

the devon school of yoga newsletter

WINTER 2020



Prana Mudra is a personal gesture to opening up ones-self to nature's abundant energy.

DSY courses

DSY Yoga Foundation Course 2021 (Only 3 places left)

This is a 10-day course, based in Devon, and is spread over five monthly weekends one of which is a full board residential (included in the course fee). It is aimed at yoga students who wish to deepen their practice, knowledge and experience of yoga. The course offers a broad base of practices from which yoga students can enrich and develop their yoga life skills.

It is also a prerequisite for our Teacher Training Course (if other requirements are not met). The course is 68 taught hours and two comprehensive course manuals are provided.

DSY Teacher Training Course. Starting January 2021

(Only 3 places left) This 2-year course focuses on the skills required to teach yoga in a safe and inspiring way. This is achieved through gaining deeper knowledge and practical experience in a safe and nurturing environment. With heightened self-awareness, confidence will grow enabling knowledge to be intuitively shared.

On meeting the prerequisites, students can join the course which comprises 44 days of practice and study held over 20 weekends in Devon, two of which (6 days in total) are long weekend residentials (and are included in the course fee). Four comprehensive course manuals are provided.

The course is 284 taught hours over 20 monthly weekends, plus home study and practice, leading to 500-hour qualification with the Yoga Register. The prerequisites for joining the course are: two or more years of regular practice including classes, workshops, retreat attendance and/or completion of the school's Foundation Course or another yoga organisation's Foundation Course.

Namaste

Welcome to the Devon School of Yoga newsletter. We trust you are keeping well with the changes that we have all experienced this year. As we come to the end of 2020, we have taken the time and care to collate and offer you a more extensive and holistic spectrum of things yoga-related to read

We trust that it will inspire you through the winter months. In this edition you will find:

- Courses
- Events
- Yoga-related articles
- Poetry Corner
- Yoga Music and Books
- Namaskaram

Thank you to everyone who contributes and reads the newsletter. Please feel free to share it with anyone you feel may be interested.

Enjoy!

Duncan, Jules & Sue

www.devonyoga.com/ info@devonyoga.com

DSY Postgraduate Yoga Therapy Course. Starting January 2021 (Only 3 places left)

This 2-year course offers a broad and deep base of academic, practical and experiential studies for qualified, self-motivated yoga teachers from any tradition who want to evolve and integrate the diversity of their life experience into a therapeutic practice.

It's holistic and eclectic approach is transformative, inspiring and empowers confidence in those wishing to deepen their spiritual practice and yoga knowledge, skills and offerings. It is a 250-hour yoga registered course including 158 taught hours held over 25 days (12 weekends of which one is a Thursday to Sunday long weekend residential) plus supports home study and practice.

NEW DSY Pre and Postnatal Yoga Teacher Training. Starting March 2021. (Only 6 places available)

This 75-hour course is a holistic approach to pregnancy specific yoga teacher training. It is a 10-day course which runs over five monthly weekends. The course is aimed at empowering the yoga teacher to safely and consciously support women throughout their pregnancy using yogic philosophy to help guide an appropriate practice and attitude towards the transformative experience of pregnancy, birth and motherhood.

For further details on all the above DSY courses including areas of study and course dates, please see our website at: www.devonyoga.com

If you have any further questions, you are welcome to email us at: info@devonyoga.com

Yoga, putting it all into practice.

By Virginia Compton, Tutor on the DSY Postgraduate Yoga Therapy Course

Someone recently asked me why I don't play music when we practise yoga together, and also if I could cut back the philosophy content and chat a little less perhaps?

I explained politely that if this is what they wanted from their practice that's no problem, but that is not how I view Yoga and so it is not how I teach. Should anyone (including you reading this, yes you!) want a different approach then you need to go to someone other than me. I share what I practice myself. In my view the focus on the breath is essential to the whole practice, so if for example there is music being played surely you cannot properly focus on the breath or the body experience, because the music serves as a distraction. Of course, as humans we rather like distractions because they help us to feel more comfortable and to take our attention nicely away from the present moment reality, discomfort and challenges.

We are all completely unique and individual, therefore your practice should be adapted for your individual needs. Some will be suited to more challenging physical movement and others will need a more grounding approach. When you come to a group class you come to learn for yourself, for your own needs, and I ask that everyone there is accommodating and accepting of the needs of the whole group and patient as we pick apart what everyone needs, as well as aiming to create an understanding for everyone of why we are doing what we are doing, instead of playing a mindless game of follow teacher with no meaning or explanation whatsoever. (This also highlights the usefulness of a private session. This is also why I no longer offer weekly classes. Now I just offer longer workshop sessions, private sessions and retreats). What I guess I am saying here is that the physical practice of Yoga, from my perspective, also embraces the philosophical aspects and goes way, way beyond a physical exercise practise. Let me explain more.

