin. Breathe deeply for 9 or more breaths. Inhaling, lift your head and chest, then release your hands to push the floor away and come out of the pose. Change sides.

Our Pros Teacher Aadil Palkhivala (aadil.com) is a co-founder of Purna Yoga and trained one-on-one with B.K.S. Iyengar. A teacher's teacher, Palkhivala has practiced yoga since 1966; he was a naturopath for 10 years and has degrees in law, physics, and mathematics. Model Valerie D'Ambrosio (organictwist.com) is a life coach, interdisciplinary yoga teacher, and co-founder of the Hanuman Festival in Boulder, Colorado.

Modify Janu Sirsasana if needed to find safe alignment for your body.

If your lower back rounds...

TRY placing your sitting bones on folded blankets or a firm foam pad. (Avoid placing your hamstrings on the blankets or pad.) Take several deep breaths, inhaling and lengthening, exhaling and folding deeper.

If you have knee pain...

TRY moving your bent knee toward your straight leg. Having your knee out at a wider angle can create stress on the sartorius muscle, which runs the length of the thigh and connects to the knee.

If you have tight hamstrings...

TRY using a strap, placing it around the lower arch of your extended leg. Hold one side of the strap in each hand and use the strap to help you lift the sides of your waist. Remember to only fold as far forward as you can while keeping your spine concave and your chest lifted.



STAY HUMBLE

Illusions of grandeur, or the desire to get into complicated asanas, are as much asmita, or ego, as illusions of inability or meekness. In order to keep your ego at bay, approach Janu Sirsasana or its more intense brother, Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana, with humility and focus. Stay present, without trying to move too quickly. Try to experience what you are feeling in your body without getting wrapped up in achieving a goal. Just as these poses can heal an unquiet mind, they can also damage the spine when done with aggression or inattention, causing pain and discomfort near the sacroiliac (SI) joint— the connection between your sacrum and your pelvis. Ask yourself, is it worth it to attain a moment's gain for a long period of pain? In asana? In life?

Lengthen your hamstrings and warm up for twisting in these **prep poses** for Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana.



Supta Padangusthasana

Reclining Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose

Benefit

Safely stretches the hamstrings and tones the legs when the quadriceps are contracted

Instruction

Lie on your back. Inhaling, lift your right leg and hold your right big toe with your right index and middle fingers, keeping both shoulder blades on the ground. If you can't reach your lifted foot, use a strap around your lower arch and hold both ends in your right hand. Press down on your left thigh with your left hand. Contract the quadriceps of both legs fully. Move your outer right hip away from your head, lengthening your right waist. Press both heels away from your hips, pulling your toes back. Inhaling, bring your awareness into your right hamstring muscles, feeling them release and stretch. Exhaling, imagine the centre of your right hamstring muscles moving toward the sitting bone, where it starts. Exhale to release and switch sides.



Ardha Baddha Padmasana Bound Half Lotus Pose

Benefit

Releases the muscles between the vertebrae, making the spine supple and relieving backaches, and opens the chest and shoulders

Instruction

Sit in Staff Pose. Exhaling, bring your left leg into Ardha Padmasana, or Half Lotus Pose. Inhaling, lift the sides of your waist and the bottom of your belly. Exhaling, sweep your left hand behind you to catch your left foot. Reach for your right leg and hold the big-toe mound with your right hand, using a strap if needed. Contract your right quadriceps and pull back with your upper body to sit up as much as possible. Inhaling, lift the sides of your waist; exhaling, twist to the left. Inhale to come out, then switch sides.



Parsva Upavistha Konasana Side Seated Wide Angle Pose

Benefit

Stretches the sides of the body and the hamstrings

Instruction

Sit with your spine erect and your legs open to a 135-degree angle. Flex your feet and engage your quadriceps. Twist left, placing your right fingertips on the floor in front of you and your left fingertips behind you. Keeping your spine long, reach for your left foot with your right hand. Bring your torso toward your left shin, bellybutton centred over your left thigh. Then, clasp your left wrist with your right hand or use a strap. Lift your chest to stretch your abdomen, eventually resting your forehead on your left shin. Exhale and release your hands; inhale to come up. Switch sides.

