



May 2017

We are on Twitter:

You can follow us on Twitter @HamishApollo. We are issuing daily tweets. At present the daily tweets are related to the themes of the *40 Days to Personal Revolution* programme. In keeping with the tenor of our teaching at Apollo Power Yoga our tweets are intended to be uplifting, motivational and supportive to you on your path.

40 Days to Personal Revolution

We are into week three of the 40 Days programme. Having pursued themes of Presence and Vitality we are this week embracing the theme of Equanimity.



Equanimity is the name given to the stage in our vinyasa practices devoted to one-legged balancing poses. Equanimity is not about easiness. Rather, it is about being at ease with challenging circumstances. When your thighs are feeling fatigued, when your mind is tiring from the concentration needed for one-legged balance, and when there are distractions around you of other people wobbling or falling out of their poses that is exactly the moment for equanimity.

When the challenge in life is high that is the moment in which you gain power by relaxing with what is. There is no need to tense and fight. There is no need to run and hide. There is power in staying, relaxing and being all you can be.

We will be running another edition of 40 Days to Personal Revolution in the spring. If you are not on the current programme make the intention now to be part of the next programme.

Step into your Power Teacher Training and Yoga Intensive Feedback:

"So much more than I signed up for and I believe the real benefits both physical and mental have only begun to be discovered post training. I'm excited to attend the next one".



"I applaud both Hamish and Margo for their dedication, discipline, humour and knowledge. Whilst at times I wanted the ground to swallow me up both of them invested in each and every one of us to their fullest and gave their absolute all to the process we had undertaken".

"Fun and amazing growth experience. Thank you for providing this training. It really has been a special experience for me".

"The personal enquiry sessions were highly useful to learn more about yourself and face some unpleasant themes and it was surprising what revealed itself throughout the 8 days. Margo and Hamish provided wonderful guidance and it felt like a safe and encouraging environment to share personal experiences, thoughts or fears. I was impressed how attentive both Margo and Hamish were to each person who shared something... no matter how late in the evening or how many people had shared before... the attention to each and every one who got up to say something was palpable. I felt that there was an amazing fine-tuning towards how far you can/have to push people and when you got to back off and give them some space. Also I thought it was most helpful that you were not forced to see things a certain way but were only guided by well-aimed questions to find or arrive at your truth for yourself".

We're on again at Wainui Park Camp in January 2018. Plan ahead and be a part of a wonderful, transformative process.

EMBR on 96.1FM:

Apollo Power Yoga has formed an association with EMBR, a radio station run by the students of the New Zealand School of Broadcasting at Ara. Tune in to 96.1FM and hear what the students are up to in their practical application of their broadcasting studies.

Hamish is giving weekly interviews on the EMBR Drive programme on Fridays. Listen in as Hamish talks about a variety of topics related to yoga and its physical, mental and spiritual benefits.

International Yoga Day Celebration:

Save the date: On **Saturday 8 July** we'll be celebrating **International Yoga Day** with a day-long smorgasbord of asana practices, meditation and yoga-related talks, in the glorious Great Hall at the Arts Centre. It will be a wonderful day, and we'll once again be raising funds to help The City Mission cope with the increased demand it faces during the winter months.



The Ethical Foundations of Yoga:

The ethical state of humans is a matter that has been debated over millennia. There are

those who argue that it is an essential element of being human to behave ethically. Those who take that view speak from the standpoint of what ought to be rather than what is.

Others say that ethics have no part in determining what it is to be human. In *Catch 22*, Joseph Heller's principal character Yossarian is proposing to go AWOL and says he would rather let some other person get killed flying dangerous missions. The character to whom he is speaking took issue and said, "But what if everyone on our side felt that way?" Yossarian replies, "Well then I'd certainly be a damned fool to feel any other way, wouldn't I?"

Thomas Hobbes, a seventeenth century academic and philosopher, asserted that man's life in a state of nature would be solitary, nasty, brutish and short as each person fought all others for access to scarce resources. In such a state there would be neither morality nor immorality but rather an amoral state in which ethics had no part to play.

The idea that we are all just in this life for ourselves and have no obligation to observe any moral standards does not rest well with me. I accept that morality shifts from one age to the next. Our criminal codes have changed over time and our attitudes to punishment have changed too such that in our current world we view as cruel and barbaric the treatment meted out to people in former times.

In 1895 Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labour, the maximum penalty (a century earlier the penalty was death), for gross indecency for having had sexual relations with other men. The criminal law of England forbade the "love that dare not speak its name" yet there were inklings of a shift in

public opinion against such a law. In his first trial Wilde was not convicted as one juror refused to participate in a verdict notwithstanding ample evidence that Wilde had, indeed, being involved in sexual relations with other men. In his retrial, certain witnesses refused to identify Wilde whilst in other respects confirming the facts of the case against him.

Over the course of the intervening period there has been progress with respect to this area of morality. Morality is a shifting ground. But that does not mean that ethics are not a fundamental element of our make-up as humans.