A physical asana (posture) practice should embrace Ahimsa (non-harming) to oneself, physically as well as psychologically. There should be the principle of Satya (truthfulness), being honest with oneself about what one needs from the practice, what it's about for you today. Meet your needs in a non-judgemental way and therefore also bring into the practice a sense of Aparigraha (non-grasping). All of this is guided by a knowledge of Ayurveda, your unique body-mind constitution. Being informed about your Ayurvedic 'type' informs your practice and helps you to actively work in your Yoga asana to prevent disease in the body and mind. This comes back to the 'we are all unique' approach. This is a complete holistic lifestyle system.

Practice Yoga in an intelligent way that is suitable for your own body-mind as it is today. Honour yourself, body, mind, emotions, spirit, through your Yoga practice. Please don't ever use your practice to judge or criticise yourself. Using the physical to get into the psychological, fully focusing on the breath within the asana (posture) practice. This body breath focus brings about a feeling of Santosha (contentment). There then comes an acceptance of self, of the body mind as it is, however it is, right here, now, in this very moment. Then we can bring about an attitude of Isvara Pranidhana (devotion). This can be towards oneself, towards the practice, the lineage of teachers, the ancient texts and teachings passed down over thousands of years, the rishis and sages. Feel this whole ancestry as you breathe and move, feel and embrace that enormous timeless connection. In whatever way this most makes sense to you.

Always practice Pranayama after your asana. The breath is the vehicle that helps to calm the mind. Create the conditions for the body-mind to find an experience of peace. Allow the body-mind to enjoy a sense of equanimity, to feel sattvic and balanced. Follow the steps that Patanjali gave us so long ago, bring them into your daily practice and embody them in your daily life. Breathe, focus on the breath, and then just sit and breathe. Bring the entire focus to a single point of concentration and contemplation (this is Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana). Now sit and allow the whole self to just be.

Now, notice whatever is arising. Sit with it, sit with it and patiently observe. Keep observing. Do not strive to change anything you notice, just know that whatever it is will pass. Whether difficult or pleasant, it will all pass. And so we begin to learn that absolutely everything, even the mind-state, is constantly changing. And so we stop trying to change or to control. We just keep patiently observing. No fuss, no noise, no drama, we are just watching the show. We practice Apraigraha (non-grasping) here as we watch everything ebb and flow. We have an attitude of gentle kindness and curiosity, without striving.

We find then, within this practice of Yoga, an acceptance, a sense of Sukha (a sweet spot), a place of deep-felt gratitude and Svadhyaya (continual and endless learning). This is a journey into the self, using the vehicle of the body breath and mind. And so it goes on, we practise, we observe and we let everything be. Settling into everything, as it arises, just as it is. Please do not ever undervalue or underestimate this Yoga. It is such a precious, beautiful gift, to oneself and to mankind. Nowhere to be, nothing to do, just breathe. In this moment I am that. This is Yoga.



Pregnancy Yoga

By Barry Elms and Alice Chapman, DSY Tutors

Yoga has become increasingly popular in the past few years. Yoga classes are offered in most gyms and sports centres as well as village halls and dedicated yoga studios. As a result, it has become accessible to more people, including women of child-bearing age. Therefore, pregnant women are often found in many yoga classes.

Yoga is an ideal exercise during pregnancy because it can:

- keep the body supple
- boost energy
- relieve stress and anxiety
- promote relaxation and restful sleep
- be used to relieve pain in labour and childbirth
- relieve common minor ailments during pregnancy (e.g. swollen joints, heartburn, constipation)
- help expectant mothers to bond with their unborn babies through breathing and visualisation techniques
- empower women to understand their body functions in order to achieve the best possible birthing outcomes.

Yoga is a popular method of birth preparation, so there are additional opportunities for yoga teachers who an interest in this field. However, specialist knowledge is needed, and therefore further training

in pregnancy and post-natal yoga is required after qualifying as a general yoga teacher.

In order to support yoga teachers and pregnant women alike, Devon School of Yoga is offering a new course in pregnancy and post-natal yoga. Whether you want to better be able to support pregnant women in your general classes, or provide specialist pregnancy and post-natal classes, this new 10-day course is for you.

Pregnancy is a special time for women (and their partners!) - physically, mentally and spiritually. As yoga teachers we can help support and nurture women during their pregnancy, and after the birth, through the holistic practices of yoga.

