

Moving towards the edge- Back-bending series

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Pushing towards your edge Vs. Surrendering

Being Type A, I always push myself to succeed. I hear from all of my yoga teachers to push to the edge but at the same time to surrender and relax. If I push to the edge, there is physical stress, and when there is stress, how can I let go and relax?

By Sudha Carolyn Lundeen

Sudha Carolyn Lundeen's reply:

Pushing and relaxing *are* opposing actions. Pushing creates tension and resistance, in both the mind and the body; relaxing releases tension. It's true; if you don't go far enough in your asanas, there will be little stretch and you will probably not increase the range of asanas within your reach.

But pushing too far in your [yoga practice](#) is a kind of boundary violation likely to result in pain, frustration, and injury. Somewhere in the middle of those extremes, a state of balance awaits you.

Given your personal tendency to "go for the burn"—and you are not alone in this—I'd like to offer a few ideas and questions for you to ponder. First, what is the edge that you are trying to push to? Is it an edge of flexibility? Endurance? Attention? And what do you need to surrender?

Consider the possibility that the type of surrender you might want to cultivate on your yoga mat is letting go of the need to push to achieve. If you work in your poses having clarified your intentions, what happens?

Word choice can also make a big difference in how you approach your edge. When your teachers say "push" to the edge, you might try translating their directive into "explore" or "meet" the edge to soften your will. I personally like the image of "snuggling" up to the edge; it's cozy and friendly. It helps me relate to my edge like most relationships, which are ever-changing and take some time to get to know.

Take the next month to experiment and test this out for yourself. See what happens if you enter a pose with sensitivity instead of force. Discover what the word surrender means for you in that context. Allow the postures to develop according to the readiness of both your mind and body, not some idea of how your postures "should" look or feel.

The doctor's credo "Do no harm" applies equally well to how we treat ourselves on the yoga mat.

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