

STACY MCCARTHY

Deep Healing Aspects of Yoga

Jason Prall:

Hello and welcome to Awaken The Healer Within. I'm your host, Jason Prall. And with me today I have Stacy McCarthy. At what is considered the Academy Awards of the health and fitness industry, Stacy was the recipient of the 2021 IDEA Health and Fitness Instructor of The Year. This prestigious award honors a certified group instructor whose superior instructional and leadership skills are demonstrated through community and industry involvement, as well as the ability to inspire and motivate others to commit to a healthy lifestyle. Stacy, thanks for joining me.

Stacy McCarthy:

Thanks, Jason. Great to be here.

Jason Prall:

So I really love the topic that we're going to be chatting about today, which is yoga. And I think there's so much misconception about yoga that we have in the West. And some of the more deeper aspects that I've been, let's just say, introduced to, not totally embodied or familiar with from an experiential level, but it comes from the Ayurvedic texts and some of the things that I learned when I was in India speaking with some of the Ayurvedic masters. And so these are some of the things that I'm excited to dive in with you. But before we get into that, I'd love to just hear about your journey in the health and fitness industry and really why you landed on yoga as your main thing.

Stacy McCarthy:

Yes. Well, that's a great question. So I started in health and fitness, actually, right out of college with a degree in exercise physiology. So I was really good with the muscular skeletal system, with really understanding functional movement, I taught group exercise classes and all the latest crazes for a good decade. And then about 30 years ago, I've been in this for a long time, about 30 years ago, my first yoga class I tried was taught by a friend, he would happen to be very bendy and he was just calling out these things, whipping his foot behind his head, and I thought, I can't do this, this is not for me at all.

Stacy McCarthy:

And then a few years later, I met a teacher who I really connected with because he really brought in the essence of yoga and made it much more accessible, really meeting people where they're at physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, because people come to yoga with different levels of resistance. Some people come in with a lot of resistance physically in the body, they're either very stiff and tight or maybe they're like a wet noodle and they don't have any stability, they can just fall into poses but there's no structure or stability, or maybe they come with some emotional or mental challenges with the practice itself, or maybe it's spiritual resistance.

Stacy McCarthy:

So everyone comes to this practice with different levels of resistance. And he was really able to tap something inside of me that was a connection and I became hooked. And at that point, he was leaving to India to study with his teacher, and he said, "You're going to teach my classes", and I'm like, "No, I'm not. This is for me, this is my practice." He said, "No, you're teaching my classes." And of course, this was way before things like yoga teacher trainings and much of that was going on. So I began teaching his classes and I was just completely connected to it. I ended up going to India and studying with his same teacher.

Stacy McCarthy:

And from that point on, one of my real missions was to help bridge the gap between fitness and yoga, because there's two different systems there. Fitness is really the ability to do an activity or an athletic endeavor, and so we're training the body for that, for exercise or an athletic endeavor, that's what fitness is. Whereas yoga is really a whole person body of health, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And so, part of my mission has been to really help bridge that gap because in the fitness world it was all about the body. So much was based on the body and I really wanted to bring in more of those deeper techniques that yoga has had throughout the centuries, through 5,000 years. So that's really been my mission and I've been doing that ever since.

Stacy McCarthy:

So ironically, I just won the award you talked about, the 2021 IDEA Health and Fitness Instructor of The Year. And it's a little ironic because I'm a yoga teacher, I've been a yoga teacher, as I said, for decades and decades, but it shows me it's really rewarding to me because I feel like fitness is now looking at the whole person, they're looking at mindset, they are looking at how we eat, they are looking at our spiritual well being as well. And so, in that respect, it was so, so rewarding to win this award.

Jason Prall:

Yes, I know, it's great. And I love that you distinguish between fitness and the yoga, because fitness is always a funny thing, right? People say that I'm fit or are you fit, and the question always is, fit for what? Fit to climb a mountain? Fit to run a marathon? Fit to play a hockey game? I mean, what are we talking about? Right. So there's a huge distinction there. And it's interesting, as we get older and perhaps start to move out of the more competitive sports athletics and things like that, then it's like, what do I train for? Right. And to me, that's actually been a question that I consistently ask myself, because I want to stay "fit", but again, fit for what? Because I don't have any ambitions to go climb a mountain or run a marathon or anything, and yet, there's a certain level of perhaps identity that comes from fitness, but also, there's a recognition that I want to maintain good physical health into my elder years, into my golden years.

