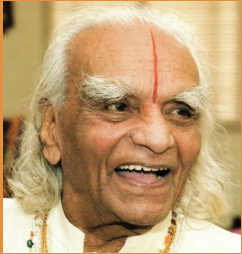




FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER

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www.friendshipyoga.com



“My body is my temple and the asanas are my prayers.”

B.K.S. Iyengar

From the Director

At Friendship Yoga we are solely dedicated to the Iyengar Yoga method. B.K.S. Iyengar, who was respectfully and affectionately called *Guruji*, died peacefully about a year ago, (8-20-2014) at the age of 95. He was one of the world’s greatest yoga practitioners and teachers; deeply rooted in his own study and in the literature and practices of Indian yoga philosophy. Traditionally in India, a yogi lived a life divorced from society, so as to focus primarily on achiev-

ing higher states of consciousness through meditation. The yoga postures played a secondary role; a way to cultivate the body for the rigors of long periods of intense meditation. Mr. Iyengar rejected the traditional path, was a householder (had a family) and traveled worldwide continuing to teach up until a year or two before his death. Although known for his fierce teaching demeanor, in many ways he was also very accessible. He drank coffee, loved chocolate and was an avid cricket fan.

Guruji initially came to yoga as a sickly malnourished teenager who barely survived many childhood illnesses including tuberculosis. When he was 15 his parents, in a desperate attempt to keep him alive, sent him to live with his sister’s husband, Krishnamacharya, an esteemed guru who lived in the palace of Mysore. At that time, (the 1930’s) there was very little interest in yoga even in India and only the most elite would have a guru or yoga teacher. Mr. Iyengar’s teacher was not one to coddle his students. He basically threw the boy into the proverbial “deep end” by introducing him to a rigorous regimen of yoga postures and then left him to practice primarily on his own. Lucky for us, the young boy took to the challenge. Through his own intense study and innate life force, he was able to regain his health within a few years, and began, before he turned 20, what would be a lifetime of practice, study, and teaching.

Mr. Iyengar brought yoga into the modern age by devising an inclusive system that embraced diversity— male/female, old/young, able/less able. He developed a teaching

methodology (Iyengar Yoga) where the postures could be adapted to meet the strengths and limitations of the individual while simultaneously challenging the student to move intelligently beyond their own expectations.

Mr. Iyengar was also a dedicated family man, fathered five daughters and a son, and always gave his wife much credit for helping him with his work. Two of his six children, and now a granddaughter continue to teach “Iyengar” yoga at the Ramanani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (named for his wife) in Pune, India. Mr. Iyengar in particular encouraged his daughter, Geeta Iyengar, who also had a very sickly childhood, (she lost one kidney) to start teaching yoga when she was a teenager. He also suggested that she write a book, because he recognized that women have distinct needs, based not only on their anatomy and physiology, but also because of distinct social pressures and expectations that are gender based. He recognized that it was a woman’s job to write a guide for women. In *Yoga, a Gem for Women* (1990), Geeta Iyengar articulated that a woman’s yoga practice should support all the stages of a woman’s life progressively, from girlhood to old age. Menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause deserved special sequences (an ordering of *asanas* or poses) to support and enhance these natural and normal life experiences.

Westerners and American women in particular tend to ignore the monthly cycle when practicing yoga, as if to change their practice, especially in a class situation, would be a sign of “feminine” weakness. The Iyengars see the menstrual practice as working from a position of strength not weakness; honoring a woman’s natural rhythms and giving her permission to become more inwardly focused, more meditative, an opportunity to step aside from their duties and expectations if only for an hour or two. At Friendship Yoga we want to encourage students to learn and do the practice.

Nancy Footner, Certified Iyengar Yoga teacher

On Saturday afternoon November 14th, from 2-4pm, Jenn Bowen will be giving an afternoon workshop on the menstrual practice. Each student will receive a study guide to take home. More about this to come.

