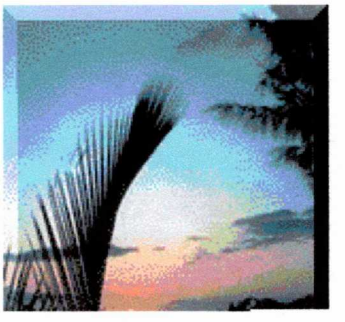

January 1, 2002
A Blessed New Year to You!

Issue 113

The next update of this site will be February 1.

"I am not young enough to know everything."
---------Oscar Wilde

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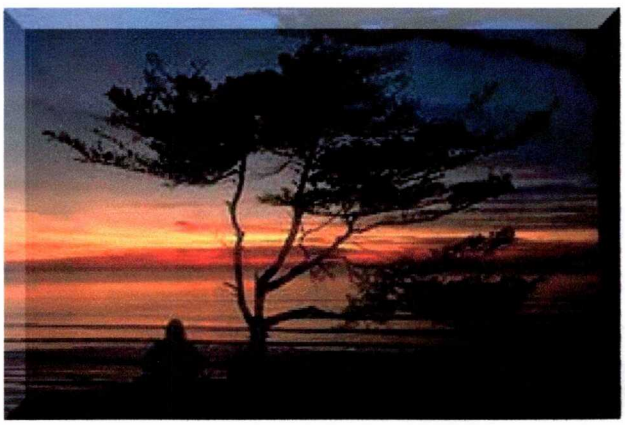
Yoga Tips

Dreams do come true.



Be careful what you wish for, it may come true.

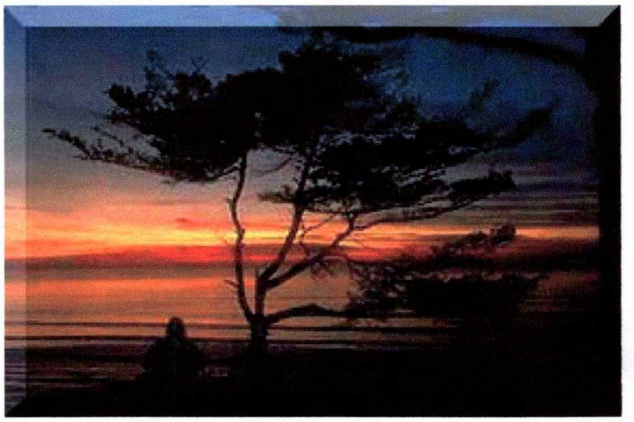
This past year, I wanted to take a sabbatical from teaching, but I would not do it. I really wished that I could. The universe listened. I broke my knee cap. I had to stop teaching hatha for a few months. Even with a broken kneecap and my leg in a cast, I was still ›uraged by others to keep teaching yoga classes. :r all, I have taught for years that yoga is more than mere physical postures and here was my opportunity to truly make an example of this and teach this. Yet, I also knew in my deepest self that I needed to take a break from teaching classes. So I did.

I am now focused on being a student again. Not that I ever stopped being a student...or maybe I thought I was stopping, that is why I needed to stop teaching. I have found there is some truth to the old saying, "Those who can't, teach." For when we start thinking that we are "learned," the learning can strangely stop.

It is important to have a beginner's mind in the approach of this study of yoga, this union of life. Life is movement. Each breath is a new opportunity for growth. Each breath is a new opportunity for change. So the yoga tip for this new 2002, is to **welcome in a beginner's mind.** It is all new in 2002. And I begin again with you...forever true...and new.

With love and shanti,

Pre Yogi School



I arrive at the preschool, prepared to teach 20 three to five year olds the art of relaxation. We exchange warm hugs and hellos as we gather around the blue circle on the floor.

"I've missed you all." I start.

Open gazes, expectant of things to come. Gentle kindness radiating from their beautiful eyes. I don't know how anyone can look into the eyes of a child and not see God. I ask for demonstrations of some of the things Miss Linda, my friend who teaches yoga there other weeks, has been teaching them . A few children get up and demonstrate some movements. Tree, snake, rabbit....rabbit? I realize that Linda and I have different interpretations of some of the postures. I watch the demonstrators, my heart opening with fascination, and then ask everyone to please sit and hold hands.

"Breath in and Breath out." As we breath in we sit up straight, and as we breath out we lower our heads to the floor. I show rather than tell. We use the focus of breathing in and out as ways to learn and combine new movements. After three deep inhales and exhales...

"Thank you very much," shaking the hands of the people we are holding. We look around at all the friends we are holding hands with. We smile and laugh as we greet each other. Then we release our handshakes...

"Breath in, lift the leg up. Breath out lower the leg." I change the movements after several tries of one kind. The focus starts to dim if I don't. In my experiences teaching, I have noticed adults

usually gain focus with continual similar movements...children often loose focus. I tell them how their breath sounds like waves at the beach. The focus is reestablished.

"Oh I want to get my swimsuit on," I say as their breaths get louder.

y giggle as the sounds of the waves increase. I instruct them to lie on their backs.

"One leg up - breathe in. One leg down - breathe out."

Focus starts to shift so I sit us up and bring out my meditation bell. I tell them to close their eyes and whoever can hear the soft bell is to raise their hands. Silence surrounds us as the children listen closely for the soft ring. I hit the bell as lightly as I can, relishing the pause of focused silence between each ring.

"Breath in deep when you hear the bell and then breathe out. It's a windy day at the beach."

With visions of skipping along the warm sand, we smile on this cold winter day. We spend quite a few moments here, breathing in and out with the gentle rings.

"AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!" the smallest child of the pack starts screaming for a reason I can't figure. I reach over and gently stroke his hair.

"That's ok," I say. He calms down and then gets up and runs around the room. Other children watch quietly. One child climbs into my lap and starts to teach.

"Breathe in and Breathe out." as she lifts her leg up and down. Some children follow, some do not. I join her and soon most children are back to leg lifts.

Some choose to join the little screamer running around the room.. The quietness and focus of twenty preschoolers, however brief, is no longer there. I start the cat/dog game. We form a circle in dog pose around the blue line. This pose involves forming a triangle with the floor. The hands are one base of the triangle and the feet are another. The hips are high in the air. It's the way the dog stretches in the morning. I pick one child to be a cat and crawl around the circle, climbing under all the dogs. This works great, until everyone realizes that only a few cats will be chosen to do this. If every child were to do this in this large a group, chaos would soon follow. As the focus starts to get hazy with the fourth cat, I bring out the bell.

"Everyone can't be a cat today, but everyone can ring the bell." This brings relief to some of the children with tears starting to well up in their sweet kitty eyes. I travel around to each child and bid all those around me to sit up straight and close their eyes. When the bell is rung, breath in, breath out. Each child gets a chance to ring the bell...breath in, breath out...and I get closer to the beach with each beautiful sigh.

h the last gentle ring, we gather and hold hands...

"Breathe in, breathe out,
Breathe in, breathe out,
Breathe in, breathe out.

Thank you very much,
Thank you very much,
Thank you very muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuch!"

Home | Asana For The Week | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tips | Yo Joan
Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest | Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan

Yoga Tips

NEW AVENUES

When I tell people I teach yoga, I often here this response,

"Oh, I love yoga. I used to do it years ago, but I haven't done it for a long time."

So I ask, "What made you stop?"

I get various answers, but they usually volve around the business of life:

Oh, My work got too tough."
"My family responsibilities increased."
"I got into a different exercise program."

If any of these reasons ring familiar to you, I encourage you to look at new dimensions in your practice. If you are finding yourself bored, there may be another approach to the study you are ready for. Perhaps your hatha (posture) practice needs some more active postures as in Power Yoga. Perhaps your hatha practice needs more relaxation, as in the Himalayan tradition. Perhaps more breathwork is needed, as in the Kundalini method. Or perhaps it is time to turn more deeply to meditation studies.

According to Patanjali, who wrote the Yoga Sutras several thousand years ago:

"Yoga is the cessation of the constant fluctuations of the mind."

A regular yoga practice can help us with the business of life. Yoga is a lifestyle. It is more than a hatha method. A hatha method simply leads us into the lifestyle. A yoga lifestyle helps us to find balance and create harmony. It is a lifestyle that helps us to become more aware of our brilliant potential and the awesome potential of the world around us.

The Yoga Train

This study of yoga involves the release of the ego. Yet we live in a world, a society, that believes an ego is an important part of success. The philosophy that competition is the name of the game, and "may the better man win," is deeply rooted in the american experience. How is it possible to release the ego and truly practice humility?

This little story is a reflection on one of my early experiences as a yoga teacher. It will give you a glimpse into my arguments with my ego. It will give you a glimpse into my releasing the ego. The work continues. It's just one story, yet there are so many. The yoga train does not end with a scheduled train destination. All aboard, the Yoga Train...

