

WELKIN WORDS

Namaste,

Welcome warm weather! I hope that all of you are making time for yourselves to reconnect with nature and the outdoors while it is so hospitable! There is something truly grounding and refreshing that comes from being in the out-of-doors. Soaking in the vibrant energy from all the life springing forth is truly nourishing to the spirit.

I am spending this month on the final preparations for the annual **Yoga Retreat**. We will have some of the usual seminars, such as Karma Yoga, Sleep Solutions, and Asana Outside, as well as new discussions and inspiration. In exploring the theme of Fulfillment, we will relate yoga philosophy to work, relationships, and creativity. There has been some interest in practicing Partner Yoga, as well. Space is very limited and I have begun to advertise to the general public. If you are thinking of attending, please contact me for more details.

In Light and Love,
Erin

Classical Yoga for Householders is the kind of yoga that we practice in class. Classical yoga is rooted firmly in tradition and follows the texts of yoga. Yoga is a spiritual philosophy that, when employed in a committed fashion, leads to abiding peacefulness and ease in day-to-day life. It is challenging to accommodate many of the traditions in modern life; thus, the traditions are interpreted for the modern householder (as opposed to monk or sage). Few of us will live in a monastery or even visit an ashram, but we may all practice yoga and glean the benefits of simplicity, health, contentment, and compassion.

Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfillment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart.
~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Recipe – Barley with Shiitake Mushrooms (Bonus Recipe: Vegetarian Soup Base)

It is believed that barley is useful in circulating *prana* (life force energy). Yogic eating dictates that we limit the consumption of mushrooms because of the energy in which they grow. However, they contain important minerals and are recommended in moderation.

1 pound barley
50 g dried Shiitake mushrooms
3 tbsp sunflower oil
a bunch of spring onions, chopped
Freshly grated ginger to taste
1/4 cup organic soy sauce (tamari)

Cook the barley in boiling water for an hour.
Drain and put aside. (Keep water for soup base.)
Soak shiitake mushroom in warm water for 30 minutes.
Drain and put aside 1/4 cup of water. (Use the rest for soup.)
In a large wok, heat the sunflower oil.
Add spring onions.
Stir briefly, then add ginger, mushrooms, 1/4 cup of water from the mushrooms, and soy sauce.
Cook on medium heat for 5 minutes, then add barley.
Stir well and serve immediately.

The First Two Steps

A few months ago in class we began to study *Ashtanga yoga*, the eight-limbed path to enlightenment. This is also known as the Royal Path (*Raja Yoga*). We have just finished covering the first two steps: *yama* (restraints) and *niyama* (observances).

The *Yoga Sutras* teach that we enhance our spirituality by purifying our nature. Thus, the first step of *Ashtanga* is *yama*, or freedom from vice. The personal virtues espoused in the first step are: 1) *ahimsa* (nonviolence) which is not hurting any creature mentally or physically through either our thought, speech, or action, 2) *satya* (truthfulness), 3) *asteya* (nonstealing) which is not coveting or acquiring other's possessions physically, mentally, or by speech, 4) *brahamcharya* (moderation in physical pleasures), and 5) *aparigraha* (nonacquisitiveness) where we release attachment to wealth and other material gain. In holding these moral standards, we remain conscious about the effects our intentions have on ourselves and the world around us. A way to make *yama* practice practical for householders is to focus on one's intention during work. Take a moment to consider how each of these restraints could be applied to your professional life.

After solidifying the values of *yama* we move onto *niyama*, self-restraint: When we are the masters of our desires, we are the masters of ourselves, rather than slaves to wants and whims. Observing the following philosophies is useful in maintaining a peaceful and steady mind; our material desires tend to lead us to dissatisfaction. There are five *niyamas*, or observances of self-discipline: 1) *shaucha* (cleanliness) emphasizes the importance of mental and physical purification, 2) *santosha* (contentment) is a relaxed state of mind by which one lives happily and satisfied no matter the atmosphere, 3) *tapas* (austerity or penance) is the defeat of all desire or sensual pleasures by practicing purity in thought, speech, and action, 4) *svadhyaya* (study) is the exchange of ideas in order to maintain purity in thought and to gain inner knowledge, and 5) *ishvara* (surrender to Higher Power) involves trusting a Higher Power or purpose. Notice your thought patterns and the degree to which you are already practicing *niyama*.

The most effective way to make any permanent change is to implement it gradually. Take each *yama* and *niyama* one at a time to practice with dedication for at least three weeks before moving on to the next. As we continue to intentionally live the restraints and observances, we begin to find a more authentic sense of ease, self-esteem, gratitude, and happiness. You may want to try it!

Featured Asana

Jathara Parivartanasana Revolved Abdominal Pose

This posture is useful in alleviating back pain and cleansing the discs of the spine. It also improves digestion while stretching the shoulders and hips.



Hug knees into the chest or for more abdominal effort straighten legs to the sky. Exhale and turn the head to the left and bring the knees/feet to the right. Let Earth support the body as tension drains away. Inhale to centre and exhale while releasing gently to the other side.

Recommended Reading

Siddhartha, Herman Hesse

The Yoga Sutras, Sri Swami Satchidananda (trans.)

The Bhagavad Gita, Eknath Easwaran (trans.)

Meditations from the Mat, Rolf Gates & Katrina Kenison

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