Kirsten Brooks



Kirsten, a certified Iyengar Yoga instructor, comes to Friendship Yoga from Michigan, where she studied under Sue Salaniuk and Mary Reilly. She completed her Introductory II assessment in October 2014. Under Sue's mentorship, Kirsten

has taught at various locations in the vicinity of Ann Arbor, MI, including The Yoga Space and the Ann Arbor YMCA. She was also fortunate enough to assist Sue for nearly three years in a Special Needs class, working with students on individualized programs, designed by Sue, for concerns ranging from knee replacement to multiple sclerosis to cancer.

Kirsten has a deep interest not only in the physiology of yoga, but in its philosophy as well. She is constantly amazed by the capacity of Iyengar yoga to meet people where they are and, as Mr. Iyengar writes in *Light On Life*, to “[bring] gifts from your very first day...It does not just change the way we see things; it transforms the person who sees.”

MAILBOX: Crossing borders

To: Nancy Footner/Friendship Yoga

Hello, My name is Diane Mora and I'm an ELL teacher (English Language Learner) in the Kansas City area. I love the images you have on your website (<http://www.friendshipyoga.com/photos.html>) showing how poses can be modified for different students. I would like to use some of your photos for two purposes related to my work as an educator.

First, I'd like to insert one of the photos into a power point presentation I'm giving to other teachers about the purpose and intent of differentiating instruction for ELLs in the classroom (math, English, Social Studies, Science, etc.). Often teachers have a difficult time understanding that providing supports to a student does NOT mean the student is not “doing the work” - and well, your lovely photos provide the perfect metaphorical image for what I do mean when I ask teachers to differentiate for English language ability.

Thank you so much for considering my request. Seriously, your photos are better than anything else I've found to help communicate this important idea to K-12 educators.

Cordially, Diane Mora

Desa bandhah cittasya dharana

Fixing the consciousness on one point or region is concentration (dharana).

Light on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, III:I BKS Iyengar

No one likes to fall down.

Nancy Footner



I was watching my neighbor's children play and saw one take a nasty knee/ elbow skinning spill. Her screams erupted for all in the vicinity to share in her anguish; and I marveled how at age 5, she has total permission to do that. It must be when we start school that social pressures clamp down on our need to just let it out when we hurt.

In my current state of temporary disability (two total hip replacements circa summer 2015), I also really don't want to fall down. I am managing to get around with a walker for the first couple of weeks post surgery, and have

discovered, following the 2nd surgery, that “progress” is much slower when you are nursing two new hips rather than one.

Dharana means focus of attention. Focusing the attention on a chosen point or area, within or outside the body. By it the functions of the mind are controlled and brought to a focal point. (BKS Iyengar)

During the summer of my convalescence the ordinary things in life have become my practice. Bathing, eating, the meds, resting, taking care of basic needs. The pace is slow. Initially, I can't carry things because I am using a walker. My sister has come to spend a week with me to help me out. Her visit is the “silver lining”. We rarely get time for just the two of us to be together, and our week is going by quickly. Thursday I am starting to feel very sad about her impending departure on Saturday morning. I go to take a shower and the warm water hitting my body makes me cry; I am the 5 year old. The shower ends and I open the door of the stall and step out. Unfortunately, because I am still distracted by sad thoughts, I lead with the weaker leg. As I am also reaching for the walker, I realize too late that this leg will not support me as I attempt to bring the other foot over the threshold of the shower. I fall down on my knee, and I am terrified as I think I have possibly dislocated the new hip. My sister hears me hollering for her and races to hoist me up. There is no pain. I immediately call my surgeon's nurse. She says I am probably just fine; that it is virtually impossible to dislocate the hip and if something was wrong I would have felt the pain immediately.

Now I resolve to be present, to be in the moment, and to take every step with total focus and awareness. Strong leg leads. Weak leg follows.

