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FALL 2012
VOLUME XVI, ISSUE II

Yoga Living



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Practice**

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Vijayendra Pratap, Ph.D.



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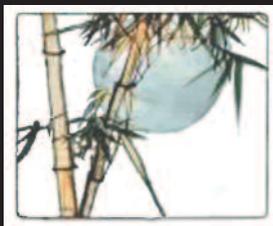
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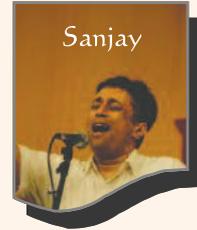
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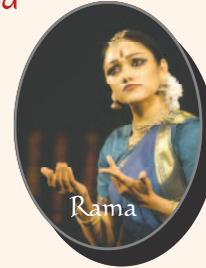
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Letter From the Editor



*“Live as if you were to die tomorrow.
Learn as if you were to live forever.”*

– Mahatma Gandhi

Your brain is a thinking organ that learns and grows by interacting with the world through perception and action. Mental stimulation improves brain function and actually protects against cognitive decline, as does physical exercise. The human brain is able to continually adapt and rewire itself. This amazing concept, called neuro-plasticity was popularized in a 2007 book titled *The Brain That Changes Itself* and is arguably one of the most important breakthroughs in the field of neuroscience.

In yoga, we have the concept of **Svadhya** as one of the basic tenants of a yoga lifestyle. Sva refers to the *individual self* and adhyaya can be translated as *study* or *education*. The literal translation of this word then, is self-study or self-education. Some schools of yoga take svadhya to mean study of the sacred texts or scriptures, while others believe that it is a life long process of self-inquiry and adaptation based on observation. I personally believe that it is both.

In the modern world it is good to read ancient texts and study books by wise teachers that guide the process of self-realization – that input is vital and not to be underestimated. Yet reading and intellectual study has its limitations - it is very different thing to understand a concept intellectually than it is to have an applied or realized understanding of it. As Albert Einstein said *“Any fool can know. The point is to understand...it's not that I am so smart. But I stay with the questions much longer.”* In this way, svadhya becomes a life-long journey that holds the potential for multiple layers of experience and understanding within the self.

How else can one practice Svadhya? Of course, a regular yoga practice or some other form of contemplative movement is an excellent way to turn attention inward and observe the mind. Meditation is powerful tool that is also intended to cultivate a deeper understanding of self. While I am fond of these approaches, I also believe that they are not the only ways self-study can be practiced.

There is a tremendous opportunity for evolution every time a person goes out of his/her comfort zone to learn something or interact with new concepts, ideas, cultures or people that are unfamiliar or different than their everyday norm. With the proper intent and awareness, doing things like traveling, taking a night school class, learning a new language, going to a weekend seminar, watching an educational TV show, learning a new form of movement or doing service based projects can be engaged in as a process of self study and development.

In its most pragmatic definition, self-study could also be described as a process whereby a person intentionally examines his/her actions, behaviors (or lack thereof), emotions, dispositions, repetitive patterns, etc. in order to understand the inherent strengths and challenges of their personality. In viewing all learning and educational experiences as a form of self-study, every individual has the potential to shift the momentum of their life towards understanding the inner workings of his/her mind and uncover his/her true nature and potential.

Whether it's an article that advances your interest or awareness in a topic or practice, a connection to local holistic practitioner that allows you to better understand a health issue or the discovery of a local training or seminar that opens a new door of learning for you, we hope that you find this issue of Yoga Living to be a supporting tool in your process of learning and self discovery!