For further details including areas of study and course dates, please see our website at: www.devonyoga.com If you have any further questions, you are welcome to email us at: info@devonyoga.com

DSY Yoga Events

24 January 2021, 10am-1pm, £30
Yoga Workshop with Duncan Hulín.
Open to All. Derekthedog Yoga Studio, Central Exeter. The focus of this workshop is on the DSY breath only kriyas and pranayama plus other miscellaneous practices. To book a place email: info@devonyoga.com

31 July 2021, 10am-4:30pm.
Yoga Workshop with Duncan Hulín Open to All Yoga Torquay, Devon. This workshop will include breath only kiryas, asanas, satsang, miscellaneous practices and pranayama. To book a place email: info@yogatorquay.co.uk

4 September 2021, 10am-4:30pm.
Yoga Workshop with Duncan Hulín Open to All. Venue TBC. This workshop will include breath only kriyas, asanas, satsang, miscellaneous practices and pranayama. To book a place email: info@devonyoga.com

14-20 September 2021, £895
Yoga Walking Holiday in Devon with Duncan Hulín and Andrea Guest
Experience a week of yoga and walking enjoying the beautiful landscapes of Devon. Includes: 6 nights full board accommodation at the rural and rustic Middle Coombe Farm near Tiverton, delicious and nourishing vegetarian/vegan cuisine, daily yoga classes (held in the converted cider press thatched barn with flagstone heated floor) and daily walks (including transport to and from starting and finishing points), kirtan (chanting) and use of hot tub. For further information including the daily schedule, please visit our website at: www.devonyoga.com



The effort to go outdoors and make a connection with nature repays you a thousand times!



To work from where I am...

By Dawn Williams, DSY Postgraduate Yoga Therapy Course Graduate

I notice in myself and some students I work with, who have an imbalance in mood and emotions oscillating from anxiety to depression, that we practice yoga or go to a class when we feel 'good enough' to do it!

It's like going to the doctor once we feel better. It says a lot about how we perceive ourselves not only in relationship to yoga but also to the world around us. We get stuck in a mindset that we are not 'perfect' and to turn up in the world, we need to be perfect! We have disconnected from our bodies and are firmly connected into the mind's construct that 'I am not good enough'.

Unfortunately, this way of thinking eats away at our self-esteem and denies the healing properties of our yoga practice. We need to work from where we are right in this moment. To feel the tentacles of shame and fear which wrap themselves around the heart and throat centres and render us frozen. We can do this safely when we become the observer who observes these feelings. We place our hands onto our heart centres and ask, "how are you today?" "What can you feel in this body?" or if that is too unsafe, we can observe, "where are the hips?" "how far away are the hips from the knees?" Our thoughts are having respite, we are connecting to our bodies and then we can feel into our breath underneath our hands. In time, the breath lengthens on exhalation and eventually the Relaxation Response kicks in. We begin to move from cold fear into warm peace, light and hope. We are back in our bodies. We are back with our breath. We are back in life. We are an important part of life. We need to contribute to life and turn up to class for our sake and the sake of others! It's by living and turning up with what we are carrying that we contribute to life because we are living as we are, we are not ashamed, but on the journey to connect to ourselves as peace, joy, light and love.

Dawn currently teaches yoga in Exeter to de-stress people with Parkinson's and to autistic children.

Visit www.devonyoga.com to discover our broad range of yoga courses

My Health Pad



“MyHealthPad” New Yoga App Inspired while on the Devon School of Yoga North India Retreat to Basunti

By Judith Hassel

Over a year ago, on the DSY retreat in Basunti, Jo and I were sitting by the pool. She shared with me her intentions to create an app that would benefit all people needing more support for their mental and physical well-being. I told her about my work with people who struggled with anxiety, stress and significant trauma. As yoga teachers, we had a shared passion to help everyone attain their health potential.

In addition to relaxation at the pool after classes, we now started brainstorming each day, getting more and more excited about the possibilities and potential of such an app. Soon after we got home, we continued meetings with Jo’s co-founder Dan, and MyHealthPad (CIC) was born!

In the spaces between our daily work, we met to discuss the app content, training courses, and to consider all the admin required to apply for funding and to market the project. We were very clear that the app should be free for all to access, and there should be no advertising attached to fund it. This meant setting up a CIC and applying for financial support to create the app content through Crowdfunding, and applications to relevant funding bodies.

As yoga teachers, Jo and I have always emphasised the connection between body and mind, and the use of breath to change one’s state. We wanted posture and movement to be an integral part of the support throughout, with added simple tips on nutrition and healthy sleep patterns.

We decided to stay away from any ‘technical’ terms, so the information would be accessible to everyone. Therefore, our meditation and mindfulness sections talk about focus and awareness techniques, with simple games and ideas to promote a sense of calm.

We were drawing close to our intended launch date when the Covid19 lockdown started. Like many others, we moved our meetings to online. Creating our crowdfunding video whilst socially distanced resulted in some hilarious situations. One of our intended filming days was during the rainy part of June, and we set up the phone on a tripod under the clouds, trying to fit ourselves into the screen whilst we appropriately socially distanced!

However, we did it! Our crowdfunding launch started on the 23rd June.

You can see how we are doing now by searching for ‘My Health Pad’ in the following ways: www.myhealthpad.org/ www.facebook.com/myhealthpad www.instagram.com/myhealthpad/ www.twitter.com/myhealthpad

For classes, workshops and retreats, please visit www.devonyoga.com

DSY Yoga Events contd...

14-28 October 2021, Dates and price TBC North India Yoga Retreat at Basunti with Duncan Hulin and Andrea Guest.

