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Issue Fifty Two
May/June 2012

Lessons from
the Yoga Mat

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Should Know
*Introducing our
Community*

Finding Grace
in the Flow

Navigating
Your Life

flow

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The next issue of *Evolving Your Spirit* will be available July 15.

Our theme will be *Essence*.

Please write in with your ideas and comments to debbie@evolvingyourspirit.com. Thanks!

Check out our Website!

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Flow...

Movement. A good thing. Sometimes a pleasant experience, sometimes not so pleasant. I decided to write openly about my journey of late, not to complain, just to put it out there as sharing and for support.

I've been challenged with some health issues, which have been less than pleasant. Long story short, I have type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure, and had a small stroke sometime in the last few months. Information that threw me for a loop and shook me to the core. I have always been a "strong" person, and here I was feeling weak, shaken and dumbfounded.

After going through all of these things with my dad before his death, it was scary to find out. I was having double vision, frozen shoulder, dizziness, and a general tired, awful feeling. So— I finally found myself a doctor (with the help of my friend Val) who was very helpful— he scheduled me for a bunch of tests and put me on several prescription medications. I have been a holistic-only girl all these years, and it was difficult to do.

Lessons. I am just now processing and allowing them to flow in. As much as I want to feel sorry for myself and pull the covers over my head, the universe has been gently knocking at my door with many messages. The trick is paying attention and letting them in. This morning in a beautiful moment of serendipity, Jane Carroo called me to check in and I was telling her about my challenges. I had a hard time even saying the word stroke, as it felt so awful to admit this had happened. In her wisdom, Jane exclaimed, "I immediately got that this is a stroke of good luck for you... a stroke of inspiration and insight!" Wow. Her wisdom brought such a feeling of light and clarity.

I am eating a healthy, fresh diet, exercising regularly, and feeling secure in the knowledge that I will be much more balanced overall after experiencing this wake up call. Grateful for the support of Western medicine combined with the holistic care I love, knowing that the medicine is helping and that I will be cured from needing it as quickly as possible.

I appreciate all of the support I have been receiving and hope that my journey will benefit us all in some way, for the good of all concerned. Amen.

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The Power *of Flow*

by Maggie Wilkins

Are you in the flow? How do you know? Can you be in the flow when difficulties arise? Can you relax in the flow of this moment— now? What is your flow?

All things have FLOW. All things start with a beginning and move to an end. But the middle, the mysterious middle, reveals flavors and experiences that the mind cannot conceive. This is your journey, a journey expressing the essence of FLOW. Observe the unexpected magic that begins when you flow in your life. Doesn't your soul dance with joy when your day flows? Mine does. The energy

that feeds my body and soul comes when I live in the *Power of Flow*.

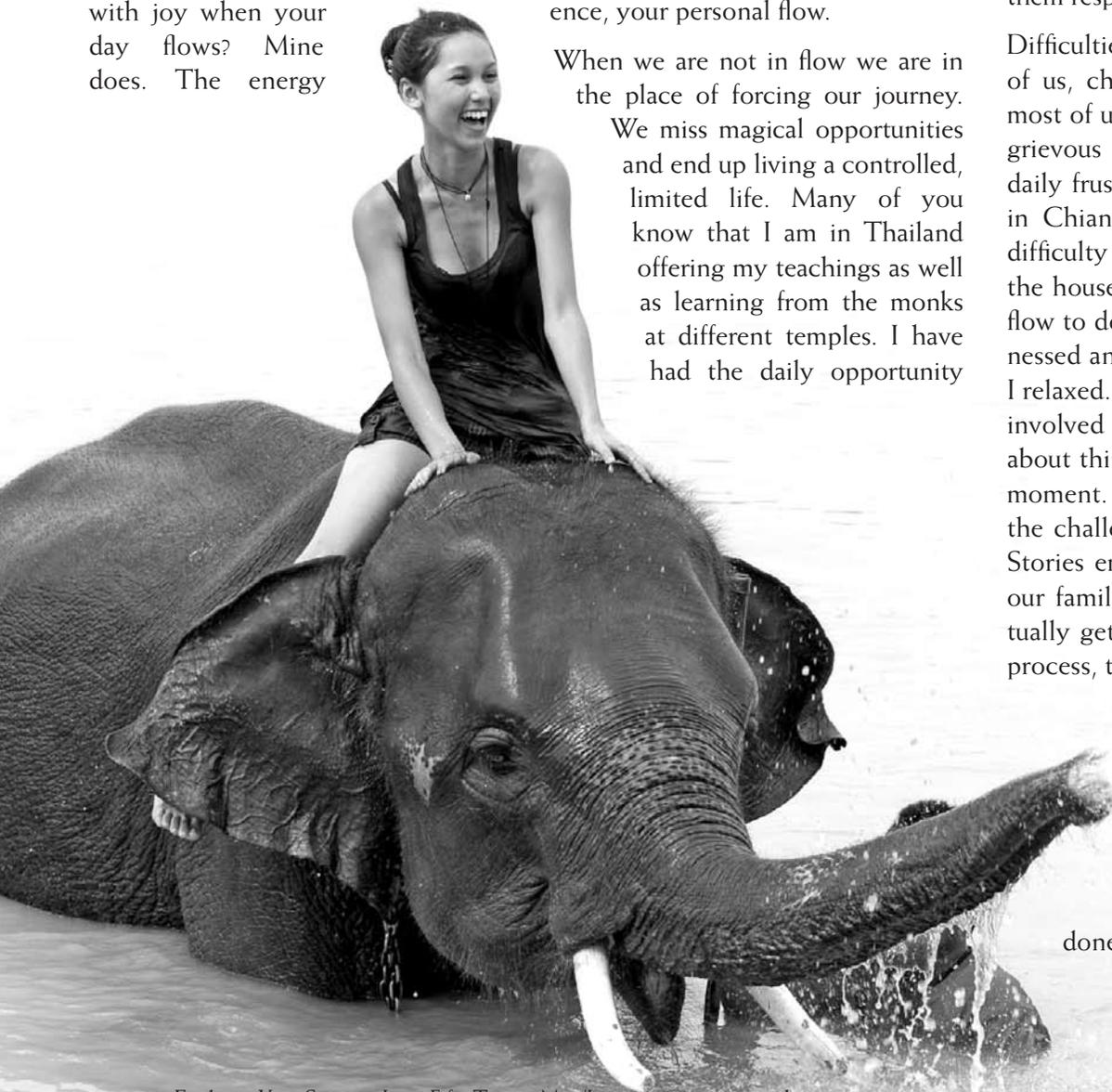
Reflect back on a day when you have had flow awareness. In it there is no pressure, no projected outcome. It is simply perfect, turning an acceptable day into an exceptional one. How is that any different than now? Can you feel the flow in this moment? It hasn't really gone anywhere. Flow is always the middle part of our lives, our journey waiting to be experienced and lingering in this moment. The journey is precious and private because it is your personal experience, your personal flow.