Your Editor –
Kristen Butera, Editor



Yoga Living

Your Healthy Lifestyle Guide

Fall 2012
Volume XVI, Issue II



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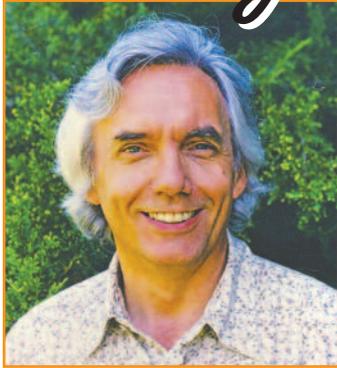
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Yoga Living, Your Healthy Lifestyle Guide, promotes the field of Yoga as a healthy lifestyle. The practice of a Traditional Yoga program includes each facet of life. This magazine introduces readers to resources for healthy living. Please share your copy of *Yoga Living* with your friends. Contact us at 610-688-7030 or at info@yogalivingmagazine.com. Advertisers go to www.yogalivingmagazine.com for a media kit.

Georg Feuerstein



Born 1947, died August 25, 2012

"We cannot change people. We can only provide the conditions facilitating self-generated change. Those conditions are compassion and a positive regard for the other person, as well as the demonstration that we ourselves are willing to change and grow. Beyond this, we may have great faith in the possibility of change, for the universe blinks into and out of existence in every instant, giving us the opportunity to recreate ourselves."
– Georg Feuerstein

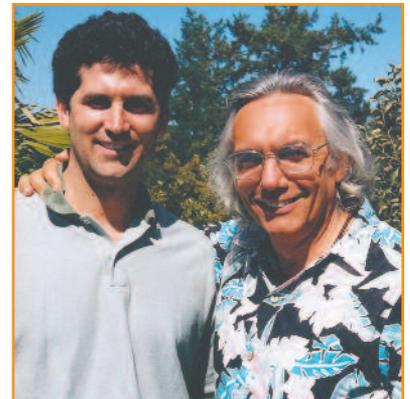
As this issue of Yoga Living was getting ready to go to press, we were informed of the passing of Dr. Georg Feuerstein, a preeminent Yoga scholar and author of over 30 books on Mysticism, Yoga, Tantra, Sanskrit, Green Living & Hinduism. He translated, among other traditional texts, the Yoga Sutras and Bhagavad Gita for Western audiences.

A scholar-practitioner of the first magnitude, Georg offered profound insights into the history and practice of Yoga and his legacy of contributions to the global Yoga community are vast and awe inspiring, to which we all owe a huge debt of gratitude.

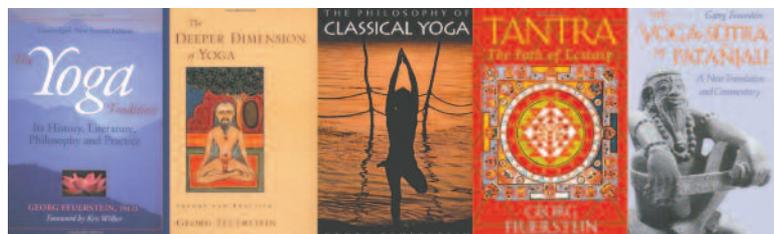
Yoga Living has a special personal connection to Georg through our publisher Bob Butera. Bob spent time with Georg in the early 1990's while he was in graduate school. He shares his personal memories here:

One day while writing my Yoga Therapy PhD dissertation, I was having trouble with a few Sanskrit terms and my CIIS professor was traveling in India and unavailable to answer my questions. While referencing one of Georg Feuerstein's books, I decided to try calling his non-profit organization to figure out how to write him an email and ask him instead of my professor. Well, Georg personally answered the call! 30 minutes later, I had all of my questions answered and had discovered a new mentor. Georg took a few more calls during the course of that year and his insights helped to sharpen my dissertation on how a therapeutic Yoga program could help those living with HIV and AIDS.

What started as mentorship evolved into a friendship, and during my years in San Francisco, Georg and I cultivated a positive relationship around our mutual interest and belief in the power of a Yoga lifestyle. The Yoga community was small at that time, and as my connections with others in the community grew, I learned that Georg made himself available to just about everyone who asked for his help. He passionately wished to communicate the teachings of Yoga to the fullest extent possible. He once said to me, "if I can help a person even take a small step forward on their journey, I want to help in any way I can." That was the kind of guy he was – generous of heart and mind – and a true scholar, communicator and supporter of all people interested in the Yoga tradition.



