



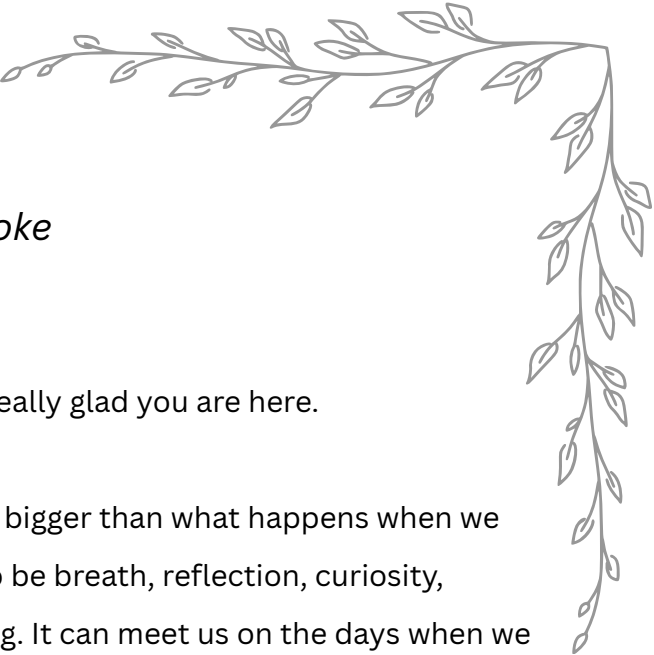
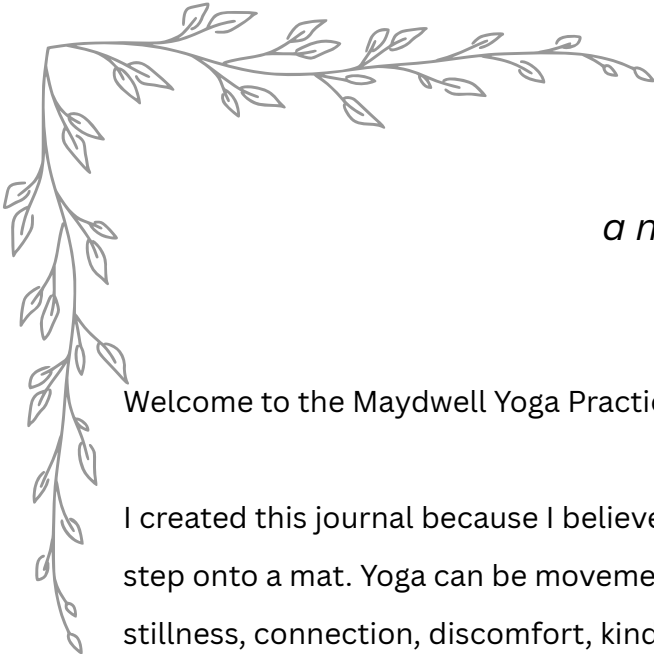
THE YOGA PRACTICE JOURNAL

VOL. 1

WHAT IS YOGA?
FINDING THE FOUNDATION OF
YOUR PRACTICE

Yoga Belongs to Everyone





Welcome

a note from Brooke

Welcome to the Maydwell Yoga Practice Journal. I am really glad you are here.

I created this journal because I believe yoga is so much bigger than what happens when we step onto a mat. Yoga can be movement, but it can also be breath, reflection, curiosity, stillness, connection, discomfort, kindness, and learning. It can meet us on the days when we feel strong and the days when simply showing up feels like enough. Most importantly, I believe yoga belongs to everyone.

This journal is an invitation to slow down and get curious about what that means for you. Over the course of this journey, you will move through twelve volumes, each one exploring a different part of the practice. We will begin with some of the most fundamental questions: What is yoga? Why do we practice? What does it actually mean to have a yoga practice? How do we know whether the practice we have is truly ours? As you continue, we will explore yoga philosophy, self-study, the Eight Limbs of Yoga, and the ways yoga can begin to influence the life we live away from our mats. We will return to ideas more than once because learning does not happen in a perfectly straight line. Sometimes we need to meet an idea several times before we understand what it has to teach us.

