



MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
& MAKE A LIVING  
TEACHING  
YOGA

The secret to transforming lives  
while supporting yourSelf

KARINA AYN MIRSKY, MA

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TEACHING YOGA

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*The Secret to Transforming Lives while Supporting Yourself*

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KARINA AYN MIRSKY, MA



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# DEDICATION



For those who long to serve the world through yoga.  
May you be uplifted and empowered.

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REVISED EDITION 2021  
AUTHOR'S NOTE

**T**HE FIRST EDITION of this book was published in 2019. Two significant things happened since requiring an update to this text. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way yoga teachers, therapists and life coaches work with individuals. To keep the contents of this book relevant, I have added a section to Chapter Nine about working with clients online. In August 2021, ParaYoga founder, Rod Stryker sent a letter of apology to his community for an act of sexual misconduct. Additional ethical issues in ParaYoga quickly surfaced which led to several senior teachers resigning their certifications, I among them. Out of respect for those harmed, Rod Stryker's Foreword has been removed from this revised edition. To address this important topic of ethics further, I have added additional content to Chapter Ten. I am also making the following statement: *Yoga teachers are in a position of biopsychosocial power. I condemn the abuse of that power in any form. I am committed to restorative justice in the yoga industry and holding leaders accountable for misusing the teacher/student power dynamic.* I also value yoga and my years of education in it and stand by the effectiveness of the techniques shared in this book.

In service,  
Karina



FOREWORD BY  
TOM HOLMES, PH.D

**T**HIS BOOK ADEPTLY weaves Classical Yoga philosophy and practice with Internal Family Systems (IFS) theory and interventions. It's an honor to speak to the value of Karina's approach to educating others in this integration.

I have been an IFS educator since I was first trained with Richard Schwartz in the late 1980's and am the author of the book *Parts Work, an Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life*, which has sold over 50,000 copies and has been translated into several languages. In these years I have had a chance to train and supervise many professionals around the world. I first met Karina when she was a student of mine at Western Michigan University twenty year ago. Following that I was a member of her master's degree committee for her degree in East-West Psychology, and I have been supervising her work as it relates to Internal Systems Therapy in the years since.

Karina is unique in her ability to integrate skill and wisdom from different academic and professional fields. Her studies in Business and East-West Psychology are one example, also her ability to be a devotee of an Eastern approach to life but also to be a successful businesswoman, running a yoga studio, developing training programs, and being in private practice.

In her teaching and clinical work, she integrates in an immensely skillful way her knowledge of yoga with superb talent in Internal Systems therapy to give her clients real healing and positive tools to live a more satisfying and generous life.

In addition to her skills, Karina has overcome many personal life hardships. As my wife and I have watched her growth over the last twenty-five years, we have become increasingly impressed with the way she has overcome and even used these challenges to deepen her understanding and resourcefulness.

This unique ability to integrate, teach and use both yoga and psychotherapy is evident in this book, where she shares the wisdom of her experience and offers plans to make it possible to earn a living while remaining true to the philosophy of yoga. This content can be helpful to yoga teachers, life coaches, therapists who want additional tools, and self-employed healing arts professionals of any type. You, the reader will find yourself the recipient of a very special gift: instruction on taking yoga off the mat and into everyday life, application in integrating psychology and coaching with yoga practice, and tools to start a private yoga and IFS inspired coaching business.

TOM HOLMES, PH.D

*Author of "Parts Works: An Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life"*

# INTRODUCTION

**P**EOPLE PRACTICE YOGA for two primary reasons: they either want to rid themselves of something like stress, physical pain, anxiety or depression, or they want to gain something like healing, improved fitness, sleep, concentration or spiritual discrimination. Most people who start practicing yoga get what they came for. Yoga eases their discomforts and imbues them with the abilities they want to possess. It uplifts and empowers them to make positive changes in their lives.

For over twenty years, I've heard yoga students attribute how they healed from illness or injury to practicing yoga. I've watched practitioners transform their bodies, make healthier choices, and even be able to stop taking certain types of medications. Those who have a dedicated yoga practice know that yoga works in their lives.

The incredible impact yoga has on people leads many to enroll in a Yoga Teacher Training program (YTT). Some who enter a YTT do it to deepen their own knowledge and don't plan to ever teach. Some start a YTT with no intention of teaching, but halfway through the program decide that they want to. Though, it's fair to say that most people entering a YTT program do want to teach

some yoga. In 2016, there were over 53,000 yoga teachers registered with the National Yoga Alliance (YA). As of January 2019, there are now over 94,000. So, in just over two years, the number of American yoga teachers has nearly doubled, and this only counts those who have opted to register with the YA.

One reason that it's hard for yoga teachers to make money is that the market is getting oversaturated. It's hard to get good class time slots in established yoga studios. Those trying to earn a living teaching group classes often teach up to eighteen classes per week. At an average of \$35/class, that's less than \$25K per year after taxes. Many of the most dedicated yoga teachers can't support themselves by teaching group classes alone. They often have to work a second job or are dependent on a partner, roommate, or family support to make ends meet. I hear stories all the time from yoga teachers about being unable to afford good health insurance or put their child in a better school, or further their education, or take a vacation.

A yoga instructor's teaching schedule is often at the mercy of what's available and being offered by the studio. So, most instructors typically drive all over town in order to teach at odd times, all while paying for gas and putting miles on their vehicle. I have a client who used to teach four classes a day over a disjointed fourteen hours, starting with a 6 AM class and ending with a 7 PM class. She came to me knowing that it was not a sustainable way to live and work. I helped her identify the classes that either made the most money or gave her the most visibility. She cut down to only teaching the group classes that support her best and is using those classes to feed her private practice.

Most yoga instructors start teaching yoga because of the positive impact yoga had on them personally. They do it because they genuinely care about people and want to make a difference in their lives. Yet, yoga teachers also need to be able to pay their bills without working to the point of burnout. This is especially challenging if the teacher is conflicted about charging money for teaching yoga. Some have been told that because yoga is a spiritual practice, it should be a free service. But this idea is misguided.

Working privately with individuals is the way yoga was originally taught. A family would often have a guru. He would be the life-long teacher to all the members of the family—often grandparents, parents, and children. In gratitude for the teachings, the family would feed and shelter the guru when he would visit. If students went to an ashram to study, they would make financial offerings at the shrines, which helped feed and shelter the resident guru. So, it's a misconception that yoga was ever taught for "free." It has always been sustained by some form of exchange for food and shelter. Today, in the West, the way we get fed and have a roof over our head is to earn a living wage for our teaching.

If I had one wish for all sincere yoga teachers it would be that they could help people on a deeper personal level, double their income, and teach fewer group classes, all while being in control of their own schedules. In my twenty-plus years in the yoga industry, I've learned that there are different ways to accomplish these objectives. One way is to teach workshops, retreats, and teacher training programs. The catch to this option is that you have to be a seasoned yoga teacher with a large following of students. There-

fore, it's just not accessible to many teachers to earn money in this way.

Another way to increase income while teaching fewer group classes is to teach private sessions. Working with students in a one-on-one setting is the best way to help them as individuals; it truly is in the highest service to the student. It is also in the best interest of the teacher to make a guaranteed wage per hour (double or even triple what one would make teaching a group class), be in total control of one's time, and develop meaningful and sustainable relationships with students.

Yoga teachers deserve to earn a living for all they have invested in learning how to help others. But teaching group classes is not often where the money is in the yoga industry. Group classes are also not the best way to help yoga students attain the actual goal of yoga. So, what it boils down to is that we can earn a higher wage if we can be of higher service.

With a few more tools beyond what they learned in YTT, yoga teachers can build a cutting-edge private yoga and coaching practice. Adding a coaching component to private sessions increases the value of the session. I recently saw a yoga-coach on Instagram say that she cleared her first five-figure month doing ninety-minute business coaching and restorative yoga sessions for \$230 per session. She also offers three- to six-month coaching packages for \$3200-5400. Wow, right?

So, now you might be thinking... *I don't know how to do private yoga sessions. Or, I don't know anything about coaching. Or, I don't know how to get private clients or where I would do private sessions.* That is precisely why you are here. This book aims to empower you with the

knowledge of how to do all those things you don't yet know how to do.

This book will not only teach you how to make significantly more money, it will transform you from being *just another yoga instructor* to being a *guiding light* in people's lives. You will learn how to orchestrate private yoga and coaching sessions and develop a business of your very own. You will also be filled with joy each time you witness the impact on your students' lives when you can help them integrate yoga into their daily mindset.

CHAPTER ONE  
WHO AM I  
TO HELP YOU?

BHAGAVAD GITA 18.47

*It is better to perform one's own dharma (duties) imperfectly  
than to perform another's well.*



**U**NLIKE MOST AMERICAN yoga practitioners today, I first did yoga as a child in the 1970s. My Jewish grandmother in New Jersey was a total naturalist. She wouldn't drive a car, hated getting on an airplane, and didn't even like to talk on the telephone. She grew a lot of her own food and lived a simple life close to the earth. She also did yoga every day. I can remember being five years old, doing what I would call *Sivananda style* sun salutations with her at 5 AM. I can still picture her impressive shoulderstand and plough poses. She was big on the health benefits of inversions.

Though yoga had been introduced to me at a young age, it wasn't until after a series of childhood and adolescent traumas that



I actually sought to study it as a discipline. I suffered religious persecution as the only Jewish child in my rural Michigan elementary school. I also suffered complex abuse from my father and separation from my younger brother in the wake of my parents' divorce. In my early adolescent years, I endured a second painful divorce aside my precious mother, a couple of cross-country relocations, endometriosis, chronic urinary tract infections, and a knee and tailbone injury. Physical and emotional distress led me to taking my first round of antidepressants at age fifteen.

Being religiously persecuted in elementary school forced me to strongly identify with my spirituality. It was the thing that separated me from other children. Being taunted about my beliefs made me curious about religion, and so an aspect of my personality was activated at an early age. I call this part of my identity the *Spiritual Seeker*. (It is one of many parts of my identity that I will introduce you to this chapter.) From 1985-1989, I spent a lot of time in an *Assembly of God Church* with a daycare provider. In the summer of 1989, my mother's second marriage moved us to Idaho Falls, Idaho, where I found myself among Mormons and rebels. I was a clinically depressed fourteen-year-old, so I rebelled with the rebels. I felt stronger, more solidified in the *Rebel* identity.

I think these two functions of my personality, the *Spiritual Seeker* and the *Rebel* teamed up to help me think outside the box around my own suffering. In 1992, I wrote my high-school term paper on alternative medicine—what used to be called the “New Age Movement”—which included things like yoga, acupuncture, chiropractic care, and energy healing. I remember Deepak Chopra's book, *Quantum Healing*, was among my citations.

In my second year of college, I met two of my future mentors: Becky Pearce, LMT, and Tom Holmes, PhD. Becky is still, to this day, the most skillful bodyworker I have ever known. I started seeing her for my back pain when I was nineteen. She helped me manage my physical pain and also made me feel safe and cared for at a time when I deeply needed to feel those things.

Tom was the chair of the Holistic Health Department at Western Michigan University (WMU), where I did my undergraduate studies in Business. I took a few classes with him and loved the internal inquiry exercises we did. I learned that I had different *parts* of myself that play unique and important roles in my psychological system. I learned that all parts of me are good and trying to help me in some way, even if they do get stuck in old beliefs or protective behaviors. And, oh boy, did I have some painful beliefs about myself and strong, protective parts.

It took me several years to identify a part of me that I call the *Overachiever*. It formed in my personality to protect another part of me called the *Shameful Little Girl*. The *Overachiever* had to work really hard, since nothing ever seemed good enough for my father. The shameful part of me suffered its worst nightmare at nineteen years old when my father disowned me and pulled my college fund because he didn't approve of the direction my life was heading in. So, at twenty-two years old, the *Overachiever* was in hyperdrive to protect the shameful and abandoned one. The *Overachiever* wouldn't let me *just* work a full-time job and go to school full time. No, I needed to be doing *more* to prove to myself, (or maybe to God or my father), that my life had value.

While I was in my last year of my college, I started an appren-

ticeship with Becky to learn how to practice disabilities management massage therapy. I both graduated from Business School at WMU and started practicing massage in April of 1998. That same year, Becky asked me if I would like to teach a yoga class through the local Continued Adult Education school, at which she taught Tai Chi. I said, “Becky, I’m not a yoga teacher.”

Then she said, “Yeah, but you *could* be.”

That brief conversation changed the trajectory of my life. It only took a couple of semesters teaching yoga for me to learn that I needed some additional education. So, I went to a big yoga conference in New York City in early 1999 to look for a style of yoga to study. I met Rod Stryker at that conference chose to study ParaYoga® for the next ten years.

These studies taught me about Classical Yoga philosophy and psychology, the science of Tantra, and Ayurveda. I learned how to intelligently sequence asana, pranayama, shavasana, and meditation techniques to cultivate desired physiological and energetic effects. I learned the value of including meditation in every yoga class. I also learned how to customize Tantric Hatha Yoga practices for individuals.

Intensive practice over the next couple of years stirred my subconscious and increased subtle awareness. I was in Hawaii on a yoga retreat in 2001 when I had my first panic attack. The attacks continued, so I sought help. My holistic therapist said, “You know, Karina, sometimes anxiety is something that wants to be known.” This piqued my curiosity.

So, I used what I had learned about the process of meditation. I concentrated on the anxiety, listening for its source. It seemed

to home in around my left tonsil, which had been chronically inflamed on and off for a long time. It didn't hurt or bother me at all; it was just big. I went to the doctor and was sent home with antibiotics. The anxiety increased, so I went back again and was sent home with anti-inflammatory medication.

In January 2003, the anxiety and the tonsil continued to grow, so I did the meditation again. This time focusing on the tonsil, asking it what it needed. In the inquiry process, I "tried on" different options from lymphatic drain massage to acupuncture. Each time I asked the tonsil if it wanted something, I felt sick to my stomach. Then, I asked it if it wanted to come out. A wave of relaxation flooded my body. That felt like what Byron Katie would call an *Authentic Yes*. So, I went back to the doctor for a third time and literally begged for a referral to an ear, nose, and throat specialist (ENT).

The ENT took one look at my throat and rushed me into surgery two days later. The tonsil was so big that he had to cauterize my throat twice to stop the bleeding. The recovery from surgery was the most excruciating pain I had ever experienced. Swallowing my own saliva felt like razor blades dragging down my throat. The only relief I got for ten days was during one, very special meditation.

I was preparing to fly down to Miami for two weeks when I had to go back to the ENT for my first follow-up appointment. I was concerned about the pressure from the flight and things like forward-bending aggravating the wound. Not thinking that there was anything to worry about, I went to the appointment alone with my little list of questions about whether I should go on the trip or not.

When I met with the doctor, he told me that the tonsil came back from biopsy as a malignant lymphoma. An aggressive form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. *Wait, what? The twenty-seven-year-old, vegetarian, massage therapist, yoga teacher has cancer?* There was clearly a part of me that thought I was the pillar of health because my whole identity crumbled, and I felt the world begin to spin.

It would be two more weeks before I could get the CAT scan results to determine how far the cancer had progressed. So, I decided to take the trip to Miami. While waiting for the test results, I clung to the yogic teachings on the *niyama* of *tapas*, the challenges we face in life, and *tejas*, how those challenges can polish us to become more of who we are meant to be. Yoga literally saved my life that year. By meditating on the source of anxiety, I caught the cancer at its earliest possible point of detection, stage 1A.

The teachings of yoga supported me through six months of invasive chemotherapy. I used mantra meditation, breathwork, and powerful yoga nidra relaxations to move through the chemical hell I was in. Five years later, I was pronounced cured and awarded a clean bill of health. It took a while for me to be able to work with cancer patients objectively, but I eventually grew to be able to support others battling cancer with the tools that helped me.

I've lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan since 1993. There is a one invaluable reason I stay here: Kalamazoo holds its community. This is obvious for reasons like the *Kalamazoo Promise*, which funds college tuition for all our public-school graduates, but Kalamazoo has held me up personally as well. The blessed *Kalamazoo County Health Plan* paid for my chemotherapy. All of it. My oncologist, Radhakrishna Vemuri, supported my yoga practice, and the West

Michigan Cancer Center treated me with kindness, generosity, and respect. My dentist, Mara Matison, treated me pro-bono and many holistic health care providers gifted me healing sessions. My *Forever-Girls*, Ruth, Kito, Heather, Alycia, Natalie, and Tiffany were at my side. Kalamazoo held me in my greatest time of need. The Kalamazoo *sangha* (community) took care of me.

I finished chemotherapy in June 2003. I had received so much support from my local community that I wanted to give something back. In October, I opened Sangha Yoga studio with the support of Melissa Spamer, Alycia Lee and two other local teachers. Running a yoga center was a labor of love. There were several months in the first three years when I had to pay the rent out of my own pocket. Since I started the business out of gratitude for my community and the desire to share the yoga that had saved my life, I decided to stay behind my commitment to the studio. I started to do workshops and advertising for more private sessions to supplement income.

When people would come to me for private sessions, I could teach them asana, pranayama, relaxation, and meditation. I could offer them a little yoga philosophy, too, but I still felt like something was missing. I couldn't directly help them unpack their real-life questions and concerns, which was my ultimate desire.

In 2004, Tom Holmes invited me to a program he was running in town called *Healing the Healer*. He had introduced me to Internal Family Systems therapy (IFS) in college, but my yogic studies gave me a new lens on the material. I saw how IFS and yoga overlapped philosophically and complimented each other effortlessly in practice. As we discussed, Tom saw this, too, and encouraged me to go back to school to complete a master's degree.

In 2006, I retired from doing bodywork and went to India with Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, for a month. There, I decided to go back to school. Tom chaired my graduate committee, and I was honored to have Rolf Sovik, PsyD and Beloo Mehra, EdD invest in my coursework as well. In 2009, I completed a Master's in East-West Psychology. I wrote my thesis on the integration of Internal Family Systems Therapy and Classical Yoga Psychology. Then, I quickly started incorporating an IFS-inspired Parts Work into private yoga sessions.

I saw the powerful impact the two practices had when used together on my students. When I added the Parts Work component to my private yoga sessions, students started coming for privates with me more frequently. I began seeing several clients once a week, for months at a time. Many have continued to come back on-and-off for over a decade. By adding the coaching component to my private yoga sessions, I was retaining more clients, teaching fewer group classes and making more money.

Over the years, I've been blessed to have my work recognized in the yoga industry at large. Thanks to my teachers and the institutions I present in, I've had the opportunity to be featured in numerous publications. Among some high honors are *Yoga Journal's* 2008: 21 Famous Top Yoga Teachers in America, the December 2012 cover of *Yoga International*, and an interview about yoga and disabilities in the *Huffington Post*. In addition to running Sangha Yoga and seeing clients, my visibility in the yoga world got me invited to guest teach in YTT programs in yoga studios in the USA and abroad. I served as off-site faculty teacher at the Himalayan Institute in Pennsylvania for six years and continue as an adjunct pro-

fessor of yogic studies at Antioch University Midwest. I am also an annual speaker in WMU's Holistic Health Department, where I lecture on the Yoga Mindset.

After twelve years of trying to do it all, the *Overachiever* part of my identity threw in the towel. I recognized that I didn't want to continue spending time on the things involved in running a yoga studio: managing software, employee turnover, teacher's schedules, constant promotions, the monthly expenses, and increasing business competition. Something had to give, so in December 2014, I closed Sangha Yoga's physical location and rebranded it as *Sangha Yoga Institute, School of Higher Learning*.

Since closing the studio, I have focused solely on training teachers and coaching, both locally and abroad; so many of my clients are yoga teachers. It's an honor to serve them with my unique background in Business, Yoga, and East-West Psychology. I wholeheartedly believe that yoga teachers deserve to make a better living for the valuable service they provide. I also know that they can have a better quality of life and help people more when they are given a few more tools than what they learned in a YTT program alone. I developed Yoga Mindset Coaching for this purpose.

Yoga Mindset Coaching is a process of blending IFS-inspired coaching with specific yogic interventions in a one-on-one private session. As you read this book, you'll learn how rapidly and effectively these principles transform lives when coupled together. After you begin implementing the tools and resources in this book, you'll see how quickly it can transform your life too.



CHAPTER TWO  
THE SECRET TO  
TRANSFORMING LIVES

BHAGAVAD GITA 13.1

*The wise sages call the body-mind the field of activity, or kshetra.  
The knower of this field is called kshetra-jña.*



**F**OR THE LAST ten years, I have been integrating Parts Work into my private yoga teaching business and have radically transformed my life and career. It's also proven to be an extraordinarily effective way to help other people. It taught me that I could be of higher service as a yoga teacher, and in doing so, I could make a higher hourly wage.

The Tantric approach to making money as a yoga teacher is to work from a place of love and devotion. Essentially, yoga asks us to humbly embody Love. Training yoga teachers has been my heartfelt service for nearly two decades. My goal is to uplift and empower the lives I am fortunate enough to touch, knowing that, in turn, it will help them to do the same. This is also why I devel-

oped Yoga Mindset Coaching. My course of study in Business, Yoga, East-West Psychology, and Internal Systems therapy gave me a unique perspective. I saw an integrated way to help people which both honors tradition and embraces the language of modern life. I also discovered how to embody a healing presence which allows others to access healing in themselves.