"The Yoga Train takes off at 8 AM SHARP.
If you arrive late, you miss the train.
The library is open for you to truck on over to.
There are many good yoga books to read there.

I made sure of this. When I started teaching at the college a few years earlier the library had only two or three yoga books to choose from. So, I put together a list of twenty or so of my favorite yoga books. I've read hundreds. I gave the list to the head librarian and asked her to order them as reference materials for my classes. The list included many philosophical ancient texts which created the foundation to the history of yoga. Books like the Upanishads, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, the Bhagavad Gita. The librarian ordered the whole list. What a great school. What a great librarian. If I wanted to order more, I was to just let her know...and I did. By the time I left that school, the library had a great collection of yoga books. Several were even mine.

I taped the "Yoga Train" announcement to the outside of my classroom door and closed the door behind me. It locked. The students now in the classroom could leave, but no one else could enter. It was 8 AM....SHARP. Choo- Choo!

I walked tall to the front of class and sat down comfortably in lotus pose. This is considered a cult seated posture, but for me it's relatively easy. I'd been sitting in lotus pose before I ever ted studying yoga. I used to sit this way as a child. So, it's really no great feat for me. It's a natural way to sit. As an adult, I continue to revisit my childhood in strange seated ways.

The knocks begin at the door. I ignore them and begin my morning lecture. Today we are discussing non-violence. Non-violence (ahimsa) is the first principle in this study of yoga. I brought with me a reading from Swami Kriyananda's book, "The Spiritual Science of Kriya Yoga." It's one of my favorite yoga books. I had met Swami Kriyananda. He's from Chicago. I like him even so. I made copies for the class to read with me. I began....

"The main source of non-violence is within our intellects. Our intellects ascertain harmonious or inharmonious energies of the mind, which sooner or later must manifest harmoniously or inharmoniously."

The knocks at the door become louder. A student in the back of the class gets up to let the late students in.

"No," I firmly stop him. "Class has already started." He sits back down confused.

I try to ignore the knocks at the door. Being on time's very important to me. I take what I teach ously. The class is only 50 minutes long. In the first 10 minutes of class, I try to cover an ortant philosophical aspect to the study of yoga. Although this is a physical education class, the foundation of yoga is philosophical. To miss this foundation is to miss the backbone of yoga. I was tired and not the least bit angry of students coming in 5, 10 minutes late to class. They were missing important aspects of the study and were distracting me besides. I find it difficult teaching about overcoming distractions when I am totally distracted. It's disrespectful to come in late. And it's sure difficult teaching about the release of the ego when my ego is puffed up with outrage.

So, today, I sit up here in front of class, demonstrating my flexibility and anal retentiveness simultaneously. Add a little outrage to the mix, and I'm quite a deal to reckon with. A flexible, anal retentive, outraged yogini. Welcome to class everyone! Peace be with you. But watch your backs, buddies.

"Any questions?" I ask. The knocks have become deafening. Here I am distracted again. I am hoping a student will pipe in with a loud question that will beg our interest. A competing distraction is very necessary right now. Oh please, cloud us with another loud one. Those knocks are so angry, so violent. Let's kick them under the rug and yell about something else.

"They are getting what they deserve, " I think loudly to myself. "They must really like this class if they're kicking the doors down to get into it," I continue to ponder in silent sarcasm, "Never mind t I grade them on their attendance. They're now simply faceless kicks at the door that are sing a class and lowering their grade. I've got the power!"

"Do you agree with Swami Kriyananda's views of non-violence?" I ask serenely. My former years as a professional actress finally paying off. Still waiting for some student input inside the room. No student responds. I start us on our postures. Meditative postures, with angry knocks and kicks at the door to punctuate our movements.

lly, a student in the back of the room, gets up in a huff out of downward dog pose, "This is bull shit!" he shouts as he stomps out of the room.

Some outside students are caught in mid kick as he pulls the door open with a start. They're too stunned to use this opportunity to enter the room. The door closes quickly behind him and locks. No more knocks. Opportunity has come and gone. There is an uneasy silence in the room.

"Part of this study is discipline," I explain, It's important to be here on time."

The students stare at me with blank faces. They understand, I think. They know I am disciplined. I mean what I say. Don't mess with this yogini. I am the almighty teacher. Class begins when I say and ends in relaxation pose. We must proceed to relaxation pose.

"Relax your feet, relax your hands, relax your body, relax your breath..."

As relaxation pose comes to an end, the past knocks and swearing in this violent, non-violent day become a blurred remembrance. All is well. Om shanti. All peace.

The students quietly leave class.

The next day I come to class to see groups of students crowded by the door. Aha..it worked. They are all here on time. As I pass them to unlock the door, I can't help but notice the daggers in the eyes of some closest to the door.

"Good morning." I sing.

No response.

I open the door and let the students enter. One of the older students pulls me aside.

"Joan, I think I should warn you, there's a lot of students angry about yesterday. They think you're a hypocrite.

"What?" Me, a hypocrite? Little ol' yogini me?

How insulting. 'Ego, egoing, egone!'....I try to follow Swami Beyondanda's advice, but my hurt ego settles firmly into its inner trenches. My blood begins to boil. I try not to boil into the student who t bared the bad news, so I direct my attention to the class waiting for me. I look into the room at 30 or so students waiting for me to enter...it appears some of them are boiling too. My boil

turns to a simmer as I see I'm outnumbered. I whimper into thinking of simply leaving. I don't need this. This is the most difficult class I've ever taught. They don't realize what a good teacher I am, how much time I put into these classes, how every moment is so precious to me. I thank the student for warning me, and I enter the class with a proud Leo strut.

›re I sit down a student walks up to me and asks me if she could make an announcement. Sure. live in a democracy, after all (admittedly not in my class, but I try to remain open to new ideas). I can tell this isn't going to be a friendly announcement, but I can take it. Yoga develops strength and flexibility.

She speaks loudly and firmly, "Many of us believe your locking us out yesterday was against school policy. It was violent too."

"I can lock the door if I choose to." I respond. "Students inside were still free to leave."

"We didn't have the guts," a shy student piped out from the back of class.

I was quiet. You can be sure that when the meek begin to speak, the earth begins to tremble.

"I don't need to learn this." the student huffed, "I know it already. I came here to study yoga not all this other stuff. I have my own religion."

"This is part of the study," I respond, "In fact, it's the most important part. It's not a religion. The postures are just the body, we're so much more than this body."

ll, this is a PE class, and I came for the body. I don't need this other stuff."

Then teach me." I respond, my voice less confident, "I want to learn." I mean it. I openly question my actions. Non-violence could not inspire such violence - physically, verbally, mentally.

The discussions continue, many people speak up. Some supporting me, some not. I defend my belief and my right as a teacher to insist that students be on time for class. It's hard to be defensive and open minded at the same time....but yoga teaches flexibility.

The conversations endure throughout the 50 minutes of class. We openly explore what is violence? What is non-violence? The student who made the first announcement ends that she would like to withdraw from the class. This is not what she came here to learn. I give her a permission slip to withdraw. I offer the slips to anyone else who'd like to withdraw. She's the only one who takes it.

The class continues with new yoga principles to discuss every week. I ask more for student input. I begin to ask students to write their own reflections on the principles. It's amazing what I read from them. Their writings turn into books - Yoga books. The study of the body, mind, spirit thriving and living in harmony together. Each semester, the enrollment grows and the books expand. Yoga books written by students - students who are great teachers.

Yoga Tips

The Wicked Witch of the West Wing

I follow the yellow-lined road to the emergency room and enter the land of the hospital. It is a foreign land that makes me quickly long for home. I rush to my mother's bedside in intensive care. I'm shocked to find her in such poor health. A nurse briskly tells me I can't stay long. Her stern words turn into a blur. I hold my mother's hand. I'm not going anywhere. The nurse tells me again I must leave. I look at her. She oddly begins to resemble the Wicked Witch of the West. I stand firm. Another nurse comes by through her gentle coaching, I reluctantly move to the waiting n.

While in the waiting room, I observe the large paintings of men in charge of the hospital. Which one is the real Wizard? Which intensive care curtain is he hiding behind? I remember back a year ago when my mother was in another life/death struggle. We were at this very same hospital. There was a beautiful kind nurse who comforted us then. I even wrote a letter of recommendation to the President of the hospital about her. Perhaps this kind nurse is here tonight? I pick up the hospital phone and try to locate her in this land so far away from home. I'm told she will be working from 11-6 the next day. A deep breath follows in knowing I'll be seeing her gentle face tomorrow in this foreign land. Tired and scared, I slowly drift away into a deep sleep in the waiting room chair.

Upon awakening, the beautiful kind nurse from the past walks up. I'm so truly happy to see her gentle face, her eyes shining brightly.

I jump up from my seat, "Remember Me?" I wipe the unexpected sleep away from my eyes.

"Of course, I remember you." she replies.

