



May 2020

COMING BACK TO LIFE

It is great to be coming back to life. The studios are open again and we are running as many in-studio classes as we can manage.

The number of in-studio classes increases as of Tuesday, 2 June as we re-instate 9:30 am classes on alternating days at the city studio and at Ferrymead.

This means that the live stream classes we have been running will now be confined to the Sunday afternoon Power All Levels live stream at 3:00 pm and the Thursday evening Power Restore live stream at 7:00 pm.

This move is in response to diminishing numbers attending the live stream classes and requests by a number of you for the return of classes at 9:30 am to the studios. We will see how it goes. To those disappointed by this change we apologise and regret that we cannot be all things to all people all of the time.

Come to our classes. We are running forty classes per week spread across a wide range of times during the day and spread across our two studios. There is something there for everyone.

Spread the word. The stress associated with the lockdowns, the disruption to normal life and the threat to jobs and livelihoods mean that many people are in need of what yoga practice has to offer. Encourage those you know who do not attend Apollo Power Yoga to come in and practice and tap in to the vital energy, the clarity and calmness of mind and the support of connection and community that we have to offer.

There is nothing to fear in our practices. If you are unfamiliar with sun salutations and feel intimidated by the tempo we take at times, check out our video on our Facebook page giving a **tutorial on sun salutations:** <https://www.facebook.com/ApolloPowerYoga/videos/1094351404251846/> This is an ideal reference to notice common flaws and defaults and to observe effective alignment.

PRACTICE AT APOLLO POWER YOGA – COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 2 FROM 29 MAY

Our physical studios are open, some live streamed classes will continue and you may purchase downloads of classes from our On Demand service.

From 14 May we operated with restricted numbers in our studios due to social distancing requirements. The relaxation of those rules effective as at midday on 29 May means that we are no longer limiting the numbers who may attend our classes but we do still encourage you to book for class to both ensure there is space for you in class and to ensure we have your details for contact tracing purposes.

1. Before attending any classes at our studios you will need to update your email and phone contacts with us for the purposes of contact tracing. Many of you have already done this and we appreciate your cooperation in that regard.
2. Upon arrival at either studio, before you touch anything in the studio, please sterilise your hands with the spray at the entryway. Leave your hands wet for 30 seconds while the disinfectant kills any germs on your hands. Even if you washed your hands before coming out to practice yoga please comply with this request, for the fact of hygiene and the appearance of hygiene and the building of trust and confidence. Please do not ask to be exempted.
3. Once you reach reception please see the teacher so they may acknowledge your arrival and check you in to class in our sign in system. Do this before going through to get changed please.
4. Be respectful and patient where other people's space is concerned. Avoid congregating around the lockers and cubbies, do not block the access to stairs and allow others to choose how close they are to you.
5. We regularly clean and sanitise areas touched frequently such as door handles, hand rails and so forth and do all we reasonably can to ensure a clean and healthy environment for you to practice in.
6. We highly recommend you have your own mat and we ask that if you own a mat you bring it to the studio to use. The rental mats are not capable of being sterilised between uses and in the interests of the health of the whole community at Apollo Power Yoga and wider afield, please use your own mat where at all possible.
7. During Level 2 we are not offering any hands-on assists in classes at our studios to respect social distancing. When we reach Level 1 we will resume hands-on assists but will continue the disc system introduced earlier this year where you can indicate your preference not to receive assists or your willingness to receive them.
8. We have PayWave enabled on our eft-pos terminals and ask that you use this contactless form of payment or payments direct to Apollo Power Yoga's bank account when making purchases.

YOGA INTENSIVE – 11-19 SEPTEMBER STEP INTO YOUR POWER

Our yoga intensive, ***Step into your Power***, is proceeding at Wainui on Banks Peninsula from 11 to 19 September. You may attend this programme as part of a yoga teacher training

programme or as an intensive to learn more of yoga, your practice and as a process of personal growth and development.

Those attending for teacher training will need to commit to full days with all sessions compulsory. Those choosing to attend as an intensive will be excused attendance at sessions on teaching methodology, anatomy and physiology sessions and the practice teaching sessions.

For those attending the course as an intensive but not as a teacher training, you will have your afternoons free to walk in the area, visit Akaroa, Duvauchelles or French Farm or enjoy the beautiful bush clad surrounds at the Wainui Park Camp, venue for our course.

