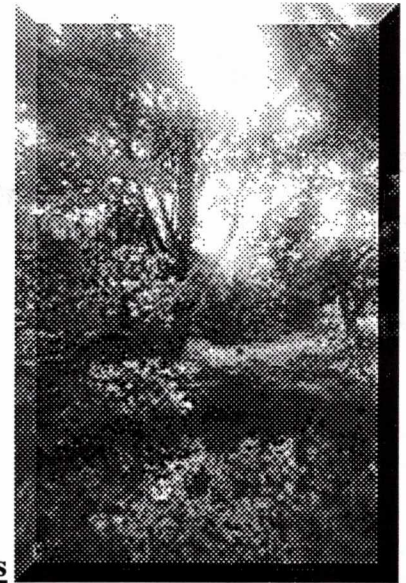


# Yoyoga

with  
Joan

September 1, 1996  
Issue 1

"Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is."  
-- Erich Fromm



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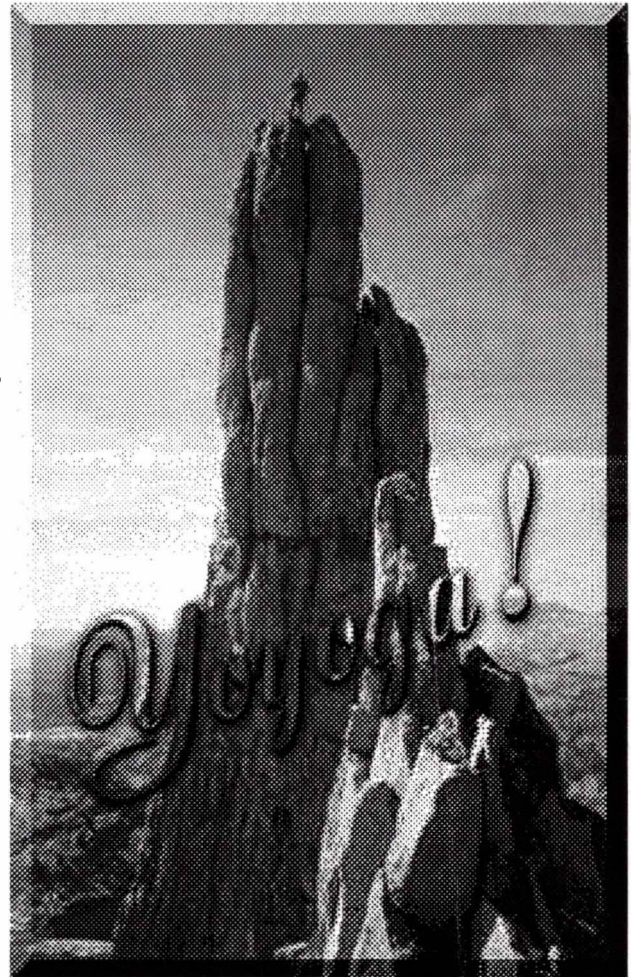
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**Too often, life is like an unfocused photo. We go through our lives without direction, out of focus, just hoping things will turn out alright.**

**While Yoga isn't a religion, it can be a way of life. Anyone can practice Yoga, regardless of age, fitness level or religion.**

**Some people choose to look at Yoga as an exercise, while some look at it as a philosophy. The best way to study Yoga is anyway that's right for you. If you choose, however, Yoga is a way to add movement and flexibility to your body, while giving you guidance through a philosophy of life that can help to offer clarity, direction and focus.**

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## BREATH!

As we get older our breath becomes shallower. Have you ever noticed an infant sleeping.? Their little tummy gently heaves up and down. They are naturally using their diaphragm muscle in their respiration! As we mature, our breath raises higher and pretty soon we are hardly using our diaphragm muscle at all. Our chest heaves, our shoulders raise...our breath weakens.

So lets recapture our life-force (pranayama). Let us deepen our experience of life and in turn reduce our stress by some simple breath exercises...

Bring your attention to your breath. Try and lower it into the diaphragm, which is located right below the lower ribs. As you inhale, let the diaphragm expand outward. As you exhale let it release and come inward. Try and keep as little movement as possible in the chest and shoulders.

Now try and increase the exhalation so that you are exhaling twice as long as you are inhaling. A natural way to relax the body. Continue as long as you like and then come back to your regular breathing.

Try this simple technique next time you are majorly stressed out. It reduces tensions and helps clear the mind. Not only will you be happy you tried this...but probably those around you will be happier too!



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## EXTEND THE NECK

How are you sitting right now as you read this? There is a good chance your back is curved or starting to curve. What this curved back does is make your breath shallower. It compresses the lungs and the diaphragm muscle.

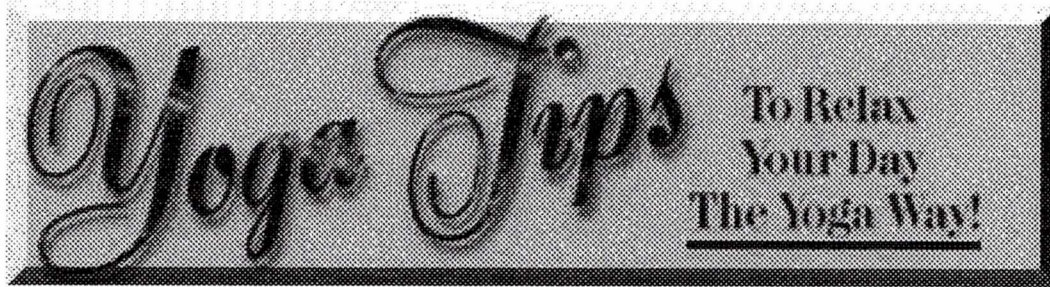
Let's start by bringing your back up straight. Bring your focus to the back of the neck. Let your shoulders come down away from your ears. Is your chest starting to open a little more?

Now imagine the back of the neck lengthening. As the shoulders push down, the back of the neck extends. Keep the chin parallel to the desk. The tendency is to push the chin down towards the chest to feel the back of the neck stretch, but we are going to get this stretch without moving the chin.



With the posture aligned, it is possible to get a magnificent stretch of the back of the neck. All the vertebrae of the spine have an opportunity right now to naturally fall into place. You are able to breath more fully... enjoy!

