

Awake & Ready!

Newsletter of the Ananda Yoga™ Teachers Association
Vol. 6 No. 1 • Spring 2001

From the Director

Engineered for Upliftment

Over the past few years, I've seen remarkable growth in the number of people who practice and teach Ananda Yoga. It's truly wonderful to see so many people taking to Ananda Yoga with such enthusiasm.

Why has this happened? Certainly the "yoga boom" is one big reason. With hatha yoga nearly everywhere—gyms, churches, businesses, hospitals, the media—naturally some would come to Ananda Yoga. But I think a bigger reason for the growth in Ananda Yoga is that more and more students want more than a workout. They want yoga to change their lives, not just (as one celebrity put it) their posteriors.



Gyandev McCord

Of course, not many students walk up to us at the first class and say, "I want Yoga to change my life." But just beneath their conscious awareness, there's a gnawing desire for "something more." They may not realize it, but what they really want is upliftment. This makes them ripe for Ananda Yoga, which is specially "engineered" to raise consciousness. That's why its full name is "Ananda Yoga for Higher Awareness." And it's our joyful duty as Ananda Yoga teachers to help students find exactly that.

Give Your Students the Full Power of the Practice

This is why we've been so strongly encouraging you not to hold back, but to offer your students the fullness of Ananda Yoga. And yes, that includes two of Ananda Yoga's unique and powerful tools: asana affirmations and Energization.

Recently, I was thinking of when I first began teaching Ananda Yoga in 1983. I valued affirmations and Energization in my own practice, and I felt comfortable teaching them to students who already practiced Ananda Yoga, but I wondered whether new students would like them. I had an uneasy feeling: "Will the students think they're weird? Will they come back if I teach this?" After all, affirmations and Energization are unusual, they're not the norm.

Over the years, I've known many AYTT graduates who have had similar concerns, and some therefore haven't taught these two central aspects of Ananda Yoga. (And of course, some haven't made these techniques a part of their own practice, so certainly they shouldn't teach what they don't practice.) The blessing for me was that I *had* to teach these techniques, because I was teaching at an Ananda Center. No choice there!

Having to "just do it" helped me begin to realize two important points. First, affirmations and Energization are indeed not commonplace in yoga classes—and that's good! It gives you what advertising experts call a USP: Unique Selling Proposition. Very few other yoga teachers can offer these techniques to their students. Not that I'm encouraging you to be commercial or feel a sense of competition with other yoga teachers. Rather, I'm simply pointing out that you have something unique and valuable to offer. So don't hold back!

Second, reflecting that I liked affirmations and Energization in my own practice, and that I was fairly normal, I reasoned that other people would probably like it, too.

(continued on page 2)

And the Winner Is ...

It's official: the new name of this newsletter is *Awake & Ready!* Many thanks to all of you who suggested names—28 of 'em in four languages, ranging from fun to descriptive to inspiring to whimsical to ethereal.

We collected votes via AYSutra (not a member yet? then see p.2) as well as from those of you visited The Expanding Light through mid-March, and from the AYTT staff.

You may recall that we had offered *Awake & Ready* merely as a "seed thought" in the contest announcement in the last issue. Guess it was a good seed, because it won a close contest.

But of course we can't win our own contest, so we decided that the winner should be Beth Howard of Cheyenne, WY. A February 2001 graduate, it was she who suggested adding the exclamation point, which *of course* it would need. Thanks, Beth!

In This Issue

Engineered for Upliftment	1
And the Winner Is	1
Member News	2
Asanas Can Teach Us the Deeper Side of Yoga	3
Yoga Day USA Is for You	4
Be Calmly Active and Actively Calm	5
Level 2 Q&A	6
Relax and Feel	7
Level 2 Programs	8
AYTA Contacts	8
Yoga Alliance Update	8



Member News

Join AYSutra Today

AYSutra, our e-mail Q&A forum, is helping AYTA members share solutions about planning a new yoga studio, teaching students with multiple sclerosis or bursitis, and lots more topics. You can even use AYSutra for prayer requests in times of need. To sign up, send an e-mail today to AYSutra@expandinglight.org.

Even if you don't have a computer, you can participate: Just visit yahoo.com or hotmail.com via a computer at your local library or internet cafe (staff should be able to help you). Either website will give you a free e-mail account. Then join AYSutra!

Want to Share Your Wisdom?