Dharana may be focused on external or internal objects. External objects should be auspicious and associated with purity. Internally, the mind penetrates to the soul, the core of one's being- the object is, in reality, pure existence. (BKS Iyengar)

Artwork by Catherine Caldwell



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Introducing Iyengar Yoga to our guests from Afghanistan

Jenn Bowen, Certified Iyengar Yoga teacher

Under the auspices of the Council for International Visitors to Iowa City (CIVIC) Friendship Yoga hosted a group of women health professionals from Afghanistan in early August. Primarily OB/GYNs and midwives, our guests, prior to their arrival, had expressed an interest in experiencing a yoga class during their brief two day Iowa City visit. It was an honor that CIVIC chose Friendship Yoga to fulfill their request. They also had expressed a particular interest in learning about the benefits of yoga to women, especially during pregnancy. When they entered the studio they were dressed in beautiful brightly colored tunics and scarves. Each woman spoke a little English, but they had a translator and listened attentively to all translations. They were open to learning and eager to experience the *asanas*. As we all stood in *tadasana*, I noticed that many of the women carried tension in their necks and shoulders, likely due to their busy travel schedule and adjustment to traveling in a foreign country.

In *tadasana* we practiced being the mountain and lifting up from the ground. We extended the arms upward in *urdhva baddha anguliasana* to open the shoulders and lengthen the sides of the chest, noting the importance of this particular *asana* for maintaining breast health. We continued with *utthita trikonasana* and *utthita parsvakonasana*. Perhaps because of their experience in working with women, they were more vocal amongst themselves when I demonstrated the supported variations of the standing poses (using the trestler) women practice during pregnancy and menstruation, and became very animated when I demonstrated *sirsasana* (headstand) and chair *sarvangasana* (supported shoulderstand) which I assured them I had practiced through my three pregnancies. Though I wasn't able to understand their individual comments,

I sensed their keen interest in a system of instruction designed to support women through the various phases of her life.

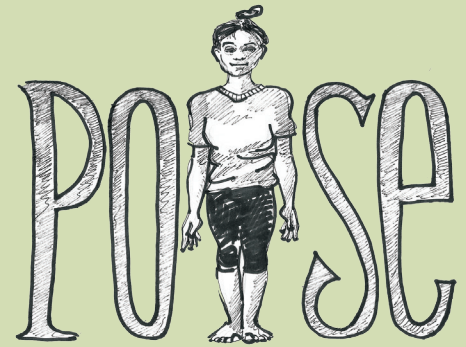
After the standing poses, we sat in *upavistha konasana* and *baddha konasana*, two poses that benefit women in all cycles of life. These *asanas* create space in the pelvic region, nourish the reproductive organs and strengthen the muscles of the hips and back. For our final pose, *supta baddha konasana*, students took support of the bolster under the chest and blankets for the head and outer thighs. This pose supports passive opening of the pelvis and hips as well as a quieting of the nervous system. Like all students everywhere, the Afghani women seemed to have a deep longing for the restorative postures. In *baddha konasana*, with blankets support for the outer hips and a bolster under the thoracic spine, the abdomen remains soft and the chest is allowed to open and expand, bringing a wonderful feeling of peace.

This was fully notable within the group and it was a gift to behold their tranquility.

The Iyengars acknowledge all phases of a woman's life cycle and teach women to practice so as to support the systems of the female body through menstruation, pregnancy, menopause, and beyond. *Asanas* and *pranayama* ease the hormonal changes in a woman's life physically, physiologically and psychologically.

Geeta Iyengar writes in *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, "These are the trying periods and the milestones of her life."

I believe the women from Afghanistan gained an appreciation for the vast subject of yoga and particularly its benefits to women. Women everywhere often put the needs of others ahead of their own. By practicing yoga, we invest first in our individual selves, and from that investment we strengthen our ability to better care for the world around us.



I stand with my feet together, toes and knees touching, thighs turned slightly in, and then pressing down the webbing between big toe and second along with the outside of the foot. Knees not locked but lifted up from their top corners. If something is out of alignment a sharp command from my teacher puts it right,

I stand corrected.

My breath is strained and the inhalation too rapid and the exhalation too harsh.

My teacher has me breathe silently and more softly and slowly – quieting my nerves and mind along with my breath.

I stand corrected.

I strain to pay attention to each body part, stretching this and compressing that – all the while struggling to maintain my balance. My eyes bulge and my brow furrows with the effort.

My teacher tells me to soften my eyes and thus my inner being.

I stand corrected.

I stand still, both sides of my body mirrored, my torso supported by legs stretching upwards from firmly planted feet, my head floating weightlessly above – I have achieved equilibrium.

I am centered in the pose and it has become Poise.