*Georg Feuerstein & Bob Butera
in California, 1995*



In ancient times, the yogin looked to natural world and within themselves to cultivate understanding in their goal of self-realization; today, we have the benefit of books that transmit the teachings, channeled through minds such as Georg's. For those who ask what they can do to honor Georg, the request is a simple one: put into practice the teachings of Yoga that he spent his life exploring and interpreting for our benefit and understanding.



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Meditation for Your Life:

Managing Expectations in Practice

EXPECTATIONS CAN BE DISASTROUS IN MANY AREAS.

When we project what we think an outcome should be and later have to face the reality that the outcome was out of our control, we feel the sting of broken expectations. We wish to control reality to make it what we want it to be, but the only things that we can actually control are our actions and reactions to reality. Expectations set us up for failure when reality hits home – and reality often hits pretty hard! Acknowledging what you know but being open to what you do not know is one step toward overcoming the delusions of our expectations. This article intends to help individual practitioners illuminate their own expectations of meditation through real life examples.

EXAMPLE #1:

I HEARD THAT MEDITATION IS GOOD FOR HEALING.

After struggling with a health condition but finding no remedy from other sources, Melanie turned to meditation after reading an article about its healing effects. When a month passed and nothing changed, she felt let down once again. Meditation was no different than anything else Melanie had tried. She later learned from a psychotherapist that meditation is a piece of a larger lifestyle that would improve her health – a lifestyle to be maintained in sickness and health.

Lesson: Make an inner spiritual principle the goal and let any physical effect be a welcome by-product. A clearer mind does give us a greater awareness of our body's condition and a compassionate relationship to it, but be careful not to add pressure to your meditation practice to fix a specific health issue.

EXAMPLE #2:

MEDITATION WILL REDUCE MY CHRONIC PAIN.

After trying just about everything else to alleviate repeated bouts of back pain, Jane decided she would meditate after learning from books on meditation

that it could diminish pain. But Jane soon discovered that meditation was more difficult than she had expected and that sitting for long periods of time actually hurt her back. She was more than a little let down. How could she hope to do this beneficial practice if she was not physically able to sit comfortably? Fortunately, Jane subsequently learned that slow walking meditation, deep breathing and relaxation exercises provide similar effects to sitting on a cushion. Lucky for Jane, she was resourceful enough to continue exploring when her original expectation was not met.

Lesson: Relaxation of the mind-body complex decreases the tension on nerves that often decreases pain as well. The expansion of consciousness, however, will also help us to accept pain with a new perspective, which also changes our experience of it.

EXAMPLE #3:

I HOPE TO HAVE BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WHEN I AM CALM AND COMPOSED.

Despite his hope, Carl's meditation practice alone did not improve his marriage. It improved Carl's stress quotient, but his wife still had the same complaints. During a marital counseling session, Carl realized that he was not really listening to his wife; he was listening to his thoughts, not hers. When his mind and heart opened to her feelings, his marriage was saved. Meditation helped Carl to become more aware, which allowed him to see beyond himself and listen to another's point of view.

Lesson: A still mind adapts better because its awareness is expanded.

EXAMPLE #4:

A FRIEND WHO MEDITATES DOES NOT STRUGGLE WITH STRESS; MY STRESS WILL VANISH IF I MEDITATE TOO.

Throughout the years, Sally admired Joan, her genuinely calm and positive neighbor. Eventually, Sally joined Joan at her weekly meditation classes, and in time, Sally learned from Joan that she

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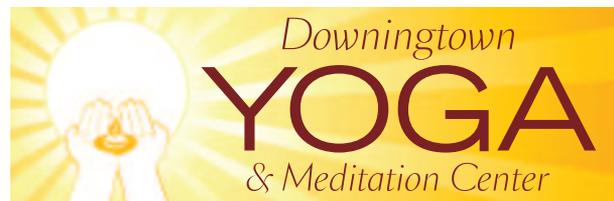
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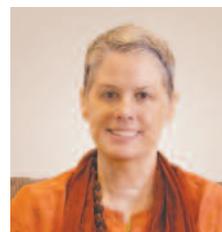
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frequently sees a counselor and regularly studies literature about cultivating peace. Joan also exercises daily and eats a healthy diet. Sally realized that if she wanted the equanimity she admired in Joan, she too would have to do more than meditate.