This course has produced all the teachers at Apollo Power Yoga, the core of the teaching group for a studio in Auckland and the leaders of the vinyasa teachers at Dunedin's leading yoga studio as well as others plying their craft throughout New Zealand. Our training enables trainees to be effective teachers and leaders in their communities. We promise you a powerful process of growth, learning and empowerment.



By participating in our programme you will develop in your asana practice, in meditation and in your appreciation of yoga as an holistic practice and in yoga philosophy.

Commit now to the most rewarding week not just of your year but of your life and sign up for **Step into your Power** now. Visit our website for more details: <https://apollopoweryoga.com/step-into-your-power-yoga-teacher-training/>

Feel free to speak with Margo or Hamish to discuss your part in the programme. Call Margo on 027 2272026 or Hamish on 021 0551884 or arrange to chat with us at our studios. You will not regret your choice to be part of an amazing group of people engaging in an amazing process of meditation, asana and inquiry.

POWER IN PARADISE RAROTONGA RETREAT – STILL PROCEEDING

Have your winter holiday plans been disrupted, along with everything else? There is still time to get in on our ***Power in Paradise Rarotonga Retreat***. But you need to be quick!

Our scheduled dates are 7 to 14 August 2020. Air New Zealand still has flights available to accommodate those dates. If you have a credit with AirNZ due to other flights that have been cancelled, you can use your credit towards your Raro flights. Go to the “credit call back form” on the AirNZ website <https://www.airnewzealand.co.nz/covid19-refunds-flight-credit> to schedule a time when they will call you and arrange your new flights.

Currently, there are 14 day quarantine requirements in both the Cook Islands and New Zealand, and those would need to be lifted by August before the Retreat could go ahead at that time. Ikurangi Resort is happy to move the dates back as far as we need to ensure that the borders are open at the time of the Retreat. If you’ve arranged to come on the Retreat, we’ll consult with you about possible new dates, and if the new dates don’t suit you, we’ll refund any amount that you’ve paid to Apollo.

The retreat gives you 7 nights and 6 days at the Ikurangi Eco Retreat <https://www.ikurangi.com/index.php> “where luxury meets sustainability”.

On each of your 6 days, Hamish and Margo will lead you in 2 yoga practices, including power vinyasa, power restore, meditation and pranayama (breathing techniques). Ikurangi has just constructed a lovely covered yoga platform which we will use for our practices.



You will have plenty of time between yoga practices to explore Rarotonga’s other great things to do.

Your package includes your choice of 2 from the following other activities:

- * Stand up paddle board and snorkel and/or night SUP lagoon tour
- * Glass bottom lagoon cruise and snorkel (includes lunch)
- * Cross island trek and/or nature walk (includes lunch)
- * Eco cycle tour (includes lunch)
- * Cultural island show (includes dinner)

* Electric tuk tuk island tour and/or sunset cocktail tour

* 60 min traditional Polynesian massage

- Free use of bicycles and snorkelling equipment,

- 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners at Ikurangi.

All meals at Ikurangi are vegetarian or seafood using the freshest, locally grown, seasonal produce. Ikurangi uses the services of three highly rated local caterers who will provide you with:

- Tropical breakfasts delivered to your room, featuring a selection of locally sourced, organic fruit, cereal and artisan bread. Tea and fair trade coffee are available in your room at all times.

- Lunches packaged for you to enjoy on site or take away to eat elsewhere.

- Dinners served as your choice of a delicious shared Island Platter for you and your room partner, or Bowls of Goodness served buffet style to the group.

On days when Ikurangi is not supplying your meals as part of the package (or if lunch or dinner is not included as one of your activities), there are many great nearby options. A Saturday morning outing to the local Punanga Nui Market for lunch, as well as the Muri Night Markets open several nights a week for dinner are easy options. There are also excellent restaurants to cater to everyone's tastes and budgets.

By making a group booking, we have been able to get a great discount on Ikurangi's regular rates. You will get all this for just \$NZ2250 per person (twin share). Pay your deposit of \$550 to secure your place on the retreat (only 12 places are available).

The package price does not include airfares. Make your flight bookings to arrive in Rarotonga by the evening of 6 August (remember that the Cook Islands are 23 hours behind us, so if you leave NZ on 7 August, you'll arrive in Raro on 6 August) and depart on 14 August.

