





Inner PEACE

Nancy Jackson

How can yoga help you keep calm through life's challenges?
Nancy Jackson (Swami Dayananda) offers a few techniques.

When all goes well, inner peace settles naturally. You feel at ease. Life flows evenly, events open to your advantage, people behave beautifully and the future looks bright. Although it may sound trite, these times do happen and may occur more than you acknowledge. You already may be a person who notices inner peace. It arises spontaneously all the time. Just after finishing a delicious meal or on a walk, while driving on a country road, or sitting in dappled sunlight. Or,

finally, at the last moment when you stop paying attention to your thoughts and drift into sleep.

Rewardingly, inner peace can also kick in at times of major life events or crises. You can be surprised by being able to say the right words or take the right actions. It's a feeling of being centred and connected. But what about difficult situations that last a long time, chronic illness, ongoing family or work dramas, and an overall sense of fatigue or depression.



STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN

Unsettled and looking for peace? Try this technique when you want to bring yourself back to your centre. As though you are pressing a button on a remote, stop. Look at what's happening. Beginning with the outer world, notice the room or space about you, whether it is quiet or filled with activities and people. Take the time to observe objects, movement, colours and structures. You might see doors, windows, or furniture, trees, roads, or water. Watch for a while.

Then, listen to any sounds you can detect. The drone of an air conditioning system or appliances, music, conversations, laughter, the clatter of dishes or the shush of a coffee machine.

Open your perspective. What colours and shapes do you see? Which movements catch your eye? What is the texture of your clothing or anything around you? Can you detect any particular fragrances or odours?

Moving your attention to the body, listen to your breath. Then take a breath. A long deep inhale and a gentle, slow exhale through the nostrils. Take a few more breaths, at least three. Relax your shoulders and relax the jaw. Find and release any other physical tension. If you are standing or seated, place both feet firmly on the floor or ground. If you are lying down, uncross your legs and be aware of both heels connecting to the furniture or floor.

You have now brought yourself to the present. Find your power in this moment. You have been using your senses and using your breath. Taking whatever time you have, stay focused on the breath. Relax some more and allow yourself to release into this moment.

It's these times of turmoil and disquiet when you particularly need the fortitude of inner peace. These are when every new challenge shakes your emotional state. Anxiety, sadness or anger flare up at any moment. Worries about resolving a situation plague your mind or pressures of work or home overwhelm equanimity. Even small challenges can affect you, especially if you are feeling unwell or have packed too much into your everyday life.

How can you strengthen your foundation of inner peace so you can draw on its power at any time?

PEACE TAKES PRACTISE

"Peace is our real nature," said Ramana Maharshi, one of the twentieth century's most prominent yogis. "All that we need do is to keep quiet. We spoil it. What is required is that we cease to spoil it. We are not going to create peace anew. There is space in a hall, for instance. We fill up the place with various articles. If we want space, all that we need do is to remove all those articles, and we get space. Similarly if we remove all the rubbish, all the thoughts, from our minds, the peace will become manifest. That which is obstructing the peace has to be removed. Peace is the only reality."

Ramana's forceful instruction has merit. In his analogy, he compares a meeting hall with the mind. If it is clean and empty or furnished with useful objects, such as chairs or tables, it is easy to be in. But when it's a storage room, the space itself is jumbled, especially when piled with old, broken, or unknown items.

Inner peace is inner intelligence. Yoga asks us to become increasingly

aware of exactly what is in the storage area of the mind. What you put in is what piles up. The more you practise self-critical or frightening thoughts, the more you experience the whip of self-criticism and fear. Likewise if you invoke memories of disappointments you feel sorrow. Stored incidents of anger are ready to flare at any time.

If you don't know what's shoved in the back wardrobes of your mind, anything can spill out at any moment. In the same way you would tackle clearing out a shed, investigate what's in your mind. When you find a resentment, throw it away, along with all the notions that you're owed an apology or an explanation. As they arise, let go of unresolved issues and clear away situations you wish didn't happen or better roads you should have taken. Although situations may have happened, now's the time to release their emotional charge.

What to keep and nurture? How about pleasant memories, uplifting encounters, conversations with dear friends and events that evoke loving or other positive feelings.

MEDITATE FOR PEACE

Meditation is the practise of turning within to your inner world of thought and feeling. In times of peace, you might find a delicious quietness or a subtle hum. In times of disturbance, you might find a morass of confusion, justification or indecision. Even a regular day generates a tide of impressions. It's easy to revel in sensations and also easy to get caught in stories and predicaments.