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## LOWER THE SHOULDERS AND OPEN THE CHEST!

It can be tough out there in the world all right. Just when we think we have got it all together and the world is our oyster (oysters are cute), something happens that knocks us down a peg or two and soon the chest curls in the shoulders hunch up. It is the body language of protection. It can be very difficult to stay open to life, especially when life is difficult.

The science of yoga is about increasing one's AWARENESS. It is a study to open one's body and mind to what is really going on.

- Is your breathing difficult?
- Is your neck tight?
- Are your shoulders near your ears?
- Is your back hunched?
- Is your mind cluttered with negative thoughts?



These are just a few questions that come to mind and body through the practice of yoga.

NOW, try sitting up straight and rolling your shoulders down away from your ears. As you do so, bring your chest forward. Are you starting to feel more confident? If your back is starting to sway forward with your chest, readjust the shoulders and align the back straight again. A simple movement like this can help us to face the world, even the difficult situations, in a clearer and stronger way. As the chest opens and you are able to breath more freely, you will find you are able to approach life in a freer way as well.... with less judgments and more understanding. Awareness begins to rise when you are not curling up and hiding, but facing things as they are. Seeing the world in a clearer way. Learning to love and rejoice in who you are!

You are beautiful and special...and don't believe a word otherwise... even if negative words about you are coming from you! WAKE UP! YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND SPECIAL!!



## WIGGLE YOUR TOES!

Once upon a time, a yogi went to his teacher complaining about a chronic neck problem he had. He was doing the yoga postures and could not figure out what was preventing his neck from relaxing. The teacher looked over the yogi's body with a glance and said "It is your right great toe." The yogi was stunned and laughed inwardly at this remark. Nevertheless, he started to pay more attention to this toe. He would wiggle it more often and laugh at what the teacher saw as the basis for his neck problem. When his neck started getting tight, instead of his usual massage to his neck, sometimes he would start playing with his toes.

As he did this he thought, "How strange that teacher is... but look at me! I am playing with my toes! And through his pain he would begin to chuckle. Suddenly he noticed that for a brief moment his pain went away. And then he thought... "It's the chuckle that made me forget the pain... Certainly it is not that toe!" But he did not forget that moment of relief and so he continued to massage and wiggle his toes. Soon his chronic neck pain went away.



I wonder what became of this yogi? I hope he became a foot doctor...

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## A smile in your eyes!

We have all heard the phrase "put a smile on your face". The other day while watching some beautiful children happily at play, a photographer told them to smile for a picture and suddenly all these frozen smiles appeared on their cute faces. It was quite a funny sight indeed! And it appeared to be quite a struggle for the children to keep these smiles on their faces too!

As adults, some of us learn to bring that smile up and let the strain of smiling not be as obvious - outwardly at least. But inwardly, the struggles and tensions persist. To smile with your eyes, is to look with a sense of love and compassion. Not only in the way we look at others, but, very importantly, in the way we look at ourselves.



Removing the judgments, and replacing them with acceptance. Replacing the impatience with patience. Finding the wonder, beauty, and innocence in something or someone we have seen so many times before. Pausing for some deep and cleansing breaths. Soon, the smile in your eyes will match the joy in your heart, which will bring a smile to your lips.

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## Which is the right path to follow?

Just when you think you are headed in the right direction, a new idea sprouts up that makes you want to make a turn in a completely different direction. Soon your life's course has more twist and turns than a roller coaster (and emotionally feels like a roller coaster ride too!) How do you steady yourself? How can true discipline be achieved?



These are the type of questions I hear constantly from people who are wondering if yoga is the right path for them. With so many different self-help books on the market, and so many authors and lecturers who are so convincing in their chosen path, it can become increasingly difficult to pick and choose one path to follow (and if you are a Gemini, the whole process becomes even more difficult).

This is why no matter what path you choose, yoga can help sooth out the wrinkles in the process. Yoga involves an inner reflection. Through the practice of the yoga postures/asanas, your focus becomes clearer. It takes less time to decide if a path you are headed on is really the right path for you.

Yoga quiets the constant chatter of the mind. The path of the mind becomes clearer, and so the path of the body. Does this mean that the topsy turvy days of old are gone for good? Perhaps. Or perhaps they become more fun to deal with...

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## Have you heard the story of the crocodile?

I heard it first from Anthony De Mellow. It struck me as a yoga story. I love to tell the story... it is fun to act out while speaking it. I will do my best to tell you it now through the written word. Can you find yoga meanings in it?

There was once a Boy sitting on the edge of a pier. A Crocodile was caught in a net near the pier. The crocodile yelled out to the boy, "Please let me out little boy! I am caught here and I have a family to feed!"

The boy responded, "Crocodile, do you think I am foolish? If I let you out you will grab me!"

The crocodile called back, "Little boy, how could I hurt the one who saves my life? I would be so grateful to you! Please, help me."

The boy thought about what the crocodile said and determined it was just to let him out. As soon as he did, the crocodile grabbed him.

"But I saved your life!" screamed the little boy.

"Don't take it personally, little boy." said the crocodile. "It is just the way it is. It is the way of the world."

"It is not the way it is! It is NOT the way of the world!" said the boy as he struggled in the large jaws of the crocodile. "Ask someone else!" Said the little boy, "I know I am right!"

So the crocodile looked up and saw a bird in a tree. He called out to the bird.

"Bird, is this not the way it is? Is this not the way of the world?"

The bird chirped back, "The crocodile is right little boy. It is the way of the world. It IS the way it is. Look at me... I was coming home to my nest last week to feed my little children and to my horror a snake was crawling up the tree straight to my nest! I screamed and yelled but I could not save my children. The snake ate them up one by one as I cried in vain. The crocodile is right. It is the way of the world... it is the way it is."

"See" said the crocodile to the boy. "I was right."

"No," said the boy "Ask someone else!"



The crocodile looked up and saw a donkey walking by. He shouted out "Donkey! Is this not the way of the world? Is this not the way it is?"

The donkey responded... "I am afraid the crocodile is right. It IS the way of the world. It is the way it is. Look at me! I slaved my whole long life for my master, and when I am old and no longer fit to work, my master leaves me out to wander and wait for the first animal to pounce on me and eat me. Alas, the crocodile is right... It is the way of the world."

