



June 2019

Africa Yoga Project – Eye Pillows:

Two of our students, Eunju Nam and Junghee Kim, have been working with Margo and they have made lavender scented eye pillows. These are on sale for \$20 with the proceeds to go to Africa Yoga Project. You may purchase these from either of our studios.



They are a great accompaniment to savasana and a great way to settle your mind, calm your nervous system and create a relaxed state of being before you go to bed in the evening.

These are good for yourself as a treat and make a great present too.

Judi McConway – KIN Workshop:

You will have noticed the sculpture in the reception area of our Salisbury St studio recently. It was given to us by Judi McConway, a student of ours and a talented artist.



Judi runs KIN Workshop where she uses found and recycled products to create intriguing and unique sculptures. You can check her out on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/kinwkshop/>

The dancer's pose yogini she has presented to us is foray for Judi into free-standing sculpture and into yoga asana and we think she has done brilliantly. Thank you Judi.

Workshops:

Thank you everyone who came to **Baddhas and Bandhas** on Saturday 22 June. Here are some comments from participants:

- *Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge. It was an awesome workshop!*
- *I really enjoyed this workshop. Although I have a degree of comfort with the material, it was really valuable to be in a workshop pace where I could slow down and work on technique and really think about poses for a change.*

Our next workshop is **Getting Started**. This will be held on **Saturday, 20 July** at the Salisbury Street studio, midday to 2:00 pm. The fee is \$40 or \$20 for Apollo Power Yoga annual members.

This workshop is excellent for those new to practice at Apollo Power Yoga or for those wishing to refresh on fundamentals.



We will address the poses of the **sun salutations**, **breathing technique** and the essential principles for **twists** and **back bends**.

Two years after I began power yoga I needed to overhaul my *tadasana* (mountain pose) under the guidance of another teacher. At our last teacher training, one of the participants who had been teaching for us for some time needed to have their low plank re-aligned considerably. Even if you have been coming for a while you will benefit from this workshop by spring cleaning and fine tuning your foundations.

Book at either of our studios, call Hamish on 0210551884 or email hamish@apollopoweryoga.com

The Kleshas - Ahamkara-Asmita:

Last month we introduced you to the kleshas and addressed in detail the first of the five kleshas, *avidya*, or ignorance. This month we shall consider the second of the kleshas, *ahamkara-asmita* or egoism.

It seems inevitable to me that egoism will cause suffering. I was born in the body I have and my experience of the world has been through the relationship of my bodily senses and my environment. It is my skin that has been burned by hot objects. It is my flesh that has been bruised by hard contact with other people or with objects. It is my feelings that have been hurt by harsh words from others. It is my pride that has been puffed up by praise from others. It is my body that has been infused with good feeling from yoga practice. I have never experienced the world through any other person's senses in the same way that I have experienced the world through my own.

Reading books, watching documentaries, listening to radio items and conversing with others has given me some understanding of what other people have experienced in their life. But I have not lived those experiences and I cannot share their experience. I value my parents and acknowledge their role in my life but they are both living so when someone loses one of their parents I have an inkling of the hole that leaves and the grief that they must feel but I do not feel what they feel.

This self-centric experience is what the Sutras warn us of in the context of the kleshas. *Ahamkara-asmita* or egoism addresses this. *Asmita* is not confined to excessive pride, conceit or arrogance (what might be called

egotistical behavior). It extends to lack of self-worth as well. Beyond that, and more generally, *asmita* connotes just what I have described earlier – the tendency to perceive oneself as being at the centre of experience and to perceive events as happening to us and to take personally the events and happenings around us.

From a yogic perspective, conceit is not inherently bad nor is humility inherently good. In yoga, shame and a lack of self-worth is not “bad” and pride and self-confidence are not essentially “good”. All of these qualities fall into the same error of assuming our perception of ourselves *vis-à-vis* others, our environment, indeed the whole world, as being the truth. For the sages who contributed to the development of yogic philosophy across time the essence of oneself is the *purusha* or the *atman*. The *purusha/atman*, is one’s true self, and has a pristine, untainted quality. All people, at the level of *purusha*, are, in essence, the same.

To regard oneself, one’s *purusha*, as better than or less than another is a mistake of perception according to the sages. To perceive one’s life history as limiting or diminishing one is a mistake. To be defined by one’s current experience of the world is a mistake. Against the perspective of all of time and space the trifles of one’s daily mortal existence are nothing.