I give her the biggest heart-felt hug I can remember. It's such a relief to see her steady pressence amidst all the turmoil of personalities around me and in me. I feel true love for this kind nurse. She starts telling me that my mother is doing much better and that she's sorry she appeared cold last night. She was under a lot of stress....

AAAAAAAH! It's the WICKED WITCH! In my exhausted, delusional state, I thought she was the good nurse from the past! I begin to sob.

"I'm sorry, I c-c-can't help it," I sputter through my tears, embarrassed by my lack of courage.

She quickly comforts me and tells me she understands how exhausted I must be. She doesn't know that I'm so ıusted I thought she was someone else! She hugs me. Not a phoney hug, but a hug that radiates sincere warmth, ɜre love. My fears, my defenses, melt away.

From that point on, the nurse of the west wing went out of her way in her kindness toward me. She continued to be caring to my sick mother. Her eyes met mine as a kindred spirit. I'm thinking of writing another letter of recommendation....

Removing veils of illusions.

Uncovering satya.

There's no place like om.

Home | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tips | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Seminars
Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest | Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan

ANTHONY ROCKS

Yoga is a study in self-realization. Our minds can become imprisoned in our bodies, thinking that as individuals we can reach enlightenment. Self-realization is egoless. The self is not bound by the ego, but rather transcends the ego. One way to transcend the limiting view of the self is through mantra. Om is a mantra that is often used. It is simple. It is easy to say. Om is a physical sound that relates to the universal connection we share. The sound is representative of a deeper experience. It is representative of all [illegible] exists in all forms. Through a repetition of this mantra, one [illegible]ns to shed illusions and begins a journey closer to the reality of our intimate connections with each other - the core of our existence - the world around and within us. Anthony demello reflects so insightfully on this yogic concept through a story of a meditator in the following passage from his book, "One Minute Wisdom."

ABSURDITY

The Master kept scraping a brick against the floor of the room where his disciple sat in meditation.

At first the disciple was content, taking this to be a test of his powers of concentration. But when the sound became unbearable he burst out, "What on earth are you doing? Can't you see I am in meditation?"

"I'm polishing this brick to make a mirror out of it," said the Master.

"You're crazy! How can you make a mirror out of a brick?"

"No crazier than you! How can you make a meditator out of the self?"

For information on upcoming DeMello conferences contact:
DeMello Spirituality Center
Fordham University
Bronx, NY 10458
or call Rev. Francis Stroud (718) 817-4508.
There is a conference coming up September 14 in New York City featuring Deepak Chopra, Julian Whitaker, and Sarno. Tickets can be purchased through the Demello Spirituality website at http://www.demello.org.

Home | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tips | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Seminars
Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest | Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan

Yoga Tips

Brazilian Beauty

Paz
Luz
Amore
Alegria

These words were my mantra throughout my travels in Brazil this summer. Portugeese is the native languge in Brazil. Paz, luz, amore, alegria is the portugees version of Peace, Light, Love, Joy. I spoke these words often while in this beautiful country. Each ıe they were spoken, the meanings became richer for me. I spoke there at the International Stress Management Association Conference on mantra and yoga.

Here is the yoga tip for you. A mantra to reflect on in your meditation practice...

Peace
Light
Love
Joy

Meditate on these words. If you don't want to use words in your meditation, let your hands silently express the feelings of these words.

Bring your hands together in namaste = Peace
Turn them palms up and look up = Light
Cross your arms around you and give your self a hug = Love
Giggle when hugged = Alegria

Try these movements to represent the words. Your yoga tip this month is direct from Brazil. Words to meditate on...

Yoga Tips

Subtle Signs

We may see the big events of our lives as being the life changing ones - weddings, funerals, anniversaries, birthdays, etc. Yet it's the subtle experiences that create the grand ones - the subtle experiences are changing our lives on a regular basis. For example, a warm glance by a new person you meet today may be the beginning of a life changing relationship.

The sensitive card you sent to someone you cared about may have [illegible]ed a heart that was closed.

[illegible]nd word spoken in sincerity may have been the catalyst for someone as they decided between a negative or postitive action.

The gentle words you said to a stranger recently may have changed their attitude for the better. Maybe it was something as simple as "thank you."

All of these examples are simple ones, yet the consequences profound.

All of the subtle movements you take are powerful ones. Yoga explores these subtle movements. Yoga examines the movement within the holding of postures. Yoga is not about achieving "scorpion" pose. Yoga is about listening to the subtle aspects of your being as you explore scorpion pose. Yoga is about holding scorpion pose and listening to your body speak to you as you do. Yoga is about increasing your capacity to listen to subtle aspects of your being. It is about learning to listen more closely, sensitively, non judgmentally to all that is around you and in you.

Release Negativity

How does one break out of negative thought patterns? Through the eyes! Synchronized eye movements with breath movements can help you release old patterns of thought that are no longer serving you. Information that comes into the brain, first goes to the thalamus. This transforms into physical waves in the brain. Some of these waves then go to the amygdala and others to the rest of neocortex. The pathway to the amygdala is shortest and this is ere negative memory is stored. Negative stimuli goes there first. It's hard to break out of negative arousal of the amygdala when it onstantly getting bombarded by negativity of various sorts. Eye l breath movements together exercise the entire brain to release negative patterns.

Here is an exercise for the closed eyes. Inhale as you look up, keeping the eyelids closed. Exhale as you slowly look down. Do this three times. Relax for several breaths with no eye movement. Then, inhale as you look left, keeping the eye lids closed. Exhale as you slowly look right. Do this three times. Relax for several breaths before beginning entire sequence again. Try to do this simple exercise for five minutes a day, or whenever you are under stress.

Do not strain the eyes. Be comfortable and gentle in your movements. Let your breath guide you. Do not force breath or eyes. When you are feeling stressed, use this exercise to help you regain composure, strength, and peace.

Yoyoga, Inc.

Merry Christmas

As this year comes to a close, we can look around the globe and see that we are still living amidst great crisis. Certainly, there's also much to rejoice about in the world, yet these rejoices pale when one reads or lives in the midst of suicide bombers, atomic bomb scares, and terrorists attacks.

"We need to attack back!" This is the answer resonating within ny of the minds and hearts of our political leaders. We are now ı "war on terrorism." War is an alternative our county, and other countries, have turned to for countless generations. Subdue the threatening forces by physical force. Hold down the aggressor by increasing aggression. According to the way of yoga, this is NOT the way. Physical force will never solve a problem of aggression, it will only bring forth more aggression. In fact, the types of aggression we are currently experiencing around the globe, are, in deed, a reflection of the past effects of this type of physical force.

War breeds contempt. Contempt that's not always readily apparent in the eyes of those waving the white flags of surrender. But nonetheless, contempt that seethes in the hearts and minds of those who have been hurt, humiliated, and overrun. This contempt is carried from generation to generation. One may be able to subdue a struggle temporarily, but the seeds of anger, hatred and discontent that war nourishes have now been fully planted within those who loose. War fills the "winners" with a false sense of pride. The loss of life, the loss of honor, the loss of innocence from all who suffer the tragic consequences of war, can hardly be rectified by a "who's on top" mentality.

From a yoga perspective, the answer lies within the experiences of a meditative life. A life that continually removes the layers of egotistical confusion and deception through contemplative practices of silence.

"In the breeze I sought the Divine Fragrance,
In the blooming garden I looked for the vision,
But only in the meditations of my Heart was the path revealed." - Sarmad

ay you find this holiday season a time to look past the outer layers of illusions. May you find this a time to look

inward into the real beauty which is the profound and truest expression of who you are. Let this deep and powerful expression be actualized through the example of your life. This core of inner beauty dwells within the lives of the mid-east as well as the mid-west. In the midst of life everywhere is a centered foundation of self awareness. An awareness that is not directed by the confused emotions of an inflated ego. As we see and feel how the death of one person can rock the lives of many, let us also deeply realize that the life of one person, can inspire and elevate the s of many. Let this inspired life be yours. Om shanti. All peace.

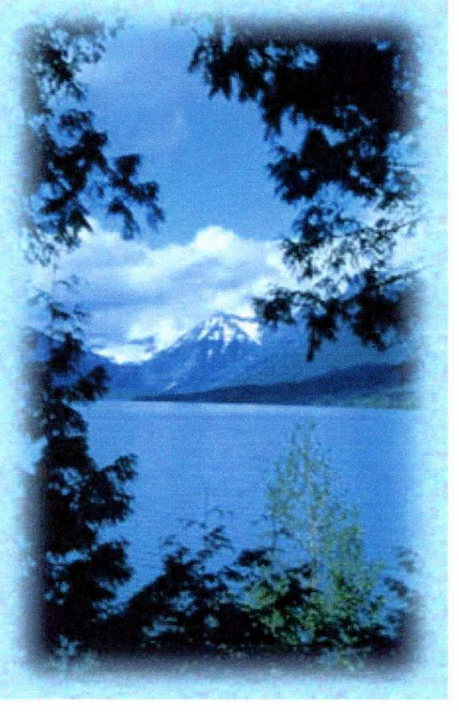
Home | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tips | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Seminars Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest | Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan

Yoyoga with Joan

January 2003

Issue 124

"And all the loveliest things there be
Come simply, so it seems to me."
---Edna St. Vincent Millay



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Yoga Tips

Let peace begin with me

"Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, a peace that was meant to be."