Jason Prall:

And the things that have really started to become obvious to me now is that there's a certain amount of balance that is really important as I get older, because my body is changing. As I get older, things will naturally shift, right. In Ayurveda they say that we dry up, right, we get into more of our Vata. And so, there's just interesting changes that inevitably occur. And so, that's what's been a fun exploration for me is to find new ways of bringing my body into greater balance as I get older.

Jason Prall:

And so this is where some of the things that get in Yin Yoga, some Qigong, these are starting to call me a lot more than the things that I used to do. And I still love the things like resistance training, and some interval training, and some of these things that are a little bit more active, but I recognize that even though I do enjoy those, that's not really what my body needs as much as some of these other things. And so, maybe you can tap into this for me a little bit more because I think, again, we're missing something in the West about yoga. And there's an essence to yoga, there's a deeper aspect to yoga, because I think when I first walked into it, I really just thought it was these Asanas or these poses, and that was my representation of what yoga was. And then of course, there's nuance to the poses and that kind of thing, but as I've grown into this understanding, there's so much more. So maybe talk to me about the depths of yoga from your perspective.

Stacy McCarthy:

Absolutely. So that was a great distinction between fitness and health. Fitness really being something we do for athletic endeavor, activity or exercise in health being a whole body person, your entire body, your cardiovascular, muscular, skeletal, hormonal, everything, circulatory system working together. So with that definition, yoga is in the lines of health. And in the West, because the West loves to market yoga as this young, lean, very fit body that looks like gymnastics, that's what the assumption is, right? That everyone thinks, well, yoga is about touching your toes. But Yoga is about touching your soul. Ultimately, it's about touching your soul.

Stacy McCarthy:

And the Asana that you talked about, the yoga posture postures, Asana is merely a body awareness technique aimed at liberating our consciousness from old ways of being, doing, and acting, because ultimately, yoga is the liberation of the mind. And it's very interesting because Yoga has grown along with the world really as it's become more popular. And in the West, when it started to gain popularity in the early 90s, the early 2000s, you see all the commercials and that thing, this westernized approach of yoga being so based on the postures, while its intent was good, in order to make it more inclusive, it barely scratched the surface of yoga's real intent.

Stacy McCarthy:

And so, what's happening now is I see a shift in one thing perspective from years and years of practice gives you a great lens to look back on and see where things are going. And as fitness started to mold into more functional movement, as fitness started to look at also how you eat, fitness grew, but then also yoga grew from this only looking at the postures to now more and more people are bringing up mindset. In fact, I've been watching the Olympics a lot, we're in the Olympics as we're recording this, and mindset is coming up so much because these elite athletes are not able to compete, they're deciding to back down, and their mental health is coming to the surface.

Stacy McCarthy:

So we can see, even while people may think that they're very fit, you look at the body of one of the swimmers on there, my gosh, it's like a Greek god or something, or these young gymnasts they're physically ... it's stunning. But what we can't see it's what's going on in the mind all the time. Yoga is primarily designed to awaken our consciousness and this is truly the Asana practice, the yoga postures, they'll give you a lean, strong, flexible body, but more importantly, they're going to give you a greater sense of well being and a peace of mind that can be long lasting. So that's really, ultimately, when we

look back at the ancient texts, the Ayurvedas, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, in it what we're really looking at is this liberation of the mind.

Jason Prall:

I love that. And I just want to share my own journey with yoga and I'd love for you to hit on what you see with your students and some of your teachers. But when I walked into it, it was an exploration, it was a curiosity. Let's go see what this is like, let's see how I do, and let's see if I like it. And I really gravitated towards Bikram yoga, which many people might think of as hot yoga, right. And for me, the reason I liked it is because it was something that we held the postures for a long period of time. And there's a lot of postures that get into the hips, and for me, my hips are very tight. And so I just found a lot of opportunity there.

Jason Prall:

And when I first walked in, right, I mean, I'm sitting there trying to do the poses. And again, one of the reasons I liked it is because it was slower, so I didn't know what I was doing yet, so I'm trying to follow along, and it gave me an opportunity to figure out what the heck was going on. But as I got figuring out these postures, and it wasn't so heady, but that's where I started, so very heady and I figured out the postures. And then I started ... okay, I got to work my breath, I got to inhale here, exhale here. And then what I really started to love was this duality that was showing up in terms of tension, and so it's pulling in opposite directions, right. And I thought, wow, this is really interesting to be able to work my body like this because it's not something that really I've ever done in any other athletic endeavor or any way I've moved my body.