The Yoga Sutras do not specifically address the duality question of the immortality (or otherwise) of the soul in the way that the Bhagavad Gita, for instance, does (the Sutras make no assertion as to an immortal soul whereas the Gita is predicated upon the basis of the survival of the soul beyond the death of one’s mortal body for the time being). However, the Sutras do assert the purity of one’s essence – it cannot be wet by rain,

pierced by blades, burned by fire nor withered by the wind.

One way in which *asmita* plays out is in one’s identification with what they do for a job or role in life.

When I practiced the law it was part of my role to express an opinion. A client would come to me with a problem and I had to offer advice as to whether they were on the right or wrong side of the law and an opinion as to how to proceed to resolve the problem given the merits of their situation.

I began to identify with my role as advisor/opinion giver and developed an arrogance in that role. At the same time I feared being wrong and would doubt my capacity to give accurate advice. Outwardly I was egotistical. Inwardly I lacked trust and confidence in myself. In total, I was trapped in the *klesha* of *asmita*.

This happens to people. When someone takes their identity from what they do then they lose connection with their true self. While I was practicing the law I very much took my identity as “I am a lawyer”.

Now, having had several different primary roles in my life (child, student, lawyer, parent, yoga teacher) I understand myself more as a being distinct from what I do. I understand better the transience of the activities with which I occupy my days.

There are examples of people who have become so committed to identifying themselves with what they do that, in the event that what they do is taken from them they experience a crisis of identity with sometimes tragic consequences. Some people experience depression in such circumstances.

For example, high profile sports people have been known to suffer depression and to

experience despair and a loss of identity once they retire or are forced from their sport due to a loss of form or injury or whatever.

In all this we can see the roots of the remaining kleshas: attachment, aversion and fear. Taking your sense of self from what you do or who you are with creates attachment to your occupation or to another person or people. Seeing yourself in a particular way can create aversion to those perceived threats to that way or to ideas or people who disagree with you.

A person who takes their identity from one religion may experience aversion to those who subscribe to an alternative religious belief including those with no religious belief.

Fear also manifests for those who experience a sense of threat to who they are or what they know about themselves or the world: those who believed the objects we see in the celestial sky all revolved around the earth which was the centre of all things were threatened and fearful of those who said otherwise and that the earth revolved around the sun; the McCarthy trials of the 1950s in America revealed a fear of those who had an ideology other than that of the political mainstream in the States.

More and more, come from a place of “I am” and not from a qualified place of “I am a...” followed by a colour, an ethnicity, an income bracket, a size or shape, a gender, a religious affiliation, an occupation or whatever. It does not matter whether you say to yourself “I am rich, good-looking, magnetic in personality and infallible in judgment” or “I am unattractive, stupid and unlovable”. In each case the identity with mortal transient attributes that are a matter of perception or opinion is flawed and misidentifies you with elements that are not your true self.

From the place of “I am” in its simplest sense, experience the space to respect yourself and

respect, value and give space for everyone else.

Hands-On Adjustments:

At Apollo Power Yoga hands-on assists/adjustments are part of the teaching tools that we use during class. Almost certainly, if you have practiced at Apollo Power Yoga you will have had the experience of a teacher placing their hands on your body during class. In this item I wish to address the basis for hands-on assists, some issues surrounding assists and I wish to emphasise some fundamental principles with respect to assists.

First, hands-on assists are a teaching tool. The purpose of an assist may be:

1. To re-align you to greater effect. For example, if your front knee in a warrior pose is collapsing inwards towards the centerline of your mat you may receive a hands-on assist to guide your knee into alignment straight up and down over the ankle of your front foot.
2. To stabilize your pose. For example, if you are wobbling in a one-legged balancing pose the teacher may place their hands or soft fists at the outside of your hips from behind or from the side to help give you stability.
3. To reinforce an action in the student's pose. For example, in the flow of sun salutations the teacher may approach you from behind in upward facing dog and use their fingers to indicate that you should draw your shoulder blades in towards your spine.
4. To deepen your expression of a pose. For example, in a standing forward fold the teacher may place one hand at your low back to stabilise you and run the palm or

heel of their other hand down the length of your spine to your neck to encourage length in your spine and depth in your forward fold.

5. To awaken expression and possibility in your pose. For example, in triangle pose the teacher may perceive you are stable and well-aligned but capable of greater opening so they may approach the back side of your body, stabilise your hips with the outside of their hip and, with their hands, guide your shoulders outside the plane of your front leg to create greater opening and expression in the front of your body.

