

Commitment #1 Yoga

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“Yoga is the art of getting out of your own way” Eoin

The yoga practice is a powerful tool that allows our mind to empty itself of all the emotions and toxicity that we hold inside of us. It is like pressing a restart button on your computer when all the programs are crashing. We become able to reset our internal compass and recharge - starting from a really clear and clean place.

In this culture of pressure to look beautiful, act a certain way, give loyalty to Madison Avenue's view of perfection and happiness, we can easily lose sight of what we really need. Yoga allows us to go deep within to the true self and start to explore our own personal truths in a non judgmental, non harming manner.

Yoga teaches us to observe the true connection between body strengthening, breath movement and physical release. In the physical Hatha Yoga practice, and the spiritual practice, we can cultivate with the divine that resides within. My teacher Bryan Kest describes this as “yoga-asana” He goes on to say about the amazing yoga-asana: “Not only because bringing yoga into exercise makes exercise more potent in the sense of it being healing, which, by the way is probably the original intention of the exercise; yet mainly bringing yoga awareness- “yoga asana” in to the exercise gives us the opportunity to do something (besides just sit there in meditation) with these yoga qualities.” He goes on to explain: “ We can get a chance to begin to go through all the vicissitudes of a physical practice with the quiet and balanced mind, eventually getting so good at it that we notice that it starts transcending our practice time and permeates our whole lives”.

Some of the things to look at in ourselves when we practice may be:

- Can we be a little less reactive to discomfort in our practice?
- Can we let the world melt away and focus on the feelings that we are feeling?
- Can we be more accepting of ourself and our body's physical limitations?
- Can we be less reactive? Less judgmental? Less competitive and less filled with self hate, self criticism?
- Can we focus more on the present pose and not on where the pose is going to take us? Can we stop believing that the poses are going to bring us to a point of enlightenment?
- Can we stop guessing what the instructor is going to tell us next and stop jumping ahead- ignoring the moment of the asana that we are experiencing?
- Can we focus more on opening the breath into pathways or channels of energy and stop worrying what our yoga outfits look like?
- Can we forgive our selves for not doing what we are supposed to be doing?
- As Bryan says: Can we broaden the light and diminish the darkness?

In addition the important quality of yoga is about strengthening something that does not have a thing to do with muscles strength-- strengthening the muscle of complete surrender to feelings. Can we actually take the time in our day to practice some human qualities that revolve around acceptance and happiness. In this way Bryan explains that we can “elevate our being”. “ We can become more content and peaceful”. This can have a profound effect on our health and stress levels. This can even have a positive effect on

Commitment #1 Yoga

the people in our lives. Here are some of the qualities that Bryan says can be exercised in “yoga-asana”:

Gentleness	Forgiveness	Love
Acceptance	Generosity	
Tone & Suppleness	Compassion	
Being Present	Humility	
Moderation	Silence	
Gratitude	Patience	

As the sages believe, yoga is the science of the mind- as you cultivate awareness of the fluctuations of your mind, you realize that you have choices to make. To bring in this awareness into your physical practices, an awareness that become more intimate into what we are feeling, we can become more intimate with our selves and our true desires. Some of us may actually make headway and diminish our desire to give loyalty to images and messages that bombard our minds via the media and internet. Some of us may let go of the baggage that we carry from our childhood, some of us may let go of the pains we feel associated with failed marriages, failed relationships and the guilt that we have placed upon our selves for not reaching so prescribed goals. Yoga gives us space to just be - just be me! This is not a scientific equation. It is just quieting the mind so we can start to feel, once we can start to feel we can begin to heal. This is a process that takes time. Its not like flipping on and off a light switch. That is why we “practice” yoga - so we can practice and remind our selves why we come to the mat in the first place.

"Egotistical gratification, in the form of body shape or material gain, simply facilitates disfunction, because, in both cases, one does not need to be loving and accepting of one's self to succeed." - Bryan Kest's Power Yoga

With that being said- Every breath is an extreme act of kindness even in the midst of challenging asanas. The body mind connection is amazing and the consistency to the breath work will eventually bring you deeper and deeper into your poses. It is fascinating how the body is completely connected, so connected that our right side can even compensate for issues that are on the left side. Every muscle, nerve, tissues, tendons and every cell in your body have memory and storage capacity. Many places in our bodies are storage centers for pain, anguish, stress and strain. Yoga also helps to touch those places in loving kind ways to release tension and detoxify the body. When we practice with awareness we can actually get out of our own way, out of our own head and let the body and the yoga begin to work for us. When we feel that connection, all of sudden the moment is not about our personal problems or solving world issues, but more about loving ourselves and connecting to a persons wisdom that is all my own. We begin to transfer positive energy, positive messages to our selves and that it simply begin to LOVE ourselves again, falling in love with our selves again. And yes, it feels very, very good.

Commitment #1 Yoga

So to wrap things up- to practice yoga-anasanas-- to spread goodness, to spread love, we need to believe in ourselves, trust our selves and connect again with our goodness within our spiritual heart- the yogi's heart . With this sense of personal contentment, our peaceful, loving heart can shower our bodies with warmth and blissfulness.