

What Yoga means to me

I remember my very first encounter with yoga. At that time, I thought that yoga was something very fashionable and trendy thing to do. I came to the class designed for the for beginners where the instructor kept telling us that she never taught beginners and that she does not know where to start. She kept on coming up to me to help me twisting my body into the most unnatural poses. It felt very painful and uncomfortable. I left the class with the notion that yoga is not for me. Years later I signed up for a professional development class designed for teachers called Nalini kids. The instructor had requested that we pre-read a book before the class. Then, while taking a class we were taught about how to make the connections between our body and our soul and teach this to our students. While this learning experience had made a profound effect on me I felt that I need to learn and understand so much more before I can teach this to my students. This is how my journey into yoga had begun. Before I can continue I must admit that I am still at the very beginning of my journey but at the same time I feel that I have learned so much. The transformation that I am going through cannot be ignored, I am a completely different person compared to who I was before.

One of the first profound things that have happen to me is how I react now to stress. Anxiety is the disease of the century. We are anxious about our jobs, our families, our health and our finances. We learn early on in life that to get anywhere in life we need to prepare ourselves for life-long competition. Once we get to the point A, which we've been striving for years, the next level of stress would become how to stay at point A or how to get above that level. I remember even worrying when things would go well. That to me would mean that something bad would happen soon, since everything comes in cycles, isn't it? That is how my mind would work. Yoga teaches us about what is important in our lives, more like it reminds us about it all the time. I catch myself more often now looking at my children and feeling blessed, noticing and enjoying the sounds of birds outside my window in the early morning hours, and just feeling full of life as I tell myself to take a deep breath. I still experience stress but my reaction to it now is completely different. I am more of an observer of it than a participator. I still notice things but I do not react to them as I used to.

The times we live in are very complicated by all the things we do to ourselves and others. There is so much hatred around that all we do is hate someone or something. People who take a stand against hatred end up hating those who hate others without even realizing it. We teach our children that they need to speak up their opinions on different issues and then we cannot understand why there is so much intolerance around these days. Yoga teaches us how see each other as the same and yet different, how to love each other for our differences and how to accept all our differences. It teaches us how to leave in a moment and how to listen and understand what is happening inside our souls. The modern society, for the most part of it, grew completely deaf to the inner voices inside our souls. We forgot how to listen, we forgot how to love unconditionally, and we forgot how to notice the natural beauty that surround us all the time. More than ever its becoming politically incorrect to be religious and to believe in god, but what we don't realize is that based on our human nature that creates a void that needs to filled by something. Yoga can fill that void. Yoga is not a religion. We don't need to fight over it or prove that is better than somebody else's believes. Yoga can give a sense of structure to those who need to

have structure in their lives and at the same time it provides complete freedom to those who cannot stand having their lives structured in any way.