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“What...Are you CRAZY?!”

By Sadhvi Parānandā

Every morning I go for a walk with my hero-dog Seeker. I do mantras as I take in the sounds, smells and splendor of the tranquil neighborhood around The Movement Center. Last week I had an unusual experience at a nearby park.

I heard the primal scream of a young woman. My first thought was that a girl had been kidnapped by someone who hangs out around the park. Seeker and I ran toward the sound. When we reached the area I believed the scream came from, a man came rushing toward us diagonally from the bushes. He was reaching inside his pants. I cautioned him to stay away from me.

As he continued toward us I said to him loudly and firmly

“WHAT, are you CRAZY! This dog is going to bite you!”

(I laughed to myself later that I am master of the obvious. *Of course* he was not in his right mind.) I needed to repeat this message three times, pointing dramatically to Seeker, before the man focused on the dog and retreated. Then he broke into a nearby apartment after attempting to car-jack a vehicle.

To make a long story short, I later learned that the man, who was both mentally disturbed and tweaking on meth, had broken into a woman’s apartment. He had a long criminal history that included violence toward women.

I attribute my composure in this situation to my yoga practice, because it is through yoga that we develop a strong and flexible body, a steady and open mind, and an uplifted spirit. Integrated, this Power of Spirit acts as a force of nature that protects and guides us.

We have a very long history of yoga practice at The Movement Center. I was our first certified yoga teacher. Back in 1976, Swamiji asked me to take



a yoga teacher training program. It was one of the first in the country, led by Vishnudevananda Saraswati. Before that I had attended a few yoga classes in my hometown. Those classes were held in a church where we practice in-between the pews.

We have had an active yoga practice and yoga teacher training program since 1977. To give you some history: In the seventies we produced a series of yoga videos with Lilias Folan, who was one of the first yoga teachers on TV. She had a PBS series entitled "Lilias, Yoga and You."

As we developed our Teacher Training program we studied with Mukunda Stiles and continued training with Gary Kraftsow, AG Mohan and TKV Desikachar.

Today our yoga program provides a deep practice where asana, breath, awareness, and meditation are equally important. Central to our program is cultivating flow: cultivating the power of spirit within us. As such, our program is geared for every kind of body, fitness level and age.

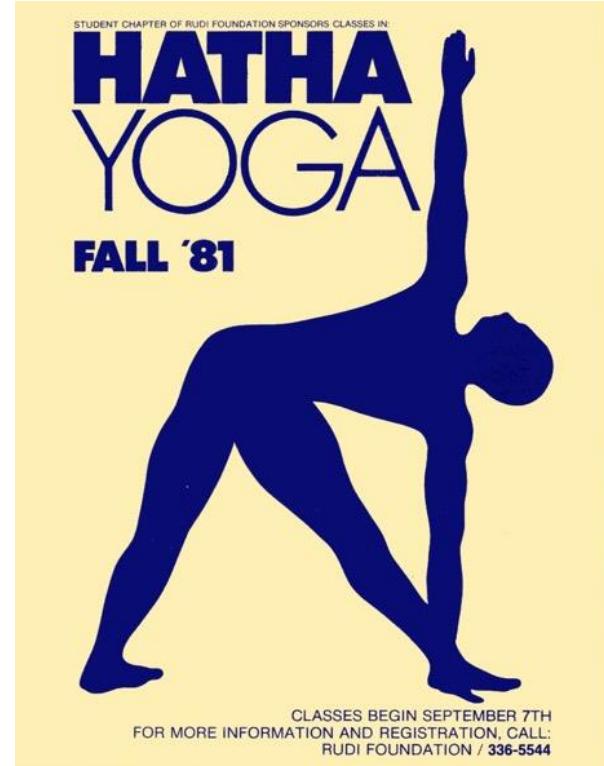
Our physical state, age and perceived lack of time are not valid excuses for avoiding yoga practice. *Seriously*, there is no excuse for neglecting to honor and take care of this vessel we have been given to house our sacred spirit. We are on this earth for a time, in this place, for a reason. Becoming contracted, both physically and mentally, is *not* the reason.

Try this!

- * Commit to practicing yoga 10 minutes per day. This commitment can be as simple as lying on the floor and following your breath.
- * Stay aware of every breath you take for those 10 minutes.
- * On every exhale feel your energy rising up.
- * Observe how you feel at the end of 10 minutes of conscious breathing.

Bonus

- * Longer practice is always optimal. You may find that 10 minutes gets you started and you are inspired to continue on.
- * Consciously integrate the three regions of your body:
Lower region - from your perineum to just below your navel



Middle region - from your solar plexus to your throat

Upper region - from your soft palate to the top of your head

- * Breathe into each region, starting below your navel. Fully inhale, retain the breath, exhale, bringing your attention to your heart center. Inhale into your heart center, retain the breath, exhale to the chakra above and between your eyebrows. Inhale into this upper region, retain your breath there, and exhale rising up above your head. Repeat.

Enjoy!

Namaste,

Sadhvi Parānandā



**Sadhvi Parānandā is a longtime student of
Swami Chetanananda and a senior teacher at
The Movement Center.**

**Sadhvi may be reached at
parananda.sadhvi@gmail.com**

If you'd like a teacher from The Movement Center to speak in your area or for your organization, please contact us at info@TheMovementCenter.com or 503-231-0383.