For those looking for a place to immerse into their yoga practice, totally relax, enjoy wonderful food and experience incredible India, our India Yoga Retreat at Basunti is perfect. Basunti’s unique location, surrounded by wildlife and with extraordinary views of the Himalaya, was created especially for yoga retreats. For further information including the daily schedule and excursions, please visit our website at: www.devonyoga.com

12-14 November 2021, 3pm Fri to 3pm Sun. Holistic Yoga Autumn Retreat with Duncan Hulin and Andrea Guest.

£340 = twin en-suite room sharing (Supplement for limited single en-suite availability) Experience a weekend of yoga, pranayama and meditation with time to relax and enjoy the beautiful surrounding countryside at Rill Estate near Buckfastleigh, South Devon. Delicious and nourishing vegetarian cuisine, spacious light studio and hot tub. (Note - the price for the residential includes accommodation, all food and drinks, three yoga sessions per day, evening kirtan (chanting) on Saturday and use of hot tub). For further information including the daily schedule, please visit our website at: www.devonyoga.com



As a deaf person in a hearing world

By Kasia Hadley, DSY TTC Graduate

As a deaf person in a hearing world, I live with daily stress and fatigue as I have to take in everything visually. Having felt drawn to yoga for many years, I heard a whisper encouraging me to try it. So, I joined our local yoga class but could not benefit from it as it was not accessible to deaf or hard of hearing people. A little research taught me that yoga lessons are not really accessible for people like me.

I therefore decided to enrol for teacher training at Devon School of Yoga where I had two wonderful years. The school walked the extra mile to make this training fully accessible to me. I received one-to-one sessions from the wonderful teachers Alice, James and Andrea. The group sessions with other teachers were supported by a sign language interpreter. The teachers were so patient in their communication with me and I felt at ease and at home in such a nurturing environment. I admired teachers' expertise, their knowledge and their kindness. The classes were very well organised, inspiring and very well executed. I gained a lot of knowledge from the course which I am incorporating into my personal life. Most fascinating were the anatomy and physiology/ashtanga theory classes where I have learned the subtlety of the physical body and how to incorporate yoga practices in various situations.

Highlights of the course were the practical days where I taught sessions to deaf students at the Exeter Royal Academy for the Deaf which was very eye-opening.

I learned a lot about how best to communicate with them and to adapt various yoga sequences to their needs. It turned out that they loved to learn the tools they could incorporate in their daily lives to cope with stress better and feel more flexible. It was very rewarding when the students came to me after the class and told me that they loved the class and how much better they were feeling.

Finally, this course has enriched my own self-development and I am forever grateful for having received support from all the teachers at the school, as well as the interpreters, the Snowdon Trust and Chris Forester for providing funding for the interpreters. I will always carry yoga principals in my heart. I look forward to teaching yoga to many more deaf and hearing-impaired people so that they too can live more fulfilled lives and experience that sense of calm.



Yogi Food: Spiritual Veganism

By Paula Kaminska, DSY TTC Graduate

Lots of yogis choose to mindfully eat vegan. Some do it for health reasons, some diet for peace, while others aim to deepen their spiritual practice. Let's explore what's the connection between veganism and yoga, and where on the spectrum would you place yourself. First thing, let's explain what it means to be vegan. A vegan is a person who refrains from eating any animal or animal by-product. Therefore, not consuming any meat (including poultry and seafood), eggs, milk, cheese, and suchlike. If something contains an ingredient that came from an animal, for example a cake containing butter, it does not classify as vegan.

Top reasons to go vegan:

At first glance, going vegan may seem an unnecessary complication of one's diet and lifestyle. But vegans often have quite noble reasons for taking this forward step. First of all, veganism reduces animal suffering. There's no compassionate way to kill an animal that doesn't want to die. Yet, about 70 billion land animals are slaughtered globally each year because of the human meat-diet demands. Often, the conditions in which these animals are kept leave a lot to be desired, too. That's why a vegetarian diet, rejecting meat but welcoming animals' milk and eggs, is often not enough for those who love animals.

Another popular reason to choose a vegan diet are health benefits. Thanks to various studies, veganism is now recognised as a tool efficient in reducing risks of many civilisational diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, certain types of cancer, and many cardiovascular diseases. Vegan blood seems to be of a higher quality, while the immune system more efficient. Vegans also often report higher levels of energy, increased clarity of thinking and empathy, which could be explained with a better hormonal balance.

The third common reason is environment. It's a big subject, but in short – farms take a lot of space which could be instead dedicated to rewilding and growing more grains. A vast majority of grains we currently produce are animal food. Yet, grains already are a great source of protein for humans, so adding an extra step in this chain – animals and later their meat – makes the process much more complex, requiring not only significant amounts of water but also causing pollution. As an Australian philanthropist Philip Wollen put it – "meat is like one and two cent coins, it costs more to make than it is worth."

