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Founder: Anchorage Yoga

Philosophy: Like my grandfather always
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YOGA

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15
POSES
TO HELP
BREAK FREE
FROM OLD
PATTERNS

—
NAVIGATE
BREAKUPS
WITH EASE



**SAHARA
ROSE KETABI**
on modernizing
ancient wisdom
p. 58

+

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Here are four signs that you're ready to take your yoga journey to the next level.

1. You're called to share with others the practices that have impacted your life.

“Yoga teacher training will solidify your calling by giving you a valuable set of tools to find your voice and hone your skills,” says Kripalu School of Yoga faculty Erica Arce. “You not only become someone who can guide a posture sequence, but, more importantly, a teacher who lives their yoga and expresses this felt sense maturely, authentically, and confidently.”

2. You want to deepen your practice through an immersive experience.

“I never fully understood what yoga really was until my Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training,” says Cristie Newhart, Dean of the Kripalu School of Yoga. “Through a month of both living and learning yoga, I realized that what I was studying represented a journey through my whole self, not just my body. As my awareness deepened, my practice blossomed.”

3. You're just as interested in exploring yoga off the mat as on.

“Asana, pranayama, and meditation are essential,” says Cristie. “But without off-the-mat practice, the lens through which yoga teachers view themselves and their students becomes narrow, and the practice loses heart—yoga becomes an exercise alone. For me, off-the-mat inquiry, such as exploring the yamas and niyamas and cultivating compassionate self-observation, keeps yoga real.”

4. You're willing to pursue your passion with a beginner's mind.

“I found it nearly impossible not to be in ‘teacher mode,’” recalls Erica. “If you are willing to pursue the yoga teacher’s path with a beginner’s mind, you are in a great position to stay open and curious. And most likely, you’ll learn a lot more than you ever expected you would.”

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Center for Yoga & Health

Jan/Feb

2020

Love Yourself

Start the New Year with confidence and courage. We've got the practices and expert advice to help make 2020 your best year yet.



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YOGA JOURNAL Issue 313 (ISSN 0191-0965, USPS 116-050), established in 1975, is published six times a year with combined issues in January/February, May/June, July/August and September/October for six issues (January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December) by Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc., an Active Interest Media company. The known office of publication is 5720 Flatiron Parkway, Boulder, CO 80301. Annual Subscription: U.S. \$21.95; Canada \$33.95; overseas \$43.95. Single copies U.S. \$6.99; Canada \$7.99. Canadian GST #8256424911. Periodicals Postage Paid at Boulder, CO, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Yoga Journal, P.O. Box 37274, Boone, IA 50037-0274.



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Start Fresh. & Love Yourself, Damn It.

There's a scene in the 1994 film *Dumb and Dumber* where we find out that Jim Carrey's Lloyd has sold a dead, headless parakeet to an unsuspecting blind kid named Billy. Lloyd thinks this trick was brilliant and hilarious, since it's produced enough extra cash for snacks for his cross-country road trip with his buddy, Harry. Cut to Billy, staring blankly into the horizon, gently stroking Petey the bird carcass (head held on by duct tape) and softly cooing "Pretty bird" to his unresponsive pet.

I was in elementary school when *Dumb and Dumber* was released, and that image of sweet Billy still gives me a shudder. At the time, my dad lovingly gave me one of his, "It's not real, it's Hollywood" talks (only rivaled by the "It's not blood, it's ketchup" conversation that occurred after scenes from movies like *Rocky* left me in tears). You see, it's never been difficult for me to feel compassion for others—real or imagined: I've held hands with strangers on airplanes, sat with homeless veterans for hours, and wept for the planet more times than I can count. But when it comes to tenderly feeling for myself, well, that's something I've only recently started learning how to do.

This issue is packed with practices to help us all strengthen our self-compassion muscles. And we should: Scientists are starting to uncover the very real health benefits associated with loving kindness, such as higher heart-rate variability—an indicator of cardiovascular and overall health. Research shows that when we practice loving ourselves first, it trickles out into how we treat others, and the long-term positive effects range from better stress tolerance to longer life and a decreased risk for depression and lasting trauma (page 70).

But practice as we might, even when we think we've mastered self-love, sometimes all it takes is a little disruption, like a breakup or traumatic event (see page 52 for trauma-informed yoga with Hala Khouri), to send us into a tailspin. To that end, "The Namaste Breakup" (page 86) is your comprehensive guide to uncoupling without the chaos (and shame and guilt and negative self-talk) that so often comes with the territory.

As I head into the New Year and this new role and a brand-new chapter in my own life with grace and courage, I'll be leaning on the advice and wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (page 78): "Faith," he said, "is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

Be well, and shine bright.

LINDSAY TUCKER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

yoga journal

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{ WEIGHT LOSS



You Ate It, So Own It... But Now It's Time to Lose It!

Nutrition expert's advise on how to lose that extra weight // By Amber Rios

Being a health and nutrition correspondent means that companies frequently send me their products, and ask for my stamp of approval. Most of the time I dive into research, give the product a try, and send the company honest feedback about what they'll need to change before I'll recommend it. Plus my hectic job and my determination to stay fit means I'm always hunting for a quick and nutritious way to fill up on nutrients my body needs. So I can confidently say, "I've tried it all."

Last Tuesday work was especially hectic, but I'd booked with my \$200 an hour personal trainer, Tony, a triathlon winning, organic-to-the-bone fitness guy with a ten mile long track record of whipping the "who's who" into shape in record time, so I had to go. He noticed that my set count was down and playfully asked, "Feeling a little tired today?", as he handed me a bottle from his gym bag. After one sip I figured that there was no way this could be healthy because the creamy chocolate flavor was just too delicious. Still, he'd never risk his reputation.

With more than a healthy dose of scepticism I decided to investigate this shake he'd called INVIGOR8.

Turns out, it's a full meal replacement shake, which stunned me because virtually every other shake I'd researched had tasted chalky, clumpy and packed with hidden "no-no's" like cheap protein, tons of artificial ingredients, not

to mention harmful synthetic dyes, additives, sugars, preservatives, and hormones. And even though INVIGOR8's full meal replacement shake cost more than many of the shakes I've tried, it was about half the price of my favorite salad, and the nutrition profile looked second to none.

Wanting to know more, I reached out to a few of the people who were talking about it on trustworthy fitness forums. By the next morning three people got back to me saying,

"As a trainer I love Invigor8. It's definitely helped me to have more all-day energy, plus build the kind of lean sculpted muscle that burns more fat."

"Yes, I'll recommend it, it tastes great, and I really like how it keeps me feeling full for hours."

"I'm a marathon runner and a friend recommended it to me. Drinking it has become a part of my regular training routine, because my time has improved, my energy is up, and I'm thinking more clearly than ever before."

I decided to take my investigation one step further by researching the development of INVIGOR8. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the company went to great lengths to keep INVIGOR8 free of harmful ingredients.

The makers of INVIGOR8 were determined to make the first **100% natural, non-GMO** nutritional shake & green superfood. The result is a meal replacement shake that contains **100% grass-fed whey** that has a superior nutrient profile to the grain-fed whey found in most

shakes, **metabolism boosting raw coconut oil, hormone free colostrum** to promote a healthy immune system, **Omega 3, 6, 9-rich chia and flaxseeds**, superfood greens like **kale, spinach, broccoli, alfalfa, and chlorella**, and clinically tested **cognitive enhancers for improved mood and brain function**. The company even went a step further by including a balance of **pre and probiotics for optimal digestive health, uptake, and regularity** and **digestive enzymes** so your body absorbs the **high-caliber nutrition** you get from INVIGOR8.

As a whole-foods nutritionist with a thriving practice I understand the importance of filling my body with the best Mother Nature has to offer. I have always been reluctant to try new products because I was never sure of the impact they would have on my energy, and weight. INVIGOR8 is different, not only because it's delicious, but because it helps me to maintain the energy I need to run my busy practice, while helping me to stay fit and toned. Considering all of the shakes I've tried, I can honestly say that the results I've experienced from INVIGOR8 are nothing short of amazing.

A company spokesperson confirmed an exclusive offer for Yoga readers: if you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "**YOGA10**" at checkout. You can order INVIGOR8 today at www.Invigor8.com or by calling 1-800-958-3392.



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PHOTO: MARK ZAMORA/UNSPLASH

YOGA RULES

This year is going to be a big one in Washington. These are the yoga bills to keep on your radar during election season.

BY SHANNON FISCHER

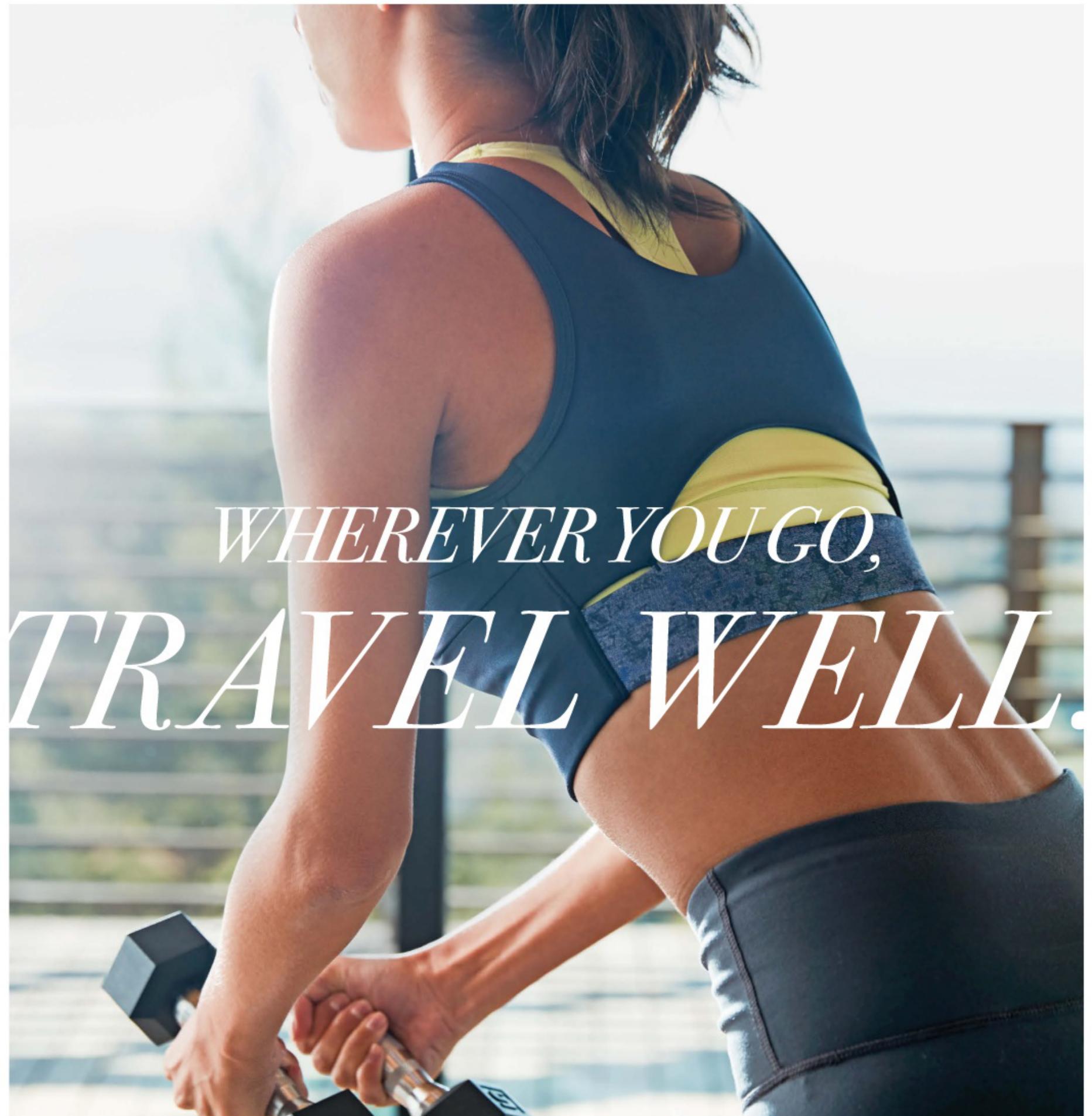


FOR SCHOOL KIDS

Yoga remains illegal in Alabama public schools after a proposed state bill failed last spring that would have lifted the 1993 ban prohibiting schools from offering the practice, likening it to an Eastern religion. Though the bill, introduced by Representative Jeremy Gray—a former football player turned yoga practitioner—had support from 18 representatives on both sides of the aisle, it never made it to the House floor for a vote. Gray says he'll reintroduce the bill next session. "We're doing kids a big injustice if we don't implement yoga in K through 12," he says. "Children are going through traumas every day—some are living in poverty or being bullied. Yoga helps people learn how to deal with daily stressors in a critical-thinking capacity, and teaches them how to reflect. It's a mental health preventative method." In fact, Gray credits the mindfulness and mental resilience he learned through yoga with helping him win his House seat despite having had no prior political experience. "I've seen [what it did for] me, and I want to be an advocate for it," he says.

FOR VETERANS

Elsewhere in the country, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has been ramping up its complementary and integrative care (it now covers, for instance, eight different interventions, including yoga and meditation, in its medical care packages). Going even further, the department is now implementing a "whole health approach," designed to consider each veteran's overarching health needs. That means less focus on doctors treating ailments only as they manifest, and more focus on a patient's whole physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual health. A small flurry of new federal legislation related to this was introduced in 2019 and will continue making its way through the political pipeline this year, including the Expanding Care for Veterans Act and the Whole Veteran Act. These proposed laws would expand the scope of VA research to include the effectiveness, accessibility, and implementation of complementary and integrative interventions such as yoga and meditation to veterans.



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BRANDT NEW DAY

Lucifer star Lesley-Ann Brandt shares the must-haves that are keeping her healthy and happy in the New Year.

BY MEGAN JOHNSON

South African actress Lesley-Ann Brandt may play a demon bounty hunter on Netflix's *Lucifer*, but her real-life pursuits are a little more inspiring: The dedicated yogi has been practicing for 10 years and recently teamed up with Earthchild Project—a Cape Town nonprofit that offers education to disadvantaged schools—to implement a yoga program into its curriculum. Here, Brandt shares some of her favorite things for staying calm, cool, and collected, whether she's acting in the underworld or helping to save the world.

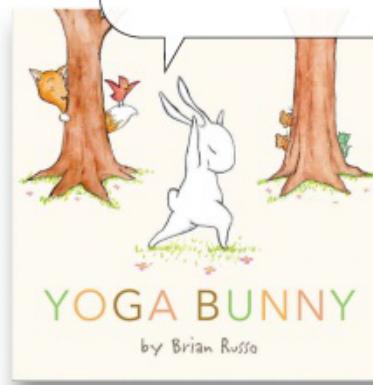
Eminence Organic Skin Care Stone Crop Cleansing Oil: *During my hot yoga classes, I sweat and release lots of toxins. But I don't want to strip my face of [necessary] oils when I wash it. This cleansing oil hydrates, brightens, and moisturizes my skin, and contains lots of vitamins A, D, and E.*



PlantFusion Complete Protein shake in Creamy Vanilla Bean: *It's great because I can't eat a heavy meal before or after a class.*



Yoga Bunny by Brian Russo: *My son and I read it together. I show him different yoga poses, and I've started teaching him to sit and breathe on a mat. It's the cutest thing.*



Natural citrine and black tourmaline crystals: *I usually hold them and meditate in my room looking out over my backyard. The citrine is great for abundance, prosperity, and lifting energy; the black tourmaline is for protection, security and getting rid of negativity.*



YOGA BY THE NUMBERS:

501

5

The number of adults with elevated blood pressure or stage 1 hypertension who successfully lowered their blood pressure after 12 weeks of hot yoga classes, according to a study from Texas State University.

The number of human participants it took to score the world record for largest goat yoga class at the Grady Goat Farm in Florida. The event was a fundraiser for the Project G.O.A.T. (Global Offensive Against Trafficking) Initiative—a nonprofit dedicated to fighting human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of minors.

\$215,811,000

The projected value of the Pilates and yoga studios market by 2025. Up from \$87,926 million in 2017, that's a compound annual growth rate of 11.7 percent.



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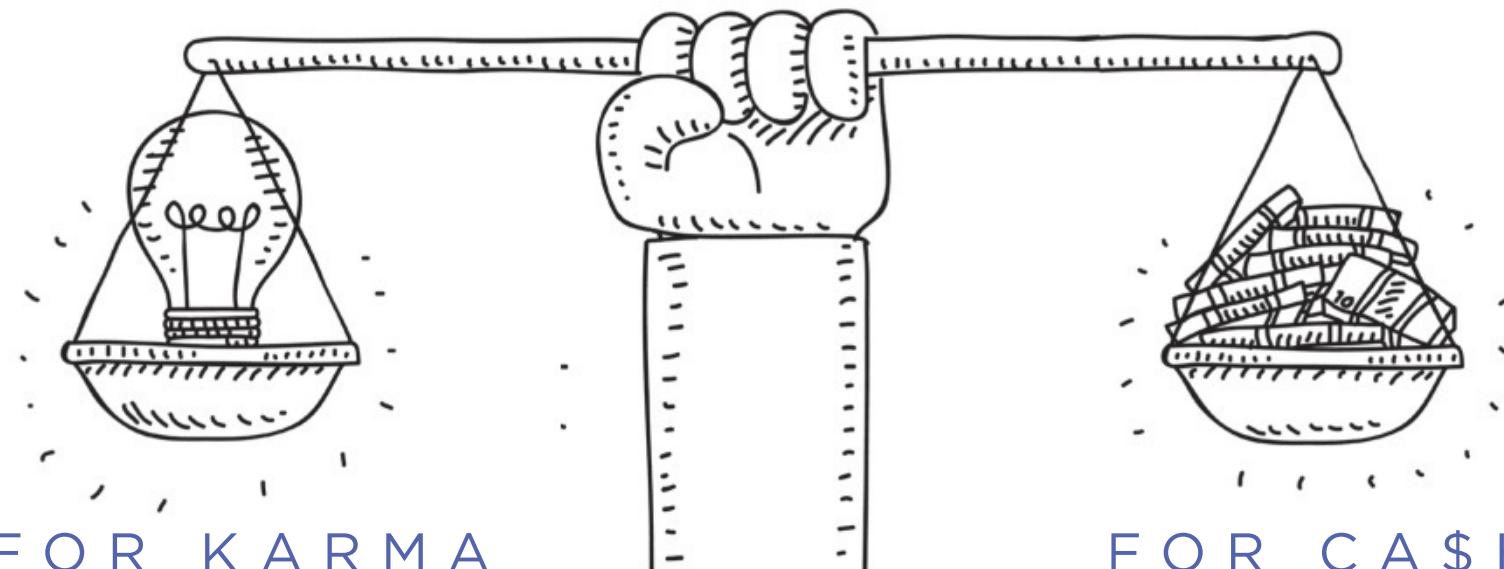
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FOR KARMA OR CA\$H?

With yoga clothes constantly flooding the market, we're here to help separate the noble from the nonsense.

BY MEGAN JOHNSON



PURUSHA: LIKE SLOW FOOD, THIS IS SLOW FASHION

Peace out, polyester. Each piece of Purusha activewear is handmade from Tencel (sustainably sourced fibers that come from eucalyptus and beech tree pulp), organic cotton, and spandex, then hand-dyed with Tennessee-grown organic indigo. It's all done with the goal of avoiding plastic-based products like polyester—which rely on drilling fossil fuels. Bonus? These are made right here in the USA; purushapeople.com.

WEARABLE X NADI X YOGA PANTS: PERSONALIZED TECHNOLOGY

Smartphone, smart house, smart...pants? Nadi X yoga pants use embedded sensors to guide practitioners through asana practice with vibration and audio feedback via a phone app. As you flow, gentle pulses cascade through the leggings, providing alerts when poses need adjustments. If you're a tech-savvy type who loves your home practice, electronic trousers might just be up your alley. But at \$249 a pair, we're sticking with the analog variety; wearablex.com.

Are recovery gyms worth the money?