"All right, boy, I have done as you asked." said the crocodile

"Just one more," screamed the boy, "please ask just one more."

So the crocodile looked up and saw a rabbit run by. He yelled out to the rabbit.

"Hey! Rabbit! Is this not the way of the world? Is this not the way it is?"

The rabbit stopped in his tracks and saw the little boy struggling in the crocodile's powerful jaws.

"Well now," said the rabbit calmly "I believe this requires a discussion of some sort, but you must let that little boy out of your jaws so he too can partake in this discussion."

"Oh, you think I am quite stupid, rabbit." Chuckled the crocodile, "If I let the little boy out he will run!"

"Really, crocodile," said the rabbit "You must know that if the little boy should try, one swoop of your strong tale will stop him!"

"He is right" thought the crocodile... so he let the little boy out.

And as soon as he did the rabbit screamed with all his might... "RUN!!!"

The little boy ran as fast as he could and escaped from the crocodile. The rabbit caught up to the little boy and said gleefully.

"Now little boy, you should go back to your village and call them all to come back for a crocodile feast, for that crocodile still has his tale caught in the net!"

And that is exactly what the boy did. His village came back and had a crocodile feast. The boy brought with him his dog. When the dog saw the rabbit he quickly ran after him and caught the rabbit in its jaws. The little boy screamed for his dog to stop, but it was too late. The rabbit was uttering his final breaths as the boy ran up to him.

The boy spoke softly to the rabbit as he sadly watched it dying on the ground. "I am afraid the crocodile was right, rabbit. It is just the way it is. It is the way of the world."

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## Counting To 10 Works!

Remember the old saying for when you REALLY get mad... "Count to 10 first!" But why? Will this repress your emotions? Will it distract you from reality? Will it dissipate your strength and turn you into a wimp?

What counting to 10 first does, in essence, is train you in one of the key concepts in Yoga - DETACHMENT. It helps you to "witness" your emotions like a train going by... first the pavement rattles, then the train roars by, sometimes the train is long - sometimes it is short, soon it is puffing off in the distance, and then the pathway clears. If you have an opportunity sometime, try and experience your anger as an observer. Not the Conductor in the train, but rather as the person watching the train go by. Don't act... WATCH your anger. See it rattle and roll. Breath deeply.



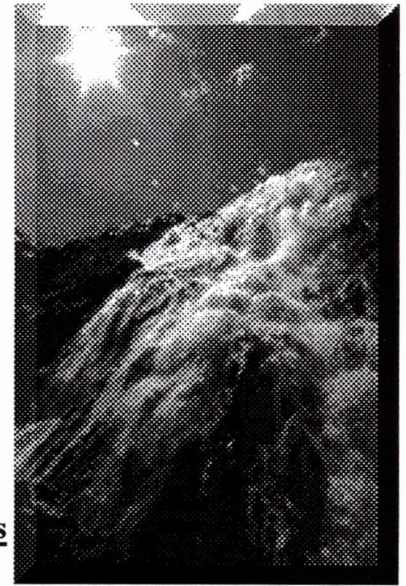
Now this is hard to do. Most people will seethe and hold on to what they think made them angry rather than turn inward and WATCH... watching what rolls by like a train...

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# *Yoyoga* with Joan

January 1, 1997  
Issue 9

"It takes a long time to become young."  
-- Pablo Picasso



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## "KARMA" - not related to teenage lingo "Car, Ma?"

Happy New Year!!!! 1997 is upon us! What are your New Year Resolutions? Have you kept them in the past? Do you think this year will be different? What makes certain behaviors so difficult to change? KARMA.

Karma involves patterns of behavior. It includes the life forces that keep us "on the wheel," sort of speak. Imagine coming to this earth on a wheel. Imagine your personality and life experiences conforming to this wheel. For instance, whenever Aunt Gertrude speaks, your blood boils. Whenever anyone who sounds like Aunt Gertrude speaks, your blood boils. Whenever you even think of Aunt Gertrude your blood boils. Lots of people and things remind you of Aunt Gertrude. Your blood boils a lot. You have quite a temper. Here is the beginning of a personality trait.



We all have Karma. We all have little buttons in us that when they are pushed, we automatically respond in a certain way. These buttons keep us moving nicely on a wheel. So we move along on this wheel until one day we realize taking a deep breath while thinking of Aunt Gertrude quiets us for a moment. Next time a situation pops up that gets the blood boiling, a deep breath is taken. Aaahhh! Then the blood starts boiling again...but this time it takes a few seconds longer to simmer.

Yoga helps us to detach from negative emotions. It helps us to see that we have control over our lives. We have choices. To have the ability to jump off the wheel, even if only for a few seconds is an empowering experience. Next time your blood starts to boil, take a deep breath...unclench your jaw, listen to the air going in...slowly release it out.....try another...aaahhhh!

Happy New Year



## All for One and Om for All!

Perhaps you have heard of the "Om" sound? Perhaps you have chanted or sung it yourself? Om is the sound or mantra that is often chanted in yoga studies. It is a sound that is all encompassing. If all of life were geared to center around a certain sound, In Yogic thought, that sound is Om.

Try saying the sound now. Take a deep breath, and sing out the "O" as long as you can without your voice faltering. Stay strong. Sing it with strength. Slowly let the O sound come to a close with the "m" sound.

Take a deep breath, close your eyes and try it again...

Notice how closely "Om" sounds like the "Amen" sung at the end of a hymn. Have you ever noticed when voices sing "Amen" in a choir that even though they may start out as many distinctive voices, soon they blend into a beautiful harmony of voices? Have you every felt or heard this when you sang "Amen" with many voices?

Om....Amen....All

Peace.



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## Is there Life After Death? Oh, Yeah? How do you know?

Have you ever looked up to someone who ended up disappointing you terribly? Perhaps it was a trusted minister who spoke every Sunday on "how to love" and then filed for divorce. Or perhaps it was the local health food fanatic who you find out sneaks MacDonaldis hamburgers. Or perhaps it was beautiful and sweet Martha Stewie down the block who disillusioned you when you heard her screaming at her kids. What a struggle life can be!

Searching for satya... you continue on your search to find the "perfect" person. There's got to be someone out there who has it ALL together? But just when you think someone is too good to be true ... KA-ZAM! They are! It is difficult, in fact some may argue impossible, to put your faith in the outside world.



