

Yoga for a World Out of Balance Meeting 4 Homework
Saturday, June 22, 2013

1. Homework Suggestions

- a. *Live with the awareness of your inherent interrelation – an integral strand of the web of life.*
- b. *Walk in nature, try listening, seeing, feeling with out knowing.*
- c. *Meditate for 10 minutes am & pm or 20 minutes once a day*
- d. *Reflect on this week's study questions & try the exercises*
- e. *Consider journaling*
- f. *Reading*
 - i. *Yoga for a World Out of Balance Chapters 8 & 9, Brahmacharya: The Wise Use of Sexual Energy & Aparigraha: Non-acquisitiveness*
- g. *Listening*
 - i. *Optional: On Being's Interview: Listening Generously: The Healing Stories of Rachel Naomi Remen, medical director of the Commonweal Cancer Help Program, and a clinical professor of family and community medicine at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine. Her books include My Grandfather's Blessings, and Kitchen Table Wisdom. <http://www.onbeing.org/program/listening-generously/124>*
- h. *Viewing*
 - i. *Optional: Joanna Macy Peace With the Unknown: Eco-philosopher [Joanna Macy](#) explains why making peace with the unknown helps us be more present in the time we live in. <https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/interviews/peace-unknown>*
 - ii. *Paul Hawken Humanity's Immune Response: Paul Hawken, environmentalist and entrepreneur, describes humanity's*

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immune response to political corruption, economic disease and ecological degradation. <https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/interviews/humanitys-immune-response>

- i. In the Chapter 6, Honesty: Satya, Michael states that honesty challenges us to focus on the relationship between actions, speech and thoughts and their effects. He asks whether attention to honesty can be a strategy by which we wake up to interconnectedness. Can we apply the Yama of honesty to every aspect of our lives, from how we speak to how we determine how much we really need?*
- j. Michael says that as we settle in to an authentic way of being we awaken to our larger responsibility of serving and supporting others. Yoga practice brings about the realization that everything is empty of self image. In stillness and silence we realize we're all connected - thus the choices we make have significant impact on well being of others.*
 - i. When have you realized the experience of being interconnected?*
 - ii. What was your response to this experience?*
- k. Michael says one of the most important issues we can practice Satya is our personal and collective patterns of consumption and the skewed ideas we have about what we think we need. Our patterns of consumption are exacerbating inequalities and damage to the world body. The dynamics of consumption including poverty, inequality and environmental degradation are accelerating. We consume resources well beyond our basic needs. Michael offers a list of questions to help us see our consumption patterns more clearly:*
 - i. How are products & resources produced?*
 - ii. What is the impact of production on environment & society?*
 - iii. Which factors influence our choices of what to consume?*

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- iv. What factors influence what, how and why things are produced?*
 - v. What is a necessity? What is a luxury?*
 - vi. How do consumption habits reflect our values?*
- l. Michael asks us to consider what we are trying to fill when we don't or won't see the connection between our values and consumption patterns. He says that suffering (Duhkha) and consumption are intimately related. The planet can't sustain the production of over-packaged useless products. The system that drives these consumption patterns is you and I. Michael further states that what we seek outside ourselves illustrates what we think we lack.*
- i. What patterns are you reinforcing with your consumption choices? What do you lack?*
- m. The ecological and social crises around the world testify to importance of responding as one who is intimately tied to the world. Yoga gives us guidelines for how to live as if the world were our very self. There is no separation. This requires examining our attachments and how they affect our world view. Have you considered your attachments and world view?*
- n. In exploring the yamas we are discovering a path of peace. We consider the conditions favorable to the emergence of peace which include honesty and a manner of attention that isn't bound by fixed ideas. We are present to what is around us and allow ourselves to be transformed by what we are experiencing including the suffering of others. Peace begins by not turning away from suffering. Consider how often you contract around a feeling state, a thought, a view about yourself or an other. What happens when you loosen the contraction and/or reaction?*
- o. Michael asks us to consider what we're defending when we create a self that falls into comfort, habit and prejudice more easily than open*

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mindfulness and intimacy. Why is our capacity to be flexible, to see all living beings as equal, to act out of that insight in honesty and intimacy so rarely exercised?

