

Welcome Back!

“Off the Mat: Living Yoga in Daily Life.”

Week Three: The Yamas, or Five Restraints



Journal on any shifts, large or small, you have noticed since starting your practice. If your practice has waned, write about how you could begin again.

Review from Week Two

- Mindfulness is a skill we can integrate in our daily activities.
- Honing this skill helps us *feel* discomfort and *stay with it*, so *that we can choose* how to respond, instead reacting to immediately get rid of discomfort.
- If we numb ourselves from pain, we numb ourselves from joy.
- It is the same skill that we are practicing in daily meditation.
- Through the discipline of mindfulness meditation, we get better at delinking the chain of events that ends in “action.”

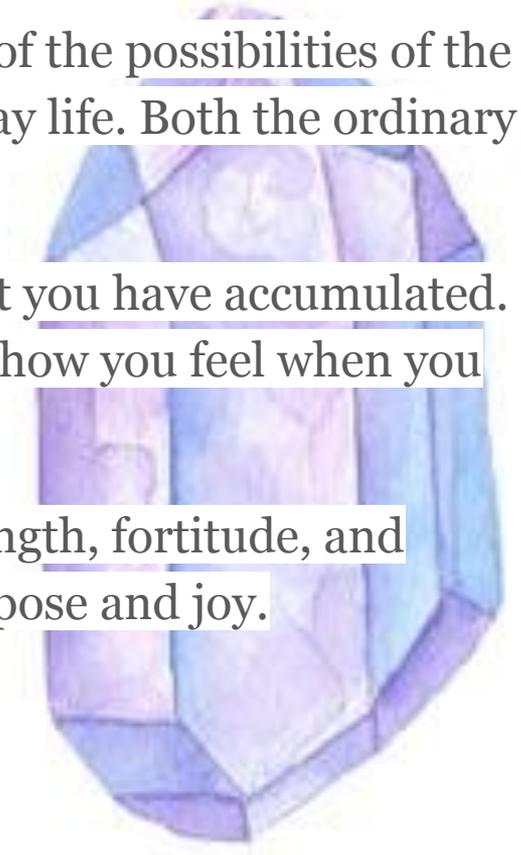
The Yamas and Niyamas: The 10 Jewels

The ethical guidelines of yoga that represent both a vision of the possibilities of the human spirit, as well as the practical guidelines for everyday life. Both the ordinary routines, and the extraordinary possibilities.

Life is not about how much you have accomplished or what you have accumulated. It is about how well you have participated in your life, and how you feel when your head hits the pillow.

The Yamas and the Niyamas are about developing the strength, fortitude, and discernment to choose how to live a life with integrity, purpose and joy.

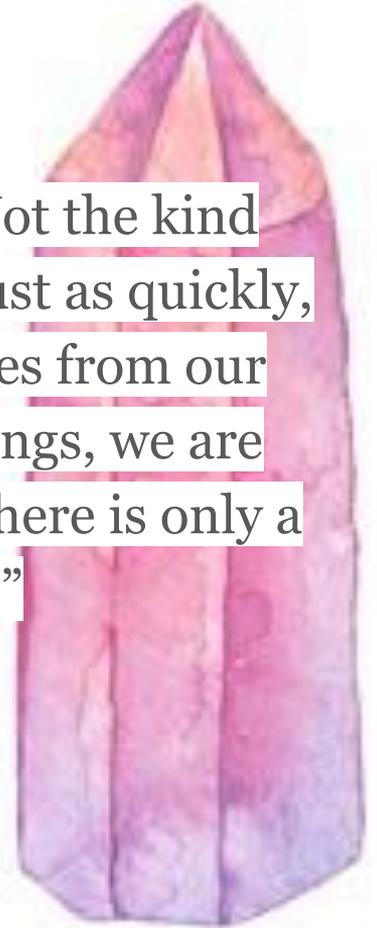
It feels great to practice them!



The Joy of Living with Integrity

“The result of a skillfully lived life is nothing less than joy. Not the kind that comes when things are going our way and disappears just as quickly, but the kind that bubbles up from within, the kind that comes from our own sense of mastery in our life, that no matter what life brings, we are ready. Maybe there is nothing to figure out ahead of time. There is only a life to live well, or not. Which are you choosing for yourself?”

-Deborah Adele, *The Yamas and Niyamas*



Start Small to Make Big Shifts

- Start at the endpoint: notice when you are about to do one of these things and just stop, right there. Simply don't do it. See it, but don't act on it.
- Like using a sharp scalpel to cut off a small bud on a big tree with deep roots.
- The transformative power of observation: when you stop and notice you can observe the deeper pattern that lead to this moment. You can see what is driving it in the first place.