When we are not in flow we are in the place of forcing our journey. We miss magical opportunities and end up living a controlled, limited life. Many of you know that I am in Thailand offering my teachings as well as learning from the monks at different temples. I have had the daily opportunity

to experience the essence, the foundation, and the seed of where flow comes from here. Buddha's dharma is the flow of this country. In Thailand it is taught that if you are out of flow, you are dishonoring yourself. Behaviors resulting from being out of flow are seen as losing face and disrespecting others. Thai people have no part of it. An acceptance and joy is ever constant among the Thai people, undiminished whether in active interaction or in just being. I see this in everyone at every age— thousands of people in this Thai town and all of them respond to life in Flow.

Difficulties come as they do with all of us, challenges that would place most of us out of flow; challenges as grievous as life loss or as simple as daily frustrations. In my first month in Chiangmai, I experienced great difficulty getting internet access into the house I am renting. By allowing flow to do the work, however, I witnessed an enjoyment in the process. I relaxed. I made new friends. Those involved had no judgment or anger about things not working out in the moment. Rather, the space around the challenge created conversation. Stories emerged of our lives and of our families. How then did I eventually get internet? Throughout the process, there was no focus on clock time. In Thailand, clocks exist, time is counted, but its influence holds second or third value. *People* are the priority. Relationships are the focus. Everything gets done when it should.

As an experiment, try moving some of your attention



away from clock time. Keep it simple. The next time that you visit with a friend, set a date and time to meet and then ask if your friend can accept your flow time rather than clock time. Flow time will give you space to feel when it is right to meet, not rush crazy to meet on clock time but rather flow and bring that energy to your visit. See what happens. Witness how stress is reduced and joy is felt. It's fun! I know because I am living it every moment in Thailand and am not going to give up my flow for any clock.

The master monks say that when we are out of flow, we are in illness. When we are in flow, we are living the journey that was meant for us to experience. Flow is your power to make your life real to what the journey wants to present. Try it and see. At first it may be hard, but how can you reject your flow? Life is a Journey... yes, it is true... and the concept that all the masters talk about. So if you want wellness and success, accept what is.

Be in the Flow of your life and I'm sure you will:

- Experience what the mind cannot conceive
- Enjoy exceptional days rather than acceptable days
- Manifest your gifts

Know that you are an exceptional person. *Flow* will manifest all the gifts you are here to have, your journey will reveal them to you. Celebrate now! ✨



Maggie Wilkins was working for Eckhart Tolle when he first published The Power of Now. She now works and teaches in the Chicago area and in Vancouver BC, sharing her personally designed meditation techniques for those with a busy lifestyle. Her new meditation CD, A Simple Breath can be found at www.maggiwilkins.com, or call 847-648-8955.

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Finding *Grace* in the Flow

Recently I was asking a group of people if they felt they were born with a mission or something they were uniquely born to express. Interestingly everyone agreed they had a feeling that it was true but most of them were not exactly sure what it meant— they just a feeling or had a sense that those words rang true in their hearts.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to wake up everyday and know you were "On Purpose"— that you were aligning with a power of grace and synchronicity that had a magnetic field of creation and resonance all it's own?

While working with tribal elders and Wisdom Keepers from different cultures I have been given many songs and stories that bring us into harmony with creation.

In some tribes the elders would have a dream about you before you were born with a vision of the gifts and beauty you were destined to bring into the world.