Do you remember ever singing this song? It continues,

"With God as our father, brothers all are we. Let me walk with my brother, in perfect harmony. Let peace begin with me, let this be moment now. With every step I take, let this be my solemn . To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

I sing this song often. Although I teach and attend yoga classes, I do realize that the quest for peace is an inner one. The study of yoga begins with me. One can not expect world peace, if inner peace is illusive. Each one of us must take the responsibility for developing ourselves and unveiling the inner peace that resides within each and every one of us. This is the study of yoga, of union, of om.

Om shanti, all peace.

Home | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tips | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Seminars
Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest | Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan

Peace

The world events are very troubling. I do not support the war in the middle east. I do support our troops. I support our troops by wanting them to come home now, alive. I believe in diplomacy. I don't believe in brute force. Brute force doesn't build, it destroys. With all the advancements our society has made in recent years, war as an answer makes no sense. We have political organizations [illegible] fight for human rights, yet in the face of war our political [illegible]lers declare that the loss of innocent civilian life is inevitable. [illegible] hypocrisy is quite sad and quite clear.

What to do? Meditate. Bring peace into your life. Let your walk of peace be the example for the world. You can not expect the world to be at peace if your own life is not. By creating peace in your life, you create peace in the world. One step at a time. Inhale Peace. Exhale Peace.

"Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me."

Om shanti, Om shanti, Om shanti
All peace, peace, peace.

Home | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tips | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Seminars
Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest | Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan

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Yoga leads to Meditation

World Peace. Terrorism. These subjects are so overwhelming. There's no one answer, just as there's no one path up a mountain. Many paths can be forged up a mountain, yet there are few mountain climbers. It can be dangerous to climb a mountain. It involves many risks. It involves flexibility and strength. Most importantly, it involves a creative mind to approach the unexpected in ways that are constructive, in ways that continue the climb so that one does not "fall down again into the material pool." This is a quote from the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita is an ancient sacred text from India. It's a text referred to regularly in yoga studies.

"When contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises.

From anger, delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost, one falls down again into the material pool."

--Bhagavad Gita

A regular practice of yoga leads one into meditation. Yoga means union. Meditation is the process of calming and quieting the constant fluctuations of the mind. There physical exercises in the yoga study that help to ate a stronger and more flexible body. The objective

of these exercises is not to be a contortionist. The objective is to feel more comfortable in one's own skin so that meditation becomes easier. Meditation leads to self realization.

ere are many roads to self- realization, the "self" ng a divine expression of reality. Meditation is one road to self realization. Various cultures explore meditation differently. Some meditations are intimately connected to the religious traditions of the culture. Although yoga is not a religion, there is still an underlying pretext within the study as to a fundamental force, a light, a presence within everyone, within all that exists, that is deeply and profoundly beautiful. War exists. Does this mean war is beautiful? No. War is yet another veil that prevents the reality of this profound beauty to be experienced

Meditation is the process of uncovering veils of illusions. Veils that prevent one from seeing this deeper profound beauty. Removing these veils is not an easy process. It's a continual process of self study and of increasing self-awareness. This is not an egotistical self. This is a self that's interconnected with all of life. One's life here. One's life in the Middle East. The process of uncovering ' ions helps us to see and realize the intimate nections we have with each other. Once veils of illusions are removed, fear, distrust, hatred subside.

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Moving with the Universe

(Excerpt from, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, Illustrated third edition")

While many yoga poses imitate animals or structures in nature (mountains, s, and so on), a vinyasana imitates rhythm and movement of the natural world, the universe, and the cosmos. The human body is like a universe in microcosm, with its own internal rhythms and movements. At the atomic level, the very atoms that make up everything are like tiny universes. Beyond our bodies, the world is full of cycles: the seasons, the years, the moons spinning around the planets, the planets spinning around the sun, the entire galaxy revolving.

A vinyasana helps us feel like a part of this magnificent, intricate, ultimately large, yet ultimately small cycle. The sun, moon, and earth all move in concert, and through a vinyasana, we move in concert, too. Everything is moving to a sacred rhythm, ancient and eternal, and the rhythm wouldn't be the same if any one thing did not move with it. We are all part of a wave in the ocean of the universe, and when we move with the tide, we are doing what comes naturally, what makes us a part of the whole.

RETREAT THIS SUMMER! YOU GO!!

WOW~! Have I got some tips for you this month!! GO ON A RETREAT! It's August, for pete's sake! Just do it. I realize that not everyone reading this can take a week off to go somewhere, but certainly you can take a day or a weekend off. You deserve it. A retreat is not a spa. A ›eat is somewhere where you go to grow spiritually. A ›eat brings you closer to the reality of what is REALLY important. Here are some suggestions for you from my recent very personal experience.

This month I've been on two retreats. One was given at the Cennacle Retreat Center in Warrenville, Illinois (Call - 630-393-1231) This was a weekend retreat on Spirituality and Sound. It was given by Russill and Asha Paul, and by Wayne Teasdale. It was an absolutely fantastic retreat. Russill has many CD's on the market now that I highly recommend. His three CD set, "Yoga of Sound," I've been using regularly in my hatha practice for several years now. It's beautiful and well worth the investment. To find out more about upcoming retreats they are giving in your area contact their website at :

http://www.russillpaul.com

/ne Teasdale has written a new book called, "A Monk in the World." I just finished reading it. I'd highly

recommend you read it too. It's an exceptional book that portrays the struggles and joys of his life as a monk. It also gives many inspiring examples of how each of us can [illegible]g spirituality into our lives in constructive ways. To [illegible]n this world and yet strive for a life that has deeper meaning than external gratification is a worthy life indeed. Wayne Teasdale exemplifies this in his book and in his life. Read it to be inspired of the possibilities that exist for each of us. His book can be found on Amazon at:

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1577311817/qid=1059677776/sr=2-2/ref=sr_2_2/002-3144074-6987238

At the conclusion of this retreat Russel suggested an important part of developing a spiritual practice is in learning a sacred language. Little did he know that the next weekend I had already planned to be in Los Angeles for a course at Loyola University in Vedic Chanting. Synchronicity!

This course at Loyola was given by Sonia Nelson. We [illegible]t the weekend chanting the Yoga Sutras in Sanskrit. [illegible]as an incredibly powerful experience for me. I found the class very helpful in learning the pronunciations and inflections of the chants. Sonia learned these chants from T.K.V. Desikachar. Not knowing that he was her teacher, I happened to bring with me his book, "The Heart of Yoga, Developing a Personal Practice." Synchronicity! It's a fantastic book with a full interpretation of the Yoga Sutras in the back. Sonia Nelson, aside from having an absolutely mesmerizing voice to listen to, is also very adept at Sanskrit pronunciations. She has produced several very worthwhile CDÕs on Vedic Chanting. If you can study with her personally, or through her CDÕs, you'll not regret the experience. For more information contact the Vedic Chant Center website at:

http://www.vedichantcenter.org

[illegible]ether or not you are able to study with these [illegible]icular teachers, surely there's a retreat experience near you that is possible. Here are some suggestions to

find a retreat near you. Check out your local Catholic or Buddhist retreat house. If you do not know where one is, call a local church or temple to find out about local eats. You don't necessarily have to be Catholic or dhist to attend. Another example - your local junior college may also have some interesting weekend seminars on spiritually related subjects. Another suggestion, check out your local new age bookstore to find out about lectures and artists coming to your area. They are often listed in the back of local newspapers as well. Open your mind to the possibility that a course, a teacher, a church, or a lecture may lead you into a deeper spiritual expression of who you are. It's summer. Get out there and move that Kundalini Energy!

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Yoga Tips

Excerpt from the newly released, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, Illustrated Third Edition." Pg. 295

"One focus of ancient Indian Yoga life science is cleanliness. Yoga includes several cleansing rituals of practices that were originally designed to keep the body clean, balanced, and in optimal health.But you take showers. You wash your hair. You use deodorant. You don't smell bad. Isn't that enough? Not to the yogi! Of course, nothing should become an obsession, but according to yoga tradition, the body needs some hygienic upkeep to keep it from becoming a hindrance to the spirit and an impediment to the kundalini energy, not to mention imbalanced and eventually vulnerable to disease. This cleanliness is called shodhana and consists of cleansing rituals, or shat kriyas, for the body. Hatha Yoga also concerns strict observance of dental hygiene. Yogis not only brush their teeth, but also rinse their mouths, massage their gums, and scrape their tongues to keep them clean."