There is one thing I want you to know before you begin: you can start this journal whenever you are ready.

This is an undated practice journal, which means it does not matter whether you begin on January 1, April 14, September 27, or a random Tuesday in the middle of a month. You might begin Volume 1 today and work through it for the next four weeks. When you finish, you can move into the next volume, regardless of what the calendar says. The months and the volumes give us a general structure for the journey, but they do not need to match the actual months of your life.

The entire collection contains 365 days of practice and reflection, but there is absolutely no expectation that you will complete those 365 days in 365 consecutive days. Maybe you miss a day. Maybe you miss a week. Maybe life gets especially busy and you put the journal away for a month or two. Maybe you finish one volume and need some time before you are ready for the next one. That's okay. Your yoga practice will still be here. Your journal will still be here. You can pick it back up whenever you are ready and continue exactly where you left off.

I think that matters because life is not something we can always organize neatly into a calendar. We have jobs, families, relationships, responsibilities, celebrations, grief, changes, unexpected things, and seasons when we simply have less to give. I never wanted this journal to become another obligation sitting on your list of things you are supposed to accomplish.

This is not a chore. It is not a challenge you have to complete. And it is most definitely not something you can fail. It is time you are choosing to carve out for yourself.

Throughout these pages, I will ask you questions about your practice, your experiences, your assumptions, and the things you may have been taught about what yoga is supposed to look like. Some questions may be easy to answer. Others may make you stop and think. Some may stay with you long after you close the journal. You may find that your answer to a question changes six months from now, and that is part of the practice too.

You don't have to have the perfect answer. In fact, I hope you don't feel like you need one. This journal isn't here to tell you what you should think or what your yoga should look like. It is here to give you space to notice, question, explore, and learn more about yourself.

You are also allowed to be a beginner here. You are allowed to change your mind. You are allowed to practice differently than you did yesterday. You are allowed to have a body that changes, a life that changes, and a yoga practice that changes right along with you. You don't have to be flexible, experienced, strong, or knowledgeable to belong here. You don't need

the right clothes, the right body, the right mat, or the right answer. You simply need to be willing to begin.

This journal is also part of something bigger to me. We live in a world that can sometimes feel very focused on taking. More attention, more money, more followers, more products, more from one another. I believe we need to practice giving, too. Giving our time. Giving our knowledge. Giving encouragement. Giving people a place to belong. Giving what we can to the people and communities around us.

That is one of the reasons I wanted to create this journal as a free resource. Education has value, and teachers deserve to be valued for the knowledge, time, and care they give to their students. At the same time, I believe meaningful education can also be offered freely simply because we have something worthwhile to share. This journal is one small way that Maydwell Yoga can give something back.

So take your time with it. Write honestly. Write messily. Skip a question if you aren't ready for it and come back later. Spend several days thinking about something that really catches your attention. Take a break when you need one. Come back when you are ready. There is no prize for finishing first, and there is nothing you need to prove. This is your practice, and this is your time.

Over the next year, or however long your year takes, I hope these pages help you learn more about yoga, but I hope they also help you learn more about yourself. I hope they give you permission to question some of the things you have been told about yoga and to discover what actually feels meaningful to you. I hope you find ideas here that stay with you beyond the page and beyond the mat.

And when life pulls you away, as it inevitably will, I hope you remember that you can always come back. Your practice will be here waiting for you.

Let's begin.

Day 01

WHAT IS YOGA TO ME?



A Little Something to Consider:

Before we can explore what yoga is, it can be helpful to notice what we already believe it is.

Most of us don't arrive at our practice with a completely blank slate. Maybe our first understanding of yoga came from a teacher, a friend, a studio, a book, social media, a television show, or simply watching someone move through a series of poses. Maybe we learned that yoga meant stretching. Maybe we learned that it meant strength, flexibility, relaxation, spirituality, mindfulness, or something else entirely. None of those experiences are necessarily wrong. They are simply pieces of the picture.