While your mother was pregnant they would already be thinking of your name. When you were born they would welcome you and thank you for coming and honor your uniqueness by giving you this special name. The name would remind you of your gifts and essential qualities. They would sing you a beautiful birthing song that celebrated your contribution to the tribe.

If you ever forgot your gifts or lost your place in the world they would gather round you and sing your birthing song to remind you of how

precious you are as a spirit and how needed you were in the community. *Isn't that lovely?*

After 25 years of working with individuals to help them discover their deeper "calling" and creative genius I have found that there is a tremendous amount of synergy and vitality that opens when people align with their unique blueprint. They begin to have a natural charisma and sense of grace about them. Art and music and innovative ideas and solutions for our world begin pouring through. All of a sudden they find themselves in the flow.

When you know who you are and how your essential gifts and talents contribute to the community at large you become a natural leader of love and inspiration in this world. So the first key to ongoing flow is being "On Purpose" and in tune with your deeper nature and authenticity.

Then you will find that there is a natural sense of vision and attunement that begins to show up. I call this "Divine Synchronicity" or a sense of being the right person in the right place.

If you set aside some time everyday to sit quietly or walk alone in nature you will find that ideas and visions will flow from this intention to give your gifts to the world.

Your intention will open the way to "Divine Timing" or being exactly at the right place at the right time. Now, you know that Grace and the power of creation is downloading your direction and helping you align

by Karen Rae Wilson

with the ways and means to bring your visions into reality.

If you are meditating, asking for grace and guidance and practicing gratitude and appreciation you will begin to raise your vibration. This means you are inviting the power of 'Divine Magnetism' into your life. All of a sudden you begin to attract the people, places and things you need to begin to fulfill your intentions and bring your vision into the community.

As you begin to offer your giftedness and creative ideas to others you will find you have a natural flow of "Divine Placement"—all of a sudden you fit in and know that you belong. You are part of this bigger picture and without your love, ideas and creative brilliance there would be less magic in the world.

Now, because you are on purpose and sharing your authentic Self in your world you find there are others who want to work and create and play with you. You begin to attract your companions of destiny— the people that spirit has been waiting for you to co-create with once you have said "yes" to your higher design. You are moving into the flow of "Divine Partnerships and Co-Creation." This means you have joined the team of conscious individuals wanting to create a better world.

When disturbing information comes into the news or you have some personal challenges with health or finance you can say, "but I am not alone, I am part of a community of like-minded lovers that are part

of this team and we are all going through this together. Now you are in the flow of "Divine Community."

You reach out and ask for support and look around to see who could use your special medicine today! Before you know it someone is dropping by with flowers or asking you for dinner. Even in the midst of difficulty it feels lighter. Somehow you will get through this! You are in the flow of Divine Belonging and Support."

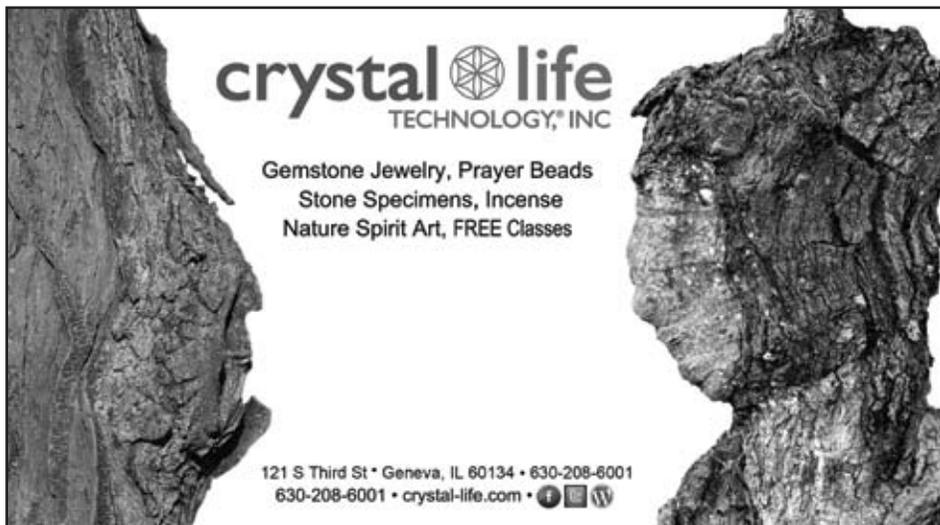
By and by you realize this is like being part of a tribe— a circle of love—and it feels natural... like maybe you should have been here all along. There is a giving and receiving and sometimes you are up and sometimes you are down. It is all part of being human. Who would have thought it would take such adversity to bring you together and teach you about the flow?

You have come full circle in the sense that you have learned to find flow where you thought there was none— that like water you can go

around stones and rocks and occasionally even boulders if necessary. Sometimes you are a waterfall and sometimes you are a lake and sometimes you are a very small pool. In the small pool is a sense of ordinary stillness and calm. Suddenly you are grateful for stillness and rest. It's all part of the cycle of flow.