You've been there: The thumping beats in your heart-pumping workout class are winding down, your to-do list has come a-knocking, and so you take off, abandoning the cooldown stretch. In an age when we're always on the go, many fitness devotees value intensity but ignore the recovery component. Not a good idea, according to the pros: Stretching is vital to protect joints and mobility. As a side effect of high-

intensity workouts, recovery gyms are popping up across the country, offering cocktails of treatments such as assisted stretching and compression therapy, all geared toward preventing injury and sustaining mental and physical recovery. And while professional stretching is de rigueur for heavy hitters (hedge-funder Bobby Axelrod on Showtime's *Billions* is always getting stretched out), recovery

gyms may not just be a passing fad for the über-wealthy. "People today are working out harder and firing on all cylinders for more hours of the day," says Amy Swift Crosby, co-owner of Boston recovery gyms BDY SQD, where clients loosen up through muscle-release sessions with a recovery coach to curb everything from post-workout soreness to pain caused by chronic illness. The relief that's

achieved through manual manipulation is hard to replicate on your own, says Crosby. Recovery coaches serve as investigators, helping identify the root of problem areas and treating them with methods such as percussive therapy with an electronic handheld massage device, and myofascial release to break up adhesions in the tissue. The goal? Saving the client months of discomfort.



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4 YOGA PODCASTS TO FOLLOW

Pop in your earbuds. These binge-worthy podcasts are definite conversation starters.

BY KYLE HOUSEWORTH



WISE ROSIE ACOSTA

INSTAGRAM: @thewisepodcast

With her *Radically Loved* podcast in its fifth season (with more than a million downloads), Rosie Acosta is launching a second, called *WISE* (Women Inspiring Success and Empowerment), this month. Episodes will feature powerful women on navigating difficult situations, breaking cycles, changing beliefs, and transforming—and the wisdom that comes with all of it.

THE 108-SECOND INTERVIEW

YOGA JOURNAL: What do people misunderstand about wisdom?

ROSIE ACOSTA: They think they don't have any. Wisdom isn't something you reach for outside of yourself; it's something that you can tap into when you're still or meditating. The soul's innate essence is wisdom. I also believe we become wise with experience not age. I know 10-year-olds who are wiser than some 30-year-olds.

YJ: What's something that's brought you wisdom?

RA: Breaking the spell of disempowerment and getting out of a difficult environment where I wasn't set up for success. Like a lot of kids, I was groomed to feel powerless. A big injustice is the thinking that women are somehow meek

and mild. I needed to break this mindset.

YJ: Who's your biggest inspiration right now?

RA: Lynne Twist. She's a global activist and the founder of the Soul of Money Institute, which aims to shift how individuals and organizations approach their relationships with money. I find that so many of us in health, wellness, and spiritual pursuits often feel that money and business are not our business, but Lynne teaches how to have a healthy relationship with prosperity in a way that creates space for a deep understanding of how money impacts our lives.

YJ: What's currently helping you change and grow?

RA: I used to be driven by creating, moving, and traveling. Right now, I'm

encouraged to grow by being still. This means finding ways to disconnect from technology, from traveling so much, and from always wanting to be somewhere else. My partner and I just bought a house, and we are creating a little sanctuary—so I'm excited to be spending more time nesting.

YJ: What is your go-to mantra?

RA: *How does this serve my highest good?* It's more of a question I ask myself than an affirmation. It keeps me from getting overwhelmed when I have a lot of things that I'm working on. Asking myself if a project is serving me allows me to look at the big picture and see if it's going to help me access my highest potential or if it's just going to create more stress.



BLACK GIRL IN OM LAUREN ASH

INSTAGRAM: @blackgirlinom

"We need to always remember that it's a journey. I'm learning something new every day; every day elevating, every day deepening into more clarity around what my purpose is."



BEYOND ASANA LIZ GETMAN & AARON KING

INSTAGRAM: @beyondasana

"Thinking of yoga as an approach to living makes it seem daunting but also more attractive. It's not just a thing that one does, it's a way that one lives." —Aaron King

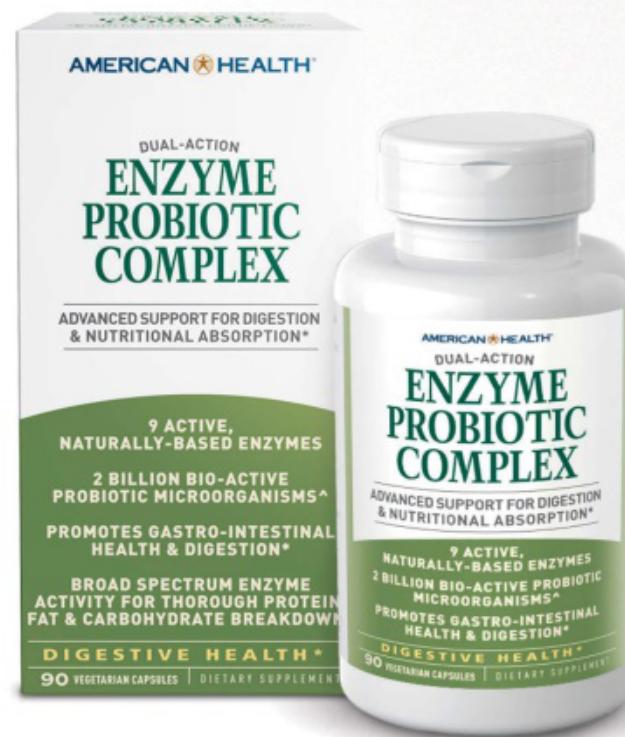


ROCK YOUR BLISS MARY BETH LARUE & JACKI CARR

INSTAGRAM: @rockyourbliss

"We're human and sometimes we mess up, and sometimes we don't show up the way we want to, but we're doing the work and we're walking our talk and we're present for our lives." —Mary Beth LaRue

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Break Down the Walls

//Yoga 4 A Good Hood minimizes the barriers that keep people of color or low socioeconomic status out of classes and trainings.

BY ANNA HIATT

Five days a week, in Rochester, New York, Yoga 4 A Good Hood's volunteers hold donation-only yoga classes in the basement of a 150-year-old Lutheran church. Some students wear yoga pants; others come in jeans. Not everyone can make a donation or practice on a yoga mat, so chairs are provided. "Wellness is a civil right and should not be a luxury," says founder Imani Olear, a yoga teacher and pastor. "You can come in as you are."

Whenever Olear has experienced turmoil, she's turned to yoga. Hardships such as the murder of her son's father, sexual assault, and losing a job have brought her to her mat time and time again. She says yoga has calmed her inner storm and helped her to see the practice's potential as a social justice tool—particularly for people of color and those struggling financially.

As a student and teacher trainee, Olear had always been one of the few people of color in her classes, and she recognized how that worked as a deterrent: When you don't see yourself reflected in your classmates or teachers, how can you feel like you belong? Plus, the prohibitive cost to attend a studio class or teacher training was locking so many people out of something

that had been so essential to her own healing.

"It takes just one person to notice what's missing and fulfill it," Olear says. And with that in mind, she founded Yoga 4 A Good Hood in May 2013. With a core teaching staff of four, the organization serves up to 140 people per week, depending on the season. The church basement is Yoga 4 A Good Hood's primary location, but it also holds pop-up yoga sessions throughout Rochester.

On Monday nights, upward of 50 students cram into the basement of the church at the intersection of North Chestnut and Pleasant streets. It's been a reliable home for Olear and her students for the past six years, but the church is running on a deficit now, and she's looking for a new location to secure the future of Yoga 4 A Good Hood.

In 2018, the nonprofit held its first 200-hour teacher training. It was spread over six months to make it easier for people to participate while holding down jobs. The average annual salary of participants is about \$16,000, and the trainings are valued at \$2,500. Because the cost of teacher training is a barrier to entry for so many hopeful students, donations from the community and grants from certain companies, including Lululemon, cover the majority of the cost. Trainees typically pay anything from nothing to \$300 to get their teaching certificates, and Olear coaches them on how to work with practitioners of differing physical abilities and emotional needs as they go along. Each Yoga 4 A Good Hood teacher, with the exception of Olear (who teaches for free) is paid \$20 per class.

To the Yoga 4 A Good Hood family, Olear has become more than just its founder and yoga teacher; she's become a leader and a trusted connection for those who need hope and support. She provides financial advice, food, and a safe place for students to be in connection with their bodies.



Yoga 4 A Good Hood

FOUNDER:
IMANI OLEAR

WEBSITE:
YOGA4AGOODHOOD.ORG

AT A GLANCE

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since 2018

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average donations
per week

\$4

average student
donation per class

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Surviving Abuse

// How yoga helped me heal from neglect and violence.

BY KIMBERLY REGAN

I grew up in poverty in a drug-addicted and violent family. Without necessities like proper food or shelter, and subjected to regular abuse, I ran away at the age of 13. Within two years, I was on the road with a 19-year-old man. Being so young, I was attracted to his antisocial, rebellious past rather than recognizing these behaviors as red flags. Eventually, we called my mother and she threatened him with jail time for statutory rape and crossing state lines with a minor—unless he married me. She was, as she put it, “tired of dealing with me.” I was forced to wed him.

One day, he returned from work with a vengeance. Storming through the door, he grabbed his gun and summoned me. I didn’t know if he was planning to hurt me or someone else. I tried to make up excuses: *I don’t feel that well; I’m tired; can we go after dinner?* But he ordered me to get my things from upstairs. My hands quivered and my knees buckled as I closed and locked the bedroom door, knowing it would only buy me minutes.

Clutching the scissors that I’d come to hide beneath my mattress, I waited for him, my mind racing to think of an escape plan. Within seconds, he was pounding on the door. “I’m going to kill you if you don’t open this door!” he threatened. When the yelling stopped, I grabbed the bedroom phone and called the police. Then I hid behind the bed. It was the first time I’d ever asked for help.

The police arrived just in time. They ordered him to leave the property, suggesting a 24-hour cooling-off period. After his truck pulled away, an officer came inside to tell me I was safe—for the moment.

I had been living in denial about the severity of the situation for so long that I had become numb to its potentially fatal consequences. But in that moment, I knew I had to get out while the police were still there. I contacted a local battered-women’s shelter. I was barely 17 years old.

FLOWING TOWARD FREEDOM

Up until then, my life had been the absence of everything yoga. But after years of living with intense shame, guilt, and fear, I could finally see that I deserved more. I desired a life free from



the violence and betrayal I had always known. And so I reinvented myself. It was a deliberate disruption that took years of perseverance, grit, and tenacity. I transformed myself through education, training, and the determination to live a healthy lifestyle (starting with a decision to be the first person in my family to finish high school). In the midst of my transformation, I found and fell in love with yoga—a practice that pushes me to change, but in a safe place: In college, I performed in a play called *Daughters*—about the evolution of women in society—and several women in the cast practiced yoga. They introduced me to Sun Salutations, which we did before each performance. I fell in love with the ritual of it all.

Twenty-something years later, my mat is still my sacred place. For me, yoga is a freeing moving meditation and a source for finding infinite power and responsibility in honoring my authentic self. I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude for the abundant life that yoga has taught me to pursue, expect, accept, and appreciate. My life has evolved in ways I never would have imagined when I was a girl struggling to improve my circumstances. Today I have a doctorate in educational leadership, and I am proud to say I started the first public charter school for at-risk kids in Nevada—where I now live. Instead of running from my past, I embrace where I am.

TO SHARE your own story of transformation, drop us a line at transform@yogajournal.com.



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Free Fall

//We tried an intense social justice training designed to help us serve a higher purpose. Here's what we learned about trauma, transformation, and taking care of yourself.

BY TASHA EICHENSEHER

I'm standing in a circle of 30-some people in a rustic yoga studio, peering through oversize windows at the lush, soggy woods outside—and trying my absolute best not to dissociate. It's the last day of a five-day Yoga, Purpose, and Action leadership training with the yoga and social justice organization Off the Mat, Into the World. Cofounders Seane Corn and Suzanne Sterling, along with facilitator RW Alves, are reading self-identifying statements aloud, such as, "If you have family and friends who are incarcerated..." "If you or someone you know has had an eating disorder..." And "If you have an advanced degree..."

The exercise, called the Ally Circle, goes like this: When you hear something that applies to you, you step into the middle of the circle and notice who else is there and who isn't. It feels a little bit like an emotionally charged, high-stakes version of that game called Never Have I Ever. But instead of earning cachet by admitting to having sex in a public space or smoking a joint before high school, I'm about to reveal the things I'm most ashamed of. My heart is pounding, and my thoughts are on fire: *I don't want these people, many of whom were strangers a week ago, to know any more about me.* I inadvertently label some of the statements "good" and others "bad." (And then noticing my own biases and judgments, I feel guilty about them.) I warm up with the questions about higher education and eating disorders. When I hear them, I take tentative steps toward the middle of the circle and realize that while I may be in the minority with my master's degree, exposure to eating disorders is way too common. I feel for those in the circle with me. Some of the people who step up next, because they have family or friends incarcerated, take me by surprise, and I check in again on my assumptions, ashamed of stereotypes I wasn't aware I held.

Then there's a question about sexual abuse. It's framed mildly enough—"You or someone you know has been a victim of sexual abuse or assault"—but I know that when I step forward, I'm talking about me. Fewer people than I expect are in the middle, and I'm desperately looking for someone to make eye contact with so I don't feel so alone. I step back and my mind leaves the room for a few minutes, staring at the trees, remembering painful details from that traumatic event. Then I'm back, just in time to hear, "You have been diagnosed with a mental illness." The statement feels harsh, but I want to be someone who is open and risk-taking. I don't want to overthink it. I want to own my depression. And as soon as I step forward, I regret it. I try to look around at who's there and who isn't, but my eyes are leaking uncontrollably. I'm aware of my tensely contorted mouth and clenched jaw. Mostly I'm looking down, this time afraid of meeting someone eye to eye.

I step back and totally check out, retreating inward. I feel the space between my ribs and pelvis shut down and imagine an infinite, dark, churning sky filling my torso. There is no ground beneath that void. I feel light, like I might float away. I am in free fall. All of a sudden I understand that this is what vulnerability feels like, for me.

I can't remember any of the statements that come after that.

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRAUMA

The Ally Circle is meant to crush assumptions, foster trust, and show that compassion can help us connect across differences. Suzanne explains why

it's part of the training: "Our work with Off the Mat is built on unpacking and taking accountability—for our familial or ancestral wounds and the systemic patterns of oppression that impact us or that we are complicit



in—so that we can cultivate the kind of activism or service in the world that is informed by a sense of solidarity and empathy, as opposed to any form of saviorism. We have seen incredible projects come out of this level of vulnerability, self-awareness, and community-building.”

The whole training takes you on a journey. It starts with personal introspection, and then you learn how to transform your wounds into gifts. The experience has felt raw, like the beginning of a new phase in which I’m demolished, then slowly rebuilt. Life has been stressful, and I’m starting to see that my coping mechanisms are finally catching up with me. Over time, I have constructed a rigid, heavy, perfectly measured frame, full of right angles, on a slippery and subsiding foundation. After decades of tectonic shifts, the integrity of the I-beams is in question, and the walls are starting to crack.

My M.O., for as long as I can remember, has been to serve—others, a mission, the planet, humanity. And now I get it. Focusing on serving others has been a brilliant strategy to keep me in my comfort zone and away from the pain of dealing with my own shit.

Seane connects the dots for me in her book, *Revolution of the Soul*: When you have undigested trauma—when you haven’t been able to talk, scream, or shake it off—“any new situation you experience that’s even mildly uncomfortable produces a biochemical reaction akin to the first trauma. To feel better, to shift energy, you may find yourself reactive.” And, as she adds at the training: “If you’re trying to get unmet needs met, your activism (or ‘selfless’ service) can cause harm to you and others.”

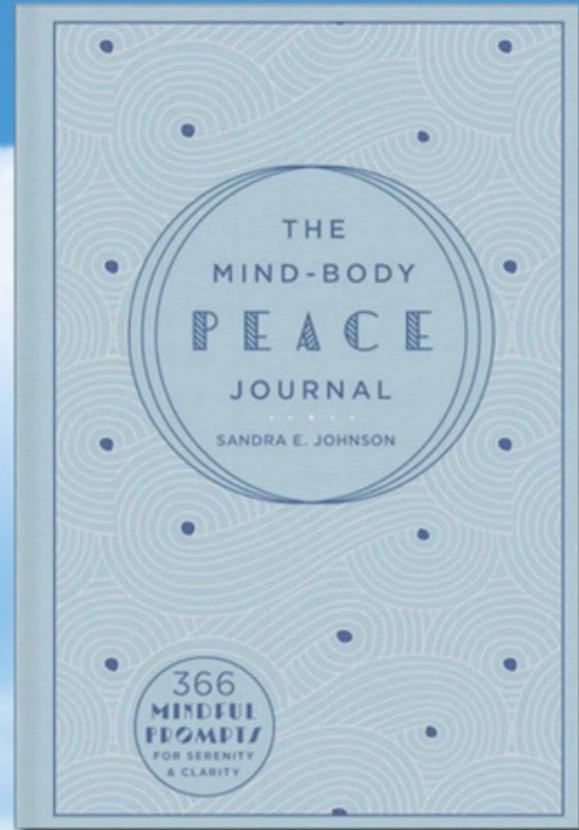
So, the training asks you to dig deep and face demons. And in doing so it allows you to show up and care for and celebrate others. What I learned that week in the woods was that compassion—for myself and everyone else—is the key ingredient of service. That I need to take care of my own house, employing forgiveness for all of the ways I feel guilty, ashamed, scared, and unsure. That I don’t have to wait until I’m completely healed (that’s a lifelong process) to re-enter the world, but that I do have to stay present to the hard work of awareness and personal transformation. I need to rebuild a frame that can flex with and serve as a conduit for collective anger, grief, pain, and joy. I want to be able to stand in the middle of the circle with vulnerability and still be there to catch someone else’s glance, helping them find ground when they are in the wild throes of free fall. 



PRACTICE

See page 52 for a trauma-informed yoga sequence from Off the Mat, Into the World cofounder Hala Khouri.

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THRIVE

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PHOTO: MATT NAGER; HAIR & MAKEUP: SUZANNE BLONS

APRÉS PLAY

Post yoga or after hitting the slopes, these looks deliver all the style points.

STYLING BY LINDSAY TUCKER



FROM LEFT
ON SHAILEE

Vuori Cleo Sweatshirt, \$68, vuoriclothing.com; **Beyond Yoga** Tri-Panel Spacedye High-Waisted Midi Legging, \$110, beyondyoga.com; **The North Face** Ozone Park Winter Pull-On Boot, \$150, thenorthface.com.

ON CLARE

Oakley Flight Deck Snow Goggle, \$200, oakley.com; **Lululemon** Energy Bra, \$52, lululemon.com; **Goldsheep** Leopard Lounge Velvet Jacket, \$128, and High Shine Legging, \$110, goldsheepclothing.com; **Ecco** Exostrike Shinebright Boot, \$180, ecco.com.

ON KEIS

Vuori Madeleine Sports Bra, \$58, vuoriclothing.com; **Athleta** Rock Ridge PrimaLoft Jacket, \$178, and Radiant Jogger, \$108, athleta.com; **Sorel** Out 'N About Puffy Boot, \$140, sorel.com.

PREVIOUS PAGE

Athleta Lofty Down Velvet Vest, \$148, athleta.com.

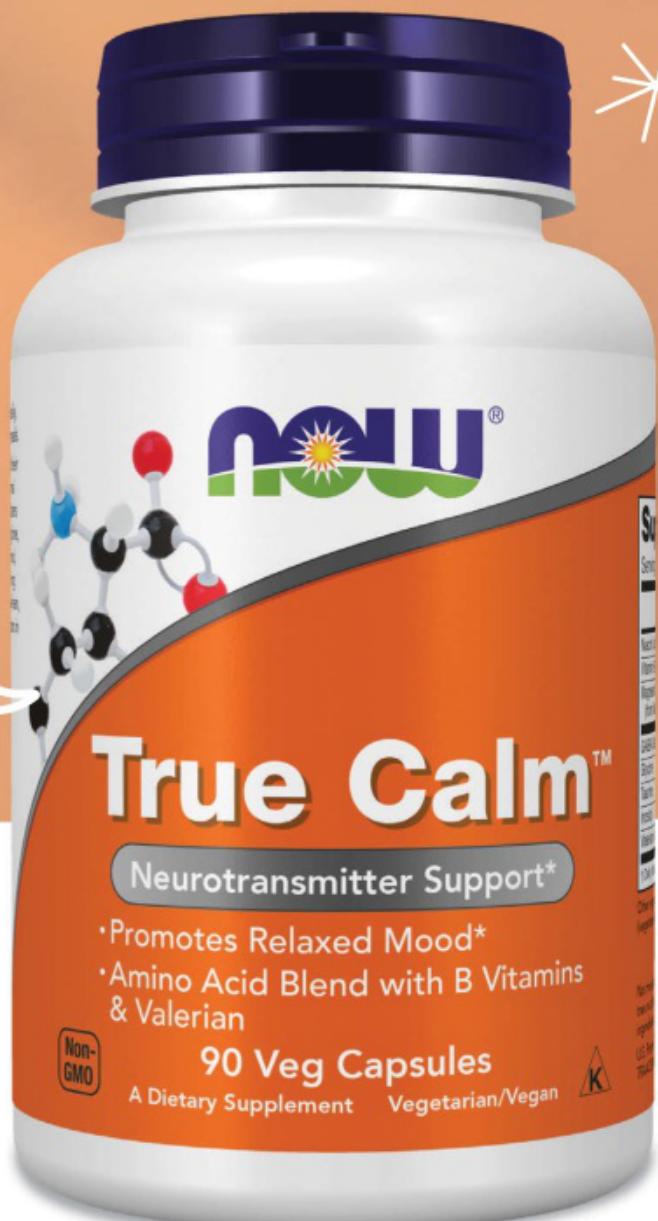


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KEPING

It Real

// Skip the Bali crowd and venture out to this serene Cambodian beach town.

