

I have been physically practicing yoga on and off for over 10 years, and have come to realize I've just been going through the physical motions without any thought to internal implications... which has brought me to this moment, to this text and philosophy during Covid. It seems I've been in the right place, but far from the right 'frame of mind'. And, at the beginning of this training, I originally had goals of only thinking in the context of myself. Not realizing that according to Michael Stone, 'Yoga is a practice of you and me in relation to each other'. So, one goal has become, getting past I, me, mine, and as the Sutra teaches, to seek out satisfaction and contentment. Truth, tolerance, and kindness in my relationship to myself and with others can begin to lead to a path of non-violence.

In contemplation about this text in my life, I'm realizing negative thoughts and angry emotions toward myself, extend inevitably to others: my family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances... ideas of being unworthy, self-doubt, past failures, guilt... being consumed in myself can create immobility and paralysis. Brene Brown talks about worthiness and acceptance... and if we can't love and accept ourselves, our love and for others has limitations also. Yoga brings us to the neutral place to evolve if we're open to it.

In regard to people I find difficult... what a relief, it's actually not all about 'me'!! Remembering that what others project has more to do with themselves and what they're living – not to be taken directly as an assault. I might be the object of the anger, and it might sting but I'm not the reason, and I must speak the truth but need not take things personally. And, if I don't take it personally, I won't explode- I can approach it as if it's a wave running over me instead of acting out with violence. And instead, meet them with understanding and compassion, which hopefully the other party will perceive and be able to diffuse their own emotions. Also, after having angry reactions, there are usually feelings of dissatisfaction and discontentment that linger.

In my practice, I've always fallen into the pattern of comparing myself to others... worries of being the odd one in the room, never being equal or as good as others, and hating myself for my differences. But, this training has allowed me to begin to better understand that it's about letting go of 'me'. Letting myself with all my perceived flaws, exist as I am, to feel, learn and grow. And, stop struggling to be so 'important or unique', but just 'to be and learn', being satisfied and content as is.

The desire to teach and share what I've learned exists... but at what level is unsure. If I am to teach, understanding the need to be both the teacher and student, always learning always growing, regardless. Every person has something different to bring to the table, something to share and be learned from. I entered this course to better understand yoga, and what it should or shouldn't be for me... how I could better apply it to my current and future life. So, if I do teach, I'd enter into it understanding that everyone is in a different physical and mental place, and unique experiences and expectations to be shared. Props are something new to my personal practice and the use has really grown my practice and in fact, because of this training and your passion, Elizabeth, I can't imagine practicing without them now. This could be a great aspect I'd enjoy sharing with others, possibly help them to enhance their practice in a safe way.

My past instructor used to say 'Perfection is in the practice'. And I'm learning more and more what was meant by this philosophy in light of all that I've been learning in the course. So, showing up, doing, allowing ourselves to feel whatever we may feel without self-judgment, and, striving to be an observer who can continue to learn, change, forgive, and grow... are continuous goals in this life for me.