

Welcome Back!

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

Week Two



*Please journal on the question:
What did I learn during my 7 days of meditation?*

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

8. SAMĀDHI

Bliss which defies description.

7. DHYANA

contemplation, mindless attention.

6. DHĀRANĀ

Steadying the mind.

5. PRATYAHARA

detachment from the world, sitting quietly aware of breath.

3. ASANA

postures and movement.

1. YAMA

Self restraints.

4. PRANAYAMA

Breathing techniques.

2. NIYAMA

Things to do, coming to terms with yourself.



The Basic Idea of Yoga

Ordinary unhappiness comes from being unable to tolerate the present how it is.

The solution is to turn inward and find stillness in your mind.

We do this by allowing thoughts, sensations, worries, excitements, cravings to rise and fall without chasing or twisting away from them.

There is a simple, practical yet not easy way to do this: meditation training and other mindfulness practices.

We are trying to strengthen our ability to be with life how it is.

The Noble Failure - realizing how hard it is to focus the mind on one thing for more than a few second. Discovering that it is crazy in there!

Tying the Puppy to the Post - the discovery that if you bring your attention back to one thing repeatedly, it will eventually settle.

The Witness - your True Self, or Soul. The part of you that is able to notice your thoughts can guide your attention back to the chosen object.

Dharana - One of the 8 Limbs; meditation training; a state of pleasant absorption.

Asana - yoga postures; trains us to be in the present; develop self-awareness; increase discipline; unite body + breath + mind

Dukkha vs. Sukha

- Dukkha means suffering. A persistent dissatisfaction with how things are.
- Sukha means sweetness. Everything is okay, even if it is not perfect.
- Not the same as “sad” and “happy.”
- Dukkha = always squirming out of the present, wishing things were different.
- Sukha = being able to sit with both joy and sorrow.



Yogis created a detailed map of dukkha

Raga. Craving, clinging, grabby, anxious, greedy. The opposite of savoring.

Dvesha. Aversion, hatred, avoidance. Saying “no” to the experience of the present moment. Letting what you don’t like ruin everything.

Moha. Delusion. Head in the sand. Tell me when it’s over!

Not everything unpleasant is 'bad'

Not all anger, craving, aversion, dislike is bad. These things are part of natural human experiences.

They are bad when they are “afflictive,” or cause suffering

1. **Disturbing.** You are agitated. Your mind is not calm.
2. **Obscuring.** You can't see things for how they are.
3. **Separative.** You cannot experience things how they are bc you are obsessed with how things should be.

The Skill of Yoga

Yoga helps us develop the skill to feel anger, craving, aversion, discomfort and *choosing* how to respond, instead reacting without awareness, feeling hijacked.

The skill is the same as noticing your thoughts in basic meditation practice. Sit in your “Witness” seat, notice what’s going on inside, and making a choice.

“Here’s the real genius part: all that compulsive eating and sexing and consuming and shopping is an attempt to get rid of the feeling of craving. It’s not a celebration of craving at all. It’s a way to avoid feeling it!”

-Stephen Cope

Journaling Prompt

When do you feel hijacked? When do you react in a way that you regret? Spend a few minutes journaling about when it happens, and ideas about why.

- Gossiping about a coworker when you feel insecure
- Drinking more alcohol than you want to when stressed or anxious
- Breaking healthy eating commitments when your cravings get strong
- Snapping at a loved one when they don't do what you want or expected
- Numbing out with media when something unpleasant is happening

How can yoga help us do better?

Through the power of inward investigation, yogis discovered this chain reaction:

1. Input. Consciousness is constantly bombarded with stimuli.
2. Appraisal. Consciousness evaluates each input. Supported by neuroscience.
3. Impulse. Consciousness reacts with: attraction, aversion or neutrality.
4. Action. You react to the attraction (craving), aversion or neutral feeling.

Creating Freedom in the Chain of Events

Without yoga, the cycle collapses into one event beyond our control.

InputAppraisalImpulseReaction

With yoga, we can separate the cycle into distinct event and make choices.

Input

Appraisal

Impulse

Conscious Action

Suffering vs. Freedom

Attraction and aversion are not the problem; they are natural part of the human experience. Rather, suffering comes from the unwanted, impulsive reaction to them. It is possible to experience attraction and aversion without suffering, or acting on them.

Freedom comes through familiarizing ourselves with the chain of events, and recognizing it's happening. This comes from carefully training your attention, which is precisely the role of meditation.



Your Daily Meditation Practice

- Add a mantra or word
- Count your breath
- Adjust the length
- Change the time or place
- Decide to use a recording
- Decide to sit in silence
- Add a candle!
- Make it cozier
- Ask a loved one to join you

Mindfulness in Daily Life

“Mindfulness is the continuous practice of touching deeply every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly present with your body and your mind, to harmonize your intentions and actions, and to be in harmony with those around you. We don’t need to make a separate time for this outside of our daily activities. We can practice mindfulness in every moment of the day - in the kitchen, the bathroom, or the garden, and as we go from one place to another. We can do the same things we always do - walking, sitting, working, eating, and so on - with mindful awareness of what we’re doing. Our mind is with our actions.”

-Thich Nat Hahn