

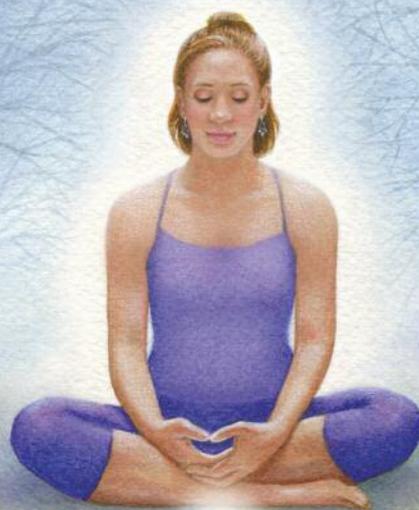
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WINTER 2013  
VOLUME XIV ISSUE III

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BOSNA

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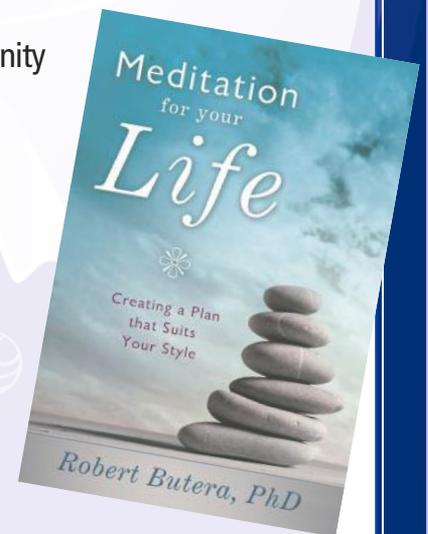
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# Letter From the Editor



## The Inner Journey

A few years ago, I went to yoga retreat where the facilitator asked the group what had prompted us to begin our personal inner journeys. While many of the people in the group were able to share a specific life event, I found myself unable to share anything solid with the group.

The question lingered when I returned home. Time was spent thinking about my formative years and all of the wonderful people who shared their knowledge along the way. Between community theater projects, church programs and AP English classes, there was a lot of discussion on things like life purpose, motivations behind individual actions, the true nature of man and the spiritual life. And while I may have always been inclined at some level to explore these kinds of topics, I still couldn't say if any of those interactions were where the inner journey actually started. So the question was let go, and trust was placed in the fact that the information would reveal itself when the time was right.

Then a few days ago, I was rearranging a bookshelf and came across a section of poetry books from young adulthood. In the midst of all the cleaning chaos, my attention settled on a copy of *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Upon dusting it off and cracking it open, an inscription was uncovered from a very dear old friend:

*Christmas, 1988*

*To Kristen – wishing you infinite love and insight as you travel the inner path.*

In the first couple of pages, a section colored over in faded pink highlighter called out:

*Beginning my studies the first step pleased me so much,  
The mere fact of consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,  
The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,  
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,  
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,  
But stop and loiter all the time and sing it in ecstatic songs*

My heart was full of joy reading these lines - my mind experiencing the stanza in the present moment, while my soul revisited the first time the words permeated into a certain level of consciousness. I knew without doubt that this is where the inner journey started. Whitman as a poet-guide taught me how to question and search for meaning in life, and ultimately how to live in the mystery.

After that first discovery in 1988, the book became a sort of traveling companion. The poems were read out loud and discussed in detail with my beloveds taking in the summer sun, sitting under a colorful tree in the crisp fall open air, curling up in front of winter fires and laying down next to rushing spring waters. Each exploration honored the cycles of nature, and we appreciated the verses not just in word but also in our intentions around reading them.

In 1992, I came believe that all of the knowledge available to me in that particular place in time had been revealed, and *Leaves of Grass* found a permanent home on an ever-evolving bookshelf. In the 20 years since that day, the inner journey as taken me to some unexpected, challenging and incredible places. As Whitman suggested, through the years, I have come to "*Know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for traveling souls.*"

The poetic power of imagination can help us to create a sense of empathy that opens and guides us to transcend our differences. Reading the perspectives of others on the inner journey offers a format to explore concepts and ideas that might seem contradictory without a need for resolution. This kind of spiritual maturity in learning creates fertile ground for a deep connection to self in order to experience personal and collective growth and harmony in the world.

The New Year is the perfect time to consider where we are on the inner journey and reconnect with what has inspired us along the way, allowing where we have been to inform where we are, as well as where we might be inspired to go.