Yoga is not based on faith. Yoga involves a system of techniques. It is not a system of faith. It supplies you tools to experience and uncover truths for yourself. Why accept someone else's word for heightened consciousness, when you can experience heightened consciousness yourself? The hatha yoga postures are part of a system of techniques to experience life in a fuller way.

And now we come to final relaxation, the "Corpse Pose." What a weird name for a pose! Why would one want to be a corpse?! Is not Yoga about Life?!!

YES! Yoga is about life! And life and death are inseparable!! In learning the corpse pose, one learns how to live. In learning to release tensions from the body one is able to focus inward. By focusing inward, one is able to ultimately connect with the beauty of the universe...

Om.



## SHINE FORTH!

You simply must see the movie, "Shine." It is a story about hope and karma. The story revolves around the incredibly difficult struggles of a brilliant classical musician. "Karma" involves the "forces" in one's life. The "pulls" we encounter to move in certain directions. Karma can sometimes be so incredibly strong that it seems there is nothing to do but ride with it for awhile... to "go with the flow" (or the roller coaster). Until one day a glimmer of an opportunity is seen, and one has enough strength to catch it...and to shine. To transcend karma can be extremely difficult.



In the movie, "Shine," the main character has what could be coined astrologically as a "strong Saturn." Saturn is the planet for grounding - and he has a most difficult time with this aspect in his life. Being born into a restrictive family that supplied him with tools and a heavy Saturn to achieve musically, but not spiritually. Finding a balance became a lifetime struggle for him.

I do not want to give too much away about the movie so as to prevent you from seeing it. It is a movie for yogis. Do see it...and shine forth!

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## First Principal - NON-VIOLENCE

What a world we live in. As our minds become more aware of non-violence, we often see the violence around us more clearly. In fact, it can appear quite overwhelming! How difficult it is not to get caught up in it. After all, violence can be very subtle. Can anyone truly live a life of complete non-violence?

Contemplate these situations for a moment...

\*When we cut some broccoli from its stem into the earth to sustain our life...is this violence?



\*When we cut the umbilical chord of the child to the mother in securing their independent lives...is this violence?

\*When we push someone out of the way of a speeding car and in the fall to the ground the person breaks a leg ...is this violence?

\*When we degrade someone who degrades us...is this violence?

\*When we dismiss someone who's view we do not agree with...is this violence?

\*When we draw a line in the sand and in the process break apart minute life forms...is this violence?

### Where does one draw the line?

There are 5 stages to every yoga posture:

- 1) Visualize the posture.
- 2) Flow into the posture.
- 3) Become one with the posture.



## What compels a soul to act foolishly?

I posed this question to college students studying Yoga. **"What compels a soul to act foolishly, even against its own will, even illogically?"** Here are a sample of some of the inspired and thought provoking answers I received:

"I think that what compels a soul to act foolishly is greed and selfishness. You can get consumed with greed and your soul does foolish things that it would normally not do. You are even going against your own will. It's like you have a fight inside your soul."



"Pressure. Pressure caused by events or outside pressure from people. It may also be caused by pressure put on by oneself."

"The two main things that I feel compels a soul to act foolishly, against its own will and illogically, are temptation and curiosity."

"It takes courage, discipline, self-fulfillment, and a vision to overcome temptations."

"It could be a lack of Svadhyaya, Santosha, Brahmacharya. Society pressures us to act extremely foolish."

"We become slaves to our own competitiveness and to the gifts of life."

"Sometimes the mind takes over the soul."

"Greed, lack of contentment."

"The 'id' compels a soul to act foolishly."

"In my case, the pressure I put on myself to have others like me."

"Spiritual immaturity or ignorance"

"I believe low self-esteem causes people to react foolishly."

"A soul, I feel would only act against its own will when forced to - as in acting in self defense - one might do something against one's will to survive."

"Constant need. Need to fill holes in side, I guess."

"Who's to say what you're doing is even fooling."

**Now I ask you:**

**What compels a soul to act foolishly, even against its own will, even illogically?**

In the Bhagavad Gita, an ancient sacred text from India, the main character, Arjuna, prepares for battle. He is an excellent Warrior - noble, dedicated, and honorable. It is his duty and great honor to lead the battle. Before Arjuna enters the battle, he looks out over the battlefield to see just who he is about to lead his mighty troops to fight. To his horror, he sees his dear family and friends amidst the people he must battle! He is compelled to go to war with the very people he knows and loves the most!!!

He cries out to Krishna (God or his higher self):

**"What compels a soul to act foolishly, even against its own will, even illogically?"**

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## You don't bring me flowers anymore.

I remember someone who was in my life 20 years ago. I wonder what became of him? His name was Jeff. We lived in the same dorm at college. I have not seen him since then. He seemed always to be so happy. Not just in a crowd of people, but also when we spent time chatting alone. In fact, he really stood out as unique in that atmosphere of college where many people were struggling to be "reborn." An atmosphere where many students were depressed because they had not figured out how to do it...to be "reborn." I, myself, certainly was struggling with this issue. Fluctuating between extreme happiness and sociability, and mournful solitude. Brooding was the "in" thing, you see.



I remember Jeff telling me that every year on his birthday he gave his mother flowers to thank her for having him. I remember thinking how different he was. Was he for real? Birthdays are a time most people want to be appreciated. Many people are sad at birthdays because they do not feel they are appreciated enough. Jeff was beaming on his birthday; and he was concerned with letting the people who gave him birth know how much he appreciated the life they gave him!

I remember how Jeff would always be the first to lend a hand if someone needed help. I remember him opening doors for others. This was not just to women he was trying to impress, this was toward all people. I remember him volunteering some of his time for charities. I remember him struggling with his grades in school. I remember how good it felt to be his friend.

I remember a lot about Jeff. He was a wonderful friend and teacher. My birthday is coming up soon...time for me to give my parents some flowers...



## How to be truthful in a world which is not.

The study of yoga can make one painfully aware. One becomes more aware of the hurt and pain that exists in so many hearts. One begins to see that "a book can truly not be judged by its cover." As one's self-awareness grows, so does one's compassion for all of life. One becomes more patient - and painfully more aware of the times when impatience erupts.

How can one be blissful when those around us are hurting?