Find length in the sides of your body and a deeper twist as you move step by step into Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana.

Benefit

This invigorating spinal twist and chest opener releases diaphragmatic tension and the intercostal muscles, enhancing breathing. It also removes tension along the spine and lengthens the sides of the waist, stretching the abdominal organs, especially the ascending and descending colon, liver, spleen, and pancreas, enhancing digestion and elimination

Instruction

- 1 Sit in Janu Sirsasana with your left knee bent. Turn your chest toward your bent knee, with all fingertips on the floor – right hand in front between your legs and your left hand behind your left buttock. On an inhalation, press your fingertips into the floor and lift the bottom of your belly and the sides of your waist. Exhaling, twist left.
- 2 Inhaling, lift your left arm up alongside your left ear. Slightly bend your right leg, then bend your torso sideways to the right and hold the outside of your right foot with your left hand. Slowly walk your right hand away from your pelvis, in between your legs, until the back of your right rib cage rests on the inside of your right inner thigh. Press your inner thigh into your rib cage.
- 3 Keeping your right leg bent, turn your right arm to hold your right foot from the inside, thumb down. Pull strongly with your hands, bending your elbows so that the sides of your waist lengthen. Start to bend your right elbow away from your right shin.



Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana

parivrtta = revolved · janu = knee · sirsa = head · asana = pose

Revolved Head-of-the-Knee Pose



4 Slowly straighten your right leg, maintaining the pressure and contact of your right inner thigh against the back of your right rib cage, and pulling the foot with your arms. After your leg is straight, press your right outer elbow into the floor and press your left elbow toward the floor behind you, opening your chest and twisting your waist. Rest the back of your head on your right shinbone, looking at the ceiling. For a more advanced stretch, extend your left knee further from your head. Do not try to press your left sitting bone into the floor; instead, let it rise without trying to lift it.

5 Stay in the pose for 10–30 seconds. To come out, release your left hand first. Untwist your spine, bringing your left hand to the floor in front of your chest. Then, release your right hand and use your left hand to push up. Change sides.

Stay safe

Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana makes the hamstrings vulnerable, especially near the sitting bones where the muscles attach. To protect yourself, contract the quadriceps powerfully, sending a message to the hamstrings to stop firing. Pulling the body down in any forward bend when the hamstrings have not released enough to free the spine may damage the lower vertebrae. Take time warming up in Supta Padangusthasana (page 83) and move slowly through all the poses. And stay humble: Remove the striving for accomplishment and instead go for the experience of whatever you can do in the moment.



PHOTO: BRIAN WILLIAMS

HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE be if you were in love with each and every little bit of it? Every little crack, each tiny crevice, all the spaces, nooks, and crannies in between? What would life look like if you were to live and love all of it, fully and genuinely? In love with what is. In full participation with the great journey ... in alignment with the calling of your soul.

Beyond an envisioned concept, how would it feel to live from this space of loving the life in front of you? The one that you live. As any good journey starts, it all begins with the first step. A good starting point is accepting and loving yourself, honestly and genuinely

connecting to the love which makes you tick, the things which light you up, and with what makes you feel fully alive.

Self-love and acceptance can be truly difficult for some of us. To truly feel self-love and acceptance, we must first see ourselves as worthy: worthy to be loved and worthy of feeling happy. To truly feel self-love and acceptance, we need to look after ourselves. We need to provide the time, space and energy to make sure our needs are met so we can give our best to the world.

Life provides the conditions for us to grow and the environments for us to meet our needs. It offers the atmosphere for us to become our best and the

challenges so we can rise to occasions which then help shape us into who we are and direct to us to where we're going.