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Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Yoga Tips

THE ENERGY ENIGMA DEFINED

You may think you have a solid body, but you don't. At the atomic level, you have lots of space between those vibrating atoms. Even the "Rock" has more space between his atoms than actual atoms!

Look up at the stars on a starry nite. There is more ›ace between the stars than there are actual stars. In ıct, many of these stars are light years away from each other. The distance would take years to travel between these stars. Although the space between the atoms in your body doesn't consist of light-years, it's relatively similar. The distance is very great. We are actually more energy than we are matter!

And so, comes the next point: **Your energy is a major part of who you are.** Your thoughts are a part of how this energy is manifested. What you think is extremely important. You may not think that it matters what is inside your head, but it does. It matters very much.

You may think people judge you mainly on your physical appearance, but they don't - even when they think they do. Your internal energy is a powerful force that emanates from you. It influences how others see you. What you think is as important to me, as it is to you.

e more you become sensitive to the energy within ı, the more you'll become sensitive to the energy within others. Your energy enigma isn't an enigma after

all. It's real. Your energy defines who you are.

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Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Yoga Tips

Shhhhhh...senses

One of the eight limbs of yoga is Pratyahara. This is control of the senses. Our senses bombard us on a regular basis. We eat, talk, think, taste, touch, smell...and all while driving the car! It's enough to sway anyone off the road. Pratyahara involves taking the time to let the senses calm down. This creates a more ceful life. Pratyahara is important to practice to experience Yoga or a balanced union with life.

Below is a simple yoga technique that helps us to bring awareness to the quieting of the senses. After recently doing this exercise in yoga class, one of my wonderful students, Megan, told me that an autistic child she knows naturally does the following exercise when he is happy. Autism is an overloading of the senses. Although this child never studied yoga, he instinctively knows what to do to help control his overpowering senses. It's particularly beautiful to reflect on the fact that this child naturally turns to the following technique when experiencing joy.

Here's the yoga technique:

Place your thumbs in your ears.
ce your second fingers over the eye lashes of your sed eyelids.
Place the third fingers over your nostrils.

Place your fourth fingers over the top of your lips.
Place your little fingers over the bottom of your lips.

– ıtly hold every opening of your face closed. When you d to breathe, release the nostrils, take a good breath, and then close them up again. Continue this quieting of the senses for as long as you comfortably can.

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Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

The Gift of Giving

Joy to the world!

The holiday season is here. As media images of material happiness beam forth around us, let's not forget that giving involves more than the latest department store sale. Giving is a spirit that can be a part of our lives at any time of the year. It need not involve money.

Here are some gift giving ideas. Know that you have the power to give these gifts to another no matter what your material wealth.

GIFT GIVING IDEAS:

When someone needs a smile, give them yours.

When someone's lost in tears, give them your steady hand.

When someone shares a personal difficulty, give them your trust.

When someone yells in hurried anger, give them your calmness.

When someone judges, give them your non judgment.

When someone's lonely, give them your

companionship.

When someone's eyes twinkle, give them your twinkles back.

Happy Holidays to all!

Yours in peace,
Joan

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Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

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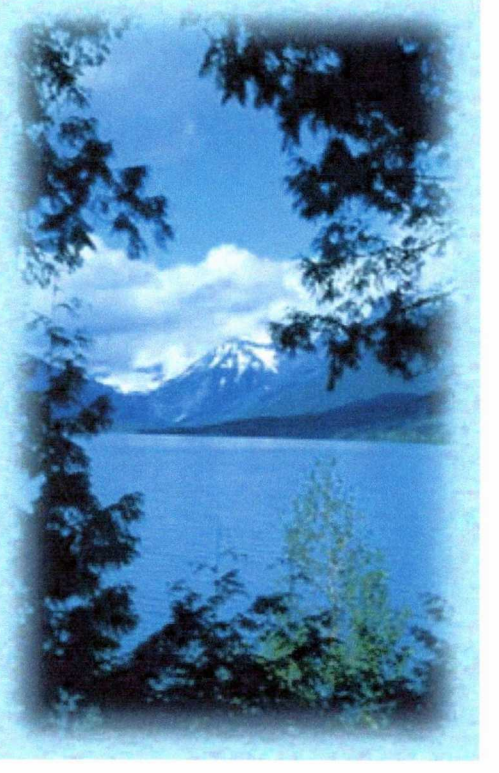


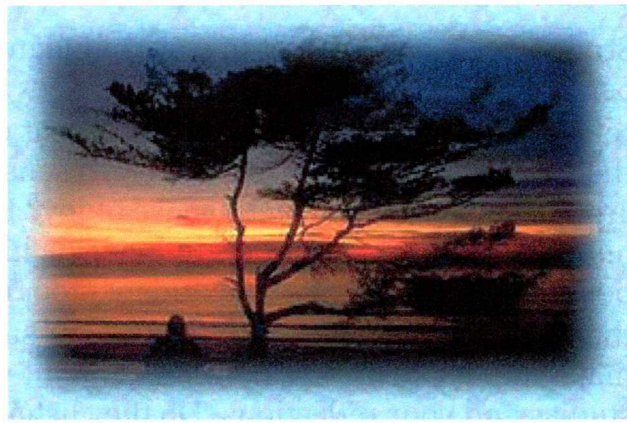
January 2004

Issue 135

"If we can learn to embrace this otherness, to heal the ancient divisions and misunderstandings of the past, if we can grant and accept forgiveness - always choosing the path of nonharming in relation to all of humankind, other natural beings, and the world around us - then we will have come of age as a species."
---Wayne Teasdale
' A Monk in the World'

Hatha Yoga Meditation for Stress Reduction,

Learning your lessons



I received an interesting phone call the other day from a personal trainer. She was opening a personal training center. She called to ask me if I could give her some tips on teaching yoga because she realized many of her clients wanted instruction in this and she had no real experience in yoga.

My response:
I appreciated her honesty. I commended her for reaching out for some help in this. I then told her I thought it would be best to hire someone who has some experience and training in yoga. I really didn't have much more to say. But now I do, and I'll share with you in case you're interested in opening up a studio too.

Keep in mind, that yoga is a process. There is no rush. Take your time in learning. Yoga's not just about triangle poses. It involves a life philosophy, which includes a foundation of principles in non-violence of thought, word, and deed. Considering the difficulties of the world we live in, the study of non-violence, in and of itself, is quite a challenge. Yoga is a challenging life changing path, but not necessarily a money making one. If making money's your main interest, I'd recommend a different profession. In fact, I'd not recommend yoga as a profession at all.

s, become a teacher, yet do not become a teacher to become rich. I understand the conflict in this. It's

Body & Soul Yoga

As yoga increases in its popularity, let's reflect on what "yoga" means. Yoga means "union" or "yoking". It means "to come together". It's a process of techniques to help bring the body and soul together. It's more than simply bringing the body into triangle pose. How does your breath move as you move into triangle? How does : breath move as you hold the pose? Where do your ___ ights go in the process? What motivates you to move into triangle pose to begin with?

These are not questions of judgment. These are questions to help you experience your yoga practice more deeply. This physical practice of hatha yoga leads one into meditation. Meditation leads one into a more peaceful existence.

Ask yourself these two questions:

1) Is the way you practice the physical postures of yoga leading you into a more meditative way of being?

2) Is your life becoming more peaceful?

If you have been practicing yoga for some time and are able to answer these two questions in the mative, then it's important to reevaluate how you are practicing. It's important to make some changes in

your practice to experience yoga.

Wishing you a blessed 2004.

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Heart Tips excerpt from the newly released, ÒThe Complete IdiotÕs Guide to Yoga, Illustrated Third EditionÓ

* Yoga can help you make the lifestyle changes you need a better, happier heart. Yoga will decrease stress and ease circulation.

* The fastest way to reduce stress is to alter your breath. Deepen it. Inverted postures take pressure off your heart because it doesn't have to work as hard to pump blood to your extremities. More oxygen is pushed through the wall of y our lungs, purifying your blood -- but first get your doctorÕs permission to practice inversions.

* Yoga asanas in general stretch the major blood vessels, keeping them open and elastic.

Yoga Tips

Body & Soul?

What does body and soul mean? When I was a professional jazz singer, this used to be my favorite song to sing, "Body & Soul." I used to instruct my trio to play it in an A flat key. Body and Soul is quite difficult to play in an A flat. It involves many tricky chord changes. Little did I know then, that my body and soul exploration ould continue in such an expansive way through yoga. 's still tricky. The keys have been continuing to change!

When people say that Yoga unites the body and soul, what do they mean by this? Do they know something you don't? Is your soul somewhere it shouldn't be? Is their soul somehow more connected to their body than yours is? What's this illusive soul that so many people make claims of finding?

It's all very interesting really, and rather comical at times. For example, it seems that magazine images often parlay body and soul into picture of a beautiful model on a beach. Does this mean one becomes a beautiful model once one's soul is found? Are souls found at beaches? Does soul searching involve a trip to the beach?! (Let's go!).