Jason Prall:

And so there was this pulling, lengthening the body. And then using the breath, not only for me, at the beginning it was timing and then, okay, I get to breathe here in this, then I realized, I can actually use the breath to sink deeper into the posture, interesting. My diaphragmatic breathing can actually pull me deeper in and then expand out. And so, I thought that was really interesting. And so, for me, it was this discovery of like, oh my god, there's so much here in this movement. And once I didn't have to think about the poses so much, I could then start to still my mind, right, and quiet the mind, and focus it on the breath, and then just notice some of the thoughts that are coming up, some of the things that started to emerge as I got into a painful position, right.

Jason Prall:

And so, these are the interesting things that I started to notice. I'd just love for you to maybe speak on some of that, because I'm sure you've heard this many times, you've experienced it yourself, so this is not new territory. What are some of the things that you see being discovered by your students and by some of the teachers that you coach?

Stacy McCarthy:

So what you're talking about is such a beautiful journey, and is a journey that I think most people come to yoga the first via the body, and they're experiencing these new sensations. Yoga, if we look back through all of the ancient texts of yoga, it explains everything so beautifully. So what you were experiencing when you're talking about this tension and release, in Sanskrit, the ancient language of yoga, this is a yoga sutra called Sthira Sukham Asanam. And Sthira means strength, or stability, or steadiness. So Sukham, you can think of sukha, sugar, it's the sweetness, it's the release of a pose. So

when we look at it, the yoga poses teach us so much while we're on our mat to use out in the world. So every single pose needs this balance of strength and steadiness and the sweetness and release to have balance and integrity.

Stacy McCarthy:

So what you were feeling is, oh, my gosh, if I really contract my thoracic spine and use my posture muscles, my gosh, and then I can release my chest and shoulders. Now I'm feeling the sweetness of space here, but I'm feeling this tension and the strength here. So what yoga is doing in the asana, it's bringing strength where there's weakness or unawareness, and it's bringing surrender where you're used to gripping and holding. So for an athlete or for someone who exercises a lot, they're bound up. And so they probably use those same muscles over and over again, and now you're asking those muscles to relax, and you're asking the opposing muscles to strengthen up so that we bring balance in the body.

Stacy McCarthy:

So from an asana practice, from the yoga posture practice, is this beautiful lesson of, hey, can you be strong and stable, and at the same time, can you also bring a sweetness and a release to it? And if you take that same metaphor that you just learned in your body, and we take it out to how we interact in the world, can you stand your ground and be strong and steady, and at the same time, can you still be kind and can you still let your voice be heard? So all these beautiful little things that we're finding via the body are truly lessons that we learn out in the world.

Jason Prall:

And one of the things that comes up for me as you speak about this is I recall so often getting in some of these postures and essentially fighting my body, recognizing that there was such resistance to getting into some of these poses or resistance to the feeling that I was experiencing, right, the pain, or the tension, or just the gripping, as you mentioned. And so then I recognize, wow, I really have an adversarial relationship to my hip, or to my left knee, or to my hamstrings, or whatever it is that's coming up. And so again, there's just a lot of realizations in the process of deepening into some of these postures and working with these practices.

Jason Prall:

And so, I guess with that, as someone gets familiar with yoga, what are some of the deeper realizations? Right. Because I feel like I've just scratched the surface with my experiential aspect of yoga. So what are some of these deeper realizations that maybe you can help illuminate for us as just a roadmap that we can maybe orient to as we go deeper into our practice? What are some of the things that you're still discovering, or some of the teachers that you're working with, what are they discovering as they even been working with this for years?

Stacy McCarthy:

Well, the truth is yoga is so vast and so deep, you can never stop studying. I mean, it is lifetimes of knowledge all packaged in here. So I'll use it from layers of the body of the way a yogi looks at a yoga body. So sometimes we look at the word yoga body and we think, well, that's a lean, strong, flexible body, but no, the yoga body is something quite different. So the yoga body, if you can think of a big circle, on the outer circle, the bigger circle, think of that as your muscular skeletal system, right. So this is coming in, doing the asana, feeling, oh, my gosh, I'm starting to get stronger here and I'm starting to get more flexible here, this is the muscular skeletal system, and that's where most people arrive.