I have taught many thousands of people across many thousands of classes. Some students have a poor mind-body connection and, notwithstanding their ability to understand a cue, they cannot convert that cue into a physical response. Many students are visual or kinesthetic learners. These students do not process verbal cues well and demonstrations and hands-on assists convey much more effectively what is sought in a pose than the spoken word. Some students are “un-coachable” and notwithstanding verbal cues and demonstrations they persist in performing poses in a misaligned or limited way. To create multiple neural pathways and to reinforce other forms of teaching, hands-on assists can reinforce and imprint best practice.

There are varying degrees of touch that the teacher may use including:

- a. Fingertip touch, at skin depth to create awareness on the student’s part. For example, if a student has hunched their shoulders up towards their ears in mountain pose, the teacher may approach them from behind and with their fingers at the student’s shoulders, encourage the student to draw their shoulders down away from their ears.
- b. A C-grip (the four fingers of one hand held together and thumb separate creating a

claw) or closed fists, at bone depth to realign the student’s limbs. For example, if a student is in warrior 1 but their back leg and hips are rotated open towards the side of the room the teacher may use the C-grip or fists at the student’s back leg or at their hips to turn the student’s back leg inwards or their hips to face straight forwards to create the true warrior 1 alignment.

- c. The open palm of the hand, at muscle level to create empowerment. For example, a student is in locust and has generated good form but the teacher perceives from having observed the student that greater lift and spinal extension is possible. The teacher places the open palms of their hands against the soles of the student’s feet. This creates resistance and the student presses their feet strongly to the teacher’s hands and lifts their torso higher from the earth.



Giving an assist is not a precise science and even with the best of intentions it is possible to give a bad or ineffective assist. I have inadvertently touched a part of a student’s body in an assist that I did not intend. On the occasions I specifically recall, the student was in an awkward position requiring support in more than one place so my eyes could not be on both hands in the assist (one was in a headstand and the other in a flip dog). I apologized to the student to be clear that the slip was unintentional.

I have been on the receiving end of an assist where, in standing leg raise, the assistant

insisted on pressing the hip of my standing leg inwards towards centre-line with force and I found myself battling against the force of their assist much to my annoyance. The assist only had the effect of pushing me off-balance. I can, on the other hand, recall an assist I received from a teacher in tortoise pose in the early days of my yoga practice that still resonates with me as it gave me length and depth that I had not been able to generate by myself.

I have had feedback from students about assists giving them a greater experience of their bodies. Any number of students have commented on the extra length in their spines, the extra opening of their chests, the extra depth of the hip opening, and so on from assists that I have given to them. Recently, in a rather roundabout way, I got feedback that as a man I had no right to be giving adjustments and that I was “too touchy”.

You may have an experience of an assist that is not effective but do not let that affect your opinion of assists as a whole. Retain an open mind and be open to receiving assists to receive the benefits addressed in the purpose of assists described earlier.

When I give an assist I like to speak to the actions of the assist at the same time so there is an unequivocal quality to the touch I give to the student. Ideally, with or without verbal cues in conjunction with the hands-on assist, the assist will be clear in the alignment, depth, direction or expression it seeks to create.

If you receive an assist that is unclear or that confuses you, you are free to inquire, either in the moment or after class, about what is intended. It is customary for the students to be silent in a yoga class and for the teacher to do the talking but, in the context of a hands-on assist, there is a specific one-to-one communication and you are entitled to seek clarification where you are uncertain.

I also like, where possible, to establish eye contact with the student to whom I am giving the assist. It is far from every assist that allows eye contact but some poses make it possible and I find that it creates a connection and understanding as between me, as teacher, and the student.

Should the teacher ask permission to give an assist? I have received many assists over the years but no teacher has ever asked my permission and I have never been resistant to the simple fact of being assisted. Some say that no assist should be given without a request for permission first. In a flowing, vinyasa style of class that is not always practicable. The tempo of some portions of the class render it impossible to ask permission and receive a reply and apply an assist before the class has moved on to the next pose or poses.

The principal reason why permission should be sought, say those who believe permission is required, is that the student is entitled to refuse an assist. Here is a key principle: **you have an inalienable right to refuse an assist** from a teacher. You may:

1. Refuse a particular assist. In the moment, simply say to the teacher that you do not want an assist or do not want to be touched. This is your right and you are entitled to exercise it.
2. Refuse all assists. Let us know and we will note in our student records that you do not wish to receive assists and our teachers will be alerted to your desire that you not receive hands-on direction.
3. Refuse an assist from a particular teacher. As with the previous point, we can note our system and a particular teacher can be asked not to touch you.
4. Refuse assists for a period of time (for instance, while recovering from an injury or from a surgery, or while the student is

pregnant). Let us know your requirements and we will respect them.