But before we run off to the beach, here are some uestions that come up in yoga classes. These are uestions, that as a yoga teacher, I think are worth pondering.

1) In yoga class, you observe your breath and your body. Who is doing the observing?

Move your third toe of your left foot. Go on. Do it ;ht now and don't move any of the other toes either.

3) When you judge someone, are you holding him or her up against your self as an example?

4) Do you think the violence in your stomach, or in your head, has any connection with the violence in the world? In Iraq? In San Salvador? In your neighborhood? In your home? In your heart?

5) Think of someone you truly love. Do any words need to be spoken?

6) Who ARE you?

7) WHO are you?

8) Who are YOU?

ıese are some questions for contemplation on body & soul. These are some questions for yoga.

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Yogi is what Yogi eats

Gunas are the three categories into which yoga divides all foods. The three gunas are Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Sattvic foods like mild and organic produce promote balance, health, vitality, and strength; rajasic foods like caffeine and hot spices promote excessive energy, restlessness, and discontent; tamasic foods such as ·erly processed or high-sugar, high-fat foods promote thargy, laziness, and inactivity.

Sattvic foods help you think more clearly, because your body is unclouded and unhindered by impurities, chemicals, and stimulants. Sattvic foods promote contemplative thought, vitality, energy, tranquility, happiness, and overall health. Most serious yoga practitioners exist primarily on sattvic foods, although because food in and of itself is not an obsession for the healthy yogi, occasional tastes of other foods when these are offered aren't a problem. The wise yogi eats moderately, and moderation means not being obsessive about anything - even moderation!

--Excerpt from The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga, Illustrated Third Edition

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe

Yoga Tips

A Love Letter to the Phone Company...

7/1/04

Dear Phone Company,

was a hassle waiting for your company to repair our phone e. We'd been without phone service in our home for three days. I had lots of work to finish at the office, yet I had to wait an indeterminate amount of hours at home for your phone repair service to arrive. I know your time is valuable, but please permit me to take just a moment of it now to tell you what happened with my time that day . . .

Annoyed with you, I sat down to read the paper, which sure didn't make me feel any better. Upstairs, I heard a loud yelp. I wondered what my two cats had gotten into this time. I went upstairs to find my one cat under the bed and the other staring at him from across the room. Obviously, they'd gotten into a little tussle. I talked to them softly, felt the situation had become calm, and retreated to my cozy chair and angst producing newspaper.

As I perused the troubles overseas, one of my cats limped over to the couch across from me. Why was he limping? I came closer. He was breathing very heavy. His one front paw hung loosely. It looked like he'd broken his leg! Cats are incredibly agile. I never thought about either cat breaking anything in their bodies, they were too busy breaking things outside of their bodies. Cats have such gentle ways of reminding us to be less materialistic.

I immediately called my vet who referred me to a closer vet who referred me . . . eventually I found someone who could help. As I was on the phone making these calls, I saw the phone repairman outside. r a brief moment I thought of going outside to speak to him, but immediately I was called back into e cat crisis at hand. This repairman obviously fixed the problem well because there I was on the phone making numerous emergency calls. Eventually, I got my cat the help he needed. It turned out

not to be a broken paw, but an even more serious heart problem which needed immediate attention.

As irritated as I originally was with your phone company for keeping me from going into the office that day, I realize now my presence at home helped my cat in receiving the important medical attention he needed. This experiece demonstrated to me that even irritations can be blessings in disguise. In fact, my husband often tells me to be grateful when my buttons are pushed because my irritable responses simply demonstrate what I need to work on; qualities I need to develop within myself to transcend my ego and deepen my compassion. With awareness, one moment, even an irritable one, can actually save a life. Perhaps the Rolling Stones sang it the best,

"You can't always get what you want,
But if you try sometime you just might find,
You get what you need."

So, thank you, dear Phone Company, because of your services, and lack of services, you helped save my cat's life.

Sincerely,

Joan Budilovsky

ana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest

Yoga Tips

Aum...

Aum

Aum

ıe sound drifted within me. Then suddenly, I was back ɪo the ocean. I tried to stay with the sound of Aum, but as my thoughts became self-conscious, the waves crashed back in and the sound of Aum disappeared.

I was leading a meditation session on the New Jersey shore. "Lead" may not be the right word, although I did lead everyone to the oceanfront and instructed all to sit facing the rising sun in silence. I was there as one of the instructors for the Demello retreat this past weekend. To say the surroundings at this Serra Retreat were beautiful would be an understatement. Here we were, a group of about 15 people, silently sitting in the sand next to the ocean. Each of us watched as the crimson globe rose far away above the deep blue tide. What a magnificent and holy site.

We remained in silence for one full hour. I alternated between closing my eyes and slightly opening them. My crossed legs fell asleep several times. As I moved to help the blood flow back into the legs, the sound of Aum seemed a distant thought. I consciously heightened awareness of my senses - seeing, feeling, hearing, touching, tasting. The misty air offered a salty taste of the water beyond. The wind tussled my hair as the waves touched the shore. The crisp sound of the water caressed the rocks and steadily rocked my soul into stillness. The sound of Aum returned.

ım

CLICK, CLICK ... Rocco was taking pictures behind me. He had said he would, but I'd forgotten.

The sun became brighter. The waves grew into a roar. Where did the Aum go? An airplane sounded above. The constant hum of the engine had an 'Aum' like quality. Could I have been hearing an airplane instead of the sound of Aum? Yet the airplane was apart from me, and Aum s apart of me. I closed my eyes as the airplane drifted away, the camera stopped clicking; the relenting ocean enchanted the shore. I tried to bring the Aum back. It wouldn't come.

I looked again at the sun. By now it was more difficult to look at. The soft pink shades had become bright yellow; the heat of the sun felt strong against my skin. I squinted and tried to hold my gaze towards the sun for a moment longer. I closed my eyes released my effort, without a thought ...

Aum

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Healing Depression

Yoga is one way to get to the root of depression, but there are other ways as well. The physical yoga postures lp to clear the mind and focus the attention. When one lepressed though, it's much easier to say, "Get moving" than to actually get up and GET MOVING! A feeling of listlessness usually accompanies depression, which makes movement in itself a difficult venture. Here are five tips to help you get to the root of your depression and into a deeper, more joyful creative awareness:

1) Try slow steady postures (vinyasana) and deep breathing exercises (pranayama) to activate the body's natural healing metabolisms in ways that are calming and not jarring.

2) Listen to relaxing music or mantra to aid the body into peace.

3) As difficult emotions or past experiences surface, write them down. Share your writings with a trusted friend or counselor who will not judge you but who will listen to you.

4) Schedule weekly massages to remind yourself that you are worthy of human touch. If massages are too expensive for your pocketbook, check with your local massage school. Schools often offer less expensive massages by students through their massage clinics.

5) Turn to sacred literature to ease the burden of answering the problems of human existence alone. Ponder on the difficult questions raised in the many stories of great literature through the centuries. For example, Patanjali's Yoga Sutra 1.33, written several thousand years BC, gives significant guidance in working with depression:

"In daily life we see people around who are happier than we are, people who are less happy. Some may be doing praiseworthy things and others causing problems. Whatever may be our usual attitude toward such people and their actions, if we can be pleased with others who are happier than ourselves, compassionate toward those who are unhappy, joyful with those doing praiseworthy things, and remain undisturbed by the errors of others, our mind will be very tranquil."

At the end of the day, review your experiences with others by using the simple sutra above. Did you have an encounter today with someone who was unhappy? Were you compassionate toward this person?

Did someone make a mistake today in how they dealt with you? Were you undisturbed by this rson's error?

Did you experience or see someone today in an act of kindness or great joy, and did you let your heart sing with theirs?

Wishing you and yours a journey of ever-increasing joy.

Yours in peace,
Joan

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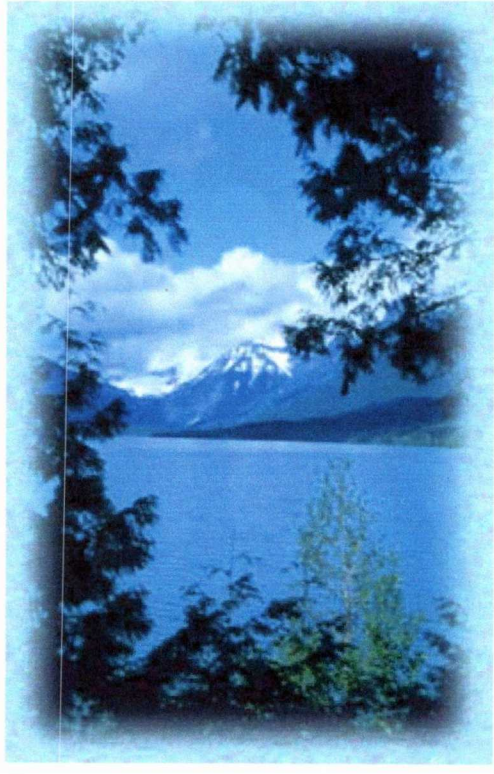

January/February 2005

Issue 144

"Only that yogi whose joy is inward, Inward his peace, inward his vision Goes to that paradise sun Attaining samadhi unison."
----Bhagavad Gita
------Translation by Goswami Kriyananda

Hatha Yoga Meditation for Stress Reduction, Peace, and Wellness.

