

JOURNEY TO BLISS

Welcome January and welcome to the theme of Intention! If we are going to Journey to Bliss we need to get clear about what that looks like. The dictionary defines bliss as supreme happiness, utter joy and contentment. As we begin to explore how to cultivate more bliss in our daily lives we are moving towards more wise, compassionate, and peace filled lives. Everything you need to live a life of bliss you already have. It's just a matter of uncovering it. Shall we begin?

Yoga means union of body, mind and spirit. It is the undivided wholeness of the human being. In order to live the greatest life possible we must be balanced in four areas. Throughout the year we will be looking at our lives from the framework of these areas; physical, mental/emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Let's look at these areas more closely:

1. Physical - You are probably very familiar with this part. You can see and touch your body. Sometimes it makes noises, so you can hear it also. It is built from the food you eat and is comprised of bones, tendons, muscle groups, and other dense masses. It is your ultimate vehicle for your life. The foods you eat, the clothes you wear, and the way you walk are all ways in which you express yourself. What is it you are saying to the world with your body? Your body is a phenomenal creation. Bodies are amazingly resilient yet fragile. Are the choices you're making in terms of food and exercise serving the vision you hold for yourself? Are you feeding and fueling your body in the ways that will help you to come fully alive?
2. Mental/Emotional - You are also very familiar with the mind, right? No doubt you've heard the term "monkey mind". Thoughts, feelings, emotions, opinions, and beliefs construct this part of the human being. Each of us could probably agree that at times the mind has been both our greatest ally and our greatest enemy. It has served us well in learning and retaining information, it has helped us to make rational decisions and create a clear plan for moving forward in our life. For many of us it has held us back. It continues to repeat the same things we heard as a child. We may still hold onto thought and beliefs that served us at one time, but no longer do. Are your thoughts, beliefs, and emotions helping you to become the person you want to be?
3. Intellectual - Your intellect supersedes your mind and ego. It is a place of wisdom, allowing you the ability to reason, discriminate, and discern. Intellect is related to the mind on a lower level. On a higher level the intellect knows the difference between truth (satya) and fiction; decisions come from the soul, not the mind. It is the intellect that says, "I don't need another cookie. This job isn't suited for me. This relationship isn't good for me." The intellect (also known as intuition) usually speaks more quietly than the mind, but rest assured it is the wisest part of you. Most of you know what you need to survive and you know what you need to thrive. You are probably reading this now because you are not

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satisfied with simply surviving. You deserve to live a flourishing life. To do so you must listen to those quiet whispers.

4. Spiritual - Wise teachers and sages tell us over and over again that we have everything we need for our journey. Life is so great that it will give us two things: 1. Things that we can celebrate and 2. Challenges put in place to help us grow to a place to celebrate. I don't mean celebration as in lavish gifts or material possessions. I'm referring to an inner celebration. A place where you can be at ease and rest in the perfection that you are. A place to feel content and connected. The thing is that our lives today are pretty busy. We're caught up in the hustle and bustle of life and we rarely give ourselves permission to rest deeply. Or perhaps your way of resting deeply is tuning out life with television? Your spirit needs silence, solitude, and simplicity. That's not all. It also needs and wants to feel the natural curiosity and wonder of a child. It wants to feel light and free. It wants to go with the flow. Spirit needs to be around people, places, and things that will inspire you to live passionately and with purpose. And if you are to grow there, you need to have discipline and focus day to day.

Your vision and intention for the year will be comprised of two things:

1. Who you truly are.
2. Who/What you want to grow towards.

Who are you when you are at your best? Each of us is born as unique and wonderful beings. Ingrained in each of us is a personality that when in balance helps us to thrive and be the best that we can be. A person's basic personality exists deep within their consciousness and does not change easily. Your personality is something you are born with. It took me years to embrace my personality and my natural tendencies (being the quiet one that prefers smaller groups is not the most popular route). What we're going for is a vision that embraces the best of you plus setting intentions that feel aligned with your authentic Self.

For example when I am healthy in body, mind, spirit I feel brave, courageous, and clear in the choices that I make. In my relationships and in life I am loving, compassionate, and patient. When I'm not feeling healthy and well in body, mind, and/or spirit I can feel totally the opposite. I get angry and can be judgmental. I make choices from a place of uncertainty. In my relationships and in life I can be controlling and stubborn. The choices that I make day to day affect how I feel in body, mind, and spirit.

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List key words or phrases that describe you when you are not feeling well:

Physical:

Mental/Emotional:

Intellectual:

Spiritual:

List key words or phrases that describe you when you are feeling you're very best:

Physical:

Mental/Emotional:

Intellectual:

Spiritual:

I invite you to start paying attention to how you are living your life day to day. My guess is that when you are feeling well in body, mind, and spirit you are making healthy decisions, living well and doing so from a place where you are embracing and accepting your fullest self.

