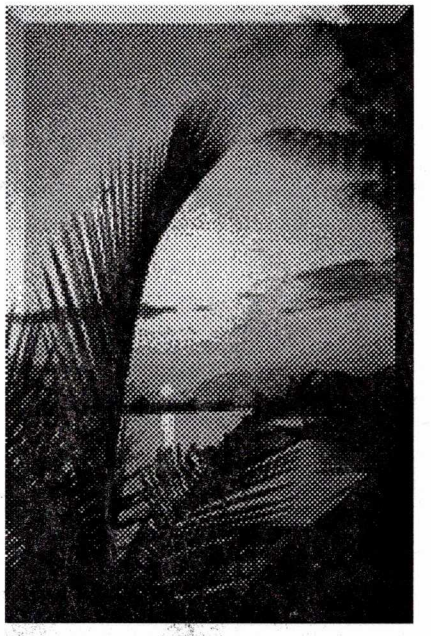
Yoyoga with Joan

January 1, 1998
Issue 30

And we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne (days of long ago)

--Robert Burns



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Yoga Tips

HAPPY 1998

1998 is here...are you happy? Just take a quick look around the world and one can see that happiness is certainly not everywhere....in fact, where the heck is it?

In the yoga study, one finds that it can not be found externally. Sure, there are beautiful sunsets (that come and go), fun times shared with friends (who come and go), reflective times in nature (perhaps the closest to a steadiness - but still lives and dies, comes and goes). There are experiences that can make us "feel" that we are happy....but "feelings" come and go. How can one become grounded in happiness? And in our competitive world we can go one step even further and ask...."How can one really be happy being happy?" Is not life about "succeeding," going that extra mile?

We are born as helpless children dependent on the kindnesses of our parents, and many of us end this life as helpless seniors dependent on the kindnesses of our social system. What a cycle of sorts. The body comes and goes. Feelings come and go. The mind comes and goes. In yoga, we study about our bodies and begin to see so clearly that we are not the body and we are not our emotions, we are not even our mind...then what the heck are we?!

We have within us deep compassion, understanding, and forgiveness. We have within us the essence of eternal bliss. We are a process of uncovering veils. Happy new year, my dear.

Yoga Tips

What about the ants?

While traveling this past week, my thoughts turned to bugs. The airport I was traveling through was very congested with people. A remark was made that "if aliens were looking down on us from 20 miles above we would look like a bunch of ants moving around." (This person who made this remark about ants, has a deep reverence for life. In fact, would sweep ants into a bucket upon finding them in the house and take them outside rather than kill them.)

Ants are extremely organized creatures. Each ant has a specific highly intricate job to perform within its colony. Ant hills consist of a complex system of pathways and life sustaining operations. Scientists have marveled at the exceptional system of communications within ant colonies.

So, if aliens ever do look upon us from 20 miles above, let us hope it is with respect for our lives; let us hope we are viewed with deep reverence. Now I ask you...how do you look at ants?

Yoga Tips

Non-Stealing

For example, the British moved into the Indian territory of North America years ago, put up a flag and claimed the land as theirs. Would this be physical stealing? The Indians did not have the same idea of ownership that the new Americans had. This idea of "owning" land was alien to their being. The new-Americans did not understand the way of the Indians, nor did many, if any, really care. The new Americans did understand the idea of "conquest" and the "superiority" of British Rule.

Now, let's take another example to think about. Let's say you are Claude Monet and created a work of art...a beautiful painting. Everyone loves your great painting, and artists all over try to copy your style. However, no one can ever really paint exactly as Monet. So, perhaps they change a slight stroke here or there. And then they claim to "be the First" to discover this style of painting. Perhaps some even become famous for being "the first," before Claude Monet. But, Claude Monet knows he started something special. Or did he? Perhaps his style of painting was formed many lifetimes ago...

Yoga Tips

Shanti = Peace

How can one find peace when the kids are screaming, the dog is barking, our stomach is upset, and we have money problems. Take any one or all of these concerns, and peace can seem quite elusive. If we look deeper, we see that each of these concerns has to do with the external world. The external world is ever changing. We can calm the kids down so they stop screaming. We can pet the dog so it stops barking. We can take some antacid for the stomach. And we can work harder to make more money. However, something else will sure enough come along soon to "rock the boat" again.

Peace is deep within. It is not something that is dependent on the moods or whims of the external world. We may be fooled into thinking that the world effects our happiness, but if happiness is not uncovered from deep within, then it's display is simply a facade. We all have this inner core of happiness and peace. It is not a happiness of big smiles and perfect teeth. It is an inner core of joy that radiates through life itself. This is the yoga understanding. Everything else is temporary.

Shanti.

Peace.

Yoga Tips

COLLEGE YOGA TERM PAPERS

Another Winter Quarter at the college has come to an end. The students have handed in their term papers, and as usual, I am given pause for reflection. It is wonderful being a yoga teacher, for I learn so much. Let me share with you excerpts from papers from two students on Ahimsa - Non-Violence.

From "Yoga's philosophy on Non-Violence in Contrast with the Martial Arts."
by Jake Nuesser

"I have been a student of Yoga for a very short time, but knew that it's purpose was to unify mind and body. I have been a student of the Martial Arts, almost since I could walk, and their teachings are very similar. The main difference lies in the paths that they travel to reach this goal of harmony, or balance. Yoga stresses non-violence in the forms of physical, verbal, and intellectual levels. I found this very interesting, because it takes the idea of being non-violent to a level of the inner self, to try to even stop negative thoughts about violent acts. It is clear, almost common sense, that saying mean things and acts of physical violence are a negative thing. The intellectual level however, is one that is rarely thought of. This level could really be the root of the other two. If a person never thought of violent acts he/she surely wouldn't commit any. So the purity of mind that Yoga promotes is a valuable lesson to be learned."

From "Ahimsa - Verbal Non-Violence"
by Dolores Lambert:

"A Hindu teacher, Swami Chidvilasananda begins each of her public lectures with this greeting: 'With great respect and love I welcome you all with all my heart.' To be loved and respected is one of our deepest needs. To offer love and respect is one of our greatest gifts. We can begin to offer respect and love to everyone we meet by being kind and gentle in our words to them.

Some ways we can practice verbal non-violence are:

*Never respond to another's statements with ridicule.
*Allow others the freedom to be honest about thoughts and feelings.
*Be able to listen to criticism without becoming defensive or argumentative.
*Don't play games, say what you mean.
*Treat all expressions of feelings with respect.
*Know how to put yourself in the other person's shoes at times and be willing to do it.
*Look for the love and innocence in mankind behind the masks we all wear.
*Do unto others as you have them do unto you."

Namaste.

Yoga Tips

COLLEGE CHAKRAS

IN the Hatha Yoga 2 classes at the college where I teach, we explore the chakra energy system in yoga. Part of the requirement for the course is for each student to write a Final Paper on a chakra of choice. Following are some keen excerpts from the papers of some keen students...

VENUS CHAKRA by Morgan Mills

"As we started to walk, I was amazed at the beauty of that day. It could not have been more perfect. You had asked us to close our eyes and then look upon the earth as if it was the first time. During the first part of the walk, I was simply in awe of nature, and its expansiveness. Then I began to concentrate during those moments of reflection and relaxation and took deep breaths concentrating on expanding my chest. The crisp air was rejuvenating while I was practicing breathing exercises. I understand that the color green is associated with the Venus chakra for its life giving qualities. Even though the earth was white with snow that day, nature was very much alive. I truly felt my spirit life and my negativity disappear. I had my first chakra meditation - a very wonderful experience that day."

VENUS CHAKRA by Lauren Kasak

"Personally, my favorite pose for this chakra is the Child's Pose. I find that it is very

comfortable and relaxing. After doing this pose for a few minutes, I begin to feel more content and forgiving. I feel more centered and at peace with the world around me. I often do this pose at home when I have had a difficult, trying day. It helps me to reduce stress that has accumulated over the day so that I can continue with the rest of the day."

SATURN CHAKRA by Kimberly A. Cygan

"I have found that if I feel like I am in a daze or I can not find something good in what I am doing, then all I have to do are a few Saturn Chakra exercises to help start back on the right track. My favorite exercise is the squat or Utkatasan. This position is wonderful when my life gets a little too hectic, I just squat down and look at the world from a new vantage point and I always feel calmer. I have also been doing leg lifts on my own almost everyday and this seems to have helped to focus my life. On the days that I do not do my leg lifts, I find that I can not concentrate as well. This is proof to me that there really is a lot of wisdom in these five very simple Chakras. I think that everyone should read up on these because of the help that they can be to you when your life starts to become unbalanced."