We see what appears to be ethical behaviour in the animal kingdom. Dolphins, elephants, primates and some other mammals are known to demonstrate behaviour consistent with a moral awareness. For example, a rat with the option of opening a box containing food or to open a box containing another rat emitting a distress sound, will choose to liberate the suffering animal. Elephants show a reverence and respect for their dead, even engaging in some burial practices, that shows a sense of morality transcending a simple notion of survival of the fittest.



Virginia Morrell and Frans de Waal have both conducted scientific studies that point to moral sensibility in the animal kingdom. Equally, there are those who assert that

morality is uniquely human, Dr. Helene Guldberg for example.

I believe there is something, beyond mere socialisation or a desire to comply with criminal laws or a desire to escape punishment in the after-life, which motivates us towards ethical behaviour. I believe that the development of some part of the mammalian brain has given certain members of the animal kingdom a sense of empathy and that this sense is critical to ethical responsibility.

Empathy is the capacity to understand and share the feelings of another. It is the capacity to comprehend what another person is experiencing. If we can appreciate the emotional hurt experienced by another person who is marginalised or who is experiencing grief or whose self-esteem is attacked then that will encourage us to avoid behaviour that causes another person to have those experiences.

The Golden Rule, expressed as some variant of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, emanates, I believe, from this sense of empathy and forms the basis of ethical responsibility.

Yogic philosophy comes from such a standpoint as well. It is true that in the *Bhagavad Gita* the idea of karma is expressed. In this context karma means that during one’s lifetime one attracts a colour or quality to one’s soul that survives death and determines into what condition we will be born in our next incarnation. There is, therefore, the weight of the afterlife influencing our behaviour in this life.

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, karma is referred to but not in the sense of a warning to behave well in this life lest you be punished in a subsequent life. Rather, karma is referenced to explain that the true self has no

karma. Part of accessing one’s true self in this life is to free oneself from all karma.

The first two of the eight limbs of yoga described in the Sutras, the Yamas and the Niyamas, are devoted to ethical matters. It is not for the benefit of our soul in future incarnations that we need to observe these ethical standards. Instead, it is for the state of fulfilment as a being in this life that such morality must be observed.

The author(s) of the Sutras assert that without such ethical observance there will be no stilling of the disturbances or distractions of the mind that is the aim of yoga. At some level, unethical behaviour will gnaw at our mind and prevent us from presence and contentment in ourselves in our circumstances, whatever they may be.

Guilt and the prick of conscience are reminders to us of circumstances in which we have not behaved ethically. I carry feelings of regret and shame for occasions when I have not observed the Golden Rule, when I have behaved unethically and when I have caused unhappiness to others. When my family moved towns in my mid-teens I found it hard to work into established sets of friends. I used the technique of picking on someone to get in with others to work into groups. I was not conscious of what I was up to but I look back with great shame at the way I behaved.

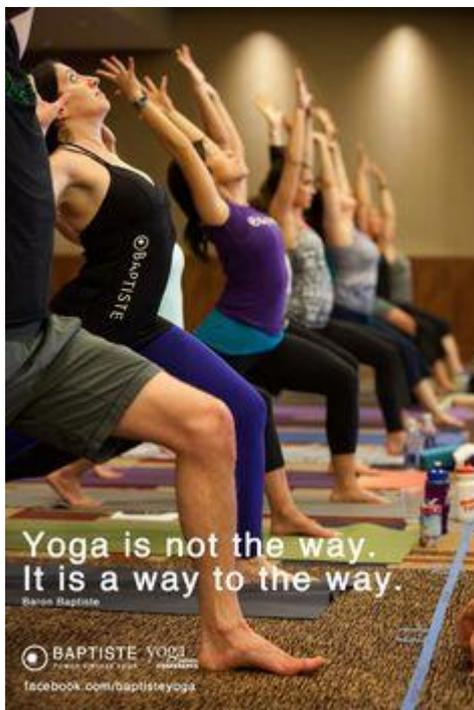
I do not enjoy these feelings and I have no desire to be seen by others as someone who inflicts hurt or behaves with cruelty. My past experiences are a guide to me to ever be better.

Utterly flawed as I am, I do not succeed as I would like in this endeavour. Words come to me quickly and sometimes out-race my better judgment resulting in others feeling the callous edge of my words. I wish it were not so. Baron Baptiste uses the expression,

“Don’t wish for it. Work for it”. I must work at being ethical and so must we all.

Be present, come from a place of connection with others, from empathy and compassion and live an ethical life. By our example we influence those around us and build a culture of ethical responsibility.

From Baron Baptiste:



Asana Spotlight:

This month we conclude a series on hip-opening poses with one called Cow’s Face Pose (Gomukhasana). It is a strong external rotator of your femur bones at the hip and, with the crossing of your legs at the same time, it reaches powerfully into the upper end of the ilio-tibial tract and even into the gluteal muscles including the piriformis.

There are a variety of ways a student can use to enter this pose. None are especially

graceful. Here, we shall offer one option that I prefer to use in classes as it allows the opportunity for modification along the way. It is my observation that many people have great difficulty with this pose and I prefer to allow them to modify as they work their way into the pose, rather than requiring all students to endeavour to come into the pose in a complete sense and risk straining or causing injury.