May you find courage and inspiration and new direction in these changing times. May you open to the power of Grace and flow. ✨

Karen Rae Wilson is a Visionary Catalyst, Singer and Purpose Consultant who designs life changing "Quests" and leads transformational retreats at sacred sites around the world. You can contact her directly at: karenrae@wisdomculture.com or sign up for insightful Wisdom Bytes at www.wisdomculture.com. Just mention you read this article in Evolving Your Spirit and receive a 10% discount on her upcoming retreat to Sedona or Mt Shasta.



Susan Loraine Barker



Susan Loraine Barker

Do you ever have that feeling or awareness that you are wearing a mask, putting forth a persona that is not you?

Why do we think we need to hide who we are? One reason might be to put our best forward and hide our shadow attributes, those things we don't want anyone to know about us. Another reason is to be accepted and liked. But the bigger truth is we hide our power and light when we are less than authentic.

Your true self is beautiful, brilliant, talented, courageous, kind, loving, connected, in the know, deep, sensitive, strong, acceptable, likeable, loveable and powerful. Your true self already is everything you want, hope for and need. The persona you put forth is much closer to the truth about you than the one you think you are hiding. Did you get that? The together, confident, likeable person you pretend to be is much closer to the truth of who you are than the person you deem less worthy that you are trying to hide.

What does the realization that your true self is actually all that and a bag of chips, do for you? How does it change your game?

You are really pretending at being small, powerless, less than, lacking, fearful, defensive, egotistical or fake. None of these things are in fact true about you. They are the false persona we think we are and try to hide. How crazy is that? When you feel centered and in touch with your core or heart you know this to be true.

Does this mean that you can reveal the authentic you? Does it mean you can say what you mean and mean what you say? Does it mean you stop withholding and give us the real goods, the person you came to be and know you are? Do you know what happens when you do just that? Your relationships become real and satisfying. Your path becomes more clear and doors open through synchronicity and more good is offered more easily. Why? Because you are claiming your abilities, truth and power and therefore letting the Universe know you have shown up and are a conscious player.

It is not hard to be you when you realize you are wonderful and that it is your sacred contract to be you. Let your authentic self shine. Let us know how you really feel, what you really think, kindly and graciously of course, because you are kind and loving. Be powerful. There is no one more powerful than you, brilliant than you or beautiful than you at being you. Shine baby and uplift the world.

Susan Loraine Barker of Mundelein is a contributing author in Jack Canfield's new book *Pearls of Wisdom: 30 Inspirational Ideas to Live Your Best Life Now!*

A life empowerment coach specializing in mandalas, sacred contracts, loving the body you have and how to live in alignment with the laws of the benevolent universe, Susan teaches clients how to be their greatest selves through identifying their inherent talents and gifts and creating a world

that works for them, rather than the usual paradigm of trying to change who you are to fit the world.

Her chapter—“*You’re Already Enough*”—discusses Susan’s philosophy that when you start from a place of confidence and worth it is much easier and more pleasurable to traverse the ups and downs of life. Our culture has us always seeking to be enough and worthy as evidenced by what we look like, accomplish and own and never quite getting there. The fear is that you will not accomplish your best if you accept that you are worthy simply because you are. Susan’s chapter offers the reader the answer to why you are already enough.

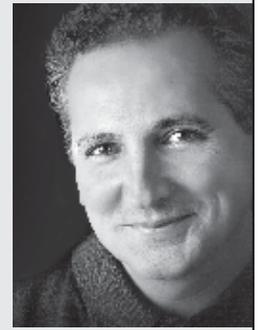
“We can all feel the truth of our worth in our hearts and souls, though we may not realize it at first. Yet the Truth that you and I and everyone else were born worthy of unconditional love is a foreign or forgotten idea to many of us. We say we love ourselves, but our mind is full of self-talk like this: I wish I didn’t have this tummy bulge. I wish my hair was thicker, my nose was smaller, and I wasn’t aging.” ❧

Pearls of Wisdom is Susan’s second book. She’s also the author of *Join Me at The Love Buffet: a book about ending your war with food and loving your bodacious body, due out this year.*

Visit www.themandalacoach.com to get a signed copy of *Pearls of Wisdom* and your own reminder to post on your mirror or fridge of *Why You Are Already Enough*.

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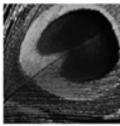
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Open Yourself to Love's Flow

by Alyse Rynor, LCSW

**Your task is not to seek for love,
but merely to seek and find
all the barriers within yourself,
that you have built against it.**

—Rumi

When I first came upon this quote by Rumi, it stopped me in my tracks. For I found it to be frighteningly powerful in its realistic truth. I didn't want to have to admit that I might be the very person blocking the flow of love into my own life.