Stacy McCarthy:

They want to feel better in their body, they want to look better. A lot of people come to yoga just because they want to feel and look better, that's why they get there. And so that's the first layer, we start to discover a little bit more about our body. We noticed when we ate crappy the night before and we drank too much the next day on our mat how, I don't feel so good, I'm stiff, I'm not quite aware. So we start noticing these things.

Stacy McCarthy:

The next layer of that body is something we call the energy body. And so when you work deep enough, the poses start to come and you start to really understand the poses, then you start to feel how the energy actually moves through the body. So especially through the spinal cord, there's a main energy channel, and in Sanskrit it's called Sushumna Nadi, and then there's two others that crisscross up through the main energy channel. And there's plenty more, but these are all energy pathways. So if you've ever had acupuncture, you may have heard of meridians, and in yoga, we call it nadis, but this is the energy moving through the body and smoothing all over. And that's where you may hear the yoga teacher saying, extend out into the fingertips, really, don't get caught up in here, extend the energy all the way out, so that you're starting to move energy through the body. So the next layer is you start to understand how energy prana life force is moving through the body. And so that's the next layer.

Stacy McCarthy:

And then we peel back another layer and we start to look really at our emotional body. We start to notice the emotions that come up in the practice. And so maybe you're in a pose and maybe this has happened to you before, if you have never been to a yoga class, maybe you can imagine it, but say the teacher says, okay, let's take tree pose, and you get in tree pose and you're like, oh, my gosh, I'm falling over. Okay, I'm going to do it again. Why is everybody else so balanced but I'm all over the place? And what happens in your mind, an emotion comes up and usually that emotion is something we call frustration. Why is everybody else able to do this pose but I can't even keep my leg up here, I just keep sliding? So frustration is a combination of three emotions, embarrassment, anger, and space in the third one, but they're not positive emotions coming through.

Stacy McCarthy:

So the Yoga Sutras again, if we look back at ancient text it says, "Hey, when negative thoughts arise, negative thoughts and emotions, can you cancel those and replace them with a positive thoughts and emotion." So you may have heard of mantras, I'm sure you know about mantras, the mind vehicles, and so the Yoga Sutra says, "Hey, when that negative thought comes up, that anger, disappointment, embarrassment which equals frustration, can you cancel it and replace it with something that's going to be more positive for you? Can you replace frustration with fascination?" Fascination is alluring, it's wonder, it's possibility, those are the emotions that come up in that.

Stacy McCarthy:

So, when we come into tree pose next time, instead of going, I'm angry, I can't do it, I'm disappointed in myself, I'm embarrassed, everyone is looking at me, can you come back to and go, this is alluring, I wonder why I'm a little off today. This is fascinating. Maybe I ate something last night, maybe I just got off a plane and I'm still a little woozy. And you start to shift your consciousness, your emotions, because we have 430 emotions approximately in any one day and 60,000 to 80,000 thoughts in any one day, and

they're mostly the same thoughts and emotions. So this practice of waking up your emotional body and having better more powerful thoughts is the next layer. And we can find that in the yoga poses. Again, it's teaching us.

Stacy McCarthy:

The next layer, as we peel it away, is something we call the intuitive body or the intellectual body. And so what happens with practice longer and longer, is we start to really connect to not just our energy, but the energy all around us, we start to connect to those little possibilities that maybe we would have missed before. We actually start to tune in and listen, our inner body wisdom is awakening, it's telling us, our intuitive nudge, we actually hear it rather than needing that big bonk upside the head, rather than here's your cancer diagnosis, here's the accident that happened, we actually hear the intuitive nudge before it needs to hit us upside the head.

Stacy McCarthy:

And then the final layer, as we get right to the bull's eye, this is something we call the bliss body, the bliss body. And this is really the soul, this is the spiritual part of it, and this is the deepest, most profound part of your inner self, that when we connect to it, this is where we find the lasting peace. And so yoga as the whole person, the asana starts with that muscular skeletal system, but we find through our practice, and through our open mindedness, and through really discovery and reading those ancient texts and learning about it, that we are so much more than just the body.

Jason Prall:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). I love that. Yes. It's funny, as you name some of these things, I've had experiences with essentially all of them in various ways but not through yoga. And so it just actually gives me a lot of intrigue to be able to experience them through the practice of yoga. And what I love here too is that this is a self practice, right? Of course, having teachers and guides is critical importance, especially ones that are experienced that can transmit, right, and they can actually help you find some of these aspects of yourself and this awareness, guide your awareness in this way.