With meditation you create the opportunity for the mind to calm down. You refocus from the

excitements of the world to the steadiness of your core being. You recognise that you are bigger and more powerful than the fluctuations of the mind. Sometimes in meditation you can let go of thought and simply sit. At other times it's challenging to unhook yourself.

- Concentrate. When you allow the mind to drift, it may get itself into troubled thinking. Turn the mind to the task at hand.

Paramahansa Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, says, "Meditate often and hold on to

"When you find a resentment, throw it away, along with all the notions that you're owed an apology or an explanation. As they arise, let go of unresolved issues and clear away situations you wish didn't happen or better roads you should have taken."

The renowned text on yoga, the *Bhagavad Gita*, says, "As the rivers flow into the ocean, but cannot make the vast ocean overflow, so flow the magic streams of the sense-world into the sea of peace." If you want to reunite with peace when you feel overstimulated or agitated, release your engagement with thinking. Typical methods are to:

- Focus on the breath. In an instant you can place your attention on the breath. Just watch the breath inhale and exhale.
- Repeat a mantra. The Sanskrit word for peace is "shanti." You can summon the essence of peace by silently repeating "shanti" on each in-breath and out-breath. Or use the word "peace."
- Invoke a quality. When you feel stuck, ask yourself what you need and give it to yourself. For example, "I'm open to strength." "I let go." "May this be solved in a positive way."

the peaceful aftereffects." One of his favourite invocations is, "I am infinite. I am spaceless, I am timeless; I am beyond body, thought, and utterance; beyond all matter and mind. I am endless bliss."

YOUR NATURAL STATE

From the great classic Yoga Sutras, (v.I.36) Patanjali says, "There is always a light within us that is free from suffering." This light of consciousness anchors the mind to its natural, peaceful flow.

One of the basic teachings of yoga is that a centre of consciousness resides within each of us. Your own consciousness witnesses everything in life. It is with you as you move through childhood and adolescence into adulthood. It is with you through different jobs, locations, and people. It is with you in the dream and deep sleep states. It is the closest, most intimate aspect of you. It is your life-force itself. Your inner consciousness is a place of peace.

The author Michael Singer says,

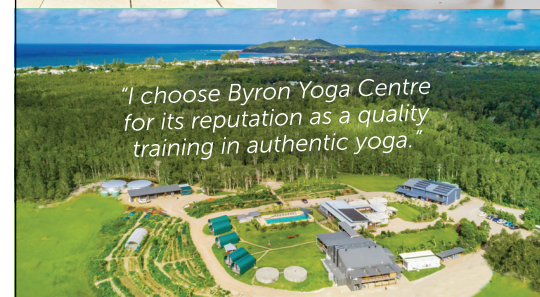


200 HOUR

20 day or 12 day + e-learning
Residential intensive courses
at Byron Yoga Retreat Centre

Part time options available
Melbourne, Sydney & Byron

Ideal first step for yoga teachers,
or next step for yoga practitioners



*"I choose Byron Yoga Centre
for its reputation as a quality
training in authentic yoga."*

Byron Yoga Retreat Centre*

The tranquil eco haven close to Byron Bay has a 20 metre mineral salt swimming pool and lush organic gardens supplying delicious vegetarian food.

*Venue for the residential course options

TWO-STEP MEDITATIONS TO DE-STRESS

Troubled thoughts and feelings can arise at any time – in the midst of conflict, inconvenience or at quiet times at home or out and about. You most likely already are aware of the direct correlation between situations and how you react. But troublesome thoughts are persistent. You can be in a state of contentment when a concern shatters it into discontent. When you want to de-stress, here are three techniques you might want to try.

MOVE NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

STEP 1 : Look at your mind and determine exactly what it is thinking that is causing you unease.

STEP 2 : Find a positive memory, good feeling, excitement for the future, thought of a friend or other happy situation and let the mind focus on that. Be aware of the breath and keep the mind in this more peaceful state.

DISSOLVE PHYSICAL TENSION

STEP 1 : Troublesome thoughts can create physical tension. Typical manifestations are a knotted stomach or a lump in your throat. As you become progressively more aware of emotional turmoil becoming physical, give yourself permission to acknowledge these recurring symptoms.

STEP 2 : Imagine this distress as a ball of energy. Draw the ball upwards in the body all the way to the crown of your head, where you can let it dissolve. Keep repeating this imaginary movement to release holding tension in your body.

