



January 2016

Step into your Power Teacher Training and Yoga Intensive:

Our Yoga Intensive and Teacher Training, from 16 to 23 January at the Methven Resort Hotel, was a great success. Our students truly Stepped Into Their Power in terms of their physical, mental and spiritual development, in addition to acquiring the skills to teach our powerful practice.

Each of the yogis on the training had taken the courageous step to show up as they were. Too often, we look at opportunities and think, “someday I might be ready for that – when my practice is better, when my body is thinner...” whatever! The people who showed up to the training embraced the Baptiste concept: “I am ready now!”

So, although each of the students on the training had initial concerns about whether they would hold up physically and whether their practice was “good enough” to be there, they all achieved big time. Know that, regardless of your perception of your ability, these intensives are for you. You will advance your practice and grow stronger and more able, regardless of your starting point.

An intensive is the best springboard for personal growth – time away from it all, with high-level instruction in the asana practice, meditation, yogic principles and philosophy, and plenty of time to look inwards and

address any issues that are limiting you. We saw our students drop their limitations and shine with their true power.

Our training addressed three elements of yoga, in a holistic sense, namely, meditation, asana practice and personal inquiry.

Through daily meditation sessions, our students were given a method by which to meditate and were introduced to a daily habit of calm focus and non-reactivity. We also explained some of the science behind meditation and its benefits for our nervous system and overall health. One of our students, a government policy analyst, exclaimed that this was the sort of information she needed to convince the people she works with that meditation really does help us.

Our students were led through Baron Baptiste’s Journey into Power asana practice in detail, as set out in his book of the same name. Each asana session focussed on a different part of the practice, to bring the students to a deep understanding of how the practice tones and strengthens your entire body and spirit.



During the training we detailed the principles of Baptiste alignment methodology, “True North Alignment”, to our students. They then incorporated those principles into their own practices and in their practice teaching sessions. This intimate knowledge of the physical practice, together with the opportunity through long and frequent practice sessions to push past what our students perceived as their limitations, saw them make amazing progress in their own practices.

One of our students, who has practiced regularly for a long time but who has been blocked from Wheel pose over the last few years, pushed up into Wheel with ease by the end of the week. Another student had not practiced Power Vinyasa before, only Bikram, and so was unfamiliar with the postures that require core strength and bearing weight on our hands. At the start of the week, her Low Plank consisted of dropping her torso to the floor, and Downward Facing Dog was a struggle. By the end of the week, she was doing both of these postures with good alignment and ease.

We had plenty of time in between asana sessions to explore human anatomy, both skeletal and muscular, and apply this information to yoga asana to understand which poses strengthen and which stretch different muscles.

Each day, our discussion sessions probed our limiting self-beliefs, and found new, positive ways of seeing ourselves. Our students sought the truth of their inner selves, and defied the lies of their negative self-impressions. They emerged from the training brighter, inspired and full of enthusiasm for their future.

Registrations for the April intensive, 16-23 April 2016 (both dates inclusive), are open. The programme for April has been revised, so that the January intensive is **not** a pre-requisite for attendance in April. ***You may attend the April intensive in isolation, or as a completion of the training begun in January, or as a fore-runner to completing your training in January 2017.***

For a shorter immersion, we are offering a **four-day package from 20-23 April** (both dates inclusive). This option will not count for credit towards a teacher training qualification and will not require attendance at all the sessions.

The venue for the April intensive is Maruia Hot Springs. This resort has recently been purchased by a group highly motivated to reinvigorate a fantastic venue in a beautiful location near Lewis Pass. This will be an amazing experience for all concerned. Register now and do not miss this opportunity to learn about yoga and its transformational impact upon your way of being.

Asana Spotlight:

Revolving triangle (*parivrtta trikonasana*) is the focus pose of this month’s magazine. Performed with poor alignment this pose feels unsatisfactory (and looks awful) but when done from a sound base and with proper principles of movement at play its tremendous capacity to transform is unveiled.