Namaste.

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

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Yoga Tips

Non-Violence in a violent world?

How does one remain kind to someone who brutally hurts you or someone close to you? How is it possible?

This question is certainly not something special or new to our society. For thousands of years, people have brutally hurt and killed each other. One need only read a little Roman history, or open a bible, or turn on the news. So then, how does one practice the ways that many religious texts purport? When might the world change and become REALLY loving? Love thy neighbor as thyself? Easy to say, but what if your neighbor threatens, hurts, or even kills someone close to you in the process. What if your neighbor scoffs, laughs, or ridicules your loving ways? After all, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is a mighty old decree, and look at how the world has incorporated it through the years. Barely, if at all.

It is a process.
Answer - stay clear of violence.

But, what if you live in a war-torn Bosnia with no way out? What if you are serving prison time for a crime you did not commit (or even a crime you did commit)? What if you are in a Prisoner of War Camp and brutally attacked and beaten every day? What if you are but a child, and have nowhere to go at night but home where you are regularly abused? (Escape to the streets! What if you are not old enough or qualified to get a job, and prostitution,

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drugs, crime are the only means you find to financial and physical survival?)

Tough questions.

What are your answers? How can a society get to the core of this issue? How can society truly be healed? How can one person be truly healed? The answers are deep within you. Share them with me. Write to me.

Namaste,

Joan

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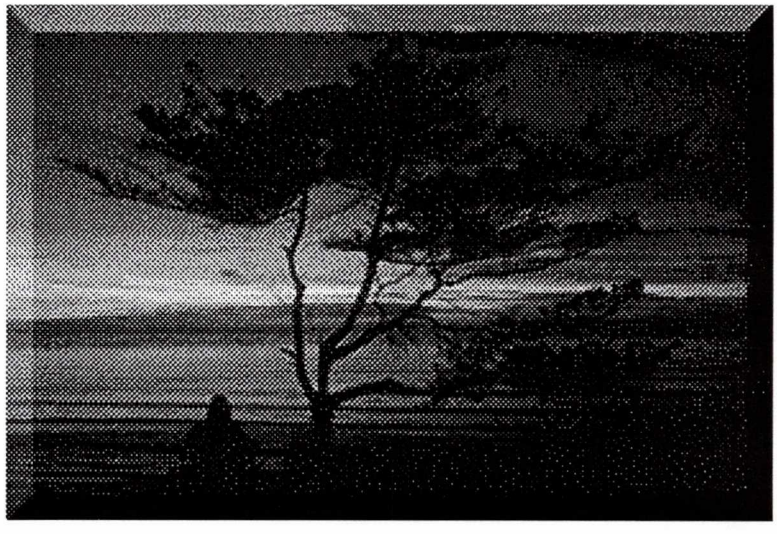
Web Site Designer: Kathie Huddleston - kat@orbitel.com

Yoga Tips

Don't Worry, Be Happy!



Yeah, sure...right. But what about when your roof is leaking, the basement is flooded, your car has a flat, and your lover has decided he or she would rather live in Greece (with someone else) - their plane leaves in an hour?

"Isn't it ironic?
Don't ya think?
Too ironic.
Yeah, I really think.

It's like rain
On your wedding day,
It's a free ride
when you've already paid,
The good advice
that you just didn't take
who would have thought - it figures"
----Alanis Morissette

I really love that song, called "Ironic." It is so powerful and true. What I love about it the most, is its strength of humor....

More from Alanis...
"A traffic jam when you're already late

A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break
It's like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife
It's meeting the man of my dreams
And then meeting his beautiful wife"

The song is loud and thrashing. It reverberates. When I need to move or am feeling down, I put it on and it motivates me to move around. I breathe deeply and a smile comes across my face. Hey, Alanis, you're not alone! Neither am I! And neither are you! ! "And who would have thought - It figures."

Yoga Tips

MANY HAPPY Birthdays!

It's my birthday! (May 23, that is) I am a Gemini Sun, and so is my twin sister, Jane. There was a time when I used to get scared of birthdays. I used to think "Oh my, what have I done...where am I going?" I suppose I still think that way, but not in a negative framework. I think of it in a joyous tone.

Here's the tip...

If you are ever feeling blue, tell people it's your birthday, and you'll be surprised at the way people will reach out to you. Happy Birthday! (I even tried this logic on some of my instructors when I was taking exams...it worked!)

Now, you may be thinking, "What a phony yogini this Joannie is! She is lying and telling people it's her birthday at times when it isn't!" My response... Every moment we are evolving and growing. You and I are not the same people we were even seconds earlier. Our physical body is changing, cells are growing, discarding and evolving. Our thoughts are growing, discarding and evolving. Our words metamorphosing (hmmmm?). So in essence, every second can be a rebirth.

You can change this very moment and be the person you dream to be.
This is it!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

Yoga Tips

Contentment???

It was horrible, really horrible. I came home and vomited. It started out nice enough. In fact, rather lovely...

AM - waking up to my sweet cat urring and curled up next to me, birds singing outside and the sun shining in over the curtains. I meet my yoga students at 7:15 AM for a 3 mile hike through the Morton Arboretum. It is a beautiful densely wooded forest where I take students each semester for a silent walk together. Each semester brings with it a new season and new students. Each walk is filled with treasured moments. Just a few brief instructions from me before we begin...

"The walk is to be done in silence. If I walk too fast, feel free to walk as slow as you like. If I walk too slow, please do not pass me up. I will lead."

We walk a few yards up and gather near a beautiful tree by the pond for a few more words...

"The Niyama (Yoga Observance) for today is "Contentment." To start us out, here is a poem by a Persian Poet named Rumi:

'Be like the Sun for Grace and Mercy.
Be like the night to cover others' faults.

Be like running water for generosity.
Be like death for rage and anger.
Be like the Earth for modesty.
Appear as you are.
Be as you appear.'"

I ask the students to close their eyes. We all do. What a beautiful day...the breeze is lovely. I tell the students,

"when you open your eyes, open them as if you are seeing the world for the first time....now open your eyes."

We pause, and off we go on our silent walk together.

A glorious walk in the Arboretum. Big Geese flapping their wings, squirrels everywhere, colorful birds of all sorts flying here and there, the roar of distant traffic reminding us of our time and space. As I lead slowly and steadily, a few mosquitos land on my sleeve. I gently push them away. We get deeper into the woods...and so do the mosquitos. In fact, I find myself walking into packs of them. I breathe deeply and slowly wave my arms. This distraction I can certainly deal with. I remember the steady gaze of the swamis I have studied with. Certainly mosquitos would not get the best of them (altho I've never seen any swamis walk into packs of mosquitos). The itch on my neck is excruciating. I instinctively each back and in the process unintentionally grab and kill 3 big mosquitos - blood all over my hands. Yuck...and violence to boot. I go back to waving my hands, my walk quickens.

Deeper into the woods now, I look behind me and find all my students flailing their arms around (just like me). One student has his t-shirt raised over his head so his whole body is covered. It is a hysterical site. I burst out laughing. We can't turn back now...we are half way through the woods. I continue on...faster. I silently ask myself - "How would Mahatma Gandhi handle this?" Although Gandhi was not born into a world of Starbucks Coffee, cellphones, and road rage...he did have mosquitos. Hmmmm. I breathe deep again, I think I just breathed in a mosquito. I cough and I STRONGLY move my arms around.

I look down at my feet. I am dressed in shorts and the entire front of my legs are covered with mosquitos! I WANT TO SCREAM! Instead, I start skipping....FAST. Arms swinging with me. I look behind me - some students have kept up with my pace, others I see further back, ALL scratching and itching. I remember Rumi "appear as you are, be as you appear." Well, Rumi, this is killing me! All my studies in Hatha Yoga have prepared my legs for what I am about to do....RUN LIKE THE BEEGEEZUS OUT OF THESE WOODS!

I start running. A few star student athletes close behind. We are laughing in agony. I look behind and watch the calmer students fade in the distance. I know we will all meet up in the end. All paths lead to the same point and are of relatively equal distance. "Feets don't fail

me now!" Let's goooooooo!!