Have you had insights—simple or profound—on teaching Ananda Yoga? Have you had instructive experiences with the student/teacher relationship? Found innovative promotional techniques? Designed a particularly effective class flyer? Received inspirations on your own practice? Then please consider contributing an article for *Awake & Ready!* No writing skills are required; we'll be happy to help you manifest it. Just contact Gyandev (see page 8).

Virtually Unlimited Good Karma

Do you have desktop publishing skills? We would be most grateful for your help with the design and production of *Awake & Ready!* If you can offer service in this way, please contact Gyandev (see page 8).

Helping Students Find You

Soon it will be even easier for students to find you. The AnandaYoga.org website will "go live" later this spring. (It's proceeding a bit slower than we'd hoped, due to a major redesign of the main Ananda websites.) In addition to offering information on Ananda Yoga, the site will list the AYTA directory of members, with phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

New Liability Insurance

We have a new carrier and policy, with annual premiums from \$100 to \$160, depending on the coverage you choose and how much you teach. For an application, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Lisa Powers at The Expanding Light (see page 8). Existing policies will continue until their expiration dates.

Engineered for Upliftment

(continued from page 1)

Indeed, over the years I've found that most students *do* like them—sometimes more than the asanas! If anything, it's usually just the teachers who are the hesitant ones.

Remember this simple truth: Students *want* to feel good—and more than that, they *want* to feel uplifted. If we're tentative in our teaching, holding back, it's neither magnetic nor uplifting. But if we teach with a magnetic inward focus, students will be uplifted. And if we offer techniques that are *designed* to uplift consciousness, the effect is even greater. Students don't really care what's familiar or trendy; they care what works. They may not know that they're looking for upliftment, but when they experience it, they know that's exactly what they wanted all along. You have the training and tools—including affirmations and Energization—to help them feel that.

You Might Even Have a Revelation

It's inspiring to hear of the results that so many of you are getting. Nearly every week, one of you sends me an inspiring report about how much students enjoy Energization, or how they love the affirmations, or how they feel better themselves as a result of your teaching.

Recently I heard from one teacher who had been very hesitant to teach Energization, thinking that her students would never go for anything remotely "spiritual." But charged up by learning to teach Energization in February's "Advanced Pranayama and the Subtle Body," she decided to go for it when she got home: she taught all 39 exercises—at a health club, no less!—and even led a meditation at the end of the class. Guess what? Her students *loved* it. Reflecting on her longtime concern that they would balk, she marvelled: "It was all in my head!" [By the way, you need not describe Energization as "spiritual" at first; you can begin simply by focusing on energy, vitality and warming up the body. The results will speak for themselves. You can address the subtler aspects later.]

Another teacher wrote, "I too have taught Energization Exercises, and students love them. In fact, this week I had other things planned, so I only did a few of the exercises, and one woman complained, 'Aren't we going to do skull tapping?' Needless to say, we did it and everyone loved it. Now I always include skull tapping and scalp massage. They also love the affirmations from the Superconscious Living Exercises for those two. There are always comments like, 'My brain needs all the help it can get!' and 'Wow, it really helps me wake up!' (this is a morning class)."

When I hear stories like this, I know that you're helping Ananda Yoga come into its own. Students and teachers alike are ready and eager for it. So keep it up, Great Souls, and please continue to send me your teaching stories. We'd love to share more of them in this newsletter. It's inspiring to know how much good you're doing for this world.

A Warm Welcome to Maria and Bent

In this issue, it's my joy to introduce to you two of Ananda's finest teachers: Maria McSweeney and Bent Hansen. Both are longtime Ananda ministers and co-leaders of Ananda branch communities (Maria in Sacramento, Bent in Portland). In addition, both have been teaching Ananda Yoga for many years. Maria currently runs an Ananda Yoga Teacher Training program at Ananda Sacramento, and Bent has taught AYT in San Francisco and at The Expanding Light.

I'm very grateful that these two superb teachers are not only part of the AYTA Steering Committee, but are writing "Exploring the Essence" articles for the newsletter (see pages 3 and 5). Thank you, Maria and Bent, for sharing your deep wisdom and experience with all of us. ♦



Exploring the Essence

Asanas Can Teach Us the Deeper Side of Yoga

Part 1: Karma Yoga Comes to Light in Asana Practice

by Maria McSweeney

What I love about the practice of yoga postures is not just how rejuvenated my body feels, but how clear and uplifted by mind is, and how happy I feel. Even today, after practicing for over 25 years, each time I practice I can immediately feel the difference on every level: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.