The Yamas: The Five Restraints

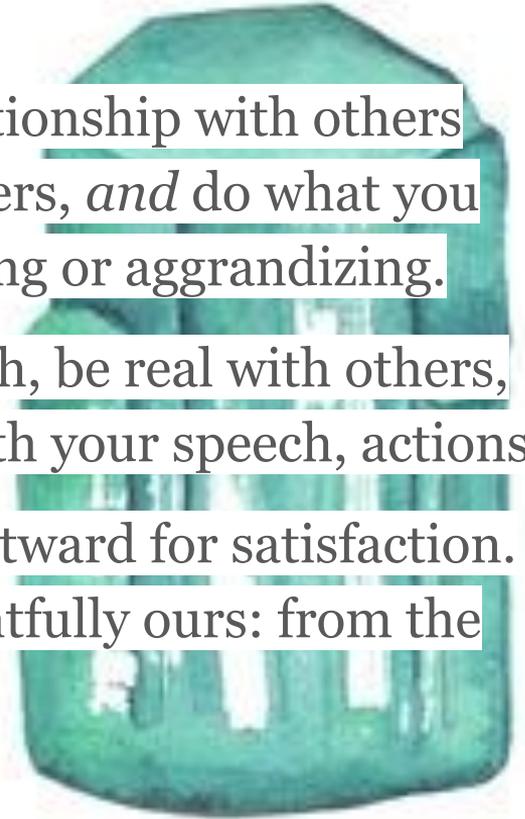
Restraint from harmful actions outside yourself.

1. Non-harm (ahimsa)
2. Non-lying (satya)
3. Non-stealing (asteya)
4. Non-excess (brahmacharya)
5. Non-possessiveness (aparigraha)



The Yamas: An Overview

- (1) **Non-harm:** The foundation. Live in right relationship with others and yourself. Share in community, support others, *and* do what you want without causing harm. Neith self-sacrificing or aggrandizing.
- (2) **Non-lying:** Being brave enough to tell the truth, be real with others, live your own truth and grow, have integrity with your speech, actions.
- (3) **Non-stealing:** Guides our attempts to look outward for satisfaction. Addresses the tendency to steal what is not rightfully ours: from the Earth, from others and from ourselves.

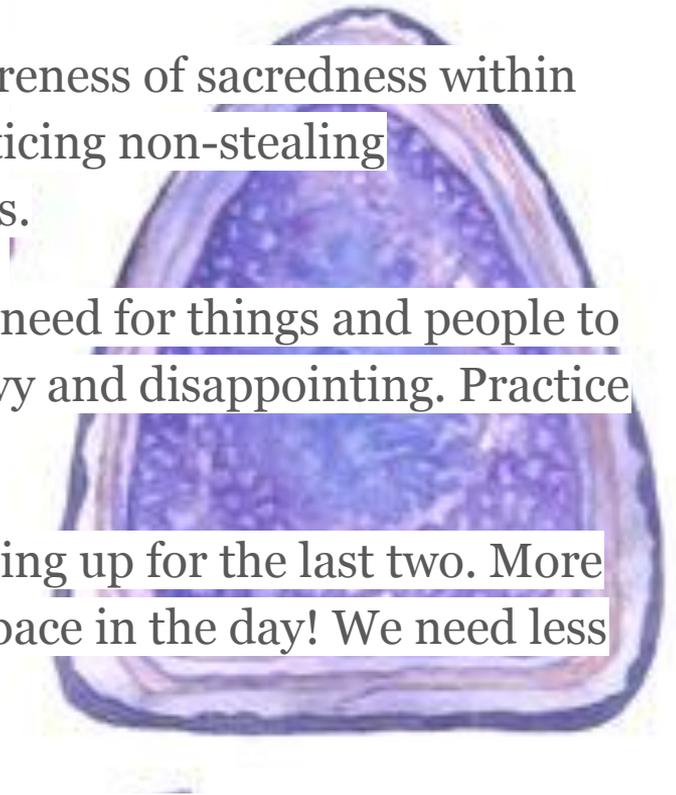


The Yamas: An Overview

(4) **Non-excess.** Literally, “walking with God.” Awareness of sacredness within each moment. Live within the limits of enough. Practicing non-stealing automatically leaves us primed to practice non-excess.

(5) **Non-possessiveness.** Asks us to “let go” of the need for things and people to be a particular way. Clinging and controlling life heavy and disappointing. Practice letting go makes life expansive and fresh!

