

Space to Breathe • Space to Grow

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Most of us know how it feels to rush through a day thirsty, hungry, or even having to go to the bathroom. A lot of us run through our days never taking a moment to find out how refreshing and soothing a deep breath feels.

Because most of us have spent the majority of our lives training ourselves to accept discomfort in its many different forms we have become so far removed from taking good care of ourselves that we don't know what it means. Many of us even wear self-sacrifice and neglect as a badge, that it somehow establishes our worth and lovability. Somewhere, somehow, we decided to believe that the more time we spend doing and producing defines us as worthy, contributing members of our family and society. This is a seesaw that I've been struggling to balance for years! "I really feel like I need to take a nap right now, but gosh I'd feel so guilty about it." Or, "I know my body, mind, heart and spirit would sing if I did my yoga practice right now, but I need to fold the laundry, clean the bathroom and do the dishes, if there's time afterward I'll sneak a few minutes in." Or, "that shirt matches my eyes perfectly, but I really don't deserve it".

What I've finally begun to realize is that the laundry and dishes and dirty bathroom will always be there, and so will the grass to cut and bills to pay. Those things will never go away. I might as well go ride my bike, drink in that beautiful sunshine and fresh air and then cheerfully, and presently, sit with my daughter while she does her homework and listen to her chatter and feel myself focus on *her* and on the *moment* instead of the hundreds of tasks and deadlines and goals that I've created for myself that so easily swirl through my brain.

The truth is that when you give yourself some time, some attention, some love, what you receive is ten fold, one hundred fold. When we begin to prioritize ourselves and our health and well-being, positive patterns unfold. We start to feel better, less rushed, more present and attentive. We are then able to give more fully of ourselves in a healthy way. When we stop and listen to what our bodies are saying we gain insight to our needs and to our wants. We begin to create healthy boundaries for ourselves. When we give ourselves permission to rest or start a project we've always dreamed about or sit and meditate, we begin to connect more deeply to our spirit and to our heart's desires. When this happens we begin to be more authentically us. When we are authentic, we become more aligned with our path and our purpose, and when this happens big shifts occur!

Don't for a moment think that what I am suggesting is easy, because it's not. To retrain ourselves to listen, and feel, and then act, in a way that supports our best interests is anything but easy, and there are bound to be growing pains.

As I struggled my way through a disastrous and heart wrenching divorce I could hear a friend and fellow yogini's voice in my head, daily, reminding me to live my life in way that was a healthy model for my daughter. If I couldn't find the strength and determination to make those choices for myself, it was easier to find the strength to do it for her. I knew my daughter was watching me and taking her cues on how to be a woman in this world from me.

That's another beautiful return on self-care, the love the most, get to witness it and learn from you. I a lovely, bright and intelligent woman who was a alcoholic and had serious weight and body image also knew her father who was regularly having toes due to progressing diabetes and continuing to sneak boxes of wine and sweets into his house. One day I was talking with this woman and she told me in a matter of fact way "I just never learned any self care in my family. I'm learning it now." While this may be an extreme example, I see people everyday who are tired and sick and stressed and not at home in their bodies and who are not loving their lives.



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I think we can change this and I think we should change this. If we can begin to open up our hearts to our own selves and embrace what we find there as we would a small child or an animal, if we can begin to extend ourselves some compassion and time and attention, if we can give ourselves a few deep breaths and a walk around the block or some time on the mat, I'm hoping that we might just find our world a little simpler, a little sweeter and a little more peaceful.

~namaste

Sara Tharrington helps to share the joy, blessings, and humor of yoga, at her studio, the Yoga Garden, in beautiful downtown Duvall, W. A. She can be reached at www.loveyogagarden.com