We get to the parking lot. Wait a few long moments for all the students to catch up. We laugh and share a few thoughts. I instruct in a few ending yoga stretches - a few mosquitos still lingering around. I encourage students to write their thoughts down on paper. The niyama for today - "Contentment."

I hurry home. I undress to find my entire body covered with big welts ---I MEAN BIG! I take a shower and start to feel real sick. I run over to the toilet and throw up...for awhile. Finally finished, I clean up and curl up on my bed (child's pose). My cat comes over and purrs and cuddles next to me as if to say, "Want to try this again?" I silently respond, "Next time I will be prepared with mosquito repellant and stronger and faster legs. I will encourage all my students in the same way."

The doorbell rings. My neighbor comes over to show me today's newspaper where I am featured. Over my photo headlines in large bold type **"CALMING INFLUENCE."** I smile and thank her. The niyama for next week's class is TAPAS or DISCIPLINE.

Yoga Tip:

It takes a whole lot of discipline to find contentment. Sometimes it even takes a 3 mile dash...and a cat.

Yoga Tips

MERCURY CHAKA

From deep in my soul, a bubbly joyous laugh filled my body. Suddenly I started to laugh out-loud, a full, deep, soulful laugh. I never laughed like this. Where did it come from? My entire body felt alive and in sync. This all happened to me, for the very first time, when I was in my 30's.

I smiled a lot growing up. I remember many giggles and chuckles. But I always seemed to stop short of a full laugh. When I tried to laugh, it was forced. Why could it not just happen? I was fully conscious that I was not fully laughing. I never talked about this with anyone. It was just one of those things that I realized about myself and tried to accept. Perhaps this was what laughter was supposed to be for me? It always seemed incomplete and somehow separate.

Then along came Berny. Berny was ten years older than I. He had the most incredible and wonderful laugh. It was robust and full. He laughed often. I liked being around him. He made me smile. I tried imitating his laugh, but I could not do it. It was not natural. So on I went, a little giggle here and a little chuckle there. Lots of smiles, lots of private tears. I am not really sure if Berny was happy, but he did have the most incredible and wonderful laugh.

One day, years after Berny had faded from my life, something happened and I started to laugh...really laugh. I don't even remember what it was that made me laugh! Maybe it

really wasn't anything. Maybe it was stored there just waiting to be freed and the moment finally came. Maybe it was from many years of hard work. But, I do know, that when it happened, it was effortless. I felt a deep sense of freedom. It was the beginning of the opening of my Mercury Chakra...

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Web Site Designer: Kathie Huddleston - kat@orbitel.com

Yoga Tips

CAR KARMA

I was in a horrible car accident this week. The lights were not working at an intersection. I went through the intersection thinking the light was green. I was driving into the sun and from my view, the green light appeared to be on. I was not aware the lights were completely out. Anyway, my little car plowed into a pick-up truck that was crossing the opposite way. My car was totaled. I was taken away in an ambulance because my back hurt me quite badly. The other driver was fine.

When I got to the ER, I was still dazed but starting to feel physically better. Xrays were taken and everything appeared fine. The police officer came in to say she was issuing me a ticket because I did not make a stop at the malfunctioning light. (I found out later that the other driver did not receive a ticket because he said he stopped.). I smiled to the officer and said I understood. I thanked her for the ticket she handed me. I was so confused at this point, that Dr. Kevorkian could have walked in with a needle and I would have thanked him too. In return, I gave the officer one of my little yoga books I had with me. She left saying that she was going to take a yoga class one day soon with her mother.

In my spaced-out state, lying there and waiting for more Xray results, I called a nurse over to please telephone the yoga studio where I was heading prior to the accident . I was an hour late for a class. One of my students was to meet me at the studio before the class. She

would be leaving the country soon, and I was looking forward to seeing her again before she left. The nurse kindly dialed and handed me the phone. I asked the receptionist if this tudent was still there. I was told that this student was quite angry that I did not show up or the class and demanded her money back for this class even though another teacher would be teaching it. Of course, this student was not aware that I was heading to the class when the accident occurred. I was carrying with me an audio gift of music that I was planning to give her. I thought she would enjoy it.

I sat there alone and stunned to hear of her anger. I laid on the hard plastic board in the ER room. I listened to the words of encouragement of the yoga teacher on the other end of the line. For a moment, I forgot about my surprise over the anger of the other student. As I lay there alone and hurting, I was so grateful for all the kind words of encouragement coming to me now from this teacher. I hung up the phone and thoughts of the angry student came back to me. I questioned what kind of yoga teacher I am. What am I teaching? How could a student who has studied with me have so much anger toward me? Surely she would not be angry with me if she knew that I had every intention of being there to meet her. Surely she would not be angry with me if she knew of the pain I was in.

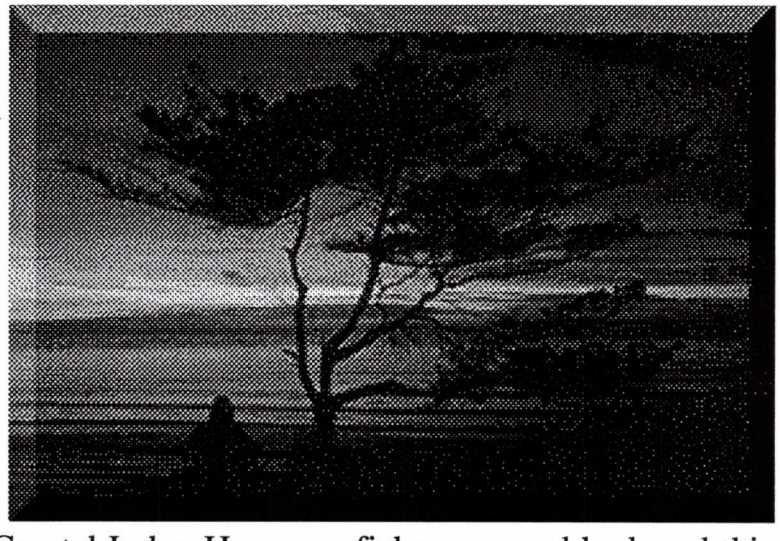
I began to think of the times I have been angry towards someone for ignoring me, or not valuing what I valued. So wrapped up in my own anger, I was not aware of the pain of the other person. Surely, if I knew of the pain the other was suffering, my own anger would subside. It is difficult, however, to see pain when someone is looking at you straight in the face. If one can not see the pain of someone right in front of one's own eyes, how can one possibly see pain from miles away?

Yoga helps us to deepen our awareness. What we are **sure** is the truth, may not be the truth at all. I was **sure** it was a green light - it was not. My student was **sure** I had forgotten her (or ever worse, dismissed her) - I had not. I was bringing her a gift. Yoga is about uncovering veils and looking deeper...and deeper for the truth.

We can not **love** enough.

Yoga Tips

Pork & Dumplings



I have struggled with Vegetarianism most of my adult life. I grew up in a loving family of Czechoslovakian/Polish heritage. I remember coming home after Sunday School to the warm smells of pork and dumplings or ribs and kasha. I remember these Sunday meals as being particularly special. I loved Sunday School. Coming home to a big family dinner made the spiritual sunday experience satisfying and complete for me.

I remember visiting my Uncle Frank at Crystal Lake. He was a fisherman and he loved this rugged life. He was like no other person I knew. On our visits there, he proudly showed me all the fish he caught for the day. I watched him as he skinned the fish as they were still flapping in his hands. My stomach turned. I really loved my Uncle Frank. He was a good man. The whole family would sit down later to a fish dinner cooked by Aunt Harriet. What a sweet lady. I ate the fish and tried to disassociate it from the way it was killed. I could not. I quietly ate and faced my conflicts inwardly. I loved my Aunt Harriet. Uncle Frank and Aunt Harriet died a few years ago.

Over the years since, my practice of vegetarianism has not been consistent. Many of my dearest friends are meat-eaters. My family are all still meat eaters. Just yesterday we went to a Polish restaurant in Chicago. All the traditional smells aroused my taste buds. My parents are much older now, and still very healthy. They have eaten meat all their lives. They are sensitive and caring people. I ate sauerkraut and potato pieroggi with mashed

potatoes and vegetables. It was delicious. Somehow it did not feel complete without the meat though.