At Apollo we teach good alignment without being dogmatic. There are some poses where we can tell immediately that some students are new and have not been given good guidance in alignment where they have practiced previously.

Chaturanga dandasana – Low Plank is one such pose. We see many students who have practiced at other studios dropping their torsos too low, which puts strain on their shoulder joints and avoids the core-strengthening work which a good Low Plank can provide.

Revolving Triangle (and, in fact, any pose requiring internal rotation of the thighs, such as Warrior 1) is another. Revolving triangle is another. Here are the steps for a meaningful revolving triangle in your practice:

- Begin where you left off from split legged forward fold (*parsvottanasana*) with your right foot forward and your left foot back on your mat. Point your right foot straight forward along your mat. Align the heel of your back foot so that it is in line with your front foot straight up and down the length of your mat – or perhaps a little further to the left. Do not have your left heel further to the right of the centreline of your mat than your right foot.
 - Angle your left foot to about 45 degrees off centre. The exact angle varies from person to person. The angle of your left foot needs to be sufficiently narrow that it allows you to turn through your legs, into your hips and square the front of your pelvis with the front of your mat.
 - The length of your base between your feet is also relevant. Your base will, in virtually all bodies, need to be shorter than that for warrior poses and triangle. It should not be so short that you square the front of your pelvis with the front edge of your mat with ease but nor should it be so long as to prevent you from being able to do so. Typically, your base for revolving triangle will be about 20 to 30 centimetres shorter your base for triangle.
- In Triangle pose, your legs are in external rotation and work away from one another. In Revolving Triangle, you must internally rotate your thighs. Engage the adductor muscles of your inner thighs and turn both your inner thighs inwards towards the back of your mat.
 - Press away from your right foot and draw your outer right hip towards the back of your mat. Press forward from your left foot and turn your outer left hip forward towards the front of your mat. These actions may cause your left heel to lift slightly off the mat. That is acceptable. It is better to have squared your pelvis to the front edge of your mat with your back heel slightly lifted than to keep the whole of both feet grounded but have your hips askew.
 - If you do this work at your base, from your feet, through your legs and into your hips, the pose will open up for you and its magic will be revealed.
 - As with triangle and split legged forward fold, the knee of your right leg is vulnerable in this pose if you hyper-extend your knee joint. Maintain the slightest of bends in your front knee and be strong in your calves and thighs to maintain stability.
 - With your hips in balance, assume a halfway lift with your torso and elongate your torso, reaching your hips towards the back of the room and the crown of your head towards the front of the room.
 - Then begin to rotate your torso around your spine towards the right hand side of the room. This is another place where many students become trapped in poor

form. It is vital that you turn from the centreline of your body outwards. Some teachers speak to the position of your arms at this junction without reference to your core. In so doing, they cause many students to simply move their arms and not rotate their torso at all. Move from your bones. Move your axis at your spine and the extremities will take care of themselves.

- Turn both sides of your torso. Rotate your left ribs and shoulder down towards the floor. Rotate your right ribs and shoulder up towards the ceiling. Stack your lungs and shoulders vertically.
- As you rotate your torso reach your left hand down towards the floor and steady yourself with your fingertips resting on the floor or on a block. Position your left hand roughly adjacent to your right foot. This is not an exact science as the length of your base between your feet and the proportions of your body as between your legs, torso and arms will influence where your left hand lands. Ideally your lower arm will be vertical, reaching straight down to the floor from your lower shoulder.
- As your right side rotates up towards the ceiling, draw your right shoulder blade in towards your spine and reach your right hand vertically up towards the ceiling.
- Some students rely too heavily upon their lower hand for support. Your feet and legs are your primary sources of support in this pose. Do not collapse too much weight into your left hand. Reach purposefully to the sky through your right hand. Maintain strength through your abdominal muscles and low back so that your torso is light and lifted away from the floor.
- Placing your left hand to the inside of your right foot aids in stability. Setting your left hand to the outside of your right foot

opens up the possibility of a greater range of twisting. Placing your left hand too far to the left away from your right foot causes your torso to angle off to the left. Your intention should be to align your spine straight up and down the length of your mat. Do the work at your feet, legs and hips in setting up the pose and it should be possible to align your torso along the length of the mat rather than angled off to the left.

