

Question: What were you looking for when you started yoga?

Answer: When I was 30 I became determined to find a spiritual guide. I had been inspired by books like *Autobiography of a Yogi* and was intent on meeting a spiritual master who would lead me to enlightenment. I traveled a thousand miles to meet Chogyam Trungpa, a Tibetan master and then Swami Satchidananda.

Question: Who was your first guru? Can you tell a story about both of you?

Answer: I then met and decided to follow Swami Rama. He encouraged me to establish a meditation center in the city in which I lived. He would often come to visit me and offer workshops for the students I gathered. Each time he visited, he would stay with me in my home for the weekend. He would meet with me and instruct me every night. We usually talked until three or four in the morning. I felt exceedingly fortunate to be given so much attention. During our time together he would tell me stories about his childhood, living with his own guru, and experiences with other spiritual teachers. I would tape record these fascinating accounts and later compiled them into a book: *Living with the Himalayan Masters*. I considered him to be my spiritual father. In him, I felt I had a guide that I had been longing for most of my life. He later initiated me as a Swami. I felt like his sidekick. I was privileged to be at his side at various events, when he was guiding others or just "hanging out." Sometimes he would call me up to the lectern to stand in for him in the midst of a lecture he was giving. I was privileged to be close to him.

Question: Looking back in time, how has the focus of your yoga-practice changed?

Answer: I used to practice intently with the aspiration of reaching enlightenment at an early age. For example, I would remain in the headstand for 30 minutes each day. I would do various yogic kriyas like swallowing a very long gauze cloth to clear my system of mucus. After some years of this, I realized that my intense striving was not leading to greater peace of mind or ease of being. I recognized that freedom and fulfillment are experienced when we are open to what is already here rather than in seeking to attain an ideal. Now, I revel in becoming aware of and appreciating the unconditional acceptance that sustains each moment, rather than trying to reach some preferred state of being.

Question: what kind of yoga do you practice nowadays? Could you describe that approach of yoga?

Answer: My practice is discovering spaciousness in every aspect of my life. Spaciousness is not a goal; it is a natural occurrence of being aware here and now. Ordinary awareness is contracted. We are preoccupied with what we are looking for, and this restricts the possibilities of what we are able to find. When we look or listen free of intent we discover what is. Then we are living in truth instead in the preoccupation of our own fantasies. It doesn't matter whether I am doing hatha yoga or making a purchase at a store. Every experience is an opportunity to be aware of myself either looking for something to occur in the future, or discovering what is occurring now. When I am finding what is I immediately experience spaciousness and ease of being.

Question: how would you describe the ultimate aim of yoga? How can this be a goal for someone who has a 9 to 5 job?

Answer: Yoga is not a special practice that is distinct from your every day living of your life. Yoga is a way of discovering the beauty, joy, and meaning that is inherent in what is already occurring. It is only your preoccupation with aims and goals that obscures the unity of your day-to-day life. The book, "Zen and the Art of Archery", describes how the accomplished archer becomes one with the bow, arrow, and target. He is not aiming to hit the target in the next moment; he is the target here and now. When we are aiming for something we are already presupposing that we are separate from our aim. Then, we try to close the gap. That requires a lot of effort. If we begin with a presumption of duality we cannot arrive a unity. There is no duality between yoga and our 9 to 5 job. Your job, your hatha yoga practice or what ever else you are doing equally offer the circumstance in which you can open to what is, in the midst of an apparent separation between you and where you prefer to be.

Question: You are a licensed psychotherapist with over 40 years of experience. Could you explain the connections between psychotherapy and yoga?

Answer: For me, here is no distinction between psychotherapy and yoga. I see psychotherapy as a process in which a person discovers the beliefs, assumptions and patterns that radically constrict his range of knowing himself and his world. Yoga is no different than this. It enables one to uncover constrictions in the body, breath, mind, and in understanding of what our life is all about. Psychotherapy offers the chance to work with a mentor each week. Most students of yoga do not have the opportunity for regular individual guidance.

Question: What are some of the main aspects of yoga psychology.

Answer: The first principles of Raja Yoga are non-injury and non-lying. Whenever you are negative toward yourself you are doing injury. Non-injury and non-lying are the same as unconditional appreciation of what is. Most of us live in a circumscribed imagined world steered by how we would like it to be, or by what we do not want to acknowledge. Yoga brings us back to reality, to what actually exists.

Question: Some people think that psychotherapy is only for mentally ill people, so they do not need it because they are healthy. What would you tell them?

Answer: Each person is uniquely imagining him/her self to be far, far less than who he/she really is. Most people in contemporary society live in a state of dis-ease. Yet, they consider this to be normal. Our experiences in life have led us to create barriers to recognizing the magnificence of our true being. Life also offers countless opportunities to rediscover who and what we really are. Psychotherapy is provides such opportunities.

Question: What can a person expect when they are attending one of your workshops?

Answer: The workshop will be experiential. There will be guided practices including meditation and self-inquiry. There will be several opportunities for each attendee to

explore the particular ways that he/she has been living a contracted view of him/herself leading to dissatisfaction, and emotional suffering. He/she will discover how to exist free from the restrictions of self-judgment. We will learn how to live in abundance, to be fully present, embodied, grounded and successful in the world. We will discern how every situation offers the opportunity to transcend the limitations that we have imposed on ourselves. We will also experience the sea of unconditional acceptance in which we are immersed.