

LIVE YOUR YOGA

Mind | Body | Spirit

“Try to see the good in others. When you’re tempted to judge someone, make an effort to see their goodness. Your willingness to look for the best in people will subconsciously bring it forth.”

Marianne Williamson

“God’s dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion.”

Desmond Tutu

“When we see goodness in everything and everyone, we become good.”

Debasish Mridha

“Life becomes easier and more beautiful when we can see the good in other people.”

Roy T. Bennett

“Polish the mirror of your heart until it reflects every person’s light.”

Kamand Kajouri



Namaste’

“In the end, you will not see the physical beauty in others that caught your eye, but the fire that burned within them. This kind of beauty is the bonfire you had to attend.”

Shannon L. Alder

Welcome February, and Namaste’, yogis! This month we are focusing on the heart chakra. In yoga, the Namaste’ gesture represents the belief that we each have a spark of Divinity within us that resides in the heart chakra. As we bow to one another, we are acknowledging that spark. *Nama* means bow, and *as* means I, and *te* means you. Therefore, the literal meaning of namaste’ is “I bow to you.” When we are able to



fully open our hearts, it becomes what the Buddhists call Mahakaruna, or a channel for universal compassion - our true self. It is only when we connect with our true self that we realize that we are not really separate and distinct; we are truly connected. Therefore, what affects one of us, affects all of us. I cannot hurt you without hurting myself. By the same token, when any one of us rises to new heights, we all rise! That doesn't mean we are the same. Rather, we complement one another.

“Sameness is not oneness; uniformity is not unity. Unity, or oneness, is complementariness, not sameness.” **Stephen R. Covey**

Mind

Many of the problems we have with others that cause us to close our hearts to them stem from the fact that they are different than we are, and we allow discord to develop instead of seeing our differences as an advantage. We withdraw love and compassion, not realizing that as we withdraw love from another, we also withdraw it from ourselves. When we work on opening the heart chakra, we can begin to appreciate those differences as necessary for all of us to grow. We are all here for a special purpose as individuals, and that single purpose contributes to a greater whole.

We can use the heart to change the mind, or use the mind to change the heart. Here's what I mean. Mind, body, and spirit are inseparably connected. Therefore, what affects one, affects all, the same way our actions as individuals affect the greater whole of the universe. When we realize we are having rigid or unkind thoughts that are hurting our relationships, we can meditate upon the heart chakra to help us let go of ways of thinking that are hurting us. Similarly, when we find ourselves harboring ill feelings towards others, we can assess our thoughts to see how our ways of thinking are sowing discord in our hearts. We can ask ourselves if our thoughts are filled with understanding and compassion. If not, we can set out to change them.

Thoughts carry energy that can influence our emotions, so it's very important that we not leave them on auto-pilot. Though certain thoughts may spontaneously arise, we needn't believe them nor entertain them. When we realize we are having thoughts not in harmony with the greater good, our focus on compassion can help us to change our minds, thereby changing our hearts and bringing our spirit into harmony with those around us.

“He who wishes to secure the good of others, has already secured his own.” — **Confucius**



Body

As your body is the vehicle for your spirit, it's important to cultivate an attitude of love and respect for it, even compassion. What do I mean by that? How often do you ignore signals from

your body? You're tired, but you continue to surf the internet or watch television late into the night when you should be sleeping. You feel a twinge during our workout, but you're determined to get in one more set. Your stomach feels full, and you know you should stop eating, but *"there's always room for dessert."*

These are only a few examples of how by ignoring our bodies, we are not showing compassion. If we are to cultivate a greater awareness of the needs of others, we must start by listening to ourselves. I often liken it to caring for a crying baby. We would never ignore a crying baby. We would go to great lengths to provide for its welfare, making sure its every need was met because its cries fill us with compassion and compel us to act. Let's do the same for our bodies by giving them the best of the best - adequate sleep, optimum nutrition, sunshine, exercise and meditation. Baby yourself!

Some of the common ailments that relate to the heart chakra dysfunction are lung problems, high blood pressure, heart disease, circulatory problems, chest or upper back pain, and a weak immune system. Of course, we know many of these come from not caring for our bodies properly, not showing love for them. We know what to do, so we must do it.

Spirit

When we look at the symbol for the heart chakra, we see two triangles symbolizing how the heart is at the center of the chakra system. There are three chakras above it and three below. It integrates the lower and upper chakras. This is why we seem to fall apart, or dis-integrate, when the heart is broken. Grief is the chief enemy of the heart chakra.

To heal our heart and spirit, we must allow ourselves to grieve. Deep breathing and crying are ways we can let go of grief. We can also pray, meditate, do heart opening yoga poses, and confide in a friend or therapist. If you are carrying around the burden of grief, and your heart is heavy, I invite you to begin today to work on opening your heart chakra. Join us on the mat every Tuesday and Thursday this month as we use pranayama (breathwork) and heart opening asanas (poses) to assist you.

Yoga Vocabulary

Chakra - pronounced "cha" "kra." A chakra is a center of energy in the body. There are seven major chakras that help to regulate bodily functions such as the immune system, our emotions, or organ functions.
Anahata - Anahata is the name for the heart chakra. In Sanskrit, Anahata literally means *unstruck* or *unhurt*. It is here that we are able to transcend anything past or present that would hurt us.



Mantra of the Month

Ong Sohung

Translation:

Ong - The Creative Consciousness of the Universe

Sohung - I am that!

Chanting this mantra can help stimulate and open the heart chakra. It is a recognition of the divine that resides within each of us because we are each a part of the Divine Consciousness of the Universe.

This month as we focus on the heart chakra, may we be more mindful of how we think about and treat others. It is my prayer that we can become more and more aware of the divinity within all creatures and treat them with increased love and compassion. We can all do something every day to make the world just a little bit better. **Namaste**'.