Each college term the yoga classes I teach approach the subject of vegetarianism. Each term I am asked if I am a vegetarian. Each term I answer honestly that I am not. I have come a long way, but I still have a long way to go. I still eat fish. I always think..."perhaps next term I will be able to honestly say, "yes, I am a Vegetarian." Did you know that fish have probably the most sensitive skin of all sentient creatures? Have you ever seen them swim in packs? They stay very close to each other and move quickly in all directions without ever touching. They can feel each other very acutely even through the water that separates them.

Karma is difficult to change. It is so strong. Just when you think you've changed it, you are faced with the same challenge again - perhaps the faces change, but the situations remain constant. Like the Energizer on its way home...it just keeps coming and coming....

Have you read the story of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita? He is an expert warrior who finds he must go to battle with the people he loves the most - his family and friends. (Do not be confused that this story is about an external battle. It is about the very real and very strong internal battle of one's personal karma.) Arjuna does not want to go to war (to change his karma). It is difficult being a warrior, but he has mastered it. And now he must finally face the people that mean the most to him. How can he fight this most difficult battle. He loves them. Above all else, he is a Warrior. It is his duty (dharma) to face this battle. How does he do it? What does he do? What would you do?

Yoga Tips

Rita's Inspiration

Last night I went to a Rita Coolidge concert. I really love her, grew up with so many of her songs. Anyway, during her introduction to a very personal song bout her grandma, someone on the ight side of the theatre let out a very loud YAWN. She looked over and said "sorry if I'm keeping you up." And then she went on with her talk. Then before she started the song she made one more comment to this person who she could not see through the glare of the lights..."Try to stay up for it, you may get something out of it."

Now if she were a different person, she may have really cut this person down for being so unbelievably rude - like comics do all the time with hecklers. However, her response was incredible because it addressed the inappropriateness without belittling the other person. Little did Rita Coolidge know that the person who did this was severely mentally disabled. There was a group of mentally disabled students there that obviously loved her concert. Through the glare of the lights, Rita could not see this. As I was leaving the theatre behind these students, I was so grateful that Rita's response was not mean to these students. In fact, they were probably flattered that she addressed them in the way she did.

'f we knew the history of each person we deal with, we would have much more compassion or their actions. If each person we deal with knew of our individual history, surely they would forgive our foibles. Since we can not know the history for each person, we must

continually remind ourselves to...

practice compassion - even amidst the most trying of situations.

Meditate.

Yoga Tips

A Mental Hospital Mentality

My dad went in for surgery recently. He is recuperating nicely now, but when they drugged him at the hospital, he said the nurse was talking to him and he wanted to respond but couldn't and wondered if that was what being "crazy" felt like. Strangely, I thought this was a beautiful connection to reflect on. How intimately connected we all are if we can only pause long enough to notice.

On top of this intimate observation, the idea of bringing yoga into a mental hospital sounds incredible. Hatha Yoga exercises calm and strengthen the nervous system and the spine. They also improve concentration and blood flow to the brain. The key would be in finding teachers who could remain calm enough to teach in these difficult surroundings.

Here is an experiment for you to try....
Look in the mirror and soft focus your eyes. See if you can gently blur your vision. Continue looking at yourself in the mirror. You may be able to look right at your eyes without looking at your eyes! You will watch yourself as your gaze drifts off. Stay with this for at least a few seconds and see what this feels like. Observe.

You are not your body, you are not your breath, you are not even your mind. You are much more than all of this.

Yoga Tips

Oh, what a beautiful cat...

As I was driving home yesterday, I saw a dead cat lying in the middle of the road. It was lying across the dividing line of the two-lane highway. It was a eautiful calico cat, lying on its side. As drove by, I gasped. How sad to see such a beautiful creature dead! It obviously must have been hit by a car.

After driving a few blocks, I thought, "What if it was not dead? I must hurry back or another car will hit it and definitely it will be!" I quickly turned around, praying I might be able to save the cat - fearful of the condition it might be in and what I might have to deal with.

As I came alongside the cat, I saw that it's head was completely turned around. It's eyes were bulging. It was a horrifying sight, and it was very much dead.

Death is not always pretty. In fact, it usually is not. Major transformations or changes in our lives are not always easy. In fact, they usually are not. This is change. This is death. This is life. This is eternal.

By turning around for that cat, it may appear that I was chasing life and that I feared death. In reality, I was chasing death, and feared life. Life can be scary when we face it for all it is. We must face it.

Yoga Tips

That age old question

Hello there...how old are you? I recently received this wonderful, humorous, and insightful look at "age" from an anonoymous writer. I just simply had to share it with you. Here it is!

"Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we're kids?

If you're less than 10 years old, you're so excited about aging that you think in fractions. How old are you?. "I'm four and a half!" You're never 36 and a half. You're four and a half... going on five!

That's the key! You get into your teens, now they can't hold you back. You jump to the next number, or even a few ahead. How old are you? "I'm gonna be 16." You could be 13, but hey, you're *gonna* be 16!

And then the greatest day of your life happens... you become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony; ~~* YOU BECOME 21 *~~ YYYYYYES!!!

But then you turn 30. Ooohhh what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk. "He TURNED, we had to throw him out." There's no fun now, you're just a sourpuss.

What's wrong?? What changed?? You BECOME 21, you TURN 30, then you're PUSHING

40. Whoa! Put on the breaks, it's all slipping away.

Before you know it, you REACH 50... and your dreams are gone. But wait, you MAKE IT to 60. You didn't think you'd would!!!

So you BECOME 21, TURN 30, PUSH 40, REACH 50, and MAKE IT to 60. You've build up so much speed that you HIT 70! After that, it's a day by day thing; you HIT Wednesday. You get into your 80's, and every day is a complete cycle; you HIT lunch. You TURN 4:30. You REACH bedtime.

(My grandmother won't even buy green bananas. It's an investment you know, and maybe a bad one.)

And it doesn't end there. Into the 90's you start going backwards; "I was JUST 92."

Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again; "I'm 100 and a half!!!" "

Yoga Tips

School Daze

A father was trying to wake up his son in the morning...

"Wake up, Johnny! You have to go to school!"

Johnny responds by covering his face under the blankets. "No! I don't want to go to school!"

The father sternly replies..."You have to get up and go to school, Johnny."

No," Johnny says, "I hate school. The kids all make fun of me. I don't like any of the teachers. And it, it's..... BORING!!!!!2 B-O-R-I-N-G! I HATE SCHOOL!"

Good spelling, Johnny, but you must get up and go to school! " says father strongly.

"Why?!" Johnny cries.

His father, "Three reasons.... It is your duty to go to school. You are 42. And ...you are the Principle!"

GET OUT OF BED!!! WAKE UP! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

Yoga Tips

How to release karma

Certainly there are many techniques to release karma. Karma consists of the forces that pull and tug at one's life. For example, perhaps you are ttracted to a certain type of person. ook around at your friends. Do they share some common characteristics? Look around at your enemies. Do they share common characteristics? What makes one person your foe and another your friend? Your specific answers and mine (if we can even get specific) will most likely be quite different. The reason - karma.

In order to release karma, one first has to be aware of its existence. Awareness is the key. How can one see a tree that is buried as an acorn? The acorn has to work very hard to get through all the soil, to grow roots, to burst forth as a tree, and then to maintain its strength in its new life. Look how many acorns are on the ground compared to how many trees. Not every acorn becomes a tree...in fact, very, very few do.

So too, few humans transcend their karma. They continue on the wheel of life...getting up, going to work, eating, sleeping, getting mad at particular events, laughing over other events, and never realizing how programmed they are. How can one possibly release arma without extensive self-study? According to yogic training - it is impossible. eleasing karma requires tremendous efforts in discipline, concentration, self-study.

Mantra, the repetition of sound; **Hatha yoga asanas**, the study of physical movement; **Astrology**, the study of planetary aspects; **Scriptures**, the study of historical sacred texts; **Meditation**, the study and stilling of movements of consciousness. These are some techniques to soften and release karma. They are not easy. In fact, they are very, very difficult.

Transitions are not easy. Whether transitions are from one city to another, or one lifetime to the next. Of course, you could choose to just plop here, plop there. Never understanding why, what, when, where. Perhaps it just "feels right" to live in Seattle, for instance? Why is there any need to know any more than this? Ignorance is bliss, after all. But, there is not bliss if one is aware of the ignorance...then one is at a different level of understanding. Once you have seen the light, you can not go back. If you think you can...you are living a sham! **Wake up!!**

One must work hard in order to make one's journey an enlightened one.