## INTRO TO YOGA MINDSET COACHING

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I HAVE A very diverse group of clients: yoga teachers, CEOs, cancer patients, people of color, gay and trans folks, people with physical disabilities, devoted Jews, Christians and Muslims, straight cis white men, couples, and non-monogamous folks. All these diverse communities of people have one thing in common: they all experience suffering and want to suffer less.

Everyone wants to be happy in their relationships and more successful at something in their lives. And everyone, regardless of their social or economic status, deserves to be happy and successful while pursuing the purpose of their birth.

Yoga Mindset Coaching is a Western psychotherapeutic approach to embodying an Eastern spiritual philosophy. It is an integration of ancient and contemporary wisdom. We utilize both science and philosophy for the purpose of alchemic transformation of the human experience. This is Tantric practice. The contents of this book aim to help both you and your clients thrive in the secular world and advance spiritually.

In this book, you will learn about the Yoga Mindset, as well as some of the ancient wisdom it is sourced from. You'll also identify

the obstacles to sustaining it. We'll discuss the yogic framework of the mind and explore its relationship to neuroscience. You'll be introduced to the Internal Family Systems model of consciousness and Parts Work. Once you understand how these models fit together and have a working knowledge of the language system we'll be using, you'll then be given practical tools to start transforming lives—both on and off the mat.

You'll learn what the role of a coach is and how this might differ slightly from being a teacher. You'll be able to ask powerful questions that lead to self-discovery and empower your clients with choices they didn't realize they had. You'll understand the coaching skills and core-competencies of a Yoga Mindset Coach, as well as be informed of potential coaching traps. You'll also learn how to couple an effective yoga practice with a wide variety of Parts Work coaching themes. Whatever is going on in a client's body, mind, or life that day, you'll be able to address it holistically through the kind of conversation you have and kind of yoga practice you instruct. Clients will keep coming back because this practice works. Regular, private clients allow yoga teachers to support themselves financially while doing what they love—helping people.

In addition to receiving the framework and tools of a Yoga Mindset Coach, you'll also be given a crash-course in Business. You'll gain practical tips and tools to build a successful private yoga-coaching practice. We'll discuss everything from getting clients, to finding a location for your private sessions, to determining how much to charge. We'll talk about our ethical responsibil-

ities and the obstacles you might face. My goal is to give you as much as I can in this book to help you succeed.

This book is also the foundation of the Yoga Mindset Coaching certification program. So, you may discover that what you learn here is valuable enough to want to become a certified Yoga Mindset Coach™. This book will teach you how to develop your own Private Yoga and Coaching Business. The programs teach you how to do it faster, easier and with a greater likelihood of success. They also connect you with an amazing like-minded community of support, allow you to use the letters YMC after your name and get listed in our international directory. Visit my website [yogamindsetcoaching.com](http://yogamindsetcoaching.com) for details

CHAPTER THREE  
THE YOGA MINDSET

BHAGAVAD GITA 13.27

*A seer of Truth sees all beings as a combination of the field of activities and the knower of the field.*

YOGA SUTRA 1.2-1.3

*Yoga is the cessation of identifying with the thought patterns of the mind.*

*In the state of Yoga, the Seer abides in its truest Self.*



THE GOAL OF CLASSICAL YOGA

---

TWO TEXTS, THE Bhagavad Gita and Yoga Sutra, comprise a philosophical system called Raja Yoga, also known as Classical Yoga. The Yoga Sutra has its roots in the dualistic Indian philosophy of *Samkhya*. The Bhagavad Gita is sourced from the Epic Hindu Poem, the *Mahabharata*. The goal of Classical Yoga is Self-Realiza-

tion, which means to shift one's identity from the *seen* (or the *field of experience*) to the *Seer* (or the *Knower of the Field*).

The *field* refers to the constantly changing human body, thoughts, feelings, desires, sensations, emotions, etc. Samkhya termed this *prakriti* or matter. The *Knower of the Field* rests at the calm, clear, center of consciousness, beyond the impact of any experience. It is pure awareness, at peace with *Reality*, connected to all that ever was or will be. Samkhya calls this *purusha*, that which rests in the city of the body. The goal of Classical Yoga is to identify more with the calm, steady, *Knower of the Field* and less with the constantly changing *field* of body, thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

## IN PURSUING THIS GOAL

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TWO THINGS HAPPEN in the course of pursuing the goal of Classical Yoga. The first is that we suffer less in daily life. Painful things will be experienced by all beings. Suffering, however, is the human mind's relationship to pain. Suffering is largely what we believe painful things mean.

For example, if my lover takes a job out of state and leaves me, it might cause me to feel the pain of loss. Healthy sadness becomes *suffering* if I think something like, *I must have done something to cause him to leave; or, I am not loveable enough for him to stay; or, he is a jerk and never cared about me.* Any one of these disempowering thoughts would hook me into suffering; unnecessary suffering at that, because the likelihood that any of those ideas are the reason he took the job are slim to none.

When I was diagnosed with cancer, I could have suffered a great deal by entertaining ideas like, *I must have done something to deserve this*. If that *vritti*, or thought wave, arose and I let it carry my mind into all the things I have ever felt guilty for or ashamed of, I surely would have suffered. Maybe these kinds of thoughts sound silly when we say them out loud, but our minds default to things like blame and shame all the time. One of the oldest survival mechanisms of the brain is to direct one's attention to the negative or potentially threatening. Unfortunately, when the mind operates on autopilot, it will default to the negative, whether it's rational or not; truly threatening or not. Yoga gives us the tools to get off the ride of a disempowering thought wave fast or see how to avoid getting on it at all.

When we are solely identified with a single aspect of the field, we have a very limited view of the whole landscape. As we disentangle ourselves from the experience of the field to become the *witness* of it, we gain powers of curiosity and *viveka*, discrimination. We learn to observe our thoughts, beliefs, and reactions *and* to challenge the validity of them. So, in moments of being triggered, we can ask, *what am I believing as true? Does any other possibility exist?*

The more aware we become of our own stories, beliefs, and behaviors, the fewer assumptions we make about what's happening inside others. We start to make space for possibilities and see more of the big picture of what's going on inside and around us. As we step outside of the field to view ourselves and the world more clearly, we are empowered with awareness and choice. The choice to suffer or not to.

The second thing that happens through the practice of Classical

Yoga is the transcendent experience of higher states of consciousness. These states include: deep stillness, light, broad awareness, realization, epiphany, regeneration, healing, expansiveness, bliss, soundless sound, and even direct encounters with the Divine, the Universal Consciousness, the Soul, or whatever you want to call it. The process of meditation directly leads us there, but understanding the nature of the field and the Knower of the Field prepares us for it. This knowledge also reminds us of the value of staying actively engaged in the practice.

## THE YOGA MINDSET

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THE WORD *YOGA* comes from the Sanskrit root word, “*yuj*,” which means *to join*. Yoga has often been defined as *union*...but union with what? The answer according to the scriptures of Classical Yoga is union of *Seer* and *seen*, the *field* with the *Knower of the Field*. The *seen* is the field of the body, mind and energy. The *Seer's* awareness is beyond this field. Therefore, Tantra teaches that a human life should be in the pursuit of two things: *bhoga* (enjoyment of the senses), and *moksha* (liberation).

## BHOGA & THE FIELD

*Bhoga* is based on the premise that it is an honor for a soul to take a human birth. *Bhoga* is the recognition that beauty and pleasure can only be experienced in a living body. *Bhoga* says that the bliss, which can be experienced through human sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound, is to be celebrated and positively contributed to



the collective consciousness. Mindfulness teaches us how to live with bhoga, fully aware of each precious moment of living.

Tantra teaches that the Divine is experiencing the world through its manifestations. Therefore, in service to the Divine and its manifestations, we are to live from an elevated place of peace, abundance, and joy. Nicola Tesla said, “If you want to understand the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.” The senses are part of the field of the body. So, bhoga teaches us how to tend to the senses with humility, delight, and devotion. Bhoga asks us to cultivate a high vibrational field and to keep *leveling up* our peace, happiness, success, and service to others. Bhoga asks us to live in alignment with our gifts, talents and passions. In pursuing it, we discover our dharma; the purpose of our birth.

Those who live without bhoga are troubled people who don't know who they are or what they want to do. They often feel disconnected from nature, beauty or the gift of life itself. They might not see the body or the earth as a sacred place to dwell so they neglect to care for themselves or our Mother Earth. They might miss opportunities to make life-affirming changes or enjoy the life they have. Those without bhoga lack contentment. They're just going through the motions, caught in the rat-race; rarely stopping to smell the roses, savor a piece of chocolate or engage in meaningful self-care.

## MOKSHA & THE KNOWER OF THE FIELD

Now, we'll discuss the Seer. The other pursuit described in the Tantras is *moksha*. Moksha means liberation; specifically, liberation

from identification with the field. It calls for us to establish identity fully in the pure awareness at the center of consciousness, one with its eternal source, *purusha*, or that which rests in the city of the body. The Bhagavad Gita calls it *atman*, or soul. Moksha is the full realization of oneself as the *Self within the self*, which is beyond birth and death.

Tantra says that the goal of a human birth is both to elevate the vibration of the field and to know oneself as *Om Tat Sat*, the ultimate Truth, beyond the temporary field of activity. It is to know ourselves as both experience and experiencer, as both scientist and science experiment. The aim is to see the field clearly in order to have the power to be a wise farmer who can cultivate a healthy, fulfilling, and meaningful existence here on the earth's surface. Tantra is non-dual; it aims to dissolve the illusion between the spiritual and the mundane, the secular and sacred. It asks us to both thrive fully in the world and be humbled to the knowledge of the *Ultimate Reality* simultaneously.

Those who are not in pursuit of moksha suffer with *avidya*. They think that they are their bodies, thoughts and experiences. They lack self-awareness and personal responsibility, often believing that they are victims to circumstance. They believe that happiness can be found in external objects, relationships or achievements. They see no value in spiritual practice and have no inclination to know themselves as the eternal center of consciousness, or see others that way. They don't see the interconnectedness of all things, nor understand the impact their thoughts, words and actions have on the collective. They are caught in what the Buddhists call *maya*, the world of illusion or deceit.

## MODEL OF THE MIND

The Yoga Mindset is aimed at allowing you to be self-aware and committed to elevating the vibration of our individual field in service to the collective. It is a state of consciousness empowered with knowledge of the inner landscape and wisdom to tend to it skillfully.

In the Vedic model, the *buddhi* is one of the four aspects of the mind. It is the aspect which discerns and decides. *Right* decision-making comes from what the scriptures call the *awakened buddhi*. An awakened *buddhi* makes decisions from a vast and detached view of the field. It has access to the perspective of the Seer. It has the power of *viveka*, discrimination. A *sleeping buddhi* will make decisions driven by the entanglements within the field itself.

In addition to the *buddhi*, there are three other aspects within the field of the mind: the *manas*, the *chitta*, and *ahumkara*. The *manas* perceives things through the five senses. The *chitta* records everything the *manas* perceives (consciously and unconsciously). The *chitta* is the storehouse for all latent impressions, what psychologists call the subconscious. The impressions stored in the *chitta* are called *samskaras*, a word Vedic Teacher Jeffery Armstrong once said that he liked because it looks like “some scars.” The aspect of mind called *ahumkara* identifies with the field. The *manas* perceives something, then the *ahumkara* says, *this is my experience and how do I feel about this?* It looks down into the *chitta*, then identifies with its old beliefs, aversions or preferences based on past *samskaras*. A sleeping *buddhi* will allow old patterning to make decisions for it.

A mind running on unconscious autopilot can be dangerous.

An example is when a child of an abusive alcoholic grows up to either also become an alcoholic or marry one. If the buddhi is asleep, old samskaras can cause us to repeat patterns of suffering over and over again. For example, do you know anyone who keeps dating the “same” person, just with a different name? We might chuckle at that, but the reality is that, until you can see yourself objectively and choose differently, you will be victim to repetition. Psychomotor therapist Eric Franklin once said, “Practice doesn’t make perfect. Practice makes permanent.” Unless the buddhi is awake enough to actively choose something else, we’ll continue to do what we’ve already done.

## MAKING DECISIONS FROM SELF

So, you want to make decisions from an awakened buddhi. You’ll know when you are identified with it when you are aware of what’s in the field. You’ll also embody certain psycho-emotional qualities—the qualities of what I will now call, the *Self*. Richard Schwartz, developer of Internal Family Systems Therapy, coins eight “C’s” as the qualities of the Self. He said that we will know we are in Self when we feel *calm, clear, centered, compassionate, curious, creative, confident, and courageous*. Being anchored in a state of Self is the Yoga Mindset.

## IN PURSUING THE YOGA MINDSET

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LIFE GETS EASIER when you practice cultivating the Yoga Mindset. You become less reactionary, less triggered. You tend to make better choices and set healthier boundaries. You feel less anxious

or depressed. You find yourself less overwhelmed and less over-committed. You are more able to stay calm and centered and just go with the flow. You start to actually like yourself and might even realize what it feels like to *love* yourself. In my years as a yoga teacher and life and relationship coach, I've seen countless people learn what it means to love themselves. I can see it in their fields when they change their lives for the better. Sometimes I witness a subtle change, but often I'm in awe of a radical life transformation.

Changing one's mindset takes two things. The first relates to what the Yoga Sutra calls *abhyasa*, to stay in the endeavor. *Abhyasa* is your heartfelt devotion to living the Yoga Mindset in every moment of every day. It's your commitment to thinking and acting in the highest way possible, no matter how challenging or unfamiliar it is to do so. The second is to forgive yourself when you fail. This relates to the concept of *vairagya*, or dispassion. *Vairagya* teaches us to not become identified with the wins and losses on the field, for neither are who we are. The path to creating your most fulfilling and meaningful life is not a paved road. It'll take constant disidentification with the old pathways of thought to construct new ones.

The teachings of Classical Yoga and Tantra work as well today in our modern Western society as they have for thousands of years for those in the East. However, knowledge is not enough. Just reading this book is not enough. Wisdom can only be attained through direct experience, therefore, one must practice. Dedicated practice without attachment to the outcomes is required, because there are obstacles.

## OBSTACLES TO THE YOGA MINDSET

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OUR BRAINS DEVELOP in a certain way based on genetics and experiences during our developmental years. Early childhood experiences have been proven to significantly impact the way a brain physically develops, and research shows that the prefrontal cortex of the brain is not fully formed until age twenty-five. Much of how we see the world and ourselves is dictated by the experiences we had before the brain development completed. Since thoughts are electromagnetic impulses traveling down established pathways, the phrase, *I'm hardwired this way*, could be a scientifically factual statement. We are truly creatures of habit. We think and behave in the ways our brain developed to. And, we don't think or behave in ways that our brain has no established pathway for.

Our experiences, or *samskaras*, shape the field of the mind by establishing our neuropathways. These pathways lay the tracks for our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors. According to yoga philosophy, we all share one big *samskara*, birth. We've all experienced being separated from unification with our mother. It's thought that at the moment of birth, the roots of suffering take seat in the storehouse of the *chitta*. These roots of suffering are called *kleshas*. There are five *kleshas*, but they all source from this one *samskara*, the very real experience of *separateness*. The *kleshas* are the obstacles to the Yoga Mindset. Our work is to stay alert to any parts of us that might be influenced by one of these five hooks into suffering.

## THE FIVE KLESHAS

### KLESHA NUMBER ONE, AVIDYA:

Ignorance; misapprehension; wrong understanding. - Any misunderstanding can cause suffering, but none more than the misunderstanding that you are ever separate from the true Source of love. As soon as we are born, we feel separate. We are now identified with a body, which will also die, separating us further from love. With this klesha often comes a belief that you are existentially alone in the universe, suffering your most painful moments all by yourself. It comes with a fear of being un-held, unworthy of full acceptance and connection. Avidya is the misunderstanding about who we really are. When we are triggered in feelings of guilt, shame, anger, fear, rejection, or being misunderstood or mistreated, we forget the existence of the calm, steady Seer. Our consciousness collapses onto the field. Just like that, we get hooked into suffering.

### KLESHA NUMBER TWO, ASMITA:

Misidentification with the field. - If we have forgotten who we are as the *Knower* of the field, then we identify with the field itself. We identify with our bodies, roles, responsibilities, cultures, and experiences. We say things like, *I'm a woman, I'm a yoga teacher, I'm a cancer survivor, I'm a brunette, I'm Jewish, I'm a writer, I'm a social justice activist...* the modifications of identity can go on and on. In neuroscience, the asmita is the neuropathways. The IFS term for the asmita is *parts*. The asmita is the temporary identities formed by a collection of samskaras. In other words, prior experiences dictate the thoughts, beliefs,

and behaviors of different “parts” of you. We’ll discuss parts extensively in the next chapter.

**KLESHA NUMBER THREE, RAGA:**

Clinging to life. - Avidya causes us to fear the separation of death, so we cling to life. We cling to what’s familiar or comfortable. We get attached to the way things are or the way we want them to be. We sometimes even fixate on something; the Buddhists call this *grasping desire*. The further our reality is from the way we want it to be, the more we suffer. So, we cling to our preferences and comforts. We cling to the people, places, objects and ideas that we identify with. We cling to the life we know. This is *raga*, the suffering born of attachment.

**KLESHA NUMBER FOUR, DVESHA:**

Aversion to pain. - When we are identified with the field (or a part), pain often leads to great suffering, so we avoid the things that make us uncomfortable. Behaviors like ghosting, denial, passivity, avoidance, dismissal, judgement, criticism, and abandonment all stem from parts of us that have dvesha. We can’t tolerate being uncomfortable, perhaps because it reminds us of our most existential discomfort: the belief that we are of separate from the *Universe, the Divine, from Love*. Parts of us desperately try to avoid the painful belief that we are unworthy of unification with that source. So, dvesha is the suffering born of both conscious and unconscious avoidance of discomfort.

**KLESHA NUMBER FIVE, ABHINIVESHA:**

Fear of death. - If we are identified with the field of experience,



or the body, then we believe that we will die. What greater fear could there be to the part of you that believes you are your body? The loss of the senses and the faculties of mind that validated our existence. The separation from the human connection to those we love. Abhinivesha is the fear of disappearing into infinite disconnection. It's the fear of suffering for eternity without love. It's basically the fear of hell.

## YOGA MINDSET SUMMARY

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BECAUSE WE HAVE the samskara of birth, we have the roots of suffering. Sri Desikachar described avidya as the trunk of a tree and the other four kleshas as branches stemming from it. It all boils down to one thing: to stop believing the lie of separateness. If we correct the misunderstanding of avidya, all the other kleshas cease to exist.

The way to uproot the kleshas is to practice yoga. To unite Seer with seen. To train the field to trust the *Knower of it* and seek its perspective, guidance, and peace. The way out of suffering is to be mindful of the parts that carry the beliefs born of klesha. Because the one who can observe the pain story is Self, the desired leader of the system. Self sees clearly and therefore knows how best to tend the field.

In essence, you are in the Yoga Mindset when you are operating from Self. Your discriminating buddhi has a broad perspective and you feel calm, clear, curious, centered, compassionate, confident, creative, and courageous. Choosing our thoughts, actions and words from Self is to be living in the Yoga Mindset.

CHAPTER FOUR  
INTERNAL FAMILY  
SYSTEMS

YOGA SUTRA 1.4

*When not in the state of Self, the Seer takes on the identity of the  
thought patterns in the field.*



**I**N THE PREVIOUS chapter, we discussed the Yogic model of the mind and how we come to identify with the field of experience. We discussed the nature of suffering and how unconscious thought waves can direct our decision-making when the *buddhi* is asleep. We reviewed the nature of an awakened buddhi and its relationship to the *Knower of the Field*. You were also briefly introduced to *Self* in the context of IFS. Now we'll explore Internal Family Systems theory in more detail. You'll learn how IFS relates back to Classical Yoga philosophy and discover the role IFS theory plays in establishing the Yoga Mindset.

In the early 1980s, psychologist, Richard C. Schwartz developed Internal Family Systems therapy, a systemic model for work-

ing with the multiplicities of the human psyche. The premise of the IFS model is that the human mind is comprised of a system of sub-personalities, which function similarly to that of societies, organizations, and family units. Schwartz heard his clients say things like, *there is a part of me that knows I should do this, but another part of me that really wants to do that. Or, I can't stop doing this, but another part of me feels guilty for doing it.*

He also observed that these parts of people had archetypal roles and performed specific functions in the person's inner and outer life. Some parts carry the stories of victimhood, while others play the role of a protector or rescuer. Some parts analyze, organize, and manage things. Some parts are caring and helpful toward others. And some parts engage in behaviors to distract a person from feeling the emotions of the parts who have the *hard job* of remembering painful things.