BY AVIV RUBINSTEN

The small province of Kep, on Cambodia's southwestern tip, is unlike the more populous areas in the country we're always hearing about. It operates at a slower, quieter pace, and though Cambodia's economy benefits greatly from

tourism, this seaside retreat offers a unique, affordable, and quieter alternative to Southeast Asia's more trafficked destinations, like Bali and Siem Reap. It is a locale rich in activities—cultural, athletic, and rejuvenating.



PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: TROPICALPIX/SINGAPORE/ISTOCK



STAY

Kep has no shortage of lodging that's only a short walk from the Gulf of Thailand—a popular meditation oasis. Picturesque, colonial-style boutique hotels, such as the treehouse-inspired Tara Lodge Haven of Peace, tend to draw yogis and quiet beach seekers. Located on a small dirt road, beset by lush, green trees and other quaint B&Bs, the Tara Lodge features spacious second-floor cottages with breathtaking balcony views of the surrounding forest and gulf. Relax by the swimming pool, indulge at the spa, and mindfully enjoy a complimentary breakfast at the treehouse-style café: Here you'll find long wooden tables for mingling, surrounded by thick foliage and gorgeous views of vibrant plants, birds, lizards, and other wildlife—plus the freshest fruit smoothie life has to offer.

Tara Lodge is a quick jaunt (less than 150 meters) from the Vagabond Temple Yoga and Meditation retreat: an ideal destination for those interested in yoga, Reiki, and sound-healing sessions. And during our stay, the lodge manager Alexis (delightfully friendly and French) was full of local recommendations to fit every temperament.

EAT

Kep's most notable food feature is its Crab Market—a huge, open-air forum where fishermen drag crab cages right out of the ocean and merchants wait to sell their daily hauls to locals and tourists alike. The market buzzes with dozens of languages and competing aromas of fresh meat, produce, and sweets for sale. Coal grills sizzle with kabobs, while carts on the market's outskirts hawk freshly ground sugarcane juice, which resembles a tasty lemonade treat.

Kep's provincial neighbor Kampot (they once were a single province) is famous for its production of peppercorn, which comes in several different colors and flavors and adorns almost every dish in the region. (Through a 1940s screwball-comedy-like-misunderstanding, Alexis's French inflection made it sound like we simply had to order the *paper* crab curry at Holy Crab, Kep's best restaurant. The *pepper* crab curry did not disappoint.)

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE: COURTESY OF VAGABOND TEMPLE, JUJROY/ISTOCK, COURTESY OF TARA LODGE HAVEN OF PEACE



PLAY

Kep boasts beaches reminiscent of Padang Padang Beach in Bali, but for some heart-pounding entertainment, a hike up Phnom Chhngok (Chhngok Mountain) is a true delight—albeit relatively easy. A short half-hour tuk-tuk ride can take you from Kep through a small village to the foot of the peak. Local children, excited to socialize with visitors, don headlamps and offer tourists sneak peeks of the hidden temple inside the mountain. In the main cavern, a 1,400-year-old carved temple to Shiva is guarded by two natural stalactite sculptures aptly nicknamed the mother and baby elephants. While the temple itself is about the size of a phone booth, dozens of tourists from many countries squeeze through in an hour or so. (Compare that to the thousands of people who crowd Angkor Wat temple each morning.)

To cool off after your hike, swing by Kampot's Secret Lake (which is hardly a secret) for a quiet waterside retreat. It's the perfect spot to practice a little yoga in one of the perimeter's small pagodas or out under the sun by the water's edge.

Before you leave Kep, take in the tranquility at the Butterfly Garden. Located in Kep National Park, on which the Tara Lodge sits, the Butterfly Garden's hiking and cycling trails are great for all fitness levels and feature enclosures that display the full butterfly life cycle.

Ultimately, Cambodia's youngest and smallest province provides practically perfect provisions, picturesque places to rest your head, heart, and soul, and activities for staying active and inspired.

**INSIDER TRAVEL TIPS**

Like in Indonesia, the exchange rate of the Cambodian riel is extremely favorable to the dollar (about 4,000 riel equals 1 USD) but unlike any other country in the region, Cambodia takes American currency everywhere. So save yourself the hassle and expense of the airport money-changing stations.

Kep doesn't have an airport, so the easiest way to get there is to fly into the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. A taxi aggregator service such as BookMeBus can provide a private driver for the three-hour (or so) trip from Phnom Penh to Kep for the approximate price of \$6.

Traffic lanes are merely suggestions in Cambodia. The common driving etiquette consists of swerving back and forth on narrow roads trying to pass the vehicle in front of you while dodging oncoming traffic. It's not for the faint of heart or the easily carsick. 🌱



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Noble Art

//This LA yoga studio teamed up with an artist-activist to try and out-scale the proposed US-Mexico border wall.

BY LINDSAY TUCKER



Jessica Rosen grew up photographing graffiti in 1990s Detroit. These days, as the owner of One Down Dog yoga studios in Los Angeles, she was eager to bring a reminder of the artwork that inspired her youth into the community she was cultivating in LA. “I wanted the space to feel like a place you’d want to hang out in and connect and talk—not like, I come here and I leave,” says the 37-year-old yoga teacher. “In Detroit, there were beautiful murals everywhere, so bringing that into my studios makes it feel like home.”

Rosen’s former yoga student (and teacher at One Down Dog), muralist Joerael Numina, has spent most of his life living in border states—from Texas to California to New Mexico. In 2016, he launched Mobilize Walls, a mural project that he calls “a petition of scale,” intended to counter the divisiveness and dehumanizing rhetoric that comes with the Trump administration and its pursuit of an expanded border wall. Numina has embarked on creating a network of murals across the country, largely influenced by his yoga practice, that today spans



about 10 miles, including the 16 he's created at Rosen's three One Down Dog outposts. He hopes other artists and activists will join him in spreading a message of unity and equanimity through art by donating their own mural or wall to the cause.

"Yoga is a spiritual practice meaning union," says Numina. "The border wall is divisive and centralized and toxic to the environment and the national budget. Mobilize Walls is transformational and inclusive. It creates dialogue and cultivates empathy and compassion. That's what art does: It connects people—especially in a public space."

PHOTO: JUSTIN W DENNIS (@JUSTINWDENNIS)

GET INVOLVED

DONATE A WALL

Got a blank space you'd like to see transformed for a good cause? Send an email to Numina at mobilizewalls@gmail.com and include the location and square footage.

GIFT SUPPLIES

Numina accepts paint and financial donations at the email address at left. Reach out if you'd like to lend a hand.

MAKE A MURAL

Artists and graffiti writers are encouraged to independently contribute to the collective. If you create something ("mobilize your own wall"), email Numina with a photo of your completed project, the size of the piece, and your name or moniker—and he'll count it toward the goal.

To learn more about the cause, visit mobilizewalls.com.

Clean Greens

THESE NOURISHING MEALS ARE PACKED WITH GOOD-FOR-YOU INGREDIENTS TO HELP YOU FEEL YOUR BEST.

RECIPES BY **LISA TURNER,**
ERIN MACDONALD,
AND TIFFANI BACHUS

Green Frittata with Avocado Cilantro Mash

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

1 tbsp avocado oil, divided
 4 oz (6 stalks) asparagus, trimmed and chopped
 2 green onions, thinly sliced
 3 cups baby mixed greens
 $\frac{1}{2}$ jalapeño chile pepper, seeded and minced
 8 large eggs, whisked
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plain, unsweetened almond milk
 1 lemon, zested and juiced
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp black pepper, divided
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp sea salt
 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
 1 avocado, peeled and pitted
 1 lime, zested and juiced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh cilantro, chopped

- 1 Heat oven to 350°. Coat an 8 x 8-inch glass baking dish or pie plate with $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp oil.
- 2 In a medium skillet on medium-high, heat remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp oil. Add asparagus, and sauté for 3 minutes. Add onions, baby greens, and jalapeños, and sauté, 1 minute. Transfer to baking dish.
- 3 In a bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, lemon zest and juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper, and salt. Pour over vegetables. Sprinkle yeast on top. Bake for 25–30 minutes, or until center is firm. Turn oven to broil on high, and cook for 2 minutes. Let cool.
- 4 Meanwhile, prepare mash: Add avocado, lime zest and juice, cilantro, and remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp black pepper to a food processor and purée until smooth. (Alternatively, mash by hand in a bowl.) Quarter frittata, and split among four plates. Top each slice with a dollop of mash.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 295 calories per serving, 21 g fat (5 g saturated), 11 g carbs, 6 g fiber, 18 g protein, 284 mg sodium



PHOTO: BEATA LUBAS



Quick-Braised Kale with Goji Berries & Cashews

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Quick-braising is a great method for cooking cool-weather greens, but make sure to select sturdy varieties such as kale, collards, and escarole. Here, fiber-rich kale is simmered with broth and caramelized shallots.

- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 large bunch kale, leaves chopped, stems discarded
- ½ cup low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- ¼ cup unsweetened dried goji berries or cranberries
- ¼ cup unsalted cashews, toasted and chopped
- ground white pepper, to taste

1 In a large heavy pot, heat oil on medium. Add shallots, and sauté for 1-2 minutes, until just softened. Add kale, and stir until coated in oil. Add broth, reduce heat to low, cover, and cook for 5 minutes—until kale is tender but still bright green.

2 Add berries and stir to coat. Divide mixture evenly among plates, sprinkle with cashews, and season with pepper.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 180 calories per serving, 11 g fat (7 g saturated), 17 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 5 g protein, 55 mg sodium

These recipes originally appeared in **Clean Eating Magazine**. For more healthy recipes, visit cleaneating.com.

Penny Wise

Crush your personal goals not your bank account with this budget-friendly gear roundup.

BY SCOTT YORKO



1



2



3



4

secret
pocket

1. JADEYOGA

Organic Cotton Mysore Yoga Rug, \$80, jadeyoga.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

You put such care and attention into your practice, so do it on a surface that meets your intention. Rural Indian artisans hand-weave this organic cotton mat and use all-natural vegetable dyes made from indigo, cumin, and turmeric. It's machine washable, and with the purchase of each rug, Jade provides a week's worth of hot lunches to children in India.

2. PRANA

Heiro Short, \$69, prana.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

These shorts pull double duty with a built-in compression brief underneath a moisture-wicking outer layer that stretches along with you. A zippered front pocket enhances all-day functionality—rock them from morning practice to afternoon errands and beyond.

3. LULULEMON

Metal Vent Tech Short Sleeve 2.0, \$78, lululemon.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

Comfort and durability converge in this top, which boasts odor-repellant fibers, seamless construction, and extra stretch that helps retain shape no matter how many twists and turns you take on.

4. SHERPA

Sapna Printed Legging, \$65, sherpaadventuregear.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

The anti-odor technology in this wicking fabric means you can wear this piece again and again. A secret pocket in the wide waistband will hide your keys or other essentials.



5. THE WAVE TOOL

\$50, wavetoolstherapy.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

This myofascial massage gadget is more mobile than your foam roller, has knobs to break down trigger points, and is small enough to fit in your yoga bag.

6. VUORI

Lux Performance Tank, \$44, vuoriclothing.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

What do you get when you combine a halter neckline with a racerback and silky-smooth material? A well-ventilated piece of activewear that looks as good as it feels.

7. HYDROFLASK

8-liter Lunch Tote, \$45, hydroflask.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

This lightweight, modern lunchbox has an insulated interior and welded seams to keep spills and condensation at bay. It's durable, waterproof, and easy to wipe clean—and keeps contents cold for up to four hours when you have to yoga and go.

8. PURIST

10-oz. Maker, \$40, puristcollective.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

This stainless steel, double-walled, vacuum-insulated

bottle uses silicon dioxide in its interior glass lining to mimic the hydrophobicity of the lotus flower and eliminate taste mitigation. So it's really just a bonus that it keeps liquids hot for 12 hours, cold for 24, and leakproof forever.

9. DOIY

Terrazzo Yoga Mat, \$40, doiydesign.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

Your concentration will be as strong as stone on this thick, supportive mat that rolls up tightly for easy stowage.

10. LULULEMON

Uplifting Scrunchie Bow, \$12, lululemon.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

The scrunchie is back, lighter, and faster drying than ever before—perfect for the sweatiest of hot yoga sessions.

11. BODY GLOVE

Sunna Eco Light-Support Sports Bra, \$32, bodyglove.com

WHY WE LOVE IT

Lightweight and breathable, this strappy sports bra offers active comfort and support—made from recycled materials.



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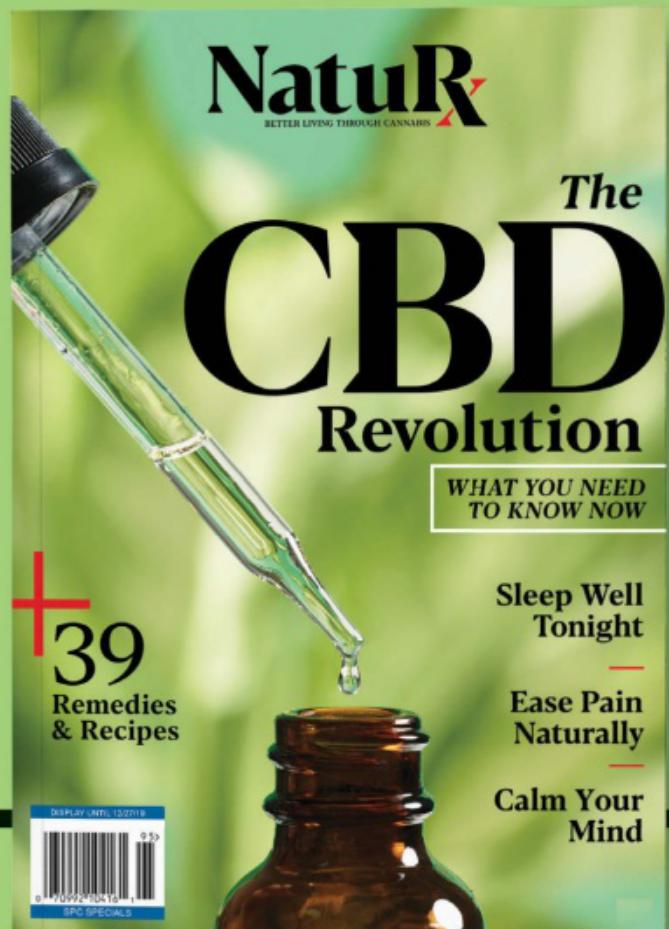
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FOR THE LOVE OF CHOCOLATE

This sweetheart season, use candy to be more mindful.

BY DIANE R. GEHART

Make a date this Valentine's Day to savor the gift of cocoa. Mindful eating encourages us to fully experience our food—its aroma, flavor, texture—and how it makes us feel. Eating chocolate is proven to calm nerves and promote happiness (it releases dopamine), and when we practice mindfulness as we consume it, we're offered a window into our mind and its long-held associations with this food. With practice, mindful eating can help you be more present in other areas of your life—making you better equipped to handle anything that comes your way, whether sour or sweet.



◆ OBSERVE

Hold the chocolate in your hand. Mindfully take in what you see: What color is the wrapper? Is light reflecting off of it? Can you smell the candy? Feel its texture and its weight in your hand. Study it with curiosity.

◆ UNWRAP

Listen as you remove the candy from its wrapper. What sounds does it make? Do you smell anything? Keep focusing on shape, color, and texture. Does it feel soft or hard? Smooth or rough?

◆ SCAN

Bring the chocolate toward your mouth, but don't bite into it yet. How does your body react? Are you salivating? Can you feel anticipation arising elsewhere for the bite you're about to take? What thoughts can you identify? Do you feel excited? Impatient? Hesitant? Observe your thoughts and feelings as though you're watching them move through your mind like clouds in the sky.

◆ TASTE

Now, take a small bite, and let it linger on your tongue, slowly rolling the creamy morsel around in your mouth. Is it sweet? Salty? Bitter? Fruity? Nutty? Try not to judge the flavor or categorize it as good or bad—simply experience it. Slowly begin to chew, keeping mindful of the texture you experience. Continue eating, slowly taking bites and immersing yourself in the experience—the aroma, the textures, the taste. When you've finished, sit for a few moments and reflect.

◆ REPEAT

Do it all again—tomorrow. Chocolate meditation can help you develop a consistent practice. Try filling a clear glass bowl with treats, leaving it someplace where you'll see it frequently (hello, work desk!). Pick a time you'd like to practice, then set a daily reminder. When your alarm sounds, set a timer for up to 5 minutes (even 1 minute works wonders). As chocolate meditation becomes easier, add a focus on your breath. After two weeks, odds are minor irritations won't be as bothersome and you'll feel better equipped to manage stress.

LETTING IN LOVE

This practice will help you cultivate self-compassion.

BY TARA BRACH

The deepest feelings of human suffering are those of being unlovable—shame, fear, hopelessness, and isolation. When you become lost in suffering, a key question to ask yourself is, *Can I let in love?*

Let me explain. I began the practice of letting in love from a greater source years ago when I was at a meditation retreat. It was just after the holidays, and I was drowning in feelings of shame and self-recrimination because I hadn't been very present with my family. I tried arousing mindfulness and self-compassion, but an angry, shameful voice dug in its heels: *I'm not OK. I'm selfish and unloving, and I don't want to be this way!*

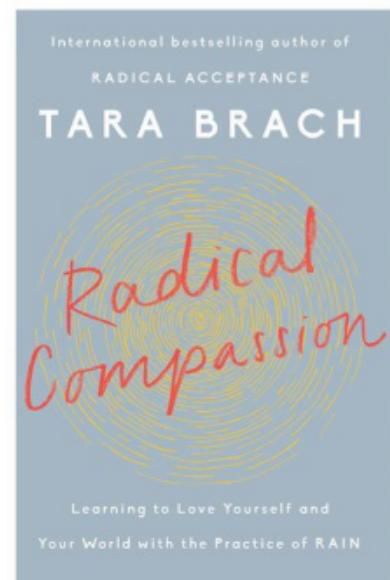
Once the anger turned to helplessness, I began to cry. A deep part of me felt unlovable. I asked myself what this sad, vulnerable part of me needed most. Suddenly, I whispered out loud, “Please love me.” Over and over, a heartbroken plea: “Please love me.”

In this moment, I became aware of an intimate presence—a field of sentience and light surrounding me—that was entirely tender and compassionate. I bowed my head slightly and sensed a kiss on my brow, a blessing of pure acceptance and care. Something in me opened. I felt bathed in loving light.

The more light I let in, the more any sense of separation fell away. Whatever arose—outside sounds, a memory of a friend who'd died, a wave of sorrow—was held in this luminous, open heart space. I remembered the words of one of my teachers: “Love is always loving you.” I rested in that truth.

Ever since, at times of difficulty, I've often called on this intimate presence and asked for love. I sense the blessing at my brow, and I feel myself soften and open up. But I've also learned not to wait for tough moments to reconnect with this ever-present compassionate awareness. Today—between emails, in the shower—I often pause, turn toward this presence, and let love in.

Love is always loving you. To realize this, allow yourself to long for love, ask for it, and let it surround you from the inside out. For me, the more I practice this, the more accessible the feelings of love and being loved by others becomes. Yes, old patterns (selfishness, self-judgments, and fears) arise, but increasingly they're held in a heart space that is forgiving and tender.



PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

- ◆ Sit comfortably and take a few moments to breathe. Relax any obvious tension in your body.
- ◆ Call to mind a situation where you were filled with self-judgment and feelings of deficiency. Visualize what was going on. Notice what most turns you against yourself. Where do your self-judgments and insecurities lie?
- ◆ Allow yourself to identify and connect with the raw, vulnerable places in your body that feel you are unlovable or unworthy. Notice how much you long to be truly seen, loved, held. Then, either silently or in a whisper, express your yearning. You might say, “Please love me,” “Please hold me,” or “Please take care of me,” and repeat it softly a number of times.
- ◆ Imagine that your vulnerability and longing are seen and felt by a larger, loving presence. Sense that this presence is close, infinitely tender, and caring. Like an absorbent sponge, allow that care to surround and soak into you. Sense it as a flow of golden nectar, penetrating, soothing, and healing the most wounded places inside you. As you let in this loving energy, sense the possibility of dissolving into, and becoming one with, the field of loving awareness.