Happy travels.

Yoga Tips

De-coding Christmas

Cash Registers are ringing louder than Santa's sleigh bells this year. Notice how complicated those registers have become? There appear to be more bar codes than stars in the sky (can't really see the stars because of all the neon signs lighting up the nights from round the clock merchandising). As our materialism has expanded, it makes perfect sense to expand the register system. After all, things have to be itemized and systemized to be processed and understood. One has to have a system!

Children are just starting to formulate a system to live by. It is such fun to watch them do this. And Christmas is a wonderful time to watch their systems at work! It's a time of wide-eyed wonder and innocence. Let's take Santa, for an example. Young children believe in Santa (even tho they can't quite figure out which of the "Three Kings of the Orient" he is). The unconditional love of young children toward Santa is precious to behold. The very fact that Santa is sweet, jolly and loving is enough for most kids. Most kids can sense the phony Santa too. But the real Santa Clause has the potential to help children realize their dreams!

As kids get older, they have to know who, what, where, Santa is. They have to figure out where he fits, and if he fits into their refined system. A system that, with time, becomes more well defined...and incredibly more suffocating too.

What has your system become? How are you defined? How complicated are you? What oundaries do you live by? Do you believe in Santa?

De-code Christmas...and have a happy holiday.

Yoyoga with Joan

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
January 1, 1999
Issue 50

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes"
-- Marcel Proust

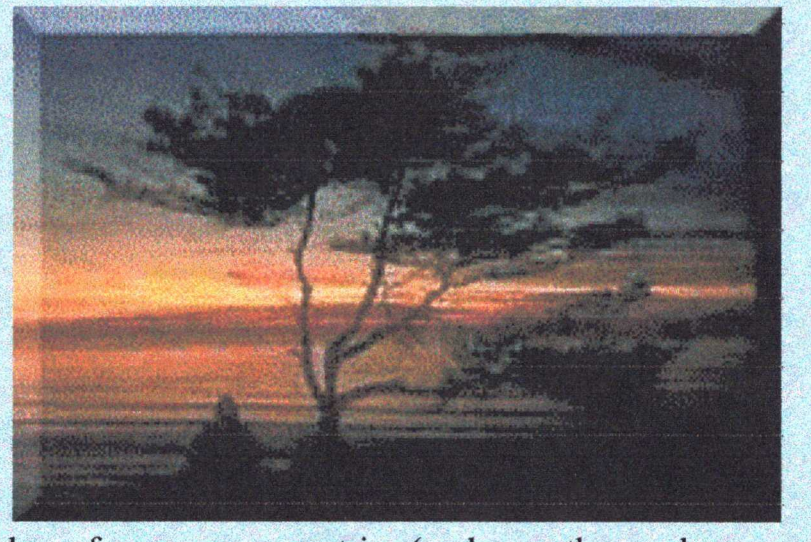
To Find Out More About Joan's Classes, Click Here!

Web Site Awards:

Yoyoga with Joan

Yoga Tips

When dreaming's through, dreams come true.



What are your dreams for 1999? Would you like to make them come true? Well, here's a tip....write your dreams down on paper. Write something down right now that you would like to see happen in 1999. It's not enough to just think about it....write it down. Get specific.

Let me give you an example: Suppose you write down "world peace." Unless you have close relations with the leaders of numerous countries (and even those who do, still obviously struggle to realize this), world peace is not an action close or clear enough for you to realize. So, this can come closer to home by saying "I want to be peaceful." But what exactly does this mean? What does it mean for you to be "peaceful?" So, you write down further, "calm under stress, harboring no ill-will." Now! That's a start!! As you go along, your vision will become clearer and clearer. Soon you will know, through the physical act of writing, what it is to be peaceful. Once your mind sees peace, your mind and body can grow to understand it too.

There is a principle in yoga (one of the observances called "Niyamas") called Ishvar-Pranidhana. This sanskrit term translated means centering on the divine. It takes tremendous self-study, reflection, and hard work to determine what exactly the divine is. This is a discovery that only you can make. What is it for you? Write it down.

Wishing you a blessed, heart-felt new year. One in which we can grow together in peace and love.

Yoyoga with Joan

Yoga Tips

For whom the bell tolls...

Here1s a simple exercise for you to do to help train your mind to focus better. First of all, do you have a bell in your house? Any type of bell. If you do not, simply take a metal poon and tap lightly against a lass cup to make a bell like sound.

Ring the bell once. Listen to the sound. See how long you can hold onto the sound. Once it finishes, listen to the silence. Really listen.

After some time, ring the bell again. Can you hold to its sound a little bit longer this time?

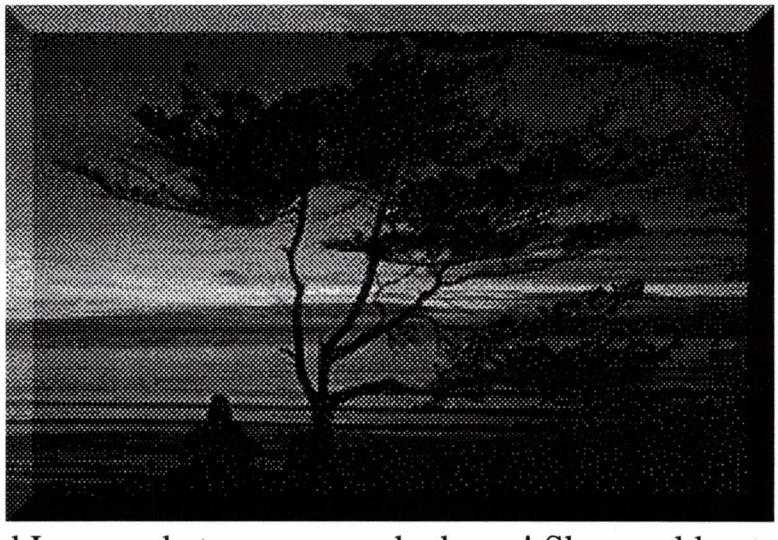
A simple exercise.

Simplicity.

Sutra.

Yoga Tips

Clear the way!



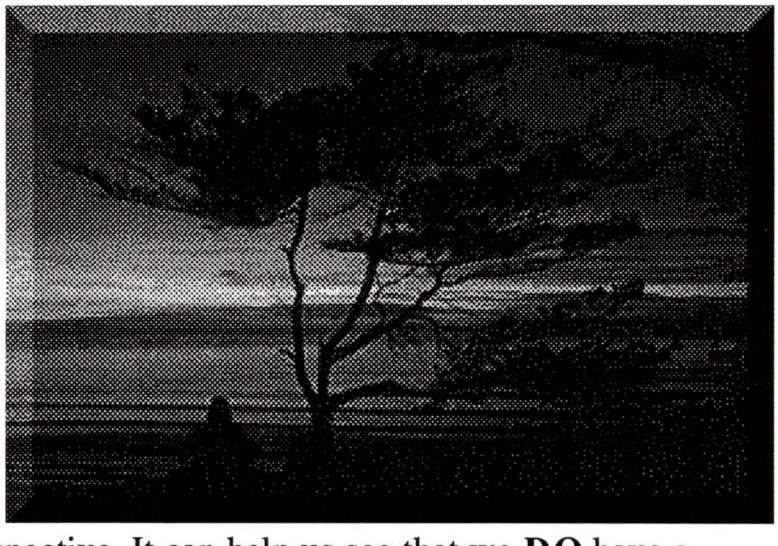
What a cycle anger can be. The other day I walked into a store that I regularly visit. One of the employees in the store had been rude toward me for quite a few months. I had always overlooked it as her just "having a bad day." Other than encounters with this person, my trips to this store had been very pleasant.

But this particular day I was in no mood to overlook her rudeness. I directly asked her why she was so rude to me? She said because she heard I was rude to someone she knew! She would not say to whom or when. I was stunned and told her to please apologize to this mysterious person for my rudeness. Wow! To think that this person had been deliberately rude to me all these months because I had been rude to a friend of hers. What loyalty! I started pondering over who, when, why, I was rude. Some of you may view this as a trivial encounter, but if you saw the intensity of the feelings involved, you would hardly think so. Whew!