A smile may mask a breaking heart... but a **true** smile brings with it the expression of inner beauty.

An act of compassion toward a struggling soul may mask the objective of receiving some political reward... but the gift of **true** compassion toward a struggling soul, is an expression of inner truth, of inner bliss.

You see, in essence, the truth can not be hidden.



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*Yoyoga will be updated on the 1st and 15th of every month.*



## Why a "Pose" is a "Pose."

In Hatha Yoga, the bodywork is referred to as "asanas." In English asanas are referred to as "poses" or "postures." Why is this form of exercise called a pose or posture?

A pose is a pose because the body positions are held for a period of time until a stillness is found. The positions are held ultimately to find the **stillness within**. As one progresses in Hatha Yoga practice, one's body becomes stronger and more flexible. Postures become easier. When this happens, new postures are introduced or old postures are deepened to find a new "edge." The reason one explores an edge, is to eventually release the edge and become one with it.



Have you ever noticed how easy it is to feel "contented" when the sun is shining, there is a beautiful clear breeze, you just ate a great meal, you are in love, and the world feels like your oyster? ( I do not really understand how a world can feel like your oyster, but this is a popular term...I hope you get the drift). So, how does one find contentment when the sky is gloomy, the air is polluted, the meal you ate is lacking, you have not had a date in decades, and the world feels like a jellyfish that bites (jellyfish I relate to)? According to yoga philosophy, it is the challenging times such as these when true contentment has an opportunity to be practiced and deeply understood. This does not mean that one has to be satisfied with polluted air. What this does means is that :

- 1)One has to first gather the full awareness of the polluted air
- 2)One has to take responsibility for the air
- 3)One has to take responsibility for one's body being in the air
- 4)One has to take action by either changing locations or working to purify the air.

Just as the earth has a limited area to move in, so does the physical body. Most of us can spend a lifetime (or many) testing the limits of the physical body. Hatha Yoga involves a deep-seated understanding that in those moments when the "edge" is released...the infinite appears. Knowing with increasing awareness, that this release may happen while one is in a difficult contorted yoga pose, or when one is ever so slightly moving an eyebrow...



## The TRUTH does not hurt!

The following is an excerpt from Joan's new book, "Yoga For A New Day..."

When was the last time you heard someone say to you "I've got to tell you this for your own good." Inside you might be thinking, "Uh-oh, better put my defenses up for this!" Remember the yoga bliss concept: The truth is bliss. If it hurts it is not bliss. If it hurts it is not the truth! The truth does NOT hurt!! If your words injure, misalign, or manipulate a person, they are not truthful.

But what if his tie really is ugly?! Rest assured someone will love his tie. Why not let it be you? And, when you come across times when blissful words are hard to come by, re-examine your thoughts. Silence is sacred.



Words can be extremely powerful. When words are truthful, every cell, every thought, every fiber of your being is in agreement. If everything is in agreement, then what you say will manifest immediately! Powerful concept, eh? "Dis" ease or "un"ease is when something does not fit - whether it is a cell in the body, a thought in the head, or a word in the mouth. Something is out of the blissful state. And so, the saying "Be careful what you wish for, it may come true," can be more accurately stated to: If what you say is true...it most certainly will become (and immediately so) reality.

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## Gotcha, Satya!

The yogic concept of the idea that "truth" manifests is an important one to expound on. For example, there is a joke that when someone is concerned with weight, all they have to do is look at an ice cream sundae and they gain weight! Even tho they may think they want to loose, there is a part of them that wants to gain...and so comes the desire for the sundae. I remember a line from Rhoda on the old Mary Tyler Moore show..."I don't know why I am even thinking of eating this brownie, I should just apply it right to my hips and save some time." In yogic thought, Rhoda does not have to eat the brownie for she already has! Depending on which desire is stronger ('loose' verses 'gain') will determine a person's weight. Perhaps both desires are strong, and so the weight remains constant.



Another example, if you wish to be a great poet, you will be...when you are grounded in the truth of being a great poet. Then you will see clearly that you ARE a great poet immediately. You **are** a great poet! This gives new meaning to the term "seeing is believing." First, one must see the truth. When TRUTH totally permeates ones being...it manifests immediately.

Gotcha, Satya!

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## NON-GREED THOUGHTS

The concept of greed...here's where things like envy and jealousy come into play. Thinking that maybe you can't have what that other person has. How come they get to have it, and you don't? Would it be possible to turn envy/jealousy around so that instead you are truly happy that the other person is able to have what you think is so great. In fact, you may become so happy for them that you may not even want it anymore! What joy! Can you share in their happiness? And if you still want it, can you work toward getting something similar, while letting them keep theirs? Just think... then the world would be filled with two happy people...instead of only one.



Non-greed within our minds can also be looked at in terms of one-pointedness. Staying focused on the subject at hand and letting go of cluttering thoughts. Beginning to notice when unnecessary thoughts cloud the mind, and then gently, lovingly releasing them. No need to push them out violently, just take a calming breath and let them peacefully go.

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## Me? Hug a Tree?!

When was the last time you hugged a tree?  
Yesterday? A few weeks ago? A few decades?  
Never?

Ok, get off your doopa...go outside and try it.  
Hug the nearest, sweetest tree you can find.  
This beautiful living tree is filled with warmth  
and energy, just like you. Well, maybe not just  
like you...but it is breathing and living just like  
you. It does have veins...just look at a leaf! Its  
roots are grounded in the earth a bit more than  
ours. It can not take a rocket ride and explore the  
moon like us. Although, every single night this  
tree encounters the moon shining above its branches.  
We cover ourselves from the moon in our houses (made  
of trees). The tree feels the heat, the snow, the blizzards, the birds on its branches.



Have you seen a thirsty tree lately? It is summer time. The trees look so sturdy and resilient; and yet, the tree's life span will be shortened considerably if it does not get enough water. You may not notice it this year. A tree that could live to be over 100 will live much less than that without the proper amount of water.

The tree breathes in the air we breathe out. It purifies the air we breathe out and sends it back to us. And we do the same for it. You may not realize this, because our bodies were just made to do this. We did not really choose this...or did we?

When was the last time you hugged a tree?

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## ZIP A DEE DO!