Adapted from *Radical Compassion* by Tara Brach, published in December by Viking, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House, LLC. Copyright © 2019 by Tara Brach.

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Awaken in Flow

Yoga teacher Jordan Smiley, founder of the In Body Meant Project, shares a playful sequence to help you break patterns and get better acquainted with your body's wisdom.

Yoga practices are designed to disrupt us. They do so by creating clear changes in how our mental, spiritual, and physical energies flow. These interruptions help us see and transform ourselves, our relationships, and our communities. I live in a transgender body of color, and my identity is one reason why I'm interested in awakening practices and how to use them to create personal and collective change.

As we've continued to wake up as a society, it's become apparent that practicing yoga in the West is an act of privilege. Here, our yoga spaces are powerfully informed by social frameworks such as whiteness, heteronormativity,

able-bodiedness, and class. Thanks to the truthfulness of many leaders, there are yoga movements currently working to create more inclusivity. We have a lot of ground to cover, but we are starting to discuss who has access to healing practices and why—and how those who feel represented in yoga spaces actually apply the practices outside of the classroom. If we want equity, we must first disrupt our personal and collective conditioning of inequity. I call this process embodiment, and I believe it starts with how we relate to—or don't relate to—our bodies.

I invite movers in yoga classes to encounter and express energy in a way that disrupts patterns and changes momentum. Research shows that 47 percent of the time, we're thinking about something we're not currently doing. The thoughts that have kept us safe and helped us to repeat pleasurable experiences become pathways of low resistance.

When we get stuck in repetitive thought, we cannot see what our bodies and minds have habituated, notice our privilege, or heal our traumas. When we focus on being aware of our present-moment bodies, we open up to new ways of experiencing ourselves and others. This moment of disruption is the beginning of change.

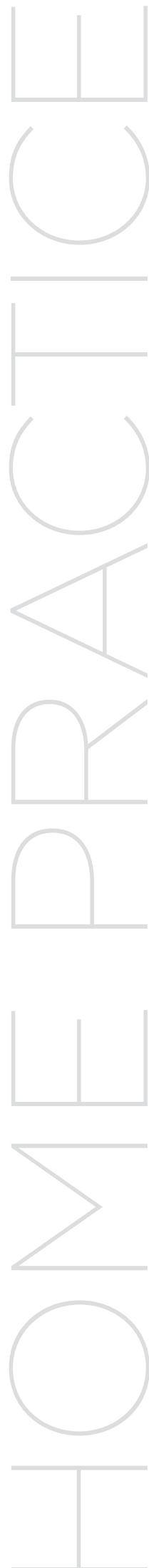
To get out of your head and into your body—and possibly create some more profound changes—try this practice. Instead of focusing on alignment, you'll use your somatic intelligence and intuitive playfulness to flow. You'll use organic patterns, or *kriyas* (action), that will help guide you intuitively into the next posture or transition, like a dance. Do the sequence once at the suggested pace—and then again as breath-to-breath movements. Cool down with a supine twist or Happy Baby Pose, and finish with Savasana (Corpse Pose). Play with the experience and have fun!

PHOTO: JORDAN SMILEY



WATCH IT

Follow this practice for embodiment at yogajournal.com/jordansmiley.



THE PRACTICE



1. EKA PADA ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA
(ONE-LEGGED DOWNWARD-FACING DOG POSE)



2. WILD THING



4. HIGH CRESCENT LUNGE



5. VIRABHADRASANA III, VARIATION
(WARRIOR POSE III)



6. JIVA SQUAT



8. UTTHITA PARSAVAKONASANA
(EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE POSE)



9. VIPARITA VIRABHADRASANA
(REVERSE WARRIOR POSE)



10. SKANDASANA
(POSE DEDICATED TO
THE GOD OF WAR)



12. MALASANA, VARIATION
(GARLAND POSE)



13. APANASANA
(KNEES-TO-CHEST POSE)



14. CHATURANGA DANDASANA
(FOUR-LIMBED STAFF POSE)



3. PARIVRTTA ANJANEYASANA
(REVOLVED LOW LUNGE)



7. EKA PADA UTKATASANA
(ONE-LEGGED CHAIR POSE)



11. ANJANEYASANA
(LOW LUNGE)



15. URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA
(UPWARD-FACING DOG POSE)

1. EKA PADA ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA | One-Legged

Downward-Facing Dog Pose

Lift your right leg up, and button in your navel. *Hold for 3 breaths.*

2. WILD THING

With your left arm and hand, assertively push against the ground. Step your right foot over the top of your left thigh. *Hold for 3 breaths.*

3. PARIVRTTA ANJANEYASANA | Revolved Low Lunge

Make a clockwise circle with your right arm toward the back of your mat and down toward the floor. *Repeat 3 times.*

4. HIGH CRESCENT LUNGE

Lift your rib cage and un-shrug your shoulders. *Hold for 3 breaths.*

5. VIRABHADRASANA III, VARIATION | Warrior Pose III

Sweep both arms back behind you, transfer your weight into your right foot, and float your upper body forward. Reach your arms out like wings. Inhale.

6. JIVA SQUAT

Exhale, and fold your left knee into your chest. Squat into your right knee. Inhale, and return to the Virabhadrasana III variation. *Repeat 3 times.*

7. EKA PADA UTKATASANA | One-Legged Chair Pose

Rise to standing on your right foot, and cross your left ankle over your right knee as you sit back. Roll your inner thighs down. *Hold for 3 breaths.*

8. UTTHITA PARSAVAKONASANA | Extended Side Angle Pose

Lengthen, and revolve your chest upward. *Hold for 3 breaths.*

9. VIPARITA VIRABHADRASANA | Reverse Warrior Pose

Inhale, raise your chest, and slide your right hand down your back thigh into side bend. Exhale, and return to Parsvakonasana. *Repeat 3 times.*

10. SKANDASANA | Pose Dedicated to the God of War

Slide your hands back toward your right foot, and squat into your right knee. Balance on the ball of your right foot. Lift your chest. *Hold for 3 breaths.*

11. ANJANEYASANA | Low Lunge

Walk both hands to your left and bend your left knee. *Stay for 3 breaths.*

12. MALASANA, VARIATION | Garland Pose

Step your feet together. Wrap your arms around your knees. *Take 3 breaths.*

13. APANASANA | Knees-to-Chest Pose

Roll onto your back. Inhale and extend your knees. Exhale and fold your knees. *Repeat 3 times.* Plant your hands, and hop or step your feet back.

14. CHATURANGA DANDASANA | Four-Limbed Staff Pose

Firm your knuckles downward, and brush your inner arms against your ribs.

15. URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA | Upward-Facing Dog Pose

Take 3 breaths. Repeat practice on the other side.

JORDAN SMILEY is an E-RYT 500 teacher whose work and practice celebrate indigenous and nonconventional wisdom. He is known for his intuitive yogic choreography, innovative and inclusive teaching techniques, and heart-centered connection. Jordan is the founder of the In Body Meant Project, an initiative to embolden yogis of color, those with abundant bodies, trans and queer yogis, and other noncentralized identities. Connect with him at @jordan.e.smiley or theinbodymeantproject.com.

Parsva Kakasana

Need a bolt of energy? When set up safely, Side Crow Pose will help you fight fatigue while delivering the upper-body strength-building benefits you expect of inversions and arm balances.

If you experience wrist, shoulder, or back pain, try modifications (page 51).



STEP BY STEP

A Facing one side of your mat, come into a squat with your feet and knees together.

B Inhale your left arm to the ceiling, then exhale your left (outer) upper arm to the outside of your right thigh.

C Keep your upper arm securely against your upper right thigh and place your hands on the floor, shoulder-distance apart, facing the front of your mat.

D Make sure your wrist creases are

parallel to each other.

E Extend your sternum away from your navel to shift forward, stacking your elbows over your wrists.

F Lift your heels off the floor and toward your buttocks while

rolling the heads of your upper arms away from the floor.

G Secure your right outer thigh on the shelf of your left upper arm.

H Pin your right elbow into your midline, but make

sure it does not support your right hip.

I Hold for 5-10 breaths, then release your feet to the floor.

J Repeat on the other side.

—Natasha Rizopoulos

POSES



LEARN MORE

For more pose instruction, download our new app—a benefit of YJ's membership program: yogajournal.com/thepath.

Parsva Bakasana Adaptations

BY ANN SWANSON



SIDE CROW IN A CHAIR

If you have general wrist or joint pain or choose not to invert, try mimicking the pose in a chair to reap the benefits of the twist: Sit tall and lift your right leg off the floor. Twist to the left, bending your elbows and bringing them down toward your outer thigh. Try to maintain as much length in your spine as possible. Hold for 5-10 breaths, then switch sides.

SIDE CROW WITH A BLOCK

If you're ready to invert but need a boost, try this pose with a block under your feet to allow yourself more space to get into the pose. Come into a squat with your feet on the block. Twist your body to one side, and bring your hands to your mat. Bend your elbows, creating a shelf for your thighs to rest on. Play with bringing more weight onto that shelf.



SIDE CROW WITH STRAIGHT LEGS

After getting into the pose, experiment with more challenging variations, such as slowly straightening your legs. Keep your feet flexed and leg muscles engaged so your legs are more buoyant. This is a practice of control, strength, and focus.

MODEL TIFFANY BUSH is a yoga teacher and mind-body-soul healer in Denver. She's also the community manager at gaia.com. Get to know her better at tiffanybushyoga.com.

NATASHA RIZOPOULOS is a senior teacher at Down Under Yoga in Boston, where she leads teacher trainings. Both the Ashtanga Yoga and Iyengar Yoga traditions inform her dynamic, anatomy-based vinyasa system Align Your Flow. Learn more at natasharizopoulos.com.

ANN SWANSON has a Master of Science in Yoga Therapy and is the author of *Science of Yoga*. She helps people safely manage anxiety and chronic pain. For free video practices, head to annswansonwellness.com.

MODEL KADY LAFFERTY founded Big Booty Yoga and is a member of the Yoga and Body Image Coalition. Find her teaching schedule and online offerings at bigbootyyoga.com.

MODEL ROB LOUD teaches embodied power vinyasa by pulling wisdom from multiple lineages. You can find him at Yoga Pod in his hometown of Boulder, Colorado; in Denver; and at roboudyoga.com.

MODEL YUKI TSUJI is a self-care advocate, yoga and AcroYoga teacher, and Thai massage therapist in Boulder, Colorado. Find her class and workshop schedule at yogayuki.com.

SEQUENCING

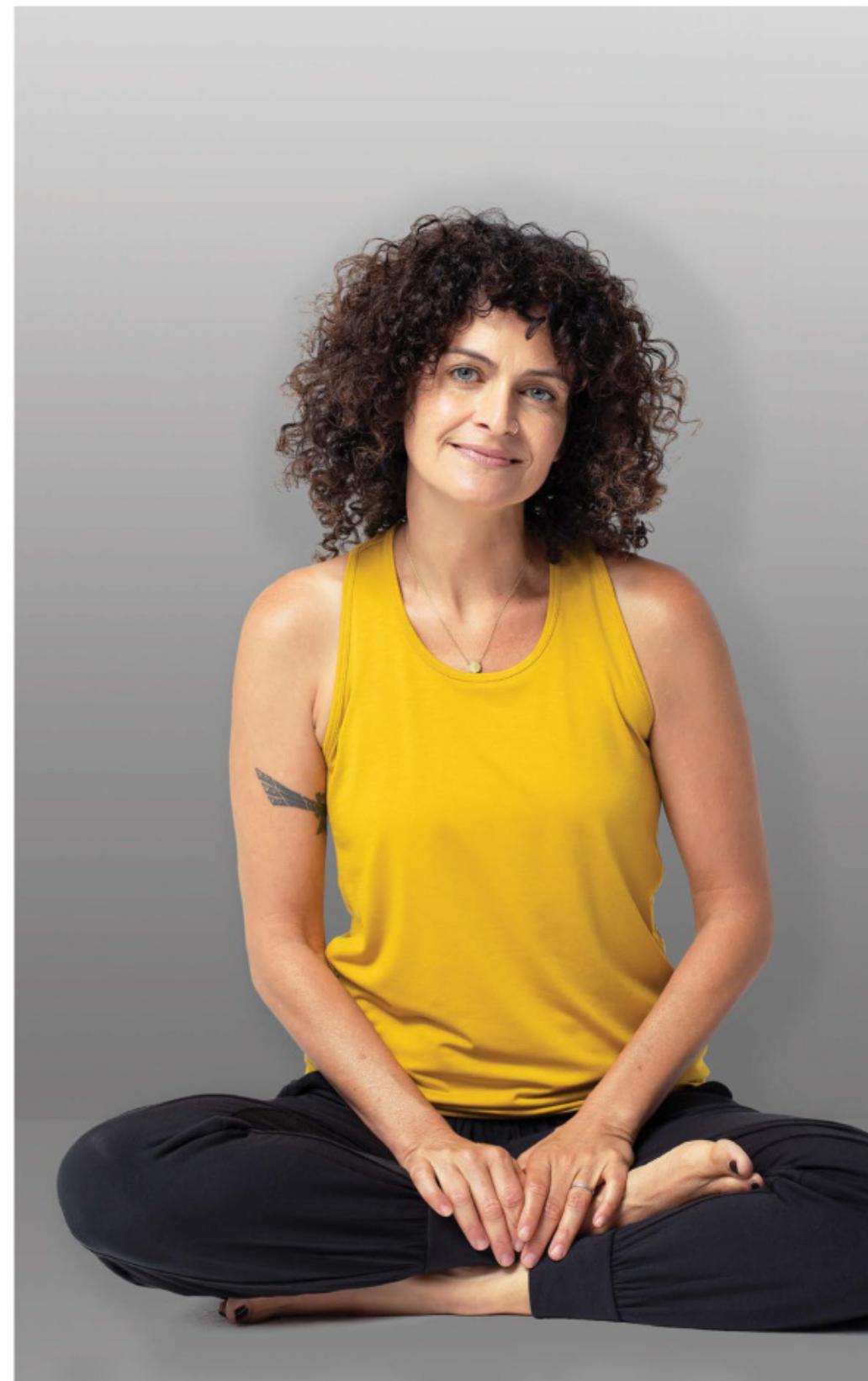
learn about trauma-informed yoga with Hala Khouri

Start to feel safe and centered with practices that emphasize grounding and breathing.

In many yoga and healing circles, “trauma-informed” has become somewhat of a buzzword, referring to practices that are sensitive to the needs of—or specifically address the symptoms of—trauma survivors. The foundational intentions of a trauma-informed yoga practice are to help you find a sense of grounding and support in your body, to connect to sensations in a safe way, and to use the practice to help you trust your body’s signals again. This way, you can learn to self-regulate and find a sense of physical, emotional, and psychological safety, as well as presence and balance.

Trauma-informed methodology is less about specific poses or sequences and more about the focus of each pose and how it is inhabited. Ultimately, the practice’s cuing, pace, and sequencing are meant to help create a sense of support so that practitioners can feel sensations and emotions without being overwhelmed. I often say that it’s about learning to tolerate discomfort so that you can move through it rather than run away from it; unresolved trauma can leave you in a constant state of disconnection. Yoga can help free you from the grip of the past so that you can be truly present in an authentic and embodied way.

Traumatic events (car accidents, abuse, natural disasters, violence, death) can overwhelm your capacity to cope and respond. So can high levels of stress. Unresolved trauma affects overall mood regulation and physical health and can leave you feeling disconnected from your body. It can manifest as anxiety, depression, digestive issues, headaches, back pain, or autoimmune illnesses. Trauma can leave you feeling dissociated,



where you don’t feel much at all, or highly activated, where you feel intense emotional or physical responses to certain stimuli. The effects vary from person to person, and there isn’t one type of yoga practice that works for everyone. That said, certain basic yoga tools can be helpful for almost anyone struggling with unresolved trauma or high stress.

My training in clinical psychology and Somatic Experiencing (SE)—a body-based psychotherapy that helps people release traumatic stress energy from the body in order to restore it back to its natural, regulated state—provides a framework that can be applied to most styles of yoga in order to make them trauma-informed.

TRAUMA-INFORMED METHODOLOGY: FEELING GROUNDED, CENTERED & PRESENT IN YOUR BODY

Focus on the following in each pose: Feel the parts of your body that make contact with the ground, engage your core muscles to support your lower back (avoid gripping or trying to flatten your stomach), and breathe. When we breathe deeply, it can create a relaxation response in the nervous system. You want to feel that your breath is available to you rather than forced. Sometimes we don't have access to a deep breath, and trying to force it isn't helpful; in those cases, focus on grounding or centering.

Pay attention to how each pose feels during and afterward, and not just in your muscles and joints; notice if you feel calm, anxious, tired, or alert. You want to feel regulated, even in a vigorous pose. If a pose makes you feel anxious or overwhelmed, skip it or back off. Try the following sequence in any order that works for you. It doesn't matter if you practice it leading with your right or left side; just be consistent. Eyes can be open or closed, whichever allows you to feel more present. This can change from moment to moment.



1. TADASANA

Mountain Pose

3-5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / *Ground down through your legs and feet. Feel the lengthening upward that can come from grounding. Look for this sense of rooting to rise in all the poses.*



2. SUKHASANA

Easy Pose

5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / *Use any props that help you to feel supported. Keep a long spine. Notice your breath as it is.*



3. EASY POSE, VARIATION

2-3 rounds

CUE / *Cross your arms, then use your hands to squeeze your arms up and down from your wrists to your shoulders. This action can create an even sense of grounding and containment. Simply notice your breath.*



4. EASY POSE, VARIATION

3-5 breaths, or as long as feels good

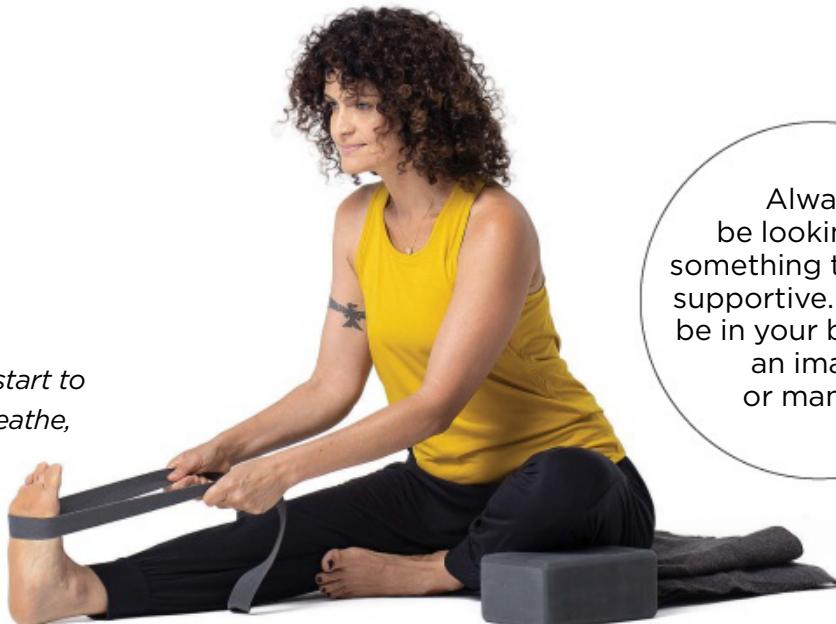
CUE / *Root down through your sitting bones, and rise up from that grounded position. Don't force anything. Repeat on the other side.*

5. JANU SIRSASANA

Head-of-the-Knee Pose

3–5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Lengthen your spine, and fold forward until you start to feel a stretch in the back of your extended leg. Then breathe, and stay grounded while you observe the sensations in your body. Repeat on the other side.

**6. REST POSE**

3–5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Lie on your back, then bend your knees, placing your hands on your torso (or wherever is comfortable). Feel into all the parts of your body that are touching the mat. Let the ground support you from below.

**7. SUPTA MATSYENDRASANA**

Supine Spinal Twist

3–5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Stack your knees, then drop them to one side. Bend the arm that's farthest from your knees, looking in whichever direction feels best. Repeat on the other side.

**8. ANKLE-TO-KNEE POSE**

5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Move into this pose slowly. Once you feel a stretch in your hips, pause. Try to feel your sensations without judgment. Repeat with legs switched.

9. BALASANA, VARIATION

Child's Pose, variation

Stay here as long as you like

CUE / Your head can be lifted or on the mat (notice which feels better).