- If your neck is feeling free and mobile, turn your chin towards your right shoulder and set your *drishti* gaze through your upper thumb to the ceiling.
- Maintain a deep, even flow of *ujjayi* breath, lengthening your torso on your inhalations and twisting deeper on your exhalations. If your body allows you to go beyond the vertical with your shoulders, flow until your body stops, perhaps with your left hand outside your right foot and your right shoulder and arm rotated beyond the vertical towards the left side of the room.



Twists are powerful actions to take and revolving triangle is a potent, close-faced twist. Many people experience some clicking in the joints of their spine in this pose as it works its healing properties of strengthening your midsection and re-aligning your vertebrae. Profound sensations can surprise us. Choose to stay and breathe as revolving

triangle reveals its true character in your body and grow to love it as it loves you.

From Baron Baptiste:



Matters of Philosophy:

In our society we prize getting things done. Notions of high achievement, financial success and career advancement are predicated upon working long hours, cramming as much as possible into the day and being busy. In this atmosphere, many of us are governed by deadlines. Our days are structured against a series of events, meetings, appointments and what have you that must occur at certain times.

Frequently I am asked whether I miss practicing the law. I generally reply that there are aspects of the law that I miss (e.g. being in court, using advocacy skills and enjoying the theatre of litigation) but there are other elements that I have no desire to return to at all. In particular, the deadlines and the pressures of time were aspects of legal practice that caused me stress. I spent virtually my whole career working on matters at the last minute. It was not a case that I was

idle, though I certainly did not always get on with matters when I should have done. Rather, it was a case of the volume of work always demanding that work be undertaken in a state of some urgency.

At times, this sharpened the senses and made for some very good quality work. At other times it meant that not all that might have been done was done. Often I would be abrupt with and demanding of others. I would lose sight of others' concerns and be very ego-centric in the way I viewed situations. At all times it left me tired in the aftermath and lacking energy or enthusiasm to show up well for others.

Increasingly, however, there is a realisation that not everyone can function under time pressure effectively. The idea that better quality work and high productivity comes from allowing more time with fewer pressures is gaining sway over the notion that forcing more work from a limited resource of workers and time in which they work is the best way. After I had announced my resignation from my legal partnership and was not taking on any new work and was handing on existing files to other lawyers in my firm, I found myself operating in a more relaxed way. There was more time for deliberation and deep thinking. There was more time to invest in team relationships. The last few months of my legal career were as enjoyable as any I experienced as the workload pressures diminished.

Our perception of time is relevant here. If we see our day is full, with lots of demands and perceive the need to rush, it is likely that we will feel rushed. If, on the other hand, we see our day as long with plenty of time for all that we need to do, then it is likely we will not feel hurried or pressured. A key way to tap into that sense of space with respect to time is to breathe through your nose rather than your

mouth and to take time to slow down and meditate. The time spent in meditation is time invested in strengthening your parasympathetic nervous system and balancing the sympathetic nervous system.

In general terms your parasympathetic nervous system works to bring calm and relaxation, to confer composed, considered responsiveness rather than irrational reactivity. Your sympathetic nervous system is your instinctive fight/flight mechanism that keeps you on a tense edge of reactivity. By setting the tone for the day with meditation we can create a critical distance between ourselves and our environment and the vicissitudes of life. From this perspective of calm we can remain unruffled even when the external challenges are high. With this perspective we can also see tasks and obstacles for what they are rather than making mountains out of molehills. In this way, we deal with matters in order of importance. We do not stew over or experience angst in respect of minor issues. The world seems to move a little slower for us.