- Begin in dandasana (staff pose), seated on the floor with your legs extended forward in front of you and your torso upright.
- Cross your left leg over your right leg, bend your left knee deeply and draw your left heel back towards the outside edge of your right hip at the floor.
- Some students find that this is enough and know to stop at this point. Warning signs are: that there is a very strong stretch in the back/outside of your left thigh and into your left buttock; your left knee lifts upwards away from your right leg; your low back bubbles outwards and your pelvis rolls backward.
- In the event that your pelvis and lower back do act as just described you may find it helpful to place a block beneath your seat and lift your pelvis somewhat. This will allow some greater movement towards a forward tilt of your pelvis. There is one caution if you are using a block to lift your hips: avoid hyper-extending your straight right leg at the knee.
- If you reach the point set out in the second bulleted alignment cue and you are not already straining then proceed as follows: roll your weight to your right somewhat and bend your right leg at the knee and tuck your right heel towards the outside of your left hip. Again, it may be necessary to place a block under your seat.

- Hold your right knee with your left hand and your left knee with your right hand and carefully draw your legs into a tighter bind upon one another.
- Carefully press with your hands downwards onto your left knee to create a degree of compression. Take this action and the previous one responsibly without violent force.
- Continue to tidy up the edges of the pose. Draw your heels backwards along your mat so that your feet sit snug alongside your hips but not beneath your hips.



- Some people prefer to plantar flex their feet (point your toes and rest the tops of your feet on the floor) but I prefer to dorsi-flex my feet (flex my ankles so that my toes turn back towards my shin bones) as this enhances the energy and stretch in my body.
- Use your hands to claw your buttocks out from beneath you towards the back corners of your mat.
- Elongate your spine and stretch up through the crown of your head before easing your torso forward and compressing your torso towards your upper thigh.
- If you wish you may stretch your arms forward. In so doing you may feel that your body allows you to relax down onto your upper thigh or you may need to carry a little weight in your hands and hold the

weight of your torso off your legs somewhat.



- As much as possible, look to align your knees one over the top of the other.
- Instead of folding forward you may wish to take the full pose with an arm bind as well. Raise your right arm high and fold it down behind your head. Reach your left arm downwards and then fold it up behind your back and bind your two hands – using a strap or towel to bridge any gap is fine if you do not have the mobility to bring your hands together.



- In this variation, keep your torso upright. Press the back of your head towards the back of the room and point your right elbow towards the ceiling rather than letting it angle off towards the right or

drop forwards alongside your head towards the front of the room.

- Stay in the pose for 2 to 5 minutes breathing steadily and calmly and then repeat on the other side.
- A fun transition to the other side that you may try if you have both legs bound is to bring some weight into your hands and lift your hips away from the floor. Without shifting your feet, stand up. Take a 360° turn to your right, pivoting on your feet as you do so. You will find yourself once again facing the front of your mat but instead of your left leg being crossed in front of your right, your right leg will be crossed over your left.
- Hinge forward from your hips and lower your hands to the floor and carefully ease your hips down to your mat between your heels or down onto a block if necessary.
- On this second side, if you are taking the arm bind, raise your left arm high and fold it behind your head and swing your right arm from low to high up behind your back.

It was hip and buttock tightness that first brought me onto a yoga mat seeking relief. This Gomukhasana pose is one that reaches strongly into the areas of tightness caused by the amount of running I did throughout my rugby and running days. For a long time I was resistant to this pose. I would avoid it in my practice because there was tremendous work in it for me. Now I embrace Gomukhasana more readily. It has become easier over time, my attitude has softened toward it and I am better prepared to do the work it requires. If tight hips are your issue, choose this pose and make it your friend. It is not a false friend who lies to you. It is a friend who tells you the truth about your body and helps you heal your injuries.

Apollo Power Yoga People Up to Something Big - Isaac Giesen:

Isaac Giesen is a young man with a positive outlook. He enjoys physical activity. He enjoys the company of his mates. He enjoys a beer. Two of Isaac Giesen's friends and his aunt have committed suicide. They had each been suffering from depressive illness and reached a point of despair from which they did not return.

Isaac wanted to do something to make a difference. He cast around for ideas and decided to make an attempt to become the first New Zealander to row the Atlantic Ocean solo. Only a handful of others have ever completed a solo crossing and Isaac would be the first from this country.



Isaac does not have a background in rowing. He made inquiries at a number of rowing clubs and was scoffed at by a number of clubs until one club, Keane Rowers in London, took him on. Isaac has been training hard physically building physical strength, rowing technique and mental skills to prepare for his campaign.

Part of his preparation has been attending classes at Apollo Power Yoga. The blend of the physical and the mental that he found at Apollo was ideal for him to integrate with his other work. Margo and Hamish were happy to provide Isaac with complimentary classes while he was in town.

Isaac has now left to carry on his preparations in the northern hemisphere as he works towards the cross-Atlantic row in December this year. Isaac is raising funds as he goes for mental health in New Zealand and has a big goal to raise \$1 million.

You can learn more about Isaac, his venture and how you can help support his efforts by visiting his website: www.thebluerower.com



Namaste

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