10. MOUNTAIN POSE

3-5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Notice the impact of your practice so far. Does anything feel better?

11. MOUNTAIN POSE, VARIATION

3-5 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Reach your arms up and out as wide and high as you'd like—you determine your range of motion. Try inhaling as you expand and exhaling as your arms come back in.

Find a level of intensity that allows you to breathe comfortably.



12. HIGH LUNGE

3-4 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Make sure you feel supported and grounded. Engage your core (centering muscles), and lengthen your spine. Repeat on the other side.



13. UTKATASANA

Chair Pose

Up to 8 breaths

CUE / Make sure your neck feels spacious and you're not straining it. Release the pose if it gets too intense.



14. PLANK POSE

2-4 breaths

CUE / With knees up or down, push the floor away from you, feeling your centering muscles engage.



15. BHUJANGASANA

Cobra Pose

3 breaths

CUE / Inhale as you lift your head, shoulders, and chest. Exhale as you lower them back down.



16. TABLETOP

2-3 breaths

CUE / Feel your hands on the floor, and keep your centering muscles slightly engaged.

17. ANJANEYASANA

Low Lunge

3 breaths

CUE / Move only to where you feel a stretch in either thigh or both. Make sure you feel supported in your lower body and abdominals. Repeat on the other side.



18. PLANK POSE

2-5 breaths—longer if you love this pose

CUE / Repeat this pose if you found it centering.



Notice your habits on the mat; often they will be reflected in other areas of your life.



19. ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

Downward-Facing Dog Pose

3-4 breaths, or as long as feels good

CUE / Keep your knees soft with your thighs engaged and heels descending toward the floor. Press into your hands, and try to shift your weight back toward your legs so that your spine is elongated. Focus on grounding through your arms and legs while you continue lengthening your spine.



21. MOUNTAIN POSE, VARIATION

1-2 minutes

CUE / Shake it out. Let it go! Imagine shaking off your stress.

20. VIRABHADRASANA II

Warrior Pose II

3-5 breaths

CUE / Stand with your legs wide. Externally rotate your leading leg, bending the knee up to 90 degrees. Turn your back toes in a little, and keep your back leg strong. Slightly engage your core to see if that gives you more space to lengthen and breathe. Repeat on the other side.



22. MOUNTAIN POSE

Stay as long as you like

CUE / Stand and breathe with one hand on your heart, one on your belly. Do this until you feel settled.

23. FINAL REST POSE

Stay as long as feels comfortable

CUE / You are welcome to take Final Rest Pose on your side or your belly, whichever feels more supportive. Remember, eyes can be open or closed, whichever is more settling. 



HALA KHOURI is a yoga teacher and somatic counselor interested in using the power of embodied practices to heal trauma in individuals and communities while addressing the impact of social injustice. She has been teaching yoga and movement arts for more than 25 years and doing clinical work and training for 15 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and master's degrees in counseling psychology and community psychology. Hala leads trauma-informed yoga trainings nationally and is a cofounder of Off the Mat, Into the World. Learn more at halakhouri.com.



CONTEMPORARY QUILL

Best-selling Ayurvedic author
Sahara Rose Ketabi has made a life
out of modernizing ancient wisdom.

BY LINDSAY TUCKER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEFANIE VINSEL JOHNSON

Sahara Rose Ketabi wants me to stop watching scary movies. We chat about this as we ride the elevator down from her sixth-floor apartment overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Los Angeles' Pacific Palisades. She never watches horror films. Art plants seeds in our minds that can grow and become real, she tells me: "It changes your subconscious and creates possibilities of atrocities that you would never have thought of on your own. Then it's in your subconscious, and it keeps leaking in. So then you're manifesting more of—not that specific thing per se—but scenarios that go along with it."

I tell her how I'm still trying to unsee 2019's *Midsommar*, which is gruesome and harrowing in a way I wish my mind could forget. Ketabi nods, although she has not seen it. Manifesting is one of her super powers, and she's not about to muck that up for a cheap thrill. Ask her about it, and she'll tell you detailed accounts of how she's attracted her life's greatest successes: a foreword written by one of her heroes, Deepak Chopra, in her very first book, back when she was living in her grandparents' apartment after college; her husband, whom she dubbed her "God Man" and says she communicated with through meditation before they ever met; and her latest endeavor, Rose Gold Goddesses, a worldwide collective of spiritual women seeking enlightenment and sisterhood.

I first met Ketabi in August 2018 when I was interviewing yoga and meditation teacher Rosie Acosta for a cover story that ran in December of that year. Ketabi had just received the first advance copies of her contemporary Ayurvedic cookbook *Eat Feel Fresh*, and she'd brought a few over to Acosta's Laurel Canyon home to promote its October release on Acosta's wellness podcast, *Radically Loved*. I honestly hadn't heard of Ketabi, but I should have. By then, her own podcast, *Highest Self*, had hit No. 1 in the spirituality category, and *The Idiot's Guide to Ayurveda* was already a bestseller in the Ayurveda space—thanks in part to the foreword and cover quote she managed to score from Chopra.

How did that happen? In May 2017, Ketabi spontaneously decided to attend a yoga and science conference while she was visiting New York City. She was bored, sitting in the very back of a jam-packed auditorium, plotting her escape. "I'm thinking, *Right now, the only thing that could keep me here is if Deepak Chopra walks on stage*,"

she tells me, leaning back into the corner of her sectional as we eat sashimi in her living room. "And then they're like, 'OK, time for a lunch break. Now, a word from our sponsor, Deepak Chopra.'" In that moment, the alternative medicine megastar walked on stage, waved "Hello, everyone," and casually walked off, signaling a break in the event.

Ketabi was a precocious child, growing up in the Newton suburb of Boston with parents who had both immigrated from Iran—her father to attend MIT, her mother to continue her own education after the 1979 Islamic Revolution resulted in the shuttering of universities. Ketabi recalls an elementary school assignment where she was asked to dress up as her favorite celebrity for a presentation. "She dressed up as Gandhi," her brother, Amir, recalls from Boston, where he lives. "Literally, white robe." Their father had showed them the 1983 Academy Award-winning film *Gandhi* as children. "We talked about violence and peace and meditation and the significance of it all," says Amir. "It had an impact on both of us, but she really took it a step further." As a preteen, Ketabi threw herself into learning about spiritual leaders and changemakers such as Mother Teresa and Ida B. Wells, using books as a roadmap for what her own path could look like. Eventually she picked up a book by Chopra. "He's always been a major figure in my life," she says. "My parents and I would get into fights, and I'd be like, 'One day I'm going to be like Deepak Chopra!'"

So there he was, at the foot of the stage, a thousand people between the two of them—an amorphous mob trying to exit the auditorium like cattle—and Ketabi started bum-rushing the stage. When she reached Chopra, he was mid-conversation. Eventually he turned to her.

Ketabi introduced herself and asked Chopra if she could send him a PDF of her forthcoming book; he agreed and gave her his email address.

"So I'm like, *This is the pinnacle of my whole life*," Ketabi says excitedly. "I have Deepak Chopra's email; now what am I going to do with it?" She meditated for eight hours that day, imagining Chopra writing an endorsement for the book. "I'm thinking, *This is exactly what I need to get this book out into more people's hands. If he writes a quote, more people will read it, and it will benefit more lives*."

Chopra did read her manuscript, and as we now know, he wrote the foreword to *The Idiot's Guide to Ayurveda* (and later, *Eat Feel Fresh*). He also invited Ketabi to be a faculty member on his wellness app Jiyo, which led to the two of them hosting a 31-day Ayurveda transformation challenge together and to Ketabi's online Intro to Ayurveda course. Today they're collaborating on an Ayurvedic certification program through Chopra Global. "It's been a joy to watch Sahara grow and expand in the past few years," Chopra told me in an email. "She is a true example of embodying her own dharma."

Ketabi says what's fueled her entire life is living in alignment with her dharma, which is the theme of her next book, *Discover Your Dharma*, coming next year. Early on, she decided that her purpose "in this lifetime" was to be of service to humanity. Because of this, she started volunteering with at-risk youth in Boston at 13 (after she'd started practicing yoga a year earlier). When she was 15, through a global justice program at her high school, she went to Costa Rica to work in a prison and care for orphans. That same year, she started her school's chapter of Amnesty International. "I was very into reading about Howard Zinn and counterculture and how we can create change," she says. "I was organizing protests all the time and bringing in speakers to talk about the Iraq war, genocide in the Congo, and forced rendition." At 16, she helped build a preschool in Nicaragua—at 17, a community center in Thailand.

"She marches to her own beat," says Amir. "As a 13-, 14-year-old girl, she was very aware of her privilege. Being first-generation Iranian, we were exposed to a lot of the truths of the world at an earlier age than most—we were having Israel-Palestine discussions in middle school. And Sahara was just adamant that she needed to go out there and try to make a difference and learn about the world."



“THE
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CLEARLY”



Ketabi attended George Washington University in 2009 to study international affairs and development, intent on becoming an international human rights lawyer. But as she dove in beyond her coursework, interning at NGOs around DC, she grew depressed, depleted, out of touch with her dharma. Soliciting money via an endless revolving door of fundraisers didn't feel in line with her greater purpose. "I wanted to help people," she says. "In DC, everything is so political. I could see I was just losing myself in the politics and I wasn't using my creativity."

To make matters worse, Ketabi's physical health was failing. She transferred to Boston University to be closer to her family and started a blog (the first iteration of *Eat Feel Fresh*) to share some of the recipes and positive psychology she was studying in her free time to try and combat undiagnosed digestive issues. It was through writing and sharing her journey directly with readers that she tapped back into her higher calling. Armed with a newfound hope, she enrolled to become a certified health coach through the Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

At 21 years old, Ketabi was 87 pounds with hypothalamic amenorrhea when, through her coursework, she discovered Ayurveda—the ancient system of medicine based on the idea that health is achieved through balancing bodily systems using diet, herbal treatments, and yogic breathwork. "All my health problems—but also my personality—were explained," Ketabi says. Suddenly her body started to heal. "The first thing I noticed was that I could sleep at night," she says. "The constant chattering in my mind diminished, and I could think more clearly. I felt more grounded and peaceful than ever before. And I could finally digest food without curling up on the couch in pain."

Unsatisfied with the limited resources available to study Ayurveda in the US, Ketabi went to India to attend Ayurveda school outside of Delhi. As a Persian American who is 50 percent Indian, she had always felt a deep connection with India and its culture. For two years, she immersed herself in Ayurvedic philosophy and began thinking about how to update it for contemporaries: For instance, traditional Ayurveda doesn't allow for the consumption of raw foods—which makes sense when you consider the contaminated soil and lack of refrigeration in Ancient India, she says. However, modern nutrition encourages us to eat fresh raw fruits and vegetables, so she's reformed certain recipes accordingly.

It was while studying Ayurveda in India that Ketabi began leading goddess retreats (for more on this, see "Find Your Inner Goddess," page 66). She had grown up surrounded by imagery of Persian and Indian deities, but it was her yoga practice and her travels to India, she says, that brought her deeper into her study of Hindu and Vedic goddesses. As I write this, Ketabi is preparing for the LA launch party celebrating Rose Gold Goddesses, her online platform for spiritual women to connect, converse, plan meetups, and explore the goddess archetypes from cultures around the world.



Members have access to a Monthly Goddess Guide full of yoga practices, rituals, meditations, music, mantras, *mudras*, and journaling prompts—all related to each month's chosen goddess. She texts me a little video of herself “getting glammed up” for the event, her face painted in the likeness of the Hindu goddess Kali, destroyer of evil forces.

When I asked her about criticisms regarding cultural appropriation, she was cool and confident and largely unfazed. “Am I allowed to talk about goddesses if I didn’t grow up in a polytheistic religion?” she asks me rhetorically. “Goddesses exist and have always existed in every religion and every culture—it’s a universal archetype that we can all step into.” We have just finished lunch and are getting into it in her living room like old friends might. “We’re human beings,” she says. “But some people are so focused on our differences instead of our similarities.”

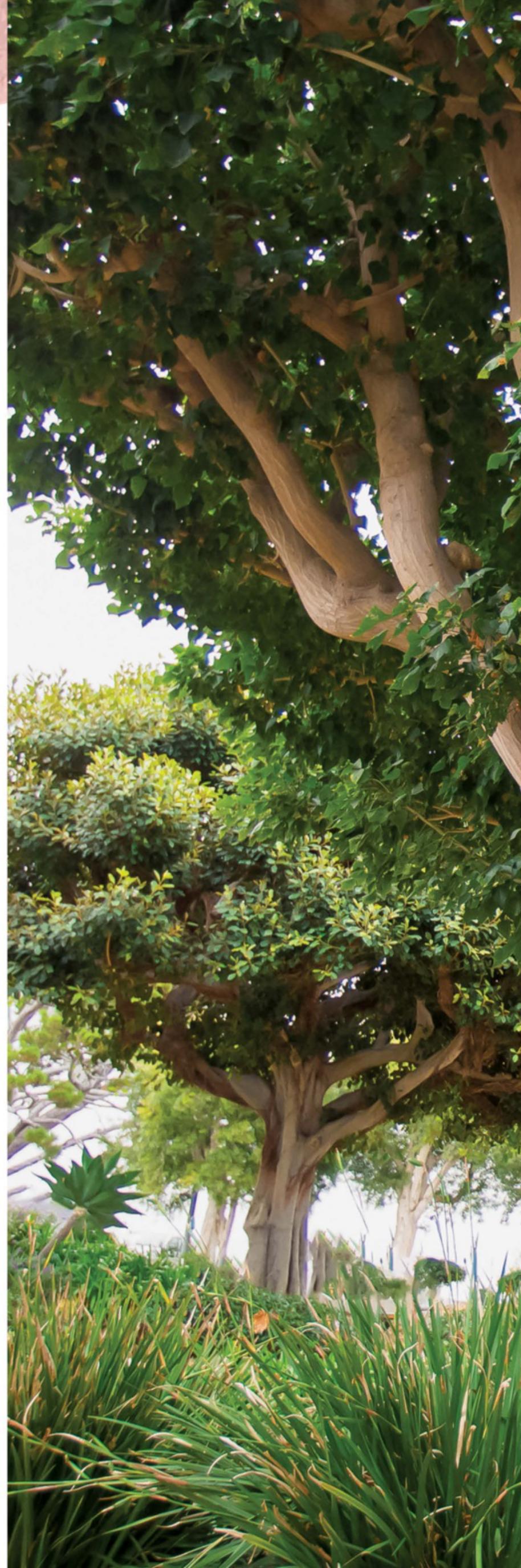
I visit Ketabi again at home on a cloudless Friday in September when Rose Gold Goddesses has been live for almost a month. The goddess she has chosen to celebrate this month is Saraswati, goddess of knowledge, music, art, and nature. Ketabi has organized a little gathering of friends at her home for a goddess ceremony, a ritual to honor the divine feminine, creativity, and, of course, Saraswati.

We assemble in her living room, sunshine pouring in from all angles, and Ketabi opens by blessing each of us with a single rose: The flower signifies “beauty, elegance, strength, and wisdom,” she says. But also, “Roses are not to be trifled with. You can’t just get a rose and make it your own. She has thorns, she’ll fight back.” This represents all of us in the circle right now, she tells us, post #MeToo, in Trump’s America. “As women, we want to share our beauty and the full spectrum of who we are, but there’s this dark spot in society that makes us feel like we’re not safe.” And yet we are all here, supporting women in the community and thriving in our personal and professional lives. And why is that? She asks, then answers: “It’s because we’re the rose.”



LEARN MORE

For more information on goddess archetypes, take Sahara’s quiz on the next page—and check out her oracle deck and guidebook, *A Yogic Path*.





FIND YOUR INNER GODDESS.

This 90-second quiz by Rose Gold Goddesses founder **Sahara Rose Ketabi** will help you lean into your own goddess energy.

I led my first goddess retreat in Goa, India at 23. Each day, we embodied a new goddess archetype through yoga, meditation, dance, and Ayurveda. For example, on the Durga day, we practiced a strengthening yoga flow and dance to connect to our powerful inner Durga energy. On Saraswati day, we connected to our inner creativity through drawing. On Lakshmi day, we tapped into our inherent abundance through beautiful feminine movements and talks about our relationships with money. On Radha day, we practiced heart-opening yoga and danced with balloons, tending to our hearts. On Kali day, we had a wild, yoga-and-dance practice and a shamanic shaking circle.

I was drawn to the goddess archetypes because I saw myself in each of them (see page 68 to learn more about the characteristics of each). They helped me recognize that a woman is a multifaceted being—she need not be simply one way or one thing. She can be strong and primal, sensual and graceful. The goddesses helped me to see where I was blocked in my own life and how I had shied away from my own inner Durga and Kali energies because I was taught to be a "good" daughter. Truly diving into those two archetypes brought me to my power so I could express the creative Saraswati that I was underneath it all. Today, I love Durga and Kali and feel deeply connected to both of their energies as a trailblazer who is here to bridge the new paradigm and break through collective social norms.

Take this quiz to better understand which deity your energy most relates to right now—so you can begin your journey honoring your inner goddess through mantras, *mudras*, and meditations!

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME -

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

AVXLIVE.ICIU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

1. My greatest superpower is:

- A. My creativity
- B. My courage
- C. My ability to transform
- D. My business savvy
- E. My love and devotion
- F. My sensuality

2. If I were a coach, I'd coach people on:

- A. Tapping into intuition and finding their unique expression
- B. Empowering themselves to become leaders
- C. How to overcome trauma
- D. How to manifest abundance
- E. How to have healthy, lasting relationships
- F. How to reconnect with their sensuality

3. People call upon me to:

- A. Come up with creative ideas
- B. Motivate them to go after what they want
- C. Help them through a tough time
- D. Get business tips
- E. Guide them through relationship issues
- F. Help spice up their sex life

4. When others have been unkind, they've used these words to insult me:

- A. A nerd/loner/weirdo
- B. Aggressive/intense
- C. Too much/too loud/crazy
- D. Materialistic/money-hungry
- E. Overly emotional/obsessive/insecure
- F. Easy/too sexual

5. My favorite type of yoga is:

- A. Creative, flowing vinyasa with a lot of room to play
- B. Power/hot yoga with strength-building poses
- C. My own wild yoga flow, preferably outdoors
- D. Yin/restorative
- E. Bhakti
- F. Tantra

6. My biggest problem is:

- A. Getting lost in my creative work
- B. Getting too wound up over things
- C. My life constantly being flipped upside down
- D. Not having enough time for hobbies because I'm busy making money
- E. Giving too much to my partner and not receiving equal energy in return
- F. Finding/staying in a committed relationship in which my sexuality is understood

7. My ideal career is:

- A. Writer/spiritual teacher/musician/artist—anything creative
- B. Entrepreneur/leader/CEO/lawyer—anything where I'm makin' moves
- C. Dancer/artist/nomad—anything that lets me be free
- D. Business coach/investor—anything that generates wealth
- E. Relationship coach/romantic novel author—all about the love
- F. Sexuality/tantra coach—all about sensuality

8. My highest priority is:

- A. Self-expression, truth, knowledge, spiritual practice
- B. Confidence, standing up for what is right, empowering myself and others
- C. Absolute freedom and dropping all illusions so I can be my most wild, complete self
- D. Abundance, financial freedom, living a life of comfort and luxury
- E. My partner and family
- F. Being sexually free and experiencing the divine through my body

9. I'm most likely to:

- A. Disappear for months while working on a creative project
- B. Get into a fight with someone about something unjust
- C. Run around naked in nature
- D. Buy a house in my 20s
- E. Fall madly in love with someone and drop off the face of the planet
- F. Bring up orgasms in a conversation

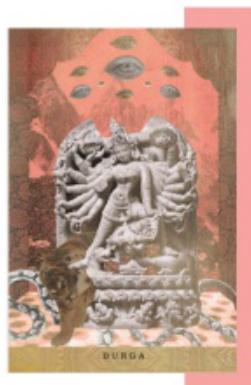
10. The chakra I'm most connected to is:

- A. Third eye and throat—intuition and expression
- B. Solar plexus—inner power and embodiment
- C. Crown and root—creation and destruction
- D. Sacral and solar plexus—abundance and courage
- E. Heart and sacral—love and sensuality
- F. Sacral and root—sensuality and sexuality

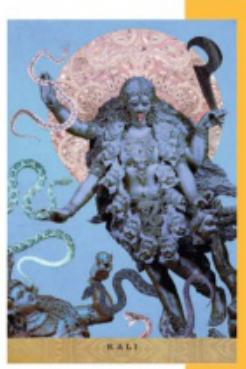
WHAT'S YOUR GODDESS ENERGY?