Schwartz discovered that he could distinguish and work directly with these unique ego-states. He also observed remarkable things could happen when his clients demonstrated identification with Self. He saw that clients could shift out of being *blended with* or identified with parts of themselves and that the identification with Self could help the parts relax, gain perspective, heal, and transform.

When clients were *in Self*, they exhibited being calm, clear, centered, curious, compassionate, confident, creative, and courageous. When in Self, clients could see their own parts through objective and empathetic eyes; they could listen to, understand, and care for their parts. In the presence of the clients' Self, their parts could share their stories and burdens of belief that formed

out of their experiences. Self could also lovingly question, negotiate with, and comfort the parts, as well as gently guide them to new ways of believing and behaving.

In neuroscience, parts are the neuropathways that get activated in relationship to the internal and external environments. Yoga calls the thoughts that travel through these pathways *vasanas*. Vasanas are our impulses to think, feel, and act in specific ways in certain circumstances based on our past experiences and our identities in the world. For example, if someone pulls out in front of you while you have your children in the car, your *Protective Mom* part might react by feeling angry at the other driver and cause you to curse at him in front of your kids. But, if you were the one who was careless and almost got into an accident, this event might trigger feelings of guilt or shame for this part.

In yogic philosophy, when a vasana, or *thought wave*, gets activated, ahumkara identifies with it and says, *this is my thought*. If a vasana arises and the buddhi is asleep, the ahumkara will identify with the established thought wave. Without the broader perspective of Self, the unconscious mind will run a default program of reaction, belief, or behavior. In IFS, these default programs are called the beliefs or burdens of the parts. So, to reframe Yoga Sutra 1.4 in IFS terminology, when we are not operating from Self, we are operating from parts.

A goal of IFS therapy is to help clients to differentiate the parts and allow the Self to be the leader of the system. An important assumption of the IFS model is that we need our parts to do their jobs, just like we need our brains and bodies to function properly. We just want Self as the decision maker as much as possible if we

don't want to suffer. If Self were in the *driver seat* when a person pulled out in front of you, your *Protective Mom* could respond by avoiding the accident, staying calm, and not upsetting the kids by yelling, even though your heart is racing.

## EVERY PART IS GOOD

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ONE OF THE most important assumption of the IFS model is that every part of us is fundamentally good and trying to help us in some way. Some parts have tough jobs to do, like carry painful or traumatic memories, or manage big circumstances like illness, financial crisis, or the dying of a loved one. These parts often have strong feelings that other parts have to manage to keep from flooding us with pain at inappropriate times.

Some parts are disliked by other parts for being angry or critical. But angry or critical parts are usually just trying to protect us from something or set a boundary of some kind. Parts that desire material things or seek adult pleasures are sometimes judged by spiritual or moralistic parts, who think we should be *egoless*. However, these *Pleasure Seekers* are just doing their job of trying to help us enjoy life, bhoga.

Therefore, even when there is internal conflict, all parts are trying to help us according to their specific function. Some parts might even engage in self-defeating behaviors like addictions or *bad habits*, which trigger other parts carrying guilt or shame. However, even when parts cause suffering, they are actually trying to help us cope in the only way they know how. After all, they *are* the neuropathways in your brain, so it's not their (or your) fault that

they formed the way they did. Parts develop to help us cope with situations, and they can only use the resources we have available at the time they formed. This is why some parts *feel* like children and others like teenagers or young adults. Those pathways, and therefore those parts, formed at those respective ages.

In Yoga Mindset Coaching, we adopt the assumption that all parts are inherently good, even when they are overactivated, in conflict with other parts, or causing harm. They are just doing what they have been conditioned to do. Our brains developed the way they did based on both genetic and environmental factors.

## TYPES OF PARTS

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SINCE THE FIRST chapter of this book, I've been using *parts language*. In IFS, there are three primary categories of parts: *Exiles*, *Managers*, and *Firefighters*. The bullet points below have been copied directly from the Internal Family Systems Model Outline on the Center for Self Leadership website.

### EXILES:

- ◆ Young parts that have experienced trauma and often become isolated from the rest of the system in an effort to protect the individual from feeling the pain, terror, fear, and so on
- ◆ If exiled, [a part] can become increasingly extreme and desperate in an effort to be cared for and tell [its] story
- ◆ Can leave the individual feeling fragile and vulnerable

## MANAGERS:

- ◆ Parts that run the day-to-day life of the individual
- ◆ Attempt to keep the individual in control of every situation and relationship in an effort to protect [other] parts from feeling [things like] hurt or rejection
- ◆ Can [manage] in any number of ways or through a combination of parts – striving, controlling, evaluating, caretaking, terrorizing, and so on

## FIREFIGHTERS:

- ◆ Group of parts that react when exiles are activated in an effort to control and extinguish their feelings.
- ◆ Can do this in any number of ways, including drug or alcohol use, [self-harming], binge-eating, [TV or porn] sex binges.
- ◆ Have the same goals as managers (to keep exiles away) but different strategies.

Tom Holmes taught me to name parts by their specific duties, which are essentially subcategories of the three main categories in IFS. I find this useful because some parts might assume the functions of more than one category. For example, a *Rebel* might act as a Manager if it sees a need for change, but if an exile gets triggered, the Rebel might engage in *Firefighter* type behaviors.

Here is a list of some common parts and some jobs they might do. Note the ones that you resonate the most with right now. Who is most active in your awareness lately?

## COMMON PARTS

### ANALYZER

has to figure things out

### TASK MANAGER

has to get things done

### EMOTION MANAGER

monitors, controls, and regulates feelings

### HELPER

a manager; takes care of others

### TEACHER

a type of Helper; conveys knowledge, gives guidance

### SKEPTIC

questions validity/usefulness of things, to protect

### CONTROLLER

takes charge of a situation, directs/dictates what to do

### PROTECTOR

protects from harm or perceived potential harm

### ANGRY PART

perceives injustice; seeks to enforce a boundary

### WARRIOR

fights for what it believes is right, willing to go to battle



**PERFECTIONIST**

wants to make sure the best is done, to protect

**CRITIC**

criticizes to motivate or protect

**JUDGE**

holds to high standards, morals, or values

**COMPETITOR**

wants to succeed, win, or prove value or worth

**GOOD PARENT**

has to do the right thing for the kids

**GOOD PARTNER**

has to do the right thing for their significant other(s)

**GOOD BOSS OR EMPLOYEE**

has to do a good job at work

**GOOD FRIEND/FAMILY/STUDENT**

wants to do right by friend, family or teacher

**ARTIST**

needs to express creativity or bring something new into the world

**COMEDIAN**

uses humor to break tension or speak truth

PLAYFUL CHILD

brings carefree joy and playfulness into life

WOUNDED CHILD

carries memories, fears and beliefs from childhood pain

SHAMEFUL PART

carries feelings of guilt, shame, remorse, and a lack of self-worth

VICTIM

carries beliefs of powerlessness; possibly sensory memories of trauma

REBEL

pushes back against normative standards, rules,

HERO

an extreme helper, feels worth when rescuing those who are in trouble

RISK TAKER

takes chances to facilitate change or bring excitement

ADULT PLEASURE SEEKER

seeks entertainment, pleasure, comfort, or relief

OVER INDULGER

distracts from feeling of exiles by “getting more”

OVERACHIEVER

distracts from feeling of exiles by “doing more”

### SPIRITUAL SEEKER

seeks understanding, truth, peace, love, guidance, wisdom, connection, etc.

### RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

intolerant of ignorance or injustice; needs to feel superior to protect

Parts comprise the totality of the *asmita*, or ego-self. Parts are our identifications with our roles, responsibilities, duties, and privileges. When Self is leading the system, parts can do their jobs appropriately. Self helps parts make healthy choices, respond skillfully to conflicts, and maintain equanimity and balance in life. However, if the *buddhi* is asleep and parts run on autopilot without the perspective Self, we might fall victim to suffering.

### WHY PARTS SUFFER

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PARTS FORM OUT of *samskaras*, the past impressions stored in the subconscious mind. So, they develop to help us survive, function, and find our place in society. However, because the *asmita* (our parts) also carry the potential for suffering, they are intrinsically linked to the *kleshas*, which came with the *samskara* of birth. All parts have *avidya*, the misunderstanding about who you are, because parts think they are *you*. Your *ahumkara* identifies with your body, mind, and experiences. Therefore, parts identify with things like gender, race, career, education, physical or mental health, sexuality, religion, activities, food choices, politics, etc. We hear these identifications in people's language all the time when

they say things like, *I'm a doctor, I'm a cancer survivor, I'm a vegetarian, I'm a lesbian, I'm a Tico, etc.* Very few people introduce themselves as *Pure Awareness*, because we are identified with the field of body, mind, and experience.

Some parts may carry the klesha of *raga*, or attachment. These parts like things to go their way. They want what they want when they want it, because they are attached to you feeling comfortable all the time. Parts with *raga* might be resistant to change or trying something new. Or, they might be fixed in their preferences and identities. For example, if a part of me is strongly identified with being a vegan and I go to a dinner party, I might suffer with nothing to eat. Or, if I'm attached to going on a date and the person cancels, a part of me might react with intense disappointment or frustration, or even self-doubt.

Some parts might have tendencies toward *dvesha*, the klesha of aversion. A part with *dvesha* might avoid social situations or activities that remind it of a person or unpleasant experience. Others might avoid acknowledging the truth or addressing an important issue. A part with *dvesha* might also avoid doing the things you know would help you, such as meditation because it's afraid you might have to feel an exile's feelings. An unfortunate example of a part with *dvesha* is someone in a monogamous relationship who cheats on their partner and blames it on getting too drunk. This part is either in denial about how much alcohol this person can consume and still make good decisions, or it is avoiding facing the truth that the person doesn't want to be in a committed relationship. Parts that avoid, deny, or have aversions to the truth have *dvesha*.

Since parts are our identities in this life, they can also have *abinivesha*, fear. The premise of this klesha is that all fear is a fear of death. Parts not only have anxieties about life, death, and separation, some also have fears about us wanting to get rid of them, exiling them, or essentially *killing them off*. Parts need to be needed. They each need to be an accepted part of you because they *are* a part of you. Some will behave in extreme ways to get your attention or struggle to shift out of awareness because they think you might misunderstand them or want them gone forever. This is why it's important to remember that all parts are good and trying to help in some way.

## WHEN PARTS SUFFER

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PARTS SUFFER WHEN the the kleshas get triggered. There are three primary reasons why the kleshas may become triggered. The first is trauma. Some part of us has to experience that trauma, remember it, feel the effects of it, and try to make meaning out of it. This activity is like a tornado—overpowering and disrupting every aspect of the field. In order to reclaim any resemblance of peace, the traumatized part and its overwhelming feelings get forced into exile, or into a *locked basement* of awareness.

When parts are exiled by other parts, it creates disconnection in the field. Isolating a suffering part triggers avidya. We cannot feel like an integrated, whole, and connected person when we are not able to access all of who we are. Yoga is a state free of suffering and it is, by definition, unification. When a part is forced into exile, this separation causes suffering. In extreme cases of trauma,

it can even cause a human psyche to *split*. Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder, occurs when the parts of a person develop a coping strategy to survive repeated trauma. In these fairly rare cases, a complete dissociation with the traumatized part is the only way the person can survive in the circumstances. Luckily, most of us just develop functional polarizations between the *Exiles* and *Managing Protectors*. This leads us to the other two reasons parts suffer.

Parts can suffer when a *Manager* or *Firefighter* is over-burdened with responsibility, or when something happens which activates the painful core beliefs and feelings of an exiled part. Often, these two things happen in relationship to one another causing a polarization between two or more parts.

We'll use my personal experience from Chapter One as an example. My *Shameful Little Girl* part has the tough job of holding the painful memories and core beliefs about my disapproving father. Some extreme beliefs and behaviors, or *vasanas*, formed out of these experiences, *samskaras*. When my dad told me that he was disowning me, pulled my college fund, and walked out of my life when I was 19 years old, the *Overachiever* was born to distract and protect me from feeling the *Shameful Girl's* pain. In getting to know these parts in IFS therapy, I came to understand the polarized dynamic between the *Shameful Little Girl* and the *Overachiever*. When I could access Self during therapy, I could hear the shameful one say things like:

*Nothing I ever do is good enough. I'm not enough. I'm not worth sticking around for. I'm too much to deal with. It's easy to leave me.*

I learned that one of “her” core beliefs is that I have to work harder than anyone else to deserve to be here. Hence, the *Overachiever* developed in order to prove that I am a good person. The worse I felt about myself, the harder I worked to prove my life had value.

The *Shameful Girl* was burdened with feelings of worthlessness and the *Overachiever* was burdened with the responsibility of proving my worth. The polarization between these two parts caused me to burnout more than once. I wrestled with anxiety, depression, and exhaustion. I suffered each time something happened that triggered one of the *Shameful Girl's* beliefs about me. For example, I would suffer if a longtime, dedicated yoga student stopped showing up for class. Or, if I heard that a friend had talked about me behind my back. I also suffered when the *Overachiever* would overcommit me or team up with a *Perfectionist* and work my body and mind way too hard on each and every task. I recall a time when Tom Holmes asked my *Overachiever* the powerful question, *Do you realize that your 80% effort is most people's 150%? Can 80% of your best just be good enough right now?*

When Self is aware of and empathetic towards these parts, the polarization between them dissolves. When Self leads my system, I can reassure the *Shameful Girl* of what is true and what is not about my worth. When I am in Self, she can feel the Truth of who I really am, the presence of Love. This presence of Self allows the *Overachiever* and *Perfectionist* to step back from working so hard to prove that I am worthy of love. When I am identified with Self, I am identified with Love, so there is no need to prove that I am good enough to receive it.

Sometimes, a part that is not necessarily a traumatized one can

get forced into exile. Some parts take over as the primary identity for long periods of time and do not allow other parts of us to have any space in the system. For example, I have several cisgender female clients who are dedicated yoga practitioners. When these women become new mothers, their *Good Parent* part usually takes over. So often, their *Yoga Practice* part doesn't get enough time to do its practice. When a new baby comes, the mother's career parts, friend parts, and creative parts also often get pushed aside for long periods of time. These women usually schedule an appointment with me when they have started to suffer with this polarization. They report feeling disconnected from their practice and from Self. Sometimes, they feel lonely, sad, guilty, or overwhelmed with responsibility. Again, we suffer when the kleshas cause our parts to feel burdened or separate.

## HOW TO WORK WITH PARTS

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IN THE NEXT chapter, you will learn the role of a Yoga Mindset Coach. Then, we will explore the coaching skills and yogic interventions you'll need to work with your clients' parts and help them gain more access to Self. However, before we delve into how to work with other people's parts, it's imperative that you get some practice working with your own. The easiest way to start working with your parts is to become aware of them in daily life and to start using "parts language." Here are two simple exercises:



## EXERCISE ONE: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PARTS

Become familiar with the list of parts in this chapter. Identify three to five parts of you that regularly get activated or get triggered with strong feelings. Write down the ones you most strongly identify with. Then, try to connect with each part and answer these questions for each one. (There are no wrong answers.):

1. **NAME**—What name would you give this part? It can be one in the list or a name that fits better for you personally.
2. **SENSATION**—Where do you feel this part in your body? What does it feel like there? What sensations arise in your body when this part is active?
3. **VERBAL**—What kinds of things does this part say when it's active? What words does it use? What beliefs does it have?
4. **EMOTION**—What emotions does this part carry? What feelings arise when it is active?
5. **IMAGE**—Can you associate an image to this part? What might it look like if it had a physical form?
6. **ACTIVITY**—When does this part get active? What kinds of situations trigger it?
7. **AWARENESS**—On a scale of 1-5, how aware am I when this part is activated? Where a 1 means, until this exercise I was completely unaware of it and a 5 means, I know this part of me very well and am immediately aware of it when it is active.

After you have completed this exercise, start becoming aware of the parts in your daily life. Notice when a part takes center stage in

your field. You'll be more aware of them now that you know what thoughts, sensations, emotions arise when each part is present. If you become aware of a part sometime during your day, notice how you feel about it being there in that moment. If you feel grateful, compassionate, or friendly toward it, you are likely in Self. But if you feel bothered by what it's doing or wish it wasn't there, then you are identified with another part of you that may be polarized with it. There is no need for judgement—just take notice.

## EXERCISE TWO: SPEAKING FOR PARTS, NOT FROM THEM

Once you have some familiarity with your own active parts, you can start practicing using parts language to describe their needs and feelings. This is a practice in you speaking *for a part* instead of speaking *from the part* itself. This means that instead of saying, *I'm anxious, I need to check on my daughter*, you say, *a part of me is feeling anxious and wants me to check on my daughter*. This is a little tricky because your habit is to say "I" every time you express a need or feeling. However, just this practice alone makes you more aware of when you are identified with the field of activity. It allows the bud-dhi to start to pay attention and gives you an opportunity to access more Self space in that moment.

When I think, *I'm so angry*, then I am identified with the angry part. If I speak from anger in that moment, I might shout at the person who is making me angry and say something like, *that's it, I'm done, screw you!* However, if I notice an angry part is in my field and take a pause before I speak to connect to Self, I might say:

*Whoa, I'm having a really strong reaction to what you're saying right now. I can feel my heart beating and just got a hot flash. A part of me is getting angry, so I think it's best that I step away for a moment before this part says something I might regret.*

For the next twenty-one days, take note of which parts tend to *take over your voice* before you notice they are speaking, and which ones you are easily able to pause, listen to, then speak for from Self. You can also try journaling in the voice of an active part, then journaling what Self might say for it instead.

For example, let's say that I get a text message at 1:30 AM from a someone I just met. It wakes me up and I feel anxious that there might be an emergency. I check my phone and see it's James, this new person I met. The text says, "Hey, what are you doing?" The part of me that reacts immediately thinks, "How rude to text me so late, what a jerk!" When I get up in the morning, I could first write in the part's voice. Let it list all the reasons it thinks this person is inconsiderate and inappropriate. Next, I can stop and get curious about how this part is trying to help me. Then, I give the part a name based on its function. Let's call it my *Protector*. Naming the part gives me a little distance from its beliefs and feelings. Finally, I can write from Self *about* the part. Self might say something like:

*My Protector has a need to be sure that I only involve myself with people who respect the way I live. It got triggered when James texted me late at night. My Protector sees this behavior as a "red flag" and needs me to be cautious about why he thought it was okay to text me that late. This part also needs me to request that he not do that again.*

Speaking for our parts instead of from them is an invaluable exercise. You will likely observe a pleasant visceral response in your body when you make this shift. Have fun with it!

## CHAPTER REVIEW

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YOU'VE NOW LEARNED some foundations of Internal Family Systems theory, including the concept that every part of us is good and trying to help us in some way. You've been introduced to the three main categories of parts in IFS and have a general list of sub-categories to refer to. We covered why parts suffer from a yogic perspective, and that they suffer when they have been exiled, overworked, burdened, or polarized with another part. You also have some exercises to practice identifying your own parts and speaking for them from Self. Next, we'll discuss the core competencies of a Yoga Mindset Coach and some additional skills you'll want to develop.

CHAPTER FIVE  
THE ROLE OF A  
COACH

BHAGAVAD GITA 18.68

*Those who teach this most confidential knowledge,  
perform the greatest act of love...*



**I**T'S IMPORTANT TO understand the foundational theories of *Classical Yoga* and *Internal Family Systems* before we dive into coaching, although you might be feeling a little overwhelmed with information at this point. So, please be assured that all you have to remember is one thing: Self.

When you are identified with Self, you will be compassionately aware of your client's parts. You will also be aware of your own parts in relationship to your client. When you are anchored in awareness, curiosity, and compassion, you are in Self; and staying in Self is the most important job as a coach.

Self by nature is the embodiment of Love. So, let's take a moment to define Love. Vulnerability expert, Brené Brown, once

said, “Love is something that grows between people when they allow themselves to be fully seen by each other.” I will take her definition one step further to say that Love is more than just seeing someone; it is genuinely accepting and having compassion for what is being witnessed. And Love is not something reserved for other people only. In fact, it is essential that this act of loving is applied toward one’s own field of parts.

In Chapter One, I mentioned that it was ten years after my cancer diagnosis before I was ready to start coaching cancer patients. Before I could approach working with people with cancer, I had to understand which parts of me might get triggered around certain topics. If I wasn’t aware of these parts, I might impose my own experience onto a client’s unique experience. I had to learn to take care of the parts of me that might get scared for someone, angry for someone, or defensive with someone.

Over time I discovered how my field of parts reacted to conversations about cancer. I witnessed when parts of me got triggered and observed how each one felt in my body. I listened to their thoughts, beliefs and concerns. I came to understand why a part of me got anxious when someone wasn’t interested in doing chemotherapy, because chemo saved my life. I understood why a part of me got angry when a client’s family wasn’t supportive; because my father didn’t care when he learned I was sick. Based on my personal experiences, it was easy to understand how my parts would react. I realized that they just don’t want to see anyone suffer. Acknowledging the goodness of these parts helped me be compassionate with them. The more accepting I was with these parts of myself, the less they got triggered. They gradually learned to trust

*Self* to lead the system. By loving the parts of me that lived through a cancer diagnosis, I learned to listen to, acknowledge and compassionately respond to the reactive parts of my clients too.