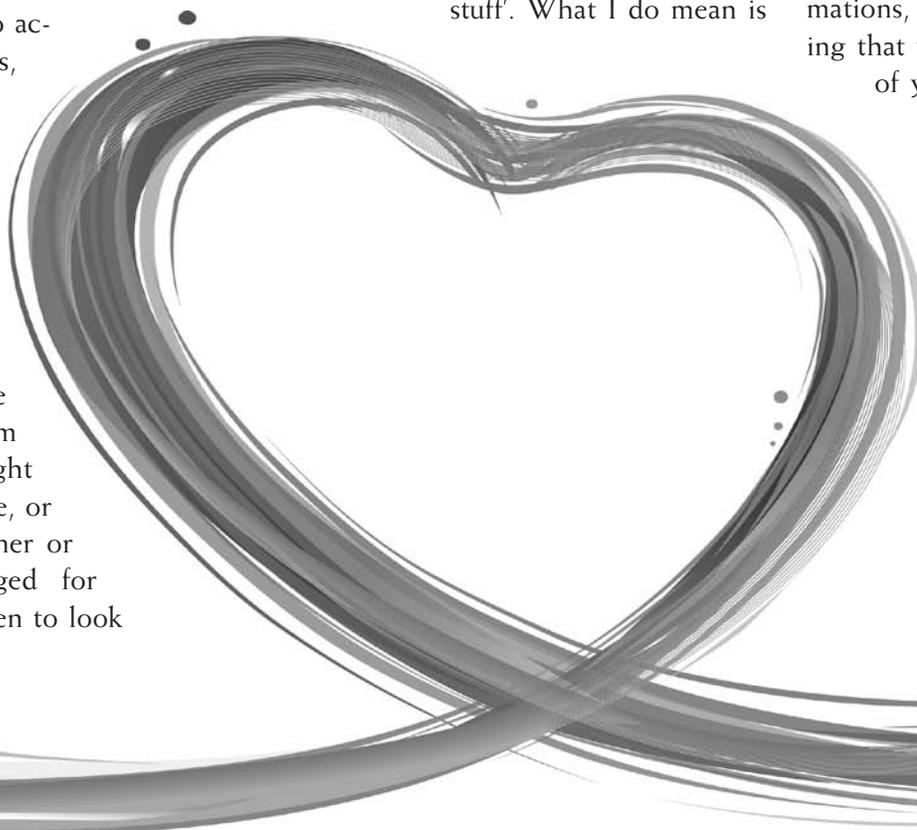
Liking what it said, I recently placed this quote as part of my email signature for inspiration. It was then that I began receiving comments from others on how they too, had never really thought about love that way. Whether or not each of us wants to acknowledge this, to me what it says is true. Although as much as even I don't want to admit it, it feels easier to believe that we just can't seem to find the right person to love, or that our partner or spouse changed for the worse, then to look at ourselves.

Maybe it's simpler to see ourselves as missing out on something or being the victim to unfortunate circumstances rather than taking ownership around discovering and admitting that the barriers we may have built against love are our own. The willingness to take a personal look at this is what M. Scott Peck called *The Road Less Traveled*, from his classic book of the same name. Doing so seems to be a journey born out of the call of your Soul.

In a larger view of Life, to me Love doesn't seem to be limited only to the idea of romantic love. The Universe can share its flow of love in so many ways: through the flow of income, satisfying friendships, career success, gifts, talents and more. And by this, I don't mean that only certain people are lucky enough to be loved by Life and 'get the good stuff'. What I do mean is

that the 'good stuff', no matter what form it takes, is available to all of us all of the time. Therefore, if there is something that you desire and it isn't flowing to you with ease and grace, then perhaps there is a barrier you may unknowingly have that is blocking it from flowing to you.

So the question becomes, how or why would you block the very thing or things you desire most in your life? I'm very clear that on a conscious level you wouldn't do that, but I'm talking here of a level you may not yet be aware of; one which is held deeper within your unconscious mind. In the book *Conversations with God*, by Neale Donald Walsch, these unconscious thoughts I'm referring to are called, "sponsoring thoughts". "Sponsoring thoughts" he explains, are actually the "thoughts behind the thoughts". So, if you are using affirmations, for example, and are stating that you are attracting the love of your life to you right now, it's quite possible that your "sponsoring thought" might pop up to say, "Ahem, excuse me, but no you're not, you need to lose those 20 pounds first" (or "you need to get a better job, make more money, grow your hair longer, move to a better home, wait until the kids grow up, the



parents are feeling better, or any number of things).

Can you see how this type of sponsoring thought can serve as a barrier within yourself to stop the flow of what you desire from showing up?

You probably now want to know where these thoughts come from. They're certainly not random. In fact, nearly every person walking the planet has some form of sponsoring thoughts they unknowingly carry within themselves. That's because each thought actually bubbles up out of what you believe about yourself or about life.

I refer to these as Core Beliefs and I'll tell you— they are always false beliefs. Only the ego wants to believe they are true. These beliefs originated from your past events, most likely when you were quite young. And, whether large or small, you made meaning out of them because you were probably too young to fully understand what happened. These events could have been quite significant, such as the loss of a family member, a health challenge, a move to a new town, or a change in schools. Or smaller, which in your world at the time still made an impact on you— something like

your best friend stopped talking to you, the teacher said something that made you feel badly or it was your sibling who continuously got the praise on report card day instead of you.

But, whatever they were, like a computer that has a bug in its program, these core beliefs are probably still getting in the way today— of your ability to allow the flow of good to come into your life. Your awareness of them is the first step to breaking down the barriers within yourself that you may have built against Love and starts to open you up to begin to receive it.

To be in the flow of receiving love in its' many forms is to find your core belief. Once found, these false beliefs typically need some healing and integration work from you.