MOSTLY As: You are Saraswati, the goddess of creativity, wisdom, arts, music, and literature. You incarnated on this planet to embody your unique creative expression. You are constantly tapped into an endless stream of creative wisdom that channels through you. All you have to do is get out of your own way and allow it to come through. Never doubt your ability to channel from Source or bring your ideas to fruition—keep calling upon Saraswati to guide you.



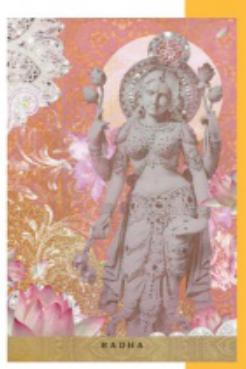
MOSTLY Bs: You are Durga, the goddess of strength, courage, and protection. You were born with an incredible strength to serve others through your leadership, determination, and grit. Your willpower allows you to overcome any challenges that come your way. The most important thing for you is to choose your battles wisely and preserve your energy for what really matters. Call upon Durga to guide you.



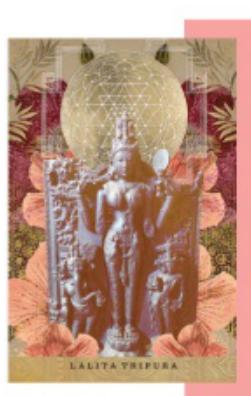
MOSTLY Cs: You are Kali, the goddess of transformation and fierce boldness. You came to this planet to break free from societal constraints and drop all illusions to embody and actualize truth. You may come across as intense to others, and the universe consistently sends you major lessons, but you keep moving through them with your fierce feminine energy. Any time you feel like the world around you is collapsing, call upon Kali to guide you.



MOSTLY DS: You are Lakshmi, goddess of abundance, prosperity, and good fortune. You know you are worthy of living a life of comfort, luxury, and freedom, and that is why you work so hard to generate an income that allows you to do so. You know money is not a dirty word—it's a necessary tool for actualizing your fullest potential on this planet. You are extremely generous to others and use your wealth as a tool for good. However, sometimes you don't make time for what you love because you're constantly working. Call upon Lakshmi to bring abundance through, so you can sit in ease and grace.

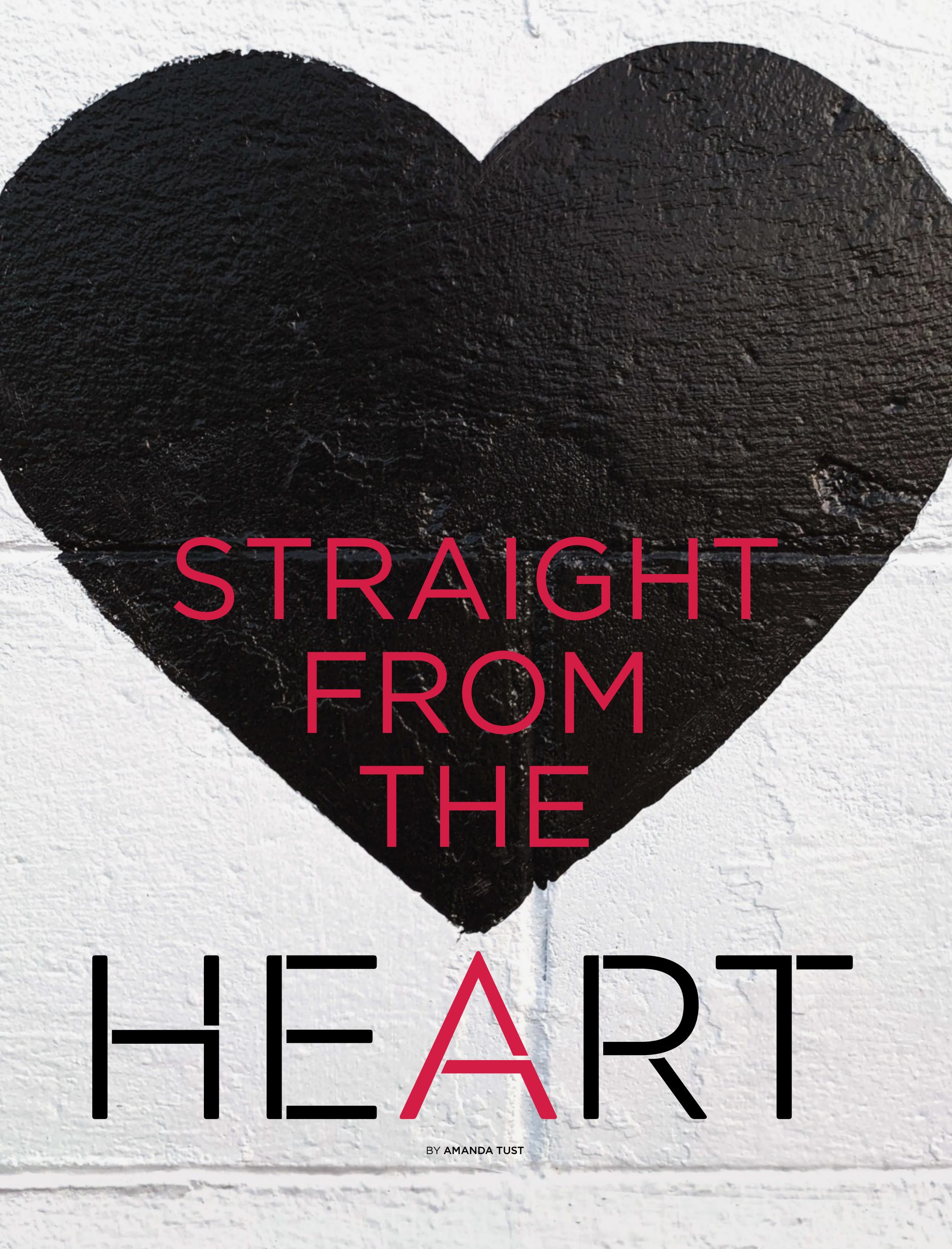


MOSTLY Es: You are Radha, goddess of devoted love and twin-flame union. You came to this planet longing for your other half and spent the first part of your life searching for them. Sometimes your devotion gets taken for granted and you give more than you receive. It's important for you to continue to cultivate your independence to make sure that you don't lose yourself in love. Whenever relationship issues arise, call upon Radha to guide you.



MOSTLY Fs: You are Lalita Tripura Sundari, the goddess of tantra and sacred sensuality. You came to this planet with the deep, profound knowledge that your body is a temple and that your sexuality is your tool to achieve absolute unity with cosmic energy. People may call you sex obsessed, but you don't see sexuality as a taboo. You want to talk about orgasms, g-spots...all things sexual. Sex is so much more than a physical practice to you—it's your spiritual one as well. 🌸





STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

BY AMANDA TUST

The field of compassion science has surged in the past decade. Today, researchers are studying a myriad of powerful ways compassion practices can improve health and strengthen relationships. Here, we look at the latest findings so you can take a glimpse into what happens in your body and mind when you treat yourself and others with more care.

A

s a child, James Doty believed the world wasn't a very kind place. He spent the summer before eighth grade riding his orange Schwinn Sting-Ray bicycle around his hometown of Lancaster, California. He'd saved his money from mowing lawns to buy the freedom to fiercely pedal away from the turbulent apartment he shared with his parents and brother.

His dad was struggling with alcohol addiction and frequently took off for days to weeks at a time, sometimes leaving the family without enough money for food. His mom was chronically depressed and rarely left her bed. When his dad was home, his parents argued constantly, leaving his mom in tears. Doty's older brother was scrawny and bullied, which meant Doty got into a lot of fights in an effort to defend him. "I felt a lot of anger, despair, and shame," Doty says. "I never knew what was going to happen next. Worse, I felt like somehow I deserved the situation I was in."

Then that summer, Doty met a woman who changed everything. She worked at a magic shop that he'd wandered into without any money. The woman behind the counter, Ruth, was so kind and warm that when she started asking Doty questions about his life, he answered truthfully. "This was rare for me, since

I carried so much shame and fear of judgment," he says.

Ruth told Doty that she could teach him a type of magic different from what the store sold—something that could change his life—if he'd come back to visit. So, he started riding to the shop every day. Ruth brought him lunch, and they'd sit in the shop's office on metal chairs casually eating and talking. Doty opened up to her about how he perpetually worried about his mom and brother, and was angry with his father. In response, Ruth taught him how to meditate. She asked him to pay attention to what he was feeling in his body when he felt worried or angry or sad. She taught him a head-to-toe body-scanning exercise to help him deeply relax. She introduced him to breathwork, mantra, and self-affirmations such as: *I am worthy, I am loved, I love myself, and I love others*. And she taught him how to set intentions for the future.

Most importantly, says Doty, Ruth taught him how to "open his heart" by concentrating on offering unconditional love to people in his life and to himself.

Doty, now 64, says the magic Ruth taught him was better than any card trick he could've cracked into his imaginary piggy bank to buy. "Ruth taught me true compassion," he says, "and it not only changed how I interacted with the world, but also how the world interacted with me."

“SELF-COMPASSION IS A POWERFUL BUILT-IN COPING SYSTEM WE ALL HAVE...”

It's poetic to think about the special kind of magic Ruth taught Doty and how it sparked a new trajectory for the sad, scared, anxious little boy who walked into the shop that summer. Yet Doty, now a professor of neurosurgery and founder and director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, says there's actual science behind the lessons Ruth imparted on him as a kid.

In fact, there's an emerging field of research that looks at how compassion and compassion training—often via meditation or self-affirmation practices—can improve health and strengthen social bonds. By using heart monitors, brain scans, blood tests, and psychological surveys, scientists are getting a window into what really happens in the human body and mind when we acknowledge suffering (our own or someone else's) and approach it in a caring and loving way. Recent studies show that when people are compassionate, especially toward themselves, their heart-rate variability—the fluctuations in the timing between heartbeats—increases, which is linked to an improved ability to self-soothe when you're stressed.

Consider this: A 2015 study published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* found that veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan who scored higher on a self-compassion scale were less likely to develop PTSD or commit suicide. Another study, published in 2016 by the American Diabetes Association, found that an eight-week self-compassion training for people with diabetes helped them stabilize their glucose levels. Countless other research has linked self-compassion to lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress—and higher rates of happiness and improved immune function.

Think of self-compassion as a powerful, built-in coping mechanism we all have access to, says Kristin Neff, PhD, associate professor in the department of educational psychology at the University of Texas at Austin and co-author of *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*. Neff has been studying the topic for more than a decade and developed the Self-Compassion

Scale—a survey of questions that identifies whether someone rates high or low for self-compassion—which is commonly used in clinical studies. “There is a ton of research showing that whether you're in combat or raising a special-needs child, dealing with cancer or going through a divorce, self-compassion gives you the strength to get through it,” she says. That's because it has an effect on your physiology, says Doty: “When you practice compassion, such as through meditation, you stimulate your vagus nerve—which you can think of like a highway that sends messages to and from your brainstem and major organs, especially your heart.”

The vagus nerve activates two key systems in the body that impact how you feel: the parasympathetic nervous system (a.k.a. what's activated when you're in rest-and-digest mode) and the sympathetic nervous system (your fight-flight-freeze mechanism). Compassion practices help you more readily turn on your parasympathetic nervous system. You become more calm and relaxed, and your brain functions at its best. Your blood pressure and heart rate go down, and your immune system gets more robust. On the flip side, when the sympathetic nervous system is engaged, blood pressure and heart rate increase. Your brain isn't as sharp as usual, and stress hormones (like cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine) as well as inflammatory proteins (which are associated with the onset of disease) are released into the bloodstream.

We evolved to toggle quickly between both systems, and high heart-rate variability is a sign that your parasympathetic nervous system is engaged, says Doty, who co-authored a 2017 paper published in *Frontiers of Public Health* recommending that heart-rate variability be used as a primary measure in studies and trainings in the field of compassion science. The good news, Doty says, is that when that toggling isn't happening as it should, and you find yourself in fight-or-flight mode more often than not, compassion is one of the best ways to find your way back to health.





“SELF-COMPASSION IS THE
EARTH INTO WHICH THE SEEDS
OF CHANGE CAN BE PLANTED.”

FROM THE LAB TO REAL LIFE

While it's great to know what's happening physiologically when we show others and ourselves compassion (or don't), it's just as important to translate that learning into everyday life, says Neff. Take, for example, someone who is hard on herself. Chronic self-criticism engages the sympathetic nervous system, which isn't up for the task of near-constant work.

"The sympathetic nervous system was designed to deal with physical threats, but now most of our threats are created in our minds," says Neff. "It's things like, 'I'm not good enough.'" But by doing the opposite—by accepting and comforting ourselves, and tapping into the power of self-compassion—we can hold our pain and our brokenness in a kind and loving way, which de-activates the sympathetic nervous system and helps us heal.

Of course, coaching your inner voice to talk to yourself like you would to your best friend can be a tall task. It's common for people to feel compassion for others yet lack the ability to show kindness to themselves, says Neff. However, here's some motivation to change that: Improving self-compassion primes you to be more compassionate toward others. That's because when you engage your parasympathetic nervous system (the one that helps you feel calm, relaxed, and safe) more often and effectively, you'll be better able to show up in the world more present and kind.

It's easier to do this than you might think. Doty and Neff both say the proof of this is in our hard-wired capacity to care and connect. "Mammals are born very immature," says Neff. "It takes decades for parts of our brains to fully develop, so there had to be a biological system in place to help infants and children feel safe." This is why we can be easily comforted by a kind, gentle tone of voice and can intuit people's emotional states by reading their body language. It's also why we sometimes mirror the behavior of others. "We're attuned to respond to emotional states through facial expressions, intonation of voices, body language, and smells," says Doty, "and we learn from and respond to these on a subconscious level."

We can boost this innate attunement toward compassion and strengthen it within ourselves through practice. Research on how this is happening within the medical community is encouraging for both health-care professionals and their patients. One 2019 review in the journal *BMC Medical Education* found that medical students who underwent compassion training reported they were better able to manage work stress and had more positive interactions with patients. Another study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* found that when hospital patients received just 40 seconds of a compassionate message, it lowered their anxiety. And

according to a 2010 study in *Health Services Research* journal, patients who received compassionate care after a heart attack were at lower risk of dying within a year.

Academics studying this field are putting the results of research like this to work in their classrooms, too. Take Scott Plous, a professor of psychology at Wesleyan University, who ends his social psychology courses with what he calls "A Day of Compassion." Plous challenges his students to focus on being compassionate for an entire day, then write about their experiences. Students commonly report that the exercise helps them to mend rifts with family members or leads them to reach out to neighbors.

Regardless of how compassionate you tend to be, your yoga practice is likely to help bolster it. "One of the things that happens with yoga is we focus on the movement of our bodies or the movement of our breath, and we get out of our heads," says Neff. "For a moment, we leave behind the storyline of our lives and what's wrong with us. We use our bodies with intention and care and can actually be present with ourselves in a tender way. That's self-compassion."

After all, when you're hypercritical of yourself, it's easier to judge others. "If I'm not taking care of myself, then my relationships with others are a possible resentment waiting to happen," says Aruni Nan Futuronsky, a life coach and faculty member at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. "Self-compassion is the earth into which the seeds of change can be planted. Trying to change through force, will, and ego only work to a point. Through compassion, something greater than ourselves comes forth. We have a partner in life—call it grace, call it higher power, call it the wisdom of the body. We're not alone. And change becomes sustainable."

When Ruth asked Doty in 1968 what he wanted out of life, one of the first things he said was to be a doctor. She helped him to believe that it was possible for him to attend college and medical school. Today, he says the practices he learned from her are what keeps his breathing slow, his hands steady, and his body relaxed when he's performing brain surgery. And these same practices are now embedded in the compassion trainings Doty teaches.

"Every day, each one of us has the capacity to change another person's life through compassion," Doty says. "When I was a young boy, Ruth told me, 'Your heart is a compass, and it's your greatest gift. If you are ever lost, just open it up, and it will steer you in the right direction.'" In teaching and studying compassion, Doty is doing his best to do just that—and to show others the magic, too.

PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

Experts share their favorite, research-backed ways to cultivate more self-love.

TREAT YOURSELF LIKE A FRIEND

When you're having a tough day or struggling with something, imagine a friend or close family member coming to you with the exact problem you're dealing with. Ask yourself what you'd say to them. What tone of voice would you use? What would your body posture look like? Now apply your words, tone, and body language to yourself. "It will feel strange at first to say or think to yourself, 'It's OK; I'm here for you,' but it starts to become habitual," says Neff. "You stop constantly criticizing yourself and putting yourself down."



WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR ANXIETY

When suffering starts to overwhelm you, Kripalu's Futuronsky recommends that you create a dialogue with your overwhelm. For example, you might write something like, "Dear Aruni, I am your overwhelm. Let me tell you, this is way too much. I can't do this. I'm terrified. What the hell is going to happen?" Then, write back. Something like, "Dear Overwhelm, Yep, I hear you. This is hard, and we're going to just do one day at a time." Research shows that letter writing can be particularly powerful. One study had participants write a self-compassionate letter to themselves every day for a week. The participants reported decreased depression levels for three months and increased happiness for six months.

COMFORT YOURSELF

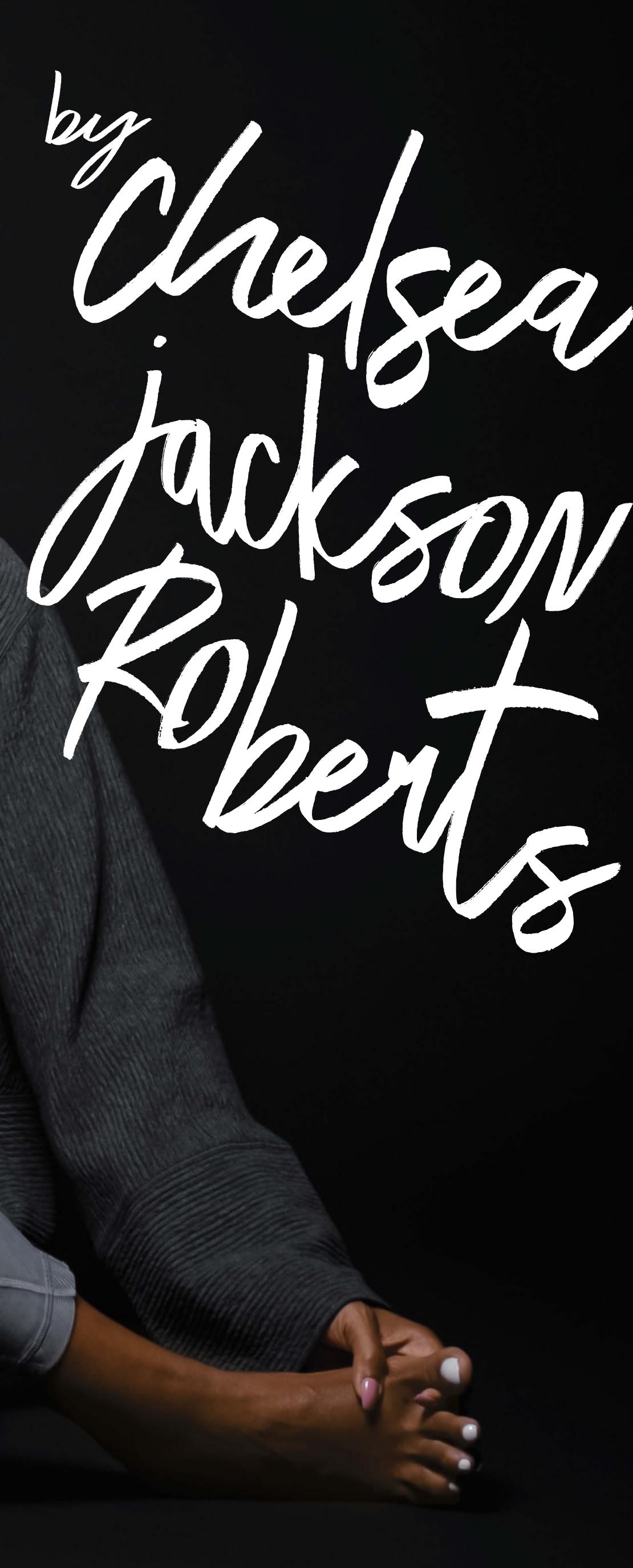
Self-touch can release oxytocin and help us feel safe. Neff recommends experimenting with different techniques to see what feels most comforting: Try gently placing both hands over your heart, giving yourself a hug, cradling your face in your hands, or clasping your hands together so you're holding your own hand. 