Jason Prall:

There's something super intriguing about doing it in this way through the body and through these practices, and of course, with the breath, right, the breath guiding the way the entire time. And I love this discussion of nadis and prana, and how this life force energy moves through us, right, because that's something that is so profound and so important to recognize and to realize, and to recognize where we're missing this awareness in the body, right. And we find that there's really a lot of places that we just don't bring awareness to, and these gaps in the recognition of our body. So with yoga, how do you sell this to the person off the street? I mean, somebody's heard about it, they don't really have a ton of interest, we can go really deep, but what are some of these things that you find that this newbie comes in and goes, this is great? Right. Is it the more fitness stuff that, the relaxation? What is it that you find that this new people really, really appreciate about yoga as they walk in the door?

Stacy McCarthy:

Well, I think the first and foremost it's finding the right teacher, because the reality is there needs to be a student teacher connection. You need to feel, one, that whoever is teaching you, first and foremost, can they keep you safe in the yoga poses? Do they have that knowledge because you can get hurt. This is a physical movement, you can certainly pull a muscle, you could certainly fall over, can they keep you safe?

And that starts to build the trust, because quite honestly, if I can't keep you safe in the poses, why would you ever, ever allow me to help you with your mind, and your soul, and your spirit? Why would you ever want to go deeper?

Stacy McCarthy:

So the first and foremost is, can we keep them safe physically? And as they feel better physically, without judgment, without competitiveness, without comparison, then they're starting to open up to possibly want to explore a little bit more, because quite honestly, most people are coming through the vehicle of the body, and they start to feel better in the body. And then for some, they're like, hey, there seems to be something more to this, I'd like to learn more.

Stacy McCarthy:

And so I always joke around that I love people to come to my classes, and my online events and, and retreats and things and do bad yoga, come and do a lot of bad yoga with me. And what I mean by bad yoga is that the only way you get good at something is to do it badly at first. We were all bad. Unless you were some gymnast or some dancer that the poses came very easily for you, and then they have their challenge with the emotional, the mental, and whatever's going on, but for most people, the poses are pretty darn challenging. And so I always say, come and do some bad yoga with me, but just do it.

Jason Prall:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Stacy McCarthy:

Get disciplined. Discipline is freedom. Discipline is freedom. So get on your mat, do it poorly with no expectation. And I'll tell you something, most days I don't feel doing my practice. It takes effort, it's work, it might be uncomfortable, but here's all I do, I have my room set up with my mat so it's there staring at me, it's calling my name, and then I just stand there and I say, okay, I'm just going to do one sun salutation, that's it. I'm just going to stand on here and I'm going to do one sun salutation. And almost every single time that one leads into the whole practice. I have no expectation, I don't care if I do it well, I don't care if the whole thing's modified, I can do it as badly as I want, no expectation, but I did it. And that discipline is what's creating the freedom. And you can either pay for it now or you can pay for it later. And I'd prefer that people get disciplined with it, pay it now because down the road you're just going to feel so good.

Jason Prall:

And if you don't mind, I'd love for you to give us an overview of the various types of yoga and maybe what you'd recommend somebody that's curious about yoga where they start, because I know there's Hatha, and there's Ashtanga, and Yin, and Bikram, and some other ones that I can't think of right now. But there's there's actually a wide menu, and for somebody walking in the door that maybe is looking at taking a class, it can be a little overwhelming, I don't know which one I want to take, and what this means, and why this one is 60 minutes, and that one is 90 minutes. And so where should somebody start?

Stacy McCarthy:

So I'll give you a brief history right up to now. So originally, yoga had a couple different paths, it had the intellectual path where you did a lot of reading of ancient texts and that's how you felt you were going to

find that connection. There was the karma path, and this was really going out and doing service, right, and that's how you felt your connection, your oneness. And-

Jason Prall:

And that's actually called karma yoga, right?

Stacy McCarthy:

Yes. So these were traditional paths, and then Hatha, the word Hatha Yoga usually stems to anything that's a physical yoga, you're doing the Asana. So that's a general, if we look at it, the general term for the physical yoga. Under that general term of the Hatha Yoga are all these different brands of yoga, Bikram was a brand because Choudhury Bikram said, "This is my brand and this is how you're going to do it. And Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga K. Pattabhi Jois said, "This is my brand." Lyengar said, "This is my brand." Yin Yoga, this is my ... So we had these different types of yoga to appeal to different people because one type doesn't fit everyone. And so depending again, a lot of it on your physical body and on your mindset in particular, your disposition, that will guide you into the style of yoga that is probably best for you.