## SELF AS THE EMBODIMENT OF LOVE

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WHEN TALKING WITH clients about their field, they will reveal things to you, allowing you to “see” them. You might become aware of a part of them that has a concern, a pain, or a strong belief or feeling. When you are in *Self*, you will embody the qualities of curiosity, acceptance, and compassion. These three qualities are the alchemy of loving presence:

CURIOSITY + ACCEPTANCE + COMPASSION = LOVE.

### CURIOSITY

Embodying Love starts with being curious. Certain parts of you think they know things and make assumptions, but *Self* is always open to possibilities both known and unknown to you. So, the first act of Love is to be curious about whatever is arising for someone. What belief, emotion, or sensation is there right now? What part is activated? Only through genuine curiosity can we understand what (*or who*) we are in relationship to at any given moment. This is why we start our 90-minute coaching and yoga sessions with some inquiry. We ask questions to discover the activity in a client’s field and help the client see their field more clearly too. Asking questions leads to awareness and understanding.

## ACCEPTANCE

Once you gain some information, the next step is to accept whatever you learn without judgement or preference. You don't have to like or agree with what someone says to accept that it is the actual activity in someone's field. You don't even have to be comfortable with it because whatever is happening in a client's field is not about you. Accepting whatever is here now and helping the client accept it too is the first step toward healing and transformation for them. We can only move in the direction we want to go if we can clearly see and fully accept the point where we are right now.

Self as the embodiment of Love accepts whatever part is active. Love doesn't judge or criticize it. Love doesn't defend against it. Love doesn't try to talk a part out of its feelings or beliefs. Love simply acknowledges what's in the field... Love says, *Ahh, okay, so that's what's here for you right now. I see.*

If the coach can't accept what's arising in someone's field, then the client won't be able to accept it either and the progress comes to a dead halt. It might even be the end of the coaching relationship. Here is an example: I took an IFS-inspired coaching course and was listening to another member share an exercise she was doing with a male client in her IFS training. This man expressed that he is often attracted to his therapists and then shared that he was even attracted to her. She got really uncomfortable and ended the training session by telling him that he should go work with someone else. A part of her got triggered, made his words personal to her, and shut down the inquiry.

Had she been able to stay in Self, she could have been curious about the part of him that often feels attracted to the women he



sees for emotional support. Had she been able to accept that this is just a part of him with a peculiar habit, she might have been able to ask him more about that part. Perhaps this part is trying to sabotage the therapy because it's afraid of being vulnerable? Perhaps the only women who have ever been kind to him are the therapists in his life, so he projects romantic feelings onto them?

Had the IFS therapist in training stayed in Self, she would have probably found out why that part of her client had the habit of being attracted to his therapists. Once she understood it and accepted that this part of him is good and trying to help him in some way, she likely would have learned that it actually had nothing to do with her. She might have even seen the *Exile* that the *Romantic* part of him was trying to protect and been able to feel genuine empathy toward her client instead of put off by him.

To stay anchored in Self, to be the presence of Love, we must stay curious, accept what we witness as being there, and not make it mean anything other than there is suffering somewhere in the field. Suffering needs a compassionate witness to heal.

## COMPASSION

Being analyzed or judged reinforces the protective behaviors of the parts. However, if one's vulnerability is met with compassion, that alone is often enough for a Protector to no longer see a need to behave in the protective way. I wonder what would have happened had the IFS therapist said, "Okay, so there is a part of you that is often attracted to your therapist and is even attracted to me. Huh, I wonder why? Does it know that it's stopping you from being able

to stay focused on the work when it distracts you with romantic thoughts about your therapist?”

Parts are either born out of suffering or develop to protect another part from suffering. The role of a Yoga Mindset Coach is to offer all parts curiosity, acceptance, and compassion. Even when the parts of a client trigger parts of you. If you find yourself having a reaction or resistance to something someone is saying, then you are likely in a part and not in Self. When you find yourself triggered, get curious about the part of you sending you those thoughts or emotions, accept whatever you see in your own field, and turn toward it compassionately. Remember, Self is Love.

Love knows that people have parts and that some parts have skewed perceptions. Love knows that some parts have irrational thoughts and reactions. Love knows that some parts have painful memories and feelings and that other parts have formed to protect the parts in pain. Love is curious about what it witnesses in a human field, accepts the activity that is present, and has compassion for the suffering it sees. The best way to practice being the presence of Love toward your clients is to practice being loving toward your own field of parts. This is the sacred role of a Yoga Mindset Coach—to simply be Love.

## SELF AS THE FACILITATOR

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YOUR COMMITMENT TO being in the state of curiosity, acceptance, and compassion will automatically lead you to being of great service to your clients. Though you still need a set of tools to develop your coaching skills. In the following chapters, we will discuss how

to be a facilitator of useful inquiry and reflection. As you continue reading, take note of the parts of you that arise and also be aware of when you feel anchored in your curious, confident, centered Self.

## CHAPTER SIX

# COACHING SKILLS

BHAGAVAD GITA 12.8

*Fix your mind on Me alone and surrender your intellect to Me.  
Then there is no doubt that you will dwell in Me.*



**T**HE PRIMARY ROLE of a Yoga Mindset Coach is to stay anchored in Self and to be the curious, accepting, compassionate presence of Love. The presence of Self alone is healing. In psychotherapy, the *therapeutic relationship* is believed to make up 50% of the therapeutic impact. This means that half of your ability to help someone comes directly from how much they trust that you genuinely care about them. When you name the parts you see are active in a client's field of activity, the client feels seen by you. When you accept those parts just as they are and offer them compassion, the client feels safe with you. This is what we call *creating the conditions* for growth, healing, or transformation.

Simply creating the conditions for transformation is 50% of the work. The other half of your ability to help someone is derived from a combination of things, such as how motivated your client

is to grow or change, the frequency in which you get to work together, and the kind of *interventions* you use to help them. In the following chapters, you will be given specific tools (interventions) to help your clients move in a positive direction. The primary interventions offered in this book are IFS-inspired coaching with supporting ParaYoga practices.

There are also core competencies, or skills, that you will want to cultivate to be a successful coach. Creating and maintaining trust between you and your client is essential to both the client's success and your own. In the upcoming Business and Ethics chapters, we'll discuss topics that will support sustaining a trusting relationship with clients from those perspectives. In this chapter, we'll explore the coaching skills of *inquiry, listening, and empathy*.

## GETTING INTO THE INQUIRY

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HEARTFELT CURIOSITY IS the foundation for successful coaching. We'll explore the inquiry process in detail in Chapter Seven, but here is a brief introduction. Each time a client comes in, you'll want to inquire about the activity in the field today. If it's your first session together, you'll do a full intake with them, which is outlined in Chapter Ten. If it's a regular client, you'll still always start your session by asking them questions about what's going on in their body, family, relationships, job, etc. You can also ask why they scheduled the appointment for today, or what their biggest challenge or concern is right now.

This initial line of inquiry will help you see what parts might be active, need acknowledgment, care, or further questioning in

today's session. Perhaps there is an exhausted *Task Manager* working really hard to complete a task or handle a number of issues, or a *Concerned Parent* who is worried about their child, or a confused *Analyzer* trying to make a decision? You might encounter a *Pain* or *Illness Manager* who is fixated on a physical issue in the person's body. Or, you could discover a *Sad* part who is grieving a loss. You may also witness a part of client who feels guilty or shameful about something. Your job as the coach is to be empathetic to whatever you observe in this initial line of questioning.

## EMPATHY

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DEVELOPER OF CLIENT-CENTERED Therapy, Carl Rogers, believed that the answers to a client's questions are within the client and not the therapist. A Rogerian therapist's role is to create an empathic environment in which each client can discover the answers themselves. Rogers defined the three integrities for a client-centered therapist. The first, *Congruence*, relates to the willingness to transparently relate to a client without hiding behind a professional or personal façade, or a *Therapist* part. The second, *Unconditional Positive Regard*, is a deep care for the client and acceptance of them just as they are, listening to them without interruption, judgement, or giving advice. Lastly, *Empathy* relates to the genuine desire to understand and have compassion for the client's perspective. In Yoga Mindset Coaching, we adopt these integrities of Client-Centered Therapy and utilize the tools of active and reflective listening.

## ACTIVE & REFLECTIVE LISTENING

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A TECHNIQUE CARL Rogers used in Client-Centered Therapy called *Reflective Listening* is a powerful coaching tool. Being a present and compassionate reflective listener is a good sign that you are in Self. Yoga Mindset Coaches are trained to listen both actively and reflectively. Active listening is when you are completely absorbed in what another person is saying without thinking of what you will say in response.

When your attention is 100% focused on your client's words, you can reflect back to them exactly what they said using *their own words*. When you speak their words back to them verbatim, your client feels genuinely heard. When you reflect what they said back with empathy, they feel deeply cared for and safe.

Reflective Listening is a useful skill to develop because it's not our default style of communication. *Analyzers* like to interpret what others are saying into our own language and relate stories to our own experiences. However, if you change your client's words or make their story about you, they will not feel as heard or cared for as if you reflect their exact words back to them.

*Helpers* and *Managers* don't like to see others suffer. So, when someone shares a problem or painful feelings with us, these parts often jump in to try to fix the problem or make the person feel better. *Helpers*, in particular, want to find the solution or uplift someone because that is their job. But these parts forget that the person's *best* resource is their own Self, not you.

Here is a scenario that might be familiar: my friend Jane and I

are getting ready to go out together when she says to me, *I'm having a terrible day. I feel really fat and ugly today.*

If I let my *Manager* respond to her, it might try to talk her out of how she's feeling, tell her that she's wrong and that she looks great. This part doesn't realize that it's negating Jane's genuine feelings in that moment. This *Manager's* opposition might activate a defensive part in Jane. If my *Helper* jumped in, it might try to fix her problem by saying, *why don't you come work out with me on Tuesday? Or, have you tried this new diet?* This might activate a frustrated or shameful part in her.

Well-intentioned parts often trigger other parts, but Self will not. If I'm in Self when Jane says to me, *I'm having a terrible day. I feel really fat and ugly today,* I'll remember that the best thing I can do for her when she is disapproving of herself is for me to accept her just as she is in this moment. Self might sweetly and softly say, *Oh Sweetheart, I'm so sorry that you're having a terrible day and feeling fat and ugly.*

From Self, I will accept Jane and how she is feeling, even if she can't do the same for herself in the moment. Self is calm, confident, curious, and compassionate. Self will listen attentively and hold a loving reflection. Reflective listening with unconditional positive regard and empathy allows Jane to feel seen, accepted, and cared for. Often, this alone is enough to help her shift out of the part that is suffering because *Self begets Self*. If I can stay anchored in Self and hold a loving mirror to the part of her that is suffering, it will feel seen and cared for, which may allow it to loosen its grip on her psyche, giving her more access to her own Self-space. By nature, Jane's Self will also have compassion for the part of her that



feels “fat and ugly.” Ultimately, it is Jane’s ability to shift her mindset from the field to the *Knower of the Field* that will resolve her discomfort.

Certainly, there are times when our parts can help others by offering our ideas, resources, and insights. Just remember, clients have greater access to their own Self -when you are anchored in your Self. So, monitor your own wonderful, hardworking *Helper* and *Manager* parts. Remind them that there is tremendous healing power in just holding a silent mirror of compassion. Practicing empathetic reflective listening will help you, as the coach, stay in Self.

In order to be a Self-led person, you have to mirror to others what it looks like to stay anchored in the Yoga Mindset. This is most challenging when someone directs something hurtful or irrational directly toward you or a client. For example, Mark has always struggled with his relationship with his mother. No matter what he does or says, it always seems to be the wrong thing to her. He feels like he’s constantly disappointing his mother and that she complains constantly. He gave me examples of both passive-aggressive and directly aggressive things she has said that make him feel bad. He came to me asking how to transform the negative communication dynamic between them. I asked him for specific details about a conversation they had recently. He said that he had just booked a flight to Texas to visit with his mother. When he told her that he was coming for five days, she got very upset and scolded him, *What, I’m not worth a week-long trip? You probably don’t even want to see me at all.*

In that moment, Mark’s consciousness collapsed. His sympa-

thetic nervous system kicked in and he got defensive. The part of his mother that carries the painful belief of her not being valued and loved triggered the part of Mark that also doesn't feel valued and loved. To invite him back into Self, I asked him about his mother's relationship to her parents, which opened up some curiosity and compassion in him. When he had more access to Self, I gave him an example of how he could diffuse these kinds of situations by using reflective listening and empathy to convey what is true for him. Here is an example of language that incorporates reflective listening:

*Oh Mom, I'm shocked to hear you say that this five-day trip makes you feel as if I don't want to see you at all. I'm so sorry you feel this way. I was so happy to get more than a weekend together, that I was excited to tell you how much time we would have. I'm shocked and saddened to learn that you are viewing this time together so differently.*

Reflective listening with empathy will eventually show the person who they are being. This exercise asks you to keep repeating after them with compassion until they shift out of the activated part. If you stay with the process, after a few rounds of you showing them that you are hearing what they are saying and have compassion for their *klesha*, they usually do shift.

A final note is to remember that *how you say something* can be more important than what you say. You can convey a great deal through your tone of voice. Try to slow down the pace of the conversation so that you can reflect back appropriately. Short pauses

in which both the other person and you have time to re-center can support maintaining Self-space.

## NAMING PARTS

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AFTER YOU EMPATHETICALLY reflect back to your client and created the conditions for them to feel cared for and safe, it's helpful to then speak about what you have witnessed in their field in Parts language. Let's say that John scheduled an appointment with you because he's having neck and shoulder pain. When you do your initial intake with him, you discover that he's going through a divorce. He's also short-handed at his restaurant and is working 60 hours a week and he is trying to be a good dad by showing up for his two boys at their sporting events. He also said that he's feeling stressed out and exhausted.

Once you have compassionately reflected back to him each part of his story, you can then frame it into Parts language. Something like this:

*Wow, John. It sounds like there is a part of you that is working really hard to manage the neck and shoulder pain, the restaurant, the divorce, and the kids. That's a lot! No wonder this Manager part of you is exhausted. I'm so glad you came in today so we can try to help this part of you get some relief from all that.*

Here is another scenario to consider: let's say that Andrea is a long-time student of yours, and she schedules an appointment with you because she's distraught after coming-out to her parents as being a lesbian. She tells you that her parents disowned her and told every-

one in her family that she is gay. She is crying, anxious, and says she feels hurt and alone. The first thing needed in that moment is for you to compassionately name *and validate* the part of her that is traumatized. You might say:

*Oh, Andrea, I hear the part of you that feels scared, betrayed, and devastated by how your parents reacted to you sharing the truth of who you are with them. I completely understand why this part would feel this way. It seems like this part of you really needs to know that it's not alone right now, and it's not.*

Acknowledging that *all feelings* belong to part of a person, and not the whole person, can help someone see themselves more objectively. As you describe the landscape, the client's buddhi starts to wake up, their perspective gets broader, and they can start to disentangle from the activity of the field. As they witness your compassion for the part of them that is struggling, they may be able to feel some compassion toward it, too. As you stay anchored in Self, you mirror that presence to the client which may allow them to gain more access to Self too.

Naming is a skill that takes some practice. Sometimes just acknowledging or validating a part is all that is needed. Sometimes you'll name how much a part needs understanding and compassion. Other times, you might need to ask more questions to understand, or help your client recognize, what a part believes or feels.

In the next chapter, you will learn how to ask powerful questions that will help your clients see their own field of parts more clearly. The right questions can also guide them to source their own resolutions from Self. At the very least, doing Parts Work

inquiry will help you to see the client's field well enough to customize today's yoga practice to support it. We'll cover practice on the mat in detail in Chapter Nine.

## COACHING SKILLS SUMMARY

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**STAYING ANCHORED IN Self** is the most useful coaching skill. The presence of Self alone will guide you. When you are in Self, you will be curious and ask questions. When you are in Self, you will listen actively and reflect your client's words back to them with empathy. When you are in Self, your client will feel understood, accepted, cared for, and safe. When you are in Self, you can create the conditions for awareness, healing, and growth. By framing what you witness in Parts language, and empathetically naming the activity in a client's field, you can help them gain access to Self. By cultivating your coaching skills of inquiry, listening, reflecting, and naming, you will stay anchored in the Yoga Mindset, too.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
THE COACHING  
PROCESS

YOGA SUTRA 1.12

*The field of the mind is stilled through consistent practice and disidentification with its passions.*



**T**HE ROLE OF a Yoga Mindset Coach is to create an understanding, accepting, and empathetic environment for our clients. We step into the role by practicing the skills that help us stay in Self, including working with our own parts. The actual process of coaching others involves three things:

- ◆ **HORIZONTAL COACHING:** assessing the landscape of a client's field of activity by asking a series of questions and empathetically reframing what you learn into parts language.
- ◆ **VERTICAL COACHING:** working directly with the most active parts to see what they need to allow the client more access to Self-space.

- ◆ **YOGIC INTERVENTION:** customizing a yoga practice to support the client's field of body, mind and energy.

Doing a *horizontal* assessment of the whole field of activity, followed by empathetically naming any burdened or triggered parts, will give the client a broader perspective on themselves. This perspective, alone, can be very useful. *Vertical coaching* is to work directly with a part, or a group of parts, that is activated around a certain situation. Vertical coaching can lead to awakening, transformation, and deep relief for the client. When coupled with the right kind of yoga practice, a ninety-minute Parts Work and yoga session can facilitate integration and equilibrium in the client's mind and body and help give them more access to Self. We'll discuss yogic interventions in the next chapter, so here we'll focus on horizontal and vertical inquiry.

## HORIZONTAL COACHING

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AS I MENTIONED in the previous chapter, you'll always want to start by asking the clients some general questions about what's going on in their life when they come in for a session. To help your clients become aware of their parts, you'll first reflect back to them whatever they tell you *using parts language*. You'll discover that:

- ◆ Some parts just need acknowledgement for how hard they are working or trying to do something good.
- ◆ Some may need reassurance or validation that it's okay for them to feel the way they feel.

- ◆ Some may need to know it's okay to step back and take a rest for a moment.
- ◆ Some parts need a compassionate witness to tell their story.
- ◆ Some need to be lovingly questioned about an irrational or disempowering belief or a problematic behavior.

The only way to find out what a part needs is by inviting the client to share with you what's going on.

In this horizontal coaching phase, you can inquire generally and take note of what the client shares with you subjectively. Then you can inquire more specifically based on what you objectively observe. Here is a list of questions that might come in handy when assessing the landscape of a client's field. These can act as conversation starters, especially if the client doesn't say much after your initial questioning:

- ◆ Why did you want to schedule this appointment today?
- ◆ Is there anything interesting or challenging going on at work or at home?
- ◆ Are there any strong emotions on the surface lately? Any triggering events?
- ◆ Where is the majority of your time and energy being focused?
- ◆ Is there anything you're concerned about right now?
- ◆ Are there any situations where you feel confused, stuck, or overwhelmed?
- ◆ Is there anything changing in your life?
- ◆ Is there something that you really wish would change?
- ◆ Do you have any specific goals you're trying to accomplish, or any patterns or habits that you're trying to shift?



- ◆ Is there anything missing in your life that would make a difference for you?
- ◆ Is there anything that you're dreaming about or longing for?

## LOOKING FOR TRAILHEADS

Let's say a client named Michael comes in. When you ask him about what's going on in his life, he says that his wife is out of town and he's been taking care of the kids by himself this week. Then, you might say, *Got it. Your wife is out of town so you've been taking care of this kids alone. It sounds like your Dad Part has been on full duty this week.*

You might wonder if this *Dad Part* needs any additional support. So now, you check to see if this information is what IFS-Inspired Coaches, Brian Jaudon and Anna Tansi, call a *coaching trailhead*. A trailhead is the entry point into vertical coaching.

To see if parenting by himself is a trailhead leading to a part that needs something, you'll want to ask Michael how well his *Dad Part* is handling this situation. You could ask, *How is that part of you holding up? Or, Tell me more about how that's going for you.*

If Michael replies, *Oh the kids are easy. It's all good*, then you might just acknowledge his *Dad Part* by saying, *It's great to hear that the kids are easy and you're doing well with that.*

It's possible that this part of Michael doesn't actually need any vertical coaching today, so you would then ask him what else is going on in his body and life. You'll repeat this horizontal line of inquiry until you find an actual trailhead.

## PARTS WORK CARDS

A fantastic horizontal coaching tool that you might consider pur-

chasing are the *Inner Active Cards for Parts Works* by Sharon Eckstein. Sharon is the illustrator of Tom and Lauri Holmes' book *Parts Work: An Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life*. The deck of cards has powerful images of several archetypal parts. These are really useful for helping clients identify their own active parts. The link to Sharon's website is in the Resources at the end of the book. She'll teach you how to use them there!

