

The Gift of Stillness

The value of practice of any kind is that we become better able to perform a particular activity. The expression “Practice makes Perfect” holds true for most things in life. It is no different with Yoga. The ancient scripts encourage a time of stillness and meditation on a daily basis. For many of us, this becomes a challenge; just one more thing to do in a day that seems full to the breaking point. How can I find the time?

Many studies are being done on the value of meditation. Quieting the mind leads to improved immune system function, making us better equipped to stay healthy and strong physically, mentally and emotionally. If the word “meditation” itself is overwhelming to you, consider it a practice of coming to stillness. In an ideal world, we would have a brief period of time each morning before interacting with others to spend in quiet reflection.

It isn't necessary to sit on a special cushion and in a special position; although some do find it beneficial to have a certain room or space to come to each time they choose to “get still.” Creating the intention is what is important. By that, I mean wherever you are, take the time to stop all activity for a few moments, and bring your awareness to your breathing. I find this easier if I put one hand on my chest, and one hand on my belly, and feel the gentle movement of those areas as they expand with each inhalation, and contract with the exhalation. I can feel the warmth of my own hands in this position, and find it comforting, as if I am being gently caressed. Practice in this way whenever you can. If you take six breaths in this way, your brain begins to secrete chemicals that allow you to relax. Try taking twelve breaths. This can be done in a minute or so. You are now on the way to a practice of meditation. Congratulations!

This is a gift that you can give yourself every day. Once this can be done without resistance, you are ready for conscious breathing at other times. Like when you are driving, or facing an unusual amount of anxiety or agitation. Bring awareness to how you are feeling, then to how you are breathing, and shift to what you have been practicing. Observe the results. It is rarely ever effective to tell an anxious person to relax and take a deep breath, but if one has practiced breath awareness on a regular basis, you can then use the breath as a tool when dealing with stress. Keep practicing...you will not be disappointed, and you will make progress in direct relation to your effort.

Namaste!

