

YOGI WRITINGS: CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

Debbie Patton

“Press the mound of your first finger into the mat.” I concentrate on my hand. The spread of the fingers, the whiteness of my first finger as I work to press the mound of my first finger into the mat. I work my thoughts through my body trying to remember all that Brenda has said over the years to help us get the Downward Facing Dog, Adho Mukha Svanasana, position correct. Externally rotate your arms, firm the muscles across your shoulder blades, spread them out, lift the belly (especially if you tend to get sway back, a curse of bendy types), lift the hips, push back and up, engage your thighs, pull them up from the knees, straighten your legs, spread your toes, lift, and most important, don't forget to breathe. And that is only one pose.

I came to yoga after my 50th birthday because I felt out of shape and needed an exercise program that would not bore me and one that would inspire me to be my best. I love to dance but taking ballet with 10 year olds again was out of the question – yes I tried that once. Let's just say that my motivation for taking ballet was not the same as the cute little ten year olds.

I have tried the whole gym thing numerous times. I can keep myself going for, oh, maybe a week, max two weeks, then I am bored. I just can't seem to make myself do something for the sake of exercise no matter how much I need it. I tried all the distractions; listen to music, read a book while on the elliptical, even taking the classes where someone else is helping to motivate me. I do feel better after but I am bored. No challenge.

I am not quite sure what led me to Valley Yoga after my birthday, I think I found it on line searching

for a yoga study, but suffice it to say that I found my exercise, my challenge, and much more.

Yoga is all about the whole person, the melding of the mind, body and spirit, and even though we practice together, it is all about the personal journey. Oh – and the exercise is extremely challenging. There have been so many days when I just

need to hear Brenda say, “Settle the fluctuations of the mind. Follow the rhythm of your breath.” Yoga takes so much concentration that the rest of the world gets put on pause for a brief amount of time and allows you to regain yourself. Sometimes I have left feeling nauseas because of the bent up toxins I have accumulated that Brenda has twisted out of me. Lots of water on those days to flush them out.

I have learned so much about my body through yoga practice, far more than I learned at the gym. I am not symmetrical, both sides are not the same, I can do a pose on one side and not the other, I can stretch one arm more than the other, I have my own strengths and weaknesses as does every one, so there is always something subtle to work on in my body. I also have good days and bad days where my body says “Umm, no not today” and I try to listen.

When my husband was going through chemotherapy and the stress was immense, yoga was my mental and physical saving grace. A time when I could let it go for a few minutes and release. When Brenda says “let your eyeballs fall to the back of your skull” my whole face felt and feels the release of the tension. Yoga gives me the energy and strength to meet whatever life brings head on.

And over the course of the years there have been many struggles in our group of regulars; cancer battles, surgeries, dizziness, separations, loss and together we have supported and comforted one another. The studio oozes with positive energy. Another benefit of yoga, a family of friends who not only help each other in achieving poses but also help each other with whatever life brings our way.



I am so glad that I found yoga.

So glad that I found Valley Yoga and all its yogis.

So glad that I found Brenda Proudfoot.

So glad to celebrate the light in all of us.

Namaste.