Or as Whitman would say:

*O brave soul!  
O farther sail!  
O daring joy, but safe!  
Are they not all the seas of God?  
O farther, farther, farther sail!*



Your Editor In Joy –  
**Kristen Butera**

# Yoga Living

Your Healthy Lifestyle Guide

Winter 2013

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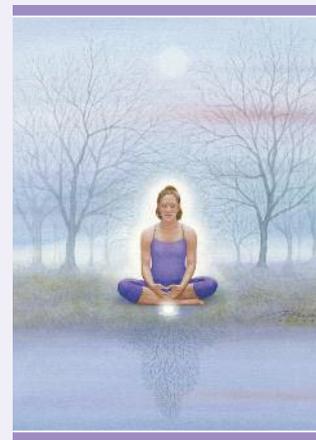
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*Yoga Living, Your Healthy Lifestyle Guide*, promotes the field of Yoga as a healthy lifestyle. The practice of a Traditional Yoga program includes each facet of life. This magazine introduces readers to resources for healthy living. Please share your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



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# Creating a Meditative Lifestyle

**MEDITATION CAN BE DEFINED IN A LITERAL MANNER AS AN EXERCISE OF FOCUSING THE MIND ON ONE THOUGHT, IMAGE, FEELING, OR CONCEPT.**

In the concentration-oriented meditation methods, the mind focuses on a word, a prayer, a visual image, a spiritual concept, or the breath. With the mindfulness type of meditation, you may simply set the mind in observer mode. Each of the literal definitions of meditation works toward a similar goal of quieting the mind. Another version to this question could be, "What is meditation in terms of how it relates to daily life?" Suddenly, the literal translation of an activity extends into the relationship between the practice of meditation and life.

At this point a tension exists between two parties—meditation and life. Does practicing meditation by sitting still each day from five to thirty minutes improve your life? Or does engineering your life in the direction of simplicity make you capable of meditating? In other words: Which comes first (the chicken or the egg question)—meditation or a healthy lifestyle?

Let's start from the meditation point of view. If you are going to be disciplined enough to sit still for an average of twenty minutes a day, that means you have to make sure that you have the proper food, because you can't concentrate on meditation if you are hungry. You must be rested, or you will fall asleep five minutes into your meditation. If you haven't exercised, you

will feel antsy during meditation practice. And, if you haven't cleared some free time with your family members, it will be very frustrating to meditate at home. At work, it is better to decrease any stress-based reactions to keep the mind steady for your evening meditation. Pretty much, just sitting to meditate causes you to balance every aspect of your life.



Let's see how meditation affects your life. OK, now you are meditating and realizing that even though your body is still, the mind races. Some days it races more than others. But each meditation session, you learn something new about yourself

and you feel more relaxed, focused, and peaceful at the end of the session. Due to this peace of mind, you tend to make better food choices as well as seem more optimistic. You are even tempered and have avoided arguing over small details. At work, you are better at seeing the larger picture, so your stress level is down. And, you are sleeping better, which probably has something to do with a more stable nervous system. Seems as though meditation practice has altered your approach to life!

It is overwhelming that there is a strong connection between overall healthy lifestyle and meditation practice.

So meditation brings a wealth of health, if you will, to your life. But what meditation exercise should is best for you personally? My honest answer is for you to discover by trial and error the type of meditation that works best for you. What I want you to do

is sell yourself on meditation by trying all the methods for short period durations.

Exhaustive research from my days as a Yoga Therapy Ph.D. student produced a list of six meditation style categories. Each of the six methods summarizes one way that the mind can be focused. The only best method is the one that works best for you. The wish is for you to be a happier person and a better person because you were empowered to figure out a successful meditation practice. Thereafter, you may seek out a group for further inspiration and instruction.

### A few tips for your meditation practice:

- Find a relatively quiet location but learn how to not react to unexpected sounds.
- Sit upright to avoid sleeping if sitting is possible. (use a chair if you are not comfortable in a seated position on the floor)
- If you feel any pain, tingling or numbness in your seated posture, please reposition your body so as to cause no harm.
- Generally speaking, the eyes would remain closed during the exercise and the body in a motionless, seated posture.
- Be careful to notice if you have any increase in negative or anxiety-related thoughts, especially if you are prone to depression or anxiety disorders.

