



As a yoga teacher, it is important to me that what I bring to you in each class comes from not only what I have learned in yoga teacher training, but also from experiential wisdom and knowledge – those things that come out of my own experiences, what I have learned through my practice.

During the month of April, when my husband and I needed to be away to attend to family matters out of state, it was my most high intention to maintain my practice and fuel it with, among other things, a renewed healthy eating life style. After just a couple of days I began to realize that was idealistic and simply not realistic for this time. We found ourselves in situations that required our full and undivided attention, commitment and focus as we had to make life altering decisions regarding another person's care. I found it necessary to not only let go of my practice, but the sense of guilt I held for not getting on my mat. *Would my practice survive this time of being away from it, maybe 4 weeks or even more, I asked myself.*

If you come to love the practice of yoga and take it deeply to yourself, you will over time, without necessarily realizing it, *become* the practice; and this does not mean just what you physically do on the mat. The movements, the concentration, the breathing, the meditations, they truly impact and change you through and to the very deepest levels of your being. And at times when you are not able to keep up your mat practice, there is something sustaining you that likely would not be there were you not a practicing yogi.

No matter how little time you can pull together in a day to do even one pose for a few minutes, or no matter how many days, or even weeks, might pass before you are able to once again find a few of those precious moments for your practice, do not give it up. Let that be your practice. Do not talk yourself into quitting altogether just because you cannot live up to some preconceived idea of what your practice should look like. Whatever your practice is, *is* your practice. Whatever it is you do makes a difference. Stay with it and keep coming back to it again and again and again.

When I got back on my mat after being away for so long, it was the most amazing returning, a renewal, a restoring, a bringing me back to me. *Then my question became, what would I have done had I not had my practice to return to.* I am beginning again anew – my body is stiff, my joints feel stuck, my muscles weaker, but it feels so good in my body, mind and spirit to be back into my practice, no matter what that is, no matter what shape that takes. There are styles of yoga practice that make the transitioning back a little smoother, a little gentler. Practicing yin style and, most especially, restorative yoga poses are exceptionally wonderful for these times.

I call my yoga "Metta Yoga." "Metta" means "loving kindness." I truly believe that if your yoga practice is not treating you with loving kindness, if it is one full of regret and remorse, guilt for missing a day, wearing you out, not giving you peace of mind when you have to allow life circumstances to take over for a while, perhaps you might want to rethink why you want to practice yoga – what have you set for your yoga goals, what are your reasons for your practice, and what do you aspire to in your practice. Me? I want a certain gentleness, peace, nurturing, healing, a sense that my being is lovingly cared for by me and the practice I choose to do. That is the kind of yoga I do. That is the kind of yoga I will teach to you.

Shanti, Jan