Life can be a series of turning points: roads to travel, paths to walk, and choices of points that help form and determine our destinies. Along the way we are gifted great joys, enriching experiences, and love beyond measure. Sometimes we're served great challenges that push us to our limits. Sometimes we have to dig deep to discover what we're made of. How can we bridge the gap and bring a little bit more lightness into our lives and practice?

As you embark on a path of new

HEART *lands*

By Chris Dixon

Discover a deep passion within as you navigate life's journey, and remember to make decisions along the way that come from a place of pure and sincere love.

journeys and transformations in your daily life and yoga practice, I challenge you to walk the path of your heart, to live the life that you love, and to make it so, through your daily intentions in action.

Every point in life where you face a choice, remember to choose love. Look to your heart and make the decisions that ultimately lead you in the direction of enjoying your life, the people in front of you, the work you do, your friendships, your loved ones, and the great wonder of the unknown. It's an amazing universe we live in, and if we can remember the great miracle of it all and see our place, we can appreciate the little things and not sweat the small stuff so much.

Within the yoga practice, and in daily life, how does that look? How do you stay in love, even in the hard times and in challenging moments when you're pushed to your depths? For one thing, you are capable and that's a great start. Let's look at a few a more.

Prioritise the things that make you happy: This could include your yoga practice; moving your body; playing and recreating; healthy friendships and relationships; time with family; time in nature; healthy, delicious food; clean water; fresh air; travel and adventures; art, music, and creativity. Be open to try new things to keep life fresh and to remain an ever-exploring student.

Tap into the quality of *santosha*: This is the choice to choose your response in any given situation. It's your choice to be happy and your choice to be contented and fulfilled with where you're at and what you're offered. This quality is an amazing strategy to help you stay mindful and keep yourself centred, no matter what comes your way.

In your yoga asana practice: Keep in

"Remember you are love and you are loved! You can always count on love and draw upon it in the good times and in the challenging ones."

check with the balance between how your passion and discipline relate. It will never hurt to try to find more joy in moving your asana in a long practice and digging deep to push your edge in a kind and playful way. Notice any tendencies you have to give up too soon, aim too short, and open yourself to explore how your willpower and discipline create a mutually supportive relationship between your freedoms and passions.

In your personal development:

Set clear goals and refine your vision within your life's path. Be willing to practice patience and endurance as well as the flexibility to adapt as you learn more and more along your way.

The biggest one of all: Remember you are love and you are loved! It's what you're made of, isn't it? You can always count on love and draw upon it in the good times and in the challenging ones.