Since 1986, Maria McSweeney has been Co-Director of Ananda Sacramento, along with her husband, Ananta. She also teaches an Ananda Yoga Teacher Training program at Ananda Sacramento.

For me the yoga postures are also an invaluable tool for understanding and incorporating the deeper side of Raja Yoga. For example, we can use the asanas to explore the paths of Karma, Gyana and Bhakti Yoga—which together with the practice of meditation constitute Raja Yoga. These three paths address different aspects of our nature, and by using their teachings to help bring out the best in ourselves, we begin to “neutralize the waves of feeling,” which, in his *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali gives as the definition of yoga.

In this three-part series, I’ll explore how asana practice can help us go deeper in each of these paths. The path of Karma Yoga is a perfect place to start, for it offers a meaningful orientation for our daily lives. It addresses how we live, how we act and the way to inner freedom through action. Let’s examine some of the key tenets of Karma Yoga and explore how to apply these in our practice and teaching, as well as how to begin to give our students a feel for the deeper aspects of Yoga:

Action vs. Inaction

“To act or not to act?” This question can confuse the beginning yogi, who may sometimes obsess over doing the right thing, in the right way. The beginner can become paralyzed, unable to act for fear of creating bad or unnecessary karma. Of course, such paralysis is stifling to spiritual growth.

We need to keep in mind that the real issue is not whether we are acting—after all, we can’t help but act—but *how* we are acting. Asana practice is a wonderful vehicle for understanding this distinction. As students cultivate an awareness of every physical movement, they’ll begin to notice the quality of energy that arises from movement, and the quality of consciousness that arises from the energy. Gradually they’ll begin to connect their actions with the spiritual results of those actions. The reverse is true also: from consciousness flows energy and movement.

How we are acting comes down to this: Do our movements make us ego-centered, or do they set us free and make us light in our bodies and thoughts? One way to help our students make this connection is through the phrasing and imagery we use. Another way is through the power of affirmations, which promote right attitude and a spirit of cooperation among body, mind and soul.

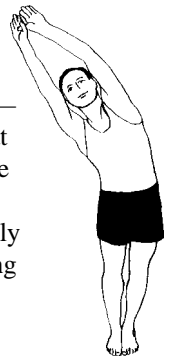
Recently the director of a nearby health club interviewed me to teach a yoga for relaxation class at her club. She came to one of my classes at our Ananda Center in Sacramento—you can imagine how different our setting is from that of a health club!—and she was very taken with the affirmations. Through them and guided imagery, for the first time in her life she experienced her body as energy and the movement of energy within the body. Needless to say, she was thrilled! She experienced how movement can—and should—be liberating, not binding. Through acting with awareness, we can experience greater freedom.

How to Help Students Slow Down and Wake Up

As you’ve no doubt experienced, getting your students to slow down and be conscious of their movements can be challenging. For example, notice how quickly and unconsciously they’ll sometimes come out of a pose, as though the pose ended as soon as they began to come out. How much they are missing!

Verbal direction—and even your own example—won’t always correct this. One thing I’ve found that *does* work, however, is to repeat a pose two or three times in a row, going slower each time.

Another helpful aid is to ask students deliberately to delay part of the pose. For example, when coming out of chandrasana, ask them to stop and hold their hands overhead for longer than usual, then ask them to allow their hands to float slowly and



(continued on page 4)



Asanas Can Teach Us the Deeper Side of Yoga (continued from page 3)

gently down to their sides. After doing this a couple of times, they'll feel the difference and correct themselves in other poses as well.

Another exercise that works along these same lines is what Swami Kriyananda calls "breathing your way to better spirits." Here, we engage the breath as a channel for right action: in this case, to overcome moodiness, depression, restlessness or worry. Your students will love this! Sit comfortably with a tall, relaxed spine. Choose a positive quality that you would like to develop. Inhale slowly and deeply. Imagine the breath filling your lungs and whole body with that quality, starting at the feet and culminating at the point between the eyebrows. Hold the breath and focus at that point for as long as is comfortable. Feel that you are burning up all negative thoughts in the blaze of divine light. As you exhale, do so forcibly, expelling forever from your body and mind any last vestiges of weakness and negativity.