If you have any questions, email margo@apollopoweryoga.com

PODCASTS

We have started a collection of podcasts. These can be accessed on our website in the same place that you find our monthly magazines: <https://apollopoweryoga.com/draft-magazines/>

For a start, these podcasts just feature Hamish speaking to yoga principles and sharing of his experiences on his yoga mat and in life.

These talks come at no charge to you. Feel free to open the links and listen at your leisure. There are now five talks on-line for you to listen to and the collection will continue to grow.

Our latest podcast is a 12-minute guided meditation on the theme of Presence. Take the time to sit, be still and be grounded in the beautiful peace of a clear, tranquil mind now.

COMMITMENT

I find it useful to periodically take stock of what I am committed to in my life. A commitment in this sense is not an obligation or responsibility. A commitment for present purposes is what I demonstrate a dedication to because of the regularity with which I do it, the time I put into it and the amount of energy I direct towards it.

I am committed to daily asana practice. I can be counted on to do a good practice daily, whether in a class taught by someone else, or together with Margo, or by myself. I get a lot of benefit from practicing daily. My practice keeps me strong and mobile. My practice gives me opportunities to experiment, to test myself and to try out poses and variations that are all part of my education as a yoga student.

My practice clears my head. In contrast to my state of mind when I used to run for exercise I benefit from clarity in my mind from yoga practice. When I used to run and something was bothering me I would fester over it while on my run. I would analyse, complain, criticise, justify and reason my way to a state where I was right and others were wrong. In yoga practice, I breathe and I concentrate upon form, alignment, action principles and possibility in my poses. If something was bothering me as I began practice I soon find that it is not there as I devote my mind to the work of my practice. As a runner, my mind could be a distraction from the labour of running. As a yoga practitioner, my mind is committed to the practice and is free of distraction.

I am committed to meditation. It is not a daily practice for me but I know its value to me and I sit, breathe and clear my head regularly.

I am committed to teaching yoga. There is no day right now when I do not teach yoga and I wake with a sense of when I will be in my role as teacher either at a studio or in front of my webcam. This is commitment in the sense of a duty or responsibility but I am committed to teaching as it is valuable to me. I enjoy teaching and I relish the connection and the shared experience of the teacher and the students. Recently I taught a class that was full of laughter and amusement. I had not planned it that way. It just manifested that way. I enjoyed the class tremendously and came away from the class energised, happy and full of appreciation for those who had participated in the class. I am committed to that engagement with people through my teaching.

I am committed to sleep. I sleep pretty well and value a good sleep every night. I am committed to having clean clothes. I like to wear a fresh set of yoga clothes to practice in each day and a fresh set to teach in each day. The volume of laundry that goes through our house is enormous. I am committed to certain dietary practices. I have a daily dose of a mixture called Body Balance that is liquid seaweed and aloe vera. I like to have two eggs per day in the morning.

What else am I committed to? I am committed to watching television. I am committed to eating a certain quantity of white sugar in the form of edible food-like substances. I am committed to worrying (about the future for myself and my family, about money, about how to keep the weeds down in our garden, about... you name it). I am committed to using fossil fuels to heat the water for my showers and to propel my chosen means of transport.

I am committed to these things because I do them regularly, I devote time and energy to them and they are part of my life on an everyday or nearly everyday basis.

The time and energy I have for all that I am committed to are resources and I have choice over how I deploy those resources. In some respects I deploy those resources in the interests of growth. In other respects, not.

Get present to the things in your life that you are committed to because you do them repeatedly, you allocate time and energy to them and you include them as part of your life. Now, get present to those things that you are committed to that are not beneficial but are the cause of suffering or discontent.

Consider what you would like to create and experience in your life and how, if you re-directed the resources of time and energy currently committed to non-beneficial practices, you could achieve those things that are your true desires. That is a commitment to growth – not a commitment to doing all the same things (thoughts and behaviours) over and over again.

When I contemplate growth I feel resistance. My track record has been to procrastinate. Often it has not been until a due date has become a pressing deadline that I have been spurred into action. This pattern has played out notwithstanding the good evidence of successful outcomes from when I have been forthright and have acted now, rather than later.