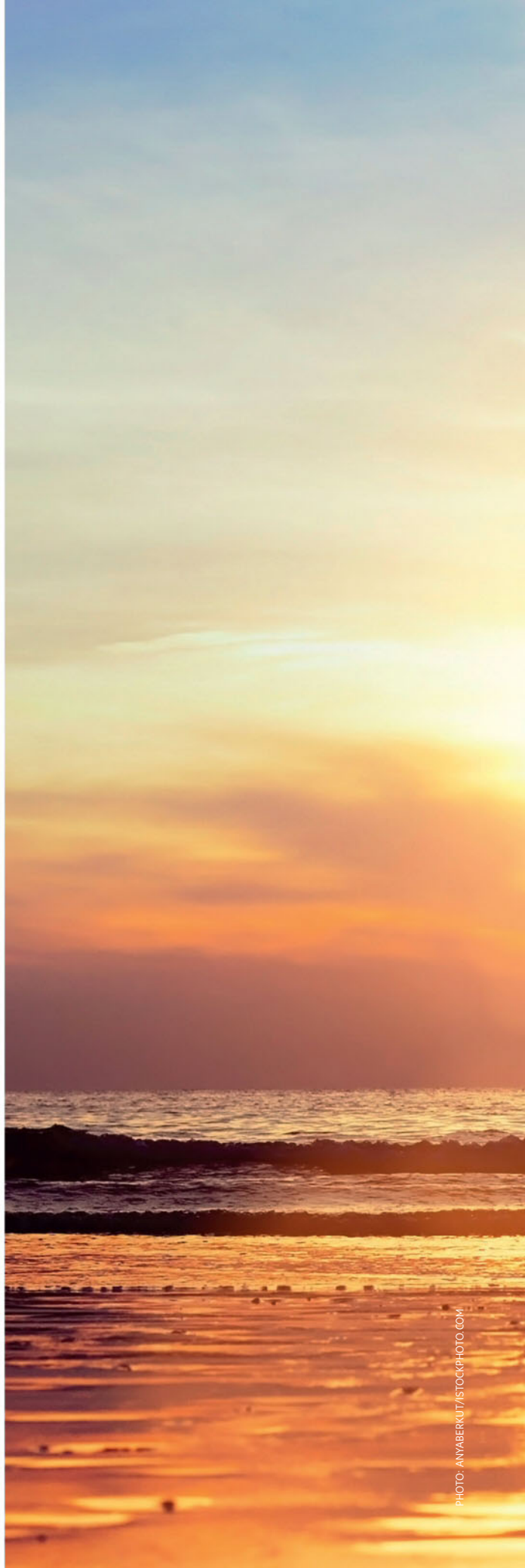
As you continue forward on your journeys and paths of heart, remember to enjoy the ride and stop now and again to smell the flowers. You're on your way and you're doing it just right. Sometimes you just have to slow down, take a step back, and remember to love each and every little bit of it.



Chris's love and passion for yoga seep through the seams of his life, extending from each class he teaches, to the moments he spends on his mat exploring and discovering the depths of what a yogic practice and lifestyle has to offer. Catch Chris on the mat for workshops, trainings, and retreats at www.chrisdixon yoga.com

Nostalgic, yogic SOUTH COAST

Jessica Humphries returns to the home of her university and discovers a thriving yoga community, unique nature immersions and devoted spiritual connections.





MY LOVE AFFAIR with yoga began in 2004 when I was a student at the University of Wollongong. I enthusiastically entered the yoga room for a “stretch” after my gym workout and I remember the teacher joking, as I trembled in my Downward Dog, “They’re only arms.” So it seemed apt to be venturing back to the Illawarra to explore the region’s yogic delights almost 13 years later as a much more experienced yogini. Back then, I didn’t know of any yoga studios in the area, so I was excited to explore this growing yoga hub through my new yogi lens. As I drove through Wollongong, I was flooded with memories of those younger days: dancing the nights away at local clubs, afternoon beers at the pub and long wanders along the beautiful beaches. Wollongong is a bustling little city with plenty to see and do, but in true yogic style I opted to stay in nearby Austinmer – a short drive away from the action but a lot quieter and immersed in beautiful surrounds which include picturesque beaches and rainforests.

Cultivating connections in unexpected pockets of paradise

To this day my first teacher, Leonard, remains a huge inspiration to me, and I was delighted when I contacted the University of Wollongong gym, **URAC**, and discovered that he is still teaching there. So much of my learning began in that room, including the curious yearning to become a teacher myself. Leonard is a unique character who teaches Iyengar in the most authentic way, and has introduced me to some fantastic contemporary folk music over the years.

My first official stop was **Ray of Light Yoga**, and owner Rachel Nokes is just that. This truly inspirational teacher ensures the traditions of yoga aren’t lost in her classes, and she has a maternal energy that allows students to fully let go and breathe. Rachel has a beautiful rainforest space in Bulli, where she also lives, as well as a newly opened space above an abundant health food shop, **Manic Organic**, in Woonona. The Woonona shala is light and filled with devoted students who come back for the holistic approach to teaching (harmonium and all) and inspiring knowledge. But you can’t beat the Bulli rainforest retreat, an invitingly



Nan Tien Temple



Younga Yoga

comforting space that feels like home in the most beautiful way, and includes a stunning rainforest backdrop. After class I met with Rachel for a cacao beetroot latte at nearby Thirroul's café **Bread, Espresso &**, where we chatted the afternoon away. I developed an incredible admiration for this approachable and genuine woman who truly lives her yoga. The café quickly became my favourite daily spot for its quirky, healthy lattes and scrumptious bliss balls.