Pausing Between Asanas: The Fruits of Inaction

And what of inaction? As Krishna emphasized in the *Bhagavad Gita*, true inaction is not a passive state. It is a heightened state in which our awareness is total.

The pauses between the poses are perfect for cultivating this state. In these priceless moments we are listening to and responding to the subtle movements of energy in our bodies and in our consciousness. Often, for me, it is after the pose that some truth or creative idea presents itself clearly and energetically to my consciousness—even without my seeking it.

For example, once during a pause in a class I was teaching, it occurred to me how much benefit there is emotionally while doing Ananda Yoga. I thought that "yoga for emotional healing" would be a wonderful focus for classes. As it turned out, Swami Kriyananda was at that very time putting together the *Secrets of Emotional Healing* booklet. We started such a series at Ananda Sacramento and it's the favorite of many of our students.

To better understand inaction, we have only to look at the great Himalayan yogis. In their lives of meditation, it can appear that they're "doing nothing," but in fact they are busily radiating waves of harmony and peace through the world. In *Art and Science of Yoga*, Swami Kriyananda wrote "The more the yogi,

by his selfless actions, develops an awareness of the divine power flowing through him, the more he realizes that he can accomplish more, even for humanity, by becoming still and serving as a transmitting station for the Infinite Power, whose sermons are Silence. Thus, outward work falls away, and the yogi's true work becomes the upliftment of others by the silent emanations of his peace." In a very tangible way, the pause between poses sensitizes us to the energy around us and to our influence upon that energy field.

Sometimes it's difficult to transition into that stillness. The mind is racing, reviewing the day and making plans. Restlessness is reinforced when mental stimulation manifests as bodily tension—for example, between the shoulders and in the arms. Poses such as *sasamgasana*, which actively stretch and then relax these parts, send a signal to the mind that it can relax too, that it's okay not to be busy all the time.

Action and inaction, then, are both essential elements in a partnership with the Divine in our spiritual unfoldment. In the same way, both movement through the *asana* and the pause afterward are needed for a complete, balanced experience.

Desireless Practice: Nishkam Karma

Simply defined, *nishkam karma* means acting without desire for the fruits of action. Many students—and teachers—overlook this attitude. All too easily we fall prey to habit and/or bad example, attaching ourselves to "the great workout" or basing our "success" on whether or not we can do the difficult poses.

This was certainly my orientation when I first started in *hatha yoga*. I simply didn't know better, and no one around me was suggesting a more refined approach. In my attempts to keep up with the instructor, my affirmation was usually, "If I hold this any longer, I'll die." How much better off I would have been had I understood that it takes time to do a pose well, to learn its subtle aspects. As Swamiji says: "There is no such thing as failure in a pose, short of simply not doing it at all. Any stretch in the general direction indicated will be important for you."

Nishkam karma is the most beautiful of attitudes. It immediately generates a flow of surrender and serenity. Let go of proving to yourself or anyone else—including your students!—that "I can do it." Simply focus on doing the best you can do at the time.

(continued on page 6)

Yoga Day USA Is for You

On October 27, 2001, Yoga Alliance will celebrate the 3rd annual "Yoga Day USA." It's a terrific opportunity to gain local visibility (and even free publicity) for your teaching. It also helps generate financial support for Yoga Alliance. And on the grandest scale, Yoga Day USA helps raise public awareness of yoga and local yoga teachers.

How can you participate? There are many ways, ranging from holding a special class on (or near) that day and giving a portion of the proceeds to Yoga Alliance, to simply making a (tax-deductible) donation. If you hold a special class, Yoga Alliance will send you a flyer template and a sample press

release that your local newspaper will very likely run, since Yoga Day USA is a public-interest event. (Yes, you can choose a day other than Oct. 27 if needed.) If you contact Yoga Alliance (877-YOGA-ALL or info@yogaalliance.org), they'll send you an information packet as soon as it's ready.

Ananda Yoga teachers haven't had a particularly high profile in this event in past years—perhaps because of short lead time, or perhaps because we didn't twist any arms—but we hope that more of you will participate this year. Please consider it, because so far, Yoga Alliance has been a very worthwhile and valuable instrument for Yoga.



Exploring the Essence

Be Calmly Active and Actively Calm

by Bent Hansen

Many years ago I came across an intriguing quote from the great woman saint of India, Ananda Moyi Ma. Commenting on hatha yoga, she described it as “doing by force.”