Yoga Tips

How to be happy in a sad world

"How to be happy in a sad world..." the guru's words trailed off into the breeze that was drifting through the nearby trees. It was hard to bring my attention to sadness when I was feeling so incredibly well. Yet I knew deeply, as so many of us do, that no matter how happy my breath was in that moment, it can change in a blink as it did for so many thousands of people encountering the Tsunami.

Devastation trauma or death can envelop a life in an instant. In the instance of the Tsunami, it was not an act of man that caused this suffering but an act of nature. The Guru's words trailed back..."It is like a spiral. The world is evolving. You are evolving."

My thoughts drifted. How could evolution permit such a tragedy to happen? What is it that is "evolving?" Human kind has built fortresses, dams and varying degrees of anchors to this world. Yet no matter how strong we build these fortresses, a Tsunami can destroy it all in a moment's breath.

The breath is important to a yogi. It is reflective of much more than an airway system that sustains the body. It is reflective of the life force that sustains the world. Learning to control this breath, this life force, is an important aspect of consciousness raising. Learning to manage this breath in times of peace can bring a deep inner calmness to the body, even if this calmness is experienced only briefly, its memory can linger into a moment when one's world may not be quite as happy.

The breeze caressed the words ...

"Only that yogi whose joy is inward,
Inward his peace, inward his vision,
Goes to that paradise sun
Attaining Samadhi unison."

Wishing you and yours a new year of inner happiness, a kind of happiness that transcends our continually changing external world and deepens our compassion for others.

Yours in peace,
Joan

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Yoga Tips

Which pose is most difficult for you? Pick one and then answer the questions.

TWISTS

What is preventing me from seeing the other side of issues?
Why do views that are different than mine trouble me?
How can I open myself up to new experiences and new ways of looking at things?

FORWARD BENDS

Where is my life headed?
What is it about the future that troubles me?
How can I move forward in peace?

BACKBENDS

What troubles of my past are not resolved?
What prevents me from opening my heart?
How can I heal my heart?

BALANCE

Who am I?

Why are decisions so difficult for me?
How can I create peace in the decisions I make?

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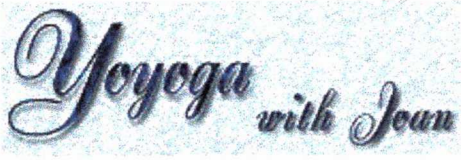
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home



Yoga Tips

Which pose is most difficult for you? Pick one and then answer the questions.

_ _ISTS

What is preventing me from seeing the other side of issues?
Why do views that are different than mine trouble me?
How can I open myself up to new experiences and new ways of looking at things?

FORWARD BENDS

Where is my life headed?
What is it about the future that troubles me?
How can I move forward in peace?

BACKBENDS

What troubles of my past are not resolved?
What prevents me from opening my heart?
How can I heal my heart?

LANCE

Who am I?
Why are decisions so difficult for me?
w can I create peace in the decisions I make?

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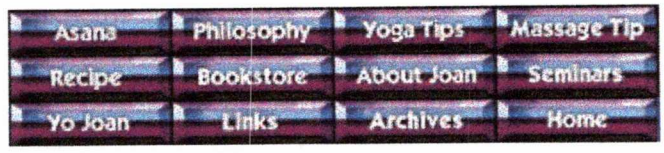
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home



Yoga Tips

MAD HOT BALLROOM

One of the foundational principles in the study of yoga is non-violence (the practice of ahimsa). Non-violence may seem pretty apparent, but it's much more than refraining from physical shoves. It's also about the way we speak to each other. It's about how insults and degradations, a trademark, for instance, in many family hour television sitcoms, fosters a violent attitude of mind. Speaking with respect is an important process in the creation of non-violence. There's a new movie out that eloquently portrays these important societal influences. "Mad Hot llroom," is a documentary on a group of street-smart inner city fifth graders learning the fine : of ballroom dancing. It's a modern look at an old art form of recreation. Sixty years ago ballroom dancing was the rage. Its delicate beauty graced the dance floors of many ballrooms; yet, even then our world was incredibly troubled. The horrors of World War 2 and the Atomic Bomb were happening alongside Fox Trots.

"You must be the change you want to see in the world."
Mahatma Gandhi

Beautiful movements, courteous speech, and finally, the creation of a gentle mind, formulate the full 3-dimensional practice of non-violence. A gentle mind would mean to think compassionately with love instead of judgmentally with hatred. Most of us assume that the ugliness or beauty happening in the privacy of our own individual mind does not really matter to those around us. For example, smoldering thoughts of contempt seem less violent than a fist in the face so we permit our mind to revel in this type of inner violence. We think that as long as we are not physically lashing out, we are not really hurting anyone. Yet even though a violent thought may take longer to manifest physically, all physical manifestation ultimately derives from thought. So in essence, you are what you think and the world is what we make of it. What is so particularly wonderful about a movie like, "Mad Hot Ballroom" is that it reminds us that the dance on the dance floor involves more than graceful footsteps. It also involves courteous speech and imately, with persistent and dedicated practice, the beautiful transformation of one's mind.

"Hostage or Host?"

In the Course in Miracle, Chapter 11, a wonderful reference is made to the decisions we make every day. Every time you or I make a decsion we make a choose to be either a "Hostage to our ego or a Host to God."

Yoga sees the ego as an illusion. Yes, it feels very real. Yes, it comes into play in so many of the cisions in our lives. Yes, it can seem to define our very existence. Yet, it is an illusion to the ality of who we really are. So, who are you?

Here's something to do to try and find out:
Write down all the things that define you. Write down as many as you can. For example, mother, sister, cook writer, teacher, tall, kindÉ.continue the list going deeper and deeper into whom you define yourself to be. When you run out of things to write down, pause and take several deep breaths. Search deep within to find more ways of defining who you are. This exercise takes time. Keep adding to it every day. At the end of each day, reflect on your actions for that day and write down one more definition of yourself. Think about what could have taken you to even greater heights in who you are and write that down too. You are all of this and more. At some point you may run out of words so, define yourself though the various senses of touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste. Hatha yoga studies the form to get to the formless. So, continue ever deeper exploring into the core of this question of "Who are you?"

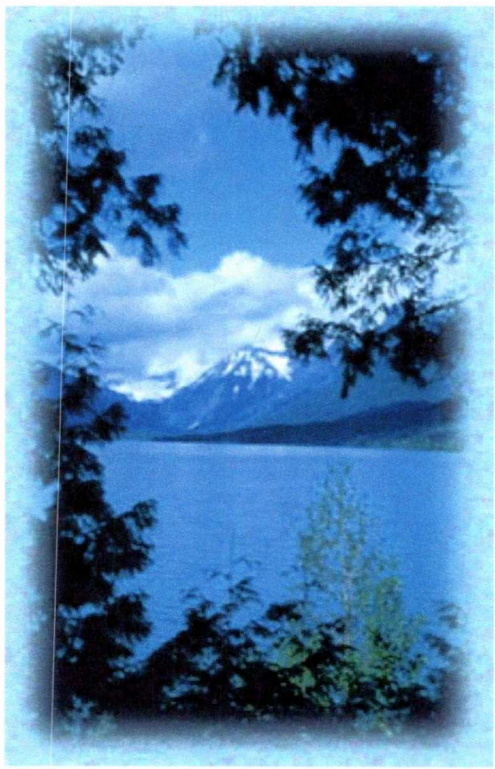
As the devastation of the Hurricane continues to affect so many lives, think of ways you can help in your individual life. If you are feeling helpless, try going every deeper into answering the question, "who are you?," to enter closer into ways you actually can help.

Can you help through prayer?
Can you help through giving blood?
Can you help through offering money?
Can you help through offering possessions?

Can you shine your expanding light into darkness?
Can you see this moment as an opportunity to be a host?

Every moment offers you an opportunity to be either "a Hostage to your Ego or a Host to God."
Which will you become in this moment? Who are you?

