



The New Year is symbolic of new beginnings, and as we shake off the holiday hangover, many of us are looking for a new perspective. The practice of yoga can offer that fresh perspective to those who are searching for it.

Over the last week, I have told my students that if we set an intention to approach things in our lives from a different perspective, we can achieve subtle, though often powerful, transformation in our lives. By looking at things from a different angle, be it upside down or sideways, we can find a fresh approach. Sometimes the same old linear model of pushing from Point A to Point B simply does not work, and the creative solution may lie on your yoga mat.

Most yogis subscribe to the “off the mat into the world” theory, which is a belief that if we pay attention to the lessons we learn on our mats, we can apply them in the world off our mats.

On our mats, we learn patience with ourselves, with the practice, and with the pose. When we are patient with ourselves, patience with others is easier. It takes patience to learn how to do a headstand. Most of us don’t walk into the studio for the first time and accomplish this pose. But patience and hard work can turn things upside down, and a once impossible task becomes an achievable goal. These lessons easily translate into our interactions with others.

Through asana we practice humility, as we learn not only our physical limits, but often times our mental and emotional limits as well. Sometimes the mat teaches us more humility than we would like. The same feeling of finding out that the backbends we did as children are not so easy anymore can be translated into everyday situations in our lives.

In a challenging asana practice, we also become grateful for our physical strength, for the glorious things that our bodies can do, for the elation of accomplishment, and the rest that comes after hard work. We become grateful for all that we can do and accomplish. Yoga

teaches a strong work ethic— if you work hard, and play your edges, you will find sweet reward in savasana.

Yoga also teaches loving kindness for all living things. Compassion. First, we must learn compassion for ourselves so that we may be compassionate with others, or our compassion is incomplete. Our practice teaches us to forgive ourselves when we do not reach our own expectations, and that too can be applied to others.

All of these asana lessons can be life lessons. The yoga mat is a vehicle for transformation. If you close your eyes and open your heart, you can take a deep breath and dive, flowing into a new perspective this new year.

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