Bent Hansen is Co-Director of Ananda Portland, along with his wife, Parvati. Bent has served at Ananda's Centers in San Francisco, Palo Alto, Seattle, Assisi and Dallas.

At first I was quite taken aback, and definitely puzzled. Her description seemed to have very little to do with what I had presumed about hatha yoga—especially from the perspective of Ananda Yoga, since our emphasis is on relaxation, both as a primary focus and as a key tool. The idea of “force” seemed to have no place at all in how I viewed hatha yoga. But I also knew that both Paramhansa Yogananda and Swami Kriyananda had great respect for this “Joy-Permeated Mother” as being a highly evolved yogi-saint. Trusting in that respect, I knew I had to dig deeper to mine the hidden gold in her message.

After searching some more, I came across other quotes from Ananda Moyi Ma that put the first quote into perspective and helped me understand her real point. She said, “Sustained effort ends in effortless being,” and “One must enter into the rhythm of one’s own true nature.”

I realized that the “force” she was talking about was not that of compelling

or “pushing” one’s body into a pose. Rather, her emphasis was on the need to be actively engaged throughout the practice. Another way to put this is that we need to use will as an essential component in our practice in order for yoga—Self-realization—to become our reality. We cannot simply “slide downhill” into bliss. On the contrary, it takes all our dedicated energy to arrive at our goal in yoga: union with the Divine.

True Relaxation Takes Focus

This made me appreciate even more the similar emphasis that Paramhansa Yogananda gave to the practice of Yoga with his axiom, “The greater the will, the greater the flow of energy.” At the heart of his Energization Exercises is his admonition, “Tense with will, relax and feel.” In light of this and of my own practice of hatha yoga—as well as my experience of teaching others—I’ve come to a deeper understanding of what relaxation is and how we achieve it. Simply put, it requires dynamic focus!

The moment we become passive in relaxation—slipping into the subconscious and letting our minds wander in restless thoughts or drift into daydreaming—we actually diminish our level of relaxation. This is why deep meditation, even though it requires great energy and focus, is so much more relaxing than sleep. In contrast to passivity, Yogananda stated that we as yogis should be “calmly active and actively calm,” meaning that we need to be centered in calmness while in the midst of activity, as well as dynamic in our calm and relaxed states.

Yogananda’s “tense with will, relax and feel” ties in beautifully with Ananda Moyi Ma’s “sustained effort ends in effortless being.” Together they guide us to a more fulfilling approach to hatha yoga. For example, let’s apply this to stretching in the asanas so we can see this as a practical application.

Using Will in Asana Practice

When we move into a pose, we use our “will” to open up and extend into the

stretch; in effect this extension is “doing by force” or “tensing with will.” We’re engaging the body, but more significantly, we’re engaging the energy in the body, plus the mind, plus our awareness. But we don’t want to leave the emphasis solely on the extension; from this point we progress to relaxing into the pose. This is the “relax and feel” phase or, in Ananda Moyi Ma’s terms, it’s how we achieve “effortless being.”

It might be good to clarify that we’re not “hanging out” in this relaxing phase of the pose. Remember the words, “actively calm.” As we relax into the stretch, we want to engage in deep (ideally, diaphragmatic) breathing and keenly focus our awareness with the aid of mental affirmations, coming into the deepening stillness of asana. This is where we achieve the perfection of asana, regardless of how far we can stretch into the pose.

To come out of the pose we once again engage in extension and then flow into a resting, “neutral” pose before moving on to the next asana. The pauses between the different poses are more than just passive resting points in our routine. They’re really an integral part of the deeper aspect of yoga since they give us the space to assimilate our experiences of the asanas. And, more importantly, they help us to dive more deeply into the superconscious.

Finding a Higher Rhythm

Again, in my own practice of hatha yoga, I’ve come to understand and value the importance of Ananda Moyi Ma’s quote, “One must enter into the rhythm of one’s own true nature.” This inner connection shifts yoga from something we “do” to something we “are.” Yoga is the unfolding into who we really are, not the creating or adding on to who we are.

When we truly engage in yoga by

(continued on page 6)



“Divine calmness flows through me.”