Road tripping south

A midweek adventure was calling, so I ventured 45 minutes south to Jamberoo, stopping at some serene spaces on the way. **Nan Tien Temple** in Berkeley is the largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere; it is surrounded by green gardens and is a perfect stop to soak up some tranquillity and knowledge – they also offer regular classes, retreats and everything in between (including Buddhist wedding ceremonies). **The Yoga Hut** in Minnamurra is a gorgeous little space nestled within a succulent, backyard garden, and students come from all around the region to practice in the charming studio that offers some of the only hot classes around. **Emergence Kiama** is a bright and simple space with great teachers, friendly owners and a

thriving community of yogis from all walks of life. **Neptune Café** around the corner is the go-to for brewed chai, healthy (and not so healthy) treats, adorable antique interiors and a seaside breeze.

Midweek magic

Driving into **Ben Ricketts Environmental Preserve** felt like a world away from my usual luxury yoga resort experience, but I easily melted into the incredibly cosy, peaceful space. Sheep grazed on the grass and the air was crisp and fresh, a welcome change from the humidity I was more accustomed to in the Northern Rivers. There was an open fire and plenty of space for the whole family in the comfortable cabin. There were three cabins and a caretaker house on the property, as well as a humble common room ideal for yoga or group events.

Ben Ricketts is a truly unique place that is owned by individuals and families who ensure that the natural and built property is preserved – a nature lovers' dream come true. The owners are dedicated to conserving the unique plant and animal biodiversity while providing affordable, friendly accommodation. Through regular working bees, bushcare contractors and volunteers, progress is

being made towards eliminating invasive weeds, regenerating the native rainforest and increasing the wildlife populations.

I awoke daily to the sound of birds chirping, and the old Aussie charm and bush surrounds left me feeling reluctant to farewell my comfortable new home. I didn't leave, however, without exploring a nearby bush walk around the flat **Barren Grounds** where I discovered an isolated water hole perfect for a skinny dip. There were plenty of other natural delights and walks to explore, and I dreamily fantasised about what life would look like as a caretaker of this peaceful property. After immersing myself in nature, I was ready to return to Wollongong and check out more of the yoga scene, but for travellers heading further south, I heard on the grapevine that **The Berry Yoga Shala** is delightful.

Wollongong wanders

Back in Wollongong, I headed to **Younga Yoga**, the city's first dedicated yoga space, right in the heart of the CBD. The studio ironically opened in 2006, my last year of living in Wollongong. I was warmly greeted by owners Russ and Deb, who aren't your typical spiritual types – Russ has a keen background in biomechanics and functional anatomy, and is a teacher for



Ben Ricketts Environmental Preserve



Ray of Light

the graduate school of medicine at the local university, and Deb has a degree in physical and health education. Walking into the space, I felt like I was wandering into the lounge room of a terrace house as I admired the beautiful dark floorboards and community ambiance. The classes were challenging, but accessible and inclusive, and Russ's knowledge brightly shone through in his teaching.

True to the warmth of the Wollongong community, I felt welcome as I wandered into **Vinyasa Yoga Fairy Meadow**, a stop on the highway that feels miles away from the concrete jungle. The holistic classes are taught by experienced teachers who have been greatly influenced by the likes of Clive Sheridan and Simon Borg-Olivier.