The Six Types of Meditation are summarized below. Note that they are listed in no particular order; each method is effective for thousands of people—see which one quiets your mind:

**Breathing Meditation:** Simply focus on the breath as it mysteriously keeps the body alive. Do not focus on the air itself as it enters and exits your lungs. Focus on the

entire process of the breathing in terms of life force.

**Mantra Meditation:** Repeat one word or a syllable in your mind that means something to you. Keep repeating the same word over and over; you may use the same word for years.

**Visualization:** Focus on an image—but not on a series of images. For example, if you pick the sky, then just imagine the blue sky or a cloud. Focus on an image alone, as it would be more like a snapshot that stills the mind versus a movie sequence that distracts the mind.

**Intentionality, Prayer/Nature:** Use a prayer in any form from your religious background and remain quiet in a listening mode after saying the prayer. If in nature, feel the universal "big picture" while contemplating nature.

**Contemplative Inquiry:** Take an unanswerable question and reflect on this question. Exhaust your active mind's theories and then only sit with the question. A popular practice is to repeated ask the question, "Who am I?"

**Mindfulness:** Observe your thoughts and feelings and notice your reactions to the same. Continue in a witness mode, just keep observing with the aim of reducing critical judgments. ▲



# No Studio Required: Stretch at Your Desk

**IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO GET STUCK IN A MOVEMENT RUT AT WORK.** Sitting in front of a computer for hours on end lends itself to a variety of postural challenges that can take a big toll on the muscles of neck, shoulders, spine and hips. Bad posture in combination with too much sitting can create a sense of brain fog that hinders our mental capacity as the day progresses. Taking 10-15 minutes every couple of hours to stretch can help to create better postural awareness, relieve tension and stiffness and pain, elevate mood levels and increase work productivity. Try it and feel the difference!

*Note: All of the seated stretches in this sequence start with coming to the edge of the chair and allowing the buttocks to remain on the chair while the backs of the upper thighs are partially off the chair.*



**Wrist Circles:** Find some length around the natural curves of the spine. Bring the backs of the wrists together with the elbows bend out to the side and fingers pointing down towards the earth. With an inhalation slowly roll through the wrists and bring the fingertips towards the heart and then the sky as the inside edges of the hand (pinky fingers) come to meet. With the fingers skyward, close the palms towards each other and then bring the outer edges of the hand (thumb side) to meet. Roll the backs of the wrists towards each other as the fingers turn down towards the earth again. Repeat the movement in one fluid motion 10-15x.

sky as the inside edges of the hand (pinky fingers) come to meet. With the fingers skyward, close the palms towards each other and then bring the outer edges of the hand (thumb side) to meet. Roll the backs of the wrists towards each other as the fingers turn down towards the earth again. Repeat the movement in one fluid motion 10-15x.

**Supported Neck & Spine Extension:**

Cup the hands at the back of the head, giving support where the bump of the head meets the neck. Open the elbows out to the side and lift the chin and breastbone skyward, allowing the weight of the head to rest heavy into the hands. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths.



**Lateral Neck Flexion:** Hold onto the edge of the chair with the left hand or reach behind the back to hold just underneath the left elbow with the right hand. On an exhalation, slowly encourage the right ear to tilt towards the right shoulder. Use your continued exhalations to create a relaxation response throughout the left side of the neck. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths and repeat on the other side.

**Eagle Arm Isolations:** Bend the right arm at the elbow and bring it to the center of the chest. Take the left elbow and place the outer right elbow on the inner left elbow. Continue to take the left hand around to reach for the right thumb or palm if the body allows, otherwise let the hands stay apart. With an inhalation, lift the arms towards the sky and with an exhalation lower them back to chest center. Repeat



with the breath in a straight up and down fashion. For more intensity, take a tiny backbend in the upper body with the inhalation and arm lift and a tiny forward bend (emphasis on rounding the upper back and spreading out the area in between the shoulder blades) on the exhalation. Repeat for 10-15 breaths on each side.

**Seated Twist:** Inhale to find some length into the natural curves of the spine, rooting into buttocks and lifting the crown of the head towards the ceiling. Bring the arms long by the ears, slide the shoulder blades down the back of the ribcage and hold for 3 breaths. On the 4th exhalation, rotate through the mid spine/ribcage to the right. Allow the left hand to hold onto the chair armrest or edge and reach the right arm behind the back, allow it to rest on the back or gently reach for the right hip. Hold for 5-10 deep abdominal focused breaths and repeat on the other side.



*continued on page 16*

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