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Now that you are more familiar with your true and essential self, let's look to what you want to grow towards. Quick think of four people you are inspired by. These could be people you know or don't know and people that are alive or no longer physically living. Write their names here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Write down the traits of those people that you admire so much: _____

There is a Sanskrit phrase "Tat Twam Asi" and it essentially means "thou art that". This phrase tells us that you are not separate from those traits that you listed. You listed those traits because that exist somewhere in you. They are very present in your heart and soul. Now it's a matter of creating patterns and habits that help you to access these traits.

How can you bring these traits more fully into your job, your household, your relationships with family and friends, and yourself? _____

I believe wholeheartedly that we are here to live and love from the level of the soul and that when we do so we're the happiest and healthiest version of ourselves. What does that mean? It means we listen to the whispers of the soul more than the ruckus of the mind. Not an easy thing to do in our society, but well worth the practice, time, and effort.

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Looking at life from this perspective, which is awakening and bringing voice to your heart and soul:

What does your body want you to know? _____

What does your mind want you to know? _____

What does your intuition want you to know? _____

What does your heart want you to know? _____

Now it's time for us to look at the upcoming year! What are ways your soul can come more fully alive in each of these areas? What are hopes, wishes, desires, and dreams for you in each area or the upcoming year? Dream BIG and list 15 for each area.

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Physical (options include physical wellness, nutrition, self expression, personal home/environment, rest/relaxation, play):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Mental/Emotional (options include career, professional development, personal relationships, social network/support):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Intellectual (options include hobbies, general interests, personal growth, and connection to books/movies/poetry/music):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

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11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Spirit (options include daily/weekly/monthly rituals, meditation, travel, volunteer work/karma yoga, spiritual studies and practices):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

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How will you feel if you let yourself come alive and show up in the world in those ways?
What words, images, feelings, and new beliefs do you see? Spend some time reflecting and journaling? _____

In 2011 I will

_____ so that I can (write
benefits)

_____.With this reality I will feel

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Are you ready? Ask yourself:

1. Does this vision inspire you to a greater good?
2. Is this vision, this intention in alignment with your heart and soul?
3. Does this vision/intention truly include what you want to explore and/or accomplish this year?

HANG THIS PAGE SOMEWHERE YOU CAN SEE IT DAILY!

Materials to Support Your Intention

Guided Meditation

Imagine you are in a forest surrounded by a canopy of trees. You are slowly walking on a narrow path appreciating the beauty around you. The trees are in full bloom and you marvel at the greenness of the leaves. You look up and see a tiny bit of blue sky peeking through the trees. You feel embraced by nature herself.

As you continue to walk this path you realize that you are ready to move forward and create a life that suits you, your needs, and your desires. The experience of your old reality was feeling a little worn out. You are ready to embrace change and step fully into your greatness.

You look to your right and see a small trail that leads to a giant rock. You make your way to the rock and carefully climb to the top and find a comfortable seat. You sense an air of magic here. You close your eyes and are surprised to learn that the images of nature are still very much alive in your mind, the trail, the trees, the sky, it's all there. You hear birds chirping and a soft breeze rustling through the trees. You sense that everything in nature has a purpose. Perhaps each of us has a purpose too. You spend a few quiet moments pondering your personal purpose.

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You inquire about ways to live in harmony with your world. How can you bring this peace and harmony present in the forest into your heart, your relationships, your home and work life? How can you thrive physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually? What changes are you being called to make? What is your biggest hope for the year? You open yourself up to believe that your dreams can become a reality.

You walk back to the trail and continue on your path. You feel the Earth supporting you on your journey. You feel the solid ground beneath your feet, you feel embraced by the trees around you. You see an opening ahead of you. The forest opens up into the most magical meadow that you've ever witnessed. You see the green field and the bright open blue sky. In this space you feel expansive and free. You feel a sense of clarity and knowingness pulsing in your body. You feel what it's like becoming this healthier and happier person. You feel energetic, alive, uplifted and filled with joy. You are ready to return back to the forest where you started your journey. For a moment you pause and reconnect to the beauty of what you see. You reconnect to our deepest desires for your future and trust that those needed for your growth, will surely come true.

Mantras/Affirmations:

Affirmations are a powerful tool you can use to support your intention. Research has shown that positive thinking is a healthy way of being. Plus, who really wants to be negative? Typically not fun, and not fun to be around. We know that repetition is key for creating new patterns. Think of affirmations as exercise for your mind. I've created a few below. Each month I'll provide several and encourage you to create your own.

My thoughts, words, and actions support my intentions.

Tat Twam Asi – Thou art that

I nourish myself with healthy foods.

