

Read Lines II.34 and II.35 from chapter two of the Yoga Sutra's of Patanjali. Summarize, in your own words, the meaning of these sutra's. Explain how they can be used in your life, with people you find difficult, in your practice and in teaching your students.

Sutras 2.34-35 in Mukunda Stiles' translation offers great guidance on aspiring to non-violence: "Negative thoughts and emotions are violent, in that they cause injury to yourself and others, regardless of whether they are performed by you, done by others, or you permit them to be done. They arise from greed, anger, or delusion regardless of whether they arise from mild, moderate, or excessive emotional intensity. They result in endless misery and ignorance. Therefore, when you consistently cultivate the opposite thoughts and emotions, the unwholesome tendencies are gradually destroyed...

By abiding in nonviolence, one's presence creates an atmosphere in which hostility ceases."
(source: <https://yogachicago.com/2014/03/yoga-sutras-chapter-two-treading-the-pathway/>)

2.34 This yama teaches us that when we are caught in negative or harmful thoughts, we should not fight them with force, but instead, we should intentionally cultivate their opposites—kindness, patience, generosity, truthfulness. This is a mental discipline of shifting perspective and energy. It encourages self-awareness and proactive redirection rather than reactivity. There is a similar quotation, "When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love." This shows that negative thoughts can only be counteracted by positive ones, and that those positive ones must be more powerful in order to be effective.

2.35 This yama shows the deep transformative power of fully embodying non-violence. When someone lives this principle, you can feel just through their presence that peace is cultivated.

To Patanjali, yoga existed to cultivate not just the body and the mind; but more importantly, to develop spiritual awareness. Through practicing yoga, we strengthen our bodies, calm our minds, and create a prayerful presence that opens our spiritual perception. This can make us more receptive to cultivating the opposite thoughts and emotions. Mindfulness can help us to recognize negative thought patterns as they arise and can give us the extra moment needed to consider our reaction when faced with negativity, and to choose the positive response. For example, if someone in our life is instigating conflict, we can actively choose to not only de-escalate the situation, but to see that person as a noble being capable of showing positive spiritual qualities, and face the situation in that way. This is only possible through practice. We may set intentions for our yoga practice to practice this. At times, yoga poses can be uncomfortable or difficult. While we do not want to cause injury, we can approach difficult poses with curiosity and patience rather than agitation and impatience. What we practice becomes a habit that we can apply in other aspects of life, such as difficult people or tasks. If we practice, we can aspire to become "one whose presence creates an atmosphere in which hostility ceases".

As a yoga teacher, we can incorporate these principles into our classes. This can be demonstrated verbally, by sharing quotations from the Yoga Sutras or from other spiritual practices and religions. We can create situations for students to experience discomfort and talk them through it, showing that they have the capacity to embody this principle. We can demonstrate the principle ourselves when difficult situations arise. Finally, we can cultivate a safe environment where students feel accepted, welcome, and peaceful.