

# YOGI WRITINGS: Karen Folger

Photos by Kathy Prekoski

I'm sore today, the kind of post yoga workshop day sore Brenda might call "delicious." It makes me feel more alive. I came to Valley Yoga seven years ago with a vague idea of wanting something. I had a sense that yoga could help calm my center and relieve stress, while keeping my body moving, something office dwellers can relate to. Not being very good at discipline, I was surprised I kept coming back, during good times and bad. I have become immensely grateful for the time I spend in the yoga studio, because the benefits of yoga aren't always immediately apparent.

I started reading the Yoga Sutras after hearing Brenda talk about them. I'm still struck by the first line in Chip Hartranft's translation, "Now, the teachings of yoga." Perhaps I have taken that one line out of context by concentrating on the "now" part, but tomorrow you might really need those teachings. And you can only begin now. Tomorrow could go something like this:

November 16, 2010, a beautiful warm fall day, the kind of day where you just want to hike and play. I had taken the day off to work on my garage. I got out a ladder, gathered a few tools, and hastily climbed up on the ladder. Yes, it was a little wobbly, but it would be fine. NOT! It's strange how slow things seemed to happen. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that the ground was moving. "What the...," BAM! I hit the ground on the heel of my right foot, a fall of about 5 feet. After a few expletives I settled into the situation. "Ouch, my knee hurts. OK, well, I can bend



it. OK, try and stand up. Nope. Of course I didn't bring the phone. OK, I will have to crawl on my hands and knees to the house to get a phone." Crawling up the outside stairs, I was glad that I had been doing yoga and hiking, and that I was in pretty good shape. Crawling was almost fun.

My heel was fractured badly. I was sort of OK with casts and wheelchairs and crutches, assuming I would be hiking by spring and going to yoga class. I couldn't get on the floor for a long time for fear of not being able to get back up. I couldn't sit on my meditation cushion. I couldn't do downward dog. Yet I was so grateful for all the years I had been practicing yoga because I could do some of what my body needed.

I tried everything to keep moving my legs. I dreamed of hiking and running. I did headstand on chairs. My body remembered things that my head didn't. Legs up the wall became my favorite pose – it kept the swelling down and drained the lymph.

The teachings of yoga slowly sink into my being. The yoga sutras aren't about yoga asana; they are like

mental asana. This is exactly what I needed as I struggled to recover, something to do with my mind when it wanted to go to dark places. The physical asanas had prepared my mind to endure the trauma. When my mind couldn't stop I would do some poses. Physical alignment has now become a major effort, but asana practice gave me many tools. Meditation practice helps me just be OK with it all.

It took five months to return to yoga class. I wear a lace up brace now that limits the sideways motion in the damaged joint. I can't stand alone on my right foot very long. Seconds. Sometimes I over do it and have more pain the next day. But I keep coming back. Yoga helps me stay centered and at peace. The studio is a place where I can just be and move however I can. "Now, the teachings of yoga". Boy, Patanjali was not kidding. Practice now, live now. Tomorrow you might really need these teachings, in ways you never imagined.

I don't know how far I can recover. I'm still going to doctors and looking at potential future surgeries. Fifteen months after the doctor kept saying I would be fine, I'm still struggling. Hiking? Warrior three? I'll just keep coming to yoga class and see what happens.