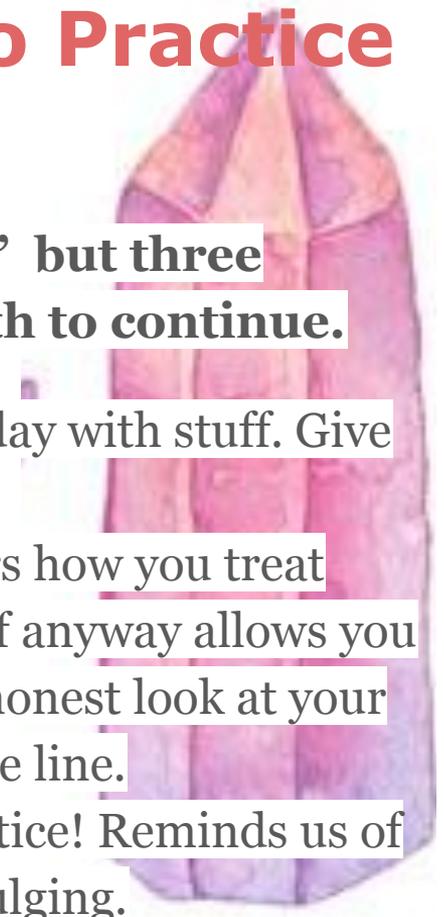
If you live first three jewels, you may notice time freeing up for the last two. More breathing space. Days feel lighter and easier! More space in the day! We need less than we thought and we are having more fun.



Creating the Right Conditions to Practice Restraint

The Yamas are about discipline, restraint and “don’t,” but three proactive practices help us maintain the inner strength to continue.

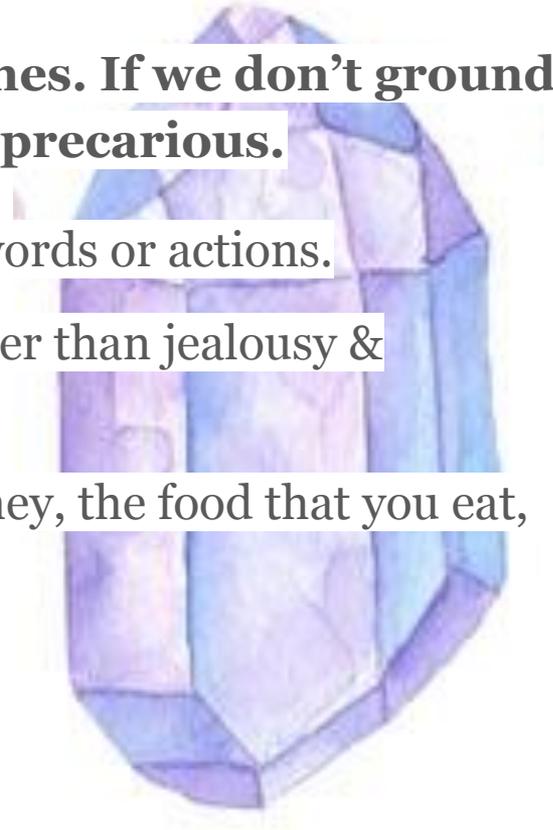
1. **Balance.** Get enough rest. Don’t fill every minute of the day with stuff. Give yourself quiet time to digest and reflect.
2. **Self-Compassion & Love.** How you treat others mirrors how you treat yourself. Accepting your imperfections and loving yourself anyway allows you to do the same for others. Self-love allows you to take an honest look at your faults, hurtful actions because your self-worth is not on the line.
3. **Gratitude.** Lovely and simple to integrate into your practice! Reminds us of how rich life already is so we aren’t clinging, stealing, indulging.



The First Jewel: Non-Harm (Ahimsa)

This is the foundation for the rest of the guidelines. If we don't ground our lives in nonviolence, everything else will be precarious.

- Not causing harm to others or ourselves with our words or actions.
- Practicing support and compassion for others, rather than jealousy & resentment.
- Being intentional about where you spend your money, the food that you eat, the resources that you use.
- Love is the core of non-violence.



How to Practice Non-Harm

Restraint of speech is a good way to practice non-harm, but also notice how you are treating yourself and the more subtle ways we harm others.