Text and drawing by Connie Roberts

New to Friendship Yoga?

If you have questions about what we do and how we do it, read on!



In Iyengar Yoga we emphasize “postural alignment,” where we balance the action of the muscles in every yoga pose to support the back, neck, knees, and other joint areas so as to encourage health and healing.

What are Iyengar Yoga classes like?

In Iyengar Yoga, we don't follow a script, or practice the same poses in every class. Instead, every week a teacher designs a class plan, which consists of a sequence of poses that have a theme or an objective. In a course, which extends from 6–16 weeks, the teacher introduces new poses each week, and finding new ways to keep the practice of previously studied poses moving forward in a stimulating and inspiring way. Every class ends with a resting pose, so when you depart you will feel calmer and refreshed.

Can I really do Yoga?? I am really stiff (weak, old, overweight, out of shape...) and can't even touch my toes!!! Yes, you can do yoga even if you are not flexible! And, you will become more flexible if you practice yoga regularly. In the beginning classes we modify many of the classical yoga poses and use “props” like belts, blocks, blankets, chairs, and walls, etc., to help everybody, whether stiff or weak, (young or old, fat or thin, fit or out of shape) develop strength, flexibility, and mental quietude in a safe and supportive way.

I have a bad back (neck, knees, shoulder and ...). Can Yoga help me?

Chronic skeletal pain is an epidemic in our modern world and is often caused by bad posture, poor body mechanics, and an imbalance in the muscles supporting the joints. In Iyengar Yoga we emphasize “postural alignment,” where we balance the action of the muscles in every yoga pose to support the back, neck, knees, and other joint areas so as to encourage health and healing. We also integrate conscious breathing into the yoga postures to help release deep, chronic stress and tension that can be an unidentified cause of chronic pain.

I have done Yoga before at the gym and other places, but always seem to hurt myself!

Accidents can happen anywhere. However, our goal in an Iyengar Yoga class is to teach students how to practice in a safe and systematic way. It takes years of rigorous training and extensive testing before an Iyengar Yoga teacher is certified, so you will be studying with a knowledgeable and experienced teacher. Friendship Yoga is not a gym where you come to do a “yoga workout,” but more like a school with a curriculum; where you come to embark on a path of lifelong learning.

I want to take yoga at Friendship Yoga but I can't commit to the same class time each week. Can I buy a punch card and drop into any class that fits my schedule? We do require you to sign up for a specific class or classes so the teacher can get to know you and your individual needs and be able to help you progress week by week. But we also have a very flexible make-up policy. If you miss a class, you can do a make-up in any other class during the same 12 or 16 week session. If you are going to be gone for a week, you can make up before or after your absence and come 2 times in the same week.

Can I just “drop-in” to a class and see if I like it?

If you are totally new to yoga or Iyengar Yoga, we recommend that you drop in to one of our first 2 weeks of classes. (Week 1 is free). After that we will have already covered enough course material that a new student will slow the progress of the other students.

What are “free INTRO classes” and when are they offered?

The free classes are for people who with no previous yoga experience, Iyengar Yoga experience, or are new to Friendship Yoga. It's a great opportunity to come and try a class, meet our dedicated and enthusiastic teachers, and experience yoga in a professional studio. The free classes are offered 4 times a year—during the first week of the course—and you can choose from several times.

Do I have to bring my own mat?

You are welcome to bring your own mat, but we also have mats and all the other “props” you'll need, free of charge.

When will I know that it's time to move on to the next level of classes?

We usually recommend that you start at the INTRO level and then consult the teacher as to whether you are ready to progress to Level 1. Many repeat INTRO once. After moving on from INTRO, some people prefer to stay at the Level 1 for several years—which is totally okay—while others prefer to move on to the next level more quickly. The more you practice at home, the faster you will be able to progress to the next level. Please check our recommended prerequisites for each class level, (see www.friendshipyoga.com) and also check with your teacher to see if you are ready for the next level. There is no hurry . . . this is life-long learning.

Remember to save these dates:

October 16 - 18, 2015 for the Friendship Yoga Annual Fall Workshop with Kristin Chirhart, co-director BKS Iyengar Center of Minneapolis.