This is a true story. The cycle of emotions

Getting ready for work in the morning, a husband and wife were arguing over some emotional issue. Thinking things had calmed down, she asked him to zip up the zipper on the back of her dress. Angrily, he zipped it up and down several times...very fast. He broke the zipper. Boy, was she steaming now! She changed her dress, and off they dashed on their separate ways to work.

All day long she simmered with anger. Finally, the work day ended and she went home. Outside their house she saw him under their car fixing something. The upper part of his body was completely under the car. Steaming, she went over to him and zip, ZIP, ZIP!!! His pants zipper, three times fast and hard. Triumphant, she stormed into the house.

There inside the house was her husband! Shocked, she asked who was working on their car?! He said it was their neighbor. Utterly embarrassed, she told her husband what she just did. They rushed outside to try to explain to the neighbor. The neighbor didn't respond...they pulled him out from under the car. He had been so stunned by the zipping that he sat up quickly, hit his head on the pipes and was knocked unconscious...

That is as far as I know of this story. But, where do you suppose it might end? Will anymore people be knocked unconscious?





## The Healing Power of Yoga

Yoga, along with the many forms of bodywork such as massage, tai chi, aromatherapy, etc, can be an incredible path to take in the healing process. According to yogic thought, we are on this planet working out karma. Karma is the law of cause and effect. We build up karma from past lifetimes and from this lifetime. "Healing" is a process in softening one's karma and eventually releasing it. This path of change can be incredibly difficult. It is important to understand that change is often important and extremely necessary in one's path towards enlightenment.



As many of you know by now, I am a yoga teacher. The classes I teach at the college require some written papers from the students. I am constantly amazed and enriched by the quality of writing and the depth of spirit within the papers that are handed to me. I have asked two recent students if they would be willing to share their papers on the internet. They agreed to do so. And so, I will share them with you now, with deep gratitude...

### **Hatha Yoga** by Michele Spidale

Besides the physical benefits that I have received from Yoga, there are many emotional benefits that I have gained also. I have learned to experience a deep relaxation based on a daily routine that is easy for me to replicate and experience on my own. Through these relaxation techniques, I have learned to work on my concentration and to improve it. The bell used during relaxation helped me to become aware of the many times my mind wanders and the noise has allowed me to relax and concentrate on my breath again. Through this relaxation technique, I have learned to get rid of negative thoughts that bombard my mind all the time. I have gained a better and more important sense of self worth and confidence. I know that I can get through any situation if I concentrate on performing the yamas of yoga. I have gained more of an inner peace in this yoga class because it has allowed me to become more comfortable with myself. I now know how to stay clam under pressure while my mind becomes more sensitive and alert. I have really enjoyed this class and the inspirational quotes and ideas it has brought to my life. Although yoga is not a religion, it gives me that same feeling I have had on religious retreats and it is the most important - a sense of self worth!

## Correlation of Body Image and Yoga in Me

By Fred Jeffries

My own life is marked by some rather disheartening experiences as a child, abuse that left me guarded and closed. I realized that over 22 years of unconscious tension I shaped my body into a largely closed and tense posture. I realized I have been literally holding muscles tight so long I was unaware of their tension. Muscles in my stomach that I can't remember not clenching. It is at a point , in letting them relax, that this very act causes pain. My shoulders are rolled forward, with my arms and hands turned inward. My back is hunched forward and my head bent forward. The entire purpose is to close my body, to stay safe and guarded.

The reality is however, that all growth requires risk. My risk involves opening my body up and allowing it to be vulnerable. It is a task to trust so many people. The most terrifying moments in class for me were when we had to touch, or be touched by other people. The courage it required of me to stay, and come back was very difficult to maintain. I extended every ounce of courage coming back as much as I did!

The gains I have made here have been tremendous in this last quarter. Do you know this is the first time I have **ever** taken a gym class (that includes all of high school). This is the first time I have summoned the courage to face this fear. The fear of letting myself be seen. I realized that in yoga class I am the truest version of me. I am in my most honest form while facing this fear. I believe this is because I am, at heart still a terrified little 8 year old hiding in a 22 year old body.

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## Today I killed a small sparrow.

While driving down the highway today, I killed a small sparrow. I had never killed an animal while driving before, not to my knowledge at least. I have seen dead animals in the road many times. Whenever I can, if their dead bodies are still in tact, I stop the car and bring the animal to the side of the road. I often wondered how could someone hit an animal and just leave it there. What a cruel person this must be. Today, as I was driving home from the yoga temple, contemplating spiritual thoughts, I hit a small sparrow.



The sparrow came across my windshield very quick. I was going 65 miles an hour, in the center lane of a crowded 3 lane highway. In a instant, I saw the little bird loose control of its flight a few feet ahead of me. The gust of wind of the passing cars was too much for it. Thud...a small thud against my car windshield. I gasped! Oh my god! The poor bird!

I could not stop. I was in the midst of a whirlwind of cars, most going much faster than I. There was no way to stop. Alas, the poor little bird had come to a miserable fate. I kept driving. But I was the one who hit it...

I quickly turned off the first exit I came to, determined to save that little bird if at all possible. I have control! After numerous on/off ramps to get back to the bird, I finally and fearfully got near to the area where I hit it. (I say fearfully because by now I was sure it would be horribly crushed by the onslaught of traffic. You see, I fear gruesome deaths.) I put my car hazard lights on and drove slowly.

I saw it! Still in its form being pushed around by the strong winds of the cars. I paused but kept driving. What could I really do? This bird is surely dead. I must let go of this little bird and its fate.....but I killed it.

I went back to the bird again. Traced my way back to it thru many highway on/off ramps. I came to it. I pulled over to the side of the highway across from it. Cars whizzing between us at 70+ miles an hour. I stood on the side of the road watching the small bird being tossed around by the wind of the moving cars. I was scared. Please everyone just stop for a moment for this poor little bird!! I prayed for some power strength to run out there between the cars and get it. Its neck now obviously broken. It's body still not squashed. I went to my trunk and put some gloves on. (Life and death here, and I am putting gloves on! Fearful of getting so so close. Fear is very powerful. Death is very scary. My mind slowing my actions.) I planned to rush out to the center

of the road, between a pause in the heavy onslaught of traffic and quickly swoop it up and bring it to the side of the road . I trembled. I realized I was not quick enough to do this. I felt weak. I realized that I might cause a pile up of more destruction, including my own. I stood on the side of the road trembling with my gloves on. Watching the cars. Watching the bird.