Living among misunderstandings. It's tough breaking cycles. It's cozy staying in them. Take responsibility for your actions. Break free!!!! Your only real enemy is within your own mind. Clear your own mind, and a world of understanding and compassion awaits.

Yoga Tips

You Count!



That old saying about counting to ten before you blow your top, works! If you are impatient, I would even suggest to just try counting to 5...that works too! The reason it works is because it removes you from the momentum of your emotions. It lets you become an "observer" for those few seconds. Often when we are in the heat of battle, we are so busy fighting that our breath and heart rate quickens, blood pressure rises, etc., etc., etc. Taking a little "time out" can give a much needed new perspective. It can help us see that we **DO** have a choice in our actions. It gives us a brief few seconds to choose another more constructive course.

So the next time you are ready to punch someone out. Count to 10 first...or five. You count, you really do!

Yoga Tips

When the sun comes up...

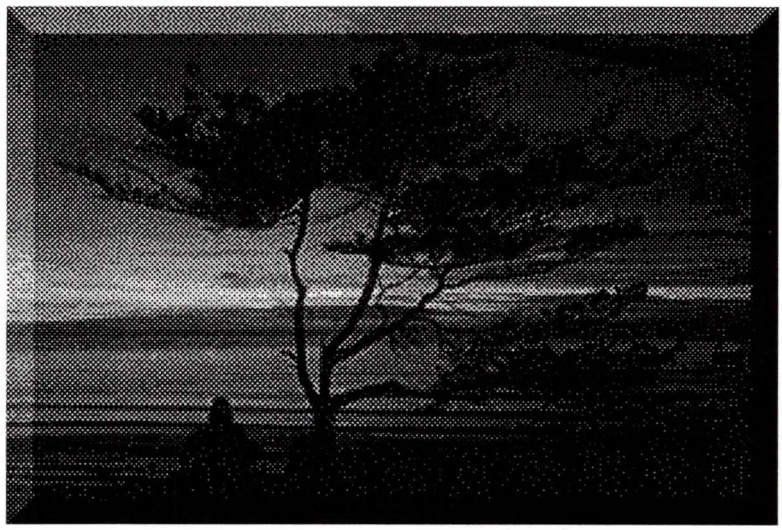
"If there was one thing that people could start to do each day to begin the day well, what exercise or pose would it be?"

Look in the mirror, into your own eyes, and say something kind to yourself.

Yoga Tips

The Chakra Tour

1,000 Petaled Lotus - Light within
Sun/Moon - You light up my life
Mercury - Tongue tied
Venus - Broken Hearted
Mars - The pit of the stomach
Jupiter - Empty Nest Syndrome
Saturn - a pain in the butt



Yoga Tips

Say it, Think it

The next time you want to call someone a "Son of a B----," try with all your might to call them a "Son of God" instead.

Say it.

Think it.

Notice what happens to them.

Notice what happens to **you.**

Yoyoga, Inc.

Yoga Tips

k-k-KARMA!

There are 6 universal laws to being human...
1) You will be given a body
2) You will be taught lessons
3) There are no mistakes in life, only lessons (k)
4) If a lesson is not learned, it gets repeated (k-k)
5) The more often a lesson is repeated, the more difficult it gets (k-k-KARMA!)
6) You know you have learned your lesson when your actions change.

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Yoga Tips

The 5 stages to every pose and to everything else...

1) Visualize
2) Flow in
3) Become one
4) Flow out
5) Reflection

Yoga Tips

The "Kids left in dark see better"

"Kids left in dark see better"

This was on the cover of the May 13th issue of the Chicag Sun Times Newspaper. It was about a recent tudy by the University of Pennslyvania that found that kids who sleep with bright night lights on, have a greater risk of developing near sightedness than those who sleep in the dark. I saw a deeper meaning in this...

.

The difficulties and obstacles in one's life are true blessings in disquise. They give us opportunities to apply the wisdom we are gathering. They give us a chance to try new techniques to the happier and richer life we dream about. Being comfortable does not necessarily motivate a person to change. Being uncomfortable can have great motivational possibilities...allowing us to transcend our karma.

I know there are many people appearing to be satisfied wallowing around in mud - perhaps things just have not gotten dark enough for them to move. The mud is a little too light and too comfortable. But as the mud gets darker, enlightenment is ever closer. All the great sages through the years have said this in some way or another. Obstacles re blessings in diguise. "Every cloud has a silver lining."

5/15/99

Yoga Tips

What the world needs now is...□

I am truly convinced that the world needs more backbends. We are catapulted forward (or backward) via our aggressive Mars (abdomen) chakra. We need to find ways to open ›ur Venus (heart) chakra. One ɪnportant way is through a backbend.

Many people get scared of backbends. Our eyes are in front of our head after all. We are fooled into thinking that it is only the forward movements that move us forward. Backbends open us up to deeper expressions. In fact, if you hold a backbend for an extended period of time, you may find emotions swelling up in you that you did not even know you had (I know I have!).

When I speak of backbends, I do not necessarily mean a full wheel pose. Even the simple movement of opening the chest in a cobra pose, fish pose, bow pose, or a supported prone spinal twist will do. Or, try just lying flat on your back with your legs and arms extended out and a few soft pillows under your mid-upper back. What the world needs now is love, sweet love. And how do you find love? Try bending over backwards.

Yoga Tips

Thank you for saving my life.

Thank you for saving my life.
You know who you are.
The time when I was drowning
in silent sorrow
over the death of someone
loved deeply,
'our compassionate eyes caught
my drowning sadness
and my heart soared
in oneness
with your kind spirit.

And then there was the time
I was feeling untouchable,
you softly
touched my shoulder
and said
'thank you.'
I know not what for.

I can not forget yet another time
for it was not all that long ago,
I yelled out in heart wrenching anger
and you did not take
my misquided attacks
ınd swing them back
ıt my dying soul

but rather
actually listened
› the depth
f my pain.
Y ou reminded me
of my hidden
peaceful reality.
You saw that my anger
was a mask
to my ever deeper love.
You saved my true
loving nature
in your mind.
You saved my life.

I know there must be many people
who go through life
never realizing
how truly important they are;
never realizing
that they actually
saved a person's life.
I don't want this
o happen to you.
. want you to KNOW
how important you are.
I want you to KNOW
the depth
of my gratitude.
I want you to KNOW
you saved my life.
I want to
sincerely thank you
for saving my life,
my joy.

Thank you.

Joan

Yoga Tips

The beauty of words

I love to read. I am currently reading "The Essential Yoga, Reflections on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali," by Bernard Bouanchaud. It consists of translations, thoughts, study questions on the sutras. Since the sutras were written in Sanskrit, (a language that is not a spoken language but a textural one - like Latin) all English renditions are translations. For this reason, it is important to try and read numerous translations to come to an understanding or glimmer into the essential meaning of the sutras.

This book is very good. The translations are easy to read. And the questions posed are helpful in delving into a deeper recognition of the power behind the words. For example, as you may already know, 'asana' is the sanskrit word for 'posture'. Here is what Bernhard Bouanchaud offers for further understanding of this word: "The verbal root (as) as in 'asanam' is rich with meaning. It is the idea of being present in one's body - inhabiting, existing, and living in it."

I love yoga. It's not every day you read such beautiful reflections on an 'as'.

Yoga Tips

Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da, Life goes one, Rah! Sha-va-sa-na, life goes on.

Would you believe I passed up an opportunity to hear and see the Beatles in "Concert-Live!" to go to he cemetery? It's true!

It was sometime back in the late 60's, and I was not quite a teenager. The Beatles were performing at a free outdoor concert at the local Holiday Inn. I was riding in the car with my grandmother, my father and my sister, to go visit my grandfather's grave at the cemetery. We saw all the commotion by the Holiday Inn as we drove by. There were banners saying "Welcome! We Love You!", and lots of girls screaming. My father pulled the car over and asked what all the uproar was about. We were told the Beatles would be there shortly to play a few songs. Wow!!!! The Beatles!!!!! I was more into the Monkees, but, hey! The Beatles!

We waited around for awhile to hear, but it appeared their plane must have been late. We were told they were delayed but would still be coming. Well, Grandma had no interest in the Beatles or in all the uproar around us. She insisted we go visit Grandpa. Grandpa was not delayed, after all, he was patiently waiting for us in his grave. Grandma was a very strong woman, and soon we were off to the cemetery, never seeing he Beatles. I don't remember being unusually upset or angry for not staying. I

remember thinking it was ok because Grandpa was more important, and I liked the Monkees more anyway. I do remember thinking/dreaming/singing some Beatles tunes in he car to the cemetery, tho. I grew up and became a professional musician. Is it any vonder why Shavasana, the corpse pose, became such a big part of my life?