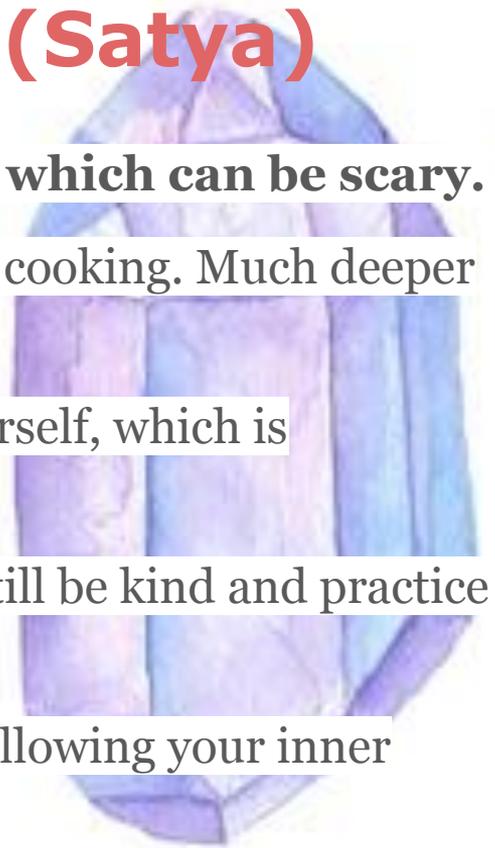
1. Don't rush yourself, overcommit yourself, or spread yourself too thin.
2. Don't say unkind things about people (maybe literally bite your tongue!) Don't gossip or be critical of others.
3. Don't worry about people, try to fix them, or give unsolicited advice. Instead, support and listen.



The Second Jewel: Non-Lying (Satya)

Calls us to live in truth, both in speech and actions, which can be scary.

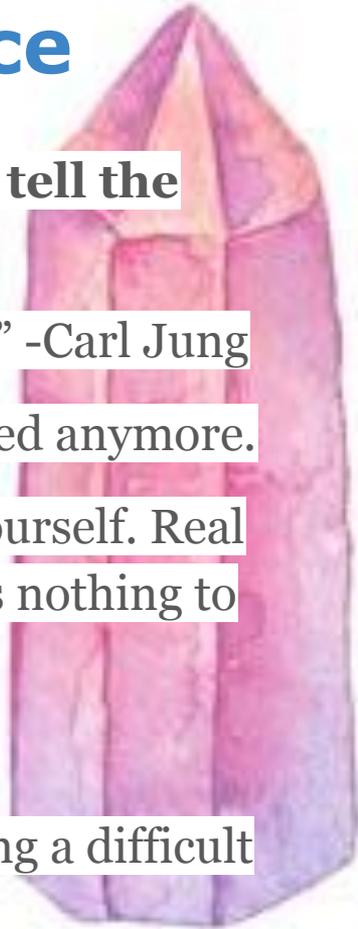
- Not as simple as not lying fibbing to mom when we eat cooking. Much deeper dynamics.
- Living in truth demands integrity to our life and to yourself, which is sometimes scary, but always good.
- Balancing being real, rather than being nice. You can still be kind and practice this.
- Balancing the need to grow with the need to belong. Following your inner guidance rather than trying to fit a mold.



Non-Lying: Being Real vs. Being Nice

Being nice is not the same as being kind. We can be real and tell the truth, yet also be kind.

- “A lie would make no sense if the truth was not seen as dangerous.” -Carl Jung
- We are afraid if we told the truth, we would not be liked or admired anymore.
- Nice is a packaging - how you think others want you to present yourself. Real comes from our center. Asks us to live from a place where there is nothing to defend or manage.
- Real is not always pleasant, but it is trustworthy.
- Why do you say yes when you mean no? When do you avoid having a difficult but necessary conversation because you fear rejection?



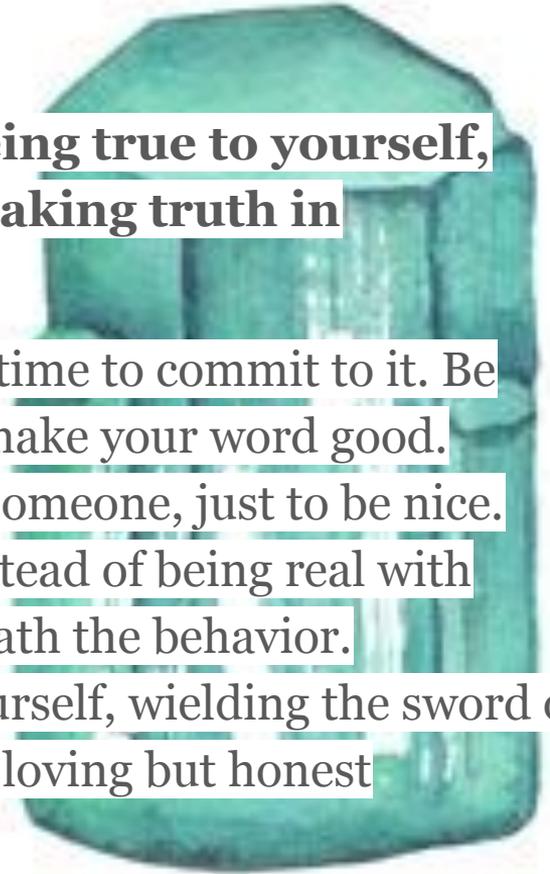
Non-Lying: Self-Expressing vs. Self-Indulgence