FILL YOUR HEART

STEP 1 : You have reacted to something by feeling hurt. Perhaps your mind runs wild or you're sitting with an aching heart. Without addressing the cause, acknowledge your emotional state.

STEP 2 : Within you is a vast well of love. It is your love that will heal and re-fill your heart. Draw your own love into your heart. You yourself are the endless supply of love.

“At each stage of your life you have seen different thoughts, emotions and objects pass before you. But you have always been the conscious receiver of all that was. Now you are in the centre of consciousness. You are behind everything, just watching. This is your true home.”

To bring yourself back to inner peace, practise being conscious. You can do this any time doing anything: perhaps as you sit to eat or look out a window. Maybe waiting at a red light, or even being annoyed in traffic. A heightened emotional state can become a bridge into consciousness; intense fear, for example, or the expanded feeling of love. It's the experience of being aware of having the experience itself. “Here I am at the traffic light looking at the giant telecom tower.”

A method to increase everyday consciousness is to grab onto those instant moments. Hold onto them a moment longer, then a minute, then more minutes. It is a waking meditation where your body and mind are connected in a state of being conscious of being alive, then expanded into the awareness of being one with a broader, permanent inner consciousness.

DISSOLVE IT TO PEACE

It is the nature of the mind to create thought. The meditation master Swami Muktananda says, “If we look at the mind we will see that at every moment it is giving rise to new inner worlds of thoughts and fantasies, sustaining them for a while and then dissolving them. This goes on and on; even while we sleep the mind keeps creating worlds of dreams.”

The mind will create positive as well as negative thoughts. It is your choice whether or not you want to hold onto a series of thoughts. What if you could simply dispel a negative feeling or thought? From Sanskrit, *layabbavana* means to dissolve or absorb through attitude. It can be translated as dissolving into equanimity.

First, of course, is to recognise you are caught in resistance or some kind of mental-emotional unsettling. The next step is to identify what it might be. For example, “I am caught in fear.” “I feel unappreciated.” “I'm apprehensive about tomorrow.” Then, hold it in your mind and consciously dissolve it.

You can imagine the thought itself just disappearing, which allows the mind to clear and relax into a more peaceful state. Here are a few other suggestions.

- Throw the thoughts into a river or ocean and watch them dissolve into the water.

- Smash them on granite with a sledgehammer.
- Blow them into the wind.
- Let them turn into steam and become one with the air.
- Toss them into a fire.
- Calm them as you might stroke a pet.

PLAN FOR PEACE

Peace can be described as a feeling of friendliness. If you're hard on yourself or caught in personal dramas, you might want to become more friendly with your own mind. Ask your mind for good-will and good decisions. Open yourself to clearing away negativities. Then when life shakes your stability, you know you have a foundation of inner peace you can draw on. Inner peace gives you freedom. 🌸

Nancy Jackson (Swami Dayananda) is AYL's senior feature writer. She teaches yoga and meditation in Adelaide and runs weekend retreats at her Lokananda Yoga Meditation Retreat



Good things take time.

It takes dedication, passion and time to become an Iyengar Yoga teacher...
it's worth it.

Find out more about Iyengar Yoga Teacher Training. Conditions apply.

iyengaryoga.asn.au



SPIRIT OF INDIA ~ TOURS TO INDIA & SRI LANKA



- SRI LANKA: February 8-23**
Visit ancient Buddhist sites, living temples, attend puja, see tooth relic of the Buddha in Kandy; wildlife safari. Attend the traditional Kelaniya Maha Perahara.
- KASHMIR & LADAKH: July 9-22 with Hemis Festival & September 13-28 with Ladakh Festival**
3 days exploring Kashmir, living on a houseboat; visit villages & monasteries of Ladakh; travel to Nubra Valley over the highest motorable road in the world.
- INDIAN HIMALAYAS: August 29 - September 14**
Visit traditional villages and sacred Buddhist sites. Easy walks, comfortable accommodations.
- NORTH INDIA PILGRIMAGE: October 14 - November 2**
A diverse cross-section of India from the Himalayas to the Ganges through Rajasthan, visiting the holy pilgrimage sites of the various religions of India. Includes Dusshera festival.

FOR INFO & BOOKINGS
E-MAIL: inquire@spirit-of-india.com | **PHONE:** 0011-415-381-5861 | **WEB:** www.originalworld.com