You can do this through meditation, self- help books, your spiritual practice or through counseling. If you have been seeking some aspect of love and felt like you've been unable to do anything about it, I'm here to tell you that you can.

It may require you to step onto "the road less traveled". It's your birthright to be in the flow of receiving love, in all of its many forms. The good news is that when you can acknowledge that you are the one blocking it, then you are the one who can surely open the channels to help it flow to you once more.

✧



Alyse Rynor, LCSW is the founder of Soul Choice Counseling, Ltd., a private Mind, Body, Spirit Counsel-

ing practice with the goal of empowering you to live life in the flow of your Soul's growth. Individual Psychotherapy & Couples Counseling by appointment. Evanston office. Call for info: 847.840.0884. Email: alyse.lcsw@gmail.com | www.soulchoicecounseling.com.

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In the flow... *now is the time!*

by Jane Carroo

It seems we are happiest when engaged in activities that make us forget ourselves and lose track of time. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls it the "flow" experience. Flow can be achieved when making music, gardening, playing with children, practicing sports, writing, or even pouring over a spreadsheet.

I work as a clutter coach and I relish being able to co-create in a person's space. When we are able to open space and create a flow for that person, it opens up their world. I have seen the positive affect on their personal lives and work as it provides the setting for that person to flow.

When a client is flowing, I am inspired and the work feels effortless.

Only in letting go can we open up the space for something to flow, possibly a new relationship, health or new career.

With regard to a room, people always talk about a room flowing. That is the energy and space that is felt in that room. When it flows, we can move unencumbered and easily get from place to place. It feels comfortable, even airy. That is why we feel free and easy, it is flowing!

What's Your "flow"?

Some activities provide an extra psychological boost. They are activities that totally absorb us, challenge without overstressing us and make us feel fulfilled. They are what create the feeling of "flow."

For you, it may mean whooshing down the Alps; for someone else it may be basting a turkey, bowling or mowing the grass. Whatever your flow, it will make you feel effective, confident and in control.

Get into the flow:

Identify the high points of your day. Try to note when you've got that "in the zone" feeling. Or reflect back at the end of the day to see what made you feel good. Then try to do those activities more.

Don't look for flow in passive pursuits. Watching TV, for example, doesn't offer the challenge that tends to spark flow. And once you improve at a task, considering raising the level of difficulty in some way.

Inject flow into some regular activities. If you inject more meaning or ingenuity into routine tasks, you can make them more rewarding. In one study of hospital cleaning staff, some

were unhappy with the job, but others upped their pleasure by creating new challenges, like working more efficiently or helping patients.

Indulge! Though there probably isn't much research on the emotional value of a good soak in the tub, we all need some kind of relaxing refuge.

Why not consider these options:

Therapeutic massage. A massage can relieve muscle tension, stimulate the body's natural painkillers and boost your immune system. It can also help you feel less anxious and more relaxed.

Meditation or a meditative form of exercise. Try tai chi or qi gong, which use soothing, flowing motions.

A nature break. A blue sky, lush bushes, a scenic lake. Walking in, or even just looking at nature calms our nerves and relieves mental fatigue. In one study, workers with views of nature were happier at their jobs than workers with similar jobs but no nature.

A mental vacation. If you can't hop on a plane to someplace soothing, just close your eyes and envision a scene you love. Try to fully imagine the experience of being there.

However you find it, now is the perfect time to get things moving. Enjoy! ✨



Jane Carroo combines her background as an Educator, Consultant, Life Coach and Certified Professional Organizer to help clients gain clarity and control over their

space, paper and time. www.cluttercoach.com
Excerpts courtesy of www.liveyourlifewell.com



Accepting your greatness

By Julie Murphy Casserly



Few things are more valuable than our space: physically, mentally and emotionally. Our space is prime real estate, yet many of us fill it with things that lower the value. What are those things filling your space? That trinket from an ex that we just can't let go of. Our favorite skinny jeans from a few years ago. The toxic friendship.

We all have them; the items that we hold on to not for sentimental reasons, but to keep a present grip on something that's in our past. We tell ourselves they're good for us— we've known that one friend for decades! But is it a positive force in our lives, or is it actually trapping us in a reality that we don't want.

Many people have trouble letting go of the things that fill up their space — both physically and emotionally. In this case, the emotional stuff is habits. As many people know, falling prey to undesirable routines isn't very hard. Escaping those routines, on the other hand, can be quite challenging. In terms of finances, it's the difference between falling into debt and climbing your way out of it.

The money habits we've picked up along the way are no different from the other stuff we just can't let go of. With money we carry such strong feelings of shame, blame, judgment and guilt surrounding it. We're so down on our present situation and so ashamed of our past that we look into the future and see doom and

gloom. But it doesn't have to be that way. What I'm telling you to do about those feelings is to first face them, and then to let go of them.

Holding on to the past blocks the abundance that lies in the future. Keeping those old clothes that don't fit in hopes of attaining our younger bodies may motivate us to change, but not from a positive place. Hanging on to toxic relationships that are very much over but too comfortable to eliminate takes your attention away from the new, healthy ones waiting in the wings.

And holding on to the bad feelings associated with our finances— as well as the detrimental habits that go hand-in-hand with them— halts us in a financial reality that we don't want.