- When we habitually silence and distort ourselves, we lose our lust for life and begin to look for other things to fulfill us. When the process is disrupted, we turn to self-indulgence.
- Expectations from others prevents us from expressing our real gifts. So we turn to overeating, overworking, over-exercising.
- Not the same as avoiding things you don't want to do and only doing the things you do want. Self-expression includes doing things that are hard, but important to you.
- Living the life that cries to be lived frees up so much energy! Everyone feels it and benefits. Suppressing that life take a lot of energy.

How to Practice Non-Lying

The subtle implications of not lying involve being true to yourself, keeping your word, living your values and speaking truth in relationships.

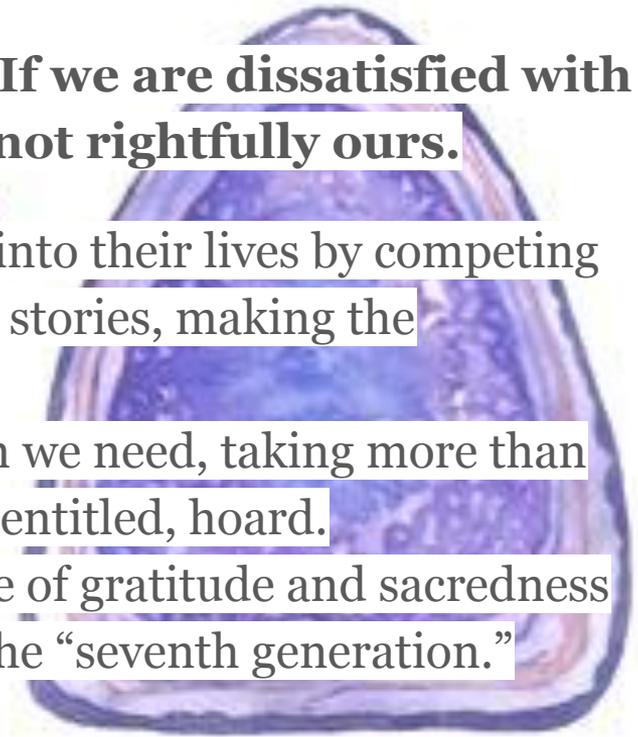
1. Don't say yes to something when you don't have time to commit to it. Be realistic and honest with yourself and others to make your word good.
2. Don't say things that are not true, or agree with someone, just to be nice.
*Notice when you have a tendency to be nice, instead of being real with someone. Consider what fears might be underneath the behavior.
3. Don't ignore issues in a relationship. Express yourself, wielding the sword of non-lying with the sheath of non-harm to have a loving but honest conversation.



The Third Jewel: Non-Stealing (astaya)

Calls us to live with integrity and reciprocity. If we are dissatisfied with ourselves we look outward, and steal what is not rightfully ours.

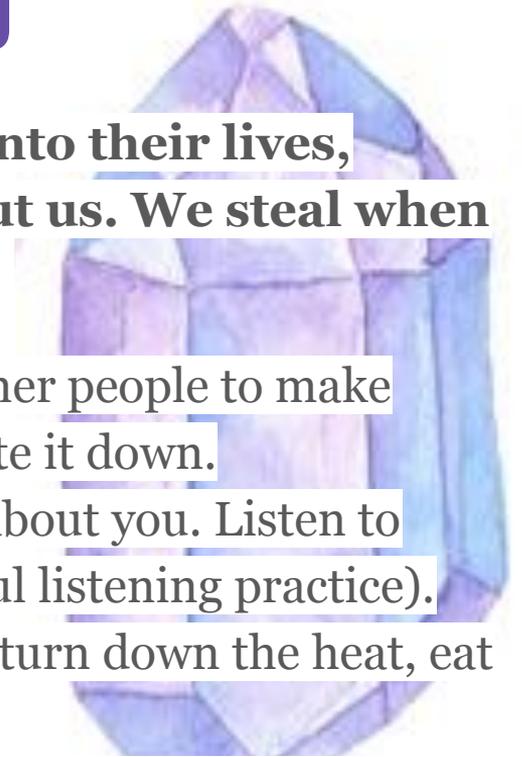
- We steal from others when we: send our energy into their lives by competing and comparing, being jealous, try to trump their stories, making the conversation about you not them.
- We steal from the Earth when we: use more than we need, taking more than we give, don't act as visitors and caretakers, feel entitled, hoard.
- We steal from the future when we: lose our sense of gratitude and sacredness for the abundance of the planet, fail to think of the “seventh generation.”