## VERTICAL COACHING

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IT'S IMPORTANT TO recognize what parts are active so that you can respond appropriately. Pay close attention to any parts that seem burdened, overwhelmed, or exhausted. Also, you should be on the lookout for any beliefs a part has about the client themselves, or another person, or about what something "means."

A trailhead into vertical coaching is often when you observe a part that is carrying a burden or a strong belief. For example, if Michael replies to your question about how he's managing the kids alone by saying something like, *Ugh, I'm counting the days until my wife comes home. I'm completely exhausted*, then that could be a trailhead to work with the *Exhausted Dad* part.

You could ask him, *What aspect of the situation is exhausting you the most? Or, What exactly about taking care of the kids alone is hardest for you?*

This information will be very useful in determining whether his *Dad Part* just needs to replenish its energy or if it has a limiting belief that is contributing to his exhaustion. Maybe he thinks he has to do everything exactly like his wife does instead of what is

natural and easy for him? So, it's always good to check for limiting beliefs.

If Michael responds to your question with something shocking like, *I don't know how it's going. I'm not really any good at taking care of the kids*, then you've definitely identified a part with a limiting belief and reached a trailhead. So, next you could ask him, *What makes this part of you say that? Or, Where did you get the belief that you're not good at taking care of the kids?*"

Whatever he says, will lead you to the next line of questions.

## TRANSITIONING FROM HORIZONTAL TO VERTICAL COACHING

Before you take a deep dive into vertical coaching, it's important that the client has some access to Self. Sometimes, just reframing a situation in parts language can help a client gain some distance from the situation and see the activity of the field from Self. Other times, they may need some support in shifting out of identification with an active part. In IFS, they call this process of disidentification, *unblending*. If you notice that a client is using "I" language and speaking *from* the part and not *for* it, then they might need a little more help unblending their identity from it. This is when I suggest using the *IFS Breathing Space* exercise below; it is intended to help the client gain more access to Self by separating a little of their identity with the active part.

When a client is strongly identified with the emotions and beliefs of a part, they might say something like, *I'm just so mad*, instead of *there is a part of me that feels angry*. Even if they don't say the words, you can often tell if someone is entangled in an emo-

tion. If someone is crying, then they are obviously blended with a part of them is sad. If the horizontal tools of reframing in parts language and offering empathy don't help the person shift into being able to speak for the part from Self, then you might need to offer an additional tool.

Let's say a new yoga student named Shelly comes to you because she recently had a second miscarriage. Her doctor told her to try yoga to manage stress and increase circulation to her pelvic floor. As she's telling you the story of how hard her and her partner have been trying to conceive, tears are rolling down her cheeks. You might compassionately reflect back to her, *It seems like a part of you is feeling that grief now.*

Then, you might ask her if it's okay to feel that part's feelings for a moment. If she says 'yes,' then you just hold loving space for the part that is sad and validate how it has every right to feel that way. If she says, *I can't seem to stop crying lately, I'm so tired of crying,* then you'll want to invite the part to separate from Shelly a little using the Breathing Space exercise. Here is the script based on Shelly's example:

## IFS BREATHING SPACE EXERCISE

- ◆ If you're comfortable, close your eyes.
- ◆ Where do you feel the sadness in your body? (say she says, *in the chest*)
- ◆ What does it feel like there? (say she says, *tightness*)
- ◆ Can you breathe space between you and the feeling of tightness in the chest?
- ◆ Ask that part to separate from you a little.

- ◆ It's important to let that part of you know that we are not trying to get rid of it. We just want to understand it better and see if we can help it. And, we can do that best, if it separates from you little.

Sometimes, parts are afraid something bad might happen if they stop sending the person those strong feelings. So, a part may hesitate to separate. If this happens, it's often useful to ask the part, *What it is afraid might happen if it stepped back a little?*

Then, reassure it by saying, *No one is trying to get rid of it. It is a good part of you and we know it's working hard. We just want to see if we can help it and we can do that best if it is a little separate from you.* If for some reason, that doesn't work, you can ask the client to request that the part simply not overwhelm her with its feelings right now.

Usually, the Breathing Space exercise will give the client a little access to Self-space. They often report a sense of calm or relief just being separate from the feelings of the part carrying strong feelings. Once the client has some distance from the activated part, then you can begin the vertical coaching dive.

## VERTICAL DIVE QUESTIONS

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WHEN YOU NOTICE a part that is working too hard, feeling overwhelmed or tired, acting out in some way, or carrying strong emotions or beliefs, you have come to a trailhead. This is the opportunity to do some vertical coaching with that part. Here is a comprehensive list of powerful questions for going deeper in a vertical coaching dive:

## EXHAUSTED PARTS

- ◆ What is this part's role or function in your life? What does it do for you?
- ◆ Does it like this job?
- ◆ Is this part tired?
- ◆ What is it afraid might happen if it took a break?
- ◆ Would it like to be able to relax a bit if it could?
- ◆ What would it need to be able to step back and rest, even a little?
- ◆ Can you give it what it needs now or in the near future so it can relax a bit?

## “ACTING OUT” PARTS

- ◆ When did this part first show up in your life? How old were you?
- ◆ How does this part think it's helping you by sending you these thoughts or feelings right now?
- ◆ What does this part hope it can get for you by doing that behavior?
- ◆ How has it helped you in the past by doing this?
- ◆ What is it afraid would happen if it stopped?
- ◆ Does it know that it's causing you suffering when it acts out?

## WORRIED / ANXIOUS PARTS

- ◆ What fears or concerns does this part have?
- ◆ Where did it get this concern?

- ✦ Has something like this happened before?
- ✦ If it happened before and you survived it, what does this part need to remember now?
- ✦ Does it know that you are safe to right now?
- ✦ What would it need to be able to relax a little?

## GRIEVING PARTS

- ✦ Does this part have enough space in your life to grieve? Does it need a little time to feel these feelings right now?
- ✦ Is it taking up too much space? Do you need a break from these feelings?
- ✦ Can you separate from this part enough to imagine that it's in a safe and healing place where you can comfort it from Self?
- ✦ What has helped comfort this part in the past?
- ✦ Can you just be with this part in the way it needs someone to be with it when it is feeling this way?
- ✦ Are there any spiritual guides or nurturing energies you can *call in* to be present with this part when it is feeling this way?

## TRIGGERED PARTS / CARRYING STRONG BELIEFS

- ✦ What does this part think is happening in this situation?
- ✦ Where did it get this belief? / When did it first start to believe this?
- ✦ Because \_\_\_\_ happened, what does this part think it means?
- ✦ Is that meaning true? How do you know for sure?
- ✦ Does any other possibility exist?

- ◆ If it could choose to believe something else, what would it rather believe is true?

*Important Note:*

Remember that you are not a certified IFS therapist and your *Helper* and *Analyzer* parts do not need to know what to do or say to a client. Your primary job is to stay in Self and empathetically affirm that you have heard what the person or their parts say. Self is also curious by nature and will continue to ask questions in a compassionate tone. There is one question I find to be particularly useful that I frequently ask my own parts and my clients. I call it the Core Question.

## THE CORE QUESTION

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PARTS TEND TO take up a lot of space in the field when they are carrying a painful belief about something. Remember that painful beliefs stem from old *samskaras*. Something painful happened in the past, and the parts developed to help the person cope at the time. Certain situations and relationship dynamics can trigger an old *vasana* of belief, which can lead a part to think that the same painful thing is happening now, even if it isn't. When an old *samskara* gets triggered, the *vasana*, or old thought wave, can cause a part to believe that the person is being mistreated or victimized in a present situation. To help the client shift identity from the story of victimhood to the more empowered perspective of Self, we look to Yoga Sutra 2.33.

Yoga Sutra 2.33 says, *vitarkabadhane pratipaksabhavanam*, which



means, “When the mind is disturbed by negative thoughts, we can use the knowledge of discrimination to cultivate the opposite attitude.” In Yoga Mindset Coaching, we do this by challenging what a part believes is true and presenting other possibilities for it to consider. This can help to reframe the situation into a more empowering context and open up more Self space for the client.

In my personal experience, whenever I hear a part of me think that I *have* to do something, or that I have *no* choice, or that *this* must mean *that*, I know that there are at least two other possibilities I have not yet considered. When I hear myself say that I don’t have a choice, I know I am blended with a part and need to consider the Core Question:

*Does any other possibility exist besides what I am believing is true right now?*

Even if it seems far-fetched, does any possibility in the entire universe even exist besides what I am thinking in this moment? Or, if I could choose to believe anything other than what I’m making this situation mean, what might I rather believe?

It’s important to remind ourselves and our clients that we always have a choice of what we want to believe is true. Rod Stryker once said, “Every thought is a choice—consciously or unconsciously, we are always choosing.” This statement has transformed my reality numerous times. Here is an example:

I taught an Advanced ParaYoga class for ten years on Monday nights. It was a very well-attended class. When I would present weekend seminars out of town, I would often fly home on Monday afternoon, then have to teach on Monday nights. This left me with-

out a day off for three weeks in a row sometimes. It wasn't sustainable for me to live like that, but a part of me held tightly onto the belief that I couldn't ask all these people to change their schedules for one person's, even mine.

Then one day in the fall of 2012, I was teaching at the Himalayan Institute in Pennsylvania, when the core question came to me. I thought, "Does any other possibility exist besides all these people being inconvenienced by me switching Monday night class to Tuesdays?" I suddenly felt a shift in my body like space was opening up. I entered a curious and hopeful state of mind. Then I thought, "Well, Tuesdays might work better for some people, and some people might not care either way." Then, my *Good Manager* said to me, "Let's email 30 of the regulars and ask them!" So I did.

Changing class from Mondays to Tuesdays worked for 29 of the 30 people. All but one, my dear friend, Paul, who is a college professor. I missed him for a few months, then the following semester he changed his class times and was able to rejoin the class. Fast forward seven years to today, and I am now only available to teach that class once a month. Paul still comes and I'm always happy to see him.

The moral of the story is: don't get stuck. Whenever we think we don't have a choice but to suffer, it's only a part which hasn't been offered possibilities yet. There is always choice. Every thought is a choice. The core question opens up powerful Self space. I've seen it change lives including my own. Use it. Teach it. *Does any other possibility exist besides what you are believing is true?*

## WHEN A TRAILHEAD LEADS TO THE BODY

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IF A TRAILHEAD leads to some kind of issue in the physical body, your line of inquiry might shift from that of a *mindset coach* to that of a *yoga teacher*. But, as we yoga teachers know, the mind and body are intrinsically connected, so stay curious! You may find that a person is both in physical pain and is suffering due to the way they are being in relationship to the pain. You might ask vertical questions like:

- ✦ When did this issue start?
- ✦ What activities aggravate it?
- ✦ When does it feel the best?
- ✦ Are there any other parts of the body that are involved in this?
- ✦ What have you tried to do to make this better?
- ✦ What seems to work and what doesn't?
- ✦ Have you had this evaluated by a physician?
- ✦ Are there any beliefs you have about why this happened or what this means?

This book came out of a relationship to pain in my body. The congenital deformation of my hip joints had worn down the cartilage in my right hip. Though I had been in pain for years, the pain became unmanageable in June 2018. After seeing multiple specialists, I learned that the best thing to do at this time was to change how I lived, moved, and worked. A part of me feared that my career training yoga teachers was over at age forty-three. I got depressed and started grasping for solutions to the pain.

Then, one morning in meditation, my buddhi woke up. From Self, I realized that a part of me was thinking too much about the pain in my body, and I was suffering as a result. From Self, I discerned that I needed to redirect my attention to my *dharma*, or life's purpose. So, that morning, I applied to a writing program with Dr. Angela Lauria to write this book.

Since I reconnected with my heart of service and made space for a creative part of myself, I have been much happier, and the pain has been more manageable. I say that the pain has been more manageable not because I have resolved the issue, but because I shifted my mindset and allowed Self to lead my system. I may not be able to demonstrate all the asanas I teach now, but I can continue to teach and make a difference in people's lives. Developing the online Yoga Mindset Coaching certification program and writing this book are two new ways that I can continue to do what I was born to do. So, now, the part of me that was afraid my career might be over isn't afraid of that anymore. Though the pain is still often present, the suffering rarely is.

## ADDITIONAL COACHING TOOLS

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THE BEAUTY OF IFS is that, like yoga, it is a psycho-spiritual model of consciousness. Both IFS and Classical Yoga are dualistic. They both view the field of activity as being separate from the most essential aspect of who we are. Yoga practitioners and other spiritually-minded folks are often very receptive to Parts Work for this reason—especially those with some connection to meditation or contemplative prayer. In addition to the Breathing Space exer-

cise, there are two other inner imagery tools which might come in handy when doing vertical coaching with a part. I mentioned them both briefly in the section on vertical coaching questions.

## HEALING PLACE IMAGERY

When parts are overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, sad, or hurt, they sometimes need an image of a safe place where they can go to rest, feel safe, be present, or comforted. It helps if this imagery is invited right after the Breathing Space exercise while the client still has their eyes closed. You can invite your client to imagine taking that part of themselves to a *Healing Place*. It could be a beautiful place in nature, a magical place, or a real-life safe place for the client. This can be an opportunity for the client's Self to just be with the part that is suffering in the whatever way that part needs someone to be with it. Or it may just want to rest there alone, away from whatever is causing it to suffer. You can just ask the client what that part needs while it's there.

## SPIRITUAL RESOURCES / GUIDES

Going to a *Healing Place* is also an opportunity to access deeper spiritual support. You can suggest that the client invite any spirit guides or a healing energy to come be with that part that is suffering. Spirit guides can take many forms, and the image of them might change for the client from session to session. Examples of guides include animal spirits, angels, ancestors, deities, Jesus, the Divine Mother, or even an unseen-but-felt, wise, and loving presence. Guides sometimes share words of wisdom, hold a part tenderly or simply provide a sense of comfort, love and peace.

## CLIENTS WITHOUT IMAGERY ACCESS

A client might not be very visual, and that's okay. You can still invite a part to travel to a safe place inside the client's body and invite guidance or energy there. So, basically, just invite a feeling if an image doesn't come. A feeling of the presence of a guide or of healing energy can help anchor the client in their calm, clear, compassionate, curious, confident, creative, and courageous Self.

## YOGIC INTERVENTIONS

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NOW THAT YOU understand the processes and value of horizontal and vertical coaching, you'll then invite your client (and their parts) to move onto the yoga mat when the time comes to bring the coaching aspect of your session to a close. In the next chapter, we will discuss how to determine which kind of yoga practice will best support the client's system of parts today and deepen their identification with Self.

CHAPTER EIGHT  
THE YOGA PRACTICE

YOGA SUTRA 1.29

*From that practice, the mind turns toward the inner Self and all disturbances disappear.*



**T**HERE ARE MANY approaches to teaching private yoga sessions. A teacher's approach is often based on what the student says they want. Students who desire increased physical strength, flexibility, or the achievement of a certain pose may want you to act as personal yoga-trainer and give them a strong yoga-workout. Other students might want guidance on alignment correction or posture modification with props. Another reason students often seek privates is to help them address physical issues of pain or limited mobility.

I often recommend that every private yoga teacher has a copy of *Yoga for Wellness* by Gary Kraftsow, of the Viniyoga Institute. Viniyoga is a therapeutic system of yoga in the direct lineage of Sri Krishnamacharya. It takes 1,000 hours of Viniyoga therapy training to be able to call yourself a yoga therapist. Therefore, having

Gary's book is not enough to advertise that you do yoga therapy, but *Yoga for Wellness* has short posture sequences for several regions of the body and a variety of common ailments. It is an invaluable resource for those who want to help people address issues of pain or mobility.

A skillful yoga teacher will be able to give each student a little of what they want, while also sneaking in a little of what they *need*. You probably already know how to give students what they *think* they want. Most yoga teachers can instruct a good workout and help students with asana-based things like alignment. Gary's book can give you enough information to start helping people more therapeutically, if that is new to you. Again, you already have the 'give them what they want' part under control, therefore this chapter will focus on the 'sneaking in of what they need'.

When clients come in for a joint coaching and yoga session, they are typically identified with some aspect of the field. They aren't usually aware of the parts of themselves that are active. They also don't usually know much about the mind-body connection. In yoga, there is no separation of mind, body, and energy; it is all the field of interrelated activity. Since there is constant communication between the brain and the nervous system, there is no way to separate the impact the body has on thoughts and the impact thoughts have on the body. When you start a session with some Parts Work inquiry, you learn what kind of yoga practice is needed to help harmonize the whole field of body and mind.



## HOW TO DIVIDE SESSION TIME

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WHEN YOUR CLIENT comes in, you'll invite them to sit down to chat. If it's a first session, you'll do a full intake; if not, it will be a follow up conversation from the last session. Either way, you'll ask questions to find out what's in their field today. You'll learn what's going on in their lives and which parts are most active. After the inquiry, you'll use your questions and coaching skills to work with the parts for the amount of time allotted for the conversation. Then you'll move into yoga practice.

In dividing your time up over a ninety-minute session, it is recommended that you do thirty minutes of coaching and sixty minutes of yoga. Alternatively, you could do forty-five minutes of coaching and forty-five minutes of yoga. The least amount of yoga you want to do is thirty minutes. Clients' parts can talk and talk; they want to give you every detail of a story. So, set a timer if you have to, but make sure you spend at least 30 minutes on the mat.

The last fifteen minutes of a ninety-minute session are reserved for either a relaxation, pranayama, or meditation. If your client talks for seventy-five minutes and you can't interrupt them for some reason, make sure the last fifteen minutes are spent in a systematic relaxation. The "yoga" part of the session is what separates you from other coaches or trained therapists. Don't let the yoga time get gobbled up with non-productive parts chatter. Name the parts that you see are active, offer them compassion, wrap it up, and get on the mat!

Any good yoga practice can create more Self-space, but a Tantric Hatha Yoga practice can manipulate *prana*, or life force

energy. So, when it comes time in the session to shift from talking to practice on the mat, you'll consider two options for what kind of practice is needed to create balance and harmony in the field. The two options for the approach to yoga practice stem from the Ayurvedic terms, *langhana* (reductive) and *brahmana* (increasing).

## LANGHANA ENERGETIC EFFECT

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### YOGA SUTRA 1.34

*[Or, the mind can be stabilized] through pranayama and the suspension of exhalation.*

Langhana means “to reduce.” A langhana practice will reduce excess mental activity (*rajas*) and reduce excess nervousness in the body (*vata*). Langhana practices are calming, as they reduce superfluous mental or physical energy. They are also grounding and stabilizing. These techniques help reduce feelings of fear, anxiety, and restlessness. They also support being able to let go of emotional burdens and physical pain. Langhana-style practices stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, so it supports digestion, healing, and sleep. This style of yoga practice folds the mind inward, leaving you feeling calm and stable.

### WHEN TO CHOOSE A LANGHANA PRACTICE

After you have assessed the landscape of the client's field, you'll know which parts are active and which ones need some balance or support. When you encounter a part carrying some excessive or obsessive energy, langhana may be the right choice. It might be a

*Manager* part working too hard to figure something out, complete a task, or handle a situation. This *Manager* could probably benefit from a break.

You might witness parts that carry the energy of constriction, which is characterized by gripping tightly onto a story or view. Agitated, angry, or stubborn parts need to be able to relax in order to expand their view. Parts that feel anxious, stressed, fearful, sad, or hurt also may need to be calmed, soothed, and stabilized. You may also witness constriction when you meet someone who talks really fast or tells you that they can't turn their brain off at night. When you encounter parts carrying any highly-charged energy, langhana is typically the best practice for that day. You can focus on elimination and letting go or on quieting, calming, and turning inward.

NOTE: the intensity of the langhana effect is determined by the number of langhana components you chose to include in the practice. The level of intensity you offer should be evaluated during each session. For example, if your session is in the evening and your client is exhausted and ready for bed, you can take them really deep. However, if a person comes to you in the morning and they have a full work day ahead of them, you should aim to only take the edge off, because you don't want to knock them out so hard that they are lethargic all day. Yes, langhana practice can be that powerful, and a little can go a long way.

## LANGHANA: APPROACH TO PRACTICE

Whether you decide to teach a strong physical practice with a lot of vinyasa and standing poses, or a more restorative or yin style

practice, focusing on forward folding postures and exhalation will create a langhana effect. Contemplation on the moon or earth and moving slowly into stillness also induces langhana. The intensity of the effect depends on how many langhana components you include in the practice. Here are some langhana techniques you can experiment with:

1. Holding a forward bending posture for 1-2 minutes will activate the parasympathetic nervous system, making the practice more calming.
2. Pausing the breath out after exhale while holding any forward bend or twist is like an energetic fast which will still both body and mind.
3. Progressively lengthening an ujjayi, *hissing breath*, exhalation while moving in and out of a forward bending posture repeatedly will stimulate carotid sinus in the head signaling to the brain to lower blood pressure.
4. Resting the forehead on a block will quiet the frontal lobe of the brain, which can slow down thought processes and even make the person feel sleepy.
5. A systematic relaxation which induces *pratyahara* will relax the senses and direct them inward. This reduces both muscle tension and mental activity.
6. Doing a langhana pranayama can sooth the nervous system. It can also manipulate the prana called *apana*, which moves down and out, supporting physical elimination and letting go of nagging thoughts.

