

Setting off on a New Path: Yoga Immersion & Teacher Training

By Kim Haas

I've been dipping my toe into a yoga practice for many years now. I started off using DVD's at home. A couple of years ago I took a few classes at a local studio, took a long break then bought a Groupon for classes at Spirit Rising. Loved it but still didn't commit to a regular practice. Another year passed and I received an email for a free yoga class for my birthday. This was in July. I went. Loved it. The studio moved to a larger space and as part of the Grand Opening, they offered a week's worth of free unlimited classes. I took advantage of that and tried different styles, different teachers and bought a package of classes. Used them. Bought another package and began to feel I was being stingy with my classes, not wanting to use them up too fast. So, I decided that on January 1, I would commit to a three-month unlimited package to really immerse myself, see if I could commit to a regular practice, see if I got my money's worth. Boy, did I. The middle of a dreary, midwest winter was the perfect time to try this. It got me out of the house, out of my head, into my body and into a supportive, nurturing community.

Then I read about the Yoga Immersion program as part of the Teacher Training. You didn't have to want to be a teacher to take it. It was being offered to anyone who wanted to deepen their practice. That really called to me, but the cost gave me pause. We have one daughter in college and another on her way in a couple of years. Could or should we spend that kind of money on me? I continued taking six to eight classes a week and kept being drawn back to the description on yoga immersion. I'd read about it on my computer, a little wistful but always managed to talk myself out of it, telling myself that some day I'd do it, but not now. Then on my way home from class one day it struck me that it wasn't that we couldn't afford it. I was choosing not to spend money on it. On me. I figured out a payment plan, ran it by my always incredibly supportive husband and committed to it.

It's not an exaggeration to say it has been life-changing. Learning and

doing the poses is the least important part of the practice. I began this thinking that I'd finally get into a real meditation practice, gain some strength and flexibility and maybe get a yoga butt if I was lucky. What I am learning is that, as Joel Kramer writes, "At its core, yoga is a process that involves confronting your limits and transcending them." The first night we met as a class, I think I looked a little shell-shocked by the end at all the information thrown at us and once I realized all that would be required of us. This was about way more than getting a yoga butt. I got a little shook up, a little scared. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea. Maybe this wasn't the right time. But as I read the material I shook my head at myself. Are you kidding? This is exactly what you've been looking for. A way to be healthy and whole; to let go of the past, of bad habits, or mental, emotional and spiritual baggage that's been weighing me down. A way to get unstuck. I can't tell you how many books I have with the words "stuck" or "unstuck" in them. I can't imagine how many times that word appears on my blog or in my journals. Way too many. As Stacey says, being stuck is just fear of changing.

So, I took a deep breath, trusted my instincts and dove in. Fears of my life being capsized still haunt me but I have faith. Kramer touches on this fear perfectly when he writes, "You might think that changing deeply could make you so different that you'd lose touch with those you love and even yourself. Actually, the transformation that yoga brings makes you more yourself, and opens you up to loving with greater depth." Most of the changes have been coming from the inside, where all authenticity is born. Sure, I've toned up, gotten stronger, more flexible. I sleep better, rarely needing to take anything. No allergies this spring. Aches that have hounded me are disappearing or at least easing. But it's been more than that. For the first time, I am feeling at home in my own skin. I no longer feel I am at the mercy of my mind, of my emotions. I feel lighter, energized. Lit up. I no longer feel compelled to look outside of myself for the answers. I am learning to trust that I know what is best for me. Teacher Training has given me this amazing toolbox filled with knowledge, tips and techniques and wisdom that I can draw on as needed to help me along the way.

Instead of yoga being a tidal wave that ripped me out of life, it has slowly been seeping into all the nooks and crannies of my life, lifting

me up to meet the life I am meant to be living, to be the person I am meant to be.

Namaste.