So I learned, on the road to Shavasana, to carry a song in my heart.

Yoga Tips

A long and winding road...

A long, winding mountain road unveiled the beautiful lush nature of Malibu, California. Tears of joy welled up in my eyes as I approached the Serra Retreat Center. How was I so blessed to be among this splendor at such a difficult emotional time in my life? My only brother had died eight months ago. I was still grieving. The sadness of his passing still very real and painful within me.

I wanted to go on a retreat. I needed to go on a retreat. Over the past year I had been drifting away from loved ones in a self-imposed isolation. Why was I embracing solitude as I longed for the embrace of others? Perhaps a retreat would offer some answers. I explored various retreat options and could not make a decision on where and when to go. Decisions of any type had become difficult for me since our family decision was made to take my brother off of life-support eight months ago. He had suffered long enough. The decision was made November 13. It was a Friday. I somehow got through the rest of the school year as a teacher. The strength of the students' interest in deeper understandings of yoga carried me through. I decided to take the summer off from teaching. The candle was fading inside. I needed a retreat.

June passed, still no summer plans were made. Early July, my dear friend, Father Frank Stroud, invited me to a retreat he was giving with another Jesuit Priest, Richard McHugh. The retreat was going to be held in Malibu, July 16-18, and was called the

"DeMello Spirituality Retreat." The decision was made. I was going to Malibu!

Anthony DeMello was a Jesuit Priest whose teachings and writings reflected ancient Yogic traditions within the spirituality of St. Ignatius. He died suddenly in 1987, a few days before I was to meet him at a conference he was giving in New York City. I have since read all of his books. They have truly inspired me over the years. As the airline tickets were arranged for me, I picked up one of my favorite DeMello books, "The Song of the Bird," and read: "The way to truth is narrow. You always walk alone." As I read these words, I thanked God for the kindness of Father Frank Stroud.

On a mountain top overlooking the Pacific Ocean, amidst fields of flowers sprinkled with hummingbirds, the retreat began...

Father Stroud: "Forgive everyone and everything. Forgive yourself."

Tears welling up in my eyes. I can not hold them back any longer. They run down my face like an open faucet. My brother's death was slow and difficult. He was unconscious his last month of life. I am missing the closure of love and peace between us. A final exchange of loving words that will never be. My brother is dead.

Father McHugh: "Let us do some awareness exercises."

We proceed to be led, by this kind soul, into an ever expanding series of awareness exercises. Each exercise a study of deepening beauty.

Father McHugh: "Close your eyes. Reach out to the hands of the person next to you., Get to know them through their hands. What do their hands tell you?"

Sensitive beauty encompasses me through the delicate touch of my partner. We explore each other's hands for some time. I am a trained massage therapist. I have not been able to touch someone deeply with my hands for months...for eight months. My hands slowly open, truly feeling again, for the first time, the beauty of the present moment. Exercise ending - our eyes open together in tears.

The body/mind/spirit connection is deeply ingrained in the teachings of these two men - Frank Stroud and Richard McHugh.

Father Stroud: "An illusion of happiness is that 'it's important to be important,' - to be the King of this insane world." He spoke of releasing the 'ego,' without ever mentioning this word. His words rang simple, true, and clear.

Father McHugh: "Search inside yourself and find something about yourself that is very intimate and personal."

We form two circles of people. An inner circle facing an outer circle.

'ather McHugh: "Now share this most intimate secret with the person facing you. You ach have one minute to share. The more intimate you are, the more you will receive."

After one minute the inner circle moves one person to the left. Each person then has a new person to share their deep intimacy with. Only one minute per person.

"My brother died a few months ago, and I think about him every moment."

The inner circle moves on. I stay with my feet firmly grounded in the outer circle. Compassionate eyes studying, sharing, embracing, continuing to move, continuing to come. Tears, smiles, hope, wonder, continual movements of consciousness. The fluctuating inner circle stops. Awareness. Mass is given.

A long, winding mountain road unveils the beautiful lush nature of Malibu, California.

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Yoga Tips

What tree are you?

I tried my best to find the author of this tree relationship chart, but was not able to. It was sent to me this week by a friend on the internet. I had alot of laughs and fun with this, and thought you might too. I'm a Chestnut Tree. Chestnuts roasting on an open fire....Which tree does your birthday fall under?

December 23 to January 1 ..... Apple Tree
January 2 to January 11 ..... Fir Tree
January 12 to January 24 ..... Elm Tree
January 25 to February 3 ..... Cypress Tree
February 4 to February 8 ..... Poplar Tree
February 9 to February 18 ..... Cedar Tree
February 19 to February 28 ..... Pine Tree
March 1 to March 10 ..... Weeping Willow Tree
March 11 to March 20 ..... Lime Tree
March 21 ..... Oak Tree
March 22 to March 31 ..... Hazelnut Tree
April 1 to April 10 ..... Rowan Tree
April 11 to April 20 ..... Maple Tree
April 21 to April 30 ..... Walnut Tree
May 1 to May 14 ..... Poplar Tree

May 15 to May 24 ..... Chestnut Tree
May 25 to June 3 ..... Ash Tree
une 4 to June 13 ..... Hornbeam Tree
une 14 to June 23 ..... Fig Tree
June 24 ..... Birch Tree
June 25 to July 4 ..... Apple Tree
July 5 to July 14 ..... Fir Tree
July 15 to July 25 ..... Elm Tree
July 26 to August 4 ..... Cypress Tree
August 5 to August 13 ..... Poplar Tree
August 14 to August 23 ..... Cedar Tree
August 24 to September 2 ..... Pine Tree
September 3 to September 12 ..... Weeping Willow Tree
September 13 to September 22 ... Lime Tree
September 23 ..... Olive Tree
September 24 to October 3 ..... Hazelnut Tree
October 4 to October 13 ..... Rowan Tree
October 14 to October 23 ..... Maple Tree
October 24 to November 11 ..... Walnut Tree
November 12 to November 21 ..... Chestnut Tree
November 22 to December 1 ..... Ash Tree
Dec 2 - Dec 11 ..... Hornbeam Tree
December 12 to December 21 ..... Fig Tree
ecember 22 ..... Beech Tree

Apple Tree, the Love

Of slight build, lots of charm, appeal and attraction, pleasant aura, flirtatious, adventurous, sensitive, always in love, wants to love and be loved, faithful and tender partner, very generous, scientific talents, lives for today, a carefree philosopher with imagination.

Fir Tree, the Mysterious

Extraordinary taste, dignity, cultivated airs, loves anything beautiful,moody, stubborn, tends to egoism but cares for those close to it,rather modest,very ambitious, talented, industrious uncontent lover, many friends,many foes, very reliable.

lm Tree, the Noble-Mindedness

Pleasant shape, tasteful clothes, modest demands, tends to not forgive mistakes, cheerful, likes to lead but not to obey, honest and faithful partner, tends to a know-all-attitude and making decisions for others, noble-minded, generous, good sense of humor, practical.

Cypress, the Faithfulness

Strong, muscular, adaptable, takes what life has to give, happy content, optimistic, needs enough money and acknowledgment, hates loneliness, passionate lover which cannot be satisfied, faithful, quick-tempered, unruly, pedantic and careless.

Poplar, the Uncertainty

If necessary, needs goodwill and pleasant surroundings, very choosy, often lonely, great animosity, artistic nature, good organizer, tends to philosophy, reliable in any situation, takes partnership serious.

Cedar, the Confidence

Of rare beauty, knows how to adapt, likes luxury, of good health not in the least shy, tends to look down on others, self-confident, determined, impatient, wants to impress others, many talents, industrious, healthy optimism, waiting for the one true love, able to make quick decisions.

Pine Tree, the Particularity

Loves agreeable company, very robust, knows how to make life comfortable, very active, natural, good companion, but seldom friendly, falls easily in love but its passion burns out quickly, gives up easily, many disappointments till it finds its ideal, trustworthy, practical.

Weeping Willow, the Melancholy

Beautiful but full of melancholy, attractive, very empathic, loves anything beautiful and tasteful, loves to travel, dreamer, restless, capricious, honest, can be influenced but is not easy to live with,demanding, good intuition, suffers in love but finds sometimes an anchoring partner.