I choose to be healthy, happy, and whole.

My choices are in alignment with my heart and soul.

Ready to create some of your own? Spend a few minutes getting quiet. Relax your body and connect to your breath. Take a moment and recall your intentions for the year (look at your list if you need to). Based on your desires, make positive statements. Write your statements as if they are happening now, this is an important part of affirmations. You should expect to feel some resistance doing this. Your mind might tell you you're being silly.

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Let your mind do its thing, but then kindly remind “it” that it’s not in charge. Then go about creating your statements. 😊 Try to make at least two for each of our four areas:

Physical:

- 1.
- 2.

Mental/Emotional:

- 1.
- 2.

Intellectual:

- 1.
- 2.

Spiritual:

- 1.
- 2.

Mudra:

Mudras are the equivalent of yoga for your hands. Translated it means “hand posture”. We place ourselves in poses such as eagle, tree, and warrior not only to balance the body but also to feel the energy of the form we’ve taken.

Think of the different ways that you use your hands to communicate. Often times we greet loved ones with a hug, a wave of the hand, or a touch of our heart. And of course we’re all familiar with the peace symbol. When we are angry or frustrated we might make a fist or flip the middle finger (yep, even yogis get angry).

Here are some guidelines to get started:

1. Don’t touch the hands or fingers in a tight, rigid way. Allow the fingers to be relaxed.
2. Most often mudras are used as part of a meditative posture. However you can practice them in any pose, in your car, or any where else when you need to bring yourself back to the moment. I love mudras because they can be practiced discreetly, at anytime you need.
3. You can hold your mudra anywhere from three breaths to thirty minutes.

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Mudra for Intention – Anjali Mudra

We're starting with the most basic and most widely practiced mudra. Anjali Mudra is the universal symbol for prayer. If we're starting the year with hope in our heart, taking time for this reverent prayer hand position seems to be a natural place to start.

To practice sit in a comfortable position. Place your palms together at heart level. Close your eyes and allow your body to settle down and relax. You might choose to focus on your breath, recite an affirmation, or say a prayer. There are no hard rules. Just be present and open.



Poetry & Quotes:

I will not die an unlived life

I will not die an unlived life.
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance;
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.

~Dawna Markova

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You Reading This, Be Ready

Starting here, what do you want to remember?
How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?
What scent of old wood hovers, what softened
sound from outside fills the air?

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world
than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting
for time to show you some better thoughts?

When you turn around, starting here, lift this
new glimpse that you found; carry into evening
all that you want from this day. This interval you spent
reading or hearing this, keep it for life -

What can anyone give you greater than now,
starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?
~ William Stafford ~

"Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love." Rumi

"A good intention clothes itself with sudden power. When a god wishes to ride, any chip or pebble will bud and shoot out winged feet and serve him for a horse." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Rise up numbly and go on your strange journey to the ocean of meanings." Rumi

"When someone knocks on the door, think that he's about to give you something large: tell you you're forgiven, or that it's not necessary to work all the time, or that it's been decided that if you lie down no one will die." ~Robert Bly

"Keep walking, though there's no place to get to. Don't try to see through the distances. That's not for human beings. Move within, but don't move the way fear makes you move." Rumi

"However glorious an action in itself, it ought not to pass for great if it be not the effect of wisdom and intention." Francois La Rochefoucauld

Barefoot Works Workshop for Intention: Saturday January 8, 11:00 – 5:00

What better time of the year to reflect and recommit to your body, your yoga and your life? Join us for a full day of asana, pranayama, meditation and creative work.

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CLEANSE & DETOX Sweat out the celebratory by-products of the holidays. Wring out body, mind, and Spirit with an upbeat practice of asana and pranayama that celebrates the opportunities that 2011 holds. Feeling toxic arises not only from diet but also from stress. Restorative poses and forward folds will allow us to turn inward and begin let go of the stresses and stories of the past year. We'll explore ways to relax, refresh and renew our habits on all levels. Please bring a pen and journal to use throughout the day.

RESOLVE TO EVOLVE: CREATING YOUR VISION FOR THE YEAR Get yourself ready for a New Year full of potential by setting your intentions and creating a vision board for 2011. Creative movement will get the energy and creative juices flowing. Through movement, meditation, journaling and creative exercises you will get clear and create your vision for the year. We provide your blank vision board, glue, and scissors. You need to bring a journal, 3 or more magazines with images you like, and anything else you'd like to put on your vision board.

Cleansing teas, juices, and a toast for the New Year will conclude our day together.

Please bring a journal and pen, scissors, 3 or more magazines with images you like, and anything else you'd like to put on your vision board. Also please bring 3 quotes that are among your favorites!

Register online at BarefootWorks.com