

It's not about the destination it's about the journey . . .

by Patricia Ezechie



Like many other people I was drawn to Yoga at a point in my life when I felt disconnected - from myself, from the people around me, from life. After a period of great emotional stress and turmoil I found that I had lost sight of who I was and what I wanted. The nature of my job at the time (I had begun my first senior management job six months previously) meant I had to keep my clothes, disconnection and loss hidden. I was effectively operating on two very different levels - the competent, intelligent, dynamic, successful professional in public, and the gibbering wreck in private. I appeared to all intents and purposes to be the picture of success, yet despite being able to acquire all the things I thought I once wanted and needed I was the unhappiest I had ever been.

It is at this point that I began to try different things in a bid to help me reconnect, to lift the fog that seemed to surround me and hopefully find some peace. I eventually stumbled upon Yoga. I would love to say that its effect was immediate and my life changed overnight and the discovery of Yoga was an epiphany, but it was a little more subtle than that. I noticed that after a class I felt connected, centred, and peaceful. I noticed as I continued to attend classes that I coped better with the stresses of my job and career. I was calmer, centred and in control. After attending my first retreat I realised how revitalised I was and also how damaging the outside world could be. Yoga became an integral part of my life. There were periods when my practice was intensive and periods when it was more intermittent but it was always there.

As my career, responsibilities and salary progressed exponentially, so did my stress levels. I began to realise that I was happiest when practising Yoga and hated the direction my life was taking and even managed to take a leave of absence and squeeze in a Sivananda Teacher Training Course. It's funny how even when we can see the habits, patterns, situations or behaviours we engage in do not serve us, we are still reluctant to let go. I was unhappy with the life I was living. I knew instinctively where I needed to be, but at the same time I remained incredibly attached to the lifestyle I had. In the end it took serious injury, work stress to the point of meltdown and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome to finally make me realise I had to change life. They do say that if you do not listen to the signals and observe the signs they get louder and larger; and they did!

Two years into my recovery and four years after leaving my job I am a fully qualified British Wheel of Yoga Teacher about to launch a new product - Yogastickmen.com. It seems that as soon as I let go, stopped planning and let life lead me, I have ended up where I always wanted to be. The path has not been easy. I have had to learn patience, especially on the days when I was so ill I could not get out

of bed, and yet so frustrated as recovery seemed nowhere in sight; acceptance of where I was energetically day to day, and flexibility - strength really does come from letting go. And I have learned all this from my mat! In the early days of my illness, throughout my recovery, and even now, within moments of stepping on to my mat I am aware of where I am energetically, how I feel emotionally and how connected I am spiritually. The challenge everyday is to accept what I find and work with what I have. This is often easier said than done!

An amazing side effect of this reconnection has been the incredible increase in my creativity. I am not sure if it is as a result of the space I have managed to create in my life, or the peace and silence that has resulted from my Yoga and meditation practice, but ideas are continually bubbling to the surface. Yogastickmen.com was one of them. I began to develop Yogastickmen.com while completing my Yoga teacher training course. I could not find an easily accessible, comprehensive source of scalable, digital Yoga stick figures that could easily be incorporated into documents, teaching and educational aids, so I began to create images for my own personal use. What began as a few images drawn in PowerPoint from necessity evolved into a large, comprehensive database of asanas, variations and modifications from all the Yoga traditions.

The journey from simple PowerPoint images to a comprehensive online image database has not been easy. The site contains over 400 asanas painstakingly researched and drawn, and is growing and developing all the time. I was determined to make it an easily accessible easy to use application and I think I have managed to achieve this. It has been fun, hard work, challenging and frustrating at times but bringing this idea to fruition has been a tremendously satisfying and enjoyable experience. I have been able to incorporate the skills and experience from my previous career into developing a product that I hope will be of use in my new career especially for students, Yoga teachers and professionals everywhere.

The journey still continues. I have just started an MSc in the Psycho-biology of Stress. My Yoga training, 12 years of practice and personal experience has given me an insight into stress and its effects, and also one means of managing it. I am hoping the MSc will provide a detailed and thorough understanding of stress and its physiological effects. I have no real idea where I am going, but I am enjoying the journey and look forward with excitement as to what is coming next. I hope you all love the site and find it useful.

Yogastickmen.com was launched at The Yoga Show in London on the 23rd November 2007, and will be going live in January 2008. Patricia can be contacted via the site at www.Yogastickmen.com, by e-mail at patricia@Yogastickmen.com, or by phone on Tel: 0845 642 2502.