Be Calmly Active and Actively Calm

(continued from page 5)

actively tuning in to the energy flow within us—whether stretching in an asana, walking down a street, sipping a cup of tea, or talking with someone—we open up to our inner qualities of joy, love, peace, calmness, power and wisdom. And these qualities, which *are* the rhythm of our own true nature, become more manifest in every moment of our lives. ♦

Relax and Feel

(continued from page 6)

fully. After a pause, we move to the other side, and the process begins again.

The expansive inhalation, the melting exhalation, the settling of the internal organs, listening intently to the subtle shifts and messages of the body—all these have a liberating and empowering effect on the student. During this process, the student learns to direct the breath with intention and then immediately experience the result. From jathara parivartanasana we move into deep relaxation. Then with the heightened, but relaxed, awareness of breath and body, we are ready to flow naturally right into meditation.

Now when we do, say, trikonasana to the left and I ask my students to come back to center, close their eyes and notice, I see smiles. They perceive the twisting like a corkscrew. When we do the other side, they feel the balance. John, a student who comes two to three times a week told me recently that he had always believed that being relaxed was weak. Now, he feels great power and energy in being relaxed. Imagine that! ♦

Asanas Can Teach Us the Deeper Side of Yoga

(continued from page 4)

Concentrate on the joy your practice gives you. Feel that joy. Whenever I see that my students have forgotten this, I gently ask them to feel the joy, smile, and radiate joy: “Fill the room with your joy. See how different you feel and where your attention now is.” No more worries, no more expectations, no more judgments. Behold, the sweetest of fruits is yours: Pure Joy! With that joy comes relaxation and ease—and eventually the ability to go deeper than you imagined possible. The affirmation for savasana captures this perfectly: “Bones, muscles, movement, I surrender now; anxiety, elation and depression, churning thoughts—all these I give into the hands of peace.”

Serving God

Karma Yoga means acting to serve God. We all know that learning to serve is vital, but sometimes our working environment and the people around us make it difficult to do. When God’s presence isn’t obvious in other people, we may not even *want* to serve them.

Therefore it’s helpful to practice service in settings where it comes more naturally, such as our yoga classes. As we nurture this attitude in a supportive, God-reminding environment, our “service muscles” grow and we become better able to serve selflessly in more challenging environments.

Sometimes people say to me, “When I practice yoga, when I teach yoga, I feel so centered, calm and blissful. It’s easy to give and to want to help others. At other times it’s so challenging to behave in the highest way.” Well, that’s true for a lot of us, but it’s not the right reason for “running off to the Himalayas” or to our private yoga sanctuary. Nor can we blame our circumstances or other people. We need to learn to let the joy of yoga and meditation spill over into all that we do. A favorite quote of mine from Swami Kriyananda’s autobiography, *The Path*, is, “Think of Him and His energy will flow through you.” Then no matter where we are, whatever we’re doing becomes God-reminding.

When you practice hatha yoga, “think of Him” and feel His energy flowing through every cell of your body, moving through the breath, vibrating through bone, muscle, organs and tissue. This gets us out of the self-centered, self-limiting impulses of our heart, moving us into wholesome channels of expression. The more deliberately we practice this in hatha yoga, the more it will spill over into the rest of our lives. We’ll find ourselves increasingly acting in cooperation with Him.

“God is the Doer, I am His instrument.” With this attitude, everything is possible! The energy of the universe becomes ours and we experience it moving through us at all times. Our bodies change, our moods change, our thoughts change. We are transformed from a lackluster diamond to one that reflects light at every angle.

In everyday activity, if we think of God as the Doer, we’ll have more energy, limitless energy—we won’t tire so easily. But that’s not the highest incentive. Our yoga practice and teaching is not about doing more and more; it’s about going deeper in the Self. It’s about discovering who we really are, and living that realization. “I am free! I am free!” This is the highest affirmation and the ultimate goal of Karma Yoga. If we can impart this to our students, we’ll have given them the greatest gift. ♦

Level 2 Q&A

Sadhana Hours

Question: Can I count sadhana hours from *any* program at The Expanding Light toward Level 2 certification?

Answer: Only sadhana hours from actual Level 2 programs count toward Level 2 certification—up to a maximum of 125 total sadhana hours. This includes the 50 (or more) sadhana hours that you accumulated during Level 1 AYTT, so it works out to about one sadhana per day during Level 2 programs.

Other Programs, Other Places

Question: Can a program taken elsewhere than The Expanding Light count toward Level 2 certification?

