

Finding True North

Written by Shelley Lowther

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Yogis are always seeking equanimity. We find ourselves looking for peace and inner calm that can only be found by becoming our true, authentic selves. But how do we find ourselves?

We spend a lot of time and money looking for ourselves, when the truth is we are never really lost. Sometimes we are just looking in the wrong place. We get caught up in the pursuit of success or fortune, or stuck playing a role of care-taker, people-pleaser, victor or victim. We forget that we are, in our own right, strong, powerful and exceptional, and that who we are is so much bigger than what we do.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa said, "The magnetic needle always points to the north, and hence it is that the sailing vessel does not lose her direction.". By finding our true north, we can keep ourselves on course, away from the rocks, and flow with the river of life.

In our asana practice, my teacher Baron Baptiste instructs that we find true north alignment by getting present to our bodies. We firmly set our feet on the earth, grounding ourselves and our practice, and bring the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space to our practice. We find the earth beneath us by pressing our feet (or hands!) into the earth. We add water through the flow, the easy movement of breath and body, or vinyasa, and by softening the joints. We add fire by engaging the core, and hugging in, from skin to muscle to bone, to radiate out. We add heat, both external and the internal furnace of the breath, to purify our practice and cleanse our bodies, stoking the fire. We add space and air by softening, allowing change to happen.

It is perhaps easier to find our true north on the mat than off of it. Distractions in our daily lives pull us off in the wrong direction, so we look for ways outside of our asana practice to bring us

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back on course. Perhaps the easiest and most sure fire way to equanimity and balance in your life is to add a meditation practice. Taking time for yourself during the day, even if only for five or ten minutes, can leave you feeling renewed and refreshed, and back in the flow.

Set an intention for yourself to take more time for yourself. By giving yourself time and space, you will give yourself a compass to find your true north, and to stay on course in your life and in your relationships.

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