Veganism in yoga:

While veganism is a lifestyle choice trending in recent years in the Western world, yoga is a holistic discipline originating in ancient India. It has links to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism which are based on a shared philosophical framework of unity with all sentient beings. Yogis who eat vegan often mention the first principle of yoga philosophy called ahimsa – the idea of non-violence, or non-harming.

Ahimsa embraces the concept of not harming ourselves, nor other people, but also the earth we live on and its animals, both wild and domesticated. Eating vegan is therefore an easy way to practice ahimsa because in doing so, we don't cause them any harm – confinement, abuse, or killing. By establishing a vegan diet, we directly disengage ourselves from this one of the most common but overlooked forms of violence.

Yogic and ayurvedic literature also mentions the concept of sattvic diet, which is a dietary classification. In this system, certain foods increase the energy of our body, stimulating and agitating it, as well as provoking mental restlessness – coffee, tea, soda drinks, spicy or overly salty and bitter foods. Then, certain foods decrease or slow down our energy and, therefore, are considered harmful to the mind and body. They lead to a duller and less refined state of consciousness – meat, fertilised eggs, mushrooms, alcohol or opium, as well as food which isn't fresh.

Sattvic foods are the third category – balancing for the mind and promoting eating habits that are pure, natural, vital, energy-containing, honest and wise – nuts, seeds, oils, ripe vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and various herbs. Interestingly, in this system cow's milk is allowed for consumption under certain conditions – the animal has to have a spacious outdoor environment, an abundance of pasture to feed on and water to drink, be treated with love and care, and not be pregnant. And, its milk can only be collected once the mother's calf has its share.

Currently in the UK, around 30% of yoga teachers follow a plant-based diet, which is 25 times the proportion in the general population. Nearly 75% desires to follow it because it's best aligned with their yogic practice.

Summary:

As a humankind, we had to eat meat to survive. Now we have reached the point in our history where we have the choice to go into our future cruelty-free. Especially, if it's only a convenience that's holding us back.



Yoga with the Angels: The Angel Hall at Bowden House. A New Yoga Studio.

By Joy Prater, DSY TTC Graduate

Last Autumn I was given the unique opportunity of opening my own studio; the privilege to transform The Angel Hall at Bowden House into a vibrant yoga and events space. This very special room, which once was the entrance hall to a grand manor house, has been a focal point in the community where I live since it's birth in 2004. Flooded with singing and music, busy with activities and workshops, this space has been blessed many times over, ready for the practice of yoga!

Not far from Totnes town and with ample free parking, The Angel Hall provides the area with a variety of morning and evening classes, led by gifted and experienced teachers. Classes range from gentle to dynamic Hatha, Kundalini Yoga, Forrest Yoga, Astrological Yoga, Yin Yoga, Pregnancy and Post-natal Yoga, as well as Qi Gong, Mindfulness and Healing Gong Meditation. The full timetable can be found here: <https://www.totnesyoga.co.uk/classes.html>

Alongside weekly and monthly sessions, The Angel Hall holds regular singing events, peace and circle dance, acoustic music concerts, plus a variety of workshops, ranging from buddhist teachings, meditation, vocal training, women's health, performance improvisation, to name only a few! To sign up for the mailing list and stay informed about all these events and new yoga offerings, visit The Angel Hall website.

www.totnesyoga.co.uk
www.theangelhall.co.uk



My New Life in Morocco

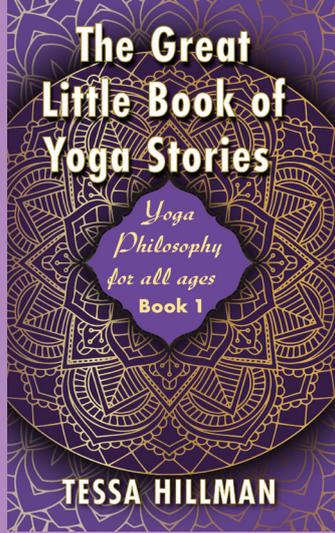
By Joanna Steele-Perkins, DSY TTC Graduate

On completion of my DSY training in October 2019, I followed my dream and moved to Morocco. I am living on the Atlantic coast close to the well know Surf spot Taghazout. The area is well known for its surf and yoga camps and is popular with surfers and yogis from all over the world. I am living with my partner Mohamed in the village of Aourir (locally known as banana village) which lies between the Atlantic Ocean and a mountainous region of outstanding beauty referred to as Paradise Valley!

It is nothing like as touristy as nearby Taghazout. The town is full of noise and bustle, cars hooting their horns, camels, goats, stray dogs and cats mingling with pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles. It's dusty and hot but due the proximity of the desert, often very cold at night. My life is very simple. I work freelance as a yoga instructor for any of the hostels that need me. When not practicing yoga, I am running, cycling, surfing or doing housework! We do not have any mod cons. No fridge, dishwasher, washing machine or Hoover. (we do have Wi-Fi however!) I wash most of my clothes by hand and scrub the floor on my hands and knees as my grandmother did. We buy food daily and often cook Tagine on an open fire on the roof top terrace. Evenings are spent playing cards with friends or reading books or listening to Mohamed play his guitar. It all feels pretty idyllic but of course there are challenges. Who said life should be perfect?!