It was impossible to squeeze everything into my one-week trip, but I did consult my local yogi friends, who recommended **Wollongong Yoga Centre**, formerly a Bikram Yoga space and also the largest Bikram studio in Australia, that now offers Yin, Vinyasa, Yoga Synergy and more in a mostly heated space. For Kundalini yogis, there's **Radiant Soul Yoga Studio** in Thirroul where classes are held in a funky, timber space. Recommended yogic eats included **All Good Things**, **Lettuce Be Frank** and **Quay Canteen**. There's also a plethora of teachers working from beautiful home spaces and local community halls. A look at any of the local health food stores' notice boards will point curious students in the right direction.

After a delightfully exhausting week, it became apparent that I'd really only sampled a taste of the smorgasbord of yoga in the Illawarra. I couldn't have imagined what a yoga mecca this humble university city would grow into in my absence, and after finding myself in a delicious flow of lattes and asana, I nostalgically began to plan my next visit, and I left with a heavy heart full of love.

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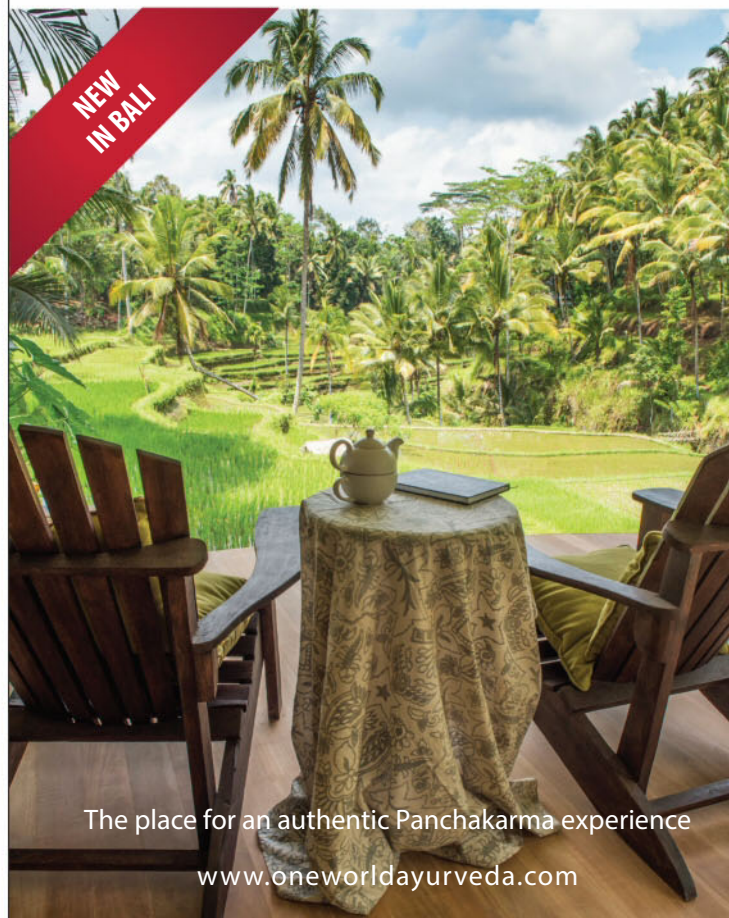
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“

Regarding my breathing... I regularly attempted to run up Earl Hill, but could not run all the way to the top – I could always only get around half way. Long story short, I damaged my MCL in my right knee which put me out of action – I couldn't run any more.

I did a **Teacher Training course with Knoff Yoga** which is a 3-week intensive course.

Total time with my injury and Teacher Training time meant I could not run or attempt Earl Hill for 3 months.

After my Teacher Training I went back and ran up 3/4 of the way. Couple of days after, I attempted it again and could run the whole of Earl Hill and have been ever since.

My lung capacity was not there before my teacher training course. **Now my lungs are able to expand further to allow a full breath and supply my body with more oxygen**, allowing me to have enough fuel to reach the top of Earl Hill while running.

To go from never being able to run Earl Hill, then not running at all for 3 months and then suddenly being able to run all the way to the top, was **100% due to an increase in lung capacity**. The Yoga postures and pranayama (breathing exercises) allowed the surrounding muscles of my thoracic cavity (ribcage area) to release and my lungs now expand further. This, along with the **strengthening of my diaphragm**.