Meditation is a millennia-old phenomenon. When the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali were compiled (possibly as much as 2200 years ago) and described an 8-fold path culminating in calm centred focus, meditation and, finally, awakened enlightenment, it was not describing something new but, rather, was explaining in structured form an already established practice. In the modern western world there is some suspicion surrounding the term "meditation", as if to practice meditation is to participate in some strange religious rite or to be part of the occult. The corporate world prefers to speak of "mindfulness" and emotional intelligence and use other forms of modern jargon to avoid the stigma wrongfully associated with meditation.



Through meditation and a strengthening of the parasympathetic nervous system we become aware of ourselves. That awareness lets us cultivate good and deny strength to that which is not good.

The spiritual guide OSHO has a beautiful saying, "That which deepens with awareness is virtue. That which disappears with awareness is sin". Our contemplative state in meditation and throughout the day when we have an established practice of meditation, gives us access to awareness of ourselves, our behaviour, our patterns and habits. Those aspects of our way of being that our awareness stimulates us to abandon (e.g. holding onto anger or resentment, eating poorly, lying to ourselves and others) are undesirable features. Awareness makes them disappear like the mist when the morning sun rises. Those aspects that strengthen as we focus our awareness upon them (e.g. our compassion, our honesty, our patience) are virtues whose presence in our way of being makes us better people.

If you feel rushed and overworked, it may not be the case that you literally have too many things to do. It may simply mean that your nervous system is functioning in a way that causes you to feel stressed and pressured and

you are not operating as efficiently as you might. If you notice yourself being abrupt or unthinking with respect to other people, it may not mean you are a grumpy person nor may it mean that those people are deserving of your irritation and annoyance. Again, it may simply mean your sympathetic nervous system is holding sway over your bio-chemistry and you are caught in a pattern of snappish reactivity.

Through taking time to slow down, breath slowly and deeply through your nose and stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system, you may not only experience a sense of calm in respect of your daily tasks that leaves you feeling composed and un-hurried but you may also show up for others in a more positive manner. Meditation does not rob you of time in your day. Its impact is such to give you a better relationship to the outside world and from that perspective you operate more efficiently and time seems to open up for you.

A friend of ours once told us she could not live *without* her white bread. A month or so later she collapsed and was diagnosed with diabetes. It turned out she could not live *with* her white bread. If you believe that your days are so full you have no time for meditation, it may actually be the case that your days are so full you must make time for meditation.

Annual Membership Special:

Our special on annual memberships of \$1200 ends this Sunday 31 January. From 1 February the price of an annual membership is \$1400.

It is not too late for you to take advantage of that deal. Deposit \$1200 to Apollo Power Yoga Limited's bank account, 01 0310 0054995 00, over the weekend or come in and pay by cash, eft-pos or credit card and you can take up all the advantages of annual membership.

Thank you to the many who have committed to another year of practice with us and those who have made that commitment for the first time. We are looking forward to working with you all a lot this coming year.

New Rental Mats:

You may have noticed we have upgraded our stock of rental mats to lululemon's "The Mat". The small fee of \$2 per rental mat hire ensures we have a fund to draw upon to keep our stock of mats in good condition for your use.

To assist in their preservation please:

1. Align your mat with our logo at the front of the mat so that the logo does not get worn off by your feet.
2. If you are especially sweaty when you practice, use a towel over the mat as well.
3. Lightly mist and wipe the mat after use.
4. Keep your toenails trimmed so that they do not cut into the surface of the mat.

Thank you. We hope you enjoy using these mats.

EDGE:

The Emergency Department at the Christchurch Hospital are embarking upon 100 days of activity called EDGE (Emergency Department Get Exercising). A number of people who work in that department in one capacity or another already practice at Apollo Power Yoga, but we are looking forward to seeing many more trying out power yoga as a means of getting energised over the next three months. Well done the Emergency Department!

Namaste

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