At Apollo Power Yoga, as with studios that follow Baptiste methodology, we have a culture of assists being part of our teaching method. For students who attend regularly, I typically do not seek permission to assist. With newer students I may preface an assist with a remark such as “If I may...” or “May I help you here...” Whether permission is sought or not, I repeat that you have the right to say no if you are not comfortable with receiving hands-on adjustments.



I believe the clarity of the teacher’s intention goes a long way towards determining whether an assist is well-received. I used the word “unequivocal” earlier. If a teacher is clear as to what they want to create with the student and their touch is firm and direct to the points in the student’s body that generate that outcome then I believe the assist is more likely to be well-received than if the teacher is hesitant, uncertain or has to feel around several points in the student’s body to find what is missing in the pose.

There are some creeps in the world who have abused their position as a teacher by touching students inappropriately and with an agenda outside the advancement of the students’ poses. These people are inexcusable and have no place teaching if they are going to commit assaults of such a nature. However, the existence of such people ought not, in my view,

to cause assists to be prohibited. They are a tremendously effective teaching tool. So long as the student consents to the assist it is a powerful piece of the teaching process.

Assists are powerful tools to convey something from the teacher to the student that mere words do not. Many is the time I have seen an expression of dawning understanding and appreciation light up a student’s face in receipt of an assist that has truly landed with them.

You are entitled to choose but I recommend that you be open to the experience of assists as much as possible to add all dimensions to your practice and to grow in all ways as a student.

Step into your Power:

Bookings are coming in for Step into your Power. If you wish to be involved make the decision now. You will not regret it. Places on this course are limited and with eight places already taken it is important for you to commit NOW.



Do not wait any longer. Begin your personal development at all levels with **Step into your Power**, Apollo Power Yoga’s yoga intensive and teacher training programme.

- If you feel stuck where you are in your practice or your life.

- If yoga is sparking curiosity in you and you seek more in-depth knowledge with respect to the practice as a whole, our practice in particular or yourself.
- If yoga has impressed itself upon you as a lifestyle and you wish to teach yoga.
- If you are ready to be all you can be in your yoga practice and in your life.

This programme has asana practice, meditation, inquiry, anatomy and physiology, and exercises in teaching to draw forth your exceeding self.

Make a commitment now, reserve the leave you may need, save the training fees you may need to put aside and choose to step into your power!

Asana Spotlight:

Triangle pose (trikonasana) is the opening pose of the Grounding series in our vinyasa practices and what an opening it is! The essence of triangle is to ground and establish a stable foundation so as to open and express the front side of your body. The greatest misalignments I see in triangle are those which have the opposite effect (someone has dull energy in the feet or slack muscles in their legs, a flexed spine or their head dropped towards their chest). Make your triangle one of length, space and energetic awakening.

- Begin in downward facing dog. Step your right foot forward to warrior 1, then take warrior 2. In warrior 2 ensure that your front foot is set straight forward up your mat on 12 o'clock and that your right knee is stacked vertically up and down over your right ankle.
- Right from the outset establish a strong foundation in your feet. Press the bones of your feet into the earth, the inner and

outer balls of each foot and the centres of each heel.

- Straighten your right leg and align the ankle, knee and hip of your right leg on one plane. For anyone prone to hyper-extension of their joints there is a danger here. I believe the most vulnerable joint in triangle to be the knee joint of the front leg. If you tend to hyper-extend your joints, if you experience any sense of your knee becoming jammed backwards or if there is a strain in either your right knee or excessive stretch to the point of strain in the hamstrings of your right leg, bend your right knee fractionally, just a degree or two.
- Pull the thigh muscles of your right leg to the bone and rotate the inner seam of your right leg forward towards the big toe of your right foot.
- Squeeze your left leg straight and hug your left thigh muscles tight. Rotate your left inner thigh outwards towards the back of the room.
- Tilt at your hips and extend your spine straight forward on the line of your right leg towards the front of the room.
- Stretch your right fingertips to the earth to steady yourself. Commonly, students place their right hand to the inside of their right leg. This movement contributes to a collapse and shortening of the front side of the student's body – the opposite of what is intended in triangle. Set your right hand to the outside of your right ankle.
- Another common default is for a student to place the whole of their right hand to the floor and drop a lot of weight into that hand. This imbalances the pose and also tends to cause rounding in the student's spine. Use your right hand to lightly steady yourself. Rest just your fingertips to the mat or to a block to the outside of your right ankle. Lift and elongate your spine.

Extend your left arm straight up towards the sky.

- Reach your tailbone towards the back of the room and draw your belly inwards and upwards to create strength, stability and vitality in your core.