Yoga has a long and complex history, and the physical practice many of us know today is only one part of a much larger tradition. As we move through this journal, we will explore some of those different pieces and consider what yoga can mean beyond the shapes we make with our bodies.

But before we begin adding anything new, let's start with what is already here.

Today's Reflection:

When you hear the word "yoga," what does it mean to you? What experiences, people, ideas, or beliefs have shaped your understanding of yoga?

A Meditative Practice: What does your yoga look like?

As you color, think about the question you just explored. You don't need to create anything recognizable. Let your colors, shapes, and marks represent whatever yoga feels like to you today. There is no right way to complete this page. Add labels, if you'd like!



Day 02

IS MY YOGA MORE THAN POSES?



A Little Something to Consider:

When many of us first encounter yoga, we encounter it through movement. We see people practicing downward-facing dog, standing in balance, folding forward, twisting, or sitting quietly on a mat. It is natural, then, to think of yoga as the physical practice we can see. The physical practice is certainly part of yoga, and for many of us it may be the place where our relationship with yoga begins. But yoga has never been limited to the shapes we make with our bodies.

Yoga includes practices of awareness, breath, concentration, meditation, ethical living, self-study, and our relationship with ourselves and the world around us. The physical practice can become a way into those deeper parts of yoga, rather than being the entirety of the practice.

This doesn't mean that you have to practice yoga in a particular way or that physical movement is somehow less meaningful. It simply gives us another question to consider: What might be possible when we stop defining yoga only by what we can see?

Today's Reflection:

Think about your own yoga practice. What parts of your practice happen beyond the physical poses? Are there ways you already practice yoga that you haven't previously thought of as "yoga"?

Day 03

WHY DID I BEGIN?



A Little Something to Consider:

Most of us come to yoga for a reason. Maybe we wanted to move our bodies, become more flexible, find some quiet, manage stress, build strength, connect with ourselves, or simply try something new. Sometimes someone else introduces us to yoga, and sometimes we find it on our own.

The reasons we begin can tell us something about what we were looking for at that particular point in our lives. But those reasons don't have to remain the same. What brought you to yoga years ago may not be what keeps you coming back today. A practice that once centered around movement might become a place for stillness.

Something you began for your body might eventually teach you about your mind. You might have come looking for one thing and discovered something completely different. There is no requirement that your original reason for practicing remain your reason forever. Our lives change, our bodies change, and our needs change. Our practice can change with us.

Today's Reflection:

Why did you begin practicing yoga? What were you hoping to find, change, understand, or experience when you first started? Has that reason changed?

Day 04

WHAT MAKES IT YOGA?



A Little Something to Consider:

Two people can move through the exact same physical practice and have completely different experiences. One person might be paying close attention to their breath. Another might be thinking about what they need to do after class. One might be moving with curiosity, while another is trying to force their body into a shape they think they should be able to make.

From the outside, their practices might look almost identical.

Yoga is not defined only by what a posture looks like. What we bring to the practice matters too. Our attention, our breath, our intention, our awareness, and our willingness to notice what is happening can all change the experience.

This doesn't mean there is one particular mindset you must have before you are "really practicing yoga." It simply invites us to become curious about what happens inside the practice, rather than judging it only by what can be seen from the outside.

A beautiful pose can be yoga. So can a simple movement. So can sitting quietly, breathing, observing your thoughts, studying, or noticing how you respond to something difficult. The question isn't always, "Did I do the pose correctly?"

Sometimes the more interesting question is, "What was happening while I was doing it?"

Today's Reflection:

Why did you begin practicing yoga? What were you hoping to find, change, understand, or experience when you first started? Has that reason changed?

Day 05

WHAT AM I TRYING TO PROVE?



A Little Something to Consider:

We may step onto the mat wanting to feel stronger, more flexible, more capable, or more accomplished. We might notice ourselves working toward a pose because we want to finally be able to do it. We might push through discomfort because we don't want to stop. We might compare ourselves to the person beside us, to a teacher, to a photograph we saw online, or even to the person we used to be.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to grow or challenge ourselves. But sometimes our practice can quietly become a place where we feel like we have something to prove. We may try to prove that we are strong enough, flexible enough, advanced enough, disciplined enough, or simply “good” at yoga. When that happens, it can become harder to notice what we actually need today.