Stacy McCarthy:

Now, you had brought up your Ayurveda a little bit. And Ayurveda is the sister science to the science of yoga. Ayurveda is the sister science, and it's the medical end of it. And in Ayurveda, Ayurveda has something called three constitutions or doshas, and so, within these three constitutions, Pitta, Vata, and Kapha have specific characteristics. And what happens, and you can take a dosha test that can give you a newspaper horoscope version of it, but people have different constitutions. And in Ayurveda there is a saying that opposites cure.

Stacy McCarthy:

So I'll give you an example without going too deep into, A Pitta dosha or a Pitta characteristic or how you are in the world is when you're balanced, you are strong, you're a leader, you might be CEO of a company, you might be a great entrepreneur. When you're balanced, things are going really well, you're a terrific leader. But when you're unbalanced, you might be sharp tongued, you might be highly critical, you might fly off the handle when you're out of balance.

Stacy McCarthy:

And when we think of Ayurveda, opposites cure, now if I'm a Pitta, that fiery type of person that's a great leader in balance, but sharp tongued out of balance, my nature, my personality might be, I'm going to go take a really hot Bikram class that's really hard, I'm going to take a really hard Ashtanga Vinyasa, sweat a maniac. And if you're out of balance, you're stimulating the fire because it's all based on the elements of the world. And so you're stimulating fire throwing you out of balance.

Stacy McCarthy:

What you should probably do, if you're out of balance with that personality, is you should go take a Yin class, a soft, restorative class, and cool some ... You should eat some salad instead of the Mexican food, even though you're craving the Mexican food and the hot yoga, you're out of balance, you're sharp tongued, you're getting angry a lot. Go back, have a cool salad, take a Yin class, bring yourself back into balance. So Yoga is so beautiful. It's based on the universe, it's based on this oneness of everything in the universe, and it has the answers if we're willing to look and doing our practice.

Jason Prall:

I love that. And you're, of course, describing my journey perfectly, right, I'm very Pitta. And you can tell by the red hair.

Stacy McCarthy:

Yes, I knew that. How did I know that?

Jason Prall:

Yes. So yes, and that's exactly what I was drawn to is the Bikram, right, it was because it's hard, and it's sweaty, and it's hot, and we could challenge me, right. And what I've realized is that the Yins are much better for me. And this is the other thing I love about yoga and Ayurveda, and when you start to get a feel for both of them is that there's specific poses that actually can provide cooling, right. And so, even irrespective of the brand, so to speak of the flavor of yoga, I can actually just get into these postures and provide cooling to my system, right. And for me, this is what I've really begun to explore with Ayurveda is, what breathing can I do to increase the cooling, to decrease the Pitta, to balance it, to pacify it?

Jason Prall:

And what foods, right, and what activities, and what meditations, and all the things, right. There's elements that I can bring in to help pacify and balance my system. And so I love that you mentioned that. And this is really how I would also just reiterate, this is a fantastic way to explore Yoga is, what body am I and what's my constitution? Perhaps, where am I out of balance? And how do I bring greater balance and use yoga in that way? And then also, to some degree, what you enjoy, right? I think this is a thing too, is being mindful of not throwing yourself further out of balance, but also, what do I enjoy, because that's the thing that I'm going to continue to do, right? So yes, I love that.

Stacy McCarthy:

No amount of yoga that you do, if you don't like it, will you stick to it, right? So you got it. And no matter how much willpower and discipline you have.

Jason Prall:

Right, exactly. So I guess just in closing here, Stacy, this has been fantastic. I've loved that we've explored deeper aspects of yoga, to me, it's such an important thing. And this is what I see too is what's happening in the West, people are really getting into the deeper aspects of the breath, and the mind, and even the deeper aspects of the awareness, and this I am, right, and this deeper realization. Where can people find your work? And what I guess the other thing that I really want to ask is, as we're getting into the yoga practice, when can I start to play with this on my own? Right. For me, this is something that I've struggled with is, it's a lack of confidence of doing it on my own, but also recognizing this is self practice anyway, so how would you encourage people to adopt this as their own versus specifically following a teacher and, I guess, becoming overly reliant maybe on a teacher?