The language is difficult to learn and I am an ethnic minority. The culture is so very different, women stay at home and when they are out they cover themselves from head to foot. We do not have a car so we walk everywhere or rely on public transport which is an experience in itself. Imagine a small Renault van with two people in the front seat, 4 on the back and 4 in the boot! Yes, this is normal! Mohamed and I are planning to build our own small yoga retreat in the near future. We intend to have a very low carbon footprint and make use of the local resources, not least the sun's energy. I feel very grateful for my life and also to my fellow students and tutors at DSY who encouraged me to follow my dream.

“Feel the Fear and do it anyway”



Need some help teaching Yoga Philosophy?

By Tessa Hillman

Yoga has been the rock on which I built my life. I will be 70 this year. I taught yoga for 30 years, from my mid-twenties onwards. It brought health, strength, and balance. In my forties my yoga changed when a mystical experience occurred.

A Guru came to me in meditation and told me that I must teach my students about the Yamas and Niyamas, he said there is no point in following spiritual practices unless one is observing the 'rules of life'. He gave me a story to tell my class, it was about greed. This was a great surprise to me. I had never been a writer other than writing essays on botany for my degree. However, I read it to my class which consisted mainly of a number of somewhat portly middle-aged ladies, including myself. It was about the guru as a young child when he wanted more than his fair share of the sweets. The story went down well, so in my next meditation I asked for a story about truth. The second story was again about the life of the guru, this time as a young man trying and failing to impress his wife by exaggerating his success at work.

I soon collected a set on all the yamas and niyamas. I became fascinated by the chakras and their significance, and collected a set of stories about them, followed by the eight limbs of yoga and the three gunas. This year I decided to turn the work into two paper-back books, Book One on the rules of life, and Book Two on the more esoteric aspects of yoga.

I found that these stories made teaching yoga philosophy much easier for me. I overcame the difficulty of having to find words to talk about the moral code to people who were older and wiser than me. The shorter stories can be read out during the relaxation part of the class. Longer stories can be copied and perhaps emailed to students. They are simple and innocent and make you smile. In these days of lack of moral guidance, stories such as these are very useful for children, too. Each story has some questions to help with the understanding of the message of the story.

The Great Little Book of Yoga Stories, Book 1 is now for sale on Amazon, and Book 2 will be published in autumn 2020.



What's the Deal with Backbends?

By Paula Kaminska, DSY TTC Graduate

Heart and chest openers are an integral part of any yoga practice. They are invigorating and strengthening, releasing the spine as well as the chest and shoulder area – places where lots of us hold tensions. If practised safely, with an appropriate mindset and warm-up, they can be very exhilarating and freeing, improving our posture in the long term.

Generally, backward bending increases physical mobility and spine awareness. This improves our posture. Unfortunately, with our sedentary lifestyle, we spend a significant amount of time losing our chest, for example while driving a car or sitting at an office desk. Such continuous gentle forward bending increases the risks of lower back issues. We often only counteract that impact – by bending in the opposite direction – in occasional yoga classes, or while warming up for other sports.

Let's talk about the spine... In the optimal alignment, the lumbar spine should rest in a slight arch. This arch is called lumbar lordosis, and although it may sound like a name of a condition, it stands for an ideal alignment of the spine – useful for carrying the body weight and preventing issues. When we lose the normal curve due to poor posture, and either reduce it or increase it, the chances are we start experiencing a persistent lower back pain, or even develop muscle spasms and disc

injuries.

Here, yoga comes to our help – the parts of the spine that are often stuck in the chronic forward position can be eased out with plenty of easy yoga postures – Low cobra (low bhujangasana), Half-locust (ardha shalabhasana), Bridge (setu-bandhasana), and Warrior I (virabhadrasana I) posture, to name a few. All of them are great backbends – the fool-proof spine-strengtheners which help us stand straighter and assist in simple daily activities, such as carrying groceries or children. Practicing daily backbends will eventually open the chest area, and subconsciously encourage us to keep our shoulders rolled back, also outside of a yoga studio. This will make our shallow breathing deep and diaphragmatic, filling out the total space of the previously compressed lungs. In fact, one of the intentions for backbends is to open the rib cage in preparation for pranayama – the breathwork. This practice is key for oxygenating the body, and calming the mind along with the nervous system.

There are a few things to remember while performing strong backbends though. We should always use a good non-slip yoga mat, to not crunch the lower back, and to be gentle with the neck. Any prevailing conditions, such as migraine, low or high blood pressure, insomnia or injuries should be always discussed with a teacher prior the class.