How to Practice Non-Stealing

We steal from others when we insert our energy into their lives, making their happiness, failure, experiences about us. We steal when we use more resources than we need.

1. Don't compare yourself to others, compete, or use other people to make yourself feel better. Notice when you do this, and write it down.
2. Don't steal from others by making conversations all about you. Listen to others without waiting for your turn to speak (mindful listening practice).
3. Don't waste electricity in your house. Turn off lights, turn down the heat, eat less energy-intensive food.
4. Don't strive to own more than you need. Enjoy all the plentiful free things in the world: sunsets, parks, public library, taking a walk.



Gratitude

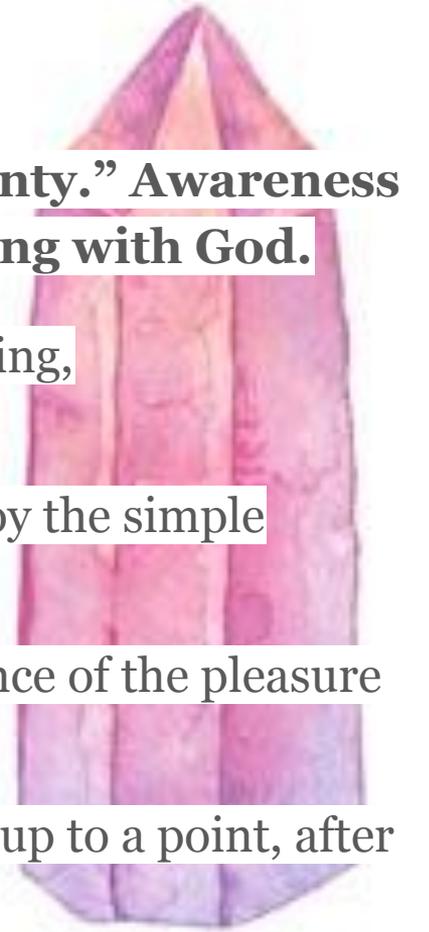
“One hundred times a day, I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labors of other people, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the full measure I have received and am still receiving.”

-Albert Einstein

The Fourth Jewel: Non-Excess

Calls us to live within the limits of enough. “As it is, plenty.” Awareness of sacredness within each moment. Translates to walking with God.

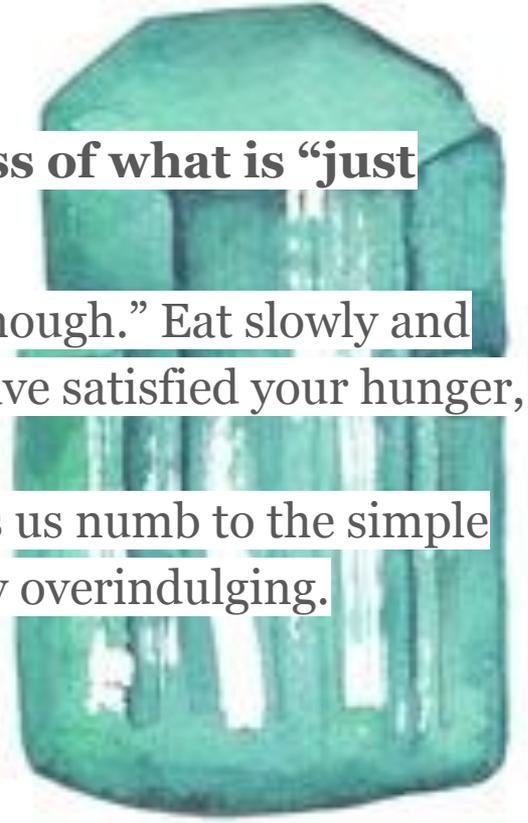
- Includes overeating, oversleeping, overworking, over-thinking, over-exercising, overshopping, over-communicating.
- Instead, we must take care of what we already do have, enjoy the simple pleasures of life, delighting and savoring experiences.
- Excess is heavy, and causes suffering and dulls our experience of the pleasure and joy of ordinary life.
- We gain energy and sustenance from food, work, and sleep up to a point, after that it is no longer healthy. Numbs us to experiences.



