



Our panel of experts answer your questions on yoga, addressing everything from posture to philosophy. This issue's expert is **Duncan Peak**.

When I'm feeling stressed, yoga sometimes makes me feel worse, and so I find myself avoiding class. Friends tell me the only way to get through this is to practise yoga more frequently. Is this true?

Practise makes perfect? Well, not quite in yoga, hence why it is called a yoga practice and not a yoga perfect. There are many variables that influence the answer to your question but let's start with this: is yoga meant to make us feel good? Will every yoga class that you do leave you feeling happy and is this its goal? Not quite. Yoga classes may and often will make you feel better, but there will also be classes when your reactions and fears surface and you have to work through this resistance. These classes can be challenging and may not leave you feeling immediately happy but will have an eventual positive effect. Over time you will notice repetitive mind

patterns and limiting beliefs that are the causes of the struggles you go through. The ancient yogis call these *vasanas*: repetitive, idiosyncratic mental patterns that limit our experience of ourselves and our connection to life.

The process of evolving to a greater state of awareness is not always easy. Your friends are right in saying that you need to keep going; what they mean is that yoga is a practice that can transform your life to feel a great sense of contentment and peace, but you must be willing to show up and do the work. Even when the times are tough, it is important not to be concerned with how you feel at the end of the practice but rather focus on the process and allow "what is" to just be. When we drop our expectation to "feel good" we then allow the true practice of yoga to begin, making us conscious of what we are not so we can a greater awareness of what divine beings we are.

I'm a beginners' yoga teacher and I want to teach more advanced students, but I don't think I'm going to ever be able to reach certain poses. What options do I have for teaching in the future?

The question, "Can you teach a pose you can't do?" has concerned newer teachers' psyches for eons. What's the answer? There is evidence to support both opinions so ultimately you have to decide for yourself, but consider this: the head coach of an Olympic gymnastics team or a star basketball team probably can't perform the way the athletes are, but they still are able to coach them. The reason is because they have committed themselves to developing the knowledge and wisdom required to understand how an athlete's body needs to function, train and perform even if they can't compete like them.

Similarly, as yoga teachers it is not important how flexible or strong you are; what's important is whether you know what you are talking about. When I train teachers I don't look for one who can do all the poses, I look for the ones that competently understand asana and can speak to the hearts and minds of students to inspire growth and inquiry within them. You need to keep lessons safe always but in my opinion (and I have done this myself), you can certainly teach and hold space for more advanced students to explore poses you are not ready for. ❖



Duncan Peak is the founder of Power Living Australia, a Power Yoga-inspired yoga and personal development school based in Sydney. He has been teaching locally and internationally for ten years.

WHAT'S YOUR QUESTION? Email us at editor@yogajournal.com.au