Dances of Universal Peace

By Anne Bateman, DSY TTC Graduate

The new year is soon upon us. Last year, we decided to spend the five days leading up to New Year staying with Stephanie and Michel at their universal peace dance retreat in Lieurac, Ariege, France along with 30 other strangers. We had brought enough food for our own breakfasts and enough to cook once for eight people over the 5 days.

Over breakfast we get to know some of the other participants...nearly everyone a yoga teacher or healer or whatever. The children run around us, in their parallel universe. Workshops with Stephanie helped us to learn to trust each other; with our eyes closed we mingle and stop and take the hands of someone nearby. We are told to explore through touch the hands of the other, taking it in turns to do this. Then we continue on our way, blindly feeling the hands of anyone we come across, aiming to find the hands of the first partner.

Otherwise we dance in circles, led by Michel, simple steps, chanting mantras from many faiths, in Sanskrit, Arabic, Aramaic, French, Spanish, English with movements and gestures to highlight the meaning of the mantras. We look into each other's eyes, moving from partner to partner, the musicians playing guitar and percussion in the centre of the circle. We sing together and then the men and women take it in turns. Finally, we mentally vibrate the mantra as we move in unison to the music. I stop worrying about my sweaty hands, about what others think of me and all those mind games. It's a heart opening experience.

I write this poem on the wall frieze everyone is contributing to.

***Pull up closer to the fire
tend our hearths feed the flames
all through the long nights
till the earth tilts in our favour***

***breaking bread together, making eye contact again
hand in hand, our bodies weave,
infinity in warp and weft
our feet fashion patterns of peace
in circle dances we usher in the spring***

***there is light at the brown brink eastward
and the stilled breath quickens, warms, deepens.***

On New Year's Eve we make candles in the skins of halved oranges. We dance and sing mantras. Around midnight we start to chant "I am the heart of the father, I am the heart of god, I am the heart of the mother, I am love"...other voices are weaving in harmony around me as we carry our candles through lines of these people who were once strangers but whom I now feel I know so well and place the candles floating in a bowl of water. There's only candle light and the soaring sounds of chanting and singing. At this moment yes, I am love.

Deciding not to gather around the bonfire under the stars till early morning with the others, I go to bed, replete, complete and all on not a drop of alcohol. In the morning we dance farewell dances outside in the cold sun around the still burning fire.

We sing, "Doors are opening, doors are closing, I am safe. It's only change."

<https://la-maison-a-lieurac.jimdofree.com/danses-de-la-paix-universelle/>

Namaskaram

The online magazine for The Independent Yoga Network

Namaskaram is the online magazine and newsletter of The Independent Yoga Network. Here you will find news, views, and authoritative articles on all matters Yoga, plus an up-to-date list of workshops, retreats and seminars put on by Independent Yoga Network members. If you are an Independent Yoga Network member you can list your classes, workshops and events - go to the 'what's on' page to find out how to add your listing. For more information: www.namaskaram.co.uk



POETRY CORNER

The following poem is recommended by Nina Adwick, DSY TTC Graduate

“For those of you on the spiritual path” By Miriam Elyse”

For those of you on the spiritual path,
I have a secret.
When you finally sit in all the ayahuasca ceremonies,
When you complete your 16th vision quest,
Have done countless rituals,
and fasted for 10 days...
The answer is: come back to earth and do the work. Right here.
Where you're at.
And with what you have in front of you.
Be a good human.
Be a good friend.
Serve those who have less than you.
Protect the earth.
Protect innocence.
Start with what is innocent inside of you.
Be a good human.
Be kind. Be honest.
Be humble. Forgive yourself.
Yes it is important to heal.
Yes it is important to gain bigger perspective.
But don't get lost in the lust of always wanting something more.
Don't yoke your ego to your spirituality.
Every guru has his folly.
Don't be so quick to give over your power.
Any true teacher will lead you to your own power.
Any worthwhile medicine will heal you until you don't need it anymore.
Don't let your path to liberation become a trap.
Do the work. Be a good human.
You don't have to try so hard to be perfect.
Your mistakes are the greatest teacher you will ever have.
Your love is the most valuable gift you will ever give.
You can relax.
Be a good human.”

POETRY CORNER

Poem by Chelsea Wills, DSY TTC Graduate

With Nature in Mind

There is a world,
Natural, rich, abundant,
Teeming with life
It has a pulse,
A beat,
A rhythm
It comprises of beautiful harmonies
Which together form Mother Nature's finest symphony
And as one life ends,
Another begins
As with the ebb and flow of the sea;
The whipping and drawing of winds
The rising and falling of the sun
... A continuous stream of energy
Each life marking a new day; A new beginning.
We are infinitely connected to the natural world
Living, breathing, moving
It lives within us all
In fact, there is no point
At which the natural world ends
And we begin
Only unseeing eyes,
Blinded, distracted...
Lost

POETRY CORNER

Poem by Richard Eraut, DSY TTC Graduate

Kundalini's day out

Today I sat to meditate.
Here comes Samadhi, I can't wait.
My thoughts were clear and calm and kind,
But even so, I cleared my mind.