7. A meditation which yields a calming, grounding, or releasing effect.

*Reminder:*

It's important to conclude your yoga session on the mat with at least one of last three exercises (#5–7), a ten- to fifteen-minute guided systematic relaxation, a pranayama practice, and/or a guided meditation. This last part of the practice is often the most impactful and memorable part of the session, in which the integration takes place and transformation can occur. If you don't have time for all three in a single session, please do at least one of these each time a client comes in and switch it up!

## A LANGHANA SHAVASANA TECHNIQUE

Below is an original script I wrote which couples a preliminary contemplation on the earth with a specific relaxation exercise. I call this guided shavasana technique, Earth Mother. It leaves students feeling inward, grounded, connected, and deeply supported. Once you get your client settled comfortably into shavasana, you may offer them this guidance:

*Become aware of your body and the space occupied by your body. Feel your connection to the planet beneath you. Take a moment to contemplate how big the earth is... our Mother Earth is big enough and stable enough to hold all of your weight. So, with the next few exhalations, see if you can give her more of the weight of your body...*

*Now, contemplate how old the earth is. For over four billion*

*years, the earth has supported her inhabitants. So, there is nothing going on in your life right now that the earth hasn't held up before. She can hold the weight of your body and the weight of your burdens too. So, for your next few exhalations, release the weight of your cares and worries to the Mother, let her hold them for you, if only for this moment...*

*Now, feel the pull of gravity connecting you to the earth. Our Mother Earth holds us firmly to her surface, just as a new mother holds her infant close to her breast. Never in the history of time has anyone fallen off the surface of the earth. You are intrinsically connected to her, grounded, and stable upon the surface of the earth. You are safe to go inside yourself; she will hold you and support you.*

*Now move your attention to the rise and fall of your breath in the abdomen. Begin to notice the moment after exhalation; that pause right before the next inhale begins. See if you can rest in that moment after exhale. The quieter the mind becomes, the quieter the breath becomes, and the longer you will be able to rest there in that moment after exhalation. This moment between breaths is the moment between thoughts, where we can experience the soul.*

Allow the client to rest in silence for 3–5 minutes. Bring them up to a seated position slowly and ask them to sit quietly for a few moments to reflect on how they feel. You may want to move them right into a pranayama or meditation technique. Whether you move into another seated practice or conclude your session with

this shavasana, when they bring their attention back, ask them to report to you how this practice left them feeling.

## LANGHANA PRANAYAMA

The energetic effect of a pranayama is largely based on the breath ratios between inhale and exhale. Ujjayi and Brahmari pranayamas are both very calming to the nervous system and could certainly be chosen. However, I wanted to give you a practice that focuses on the breath ratios. Below are two langhana practices for *nadi shodhana*, or alternate nostril breathing.

Begin by sitting up with the spine erect. Bring the right hand up to the nose; the index and middle fingers should be folded so that the right thumb can be used to close the right nostril and the ring finger used to close the left nostril. *This is called the Vishnu mudra.* Closing the right nostril with the right thumb, inhale for the specified number of counts through the left nostril. Next, close the left nostril with the ring finger, and exhale for the specified number of counts out the right nostril. Then, repeat by inhaling through the right and exhaling out the left.

## BEGINNER LANGHANA NADI SHODHANA PRACTICE

No breath retentions or suspensions. Pinch the open nostril slightly to control the amount of airflow coming in and out. The numbers below are the seconds it takes to complete each breath. There are four steps to this practice. *Repeat each step two times.* The last step can be practiced for additional rounds if time permits. Note: If at any point your clients loses breath control or runs out of breath, do not progress to the next step.

Stage 1	In Left: 6	Out Right: 6
	In Right: 6	Exhale Left : 6
Stage 2	In Left: 6	Out Right: 8
	In Right: 6	Exhale Left : 8
Stage 3	In Left: 6	Out Right: 10
	In Right: 6	Exhale Left : 10
Stage 4	In Left: 6	Out Right: 12
	In Right: 6	Exhale Left : 12

*Beginner Langhana Nadi Shodhana Practice*

## INTERMEDIATE LANGHANA NADI SHODHANA PRACTICE

This practice includes *rechaka kumbhaka*, or suspension after exhalation. Please read the medical disclaimer at the end of this chapter before offering this practice to a student.

Pinch the open nostril slightly to control the amount of airflow coming in and out. There are four steps to this practice. *Repeat each step two times.* The last step can be practiced for additional rounds if time permits. Note: If at any point your clients loses breath control or runs out of breath do not progress to the next step.



Stage 1	In Left: 6	Out Right: 8	Hold Out: 0
	In Right: 6	Out Left: 8	Hold Out: 0
Stage 2	In Left: 6	Out Right: 8	Hold Out: 2
	In Right: 6	Out Left: 8	Hold Out: 2
Stage 3	In Left: 6	Out Right: 10	Hold Out: 3
	In Right: 6	Out Left: 10	Hold Out: 3
Stage 4	In Left: 6	Out Right: 12	Hold Out: 4
	In Right: 6	Out Left: 12	Hold Out: 4

*Intermediate Langhana Nadi Shodhana Practice*

## LAKE OF THE MIND MEDITATION

*Meditation to calm, still and transcend, ParaYoga©*

This is one of the most effective meditations I know for quieting the mind. Even if someone can't visualize well they can still access the *bhavana*, or inner feeling.

*Bring your awareness to the space of the body. Now to the region of the head. See the full moon shining at the back of your head. And, see your mind as a lake. The reflection of the moon shines onto the lake of the mind.*

*When the mind is quiet, the lake is still, and a perfect reflection of the moon can be seen. Thoughts create waves on the surface of*

*the lake, distorting the reflection of Reality; hundreds of fragments of the one true moon. But, when the lake of the mind is still, the mirrored image of the moon is sustained on the lake.*

*After a while, when the lake is still enough for a long enough period, a moon can beam shine onto the lake which then bounces off the surface and reflects out through the point between your eyebrows.*

Allow the client to meditate in silence for three to ten minutes. When they bring their attention back, ask them to report to you about their experience with this meditation. Were they able to visualize? Did they feel any sensations? Do they feel more calm, peaceful, centered? Notice for yourself any shifts in the client's field too.

## APANA VAYU MEDITATION

The Apana Vayu is one of the directional movements of life force energy, or prana. It is the descending breath or the downward and outward force. It governs elimination on all levels. According to Dr. David Frawley, Apana moves primarily from the navel to the soles of the feet. Here is the Para Yoga apana meditation:

*Meditation to let go, release & ground, ParaYoga©*

*Begin seated comfortably in your meditation posture with your spine tall and eyes closed.*

*Inhale: Draw all your feeling and consciousness down to the base of your spine. Pause your breath briefly, without strain.*

*Hold your awareness at the root.*

*Exhale: Visualize all physical and mental toxins down out of the body, toward the core of the planet.*

*(Repeat 9 times.)*

*Next, visualize a dark blue downward pointing triangle at the root chakra. Feel and see energy moving downward as flashes of lightning, which ground into the center of the planet. Feel a powerful sense of being grounded and stable, the body tall and steady*

*(3 to 10 minutes)*

Allow the client to meditate in silence for at least three minutes. When they bring their attention back, ask them to report to you about their experience with this meditation. Were they able to visualize? Did they feel any sensations? Do they feel more grounded or a sense of release? Notice for yourself any shifts in the client's field too.

## BRAHMANA ENERGETIC EFFECT

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### YOGA SUTRA 1.36

*Or [the mind can be stabilized] by placing attention on an inner state of Lumosity which is beyond all sorrow.*

Brahmana means “to build or increase.” A brahmana practice will increase physical energy and mental vitality. Brahmana practice helps clear excess *tamas*, that which is dark, heavy, or stuck in the

mind. These techniques also help clear and excess *kapha*, the accumulation of phlegm, weight, or stagnation in the body. Brahmama practices replenish vital life force energy and awaken the mind. They can also build feelings of confidence, courage, clarity, and joy. Brahmama techniques strengthen the sympathetic nervous system, helping us improve alertness and reaction time.

## WHEN TO CHOOSE A BRAHMAMA PRACTICE

Choose a more brahmama-focused practice for your client today if a part of them is exhausted and needs to keep going. Consider choosing a brahmama style practice if a part of them feels fatigued or lethargic, stuck or confused, disempowered or victimized, disconnected, lonely, uncared for or depressed. Brahmama practice may also be appropriate for someone recovering from illness or injury, especially if a part of them is feeling physically weak or insecure in the body. Brahmama practice focuses attention externally and can leave us feeling lighter, brighter, clearer, and more alert, expansive, and confident.

## BRAHMAMA: APPROACH TO PRACTICE

Whether a strong physical practice or a gentle one, whether a long practice or a short one, focusing on back bending and lateral postures will induce brahmama. Lengthening and retaining the inhalation will also intensify the effect. Contemplation on the light and the heart can also increase brahmama. The intensity of the effect depends on how many components you include in the practice. Here are the brahmama techniques you can experiment with:

1. Holding back bending and lateral postures statically for one to two minutes; it will stimulate the cardio plexus of sympathetic nerve fibers, making the practice more activating.
2. Pausing the breath in after inhale is like an energetic feast; it will stimulate the body and externalize the mind.
3. Progressively lengthening the inhalation while moving in and out of a backbend or lateral posture repeatedly; it will stimulate the sympathetic nerve fibers, invigorating the system.
4. Restorative back-bending over props can yield a *post-digestive effect* of brahmana in a restful style of practice.
5. A systematic relaxation that yields feelings of expansiveness awareness, brightness and joy.
6. A brahmana pranayama can stimulate the nervous system and manipulate the prana called *pran'*, which moves in and up, replenishing the body and uplifting the mind.
7. A meditation that invokes feelings of clarity, connection, strength, courage, contentment, and vitality.

## BRAHMANA SHAVASANA TECHNIQUE

*Expansive Relaxation, ParaYoga©*

This technique leaves students feeling light, bright, and expansive. Once you get your client settled comfortably into shavasana offer them this guidance:

*Become aware of your body and the space occupied by your body. Feel all the points of contact your body makes with the*

*floor... Now feel the surface of your skin. Feel where the clothing or props touch the skin... Feel the bare skin.*

*Now, bring your awareness to the space just off the surface of the skin. Imagine that there is a radiant golden light filling the space around you hovering just off the surface of your skin in all directions. Relax...*

*The more you relax, the more difficult it becomes to tell where you end and the light begins.*

Allow the client to rest in silence for five to ten minutes. Bring them up to a seat slowly and ask them to sit quietly for a few moments to reflect on how they feel. You may want to move them right into a pranayama or meditation technique. Whether you move into another seated practice or conclude your session with this shavasana, when they bring their attention back, ask them to report to you how this practice left them feeling.

#### BEGINNER/INTERMEDIATE BRAHMANA NADI SHODHANA PRACTICE:

No breath suspensions or retentions. Pinch the open nostril slightly to control the amount of airflow coming in and out. The numbers below are the seconds it takes to complete each breath. There are four steps to this practice. Repeat each step two times. The last step can be practiced for additional rounds if time permits. Note: If at any point your clients loses breath control or runs out of breath do not progress to the next stage.

Stage 1:	In Left: 6	Hold In: 0	Out Right: 6
	In Right: 6	Hold In: 0	Out Left: 6
Stage 2:	In Left: 6	Hold In: 2	Out Right: 6
	In Right: 6	Hold In: 2	Out Left: 6
Stage 3:	In Left: 6	Hold In: 4	Out Right: 6
	In Right: 6	Hold In: 4	Out Left: 6
Stage 4:	In Left: 6	Hold In: 6	Out Right: 6
	In Right: 6	Hold In: 6	Out Left: 6

*Beginner/Intermediate Brahmna Nadi Shodhana Practice*

## THE LIGHT OF THE HEART MEDITATION

Below is an original script inspired by the countless meditations I've done that led me into the light of the heart. It cultivates feelings of contentment, peace, hope, and joy. Once you get your client settled comfortably into their meditative seat, offer them this guidance:

*Become aware of your body and the space occupied by your body. Now, become aware of the region of your chest and the breath moving in this area... Attune to the region of the heart, not the physical organ, but the spiritual center of the body. See a tiny little light there.*

*Notice that as you inhale and exhale that this light responds to*

*the flow of breath. On the inhale, it becomes bigger, brighter, more expansive. On the exhale, it retracts slightly. Gradually, as you relax and concentrate, the light expands in all directions to encompass more and more of your body...*

*Eventually, the light will encompass the whole body, as if you are sitting in a sphere of light emanating from your own heart center. At this point, you can drop the technique and just rest in the light of your heart.*

*See what's available to you in this space. Whatever you most need in this moment, it is available to you here, maybe it's peace, healing, acceptance, compassion, or a sense of connection. Whatever it is, just feel it, rest in it, let it penetrate your body and mind.*

*(Rest in silence for three to ten minutes)*

Allow the client to meditate in silence for at least three minutes. When they bring their attention back, ask them to report to you about their experience with this meditation. Were they able to visualize? Did they feel any sensations? Were they able to connect to and receive what they needed? Notice for yourself any shifts in the client's field too.

## PRANA VAYU MEDITATION

*Meditation to replenish and restore vital energy, ParaYoga©*

The *pran' vayu* is one of the directional movements of life force energy, or prana. It is the forward moving breath or the inward



force. It governs restoration. According to Dr. David Frawley, Pran' moves primarily from the navel to the crown of the head, though its primary locations are the heart and head.

*Begin seated comfortably in your meditation posture with your spine tall and eyes closed.*

*Inhale: Draw a white light in through the gates of your five senses: eyes, ears, nose, skin, and mouth towards your third eye.*

*Hold your breath in for 4–6 seconds and meditate on a ball of white light at the third eye.*

*Exhale: Feel prana move out from the brain and out through the gateways of the senses. This process heals the nervous system, cures fatigue and exhaustion. It provides a pranic bath to the brain, refreshing and revitalizing it for more productive intelligence.*

*(Repeat 9 times.)*

*Next, Rest quietly. Meditate the brain soaking in a bath of white light, completely replenishing and restoring vital intelligence.*

Allow the client to meditate in silence for at least three minutes. When they bring their attention back, ask them to report to you about their experience with this meditation. Were they able to visualize? Did they feel any sensations? How do they feel now? Notice for yourself any shifts in the client's field too.

*Reminders:*

The intensity of the brahmana effect is determined by the number of brahmana components you include in the practice. The level of intensity you offer should be evaluated during each session. For example, if your session is in the evening and your client is getting ready for bed, you don't want the practice to negatively impact the quality of their sleep. However, if a person comes to you in the morning and they have a full work day ahead of them, you can give them a very energizing practice. Remember, a little can go a long way.

Conclude your ninety-minute session with a fifteen-minute guided systematic relaxation, pranayama practice, or guided meditation. If you don't have time for all three in a single session, please do at least one of these each time a client comes in.

## A THIRD OPTION SAMA VRITTI

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SAMA VRITTI MEANS *same wave*. So, it is the equal balance between inhale and exhale, langhana and brahmana, sun and moon. Occasionally, you might not be able to tell if a langhana- or brahmana-style practice is best. You can never go wrong with sama vritti. It's always safe and always useful. Sama vritti harmonizes the field more subtly than a distinctive langhana or brahmana practice. It's great for a client who has a medical condition you aren't sure how you can best work with.

It's useful anytime someone's field of parts is really polarized. Polarization is when two or more parts are in a tug of war in someone's field or when they are caught in a loop of opposite behaviors.

An extreme example would be the field of someone suffering with bulimia. There is a part of them that feels shameful, so it binges on food for comfort; then, another part feels guilty for allowing that to happen and purges, and then, the first part feels shame for purging and binges again for comfort. Polarized systems benefit greatly from sama vritti practice sometimes. It's useful anytime you sense that *integration* is what the field needs.

## SAMA VRITTI: APPROACH TO PRACTICE

Short or long, physically challenging or not, a sama vritti yoga practice is about creating equality and balance between left and right, front and back, and, most importantly, between inhalation and exhalation. Here are some sama vritti techniques you can experiment with:

1. A well-rounded asana practice that includes postures from all categories of poses without over emphasizing any specific category.
2. Focusing on asymmetrical postures will create balance between the dominant and non-dominant side of the body, as well as the left and right cerebral cortex of the brain. Be sure to hold postures the same number of breaths on each side.
3. A strong focus on the inhale and exhale being the same length and quality, the same number of counts. (I often count for clients.) This balanced breathwork should be done in the asana practice as well as in any relaxation, pranayama, or meditation that you teach.
4. Alternate nostril breathing where the inhale and exhale are the

same number of counts and the retentions and suspensions are also the same is a powerful sama vritti practice.

## SO HUM MEDITATION

So Hum Meditation has long been revered as one of the most centering and balancing mantras. It loosely translates to mean, “I Am.” It connects the field to the Knower of it. In just five minutes of breathing with So Hum, we might start to feel an internal shift.

*Focus on the breath rising and falling in the nostrils, like two streams of light. Relax 10% more effort in your inhalation and 10% more effort in the exhalation. As you relax your effort, the streams of breath will begin to equalize.*

*When the breath is effortless and even, start thinking the sound SO on inhale, and the sound HUM on exhale. So Hum loosely translates to mean, “I Am”.*

*Do this until you forget about the breath and the sound is established in your mind. Rolf Sovik says that, “it’s as if your mind becomes So Hum.”*

## OTHER SAMA VRITTI TECHNIQUES

Some of the most effective tools for harmonizing the field come directly from the Himalayan Tradition. Two have been discussed already, Nadi Shondanam and meditation on the sound So Hum, as described above. The other two I teach in the *Yoga Mindset Coaching Certificate Program*, and they are also accessible in audio for-

mat for free on Insight Timer. Below are the direct links for those FREE recordings:

Insight Timer is a free phone app that I contribute to. There, you can listen to and learn to teach the “Essential Qualities of Meditative Breath” and “61 Points of Light” exercises. These are two of the most powerful tools in my toolbox. It is highly suggested that you practice them enough to memorize them. Then teach them frequently.

You can find many of the practices in this chapter and many more on Rod Stryker’s Sanctuary App listed in the Resources at the end of the book.

## MEDICAL DISCLAIMER, RISKS AND CAUTIONS

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THE PRACTICES ABOVE are for informational purposes only and do not constitute as a substitute for medical advice. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical consultation, diagnosis, or treatment. Always have clients seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health professional with any questions they may have regarding a medical condition. Never attempt to diagnose a client’s medical condition or recommend anything outside of your own scope of practice. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay suggesting a client seek medical attention when appropriate.

There are inherent risks to practicing yoga, and there are certainly medical reasons to avoid certain langhana and brahmana techniques. Since the energetic techniques can affect blood pressure, it is important to know if your client has unregulated high or

low blood pressure or any kind of heart condition. We don't ever want a client with high blood pressure to retain the breath in or out. We don't ever want a client with a pulmonary (heart) condition to hold a posture sustaining their hips above their heart. Finally, we don't want a client with low blood pressure to get dizzy, so we have to monitor the langhana effect for them. When in doubt, teach *sama vritti*.

## CONCLUSION AND MORE INFO

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STARTING A PRIVATE session with some Parts Work Inquiry gives you some insight in the whole field of a client's body and mind. Offering your client the appropriate langhana, brahmana or sama vritti yoga practice for the unique needs that day will leave them thinking you are some kind of magician, which, in a sense, you will be! Accept the gratitude with a humble heart, remembering to check your own prideful *Helper* parts and give the credit to Yoga itself and to your student's practice.

There are of course, many other techniques and approaches to practice. I'd love to spend time with you personally to share even more. The Yoga Mindset Coaching Certificate Program is a great place to start.

CHAPTER NINE  
PRIVATE YOGA  
BUSINESS 101

BHAGAVAD GITA 3.20

*Perform your work with the sole intention to guide people, and  
for the welfare of the society.*



**N**OW THAT YOU know what to do in a private yoga and coaching session, you need to set up and maintain a successful Private Yoga Business. In the follow pages, you will learn how to recruit and retain clients, choose an affordable location to work in, set competitive prices, do client intake forms, take notes, and keep financial records. There are also some juicy marketing tips. Be aware of any parts of you that get triggered as you read this chapter. Stay curious and breathe...

## HOW TO GET PRIVATE CLIENTS

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ONE OF THE most common things I hear from yoga teachers is that

they would like to do more private sessions, but don't know how to approach potential clients. The paradoxical thing about that statement is that *you* don't have to approach anyone when students are already approaching you.

Before or after almost every yoga class you teach, at least one person typically comes up to you to share something that is going on in their body or life. Recall for yourself a scenario like this: a fifty-year-old man comes up to you after class and tells you how tight his glutes and lower back are. How do you respond to him? Do you drop down to the floor and show him a pigeon or a locust pose, or perhaps a forward bend or a twist? I know you do that because I used to do that. Most yoga teachers are so committed to helping others; our *Helper* Parts jump in automatically and give our knowledge away for free on the spot.