Stacy McCarthy:

Right. So most people, myself included and probably you as well, it's important that you have a teacher that, one, helps you explore yourself, helps bring out those questions within your inner self, and then finding that system, however they teach, that really works for you, stay with it for a while. There is a real joy in consistency, so in continuity.

Stacy McCarthy:

So the way I personally teach is I have a lot of consistency and continuity, especially at the beginning and the end, and as people grow then in the middle I add the variety and the growth. But that consistency, over and over time, gives people, once they understand that, a chance to take that and do it on their own as well. I know how to warm up, I'm going to go on my mat and I'm either going to do some Sun Salutations, some cat cow, I have the knowledge to do that. And then as I grow, hey, here's the growth area in it.

Stacy McCarthy:

So start with a teacher that you connect to, that you understand that is there to take you deeper, and then on your own, set up your system of getting on your mat and doing a little each day on your own. And I call it mini-maintenance practice, that can be 10-15 minutes, connecting with your body, with your breath, with your heart center. I will tell you from years of practice why most people quit, and I see this all the time and it breaks my heart because I know why they quit, or at least why see most people quit. And I know with your movie and everything on the longevity project of community, and unity, and oneness, how important that is in our lives.

Stacy McCarthy:

So most people start yoga, and I say this with all the love in the world, and it's how I started, as a self serving practice. We start because our doctor said we need to reduce our stress, we start because, hey, I want that yoga body, we start because everybody else is doing it or I saw this ad, we start for a self serving practice. And so after a while, if we're just always doing it for ourselves, it can dry up, it can start to feel like yoga has not given me what I want anymore. It's like you're here to take something from yoga, and you know what, you're just not giving me what I want anymore, so I'm going to go do the next latest greatest.

Stacy McCarthy:

And it's like I teach a lot of meditation as well, and this is true in meditation, why people quit meditation too is they're trying to get something from that meditation. And that's all fine and good when you start off, but it's difficult to keep it sustainable. It's like a drop of water. If you have a drop of water in your hand and you just leave it there, eventually that drop of water will dry up, just like a yoga practice or a meditation practice will dry up. But if you take that drop of water and you place it in the ocean, it becomes part of the whole, it becomes part of the ocean and becomes limitless.

Stacy McCarthy:

So if we can do the same thing with our yoga practice, and not just treat it as we started this conversation, as an exercise program, but if we can actually treat it as a way to connect to a oneness of all things everywhere, if we can treat this as a way to truly connect to the deepest part of our inner self and to connect to all beings everywhere, all of a sudden, this yoga practice becomes this practice of oneness and we're never really alone. We want to get on our mat, we want to feel that connection. And when you start directing your yoga and meditation, I put them hand to hand because that is basically what it is, that when we commit to doing this for the oneness of all beings, we want to get on our mats, we're excited to get on our mats and do our practice because we want to feel that connection and that sense of unity of community.

Jason Prall:

Yes, I love that. And this is the key to really any habit or thing we want to change, right, is we've got to get bigger than ourselves. We've got to really identify our dream, our purpose, our why, what is that big thing, even if it's self-serving in the sense that I want to do this yoga so I can bring more balance to my body so I can live longer for my kid, or my wife, or my whatever, right, that is at least getting beyond the self. And I think that's the first step, is getting beyond the self and expanding outward as much as we can. And eventually I think this is the ultimate just for the benefit of all beings, right.

Stacy McCarthy:

That's right, it's getting out of our ego, right? And I always say in my classes, "The ego is not your amigo, okay, and the Asana practice is going to teach you that. As you try to force your foot into something, it's going to go, bonk, see, you can't do that."

Jason Prall:

Right. Absolutely. Great. Well Stacy, tell us where we can find more of your work.

Stacy McCarthy:

Yes, so I am at Yoga NamaStacy, and it's a mouthful I know, but if you know the word Namaste, the divine light in me bows, honors, and sees the divine light in you, and when you are in that place and I am in that place, we are one. If you know that Namaste, that sense of oneness, it's NamaStacy. So Yoga NamaStacy, no E in it, N-A-M-A-S-T-A-C-Y.com or just google Stacy McCarthy Yoga and you will find all kinds of places to find me, but my website's best. And I have some free gifts there if anyone wants to go there on really learning more about starting your yoga practice as well as eating, and thinking, and the whole bit.

Jason Prall:

Beautiful. Well, Stacy, thank you so much. This has been fantastic. And thank you all for joining us, we'll see you on the next one.

Stacy McCarthy:

Thanks, Jason.