Answer: At this time, the only such program is Kriya Yoga Preparation, offered at Ananda Centers in Sacramento, Palo Alto, Seattle, Portland, Assisi and Rhode Island. In the longer term, we hope to offer additional Level 2 programs elsewhere than The Expanding Light.



Relax and Feel

by Fran Zabica

I came to the practice of hatha yoga eight years ago when I quit smoking. For eighteen years I had smoked heavily, and at the age of 35 I decided that I would really like to be able to breathe. I felt tired and old and knew that if I didn't do something soon, I would be facing a life of pain and disease. As the nicotine began leaving my body, I felt agitated, anxious, nervous, and all-around uncomfortable. I knew I needed to move, but since I had no lung capacity, jogging and step aerobics were out of the question.

Then I remembered a yoga class I had taken years earlier in college, and thought that perhaps hatha yoga could help me transition. I went out and bought an inexpensive video and thus began the journey of a lifetime. I now teach others how to use the techniques of Yoga to release old habits and bring energy to tired bodies.



Immediately after AYT, Fran Zabica opened her studio, Inner Harmony, in San Pedro, Calif., where she teaches Ananda Yoga and meditation.

Getting "The Feeling"

The thing that kept me coming back to hatha yoga during my eight years of on-again-off-again practice was "the feeling." I felt something when I practiced, and I didn't feel it when I didn't. But what was I feeling? It felt like a summer breeze. It felt like getting out of the shower after having been in the sun all day. It felt like enthusiasm. It felt like love. It felt like life. And the feeling would appear when least expected it: in the checkout line at the grocery store, in my car, at work, hours after practice. My whole body would feel open and spacious when I practiced, and it would feel stuck and clogged when I didn't. I stumbled on this feeling by accident and didn't really understand it or know how to control it. It wasn't until I discovered Ananda Yoga that I began to get a feel for "the feeling."

A familiar saying of Paramhansa Yogananda's is: "Tense with will; relax and feel." As Westerners we understand using will power to tense. We know how to push and strive. But we are not very good at the "relax and feel" part. That requires getting very quiet and listening with the whole being. I've seen that Ananda Yoga is designed to create the opportunities to listen for the feeling. The affirmations help to bring the mind into the body, and the pauses between postures offer an opportunity to relax and feel the movement of life-force (*prana*) in the body.

I must admit that I didn't seek out hatha yoga for "the feeling," nor do most of my students. Usually the student's mind is so disconnected from the body that it will take months, if not

years to begin to perceive "the feeling." They want the stretch of the postures or the release of deep relaxation, but they couldn't care less about going inward and comparing the left and right thigh after tree pose. They want to go to the next stretch.

Helping Students to Get "The Feeling"

How to get them to listen, to connect, to feel? Quite by accident I discovered a wonderful bridge between stretch and perception.

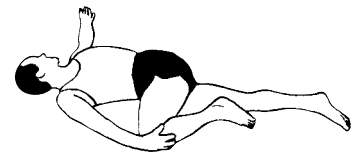
There I was, a new teacher trying to remember everything I was taught, trying to get in the perfect balance of standing, seated and prone postures, trying to breathe, talk and demonstrate all at the same time. I had the class in jathara parivartanasana (supine twist) and it felt as if my brain were as twisted as my students' bodies. I sat on my pillow for a moment to catch my breath and was just about to ask them to inhale the knee up, etc., when it happened: I was watching one of my students as she took a deep breath and her whole body melted. The waist released, the hips went vertical, the knee glided down. It was beautiful. It was obvious that she enjoyed it too, so I didn't have the heart to pull her out of it just yet.

I waited, and right before my eyes the other students began to melt in the same way. They had been holding the posture about three or four minutes by that time. I guided them out of the twist and prepared them for the other side. I instructed them to put the breath into the waist, lower back and hips, and to relax on the exhalation. Then I waited. They were stiff and apprehensive for the first three minutes, then one by one they melted into the posture. It was awesome!

A Complete Practice in One Asana

Since that day, jathara parivartanasana has developed into a mini-practice on breath, relaxation and listening. We hold each side for five minutes and direct the entire awareness into the waist, hips and lower back.