THE
MAGNETIC
COMPASS



PHOTOS: TABIA S. LISENBEE-PARKER



by
Chelsea
Jackson
Robert

FIND PEACE THROUGH
SELF-ACCEPTANCE.
THIS MINDFUL
VINYASA PRACTICE,
INSPIRED BY DR.
MARTIN LUTHER KING
JR., WILL HELP YOU
EMBODY AHIMSA
(NONVIOLENCE) AND
LOVE—FOR YOURSELF
AND OTHERS.

I was 16 years into my practice when I found myself crying profusely in Savasana (Corpse Pose). Lying in this vulnerable posture during my beloved teacher Tracee Stanley's *yoga nidra* immersion, I realized I had been treating myself as an enemy. Something happened during this specific Corpse Pose—one of hundreds I'd practiced by this point—that offered a glimpse of surrender, peace, and acceptance. Enveloped in stillness and silence, I noticed that for once, I was not trying to control, critique, or compare myself, and I became acutely aware that I had been missing self-love and compassion: that I did not know how to love myself fully. It was the depth and nurturing that I encountered through *yoga nidra* that gave me the strength to face the truth and acknowledge the parts of myself that I had been denying, such as my needs for rest and to be taken care of and held.

As I lay there, Tracee's words moved into every fiber of my body: "We cannot teach what we do not practice," she said. This statement prompted me to ask myself hard questions: *How can I teach my yoga students how to practice compassion with their bodies if I am not accepting all of the parts that make up mine? How can I expect my yoga students to trust me if I dismiss, and lack trust for, the parts of myself that want to be seen?*

Because I truly felt held by the yoga and the guidance of my teacher, I felt liberated from self-judgment around these questions. Normally, I would have wiped away my tears and the associated emotions before anyone noticed.

I was breaking free from concern for how anyone would see me or interpret this release. With my breath, I let go of the self-talk that would have said I was taking up too much space with my sobbing.

I am convinced that I showed up differently for myself during this particular Savasana simply because it was time to accept my suffering and open up to a practice of radical compassion for myself. Now, each time I step onto my mat, my body remembers that moment of not being controlled, critiqued, or compared. It remembers that the road to freedom from suffering can exist only when compassion is present.

Self-Love in Action

I remember being a little girl, learning about the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and hearing the word “compassion” for the first time. To me, it always seemed like something that could only be shown to someone else. After all, Dr. King spoke specifically about it in regard to social injustice and inequality: He talked about compassion, or a lack thereof, when describing the social conditions African American people had to experience based on systems of marginalization and oppression. He spoke of it while demanding that the government respond to individuals and communities that were suffering because of inequality, and he wanted everyone to know how marginalization and oppression impact us all, not just those denied their basic human rights. He asked for curiosity and empathy: “Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy’s point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.”

Dr. King advocated—and gave his life—for the eradication of suffering based on something as arbitrary (yet real) as race. He sacrificed his life sharing the teachings that remind us that social change, liberation, and connection can be achieved only through radical compassion and nonviolence.

He taught me that it is violent for me to suppress my experiences with suffering and dismiss the consequences of that. Because when I do, not only am I not honoring the practice of *ahimsa*, which also means nonviolence, I am not practicing yoga. By definition, yoga means to unite, or to join. Whenever I deny myself

the acknowledgement and acceptance of who I am, I am in direct opposition to myself. So when I reflect on that “aha” moment in Savasana, and the profound experience of recognizing that I was treating myself as my own enemy, I can fully come to terms with Dr. King’s words. I made space to get quiet enough to listen to the ways in which I was afraid of my own questions, the experiences this body had encountered that carried suffering, and every urge that came up in me to pretend that part of me didn’t exist. From this place, I am able to confront the points of view and narratives that I regurgitate from society—the ones that tell me I am not worthy of rest, to be held, and to be loved fully.

I have learned, and continue to learn, that the moments that call for copious amounts of compassion—for myself and others—are also the moments I tend to avoid, escape, or try to “make better” through impulsive words and actions. I am still working on sitting with the feelings that accompany an unintentional lack of awareness around my words with someone, especially if I offend or hurt them. It is a challenge. It is so much easier for me to rush and defend my mistakes in order to not feel the depths of my actions or to become overly apologetic in an effort to move beyond the discomfort.

It was during my emotional release in Savasana that I realized I was avoiding compassion in my own yoga practice, too. I was depriving myself of the opportunity to slow down, or practice Savasana, because it meant being still and quiet enough to hear my own suffering crying out for release. Because of this profound moment I experienced, I can see that radical compassion, even if initially uncomfortable, leads to liberation, freedom, and love.

Now, for me, compassion exists in the silence before words or action. It can be found in the moments I choose to stay present and not escape. Compassion allows me to see the points of view of those whom I am not in agreement with in order to learn something about myself and the ways I respond to—and at times lack compassion for—myself. It looks like being still, allowing myself to be held, and allowing the tears to flow. I cried in Savasana because it was the first time I’d been grounded in the reality of who I am and how much I truly owed myself. Each time I step onto my mat, I am recommitting myself to a practice of radical self-compassion so that I can practice that same empathy and love with my students and every single living being I encounter in this lifetime.

CHELSEA JACKSON ROBERTS, PhD, is an internationally celebrated yoga educator and the founder of Yoga, Literature, and Art Camp for teen girls at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. Chelsea is a Lululemon global yoga ambassador who travels the world sharing some of the ways yoga can be used as a tool for social change. As an Off the Mat, Into the World faculty member, Chelsea enjoys writing and speaking about her research and how yoga can be used to understand cultural, social, and racial differences. Chelsea is the cofounder of Red Clay Yoga, a non-profit in Atlanta that provides access to yoga within marginalized communities. Learn more at chelsea loves yoga.com.



"There is meaning in compassion — when it helps us to see the enemy's view, to hear his assessment of ourselves. View we indeed basic of our own and if we are we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition."

the true & value of and nonviolence, helps us the point of his questions, assessment For from his may see the weaknesses condition, mature, brothers who opposition."

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

SEQUENCE FIND SERENITY



Radical self-compassion is essential for the health and wellness of all human beings. Yoga provides a powerful way to practice it with our own bodies before practicing it with others. This flow is ideal for quickly honoring your body with both gentle movement and rest.

1. CHAKRA CLEARING

Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose), and check in with how your body is feeling. Notice what feels clear and what is in need of clearing. Inhale your arms up alongside your ears, and draw your fingertips together with your palms facing the earth. As you begin to exhale, slowly press your palms downward, passing in front of your crown, brow, throat, heart, and belly. Then, when your hands reach your hips, sweep your arms open. *Repeat this cycle 5-7 times.* During each cycle, visualize yourself clearing the path for your breath to flow freely through your body.

2. TADASANA VARIATION

Mountain Pose

Stand with your feet planted firmly on the ground with your arms beside you. Begin sweeping your arms from front to back. Each time you lift your arms vertically, take in an energetic inhalation. As you exhale, sweep your arms behind you, allowing your wrists and fingertips to move past your lower back. Allow your arms to relax and move with the rhythm of your breath. *Continue for at least 7-10 rounds of breath.*

“at the center
of non-violence stands
the principle of **LOVE**”

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



3. TRIDENT AND TEMPLE MUDRAS

From Mountain Pose, ground into the soles of your feet. Allow your body to feel the flow of your breath. Once you are ready, inhale your arms into Trident Mudra with your elbows bent, palms facing forward. Press your shoulder blades into your back as the center of your heart lifts gently. Concentrate on lengthening through your spine and opening your throat. Then, as you exhale, clasp your palms together near the center of your chest and interlace your fingers. Continue exhaling through your nose, and extend your index fingers away from your body in Temple Mudra. Roll your chin toward your throat, rounding your shoulders and pressing your navel toward your spine. Return to Trident during each inhalation. Focus on opening and closing the front of your body between the two postures. *Repeat for 7-10 rounds of breath.*



4. URDHVA HASTASANA

Upward Salute
From Mountain Pose, separate your feet, making sure they are parallel to each other. Press all four corners of each foot into the earth. Pause here for a few breaths. When you are ready, inhale your arms up alongside your ears. Concentrate on grounding your weight into the soles of your feet while elongating your spine and arms. Bring awareness to the front of your body, and avoid pressing your ribs and hips forward. Instead, lift the top of your sternum toward the sky, and draw your shoulder blades softly down your back.

5. UTTANASANA

Standing Forward Bend

Exhale and bow forward. Bend your knees as necessary to support your lower back and hamstrings. Once your fingertips touch the earth (or blocks, if you want to bring the earth closer to you), allow your upper body to lengthen. Walk your hands away from your toes in order to make room for the breath in your belly and rib cage. Relax your face, jaw, and brow.

6. ARDHA UTTANASANA

Half Standing Forward Bend

Inhale into a half lift with your fingertips on the earth or a block—or your hands on your shins. Remain long through your spine by extending through the crown of your head and lengthening your torso. Use your hands as your anchor.

7. STANDING FORWARD BEND

Exhale, returning to a forward fold as you release the breath. This time, try moving deeper into the fold with awareness. Continue to bend your knees as needed, or try lifting your hips even more toward the sky to lengthen your hamstrings. Be sure your hips are not moving beyond your toes. Instead, stack your hip joints above your ankles while pressing into all four corners of the soles of your feet. Continue to use your fingertips as your anchor—on the earth or a block.

8. MOUNTAIN POSE

Inhale and reverse swan-dive—sweeping your arms beside you and opening the center of your heart—as you come back to standing. Bend your knees as necessary as you come up. On the sweep, circle your arms around your body, eventually bringing your palms together into Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal) at the center of your heart as you exhale.

Moving with the flow of your breath, repeat poses 3-7 5-7 times.



“darkness cannot drive out darkness;
only light can do that.
hate cannot drive out hate;
only love can do that.”

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

9. SUPPORTED SPINAL TWIST

Make your way onto your back. Allow your spine to settle into the ground. When you’re ready, inhale, feeling expansion throughout your body. Exhale your knees into your chest, and place a block or pillow between your thighs for support. Extend your arms, creating a T shape, and allow your palms to face up while anchoring the tops of your hands to the earth. Draw your shoulder blades into your back, and notice the connection between your back and the earth. Draw your knees over to the left side of your mat. Try stacking your hips, knees, and ankles. Gently rotate your head, gazing to the right. Soften your face and joints while tracing the flow of your breath from the base of your spine to the top of your head. Once you have completed 5-7 rounds of breath, inhale, and draw your knees back to center. *Repeat on the other side.*



10. SAVASANA

Corpse Pose

Fully extend and relax your arms and legs, and notice how your body feels. Is it in need of support? If you have any lower-back pain, try placing a pillow or bolster below your knees. Allow your palms to face the sky with your toes naturally swaying outward as you release any tension in your hips. If your body is longing for care in a particular area, feel free to place your hands there. If comfortable, close your eyes, and bring awareness to the natural flow of your breath. Try softening your face, brow, eyelids, jaw, and the joints of your body. Notice where tension exists, and also notice where your body feels free or at peace. *Stay in Corpse Pose for at least 3-5 minutes as your body absorbs the breath and the benefits of your practice.*



Join Chelsea for **the Practice**—an exciting new event experience brought to you by Yoga Journal and 1440 Multiversity: January 17-20. Sign up today at yogajournal.com/thepractice.

THE NAMASTE BREAKUP

To the casual observer, maybe you were the perfect couple—the nubby fabric to each other's Velcro, the oat milk to her latte, the peanut butter to his jelly. But on the road called adulthood, lots of things lose their magic. That industrial-strength, grape-flavored sugar-goo we ate on sandwiches in kindergarten? Wouldn't touch it now.

Relationships can be like that.
THAT'S OK. YOU'RE MOVING ON.

Breakups are never easy, no matter who initiates the split. By nature, decoupling injects fear and doubt into so many parts of our lives. It can make us question our very identity: *How could we have been so wrong about something so important?* And because many of the things that seem to matter most in society are at stake—who our friends are, our economic standing, where we live—breaking up muddies our thinking; it can leave us feeling ungrounded, and it can turn our support systems upside down.

Twelve years ago, when my first marriage ended, I suddenly found myself lost in a strange and unfamiliar world. Up to that point, I'd spent most of my adult years as half of a pair, and suddenly I was...alone.

Or so it felt at the time.

During my divorce, people whom I'd assumed would always be there for me vanished. Others fumbled along, offering questionable advice and mixed messages. (My own mother, who has been married to my father for 51 years, still wistfully recalls things that happened at my first wedding while forever stumbling over the name of my current husband of nine years.) Some friends hedged their bets, picked sides, or went silent. *Traitors!* I thought.

Somewhere deep down, though, I had the feeling that I'd come out OK. I'd spent most of my adult life playing roles—mother, wife,

BY RACHEL SLADE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LACI JORDAN





daughter-in-law, student, employee—and in the midst of this breakup-induced gigantic upheaval, I hoped I could reclaim myself.

Indeed, every major life event—even a difficult one—offers us the opportunity to recalibrate and reconnect, says Elizabeth Rowan, a yoga teacher and healer in Atlanta who went through her own divorce several years ago. “I’m a big proponent of diving into the dark, where we can discover what we are pushing away but could learn to hold,” she says.

For healers like Rowan, mindfulness, yoga, and meditation are gifts—a collective wisdom distilled from the experiences of countless others who found their way back to the light. At their essence, these tools teach us that we have the power within ourselves to weather whatever life throws our way.

Isn’t that exactly the narrative that underpins every yoga sesh, from Boston to Boise? That breathing through adversity makes us more resilient? That it takes immense strength to find stillness when we’re uncomfortable? That every practice builds toward something greater than ourselves?

But how can these techniques be harnessed during the craziness of a separation? To answer that question, I reached out to psychologists, divorce lawyers, researchers, yoga teachers, and life coaches—many of whom had gone through their own big breakups. I asked each of them to describe the particular aspects of divorce that make it one of life’s most stressful events. Then I asked them about the tools they use to guide their clients (and themselves) through the journey.

Of course, every breakup is different. But a surprising number of the emotions we experience during uncoupling are the same across sex, gender, and age. Which is good news for all of us, no matter where we may be in the process, because it means that when we come face to face with the end of a relationship as we know it, we can take full advantage of the wisdom of the ages.

Through yoga and meditation, we gain insight from the countless people who came before us and grappled with the pain and joy of the human condition; their gift—handed down through the philosophy that is the foundation of these practices—is the knowledge that by accepting change, we can find grace in adversity. Their teachings reassure us that everything we’re feeling now has been felt before. They remind us that this, too, shall pass.

This isn’t magical thinking. It’s about using mindfulness to navigate times of tremendous change. Because how you manage during this transitional moment will shape who you will be on the other side of it.

I wish I knew then what I know now. If I’d had a yoga practice in the midst of my divorce, I would have understood that time was on my side—that there is strength in the pause. That I didn’t have to react right away. I would have known that pain is a fundamental part of life, just as much as pleasure, and that I needed to give myself permission to lean into the rage, fear, and hurt, as well as the healing. I would have acknowledged the confusion and questioned the shame. I would have learned that I am never alone. At any given moment, people around the world are stepping into a breakup, in the middle of one, recovering, and moving on.

So let me begin by offering you this: However long your breakup takes (and divorce can be a marathon), eventually you will find yourself on the other side. I promise. And if you choose to proceed with mindfulness, remember that the goal is not to exit the marriage with the most stuff—that’s an awfully crude and unproductive way to keep score of your life. But you already knew that.

Taking any negative experience—the tears, the fury, the discovery—and muddling through it with grace to emerge stronger, wiser, and more resilient than ever before is part of what life is truly about. To become more yourself. To establish peace, knowledge, and a community that will carry you throughout the rest of your days.

Like steel forged in the hottest fire.

Like the autumn tree strengthened by a dozen summer storms.

You will bend, not break.

On the following pages, you’ll learn how.



LET'S MAKE SENSE OF ALL THIS.

It's not just you: Ending long-term relationships can make anyone feel a little nuts. Breakups tap deep into our most primal emotions. From birth, our survival has depended on developing strong attachments—indelible emotional bonds with family and friends who, in exchange for our love, have shared resources and wisdom with us. They've fed us and we've thrived. These relationships are "so core to our survival as a species," explains psychologist and divorce counselor Lisa Gabardi, PhD, "that our safety is tied up in belonging."

When we choose a life partner, we form a deep emotional bond. If that partnership ends, and statistics suggest it might, we're forced to deal with the rupture of a primary emotional attachment. Loss of an important bond—with a parent, a friend, a loved one—whether or not the relationship was a healthy one, naturally triggers a panic response. We're hardwired to cultivate relationships for survival, so losing one can feel like the end, Gabardi explains. That's why, with any major loss, we find ourselves doing and saying things we never, ever imagined we would.

Uncoupling is a special kind of loss. The person we mourn has not died. In fact, they're very much still woven into the fabric of our lives: We're going to have to interact with them whether we like it or not while we sort things out. What's worse, divorce proceedings can feel engineered to stoke the fight-or-flight response: While we're processing the loss of a partner, we're expected to negotiate for fundamental necessities such as money, time with our children, our home. You may find yourself fighting for your share of limited resources with the very person who at this moment you never want to see again.

I think what's most disorienting in a divorce is how quickly someone you once loved and trusted can flip from life partner to adversary. In my own divorce, I first suggested mediation. I hoped that avoiding lawyers would reduce the impending stress and cost. My ex agreed. But once I was in the room opposite him with the mediator in the middle, I had trouble advocating for myself. My ex had always been fair and equitable, but here he was (understandably) fighting for his share. There was no one to protect me and look out for my interests but me. I felt more alone than I ever had, and of course, I felt panic creeping in from all sides. I stopped the mediation and got myself a lawyer.

My frenzy set me on a course that took years to recover from. I had trouble finding stability within myself, which made me impatient in my work and as a parent. I pushed so hard to balance everything on my own that that period of my life is now a blur. I feel like I missed part of my daughter's growing up because I wasn't fully present. (Don't worry, she's fine. Kids are more resilient than we give them credit for. See page 94 for more on parenting.) Fortunately, it doesn't have to be that way.

The secret to keeping your sanity during times of transition and healing is to first find the ground beneath you and let it hold you up, says Rowan. Any time, day or night, give yourself permission to pause and understand that the moment you are in is part of a much longer continuum. There is no up without down. No light without dark.

Rather than pursuing strictly "good vibes only," Rowan says we can practice honoring the full spectrum of our emotions and experiences. "We have to acknowledge the natural cycle of life. What it means to be human. I'm not condoning losing your shit at Whole Foods, but honor the inevitable anger that will come with the dissolution of a relationship without adding a second layer of shame." (For some reason, Whole Foods came up a lot in my divorce interviews. Have we been conditioned to associate the brand with the perfect life we'll never have? If so, I'd say that avoiding WF is part of the healing process.)

ILLUSTRATION: LACI JORDAN @SOLACILIKE

PRACTICE BEING IN THE NOW

MINI-MEDITATION

Divorce coach Lisa Gabardi, PhD, uses this exercise to help her patients acknowledge the here and now.

1. Notice when you're obsessing, lost in a rage, swamped with sorrow, or in a fear loop.
2. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, bringing your awareness back to the present moment.
3. Focus on elements in your environment to ground yourself. Touch your fingertips together; feel your feet on the solid ground beneath you and the cool air inside your nostrils as you inhale—the promise of the new path ahead; feel warm air exit as you exhale, and with it, breathe out lingering negativity or toxicity.
4. Say to yourself, "I believe in my inner strength and natural capacity to heal. I will get through this difficult time. In this moment, I am safe."
5. Respond, "I am all right, here and now."



LEARN MORE

More divorce meditations by Gabardi are available at gabardi.com/divorce-meditations.

SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY. LOOK THROUGH THE LENS OF COMPASSION.