I never knew how little of a lung capacity I had until now and it also continues to expand further. **Every week I am noticing a little extra with my breathing**. There are many more improvements in my overall health and wellbeing thanks to the Knoff Yoga System and the teachers.

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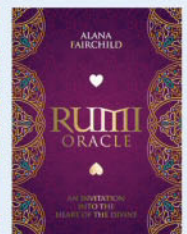
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Vibrant fusion

Yogalates founder Louise Solomon shares her international success story, how her passion for blending yoga and pilates has inspired others and what she loves most about being immersed in an ever-expanding fitness industry.

Interview by Tamsin Angus-Leppan

BYRON-BASED LOUISE SOLOMON, 53, was a single mum in her 20s when she created the fusion of yoga and pilates called *Yogalates*. Louise started teaching *Yogalates* in 1995 and in 2000 she was discovered by a UK film distributor and she started making *Yogalates* DVDs that went to number 1 in the UK and won the 2002 British Video Awards for Health and Fitness. Louise's success and longevity in the fitness industry show enormous commitment and courage, but when asked about what keeps her motivated, Louise says simply, "I enjoy the person that I am when I teach." Louise is teaching at the *Byron Spirit Festival*, March 31-April 2, 2017.

How did you first come to yoga?

In my early 20s I started yoga. Prior to that I was a bit of a master chef running

restaurants in Byron Bay. I used to do one class a week; there wasn't a lot of yoga on tap in the late 80s, and I started doing Ashtanga intensives because that's how they were run. I was very much a beginner and I actually got injured. I could not continue Ashtanga as I'd torn a groin muscle via an adjustment, but I was gaining so many more benefits in the experience of yoga than just the physical. At that time, pilates had just started in Byron Bay. I did one or two sessions on the reformer and the way my body felt after those sessions intrigued me. I continued with that for about two years and I ended up training in pilates in 1992. That was when there was no mat in pilates. However, I missed the yoga room, so in 1994 I trained in Ashtanga.

How did you develop *Yogalates*?

In that year, when I trained in Ashtanga, I was adapting and adjusting myself in poses from the knowledge that I learned and taught in pilates. I opened my studio in 1995, which is when I started fusing yoga and pilates. That was way ahead of any of the mainstream work in the mix of yoga and pilates. I launched my method as a single mum in a share home. It's extraordinary where I am now; I'm getting goose bumps saying that. When all this was going on, I was 26. Yoga gave me a lot of trust, courage and guidance. I launched my teacher training in 2000 and it was the longest running accredited teacher training in the Byron shire. When I started my course, I realised I needed a book because there was nothing out there on yoga and pilates. I rang around book stores to see if they knew of anyone who might be interested in doing my book. I found a woman at a publishing company who was interested and she took the idea of my book to the London Book Fair. A woman there liked the name *Yogalates* and her husband, the CEO of Momentum Pictures, contacted me to see if I wanted to do a DVD. The DVDs were huge! I was number one in the UK and I had interviews all over the world. I won an award in health and fitness and innovation in the UK. Then came the book. At one point, I could've set up in the UK but I didn't because I had my daughter going through the HSC so I stayed in Bangalow. That year, 2003, was a very busy time: my daughter was doing HSC and I was doing book and DVD launches around the country and training 35 students. It was like being launched on a rocket.

What do you like about the Byron Spirit Festival?

When people come to my classes for the first time, I say, it has to feel right for you and if this isn't right for you, find someone else ... don't give up. The festival opens a great platform for everybody to show all their phenomenal techniques and the insightful teachers we have and people will be guided to them. It's great to be a teacher but those people who come to you teach you so much. It's such a reciprocated profession to be in. A lot of yoga teachers come to classes at the festival and then they go and use what they learn in their teaching. ☺

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