



Infinity in a Box

USING YOGA TO
LIVE WITH EASE

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Everything is Yoga

The sun was shining overhead as a business colleague and I conversed outside work. She was dashing off to another meeting; I was heading back to my office to finish cleaning out my drawers. I had finally quit my job.

She congratulated me, and confided in me the questions she had about her work. These were questions I was familiar with: *Where am I going? What do I want to do with my life? Who am I, really?*

Living with the questions became a spiritual quest for me. Where else does one eventually go for the meaning of life if not to a higher power? At one point I decided to host a small group to discuss spiritual topics. Three of us gathered regularly in my living room, with a fire roaring in the fireplace, and a spread of cheese and crackers with tea laid out before us. It was bound to be interesting; not only were we close friends who loved to celebrate and chat, we also chose to practice our spirituality in ways that were eons apart, at least on the surface. I was a yogi, another was

a pagan, and the third was a Catholic. This was not your usual religious roundtable.

One night we were celebrating the eventual end of a New England winter. Although snow was still on the ground, you could smell spring in the air and feel the slightly warmer air on your face. As Ann put another log on the fire, making the already warm room hotter, Jess reached behind to open the window wider. Already the pagan and the Catholic disagreed.

I was stretched out on the sofa enjoying the fact that my two small children were asleep. Quiet rang through the house, something that's entirely too rare for my liking.

Sometimes when we gathered we chose topics to discuss; other times we just followed what came. An unplanned ritual unfolded this evening to fit with the season. We decided to pick a package of seeds that represented what we wanted to plant in our life for the upcoming growing season.

Rummaging through my cupboard, I found a stash of seed packets. I never seem to plant all the seeds that come in an envelope, and for some reason I feel compelled to keep all the half-emptied packets. I stuff them into a box and hide them in a dark corner of the cabinet, which I promptly forget about until after I've bought more seeds for the next planting season. They'll most likely never make it into the ground, but tonight they had a purpose.

Ann, who had made the commitment to show more patience and understanding in her relationship to her husband, appropriately chose the seeds "Sweet Pea." Next, Jess chose the largest seeds from the lot. These would show up in her basket on her altar at home and serve as a reminder of the changing season. I looked through the seed box, wondering which seed packet to pick.

I had made a New Year's resolution a year ago that I was feeling more desperate about. It was not a minor resolution. I

wasn't interested in losing ten pounds, exercising more, or eating right, even though I could have benefited from all three. I was only interested in one thing: knowing God. And I wanted to know God experientially, not as some abstract or theoretical construct. Just give me an all-pervasive, all-consuming understanding of the Creator . . . that's all.

My friends knew of this resolution, since I announced it at one of our get-togethers. They understood, then, when I chose the seeds for the flower "Love in a Mist."

It seemed that my concept of God, the intimate contact I craved, was shrouded in a mist. God was there, but I couldn't see clearly. The more I tried to know God, the more aware I became of the void or separation I felt, and the unhappier I became. I suppose the lofty (and some may say impossible) desire to know God was linked to the rather mundane and earthly desire to have satisfying work. I'll bet my paycheck that everyday life and heaven's gate are connected.

On my commute into work one morning, as my mind wondered aimlessly for the 90-minute drive, the proverbial light bulb went off. The punch line was revealed: it's not that Love, or God, is *in* a mist, as the seed package said. Rather, God *is* the mist. There is no place that God is not. Then the void between self and God dissipated. Now that's a good way to begin the day.

I relate this story to you as a prelude to my definition of Yoga. I use the term in its broadest sense—meaning union or wholeness. I do not use the word Yoga to connote only a specific activity, such as breathing exercises or physical postures.

I do use Hatha Yoga (the physical activity most people associate with the term) as a personal practice to know wholeness and union in my everyday life. You may find this wholeness when you're walking outside, hugging your child, or staring into the fire. This book is not about creating converts to a specific school of thought.

Rather, this book advocates a self-directed path to knowing union or wholeness in your own life that does not exclude any aspect of your current reality.

In this book you'll find a smattering of Patanjali's aphorisms (the defining text for classical Yoga) and the Vedic philosophy that serves as the underpinning of the yogic tradition. You're just as likely to find an example of wholeness from the *Harvard Business Review*, a marketing newsletter, or a Buddhist story. You'll find in this text the full spectrum of our twenty-first century life that calls for union.

If wholeness, union, God, emptiness or the divine is omniscient, it's where you are now. If not in this moment, where else would it be? What we're all searching for, the thing that we crave, that we long for in our hearts, is as inseparable as our breath. There simply is no place that it isn't.

The questions my colleague and I were discussing—where am I going, what do I want to do with my life, who am I, really?—were married to the answers. Rainer Maria Rilke answers it best in *Letters to a Young Poet* when he wrote, “. . . .have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign tongue. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”

With the knowledge that this moment is inherently whole, you can relax. Just trust that where you are now has what you're looking for. This is Yoga.

And with this definition, everything can be Yoga.



What is EASE?

After leaving my job, I decided to share with others the process I had found so helpful. What came from this intention was a four-step approach, called “EASE,” which combines the introspective techniques of Yoga with the pragmatic demands of everyday life.

EASE is an acronym for a method designed to develop self-knowledge, self-leadership and deliberate living. It’s a process to help you see the wholeness of now.

That’s right, it’s all about you.

Rather than narcissistic self-absorption, self-knowledge is reaching out from the inside with conscious awareness. Most of us run on automatic, trusting that what we know is the truth, and we remain ignorant of our own ignorance. So, the EASE process means you make the decision to question everything, including your definition of who you think you are.

Following, in a snapshot, is the process.

Step One: E

E stands for *experience*, the ability to fully connect with the experience you're having in a given moment. Leo Buscaglia sums it up best when he says, "Braille your world," meaning touch, explore and know all there is to know about the moment of now. Life is full of diversity, externally and internally. It's rich with texture, but many times we just skim the surface, not fully experiencing all that's available. When work is frustrating, live that experience fully. When your child gives you a bear hug, live that experience fully. The truth is in the most mundane and the most magnificent daily tasks.

Step Two: A

A stands for *awareness*, the ability we humans have to expand our view beyond our initial limited construct. Just when we feel smug because we have figured something out, we realize there are more layers to uncover. It keeps us humble to know that we don't know. Our hearts stay open and our minds stay young to ask the question "What else is there in this moment?"

Step Three: S

S stands for *self-reflection*. Throughout our lives we ask, "What do I want to do with my life? Where do I want to go? What do I want to get?" This external, future-oriented drive to get, do or be something creates tension. The more pertinent question is "*How* do I want to be right now?" The answer creates a conscious, deliberate path based on the characteristics you wish to express.

Step Four: E2

E2 stands for *elect* or choose. When you have answered the question of how you want to *be*, instead of what you want to *do*, you can experiment with your ability to choose responses that are consistent with your inner values. This is a particularly telling exercise. Actions can frequently be inconsistent with espoused values. Which, of course starts the loop all over again, starting with E looking at your experience.

The intrigue of the EASE process comes from a personal application to your own life, not from reading. Who wants to just read about flying a plane when you can experience it for yourself? In other words, you are an active participant.