Using the inhalation to expand the waist, the student then exhales slowly and witnesses the body responding to the breath. I stay with them the



whole time, gently encouraging them to stay aware of the subtle movements of the body. I let them know that internal organs are being massaged and moved, and I remind them to be patient while these organs find a place to settle. I place blankets under knees and toes to remove fear and striving when necessary. I continually guide them back to the breath, paying special attention to the exhalation and the accompanying melting.

When coming out of the posture, it's very important to remind the student to push into the floor with the foot as it comes back around so that the hips can be lifted and squared to the floor. I have them bring their knees to the chest very slowly and mind-

(continued on page 6)



AYTA Contacts

AYTA Steering Committee:

Gyandev McCord
The Expanding Light
530-478-7518 ext. 7081
gyandev@expandinglight.org

Doug Andrews
831-338-9850/2103
rdwdyoga@aol.com

Lisa Powers
The Expanding Light
530-478-7560 ext. 7087
lisa@expandinglight.org

Bent Hansen
Co-Director, Ananda Portland
503-626-0493
anandap@europa.com

Maria McSweeney
Co-Director, Ananda Sacramento
916-361-0891
anandasac@jps.net

The Expanding Light Retreat
14618 Tyler Foote Rd
Nevada City, CA 95959
800-346-5350, 530-478-7518
530-478-7519 (fax)
info@expandinglight.org
www.expandinglight.org

Upcoming Level 2 Programs

AYTA Members receive a 10% discount on all Level 2 programs, which more than pays for your membership! In the schedule below, “★” indicates a required Level 2 program. For program details, see the new Expanding Light program guide (which you should have received by now; if not, please call 800-346-5350).

- 5/6–11 **Kriya Yoga Preparation**
- 6/17–24 ... **Yoga Teacher Workshop** (This is not a Level 2 program; it enables qualified non-Ananda yoga teachers to learn Ananda Yoga™ and enter AYT Level 2. Tell your yoga teacher friends to contact The Expanding Light for an application.)
- 6/24–7/1 .. **★Essence of the Yoga Sutras** (This is a rare opportunity for an in-depth study of the *Sutras* with Jyotish and Devi Novak, Ananda’s Spiritual Directors, based on Paramhansa Yogananda’s penetrating interpretations. It includes some asana teaching skills, too.)
- 7/1–8 **★Meditation Teacher Training** (with Savitri Simpson)
- 7/8–20 **★AYTT Assistantship**
- 7/15–20 ... **Kriya Yoga Preparation**
- 8/12–17 ... **Sharing Yoga with Children** (Hatha yoga, meditation and Energization are just a small part of this training, which applies the Yoga teachings to bringing out the best in children. Based on Ananda’s Education for Life system.)
- 10/7–12 ... **Kriya Yoga Preparation**
- 10/7–14 ... **★Meditation Teacher Training** (with Savitri Simpson)
- 10/11–14 . **The Healing Path of Yoga** (with Nischala Joy Devi)
- 10/14–26 . **★AYTT Assistantship**
- 1/6–2/3 **★AYTT Assistantship**

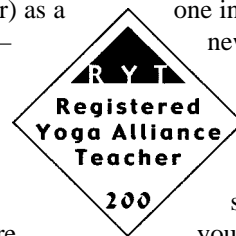
Yoga Alliance Update

“Yoga is an art as well as a science. It is a science, because it offers practical methods for controlling body and mind, thereby making deep meditation possible. And it is an art, for unless it is practiced intuitively and sensitively it will yield only superficial results.”

— Paramhansa Yogananda
The Essence of Self-Realization

More than 1600 yoga teachers have registered with Yoga Alliance, and the Alliance continues to gain recognition. Now, the Alliance has begun to promote “RYT” (Registered Yoga Teacher) as a criterion for selecting a teacher—both to employers of yoga teachers and to the general public. Also, RYT names and contact information are posted at www.yogaalliance.org.

All Ananda YTT graduates are eligible and encouraged to become



RYT’s. Yoga Alliance charges \$40/year for being in the registry.

If your AYT certificate doesn’t say “Level 1 Training,” you’ll need a new one in order to register. To receive a new certificate, simply send a copy of your old one and a \$10 check (payable to The Expanding Light) to Lisa Powers (see left). She’ll also send you a super-easy registration form. If you need only the form, send Lisa a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The Expanding Light

14618 Tyler Foote Road
Nevada City CA 95959

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 36
N. San Juan, CA

*Your AYTA Newsletter
Has a New Name!*