The problem with this *Helper* part jumping in at this moment is that the *Helper* isn't Self. So, it isn't able to hear the concerns of the part of you that has invested thousands of dollars into yoga training, gas money, yoga teaching clothes, props, etc. This *Finance Manager* part knows it needs to pay your bills and that doing privates is an option, but it has no space in your awareness in that moment because the *Helper* has taken over.

Here's the harsh reality for the *Helper* part: it thinks it's helping by harmlessly giving your knowledge away for free, but it's actually not helping anyone by doing that because people only value what they invest in. If you just show them what to do for free, they don't do it 90% of the time. However, you charge them \$100 for it, they will actually do it 90% of the time. So, by taking that pause long enough for Self to consider the roles and responsibilities of all



your Parts, the Helper will actually be helping the student. If you give your time and knowledge away for free, both your Helper and Finance Manager don't get their needs met. So, neither the student or you gain much from the exchange.

So, what if, instead, when someone comes up to you after class to ask for help, you took a pause, acknowledged the *Helper*, and asked it to make space for the part of you that wants to be doing private sessions? Imagine again that the fifty-year-old man comes up to you after class and tells you how tight his glutes and lower back are. This time, instead of jumping on the floor to show him some postures, you say to him:

*Mmm, sorry this is troubling you. I'd love to take the time to explore all of what's involved and see if we can get you some relief. If you really want to resolve this, I'd love to do a private session with you. Here's my card, call me. Or better yet, I have my calendar, so we could just schedule it now!*

This response works not only for people complaining about physical pain, but also for any experience in which someone approaches you about stress, anxiety, grief, frustration, overwhelm, fatigue, etc. Of course, you won't book a private session every time you say something like that, but if you don't get into the habit of saying it, you won't book anyone. You have to set yourself up to succeed. The only way to do that is to pull back the *Helper* part to make space for the *Private Session Teacher* and let the Self lead you in the highest way for all involved.

Your practice is to take this approach with you everywhere you go. You may be at a friend's house party when someone discovers

that you are a yoga teacher and tells you that they want to try it. Hand them your card and tell them that the best way to learn yoga is one-on-one for their own, unique needs. If it feels appropriate, you can offer them a friends and family discount rate. We'll discuss discounts, pricing, and other marketing basics later in this chapter.

## WHERE TO DO PRIVATE SESSIONS

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THERE ARE SEVERAL options when it comes to where to locate your private sessions. Where you choose to do them depends on how comfortable you feel with the client and what resources you have available to you. Some questions to consider are:

- ✦ Can I work remotely, online?
- ✦ Is my home a safe and appropriate place for me to see this client?
- ✦ Would I be willing to go to this client's house or business?
- ✦ Do I have access to an affordable space I can rent by the hour?

## WORKING ONLINE

A simple and affordable way to work with clients online is through the popular video conferencing platform called Zoom. A free Zoom account allows you to meet with a single person for an unlimited time. It will allow you to share your screen, record sessions, and it integrates with many online calendars for scheduling. The least expensive paid Zoom account is called Zoom Pro. For less than \$150 per year you can access several other features and

have up to 100 devices logged onto a Zoom meeting for an unlimited time.

In addition to Zoom or a similar video conferencing platform, you will need a way to collect payments. The easiest and more cost-effective way to accept payments is through fund transfer phone apps. I use Venmo, Zelle, Paypal and CashApp. All you need to do is download an application onto your phone, then link it to your bank account. Most of these apps have a free payment transfer option, so they cost nothing to use.

Other methods of payment collection have processing fees associated to them. If working in-person, you can swipe credit cards right from your phone using Square or Paypal. Most website hosting platforms like WIX and Weebly have credit card processors built into the site which you can set up to collect payment directly through your website, but there are additional fees to do this.

In my experience, you don't need expensive video cameras or microphones for online coaching sessions. What you do need is to maximize the potential of the device you already have. Here are some things to consider:

- ◆ Keep clutter out of view of your camera. Consider creating a space in your home near your internet router that you can create a simple, calming backdrop.
- ◆ Have your face well lit. A simple, affordable way to up-level your lighting is to purchase a small circular light called a "Selfie Ring." These often plug right into your phone or computer. These compact and mobile lights can be found for \$20-\$50.
- ◆ It's suggested to keep your face in the full frame and speak

consistently toward the device's microphone. If you or your client hear an echo or feedback when speaking, lowering the speaker volume, or using headphones or earbuds will eliminate the issue.

Working online allows you to work with people all over the world, not just locally. However, since most of your clients will likely be your yoga students, it's nice to have the option of an in-person location to meet as well. Until you build up your clientele enough to rent a monthly office of your own, renting space by the hour is a great option.

## RENTING A SPACE BY THE HOUR

When renting office space by the hour, it's recommended to not pay more than 20% of what you feel comfortable charging your clients per hour. For example, if you are comfortable charging \$100 per hour and your rent is \$20 per hour, then you take home \$80 per hour.

Sometimes, we think a rent offer seems reasonable when we first hear it. When you hear the words, *I'll rent you space for \$25 per hour*, you probably think, that doesn't sound too bad. However, you have to do the math to see if it actually makes sense *before* you say yes.

Let's say you are only comfortable charging \$100 for a 90-minute coaching and yoga combo session. At a rent payment of \$25 per hour, you would be paying \$37.50 in rent and only making \$62.50 for that 90-minute session, which is about \$42 per hour. Is that acceptable to you? If not, you have four options:

1. Negotiate that \$25 per hour rent fee down lower
2. Raise your 90-minute session price up higher
3. Advocate for a combination of both 1 & 2
4. Or, look for another space!

Often, a massage therapist or psychotherapist who rents a room in a building will have certain hours of the week that they don't use their space. Sometimes, they are willing to rent the space to you for a very minimal charge. Don't get discouraged if you have to ask around a bit, but it is absolutely possible to find an affordable, conducive space to rent by the hour. Places to investigate renting space by the hour include:

- ◆ Yoga or fitness studios
- ◆ Massage, chiropractic, acupuncture or other holistic health offices
- ◆ Liberal churches
- ◆ Psychotherapy practices
- ◆ Privately owned health food stores and book stores

## SETTING PRICES

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**WARNING! BEFORE YOU** set any prices, there is some research to do, things to consider, and decisions to make first. You'll want to understand how to price competitively, examine your costs and investments, and scan for any well-intentioned Parts that will sabotage your success.

## INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Start with some internet research on industry standards. There is always a low and high range of what different people charge for similar services. Some things to look up include:

- ✦ The overall standards for the price of private sessions.
- ✦ What other yoga teachers charge for private sessions in your local area. *How does my service compare to theirs? Am I offering something more or less?* (Hint: if you are also coaching, you are likely offering something more!)
- ✦ If any other yoga teacher also doing a form of life-coaching, how much does that person charge?
- ✦ What do other holistic health service providers charge in my area? (Think: how much does the average massage cost?)

## EVALUATING COSTS

Now that you have a sense of how to price your private sessions competitively, the next thing to examine are the costs to you. As you read this section, make a list of all the expenses and personal costs that come up. The obvious expenses of your business might include reoccurring charges, such as space rental and gas money.

A less obvious expense might be your overall financial investment into yoga study and practice. Estimate the amount of money you've spent on taking a certain number of yoga classes each month over a number of years. Add in the costs of workshops you've paid for and your YTT tuition. Now, add in the yoga props and books you've purchased, as well as the eco-friendly clothing you buy to teach in. These investments are all considered part of

the cost of doing business and deserve to be considered part of the value of your service. The total financial investment you've made into yoga is its monetary value to your Financial Manager Part. Most yoga teachers believe that it's our duty to give back what yoga gave to us. So, teach it both *at* and *for* the value it gave you. Please don't cheapen yoga's value by not considering your own financial investments in the value of what you should be paid for teaching it.

The least obvious expenses are what economists call opportunity costs. Opportunity costs are what you are *giving up* in order to do something. Maybe it's costing you time with your family to drive to a certain location? Maybe it's costing you the chance to work somewhere else and make more money? The bottom line is that after you consider of all your costs, what you will actually earn from doing a private session has to be worth more than what you are giving up to do it.

## SETTING PRICES FROM SELF

The most important thing is to make your pricing decisions from Self—not from a part of you that would undervalue your investments and costs to offer this service. Beware of the sneaky *Self-Doubting* part, also known as a *Martyr*. That part will want to set your prices for you. The *Martyr* thinks it is helping you by keeping you humble or helping others by wanting your service to be affordable to everyone. But these parts of you will shoot you in the foot every time. Remember, people only value something to the level they are invested in it. So, set your prices to help both you and your students value the work you do together and succeed.

I know what you're thinking, *But what about this person, and that population?* Yes, of course you can volunteer, do a trade, take a pro-bono client, or offer a discount when it's appropriate to do so. The key is to not make the mistake of undervaluing your business and undercharging for your service just to keep it affordable to the few people who really need and deserve a discount. Undercharging doesn't work in business. What does work is to value your time, value your investments and costs, value the lives of your students, value the yoga industry, and value yoga itself... then, set your prices.

## WHY YOU SHOULD SELL PACKAGES

The best way to make money teaching private sessions is to sell packages. This doesn't mean that you can't have single session rates, but those rates should be much higher than the price per hour in a discount package. Your discount package price must be the lowest amount you are willing to work for per hour.

People make the mistake of setting the single session rate as the "real price." Then, when they try to create discount packages, they are not making enough money per hour. It will feel uncomfortable if a part of you thinks that you are *over-charging* for the single session rate. Don't let it confuse you. The discounted package rate is the real amount per hour you want to earn. The single session rate is a higher-priced option for a reason. Anyone who is not willing to commit to doing the work over a few sessions needs an incentive to get the most out of that single session. Your job is to help them value that session as much as possible so they will actually learn and practice what you teach them. The more they value it,



the more likely they are to buy a package next time to save money. And, if they don't rebook, at least you made a little more money for that single session.

## RETAINING CLIENTS

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RETAINING CLIENTS IS important because it costs you less to retain them than it does to have to recruit a new one. The inquiry and empathy skills you will refine over time will automatically help you retain clients. Again, over half of your ability to help someone comes from their ability to feel safe and supported by you. Compassionate inquiry builds trust. As you engage clients with meaningful questions and observations, they will see you as someone to turn to in moments they need support.

There are also some practical ways to keep clients engaged and enrolled with your business. Assigning homework for your clients to do between sessions is useful both to the client and to your business. You might ask them to do certain postures or techniques a certain number of times, ask them to watch a video, or practice along to an audio recording on Insight Timer or the Sanctuary App. You might encourage them to be mindful of a certain activated part, or a parts dynamic with another person. Giving your client homework helps them know what and how to practice in between sessions. When you check up on their progress, you also hold them accountable to doing the program or lesson. Therefore, your involvement helps them succeed. It also keeps them actively engaged with your teaching and coaching, so it also helps keep you employed.

Another practical way to retain clients is to schedule forward. Always attempt to book the next session at the end of today's session. If you are selling packages, which I hope you will, keep track of when packages are ending and offer to schedule ahead so they can secure their desired appointments. It's helpful to attempt to schedule an individual at the same day of the week and time for each session, if possible. Standing appointments get cancelled less frequently than random ones.

There are other best practices for client retention, too, all which focus around trust. It is so important to start and stop sessions on time, just as much as it's important to keep the appointments that are already booked. Also, if you tell a client that you will email them something or follow up with them, you must do it if you want them to continue to trust you and buy into your program. Be sure to do scheduling from Self, which has a realistic understanding of your schedule of commitments. Be careful of *Helper* parts that might over-schedule you, causing you to later cancel an appointment. If you cancel on your clients, forget to do something you said you would do, or chronically show up late, they will lose trust in you.

## WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE A CANCELLATION POLICY

I highly recommend implementing and enforcing a cancellation policy. You are reserving each time slot to earn money. If someone cancels an appointment last minute, your income suffers. Clients need to be aware that you expect to be compensated for lost wages. You can decide what feels right to you. I do suggest charging a full session fee if the client is a no-call, no-show for the appointment.

If they cancel within 24 hours and reschedule at the time of cancellation, you might consider only charging them 50% of the full session fee. Again, beware of *Martyr* parts.

## HOW TO DO A CLIENT INTAKE

When you meet with a client for the first time, it's important to do an initial consultation and create an intake form. The information gives you important insight into the whole landscape of the client's inner and outer life. They will tell you things (objectively), and you will notice things (subjectively). Write down both the things they tell you and the things you notice.

For example, let's say you ask a client about their relationship. The words they say make it sound like everything is fine, but if you notice that they get fidgety or stopped making eye contact, you might want to ask more questions. Non-verbal cues help us identify which parts are most activated in a client's system. When creating a file for a new client, include the following:

- ◆ Name
- ◆ Age (or approximate age)
- ◆ General Health: medical conditions, past injuries, surgeries, current medications
- ◆ Relationship Status: level of happiness and health of relationship (or solo-hood)
- ◆ Children: ages, genders, any special needs or concerns
- ◆ Occupation: level of happiness at job, stress level of job
- ◆ Typical day: Sleeping and eating schedules, family time, work-life balance

- ◆ Reason for Scheduling an Appointment: What do they want help with, and what do you think they may also need help with?

## HOW TO TAKE NOTES

It's very useful to take notes at each session with a client. It helps you to remember important things about your client and track their progress. An easy approach to taking notes is to use the modified model of medical SOAP notes, as shown below. Just hand-write or type a few bullet points in each section. You could also use a voice recording device. However, if you choose to record your notes, make sure you store them in a confidential place. Here is a suggested template:

### SUBJECTIVE

This is where you note what they tell you. Ask why they scheduled the appointment or came in to see you. What's troubling them today? What symptoms do they have? What level of pain or discomfort are they in?

### OBJECTIVE

This is where you note the things that you observe. What things stood out to you as important to note? Does this person seem stressed, depressed, motivated, etc.? How is their posture? What does their body language tell you? What Parts do you notice are active? What level of awareness do they have about any active Parts? What level of awareness do they have about the underlying cause of their symptoms (like lack of rest, over use of a body part, poor habits, etc).

## ACTION

This where you note what you did together that day. List important points of conversation. What did you talk about? Which Parts did you work with or discuss? List any postures, breathing, relaxation, or meditation techniques that you guided them through.

## PRESCRIPTION

This is where you note the homework you are giving them and any actions you want to remember to do in the next session. This is also the place to make a note about things you want to remember to check in with them about next time as well. How often did they do their homework? Or, how is their sister, who has cancer, doing?

## MARKETING BASICS

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AN IMPORTANT GOAL of marketing is to sell a specific product or service to the exact person who wants or needs it. You should ask yourself, “Who is that perfect client, and where can she be found?” Another goal of marketing is to make it as easy as possible for that person to actually buy that product or service. So, you make it easy for the people you want to serve to find you, schedule with you, and pay you. Keeping those two things in mind, here are some basic tips.

### HAVE A WEBSITE

YourName.com is the best URL for most health and wellness practitioners to use. Unless you are selling a product or running an

organization, use your name or something close. Over time, things change in life and in business, but your name never changes. On your website have a bio, photos, your Yoga Mindset Coaching info and payment buttons, times and locations of your weekly group classes, and your contact information. Set yourself up to take payments online. I use PayPal, but there are others as well.

### HAVE AN INFO FLYER (OR BUSINESS CARD THAT STANDS OUT)

The main goal is to direct people to your website. Have a small flyer or business card with your face on it. People remember faces and will be more likely to feel connected to you. Be fearless in self-promotion. Carry your card and pass it out often!

### USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Use only two social media networks to promote yourself. Pick the two where you have the most access to your ideal clients. Don't waste time in more than two platforms. Stick with the two you know and like the best and keep in mind where you get the most engagement. For example, my two preferred social media platforms right now are Facebook and Instagram.

### USE EMAIL

Collect email addresses & send a monthly newsletter. Use a professional online email platform like *Mail Chimp* or *Constant Contact*. Make the email a combination of content-sharing and promotion. To retain clients to your email list, don't just promote, also inspire, teach, and reflect. My e-newsletters get the most opens when I

write a personal message in them, so you may consider doing the same.

## ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS

Therapeutic relationships are based on trust. Building rapport with your students is essential. Here are a few ways to do that: learn students' names, make yourself available for conversations, engage in social media with students, and support student activities and businesses. This not only a useful business strategy, supporting the people who are supporting you is how we build *sangha*, spiritual community. Success comes when we understand that devotion is a two-way street.

## CREATE A REFERRAL NETWORK

Trade referrals with good massage therapists, chiropractors, physical therapists, acupuncturists, dentists, and hair stylists. Invite anyone you feel confident referring your students to. Offer to promote them in exchange for them promoting you. Have each other's cards on hand. This is most effective when you are a client, patient or patron of the person you are asking to trade referrals with. People are most likely to recommend you to their clients if they know you personally and feel seen by you too.

## VOLUNTEER

Teaching yoga for free to those in need is an act of yoga itself. A side benefit to that highest reward is that it can also earn you visibility and respect in your community.

## FINANCIAL RECORDS AND TAXES

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BEING SELF-EMPLOYED MEANS that you have to take responsibility for your own financial records and taxes. There are many ways to keep track of your income and business-related expenses. Choose a way that works best for you and update those records at least once a month, if not more. There are software programs like QuickBooks to help you, or you can save receipts and create spreadsheets. It's also important to put money aside each month for paying your taxes. I suggest having a separate savings account to put 30% of your earnings into for taxes. You can pay quarterly or annually, but quarterly is recommended.

Small, local accounting firms often work with self-employed people for significantly less than the big chain tax firms you see advertised on television. An accountant can give you guidance about what you write off as a business expense and find you breaks and refunds you may not have known about otherwise. For example, did you know that if you see any clients in your home, you can write off a certain percentage of your rent/mortgage and heating costs? Meeting with my accountant each year saves me a significantly greater amount of money than it costs me to meet with him. That's why I recommend you do the same. Ask for referrals and shop around for the best rates.

### LIABILITY INSURANCE

Most places you teach will require you to carry Personal Liability Insurance as a yoga teacher. Several insurance companies have policies that will cover you for both group classes and private yoga



sessions. I partner with BeYogi.com. It's comprehensive, affordable and diverse in coverage. BeYogi is an insurance policy made by yogis for yogis. They even plant a tree in your honor when you join! To receive a discount, go to: <https://beyogi.com/karina>

## BUSINESS 101 SUMMARY

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TO RECAP, TO start and maintain a successful Private Yoga Business, you need to know how to reach, approach, and retain clients, have an affordable location to see clients in, value and set competitive prices, track client progress, and keep financial records. Be mindful of any part of you that may be overwhelmed with the big picture. Remind it from Self, that all you have to do is take it one step at a time. Building a business takes time, and there is no rush or perfection. Just keep evolving with your business.

## CHAPTER TEN

# ETHICS

### YOGA SUTRA 2.35

*In the presence of one firmly established in non-harming, others  
feel calm and safe.*



**E**THICS ARE DEFINED as personal, moral values, which guide individual choices and behavior. Ethics are also a set of principles, rules, or standards governing the conduct of the members of a group or profession. In the United States, the *Yoga Alliance* has a webpage called “Code of Conduct,” and most yoga teacher training programs include a conversation about ethics. Your YTT host may have even suggested Donna Farhi’s splendid book, *Teaching Yoga: Exploring the Teacher Student Relationship*. In September 2021, I published an article about the abuse of power in yoga communities on Medium that went viral. All of those resources are already available to you. So here, I want to offer a “parts perspective” when thinking about our ethical responsibilities.

## THE YAMA OF AHIMSA

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THE YAMAS AND Niyamas are the principles of moral conduct in yoga. When Patanjali lists a group of things in the Yoga Sutra, the first thing in the list is either the most important or it is the umbrella for which everything else in the list falls under. The first Yama is Ahimsa (non-harming). To practice ahimsa as a yoga teacher is to basically avoid any action that might conflict with the highest interests of a student. Ahimsa extends from safe practices in the classroom, to relationships with students off the mat, to how we conduct business.

In the classroom, ahimsa charges yoga teachers with the responsibility to put our students' safety first. It is our duty to keep their bodies safe when we sequence poses, teach alignment, and make hands on adjustments. It is our duty to keep their energetic systems safe by teaching a balanced practice. It's our duty to keep their psychological systems safe by being aware of power dynamics, emotional limits, and trauma triggers. It's also our duty to keep their identities safe by being inclusionary of religious and cultural backgrounds, sexual and gender orientations, levels of ability, size, age, race, etc.

When we are Self-led, non-harming actions usually come pretty naturally. However, there are times when a part of a student might trigger a part of the teacher. In these moments, we have to be mindful not to accidentally cause harm. For example, you may encounter a *difficult* student who just doesn't do what you instruct them to do, no matter how many times you instruct them to do it. This student's behavior may trigger a part of you that feels frus-

trated, undervalued, or unheard. The *Frustrated* part of you might want to avoid continuing to correct that student's alignment or cause you to want to talk about that student negatively. It's important for this part of you to remember that nothing a student does or doesn't do is about *you*.