Today's practice is an invitation to notice the difference between growing and proving. What if you could practice without needing to demonstrate anything at all?

Today's Reflection:

Have you ever found yourself trying to prove something through your yoga practice? What were you trying to prove, and what might your practice feel like if you had nothing to prove?

Day 06

HOW DO I MEASURE MY PRACTICE?



A Little Something to Consider:

We are often taught to measure progress by what we can see. We can hold a pose longer. Reach farther. Balance longer. Learn a more complicated shape. Practice more often. But yoga can change us in ways that are much harder to measure.

Maybe you notice your breath more easily. Maybe you recognize when you are holding tension. Maybe you are learning to be patient with yourself. Maybe you are becoming more comfortable with stillness or more willing to listen when your body says enough.

These changes may never show up in a photograph, but they can still be meaningful parts of practice.

Today's Reflection:

How do you usually measure progress in your yoga practice? What changes have you experienced that cannot be measured by how a pose looks?

Day 07

CAN I STAY?



A Little Something to Consider:

We've been thinking about how we measure our practice. Sometimes we measure it by how far we can go, how long we can hold a pose, or how quickly we can move into something more challenging.

But there is another question we can ask: What happens when we stop trying to get somewhere? Sometimes we move through our yoga practice quickly. We transition into the next pose before we've really experienced the one we're in. We may be thinking about what comes next, counting down until the pose is over, or simply moving because movement feels easier than staying still.

A posture can give us information when we give ourselves enough time to notice it. We may discover effort, discomfort, impatience, resistance, ease, or the urge to escape. Our physical practice can sometimes reveal patterns that show up elsewhere in our lives. The pose eventually ends. The question is what we learn while we are still in it.

Today's Reflection:

Think about a posture you tend to rush through or avoid holding. What happens when you stay with it a little longer? What might your experience in that pose teach you about the way you respond to discomfort, waiting, or stillness away from your mat?

A Meditative Practice

Choose one familiar yoga posture that feels safe and accessible to you.

Set a timer for a comfortable amount of time and stay.

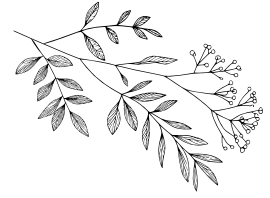
You do not need to go deeper. You do not need to make the pose harder. Simply notice.

Afterward, use this page to draw, write, color, or make marks that represent what you experienced while staying.



Day 08

WHAT IS MY BODY TELLING ME?



A Little Something to Consider:

Our bodies do not feel the same every day. A posture that feels comfortable one morning might feel completely different the next. We may have more energy, less energy, more range of motion, more tension, or simply a different experience than we expected.

It can be tempting to decide that one sensation is something to overcome. But our physical practice can also be an opportunity to listen.

Listening to the body does not mean avoiding every challenging sensation. It means becoming curious about what we are experiencing and learning to distinguish between effort, discomfort, and signals that tell us we need to change what we're doing.

The goal isn't always to get further into a posture. Sometimes the practice is noticing when enough is enough.

Our lives change, our bodies change, and our needs change. Our practice can change with us.

Today's Reflection:

Think about a time when your body told you to change, modify, or stop during a yoga practice. Did you listen? What made it easy or difficult to listen to your body in that moment?

Day 09

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I “CAN’T” DO THE POSE?



A Little Something to Consider:

There are poses we may believe we can't do. Maybe we can't make the shape we see in a photograph. Maybe our balance isn't there yet, our body doesn't move that way, or something simply doesn't feel right.

But “can't” can mean many different things.

Sometimes it means our body isn't ready. Sometimes it means the pose isn't appropriate for our body. Sometimes it means we haven't found a variation that works for us. And sometimes it means we have decided there is only one way the pose is supposed to look.

The physical practice gives us an opportunity to become curious about that word. Instead of immediately deciding that we can't, we can ask: What is actually happening here?