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home



January/February 2006

Issue 150

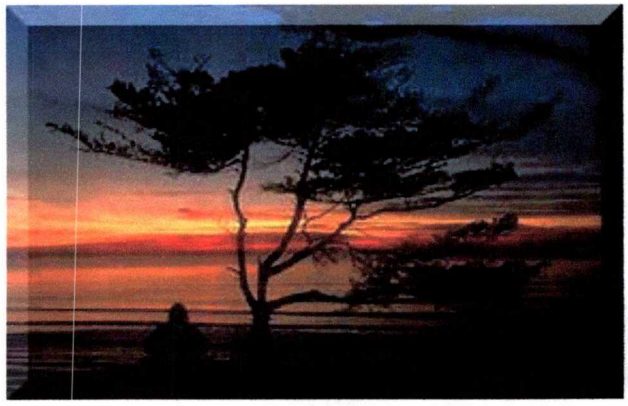
"Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured."
---B.K.S. Iyengar

Hatha Yoga Meditation for Stress Reduction, Peace, and Wellness.

Joan Budilovsky

These avenues for stress

Yoga Tips



What is "STRESSED" spelled backwards?

Can you relate to any of this?

1)

You are looking for something, your glasses, a notebook, etc and walk to another room to look, but when you get there you forget what you are looking for.

2)

You lock your keys in your car

3)

Once you hit 30, You seem to be gaining at least 10 lbs per decade.

You drink more coffee than orange juice.

5)

ıbble bath sounds more appealing than a workout.

All of the circumstances above are related to stress in some way. Yet not all stresses are bad. In fact, some are actually quite good. While some stresses create havoc in body and mind, others keep us on our toes and aware. Can you think of a stress in your life that is helping you move forward? Can you think of a stress that motivates you? Come on, think of one that you think is positive. If you can't, here's one: Your inhale forces your lungs to expand enough that it is necessary for you to exhale. There's one, but there are so many more!

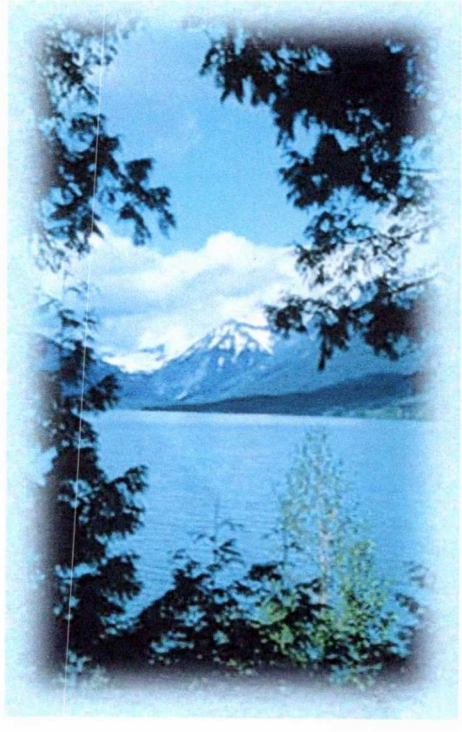
Now, onto the negative stresses: Can you think of any currently creating havoc in your life? What do you think your life would be like without this stress? Would it be rosy and carefree? Most of us simply replace one stress with another. For instance, we may give up smoking, but take up drinking. Here's a suggestion on eliminating the negative stresses in your life.... Don't! Rather, transform it!

Here's how:

Sit quietly in the comfort (or discomfort) of your own mind. The next time you find yourself silently judging another, see if you can transform this thought into a positive one. Replace anger with compassion, arrogance with humor, sadness with wonder. Try it for one breath, and see t happens. Next time a downer of a thought comes into your busy mind, let a simple breath sform this negative thought into a thought of inner kindness. It's all in you. It's all up to you. You can do it...YOU and you alone. Your thoughts will not only make your world a better one, they will make mine a heck of a nicer place to live in too. So, let's keep it simple, just one breath at a time.

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home

Yoyoga with Joan

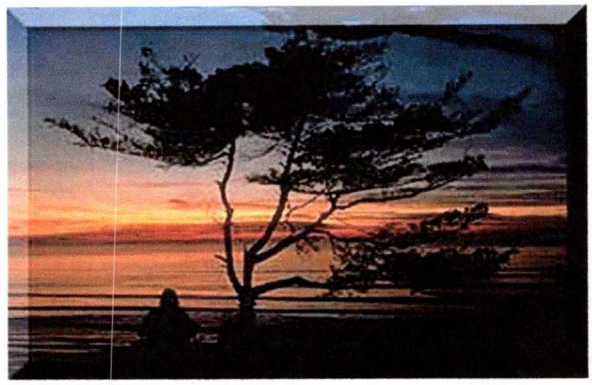


January/February 2007

Issue 151

"It's not easy to find happiness in ourselves, And it's not possible to find it elsewhere."
---Agnes Repplier

Yoga Tips



How do you not spoil a baby?

I'm having one in March. With new motherhood looming around the corner, I've been receiving lots of well meaning advice from friends and family A sage friend of mine, who raised two children many years ago, told me recently her tip on motherhood..."Don't spoil your child." Now, I would imagine this advice to be very hard to follow, particularly in regards to an infant. I plan on giving the baby everything it wants, no questions asked. But, what about a year or so down the road? After all, we live in a culture of Santa Claus and it's fun to give kids gifts.

I myself have given tons of gifts to kids over the years, possibly to the disheartenment of some parents trying to "not spoil" their children. This sage friend of mine went on to say that children now a days are just not grateful. Hmmmmm. Children to her are in their 30's, 40's and 50's. In fact, I am the age of a child of her's.

Have you given any gifts this holiday season that were not acknowledged with words of thanks or perhaps no recognition at all? Have you ever had to sheepishly ask a month or so later if a gift you sent by mail was ever received, only to find out it indeed had? I've had this happen to me on numerous occasions. Even though I thought I didn't give to receive, my curiosity if the mail got messed up has consistently taken over. Once or twice in my life there was a mail error, but many times the gift arrived and was simply not acknowledged. And, we

are talking about unresponsive big grown up kids too - adults who were once children.

Maybe my sage friend is right? Maybe some of us are overindulgent in gift giving or maybe we simply are not taking clues that the gifts are not necessary? The kinds of gifts that mean the most, after all, are not wrapped in paper or surrounded by tinsel and often don't arrive by parcel post.

So, this yoga tip for the new year is not only to remind you how important it is to respond to a thoughtful gift, but to also recognize the gifts all around us that are occurring right now. To take a moment to express your inner gratitude for all that is in your life - the joys, the heartaches, the gifts of the seasons. I don't think it's possible to spoil a baby, but I do think it's possible to give too many material gifts. What gifts have you given lately that were not wrapped up in pretty paper? What have you given lately that has made this world a more beautiful place? What have you given that you did not want anything back for, even an acknowledgement? If you can't think of anything, start making a list of ways you can give these kinds of gifts more often.

Together, let's acknowledge and create many deep blessings for the New Year whether or not our pockets are deep.

Asana For The Month| Yoga Philosophy| Yoga Tip| Massage Tip| Yo Joan| Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
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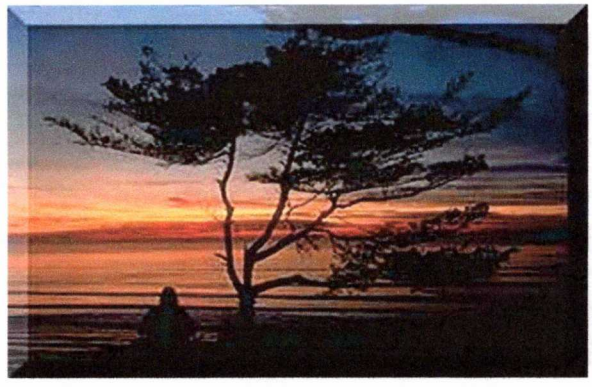
Yoga Tips

The world on your shoulders?



Are you carrying the world on your shoulders? The shoulders often end up carrying a majority of our tensions for the day. Many neck and headache problems originate from shoulder pain as well. Here's a simple yoga stretch that can be done anywhere and anytime to take some of the strain off those well-worn shoulders of yours:

Place your hands on the top of a sturdy chair. Space them about shoulders width apart - if you don't have a chair, place your hands against a wall at about chest level.

Bring your feet a giant step away from the wall or chair and bend forward with a flat back. If your legs feel tight, bend your knees and feel your tailbone lifting up. If your shoulders hurt, bend your elbows. Lengthen your spine and let your head relax down. Your arms, head and back should hang at about a right angle to the floor. Rest in this position for several deep breaths.

Breathe into your shoulders. Exhale and watch as the tensions begin to release. After several long breaths, slowly step back up and straighten your body.

Not only does this simple stretch release tensions in the shoulders and neck, it also helps to give you a fresh outlook on life. When you feel overwhelmed or stuck in a problem or way of thinking, try this stretch to help you gain a new perspective. As your day moves along and you find yourself shouldering more and more responsibilities, bring this simple stretch into your day more often.

Asana For The Month | Yoga Philosophy | Yoga Tip | Massage Tip | Yo Joan | Simple Vegetarian Recipe Contest
Yoyoga Bookstore | About Joan | Seminars | Links | Archives | Home