- p. Michael urges us to transform our states of mind into genuine care. Our longing is satisfied out of attention to the way our existence is built through relationship. Yoga directs our awareness to the way we cling to our history, habits and familiar comforts and offers practices to interrupt this repetitive aspect of our personality.*
- i. Has your yoga practice revealed these habits to you?*
 - ii. How do your tendencies to cling to the familiar relate to your ability to care and be in relationship?*
- q. Michael states that Yoga is a release from our constant preoccupation with ourselves. The yamas are focused on interrupting the conservative, repetitive aspect of our personality. Honesty obliges us to refrain from turning away from suffering - from moment to moment. He describes the yoga path as one of awakening - a path of no escape - we refrain from the tendency to shut down in the face of suffering. Our capacities to wake up and shut down become our spiritual work.*
- i. Are you aware of the circumstances that trigger your tendency to shut down?*
 - ii. What practices help you to stay open and refrain shutting down and succumbing to the hypnotic pull of rationalization?*
- r. Michael discusses the application of honesty in conflict as using our communication skills to enlarge our vision of what the truth might be in a given situation. This requires patience and flexibility and a willingness to allow possibilities to arise before we make up our minds. He further states that truth is always partial and we must still act. Wisdom arises through our mistakes.*
- i. Consider how willing you are to suspend belief and inquire about situations with sensitivity and openness.*

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ii. Are you willing to risk making mistakes?

- s. Michael observes that we all harbor more biases than we might think. Since belief precedes action we need to be honest about where our beliefs are narrow, dogmatic or even violent. Notice how your feelings condition your perceptions and how, in turn, your perceptions influence your feelings. Who do you perceive to be “us” and “them”? Try contemplating your feelings and perceptions about a friend, an enemy and a neutral person.*
- t. Our willingness to let go of fixed ideas and observe life openly with clarity and authenticity fosters compassion. In practicing honesty in this way we express a deep commitment and caring for the web of life of which we are a part. How willing are you to practice nonviolence and honesty in this way - with attention, authenticity, curiosity, openness and sensitivity toward your self and others?*
- u. Michael stresses that listening is at the heart of community practice. He says that authenticity is always constructed in the context of relationship because we are never finished. Our personality is just a contingent unfolding without end. As we cultivate equanimity, kindness, friendliness and joy - we counteract the ill will that often arises in a competitive culture. We can enjoy each other in similarity and difference. Consider the relationships that enable you to be yourself, to co-create yourself. What interactions foster the qualities that enable you to enjoy an other in similarity and difference?*
- v. Michael says that the way we speak with each other is key to relational yoga. Karma operates on 3 spheres: body, speech and mind. Language is the repository of meaning and relation that make a culture what it is. In a sense we literally are the language we speak. Consider the way you communicate, the way you express your self. Consider how intently and openly you listen to others. Michael states that there is an urgency to fostering a new selflessness, a willingness to see and love our fellows as ourselves. He asks how we can integrate flexible thinking and listening with ethical action. He*

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believes the answer begins in our attitude and ability to find clarity of mind with less self referencing. What does this mean to you? How do we learn to stop filtering experience through the narratives of “I”, “me”, “mine”?

- w. Michael suggests the more we relax into present centered awareness - that comes from reducing our habits of reactivity and distraction - the more we can engage in life giving relationships, the more we can get a clear sense of what we're perceiving, thinking and choosing. Do you believe mindfulness practice can help us base our decisions on what reality is versus what we want reality to be?*
- x. In Chapter 7 Michael states that when we take more than what we need we are stealing. People over consume to emulate others, indulge themselves, escape feeling reality or to somehow fill an underlying sense of lack. Consider how you might be consuming more than you need. Contemplate what might be the underlying motivation and whether you're truly satisfied.*
- y. Gandhi said that we're not always aware of our true needs. Most of us mistakenly multiply our wants and unconsciously make thieves of our selves. He suggests that intentionally observing the principle of non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of wants. Consider experimenting with this idea.*
- z. Beautiful corollaries to not stealing are acts of generosity, letting go and contentment. In actively practicing these acts of “non-greed” we are creating the conditions of peace, non-harming. Michael asks whether we can do something out of the ordinary & turn our daily desires into new habits of generosity. How would you turn a daily desire into a generous habit?*
- aa. Michael states that any action motivated by craving only motivates more craving. He suggests that underlying this craving impulse is a belief in insufficiency. Untying this knot of insufficiency can be a gateway to freedom. Non-attachment - even to a sense of self - is the*

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antidote to stealing. Consider how these ideas might operate in your own life. Notice any resistance that may arise.

bb. Michael interprets that yamas as suggestions for how we can sustain ethical, sensitive & compassionate lives. Rather than applying them rigidly to every situation, he suggests that we consider our intention & potential consequences as we apply them in particular situations. He suggests considering these questions when following the Yamas:

- i. Are your actions going to cause harm to you?*
- ii. Are your actions going to cause harm to another?*
- iii. What is the quality of intention in the choice you are making?*

cc. Michael suggests that the yamas as precepts can become mirrors in which we see the web of connections. He asks whether self-reflection can enlarge our capacity to take in others & see ourselves within the matrix of all living systems?

dd. Michael states that one of Yoga's goals is to cultivate clear sense perception. This perception moves the practitioner into deeper intimacy with the natural world. He suggests the combination of worldly-responsiveness and increased awareness helps one overcome greed and material addictions that are harmful to the ecosphere. Are you willing to enter into practice with this intention?