Lesson: Meditation is one tool for stress management among many that together create a lifestyle of well-being.

**EXAMPLE #5:
MEDITATION WILL HELP ME DOUBLE MY SALARY
BECAUSE MY CREATIVITY WILL BE ENHANCED.**

John is a workaholic who knows that overwork leads to diminishing returns. He chose to meditate in hopes of maximizing his productivity. His unemployed buddy Bill also meditates, believing it will manifest a job for him. Both men are meditating because they have misunderstood the popularized law of attraction: Focus on what you want, and you will attract it into your life. But John and Bill have not examined the essence of what they want. On the surface, both wanted better careers and financial gains, but deeper reflection enabled them to see that what they wanted was a happy, peaceful and safe existence for their families. In time, Jon and Bill let go of their desire for material measures of success and instead started to cultivate their internal experience of success. They simplified their lives and used their money more consciously.

Lesson: A stable mind can see what the real problems and solutions are, and what is truly needed or desired.

**EXAMPLE #6:
MEDITATION WILL ANSWER MY QUESTIONS WHENEVER
I WANT IT TO.**

Greg was at a standstill: Should he accept a promotion that would force him to move his family to another country, or should he pass on the promotion and keep his family rooted where they are? The family listed the pros and cons, but they were surprisingly equal. No one could see into the future, so Greg decided to find the answer by meditating on the question. But his meditations were full of disrupting thoughts; his ego persisted in its attempts to solve the situation. Finally, one day he let go of the ego's drive and stopped searching. A few weeks later, Greg shared this insight with his family: "Our happiness as a family will have to be found within each one of us. We can be happy here, and we can be happy in South America." The family finally decided to

move because they thought the relocation would be fun and realized they could always return to their hometown in the future.

Lesson: When answers to questions are not clear, allow the answers to find you in their own time. They will find you when you are open enough to receive them.

**EXAMPLE #7:
I HAVE BEEN MEDITATING FOR A FEW MONTHS, BUT
NOTHING IS HAPPENING.**

After a few months in the meditation training class, Betty told her teacher that nothing was happening in her practice. Betty reported that she meditated every day at the same time, using the same technique, but months had passed and she still had not seen a light or heard an inner voice – the kinds of things she had read about in some of her New Age books. Betty's meditation instructor reminded her of what many of the meditation teachers throughout the ages had said about becoming distracted from the true Self by extrasensory phenomena. She also directed Betty to explore her experience and interpretation of "nothing."

Lesson: It is helpful to have a meditation mentor to consult with because it is tough to measure progress in meditation during meditation.

**EXAMPLE #8:
I THOUGHT MEDITATION WOULD DECREASE MY
THOUGHTS, BUT THEY HAVE INCREASED!**

At the last Introduction to Meditation class, Ralph announced to the group that he had regressed during the course. Instead of a calm mind, he found he was having more thoughts now than when he had started the course. Although he did not say it aloud, he wondered if he could get his money back. But then the teacher surprised him by announcing to the class, "Ralph has, in fact, successfully begun the meditation self-discovery process. If anyone else has also discovered that he or she has more thoughts now than at the beginning, know that it means your consciousness has risen above the thinking mind. In order to realize that your mind has a lot of thoughts, you must have arrived at a place from which you can observe your own mind. When you come to understand the roots of your thoughts, they will begin to subside. Great work Ralph!"

Lesson: We see much turbulence when we are seated in the eye of the storm. ▲

Article based on the new book Meditation for Your Life: Creating a Plan that Suits Your Style by Robert Butera, PhD. Published by Llewellyn Worldwide, 2012.