Let go of your old financial worries, insecurities, neurosis and habits. Stop feeling ashamed of your past and discouraged about your future. Accept where you are right now, and remove all the shame and blame associated with your money.

Step into your new financial reality and allow it to take you where ever it leads. Accept that you deserve a healthy and wealthy financial life,

and surrender to the greatness that awaits you. Spend time each day letting go of the things holding you back— clutter, acquaintances, fear, insecurity— and focus on accepting both your present and your future.

✦



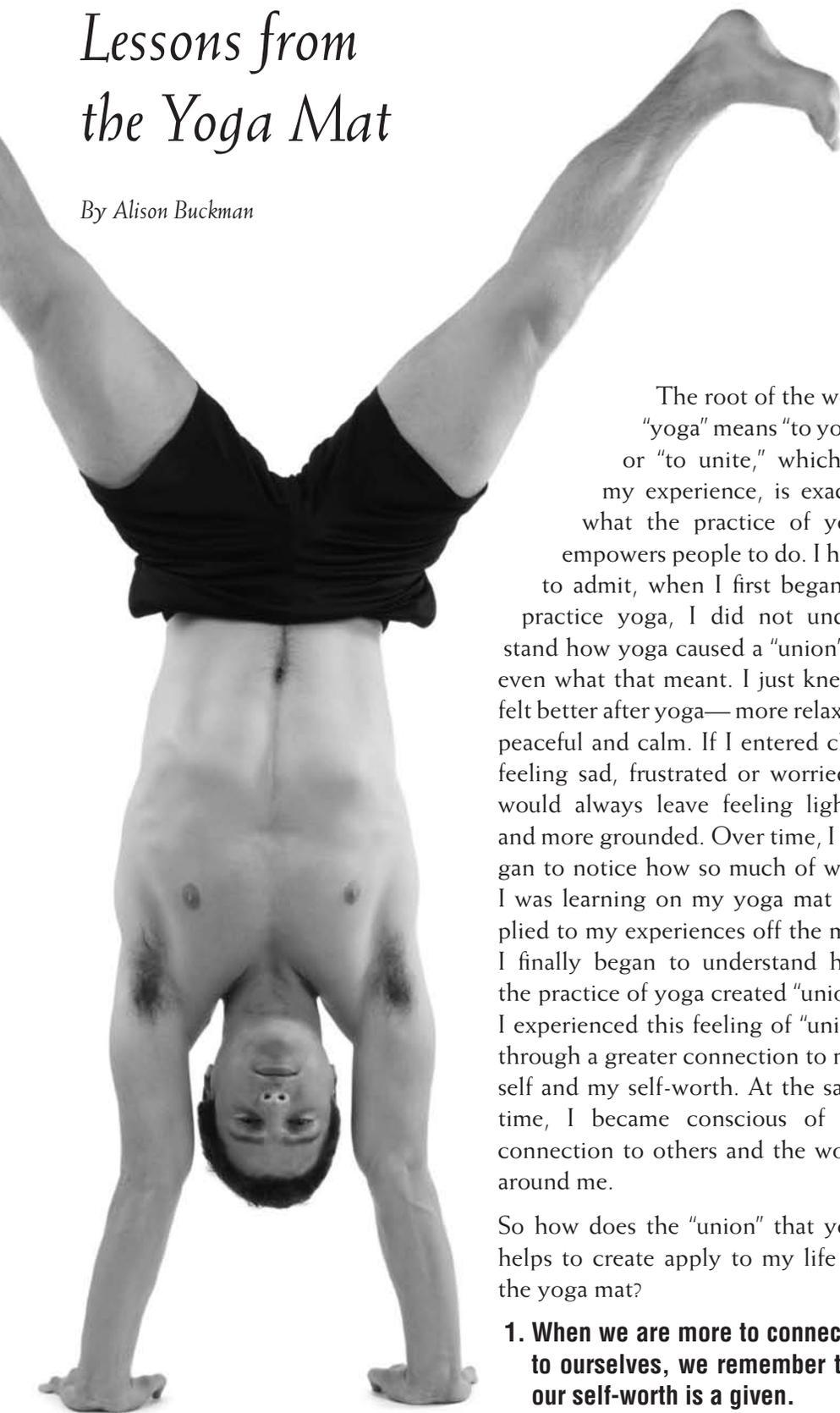
Julie Murphy Casserly, CFP® , CLU, ChFC, is a 16-year veteran of the financial services industry and founder

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* The tips above may not be suitable for all people, and JMC Wealth Management advises clients on their investment strategies on an individual basis.

A Sacred Union: Lessons from the Yoga Mat

By Alison Buckman



The root of the word "yoga" means "to yoke" or "to unite," which in my experience, is exactly what the practice of yoga empowers people to do. I have to admit, when I first began to practice yoga, I did not understand how yoga caused a "union" or even what that meant. I just knew I felt better after yoga—more relaxed, peaceful and calm. If I entered class feeling sad, frustrated or worried, I would always leave feeling lighter and more grounded. Over time, I began to notice how so much of what I was learning on my yoga mat applied to my experiences off the mat. I finally began to understand how the practice of yoga created "union." I experienced this feeling of "union" through a greater connection to myself and my self-worth. At the same time, I became conscious of my connection to others and the world around me.