Today I killed a small little sparrow...

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## A Kriya Story of Friendship

There once was a man named Sam who had a beautiful pair of shoes. The whole village admired his shoes. Every night he would leave his shoes outside his door before retiring for the evening. Neighbors would walk by his home and smile that he had such a nice pair of shoes.

One night a good friend of his named Jack, strolled by Sam's home and stopped to look at Sam's shoes. He looked down at his own calloused, bare feet and thought how nice it would be to have a pair of shoes like Sam's. When nobody was looking he took Sam's shoes.



The next day, Sam woke up to find he was shoeless! He thought it must have been some traveling coyote that took his shoes. Surely it was no one from the village. Sam was determined to work extra hard to make a new pair of shoes. This required many days and night of long hard work.

Some days he would take a break from his hard work and go into town. There he would see his friend Jack and notice what nice feet Jack had. (You see, whenever Jack saw Sam coming he would quickly take off Sam's shoes and hide them in his shoe bag.) Sam asked Jack how he could keep his feet so nice without any shoes? Jack would quickly change the subject and hurry off down the road (with his shoe bag). Sam was left wondering what became of their friendship? In the past, they were able to talk so freely.

Jack now lived in fear of seeing Sam. It hurt Jack to see Sam's blistering feet. Jack decided to move to another town where he could wear Sam's shoes freely. After some time though, the shoes wore out. Jack was shoeless and unhappy again. He chose to live his remaining days shoeless and unhappy in that distant town.

In the meantime, and after many months, Sam was able to make a nice new pair of shoes. He wondered what became of his friend Jack? He wished him well on whatever journey he was on.

One day a new friend of Sam's, named Eric, burst into Sam's home and said he must have Sam's shoes! Eric said he can not afford to make his own and that it is not fair that Sam is the only one in town with nice feet. Sam and Eric looked at each other in silence. They looked at each other's feet. Sam looked at Eric's bleeding feet and became aware of how hard it is to be without shoes. Sam took off one of his shoes and offered it to



Eric. Eric smiled happily and put on his shoe. He knew Sam was a good friend.

Sam then asked Eric if he would like to work with him to make two more shoes so that they will each have a full set. Eric happily agreed and they started making shoes together. Soon they not only had a full set for themselves, but due to their ease of working together, they were able to make shoes for the whole village!

Sam and Eric's friendship deepened and their happiness abounded as they were able to make so many lives happier with their fine shoes. Their business quickly prospered. Soon they Incorporated and began making shoes for the surrounding villages as well!

Sam and Eric happily found out that there truly is...

no business like shoe business.

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## A New Moon for New Beginnings....

The First day of October is a New Moon! This is a very special time. Once a month there is a new moon and once a month there is a full moon. A new moon is when you do not see any moon in the sky. It is completely shadowed. Astrologically speaking, it is a significant time for new beginnings, for the seeds you plant in the new moon, take fruition in the full moon.

Full moons have been correlated with lots of action. Things seem to really move and shake at full moons. But it is at the new moon that the actions are being conceived (sort of speak). The new moon is a time when a little snowball starts rolling down a snowy mountain. By the time the snowball reaches the bottom of the mountain, it can be quite large and quite powerful.

What seeds are you planting on the new moon? Are your thoughts filled with love and harmony? Or are you resenting someone? Are you hopeful? Are you doubtful? Do you believe that good things and people are coming your way? Can you see the beauty around you now?

Keep this simple thought in mind, and see what happens... **"The seeds you plant (in your thoughts, words, and actions) in the New Moon, take fruition in the Full Moon."**



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## Crazy in love.

Time to get personal....are you in love with someone? Have you ever been in love with someone? Would you like to be in love with someone? Most of us desire this type of connection in our life. Love songs and movies about love are all around us. It is a universal theme of two people bonding as one.

Many cultures do not romanticize love the way that ours does. However, the special bond of love that is created between 2 special people, is a theme that still crosses all cultures. It even crosses types of species! Look at 2 cats that have bonded. It is not that they bond with all cats. Anyone who is familiar with cats knows that a cat can be quite a solitary animal and often does not like the company of other cats. But once in a while, a special cat will come into their life, and suddenly they are in love!



Now back to you....what have your emotions been like when you have been in love? If you do not think you have ever been in love, then visualize what you think it would be like. Up...up...and away?! Or perhaps up ...up ...down...down....all around? That powerful grip of emotions can certainly run amuck. Feelings are so 'out there' when someone is in love. Suddenly one has to deal with intense emotions, and many of us just do not have the tools on how to handle these emotions in a way that is to the betterment of our spiritual evolution.

In yoga, the fourth principal / yama is one of Chastity. Yogis discovered thousands of years ago that the powerful drive of love or lust can cause one to self-destruct and / or to not spiritually evolve. For many, the only way they could figure out how to spiritually evolve was to completely abstain from physical and sexual contact with the opposite sex. Now, of course, this can sometimes have the opposite effect of what was intended. For when something is denied it is then often wanted even more. For example, just try not thinking of pink elephants. The more you try NOT to think of pink elephants, the more pink elephants stay glued on your mind!

Back to you in love...can you love another person without wanting them to be like you? Can you truly want what is best for that person without it involving your own needs? Can you be fulfilled without the person being next to you...or even near you? Can you experience true love?



## Souls of the Feet

Have you heard of foot reflexology? It is the science of foot massage based on the premise that there are reflex points in the foot that correspond to various other parts of the body. For example, the arch of the foot is the reflex area for the lower back. If your lower back gives you trouble there is a good chance that the arches of your feet will be tender too. By massaging the arches, the tensions in the lower back may begin to fade. If it is the arch of the foot that is troubling you, a nice massage to the lower back may give relief to the arch. And so the relationships within the body go...



This holistic view of the body is closely related to yoga's holistic view of health. In studying the yoga postures we become more familiar with our bodies. We begin to see that the way we hold our head can effect our shoulder tension, or the way we tilt our spine can effect the strength in our knees. We begin to see that what happens in one area of the body can have a profound effect on a totally different area of the body. Like distant cousins? Hardly. More like an intimate marriage.

Next time you get a headache, pull your great toe. Oh...what a relief it is!