- Put your awareness in the side seams of your torso. Lengthen the right side seam of your body and relax the left side of your trunk.
- Firm your lower abdomen inwards, tone your waist and hold your torso from the floor with core strength rather than from any collapse into your right hand. You may choose to float your right hand a few inches off the floor.
- Draw your chin inwards, towards your throat (not downwards towards your chest) and stretch the back of your neck long. If your neck feels free and unstrained, turn your chin to your left shoulder and set your drishti gaze to the ceiling through your left thumb nail.

- Be aware of any flexion or hinging at the front of your hips. Stretch rather than shorten the front of your hips. Be aware of any narrowing of your chest. Stretch the front of your torso long and wide.
- For extra expression draw your shoulder blades to your back, press your thoracic spine to your chest and extend your head and shoulders further to the right side of the room, outside the plane of your right leg.
- Rotate the left side of your torso even further towards the right side of the room.

Archimedes said “give me a place to stand and I will move the world”. Ground your feet powerfully into the earth in triangle and lever open the front of your body. Flood the front side of your body with healing energy like a cleansing wind. Let go the psychic chains that bind you, create a fresh experience of freedom, connection and love. Move your world!

From Baron Baptiste:



Share yourself in ways that impact others.

New Service for Your Sweaty Yoga Gear!

FitFresh is a health and fitness laundry service who will be running a pilot, with limited spaces, at Apollo Power Yoga.

You can have your gear picked up from the studio, laundered, and returned to the studio fresh for your practice the next day. Just think, you'll no longer need to carry your sweaty gear away with you, smelling up your bag or maybe left in your car all day. And it will get laundered for you!



Fitfresh will be offering this service, for up to 10 people, at cost during the trial period from 10 June to 14 July 2019. During this period, the rate will be only \$5/week to have your yoga gear laundered every day.

Extra special: The first Apollo yogi to sign up will get the service FREE for the trial period 10 June to 14 July, and everyone else who signs for the trial period will go into the draw to win a FREE lululemon outfit.

Sign up HERE: www.fitfresh.co.nz.

Asana for Africa – Fundraising Practice for Africa Yoga Project

Get in behind our teacher, James Anson-Holland, to raise \$15,000 for the Africa Yoga Project: <https://www.africayogaproject.org/>

James is an Ambassador for the AYP. As part of that role, he's raising funds to support the amazing work AYP does. His principal fundraising event is Asana for Africa, at the Apollo Power Yoga Central City studio on Sunday 28 July, 7-8:30pm.

Live music, free kombucha, product giveaways, and a great power vinyasa class taught by James. Get your ticket now before it sells out: <https://www.eventbrite.co.nz/e/wynn-williams-presents-asana-for-africa-tickets-62957922842>

James – AYP Ambassador

James has been teaching at Apollo Power Yoga since 2016, when he undertook our teacher training course. During this time, he has also completed his law degree, and is now working as a lawyer, at Wynn Williams, the principal sponsor of the Asana for Africa event.

The other event sponsors are: Leighs Construction (thanks to our yogi, Anthony Leighs) and Harcourts (thanks to our yogi Alison Aitken).

James' interest in teaching yoga has recently led him to apply for and be appointed as an Ambassador for the AYP. This appointment means that he has committed to raising USD\$10,000 (NZD\$15,000) towards AYP.

On top of raising those funds, James and other AYP Ambassadors self-fund a trip to Nairobi, Kenya, where they run a number of professional skills based workshops and assist with the AYP programmes (both in the community and at AYP's yoga studio, the Shine Centre).

In addition to teaching yoga for AYP while he is in Kenya, James has also committed to running a number of workshops on:

- entering into business relationships (a guide to contractual legal rights and obligations); and
- persuasive argument and confident public speaking.

Africa Yoga Project

AYP was created in 2007 to train youth and to build the wellbeing industry so that previously disenfranchised young people from marginalised communities could earn a self-sustaining income as community leaders. In turn, it enables them to build healthy, wellness-promoting communities.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, AYP serves diverse, marginalized, and vulnerable communities. Currently AYP have over 300 trained yoga instructors to:

- give back to their communities by providing free yoga classes to over 6,000 people in Africa each week; and
- earn a living teaching classes at AYP's yoga studio, the Shine Centre, and at other studios, companies, gyms and homes across Kenya and 15 other African countries.

The money James is raising will go towards the daily administrative costs of running AYP, including the AYP Academy.

The Academy is a three year programme that focuses on community leadership, professional training, and yoga training. Graduates of the academy will have learned valuable skills that lead to future employment (not just as yoga teachers).

Namaste

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