So how does the "union" that yoga helps to create apply to my life off the yoga mat?

1. When we are more connected to ourselves, we remember that our self-worth is a given.

It seems so natural for people to acknowledge the inherent worth of their pets. When working with clients, I often ask them what makes their dog or cat worthy? The answer is always the same: Because they exist. We as human beings, are also worthy *simply because we exist*. We are here. Our worth is not based on our accomplishments or what we DO. It is so easy to see the worth in an infant, but when it comes to ourselves, we often forget that we were once an innocent and pure infant as well. We can begin to rediscover our own self-worth through the practice of yoga by accepting that where we are in a pose or our practice is exactly where we should be. Our worth is not defined by our ability to stand on our heads or touch our toes. Through yoga, we can practice accepting ourselves and remembering our innate worth.

2. Yoga helps create a connection between body, mind and spirit, thus guiding us towards both physical and emotional strength. A couple of years ago I did a training for my colleagues about treating eating disorders. At one point in the training, I discussed how I used yoga in the therapeutic process and asked for a volunteer to demonstrate this idea. My friend reluctantly agreed, and as I explained to him that I was going to help him get into a handstand—the color drained from his face. I told him that I knew he had the strength to do it and that I would not let him fall. He looked his fear in the face and soon he was standing on his hands view-

ing the world from a completely new perspective. After I helped him come back to standing on his feet, he began to cry. In that brief moment, the yoga pose allowed him to use his physical body as a vehicle to tap into emotional strength he didn't even know existed.

3. Yoga creates a sense of community and reminds us that we are all connected.

Through that connection, we can find support and love. While it is important to recognize our inner strength (as my friend), we don't have to find that strength all on our own. In yoga, we have the sacred space of our individual yoga mat, however, we also are surrounded by the other students and the teacher in the room. This dynamic is a reminder that we have the power of those who support us standing behind us all the time.

4. Yoga allows us to find the union between giving and receiving.

Many of us give so much of ourselves but don't allow ourselves to receive. We end up feeling depleted, exhausted and burnt-out. The practice of yoga is a chance to give to ourselves and take the time to receive. I have learned that we need to give to ourselves first before we can really give to others. At the end of a yoga class, we often bring our palms to touch and place them at our heart center. Why not try this right now? As your hands come to your heart center, bow in and focus your energy on you. Let a golden light

of energy move through your hands and into your body, filling you up and restoring your energy. Then, open your hands, and imagine sharing this energy with the world around you while at the same time, you are receiving positive energy from outside of yourself. Once again, draw your hands to the center of heart and allow yourself to sit with this balance between the giving and receiving.

Yoga provides healing and transformation for many different reasons—much more than I could write about in a single article. In my experience, "union" and connection—the very root of the word "yoga"—is also the essence of the practice itself. Judith Lasater writes in *Living Your Yoga*, "Connection is that process of knowing our importance to the Whole, as well as comprehending that others share this importance with us. When we do so, we are less likely to hate or fear. We can rest, secure in the knowledge that we are all eternal threads in the grand design." ❧

Alison Buckman, LCSW, RYT, CLP is a psychotherapist, Certified LifeLine Practitioner and Registered Yoga Teacher. She has over 9 years of experience working individually and in group settings with a diverse population of clients. She has additional experience and training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) and psychodrama/drama therapy techniques.

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Like a River

by Laurie Buchanan

*"The quality of the imagination
is to flow and not to freeze."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

One of the most frightening things a writer can encounter is writer's block—the opposite of flow. Sitting down to create an article or a story, we fully expect original thoughts and creative ideas to flow down from our brain, through our arms, out our fingertips, and onto the keyboard. If this doesn't happen, the result can be white-knuckling.

This is true in many areas of life:

- Whether it's family or friends, we expect flow in our daily encounters with other people.
- Whether it's coworkers or the task at hand, we expect flow in the workplace—and flow in our commute to get there and back again.
- Whether it's at the bank, the post office, or making travel arrangements, we expect flow when conducting business transactions.

You've heard the saying, "In the zone." It's a good place to be—it's in the flow. It happens when what we're doing is going well, feels effortless, and even exciting. We become so immersed in the moment that we lose track of time. In fact, time seems to stand still. An athlete is in the flow when they're performing their best. A musician is in the flow when they're creating beautiful music. A dancer is in the flow when their movements are flawless.

Flow is dynamic, moving, and changing. The image that comes to mind when I think of flow is running water—like a river—and being carried along in a kayak or a canoe. It's immensely enjoyable and almost effortless, yet full of energy. When we encounter anything other than flow, something's amiss. It indicates blockage, or even stagnation.

Healthy individuals exhibit vim, vigor, and vitality—characteristics of flow. Their bodies, minds, and spirits work and communicate in harmony; everything flows in the same direction oftentimes pushing at boundaries along the way. In so doing, new behaviors, patterns, or limits emerge, giving birth to inspiration—the driving force behind creativity.

Where are you flowing? ✨



Board Certified with the American Association of Drugless Practitioners, Laurie Buchanan is a holistic health practitioner

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