I ran my first marathon in the early 2000s. I did not have a great deal of running experience and the idea of the distance daunted me somewhat. I felt resistance at the idea of the work needed to prepare myself and the discomfort that I would go through *en route* to my goal. But I set aside 15 weeks to prepare. At the time I was not in the practice of running year round but would run to prepare for a specific purpose. I also did not enjoy running in the warmer months and came to mid-February, when the training programme was to begin, unfit for running.

The first few weeks were not pleasant as I tried to build fitness from a low base in the warmth of late summer. After four weeks my running was much easier and I was increasing the number of days per week that I ran and the distances that I ran. I entered a couple of events to prepare myself for the full marathon including a 32 km time trial organised by the Christchurch Marathon Clinic which served as a good test of my fitness, my ability to pace myself and was a good “long run” as part of my overall training regime.

By the day of the marathon I had confidence in my preparation and I had a plan for how I would approach the race with a view to breaking 3 hours. Everything went well and I ran 2:56. It was an experience in which, by committing to a process and to growth and by defying my resistance, I grew and created something new for myself.

A commitment to growth demands that you acknowledge and understand your resistance and move ahead anyway. When we ran a 40 Days to Personal Revolution programme a couple of years back, one of the participants was reflecting upon the time demands of the course and came to a realisation. If she did not troll through social media for several hours every evening she might have time for daily asana and meditation. Her resistance was an unwillingness to

give up the routine of ingrained habitual behaviour. Her commitment to grow – to personal revolution – demanded that she give up some of her habitual practices and adopt a new way.

To pursue growth with commitment requires integrity. To act with integrity means to act truthfully towards yourself and to others and to have good principles at play in what you do. Hold yourself accountable for your growth. It is too easy to slip from ground already won through a wavering of resolve. It is too easy to make excuses for laxity in the discipline of growth. It is too easy to justify compromise of principle on the basis that you will do better later. I say all that because it is that way for me.



Upon waking in the morning I am more inclined to read a chapter of the book I am in the middle of than to get up and meditate for the time I would spend reading. I can justify to myself the time reading on the basis I will meditate later... and later becomes the next day. When I am in integrity I do not make excuses. Instead, I act and do that which I know is effective and rewarding to me.

Someone I know is an excuse maker. Whenever they do not show up as planned or seek a re-arrangement of an agreed course of action, they always say "Because..." and run off a list of reasons why they need to change things or why they did not show up. They do not simply own their responsibility for the situation. They divert responsibility, they shirk accountability and they make excuses or try to justify the change. I believe they would be so much more effective if they had greater integrity in both holding to their commitments and in not seeking to avoid accountability.

Be present to what is possible if you adhere to your commitment. If worrying creases your forehead, makes you irritable with those you love and causes you to sleep poorly so you get up tired every day, conceive of the possibility of meditation daily allowing you to relax the muscles of your neck, jaw and forehead, making you calm, present and intentional in your communications with those close to you, and granting you a peaceful, restful sleep.

Yoga is not for nothing. Yoga is the way to the way – the path to the life of contentment. Your daily practices will either move you closer to contentment in your life or further away. Have a sense of the prize, of what is at stake and what can be accomplished and hold fast to the course that takes you closer to the goal of your heart's fulfilment.

Commit and apply yourself to the thoughts and behaviour that will empower you and reward you in all aspects of your life.

ASANA SPOTLIGHT

Our featured pose this month is bridge pose (*setu bandha sarvangasana*). In many ways bridge pose resembles camel pose (which we featured last month) but, being more supported at the floor, offers greater stability, a more comfortable neck position (which we identified last month as being a principal cause of discomfort in camel pose) and greater access to length strength to create lift. Here is how to do bridge pose:

- Lie down on your back. Bend your knees and draw your heels towards your buttocks on the floor. Set your feet and knees at hip width distance. Align your knees straight up and down over your ankles.
- Press your feet, especially the heels and inner mounds, to the floor. Lift your hips up from the mat.
- You will see in Figure 2 that Hamish's shin bones and knees are stacked vertically over his ankles. Contract both your hamstrings on the back of your thighs and your quadriceps on the front of your thighs. The hamstring contractions will hold your knees bent at a square and will draw the backside of your pelvis and tail forward towards your knees. Do this to lift your hips and shorten the back side of your torso.
- The engagement of your quadriceps will hold your knees at a square and stop your hamstrings from over-powering your knee joint and causing it to bend too far. I notice my quadriceps in bridge more than my hamstrings. My quadriceps are stretched across the front of my knee joint while they are under load. This is called eccentric stretching and is a characteristic of yoga creating long, lean, functional muscle tissue. The one quadriceps muscle that also spans the front of your hips (rectus femoris) is also stretched at its uppermost end as you lift your hips up and extend the front of your hip joints.
- There are four options for you with respect to your arms.
- Option 1: shrug your shoulder blades in towards one another (not aggressively or in an over-powering way) and clasp your hands beneath you.
- Option 2: shrug your shoulder blades in towards one another. Brace your arms at the floor at, or just wider than shoulder width. Turn the palms of your hands down to face the floor.
- Option 3: draw your shoulder blades gently in towards one another and draw your elbows in to around, or just wider than, hip width. Bend your elbows and place your hands on the back of your pelvis.

- Option 4: draw your shoulder blades gently in towards one another. Turn your palms in towards one another, squeeze your fingers together and curl your fingers in a monkey grip. Bind your ankles with your hands from the outside.
- Draw the major muscles of your back into towards your spine. Shorten the back side of your torso. Press the joints of your spine up into your torso.



Figure 1

- It is essential to contract your back muscles and actively lift your spine away from the floor. Without these actions you do not create a back bend (spinal extension). Instead, you remain with your hips off the floor, simply because your legs are bent, but with your spine sagging and in forward flexion. In Figure 1 (the picture of the group class) there are two students with one leg up in bridge pose. The one on the left of the picture is Margo. The one to the right of her is Hamish. To the right (as you look at it) of Hamish is a woman (on a pink mat) who is doing a forward bend bridge rather than a back bend bridge (so also is the woman nearer the camera in front of Hamish). Her arms are flaccid alongside her. Her back muscles are disengaged and her spine is slumped towards the floor. You could run a straight line from her throat to her knees with no break in that line caused by her hips. Not so with Margo and Hamish who have actually created real lift from the floor. It would not be possible to run a straight line from their throats to their knees because of the degree of elevation of their hips and spine. The teachers taking that class (not Apollo Power Yoga teachers ☺) were deficient in their cueing and many of the practitioners in the class were deficient in their practice of bridge pose.



Figure 2

- Whichever arm variation you take, be active in your arms. Brace the length of your arms to the floor. Press your arm bones down and lift your body upwards. In Figure 2 you can see how Hamish is actively pressing the full length of his arms down into the floor.
- If taking Option 4, pull your hands on your ankles to create as short a space between your feet and your shoulders as you can to maximise the degree of lift of your torso.
- Set the back of your head neutrally to the floor and draw your chin in towards your throat. Firm and stabilise your neck muscles (*jalandhara bandha*). This does not mean to drop your chin towards your chest nor to lift your neck away from the mat and point your chin up towards the sky. Be neutral and balanced in the position of your head and neck.
- Breathe calmly for 5 – 20 breaths then lower carefully down to the mat. Do not collapse or snap release out of this, or any other, pose.
- I have been at pains to emphasise the contractions required for bridge pose. Do not approach bridge passively. Be active in creating the lift and space of the pose. *Setu bandha sarvangasana* means, literally translated, all limbs engaged bridge pose. Make it so in your pose. Engage your whole body to generate lift and lightness. Consider why the photographer took Figure 1. It was not because of those collapsed bridges dotted about the room but, rather, because of what Margo and Hamish had created. Be up to something big in bridge pose.
- A variation of bridge is to raise a leg to the sky as Margo and Hamish are doing in Figure 1. The flaw in Margo's form in Figure 1 is that her raised leg has crossed slightly over the centreline of her body. Keep your raised leg straight up on the side of your body from which it arose.
- The flaw in Hamish's pose in Figure 1 is that he has allowed the knee of his grounded foot to stray outwards somewhat. Stack the knee of your grounded foot straight up and down over its ankle.

Bridge is about space. Use the strength of your legs and back to create space between your body and floor. Let your cares, worries and negative beliefs flow away through that space such that your pose truly becomes a bridge over troubled waters.

FROM BARON BAPTISTE



Positive change comes not when we declare "I've earned this," but rather when we are ready and willing to receive it.

Namaste

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