How to Practice Non-Excess

Practicing non-excess is about mindful awareness of what is “just enough,” whether it is food, work, rest, fun, etc.

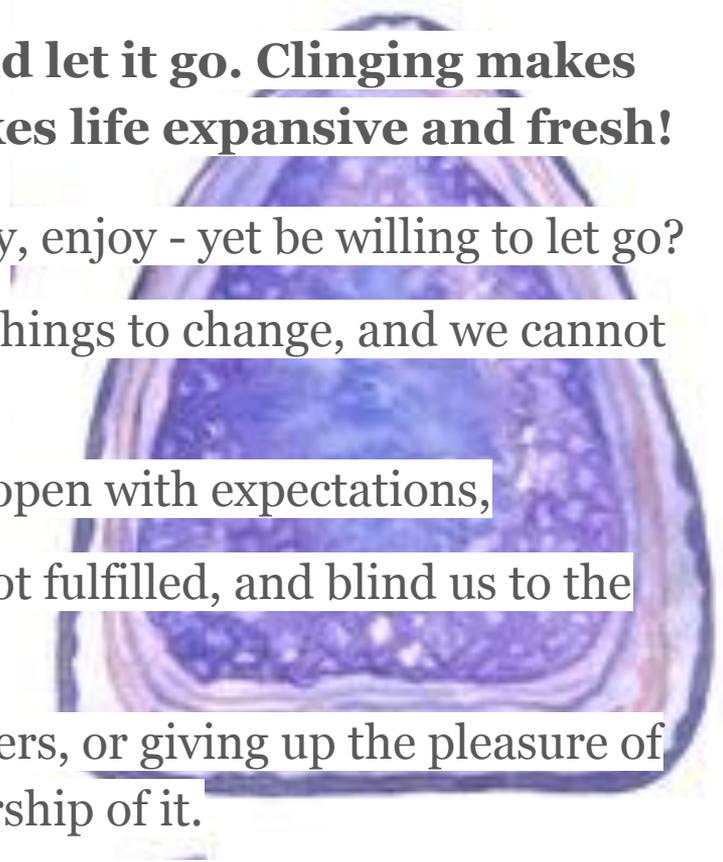
1. Don't overeat. Practice eating to the point of “just enough.” Eat slowly and enjoy your food. Track the sensation of when you have satisfied your hunger, and then stop (mindful eating practice).
2. Don't make yourself too busy. Being too busy makes us numb to the simple pleasures of life, so we try to feel something more by overindulging.



The Fifth Jewel: Non-Possessiveness

Calls us to take each moment as it comes, and let it go. Clinging makes life heavy and disappointing. Letting go makes life expansive and fresh!

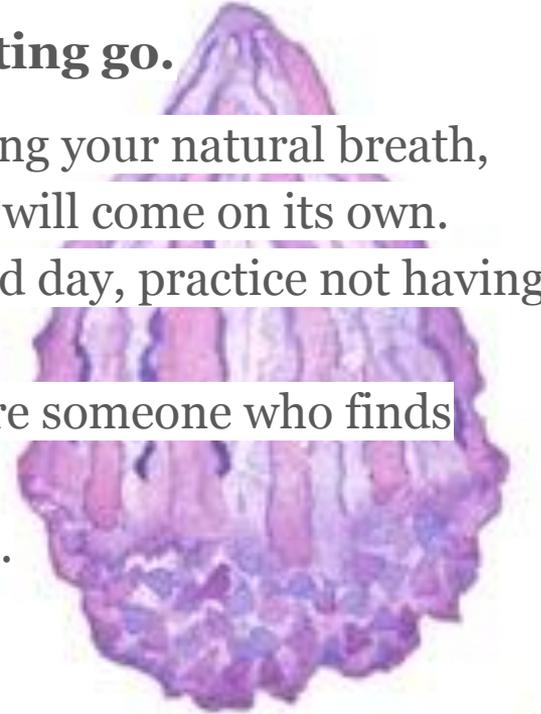
- Big question: how can we care deeply, love fully, enjoy - yet be willing to let go?
- Challenges us to accept that it is the nature of things to change, and we cannot control it.
- Asks us to accept things as they come, remain open with expectations,
- Attachments can ruin our day when they are not fulfilled, and blind us to the new opportunities all around us.
- Does not mean shutting ourselves off from others, or giving up the pleasure of liking something. It means releasing the ownership of it.