Lime Tree, the Doubt

Accepts what life dishes out in a composed way, hates fighting, stress and labor, tends to laziness and idleness, soft and relenting, makes sacrifices for friends, many talents but not tenacious enough to make them blossom, often wailing and complaining, very

jealous, loyal.

Hazelnut Tree, the Extraordinary

Charming, undemanding, very understanding, knows how to make an impression, active fighter for social cause, popular, moody and capricious lover, honest and tolerant partner, precise sense of judgment.

Rowan, the Sensitivity

Full of charm, cheerful, gifted, without egoism, likes to draw attention, loves life, motion, unrest and even complications, is both dependent and independent, good taste, artistic, passionate, emotional, good company, does not forgive.

Maple, Independence of Mind

No ordinary person, full imagination and originality, shy and reserved, ambitious, proud, self-respect, hungers for new experiences, sometimes nervous, many complexes, good memory, learns easily, complicated love life, wants to impress.

Walnut Tree, the Passion

Unrelenting, strange and full of contrasts, often egoistic, aggressive, noble, broad horizon, unexpected reactions, spontaneous, always liked but often admired, ingenious strategist, very jealous and passionate, no compromises.

Chestnut Tree, the Honesty

Of unusual beauty, does not want to impress, well-developed sense of justice, vivacious, interested, a born diplomat, but irritate and sensitive in company, often due to a lack of self-confidence, acts sometimes superior, feels not understood, loves only once, has difficulties in finding a partner.

Ash Tree, the Ambition

Uncommonly attractive, vivacious, impulsive, demanding, does not care for criticism, ambitious, intelligent, talented, likes to play with its fate, can be egoistic, very reliable and trust- worthy, faithful and prudent lover, sometimes brains rule over heart, but takes partnership very serious.

Hornbeam, The Good Taste

Of cool beauty, cares for its looks and condition, good taste, tends to egoism, makes life as comfortable as possible, leads reasonable, disciplined life, looks for kindness, an

emotional partner and acknowledgment, dreams of unusual lovers, is seldom happy with her feelings, mistrusts most people, is never sure of its decisions, very consciencious.

Fig Tree, the Sensibility

Very strong, a bit self-willed, independent, does not allow contradiction or arguments, loves life, its family, children and animals, a bit of a butterfly, good sense of humor, likes idleness and laziness, of practical talent and intelligence.

Oak, robust nature

Courageous, strong, unrelenting, independent, sensible, does not love changes, keeps its feet on the ground, person of action.

Birch, the Inspiration

Vivacious, attractive, elegant, friendly, unpretentious, modest, does not like anything in excess, abhors the vulgar, loves life in nature and in calm, not very passionate, full of imagination, little ambition, creates a calm and content atmosphere.

Olive Tree, the Wisdom

Loves sun, warmth and kind feelings, reasonable, balanced, avoids aggression and violence, tolerant, cheerful, calm, well-developed sense of justice, sensitive, empathic, free of jealousy, loves to read and the company of sophisticated people.

Beech, the Creative

organization of life and career, economical, good leader, takes no unnecessary risks, reasonable, splendid lifetime companion, keen on keeping fit (diets, sports, etc.).

Yoga Tips

Kittens to Kids

Have you ever watched how a kitten looks at the world? Every single movement fascinates their childlike wonder. A towel tossed on the floor, birds, flowers, a paper wad that moves as it is studied with small paws. The kitten is courageous and playful with all that moves - very much aware of, and sensitive to, the present moment.

Have you ever held a kitten in your arms and felt it purr as it looked up into your eyes? Contentment and trust resonating within its small frame. It is very easy to fall in love with a kitten. I have heard that there is a problem with kittens. The problem I have heard is that they become cats.

Have you ever watched how a cat looks at the world? Studying, observing, waiting for the right opportunity, the golden moment to pounce or play. The cat observes more and plays less. He is more cautious in his approach. The sound of his discerning purr comforting to all who are lucky enough to be near.

Children are very much like kittens. The problem with children - they become adults. The problem with adults - they forget they are really children.

Yoga Tips

Young at Heart

Do you spend much time with children? If not, please consider it. Children remind us who we really are.

Do you remember that once the simplest act could make you smile? Perhaps it was your aunt's lipstick, or a weed that had a flower on it, or a squirrel that ran across the grass. When someone smiled at you, you were not suspicious of their intentions, you actually smiled back with your full heart.

Do you remember how good it felt to hold someone's hand who really cared about you...or who you really cared for? Or how wonderful it felt to be told the drawing you made was so beautiful. Do you remember a time when you were not competing for attention? Everyone knew you were wonderful. A time when you saw the world through rose colored shades without wearing glasses. A time of wonder, beauty, and full awareness.

Yoga Tips

Meditation Exercise

Here is your exercise for this week.

As soon as you get up in the morning, find a quiet place to sit up straight. Take a few deep breaths and then chant softly :

"Om Shanti, shanti, shanti. All peace, peace peace."

Sit for 5 minutes watching your breath. Only 5 minutes. You may want to set a timer so that you can completely relax and not fear that you will be late for your dailey chores.

In the evening, before going to sleep, find a quiet place to sit up straight. Take a few deep breaths and then chant softly :

"Om Shanti, shanti, shanti. All peace, peace peace."

Sit for 5 minutes watching your breath.

A total of 10 minutes a day. Do this exercise this week. When you see the results of this simple exercise, you may want to continue for another week, and another....

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Yoga Tips

The Yogi Mind Trip

Realization of your own suffering.

Realization that you have chosen to suffer.

Becoming more compassionate oward yourself and your human olly.

Realization that you are not your emotion.

Becoming more detached from your suffering.
Becoming more aware of the suffering around you.

Feelings of powerfulness and powerlessness are replaced by humility.

Growing in compassion.

Through your compassion, all is possible...

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Yoga Tips

Tonglen Meditation

I am currently reading "The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying." What a great book. I highly recommend you read it. Here's a meditation for you to try from the book. Although this meditation is from Tibetan Buddhist practices, anyone of any faith can try it. It is a meditation of healing. It is called the Tonglen Meditation. Very simply, this is how the meditation goes...

When you encounter someone in pain, breathe in all their pain and suffering...every bit of it. Breathe out to the person, all your love, peace, and happiness. Continue working with the breath on this meditation.

Now, you may be asking yourself, won't this make me suffer more?
The answer is simply...no.

If you do not feel strong enough to breathe in someone else's suffering, then just imagine yourself being strong enough to. If you can not imagine yourself doing this, then pray that you can do it.

"I pray that I can take on your suffering. I pray that you receive my love, peace, and happiness."

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Yoga Tips

5 Easy Pieces

One step at a time...

1) **LAUGH** at the absurdity in 'hinking you can change someone lse

2) **WATCH** as your emotions rise and swell, then fall and fade

3) **LISTEN** to the sounds of nature

4) **SEE** the movement in stillness

5) **NOW** is the time to meditate

Yoga Tips

Thanksgiving

A time to be thankful for life. Life involves death. A time to be thankful for death. A time to see the interconnectedness of all of life. A time to see that slavery still exists in many forms within the animal ingdom. A time to see that we have ..e power for liberation. We have the power within us right this very second. We have the power to change the course of our actions. We have the power to change the course of our life.

Through changing the course of our individual life, we change the course of all lives.

Yoga Tips

Yoga in the Spirit of Christmas

The words of Jesus as seen through the eyes of a yogini...

Yoga Principle 1 - n-Violence

ıt if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."
---Matthew 5:38

Yoga Principle 2 - Truthfulness

"For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."
---Matthew 17:20

Yoga Principle 3 - Non-Stealing

"But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you."
---Luke 11:41

Yoga Principle 4 - Celibacy/Non-Desire

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
atthew 26:41

Yoga Principle 5 - Non-Greed
"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"
---Mark 8:36

Yoga Principle 6- Purity
"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, shall not enter it."
---Mark 10:15

Yoga Principle 7 - Contentment "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."
---John 3: 8

Yoga Principle 8 - Self-Discipline
"...But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."
---Mark 10:40

Yoga Principle 9 - Self-Study
"For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."
---Matthew 25: 29

Yoga Principle 10 - Centering on the divine
...I am with you always, to the close of the age."
---Matthew 28:20