

It is hardly necessary to meditate in a remote cave in order to create a lifestyle that supports your practice. The practices of meditation presented in this course are meant to be integrative and adaptable to the modern world. Between 1000-1400 CE, in India, the region of Kashmir saw a revolution in yogic thinking. These yoga practitioners were in reality, householders, husbands and wives who embraced the practice of yoga and wove it into the fabric of their lives. The approach was one of non-renunciation, among other practices, and was later called Tantra, which literally means 'to weave'. The yogis took the more classical understanding of yoga and recreated it, refining it into a meaningful practice themselves.

"A sharp mind, a soft heart and vibrant body" (John Friend) are among the qualities of a competent yoga teacher. Such qualities are supported and encouraged by adequate rest, supportive relationships, appropriate diet, and self-practice and study.

Teaching a class while tired, agitated, hungry or disconnected from your practice is not an uplifting experience. If you are properly prepared, nourished with food, full of prana after a good meditation practice, well rested and feeling supported, you are assured to teach a good class. The business of mediation and your lifestyle cannot be separated as may be possible in some other occupation. As a teacher, you are a living example of whether meditation practice works!

Diet

Equanimity of mind has always been regarded as one of the keystones of yoga. The ancient texts say - 'Yoga is not for those who eat too much, or do not eat' (Upanishads).

Diet directly affects our moods and our bodies. Simply paying attention to what we eat and how much we eat is another practice of yoga, embedded into the larger practice of our wellbeing. Extreme austerity regarding diet can be a form of ego takes to create more separation. However, eating a balanced diet with lots of vegetables and fruit is accessible to almost anyone.

Cutting down on stimulants such as alcohol, sugar, and possibly caffeine will create a more stable mood and create a bodily environment where mindfulness is easier to attain. Eating a vegetarian diet is considered to be purifying by many streams of the yoga tradition. Eating the flesh of an animal that has been kept in non-life affirming conditions will at the very least be of less nutritional value than free range animals. We, as sentient beings, are able to choose what is life affirming for ourselves, and how those choices affect other beings. Eat with friends or loved ones as much as possible, giving blessings/gratitude before eating,

Sleep

There is a fundamental pulsation in the universe called 'Spanda'. From this pulsation comes the dual nature of manifestation – cold and heat, male & female, light and dark. A cool and quiet dark place and a comfortable bed to sleep on restores the body's vital energies and is the natural complement to physical activity. The cycle of one day is a mode; of life, just as a yoga practice and the resting posture shavasana is a model of one day. Live fully and deeply. Allow the previous day to dissolve, bringing your attention as fully as possible to the present moment.

Practice

Teaching meditation requires the assimilation and embodiment of the teachings, presented in your own voice and in your own way. As we grow as teachers, we add our own voice to the lineage of teachers. This is how the meditation tradition stays alive and evolves. By practicing on your own, your inner wisdom begins to emerge. By embracing knowledge that has been revealed and by also honouring your teachers you grow individually as a teacher, and simultaneously become more connected to the universal energy. Pick a time and place to practice daily.

The body changes from day to day. Some days our energy is high and the body feels like a feather. Other days the body's energy is less available and we feel like wet concrete! On the days of higher energy, your practice can be a celebration that is dynamic and challenging. On harder days, develop a sequence of more restorative meditation to help alleviate fatigue. There is never a reason to miss a practice, and your skill in teaching a variety of students will increase.

Relationships

Everything in the universe is innately divine. Open up to this reality first and then make skillful choices. The practice of mediation is not something that happens just on a 'mat' (cushion or chair). Remaining fully conscious in relationships with other human beings is perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of practice. Here is the place where our ability to remember our innate divinity and the divinity of others is revealed. Notice patterns in your relationships.

Notice your habitual reactions and habitual desires. Embrace relationships as a part of, not separate from, your practice. In this way you will affirm the sacred nature of others. Honour those you love and those you have loved.