## SOME COMMON PARTS DYNAMICS

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IN 1983, AMERICAN developmental psychologist Howard Gardner described nine unique types of intelligence. If a student lacks kinesthetic intelligence, this person might not be physically able to integrate what you say into how they move their body. Self knows that your job is to keep the student's body safe in the classroom and keep that person's reputation safe in the world. Self will not assume a student is being "defiant," nor will it take any unskillful behavior of a student personally. Self will always approach a student with curiosity and compassion. On a rare occasion, your *Teacher* part may not know how to keep a student safe or stop them from being disruptive in class. Self will know when it's time to reach out to your mentor or supervisor for guidance or refer a student to a different teacher or practitioner. Self will never abandon genuine care for a student, although *Helper* parts might over-help if we're not mindful of them.

*Helper* parts share some qualities with the Self, such as compassion. But the problem with *Helper* parts is that they help others, and they help *you* feel reassured that you are a good person. *Helper* parts often work hard to prove your worth to another part of you that has guilt or shame. So, *Helpers* can be a little sneaky.

If a client brings something to you that is outside the scope of your education and understanding, your *Helper* parts might still want you to be able to help. Self knows that sometimes being of the highest service means sending a client to see someone else. So, have a referral network ready and know when it is time to refer a client to another healthcare professional. It's recommended that you have the phone number or business cards of at least one trusted: physical therapist, psychologist, allopathic medical practice, chiropractor, massage therapist, ayurvedic practitioner, and acupuncturist.

If you don't know anyone personally who seems to be the right referral for a client, consult within your network. Seek the specific kind of referral from a trusted source. When consulting with someone on behalf of a client, please remember that it is always your ethical responsibility to maintain client confidentiality. Even if you are consulting with your own yoga teacher, coach, or mentor, you must not name your students directly. Maintaining the privacy of your students is *ahimsa*.

Another parts dynamic to be aware of is known in psychotherapy as *transference* and *countertransference*. I suggest you spend some time researching these terms as well as the term *projection*. When you offer genuine attention and concern, feelings may arise for students in response to your care. These feelings may cause the student to project feelings of family or romantic love onto you. A part of them might want your approval like a parent, while others may want your returned affection like a friend or lover. They may make assumptions about you or have expectations of you based on how their parents or an authority figure behaved. Some may have a part

that needs to be special to the teacher. They may praise you, give you gifts, or offer you things from their places of business. They may invite you to get together outside of class or private session.

This kind of attention and adoration will feel good to certain parts of you, and that's okay. But it's important to remember that there is a healthy and unhealthy way to be in relationship to student projection and transference. My point is not that you should never accept a compliment or a gift. Certainly, you can receive genuine gratitude with a humble heart. Just be aware of any parts of the student that may be gifting or praising you and be aware of any parts of yourself that might indulge in that praise. Once in a while, there may a good reason to say, "Thanks, but I can't accept this." Trust your gut. Inquire with Self.

Self understands that there is an inherent power imbalance in the teacher/student relationship. The teacher is in control. Directing the movements, thoughts, and breath of the student. Students are vulnerable. Yoga practice cracks open their bodies, minds, and emotions. Yoga guides them home to their calm, steady center of Self. They feel and experience new, sometimes tender things.

Yoga is the symphony transforming their lives, but since you are the conductor, they might project this glory onto you. They may put you on a pedestal as a mystical healer, substitute parent, or the ultimate romantic desirable. When this happens, you have to redirect their projection back to Yoga because, ultimately, the power and glory belongs to the student's yoga practice. It is their choice to seek guidance and show up and do the work that is changing their life. However, if the client says that you deserve the glory,

and it validates an insecure part of you, then you might have to be mindful of your own *Countertransference*.

Monitoring your own countertransference protects you as much as the student. When you get knocked off the client's pedestal of approval (and eventually you will) and if you aren't aware of your *Countertransference* part, it will hurt like hell when your most devoted student suddenly disappears. Again, it's not personal; it never was. But, if you believe that it is about you, suffering is inevitable.

Some relationships are complex. Of course, a student may become a friend or business associate at some point. It's all about keeping your dealings fair and in equal exchange of energy. If you stay anchored in the integrity of Self, it will not allow you to take advantage of a student or let you be taken advantage of. Self respects the power dynamics in a therapeutic relationship and has healthy boundaries. Self knows that having sexual relationships or getting intoxicated with students is never in the highest good of the student. Self is clear about the concept of a "right relationship."

## ETHICS CONCLUSION

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OUR MOST IMPORTANT ethical responsibility as yoga teachers and coaches is ahimsa, to do no harm. For Part Work practitioners, it's to check our parts and stay in Self. If you want more information about general ethics, at the beginning of this chapter I mentioned both Donna Farhi's book and the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct.

CHAPTER ELEVEN  
THE OBSTACLES

YOGA SUTRA 2.16

*The suffering of the future which has not yet come, should be anticipated and avoided.*



**A**NYTIME WE EMBARK on an unfamiliar journey or take on a new venture, it takes time to get into a flow. It's important to anticipate that you will face some challenges along the way. Of course, the greatest obstacle to succeeding as a private yoga coach will be the activity of your own parts. This activity includes not only the ethical considerations of the previous chapter, but also the formation and operation of your business.

PARTS TO BE AWARE OF

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AROUND MONEY

A *Skeptic* might get concerned about how other people will perceive you when it comes to financial dealings. These parts may



cause you to undervalue your services when negotiating your prices or private session work location. So, make sure you do the Valuing Exercise in Chapter Nine to keep these parts in check.

You'll also want to beware of the barter. A lot of people will offer to trade services with you. It's important that a *People Pleaser* part of you doesn't have you working solely on trades (unless you trade for food and shelter, too). Be sure to allow your *Financial Manager* part to say "no" more times than the *People Please* or *Helper* parts say "yes" to trades that don't serve you exceptionally well.

I find it extremely useful to let my *Financial Manager* have a pre-determined statement when it needs to say no to a request for a trade. You may also find it useful to practice saying something like, "Thanks so much for the offer to trade. I actually only trade services with one person at a time and currently that slot is filled. I'm happy to work with you now at my Friends and Family discounted rate, and let you know if that trade slot opens up in the future."

In my experience, people often respond quite positively to a clear statement like that. Sometimes they book with me and sometimes they don't; either way, I keep my designated time slots reserved for those who are invested in the work enough to pay for it. I also only trade with people whom I would pay for their service. Sit with that idea for a moment. It was a realization I wished I'd come to sooner.

With all that said, I have shared in some very successful, mutually beneficial barterers. I also reserve a number of appointments each month for sliding scale clients because I am committed to equity in yoga. Anything is possible when we honor ourselves as much as we care about others. It's all about balance.

## IN THE COACHING PROCESS

Of course, there are obstacles in the actual coaching process, too. You may have a *Self-Doubt* part arise in you about your own abilities. These kinds of parts may get activated if you hear a client say something and you're not sure what question to ask next. Or, you might find yourself feeling confused about which part of a client is actually speaking, or if the client is in Self or a part. The *Self-Doubt* parts of you just want you to do the right thing. So, this part may also get triggered if you aren't clear which yoga practice will be the most supportive. It's important to remind the *Self-Doubt* part of you that you appreciate its concerns, but as long as Self is leading you, everything will be fine. So, ask that *Self-Doubt* part to step back. When in doubt, trust the yoga. Refer to the notes on Sama Vritti in Chapter Eight. Just teaching one of these techniques will reestablish you in Self, and the client will always benefit.

It's the job of our *Fixer* parts to want to solve problems. There will likely be times when the solution to a client's problem is obvious to you. Just remember that handing them the answer won't have the same impact as if you ask a question that leads them to discover the answer for themselves. Here is an example. I recently had a few meetings with a sex worker in her twenties. It was clear to me that she suffers with mental health issues and dependency on substances. From Self, I could see that she came to me because she needed someone to validate her traumatic experiences, accept her and believe in her goodness and capabilities. I could also see that the *Rebel* part of her did not like being told what to do. So, I compassionately affirmed her and offered her possibilities, but never once told her directly that what she really needed was inten-

sive therapy and rehabilitation from alcohol and drugs. Though I knew this, telling her would not be as impactful as her realizing it herself. And she did. After just a few sessions together, she informed me that she appreciated our coaching time but that she needs to enter substance abuse treatment. I saw a report on social media that she is now one month sober. When we hold space from Self and ask our *Fixer* parts to be patient, our clients can discover their own truth when the time is right for them to awaken it.

## CLIENTS PARTS

Parts of a client may also trigger an uncomfortable part of you. Think back on the example from Chapter Five, when the IFS trainee ended her training session with the gentleman who told her that he was attracted to her. It's important to remember not to take anything a client says personally. The reality is that the activity of a client's field is never about *you*; it's about how the client's system developed in order to cope with the circumstances of the client's life. This is also important to remember when you encounter a part of a client that holds radically different beliefs or core values than you do. An example of a kind of this encounter is if you are a liberal Democrat and you have a client who is a conservative Republican. In a circumstance like this, you might have to keep an eye on your own moralistic parts so that they don't judge the client and sabotage your ability to meet them at their level of readiness.

## WOUND-MATING PARTS

Another coaching trap is the potential to relate to a client's story.

Occasionally, you may find yourself identifying with what a client is going through. This might activate a part of yourself and trigger what author Caroline Myss calls *wound-mating*. Wound-mating is when your system sympathizes with a client's feelings based on a similar experience to your own. A *Warrior* part of you may get triggered and think that it is trying to protect your client, when actually it is trying to protect you from experiencing those feelings yourself. If a client's wound activates your wound, it could cause a part of you to take over the field of your consciousness, squashing out Self. So, watch out for any *Wound-Mating* parts. I find this particularly tricky for those who have been cheated on in a romantic relationship. If a client reports infidelity and the coach has been in that situation before, it is very difficult for the coach not to impose their own reactions, values and choices on the client.

We must be mindful of our own stories and stay curious about what is true for the person telling us theirs. We don't know a client's story. Because though similar, it is not our exact story. Empathy says, "I know how you feel." Sympathy says, "I feel as you do." So, we must empathetically, not sympathetically, accept what is right for the client in this moment based on their story, not ours. If you wound-mate with a client, curiosity is key.

## YOU HAVE SUPPORT

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I KNOW THAT this can seem like a lot of information. So, I hope your *Student* part isn't feeling overwhelmed. If it is, please know that I completely understand, and I am ready and willing to support you. In the next chapter, we will discuss the best way to inte-

grate what you've learned reading this book. We'll also discuss how you can avoid getting caught in these common coaching traps and how to best overcome any obstacles you may face.

CHAPTER TWELVE  
MOVING FORWARD

BHAGAVAD GITA 10.11

*Out of compassion for them, I [the eternal Atman], dwell in their hearts to destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the shining lamp of Self-Knowledge.*



**T**HE SLOKA ABOVE is one I chant in Sanskrit often. To me, it encapsulates the whole teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. According to the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, the soul of human is one with and the same as *Brahman*. When Brahman, or the supreme consciousness, lies within an individual, it is referred to as Atman. My wish for you is to know yourself as the Eternal Atman and know that you are always connected to the Source of Love and pure consciousness.

I hope that you can feel into the refuge inside your own immaculate heart and to go there daily to seek perspective beyond the field of your experience. The more time you spend there, the more your buddhi will stay awake, and from that vantage point, you'll be able to witness your own parts with compassion and dispassion.

You'll know both joy and peace as the centered, curious, calm, clear, compassionate, confident, creative, courageous Self.

As you identify more with your own Seer, you will be able to help others do the same. From Self, you'll be able to establish an ethical and successful private yoga and coaching business. If you follow the steps outlined in this book, you'll not only be able to be of higher service to your yoga students, but you'll also be able to set your own schedule and prices, teach fewer group classes, and make more money per hour teaching by doing private coaching and yoga sessions.

Your role as a coach is to stay awake to your own field, as well as your client's field of activity. When you are anchored in Self, you'll be able to effortlessly employ Yoga Mindset Coaching tools, like using parts language to inquire about and empathetically reflect back the activity in your client's field.

Both horizontal and vertical coaching are facilitated out of your compassionate inquiry. Asking powerful questions can help clients gain perspective, clarity, and relief. When you meet the answers to those questions with loving kindness, acceptance, and curiosity, your clients will feel seen, cared for, and safe. When these conditions are established, healing, growth, and transformation are possible for the client.

When you couple the Parts Work coaching with a langhana, brahmana, or sama-vritti yoga practice, this can deepen the healing effects for the parts and support your client in resting in the calm, clear, center of Self. Your clients will know that something special happens when they come in to see you. So, when you invite them

to buy a package or set up the next appointment, many of them will jump at the chance to keep working with you.

## BECOME A YOGA MINDSET COACH

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AS OF 2019, there are no requirements for either yoga teachers or life coaches to be certified in the USA. So, most of you can use all the tools you've learned in this book on your own. However, as we covered in the last chapter, there will be obstacles and challenges to starting a private yoga and coaching practice.

There is a list of resources at the end of this chapter for you to continue learning. However, there is no better way to integrate what you've learned than to go through the Yoga Mindset Coaching (YMC) online training program. Going through YMC training will give you direct support in developing your private yoga and coaching business. Having personal support and guidance makes the process faster, easier, and more likely to be successful.

The YMC program is designed to walk you through each component of the book (and then some). You'll have the opportunity to practice the coaching skills, ask questions that arise for you in the moment, and hear additional commentary on things not here in the book. The homework between training weeks gives you a chance to practice with friends and family, while also receiving direct coaching from me at the next session if you got stuck somewhere. Becoming a certified YMC coach will also allow you to use the YMC name in your advertising and become part of an international community and registry of Yoga Mindset Coaches.

I wrote this book in honor of the teachers who gave me the



tools to succeed. This is why I train yoga teachers and coaches—it's my duty to pass the torch to you. We are all worthy of success, happiness, effective guidance, and heartfelt support. It's my privilege to serve your highest way.

I hope you'll join our movement. Yoga Mindset Coaches are a tribe of teachers and healers who have learned to thrive by uplifting and empowering others through the applied philosophy of yoga as well as its physical practices. Whether you join our community or not, I'd love to hear from you, so please keep in touch!

# RESOURCES

## BOOKS

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- ◆ *Parts Work: An Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life*, by Tom Holmes
- ◆ *Intro' to the Internal Family Systems Model*, by Richard C. Schwartz
- ◆ *Yoga for Wellness'*, by Gary Krafstow

## USEFUL WEBSITES & TOOLS

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- ◆ Tom Holmes, PhD: [wingedheart.org](http://wingedheart.org)
- ◆ *Inner Active Cards*, by Sharon Eckstein: [inneractivecards.com](http://inneractivecards.com)
- ◆ The Internal Family Systems: [selfleadership.org](http://selfleadership.org)
- ◆ BeYogi Insurance (discount) : [beyogi.com/karina](http://beyogi.com/karina)
- ◆ Insight Timer Meditation App: [insighttimer.com/karinaaynmirsky](http://insighttimer.com/karinaaynmirsky)

## KARINA'S WEBSITES

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- ◆ Yoga Mindset Coaching: [yogamindsetcoaching.com](http://yogamindsetcoaching.com)
- ◆ Sangha Yoga Institute: [sanghayoga.com](http://sanghayoga.com)

## SOCIAL MEDIA

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- ◆ Follow us on Facebook: Yoga Mindset Coaching
- ◆ Follow me on Instagram: Karina.Ayn.Mirsky
- ◆ Subscribe on YouTube: karinayn

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## ABHINIVESHA

the fifth klesha; fear of death; fear of losing identity

## ABHYASA

“to stay in the endeavour”; consistency of practice

## AHUMKARA

“I”maker; identifying aspect of mind

## ASMITA

the second klesha; misidentification with field of thoughts

## AVIDYA

the first of the kleshas; ignorance; misapprehension; misunderstanding

## BRAHMANA

“to build or increase”; energizing energetic effect

## BUDDHI

decision making aspect of mind; can be asleep or awake

**CHITTA**

storehouse of samskaras (latent impressions); recording aspect of the mind

**CLASSICAL YOGA**

a dualistic philosophy comprised primarily of the teachings of the Yoga Sutras and Bhagavad Gita

**DVESHA**

the fourth klesha; aversion to discomfort; avoidance

**EXILE**

IFS term for parts which carry strong and painful feelings and beliefs

**FIREFIGHTER**

IFS term for the part which distract from the feeling of exiles

**IFS**

Internal Family Systems Therapy™; psychotherapy model developed by Richard Schwartz in the 1980's

**KARMA**

action; what we think, do and say

**KLESHA**

the obstacles to clear seeing; the roots of suffering; there are five kleshas, avidya, asmita, raga, dvesha and Abhinivesha



**KSHETRA**

constantly changing field of prakriti; that of the temporary manifest world; includes all human experiences

**KSHETRA-JNA**

Knower of the Field; Center of Consciousness; Soul

**LANGHANA**

“to reduce”; calming energetic effect

**MANAGER**

IFS term for parts that have to figure out, control, regulate, and manage things

**MANAS**

perceiving aspect of the mind; the five senses

**OPPORTUNITY COST**

an Economics term for what choosing to do something is costing you

**PARAYOGA®**

American style of yoga developed by Rod Styer; focus is on sequencing asana, pranayama, and meditation for physiological, energetic and psychospiritual benefits

**PARTS**

IFS term for the multiplicity of subpersonalities in the human psyche; each plays an essential role in the person’s life; every part is inherently good and trying to help

**PARTS WORK®**

a process based on IFS and the Buddhist Model of consciousness developed by Tom Holmes, PhD

**PRAKRITI**

Samkhya term for “matter”; anything in the manifest world that is changeable

**PURUSHA**

Samkhya term for “pure consciousness”; that which rests in the city of the body; the eternally changeless true nature

**RAGA**

the third klesha; attachment; grasping to comfort

**ROGERIAN THERAPY**

Client Centered Therapy developed by Carl Rogers; core competencies include, empathy, reflective listening and unconditional positive regard

**SAMA VRITTI**

“same wave”; balanced energetic effect

**SAMSKARA**

latent impressions; stored in chitta; can be positive or negative

**SELF**

IFS term for the aspect of the humane psyche which is differentiated from Parts; possesses the ideal leadership qualities; relates to the awakened buddhi in yoga

TANTRA

non-dualistic philosophy; the interconnectedness and inherent divinity in all things in the manifest and unmanifest world

UNBLENDING

IFS term for separating identity from a Part

VAIRAGYA

“non-coloring”; non-attachment; dispassion

VASANA

an impulse; tendency to think, feel, act or speak based on past experience

VIVEKA

discrimination; right discernment

VRITTI

thought wave; movement of mind

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**K**ARINA AYN MIRSKY, is an international Yoga and Meditation Educator. She is the director of Sangha Yoga Institute in Kalamazoo, MI, and the developer of Yoga Mindset Coaching. Karina has been teaching yoga since 1998 and training teachers since 2004. She holds a BBA in Business Management and a MA in East/West Psychology and has been in private practice since 2009.

In 2008, *Yoga Journal* named Karina as one of 21 *top yoga teacher shaping the future of yoga in America*. She's been honored in publications including the *Huffington Post*, *Spirituality & Health*, and *Yoga International* of which she graced the Winter 2012 cover. Karina is

also a popular contributor to *Insight Timer*, along with meditation teachers like *Tara Brach*, *Ram Das*, *Jack Kornfield*, and *Sharon Salzberg*.

Committed to inclusion, anti-racism and restorative justice in the yoga industry, Karina works with people of color, LGBTQAI+, people with disabilities, and even a death-row inmate at San Quentin State Prison.

Karina trains yoga teachers in the U.S. and at Blue Osa in Costa Rica. Many travel with her annually for her international yoga and service retreats, (join her Retreat Facebook Group). Karina's YouTube channel has some provocative content and she is currently blogging on Instagram and Medium.

## MY THANKS TO YOU

**I**F YOU PICKED up this book, it tells me that you want something *more*. Maybe it's more information about yoga, or maybe it's more tools to help people? Maybe it's the desire to make more money doing what you love... or, maybe it's all of the above?

If you've read all the way to the end of this book, there is a good chance that you have what it takes to earn a higher wage and be of higher service as a yoga teacher. To help you know if you are ready to start using the tools in this book to transform lives, I have a FREE gift for you. It's a simple 10 question quiz that will show you if you are ready to start teaching fewer group yoga classes and double, *if not triple* your income by doing private sessions.

If you're anything like me, you don't want to give away your email address just to get a FREE gift. So, you don't have to sign up for my email list to take this quiz. I'd love to have you on my email list to give you important updates, discounts and exclusive offers, but you can also connect with me in a more interactive way on my social channels. I'm active on Instagram and Facebook. Thanks again for reading, I'd love to hear from you!