It could be done. They hadn't lied.
Now something stirred deep down inside.
A snake had come to join the party,
Rising up through sushumna nadi.

Piercing knots along the way,
Today was going to be the day!

A surge of pride. I'd done so well,
But Kundalini knew that smell.
She'd smelt it a million times before,
The smell of an ego, she was sure.

"Still" she thought "I might come and play."
But the ego was big. It blocked her way.
It faced her now. She took a peek.
"Perhaps I'll try again next week!"



The Devon School of Yoga runs the Devon Yoga Festival which is a non-commercial and not for profit event which supports the following charities:

Ganga Prem Hospice, Rishikesh, India

Ganga Prem Hospice is a spiritually orientated, non-profit hospice for terminally ill cancer patients. The Hospice will provide medical, social, emotional and spiritual support for individuals and their loved ones as they face life threatening cancer and in their ongoing grief.

The Ganga Prem Hospice is unique in the sense that it is being created to add other dimensions to the concept of hospice, i.e. the dimensions of spiritual care and holistic treatment. The Ganga Prem Hospice exemplifies a rare and valuable fusion between medical excellence and spiritual perception. Eminent oncologists from Delhi have joined with spiritual seekers and holistic therapists in the Rishikesh area to alleviate the physical and emotional pain of cancer patients and their grieving families.

To find out more about the work being done by Ganga Prem then please visit their website: www.gangapremhospice.org

If you would like to make a donation to Ganga Prem Hospice please visit the following link: www.gangapremhospice.org/pages/05donate/donate.htm

The Glacier Trust

You may have heard about glaciers melting in the Himalayas because of climate change? But what does this mean for the millions of people who live there?

Well it depends on where they live. The melting of Himalayan glaciers will affect communities close to the rivers that the melt feeds. However, climate change as a whole is adversely altering weather patterns all over Nepal and hindering the ability of mountain farmers to grow enough food to survive; winters are drier, groundwater often runs out before the rainy season relieves the drought, and disruptive pests and invasive plant species survive more easily due to the warming climate.

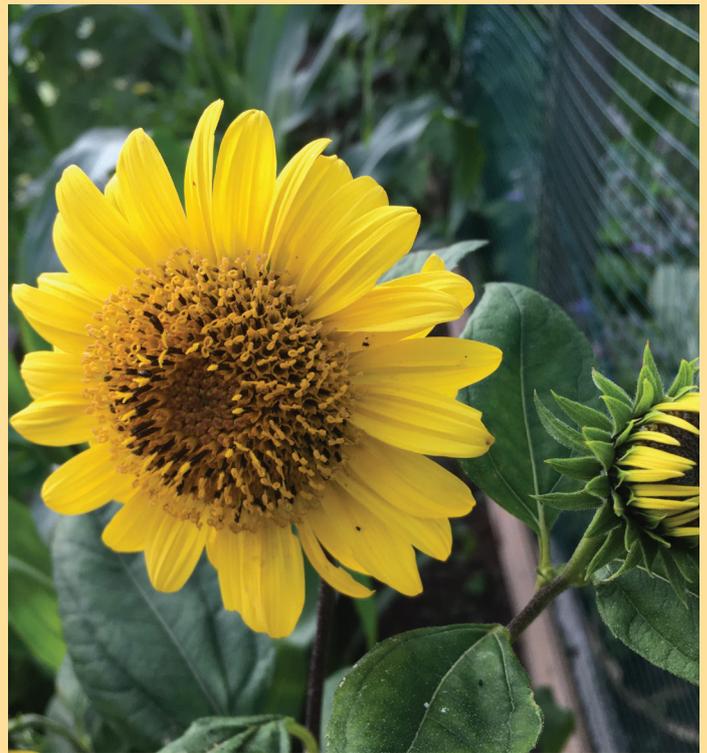
These farming communities need a solution. The Glacier Trust does not 'do' aid. Instead we work at community level promoting community-led sustainable development programmes as a solution.

We take a holistic approach to building resilience to climate change with 'hands on' knowledge sharing education programmes that focus on better use of existing resources. We achieve this one village at a time, enabling positive change to occur which neighbouring communities tend to pick up on and apply themselves, so your money continues to make a difference as the knowledge you have paid for moves from village to village!"

For more info, please visit the Glacier Trust website: theglaciertrust.org

The Devon Yoga Festival will be returning to the Rill Estate on the 16-18 July 2021, more info soon at www.devonyogafestival.co.uk

The Devon School of Yoga believes in promoting natural health and vitality.



Here are some lovely photos of Duncan and Andrea's beautiful and nourishing vegetables and flowers that they grow. (For anyone that may not know, Duncan is the founder of the Devon School of Yoga and Andrea is his partner.) The homegrown organic food that they grow, is often shared on the various DSY residentials of which Andrea is the cook.