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## Yoga and Cancer

In 1931, Dr. Otto Heinrich Warburg won the Nobel Laureate in Medicine for his discovery that sub-optimal oxygenation of tissues and cells is the underlying cause of cancer. I have found this information fascinating, since the yoga perspective focuses on breathwork as a means to improving and maintaining health. Since most of us breathe with unconscious effort, we do not really pay attention to the patterns we develop in breathing. Developed patterns that are often not conducive to our health, and certainly not conducive to improving our health.



As we age, our breath can become quite shallow. This does not permit a necessary release of toxins from our increasingly polluted environment. A regular work-out of breathing exercises is an essential element to a healthy body and mind. It is often the simple things in life that we overlook, but it is exactly these simple things that make up the quality of our existence. "Big" experiences come and go. It is the little, everyday encounters that give us the sustenance to continue.

Do you have a breath work-out as part of your physical exercise program? Do you have a physical program? If not, I would like to suggest for you to...

**START WITH THE BREATH..**

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*Yoga Tips*

## Sagacious Students...

I am constantly inspired by the people in my yoga classes. Each semester I ask students to write a page on a yama/yoga principle of their choice. I will share with you now two different students views on two different yamas - Ahimsa / Non-Violence, and Satya / Truthfulness.



**Reflections on Ahimsa or Non-Violence**  
**by Margot Knudson**  
**Hatha Yoga 1 Student - College of Dupage**

"While reflecting on the practice of **Non-Violence**, I first think of one of my favorite authors, Robert Anton Wilson. In 'Cosmic Trigger Volume 1.' Wilson tells the story of his youngest daughter, Luna. Luna liked to paint watercolors that showed the 'Clear Light' and often shocked her father with her loving and caring ways. One day, while returning from school, Luna was horribly beaten by a group of young black youths. Wilson was surprised the next day when Luna seemed unaffected by the incident. She told her father that she had stopped the wheel of Karma by leaving all the bad feelings with those who had beaten her and not taking any of them with her. Wilson further explains this by saying she was beaten not for her sins but the sins of racists who had never suffered for those sins. If one is to hold resentment against a group of people it perpetuates the turning of the wheel. Luna

stopped the wheel by realizing she was not the reason for the beating and being angry at those who had wronged her would only make her act out in bitterness leading to someone else's bitterness etc.

After pondering that story again, I thought of the two men recently executed for their crimes at Statesville Prison. First I think of their victims. Innocent people, one a young boy taken off the street, taught to trust and then molested and brutally murdered. I admit this is horrible, but does two more deaths make it even? It creates two more mothers mourning their sons. Two more women without a husband and father to their children. It creates many more people who have to find some way to release the bad energy created by violence. Are we such a barbaric culture that to find closure and peace we must kill those who wrong us? Killing these men, murdering them, did not bring back their victim and any peace felt by the victims loved ones is sure to be fleeting and unfulfilling.

I hope that when bad things happen to me I can be as insightful as Luna. For violence feeds violence and until enough people see the light, the wheel of Karma will not stop."

"Satya"

by Shanon Baker

Hatha Yoga 1 Student - College of Dupage

"One of the more interesting Yamas to me was **Satya; truthfulness**. I can't even count the number of times I've attempted something, only to fail before I began because I did not practice this Yama. This Yama states that what we say, think, or feel becomes truth only when our entire being, right down to each cell believes it to be the truth. If one cell is in disagreement, then truth will not be obtained.

Someone made the comment in class that if he believed with every cell that there was a Mercedes in front of him then it would truly be there, and the answer was yes. Sound like David Copperfield tricks to me. And if this was true then everyone would have whatever they wanted just by believing they had it. But then I thought about this Satya Yama, and came up with this conclusion. This Yama would be hard to reach if someone was trying to manifest a car, because as humans, we can only believe in so much. We believe in what our senses tell us, or what we believe in just by faith. So, I as a human would never be able to believe in a car that didn't exist in the first place because it's too abstract of an idea, I would doubt, and so not every cell would be in accordance, and thus no car. I'm sure this is how it would be with most people.

But if someone did believe with every cell that there was a car in front of them, yes it would be in front of them because they themselves can sense it. But the rest of the world would not. For the rest of the world probably isn't believing that there is a car in front of

said person. Thus the car would only exist to said person, and not truly exist but for in said person's mind because they really believe it's there.

Perhaps this is how God or other supreme beings exist for some people, and why they don't for others. If someone has faith and believes in a supreme being right down to every cell, then that supreme being is very much the truth for said person. This kind of believing is faith. Faith that something truly exists even if there is not tangible evidence. And with the deepest faith is how intangible things are believed in.

For many things like a car or money, this would be a difficult way to obtain them, and if we did, I'm not sure if the cashier would believe us when we handed them our 'money.' But who knows the full powers of the mind body and spirit when they are all focused on something. Much more powerful than I can imagine I'm sure. Maybe if I believe with every cell in my body that I was an 'A' student, the grades in all the computers and grade books would suddenly change. But I also think that we can only obtain what we deserve, what we work for, what is truly ours.

The important thing about this 2nd Yama, Satya, is that only when our entire being believes in something will it then happen. Our mind body and spirit must work together, and no doubts must hold them back. If we want something badly enough, or if we want what we say, think, or feel to be the truth, or if we really want something to happen, then we need to remember that truth comes when every part of us believes it to be the truth."

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## Yoga Tips

### Soulful Music

Do you listen to music? If so, what kind of music do you listen to? Does it inspire you? Does it uplift your thoughts?

I was at a seminar this weekend taught by an extraordinary yogini named Barbara Linderman. It was Yoga to Sacred Music. Every three hours we listened to a different sacred tradition of music and combined with it various yoga postures. First it was Tibetan Buddhism, next 3 hours of Hinduism,



then Native American, and next Christian. It was so very inspiring and a truly sacred experience. Every 45 minutes or so, we would rest in silence in Shavasana/Relaxation Pose. The sacred intent in which the music was created rested in our bodies. The soul of the music continued in our breath. It was incredibly cleansing. It was incredibly uplifting.

Do you listen to music? If so, what kind of music do you listen to? Does it inspire you? Does it uplift your thoughts?

Wishing you a blessed holiday season. **You are blessed.**