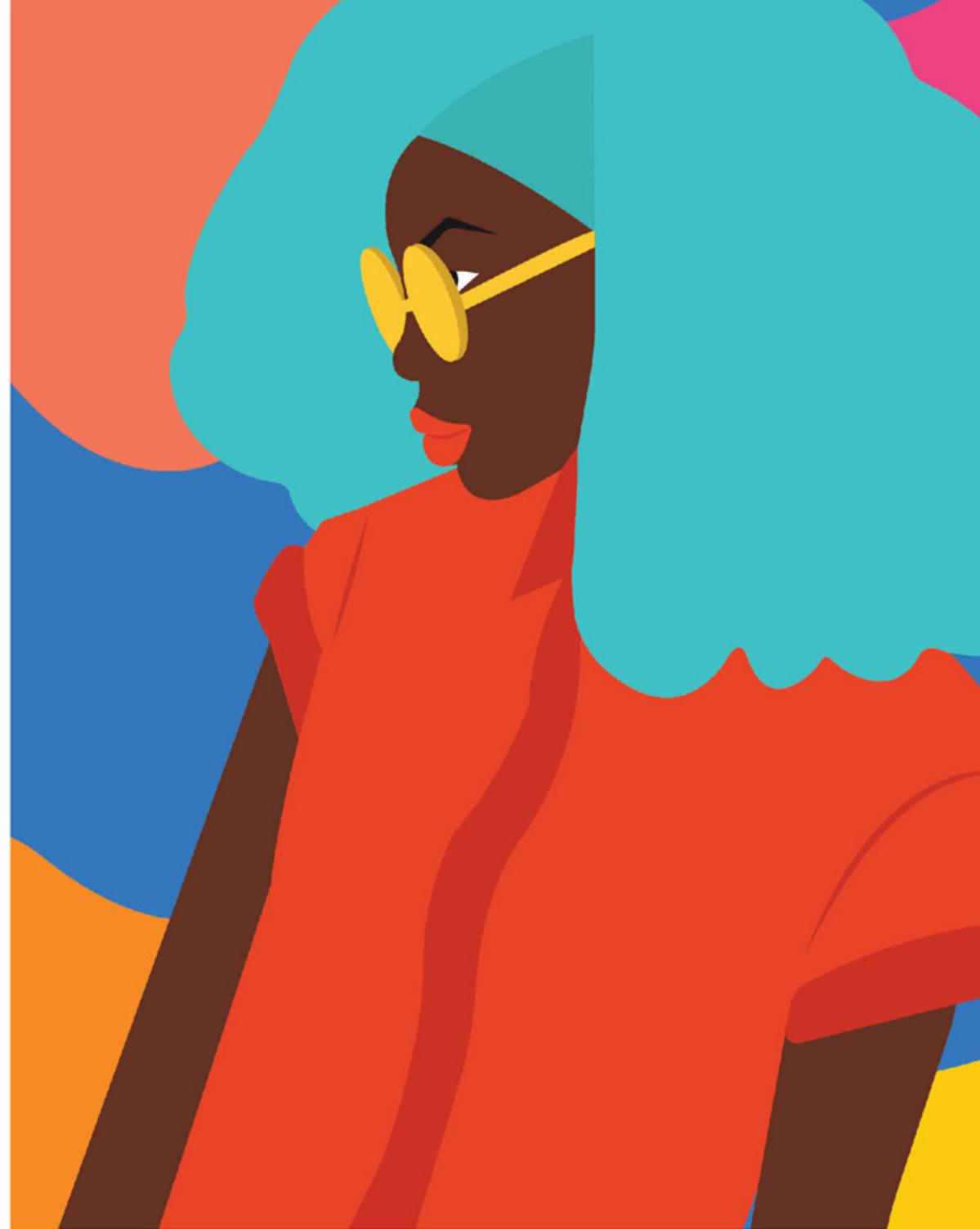
An important part of healing (and negotiating, and parenting, and functioning in the world) is learning to look at things from different perspectives. By understanding what motivates others to say or do harmful things, for example, we are less likely to internalize their anger. We can be more dispassionate and less reactive when we understand that much of the stress in a breakup comes from fear—an emotion that causes normally sane adults to act out. How you react, or don't, can have a profound effect on your ex as you both work through the nitty-gritty of separation.

When Lisa Talev, a Tucson-based holistic health coach, learned that her husband wanted a divorce, she immediately tapped into more than a decade's worth of Reiki, massage, yoga, and healing training, and used it to stay open and cool-headed. "I knew we didn't have to make it ugly," she says.

She used the gym to burn off a lot of her anger early in her divorce. But in her meditation, she adopted a loving process to invite compassion in. "The spirit of namaste says that if you loved each other once, then conscious uncoupling honors the other's spirit," she says. "When we married, we underwent a sacred ritual to bond ourselves in the community, so we deserved conscious uncoupling to undo that bond."

Talev approached her divorce with the same loving energy that she put forth in her marriage: "Rather than tear him down, I honored him. I recognized that we had shared a magical time together but that we weren't life-partner material. If we stayed together, we wouldn't reach our full potential and happiness, so we had to move on."

She found a yoga instructor who focused on heart- and hip-opening and sought out those classes whenever she felt overwhelmed. "Hips are the miscellaneous drawer in the kitchen where we stuff everything we don't know what to do with," Talev says. In her yoga practice, she embraced every opportunity to "dump out the junk drawer, restore my body, and remind myself that it's going to be OK." She recalls one teacher suggesting breathing into the front of the heart to take in all the new and good energy surrounding her, then exhaling out the back of the heart to release



the past and any pain the body may be holding onto.

"In the yoga studio, I would find this core I didn't realize I had—ooh that power—and I was able to tap into a peacefulness inside of me," says Talev. "With this clarity, I could take a deep breath during confrontations and say, 'OK, let's talk, not fight.'"

But through that release, she also found a way to look at the divorce from a different perspective. "We didn't have to set the relationship on fire," she says. "It had outlived its purpose. I recognized that it was time to move on. It's an act of love to set each other free."

TRY THIS

Dump out your own junk drawer with hip and heart openers. "In the yoga studio, I feel the tears coming, but I leave the class feeling centered so I can access the rational side of my brain and stay calm."

PRACTICE THIS MINI-SEQUENCE...

when you need a shift in perspective: Pigeon Pose, Utthan Prishthasana (Lizard Pose), Ustrasana (Camel Pose), Utkatasana (Chair Pose).

BATTLE THE SHAME WIZARD.

In the blur of my divorce, one day stands out: On a gorgeous New England afternoon just before Thanksgiving, I stopped at a suburban Whole Foods (yep, Whole Foods) to pick up some packaged something-or-other for dinner. I walked through the parking lot and suddenly found myself surrounded by perfect families pushing carts overflowing with turkeys and sweet potatoes and pies and flowers. I saw Volvos and lacrosse sticks and duffel bags and school uniforms, and in every back seat, a glossy golden retriever seemed to be wagging her tail.

For the first time as an adult, I found myself on the outside looking into my life. I was single and temporarily childless, an apartment-dwelling, underfunded, underemployed, homewrecking pariah. I was rudderless and alone. *You ruined everything*, my inner voice screamed. *You destroyed your family. You will never feel happiness again, you don't deserve to feel joy—now or ever. Single woman alone in a Whole Foods parking lot? Shame! Shame!* I shrank back into my car and drove away, suffocating on my pain and tears for what I'd lost, for the mess I'd made, for all the suffering I'd caused.

I didn't have a name for that voice then, but I do now. He's the Shame Wizard—a ghoulish phantom—the cruellest of all inner voices, the one that twists perfectly normal feelings into crippling self-loathing. He's shrewd and persistent. He's also a regular character on the show *Big Mouth*, an improbably brilliant comedy that follows prepubescent protagonists through the middle school journey. In the series, the Shame Wizard shows up at the worst times to make the tweens feel guilty and shameful for their very normal hormonal urges. ("You're a little perv," he helpfully reminds one; "You're a horny little slut"; "You caused your parents' divorce.")

When the Shame Wizard pipes up, he'll tell you that he's doing it for your own good—he only wants to make us better people by embarrassing us into behaving properly. He thrives on our deepest fears, like that nagging notion that maybe we're abnormal, aberrant, secretly awful people—and that our loathsomeness is the root cause of everyone's suffering.

But the Shame Wizard is dead wrong. Beating ourselves up gets us nowhere. We've got work to do, and we don't have time to wallow in a self-loathing pity-fest. Yoga teacher Elizabeth Rowan knows how to quiet shame. The trick, she says, is to embrace all the mixed-up feelings you're experiencing and recognize when shame sneaks in through the backdoor to make you feel rotten. The Shame Wizard is a clever one; he knows when you're vulnerable. Identifying him and his dirty tricks is the first step toward processing all of your emotions—every single one—as completely normal parts of the breaking-up process. The anger. The fear. The hope. The doubt. The joy. Even that lurking sense of failure that you couldn't save the marriage. OK, you couldn't save the marriage. So what? That's in the past now. Blame has no place here.

Whatever forces led to the end of the relationship, accept that it is done and allow the healing to begin. Accept all of it as part of your life journey. "Honor the rage, the sacred rage, the metabolizing energy, and the hurt," Rowan says. "Honor whatever you're housing." Let these emotions flow through you. Acknowledge them, then let them go. Remember that feelings are impermanent.

SHAKE IT OFF!

THE CATALOG OF BREAKUP MUSIC is seemingly infinite because breakups are a universal theme in the human experience. Whenever you feel overwhelmed by shame or guilt, sing it out with T-Swift or Fiona.

A playlist—a mix of calming and empowering songs—can recharge and recenter. Keep one on your phone of your most resonant tunes, and whenever you need a better voice inside your head, pop in those earbuds and let the music take over. It's OK to get off the couch and start dancing, too.

Need some help getting started? Try these defiant anthems for a mood lift.

BREAKUP PLAYLIST

TAYLOR SWIFT
Shake It Off

FIONA APPLE
Extraordinary Machine

DEMI LOVATO
Sorry Not Sorry

JUSTIN BIEBER
Love Yourself

HAILEE STEINFELD
Love Myself

ALANIS MORISSETTE
You Oughta Know

ARIANA GRANDE
Break Free

BEYONCÉ
Irreplaceable

GLORIA GAYNOR
I Will Survive

FLEETWOOD MAC
Go Your Own Way

FLORENCE + THE MACHINE
Shake It Out

CHER
Strong Enough

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

In life—in love and grief and all the moments in between—the best thing we can do is regularly affirm that we’re doing the best we can. But that’s a habit few of us develop until we desperately need it. Caring for ourselves can feel self-indulgent. Checking in with the body and mind, listening to what each needs to feel warm and nourished—these aren’t things we always give ourselves permission to do, especially when we’re wrapped up in adulting.

And so, our connection to body and mind may have wilted a bit while we were busy taking care of everyone else.

Trust me, I know how long that beat-yourself-up list can be, because I’ve made plenty of my own.

Simply losing the diurnal rhythms that once drove our lives leaves us feeling ungrounded and overwhelmed. I get it.

But separating also offers you a tremendous gift. You are now free to set your own rhythm, one that could include more purposeful self-care. Build that into your life now, and you will have it forever more.

Elizabeth Rowan cautions that no yoga posture or soothing music or asana sequence could have fully supported her through the experience: “None of that can replace time, process, and sitting with ourselves in our darkness and light.” One way she now helps clients in these moments of massive transition is by working with them to create a traveling altar, a collection of personally meaningful objects that can serve as a meditative aid. “Meditation is a beautiful technique because it is grounding,” she says. “Wherever I was—I changed cities, houses, jobs—meditation became a constant.” It’s easy to lose sight of the divine and the Self when you’re in the day-to-day survival mode, she says. Creating a traveling altar that’s not space-specific provides a steady, grounding visual path and connection to the Self and something greater. During times of upheaval, its mobility is a reminder that we’re always moving and growing.

Throughout time, people from all cultures have carried personal altars, from pocket shrines dating back to the Middle Ages (carried by pilgrims) to the bag of mystical objects, called a *mesa*, that Peruvian shamans bring with them to channel the divine when healing others.



AN ALTAR FOR YOU

YOU MIGHT BE PACKING UP the home you thought you’d grow old in. You may be in a transitional space—a new apartment or hotel, or camping out at a friend’s or parent’s house. At this shaky, ungrounded moment, you’ll benefit from something that’s absolutely, exclusively your own. Try having something that can travel—objects to arrange on a tray or an altar you can easily pack and unpack and keep in the corner of a room. Rowan suggests including keepsakes, photos, stones, elements of earth, and candles that can serve to remind you that you’re connected to something greater. The act of building and rebuilding your altar in different spaces is a way of establishing a place as your own, even if it’s only temporary.

STAY COOL, CALM, AND RATIONAL.

In divorce or any other breakup, you will need clarity. The good news is that we have thrived in the world as naked, clawless, and fangless animals simply because we are natural problem-solvers. Our minds are happiest when they're working toward solutions. And at the end of the day, uncoupling really is about solving problems and forging ahead.

To that end, controlling your breath will become your superpower. In humans, sensing (real and perceived) threats can trigger an automatic physiological response. When this happens, the breath quickens and gets shallower. Short, rapid breathing fires up the body's automatic fight-or-flight response; adrenaline floods in. Panic sets all of your perception systems on stun, bypassing higher-level brain function.

This science is well established: Again and again, researchers have shown that excessive anxiety inhibits cognition, which includes memory, speech and language, complex perception, orientation, attention, judgment, planning, and decision-making. When we're frightened, provoked, or threatened, our amygdala—the most primitive part of the brain—takes over, triggering a system-wide physiological response primed to detect and react to physical threats and propel the body into action. This panic reaction overrides executive functioning because, frankly, if the cave bear is about to attack, who has time to reason with it or question its motives?

Called the fight, flight, or freeze response (FFF), this reaction has its uses. It's the reason we jump away from a swerving car without even thinking. But in the modern world, most high-anxiety situations—a test, a deadline, a public-speaking engagement, a divorce—are best handled by cooler heads. Your lawyer may want you to calculate your monthly expenses, a perfectly reasonable request, but inside, your anxious, hyperstimulated brain may be screaming, "Screw it! The end is nigh!"

Non-physical threats such as vicious emails, texts, or phone calls can trigger the FFF response just as physical threats do. Calming the amygdala through breathing and mindfulness techniques and regular meditation allows us to quell the panic response to access higher cognitive functioning once again. When the panic reaction subsides, then the rational, thoughtful part of our brain has the space to lead the way.

So when the phone rings, pause. Is now a good time? Do you have the emotional bandwidth to manage your reaction? Are you grounded enough to stay focused? If not, let it go to voicemail. It's most likely that nothing needs to be decided this very minute.

Same with email. I suggest creating a separate divorce-related email account. You can share this address with your lawyer. You can also set your other email accounts to auto-forward messages to this address from your ex and anyone else who might send highly charged missives your way. (Your mother? Your soon-to-be-ex-mother-in-law?) Now you control when and where you deal with this stuff.

Through trial and error, you will figure out the right time of day to tackle divorce stuff. Maybe post workout when your feel-good neurochemical levels are high, or after a glass of wine or your yoga practice.

Regardless, there will be times when you feel a compulsion to fire right back or freak out or collapse in a raging heap, but hang on. Remember that a panicked reaction isn't coming from the best you.

Instead, try giving yourself the space to let those panicky feelings subside. Breathe deeply, take a bath or a walk, or do some stretching on your mat, all in the service of quieting the amygdala to access your clear-headed self—the person who makes careful decisions, plans for the future, and anticipates the consequences of actions. The panicked brain can only think about this very moment. But there will be a tomorrow, and a next week, and a next year. Now that you're in a divorce, you need to be strategic. You need to begin writing your next chapter. So wait. A few hours or days can make all the difference in how you manage the challenges ahead.

PRACTICE BREATHING

WE KNOW THAT BREATH IS THE FOUNDATION.

We're taught to send nourishing breath into clenched spaces to allow the light in, recenter, and get present and calm. Many meditations coach us through the pathways of the breath, from the solar plexus to the heart to the throat chakra. When we breathe mindfully and deeply, the body relaxes, the amygdala eases, and we open and soften. It's like a system-wide announcement that nah, today we won't need to slay a cave bear or outrun a rabid wolf.

Sama Vritti Pranayama (equal ratio breathing) is a powerful relaxation tool that can help clear your mind, relax your body, and allow you to focus. Just find a comfortable seat with your back supported and feet on the floor.

1. Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose, slowly counting to 4. Feel the air filling your lungs.
2. Hold your breath here and slowly count to 4 again. Try not to clamp your airways shut. Simply avoid inhaling or exhaling for 4 counts.
3. Slowly exhale to the count of 4.
4. Hold the exhalation for another 4 counts.
5. Repeat steps 1-4 for 4 minutes or until you feel calm and centered.

Try returning to your breath each time you need to get calm and problem-solve in a rational, methodical way.

LEAN INTO YOUR PRACTICE.

Many people I spoke to for this story had a yoga practice before their divorce but generally only considered it part of a physical health regimen. Alice Schlegel—mother, researcher, yoga teacher, and director of student activities at a community college outside of Seattle—had moved from Alabama to Washington state with her first husband and joined a yoga studio as a way to stay in shape and meet people. Then her relationship unraveled. Schlegel's yoga studio became a safe place where she could focus on herself. "I didn't feel at home when I was at home," she says, "because my home was disappearing."

She didn't talk to others in the studio about her divorce; she kept yoga separate and sacred. "No one in my yoga space knew my spouse, so it was really my own place to be

myself and not worry about who was going to bring up turmoil."

Schlegel read more about yoga, tried different teachers, and went to as many classes as she could. "There was a void developing," she says, "and I was filling it with knowledge and positivity."

Like Schlegel, Elizabeth Rowan had a yoga practice, but she didn't lean into it until her divorce was in full swing. Schlegel says that yoga became a "true necessity to navigate the process of uncoupling—integral and imperative to me reclaiming myself."

How did her practice do that? "On a logistical level, yoga was critical for cultivating groundedness and steadiness when it felt like the world was ending," she says. On a deeper level, she found that as one relationship was closing, her relationship with yoga was evolving dramatically. "The spiritual path proved to be a really beautiful lifelong bond," she says. "I discovered that this path is its own marriage."

MODEL MINDFULNESS FOR KIDS

Author and educator **Susan Kaiser Greenland** has worked with children and families using mindfulness and meditation for more than two decades. Here, she offers guidance to help children cope with family challenges, such as divorce, throughout their lives.

It's important to understand how the nervous system works. We all need a certain amount of stimulation to function—a deadline, a public-speaking date, a race. That small adrenaline boost we get from a moderate amount of stimulation ensures peak performance.

Too much stimulation, however, can send us into fight, flight, or freeze (FFF). In children, this is especially confusing because it can be interpreted as defiance. Kids cross their arms and seem to pull away or zone out. This behavior is actually a sign that they are overstimulated.

When children go into reactive mode, their capacity to think clearly and respond to reason shrinks. They become closed off. This is when you should be available. Be with them; listen, acknowledge their feelings, and don't expect them to talk it through right then.

It's important for you to be present for your child so that they feel seen, loved, and conflict-free. When you're grounded, your child

can become grounded.

Interactions will not always be pleasant—don't take what your child says or does personally. Recognize that they have mixed-up feelings and will need you to keep the space safe. Your job is to contain the situation without being reactive and allow them to feel their feelings. If you can't respond calmly, you will only escalate the situation.

Of course, no parent is perfect. I made a huge mistake as a young parent: I'm a fixer and always tried to reason it out or find a consensus with my kids. I didn't understand that in the midst of a meltdown, none of us had the bandwidth to work through the problem. But I learned that when a child is in FFF mode, you shouldn't try to sort out the problem.

The wisdom doesn't come from being perfect. We're always going to lose it sometimes. Turn it into a teaching moment for both of you. Recognize that it happens; circle back and apologize. Don't hold yourself up to an unrealistic standard.

Prioritize your relationship over everything else. Your child may say they're scrutinizing you, but most kids want to feel safe, loved, and have reasonable expectations about what's going to happen next. It's about creating a healthy, attuned parent-child connection, paying attention to what's happening in the moment—not what's going to happen next.

If you feel like what's happening with your child is outside the norm, seek help from friends, family, the community, and professionals. We're all stronger together.

Your bond with your child is not going to go away; it's going to get deeper and even more fortified.

Walk together in nature, feel soap suds on your hands, create sensory experiences. These kinds of things keep you in the moment and ground you; they keep you connected.

Pro tip: When you need reinforcements fast, the Stop, Breathe & Think app can help guide stressed-out kids into more meditative, mindful states. 

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10 QUESTIONS WITH ALY RAISMAN



The Olympic gymnast recently launched the #FlipTheSwitch campaign with nonprofit Darkness to Light to educate adults on how to protect children from sexual abuse.

BY LINDSAY TUCKER

- 1. If I were a yoga pose, I'd be:** Savasana—frequently checking in with how we are feeling is really important.
- 2. The secret to success is:** Getting to know yourself
- 3. The best advice I've ever heard:** If you don't believe in magic, you will never find it.
- 4. What I crave the most:** Relaxation
- 5. The change I'd like to see in the world:** More empathy and love
- 6. Favorite song to dance to:** "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" by Whitney Houston
- 7. The book with the greatest takeaway:** *29 Gifts*. Acts of kindness can work miracles.
- 8. Who I'm following on Instagram:** People who post real photos without makeup and share their passions
- 9. If I weren't an athlete, I'd be:** A singer
- 10. What I want to be remembered for:** Being a good person and having good intentions (no one is perfect)

To learn more about Aly's campaign, visit fliptheswitchcampaign.org.

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