How to Practice Non-Possessiveness

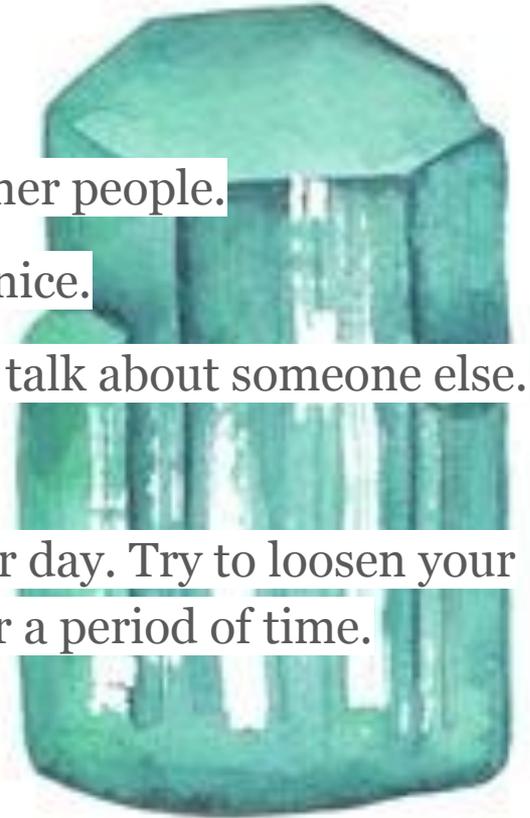
Practicing non-possessiveness is a practice of letting go.

1. Use your breathing practice. Sit or lay quietly, noticing your natural breath, feel in coming in and out. Trust that the next breath will come on its own.
2. If there is something that you “must have,” for a good day, practice not having it once and notice what happens.
3. Take yourself out of your routine, especially if you are someone who finds great comfort in your routines.
4. Don't pack more than you need when you take a trip.



Little Moments of Restraint

1. Don't gossip, criticize or say unkind things about other people.
2. Don't say things that you don't mean in order to be nice.
3. Don't turn the conversation to you when it's time to talk about someone else.
4. Don't keep eating after you are full.
5. Notice what you cling to in order to get through your day. Try to loosen your attachment to it by going without, or changing it, for a period of time.



Off the Mat, Week 3

We will continue to practice our first two layers, daily meditation and one mindfulness practice in your daily routine. Add one more layer, practicing one of the yamas.

1. AM or PM Practice: five minutes, or longer, of meditation, either right after waking or right before bed, every day.
2. Pick one mindfulness practice from Week 2 (blue handout), and practice it at least one time during the next week.
3. Choose a yama to practice this week.

1. Continue, or restart, your daily AM or PM practice. Keep doing your five minutes minimum of meditation, and add an element of either Balance, Self-Compassion, Gratitude.

To cultivate **Balance**, make your practice more restful. Suggestions: Lie down comfortably instead of sitting, listen to a guided relaxation before bed, journal for a period of time, or extend the length of your practice.

To cultivate **Self-Compassion**, do a breathing meditation with one palm over your heart. Listen to a guided self-compassion meditation. See resources on course website for suggestions.

To cultivate **Gratitude**, include a gratitude practice in your AM or PM meditation. Write down five things you are grateful for every day in a notebook, or make a gratitude jar.

2. Review your blue handout from Week 2 on mindfulness practices in daily life. Choose one to practice this week. It can be a single time, or multiple. Choose what feels realistic and enjoyable, and write down your intention to do it. These mindfulness practice help us cultivate the awareness, slower pace, and appreciation for life that we need to skilfully practice the yamas.

3. Choose one of the yamas to practice, and a specific way you will practice it. Write it down in a positive statement. For example, “This week, I will practice non-harm. I will practice restraint in speech by not saying anything unkind or malicious about people.” Read this statement during your daily AM or PM practice.

Example of Statement for Week 3

Practice. Write it down, read it daily.

- (1) This week, I will spend 20 minutes before bed each night relaxing in a Restorative yoga pose. I will listen to the guided meditation “Making your Life Sacred” by Sarah Blondin on the Insight Time app, and spend the remaining time breathing deeply and slowly. Then I will write down in my journal three things I was grateful for today. (2) I will also cook one mindful meal. (3) I will practice the yama non-excess by eating my meals slowly, enjoying the flavors and textures, and paying attention to when I have had “just enough,” and stop eating. When I fail to do this and eat too much, I’ll notice that too.