Today’s Reflection:

Think about a pose you have told yourself you “can't” do. What does that word mean in your experience? Is there something your body is communicating, something you are still learning, or an expectation about what the pose is supposed to look like?

Day 10

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EFFORT & FORCE



A Little Something to Consider:

Effort is a natural part of yoga. We may engage our muscles, concentrate our attention, challenge our balance, or stay with something that feels difficult. Effort can help us learn, build strength, and become more familiar with our practice.

Now, let's discuss force. Effort and force are two different things. Sometimes we push harder because we believe harder must be better. We force things. We may hold our breath, tense our bodies, ignore discomfort, or try to make a pose happen simply because we want to achieve it. We can become so focused on reaching a particular shape that we stop paying attention to how we are getting there.

Yoga gives us an opportunity to notice this difference. We can challenge ourselves without needing to force an outcome. Sometimes the practice is finding the right amount of effort for today and recognizing when pushing harder is no longer helping. The way we respond to difficulty on the mat may also tell us something about how we respond to difficulty in the rest of our lives.

Today's Reflection:

Think about how you respond when something feels difficult in your yoga practice. Do you tend to push harder, back away, or find a way to work with what is happening? What might this reveal about how you approach challenges away from your mat?

Day 11

WHERE IS MY ATTENTION?



A Little Something to Consider:

Our bodies can be in a yoga pose while our minds are somewhere completely different. We might be thinking about work, dinner, a conversation from earlier, or what we are going to do when practice is over. We may move through an entire sequence without realizing how little attention we were giving to the experience itself.

This is not a failure. A wandering mind is part of being human. Yoga gives us the opportunity to notice when our attention has drifted and gently bring it back. We might return to the breath, the sensations in the body, the feeling of our feet against the floor, or simply the movement itself.

Where we place our attention can change our experience of the practice. The same posture can feel completely different when we are actually present for it.

Today's Reflection:

Choose one familiar posture and notice where your attention goes while you are in it. What pulls your attention away? What helps you return? What do you notice when you are truly present with the experience of the pose?

Day 12

WHAT DOES COMFORTABLE MEAN?



A Little Something to Consider:

Yoga is sometimes described as finding a balance between effort and ease. But what does ease actually feel like? And does a posture have to feel completely comfortable to be useful?

Some poses may feel challenging without being harmful. We might notice effort in our muscles, a strong sensation, or the work of maintaining our balance. Other sensations may tell us that something needs to change. Learning to recognize the difference takes attention and experience.

Comfort doesn't necessarily mean that a pose feels effortless. It can mean that we feel able to stay present with what we are experiencing without needing to fight it, escape it, or push past what our body is telling us.

Today's Reflection:

Think about a pose that feels challenging but manageable for you. What makes the difference between a useful challenge and a sensation that tells you to change something? What does "comfortable" mean to you in your practice?

Day 13

CAN I LOSE AGAIN?



A Little Something to Consider:

There is a lot we can control in our yoga practice. We can choose where we practice, what we practice, how long we stay, and how much effort we give. But there are also things we cannot completely control. Our bodies change. Our balance changes. Our energy changes. Our thoughts wander. Some days simply do not feel like other days.

Sometimes we respond to this uncertainty by trying harder to control the experience. We may hold tightly to the way we think a pose should feel, become frustrated when our body does something unexpected, or keep pushing because we want a different result.

Yoga can give us a place to practice something different. We can make choices about how we practice while also learning to accept what is actually happening in the moment. Letting go of control does not mean giving up. It can mean recognizing what is ours to influence and what we may need to allow.

Today's Reflection:

Where do you tend to seek control in your yoga practice? What happens when something does not go the way you expected? Is there anything your practice could teach you about letting go of control in other parts of your life?

Day 14

WHAT DOES MY BREATH HAVE TO DO WITH IT?



A Little Something to Consider:

We breathe all day without having to think about it. Yet when we bring our attention to the breath during yoga, something changes. We begin to notice its rhythm, its depth, its pauses, and the way it responds to what we are doing.

Our breath can also give us information. It may become faster when we are working hard, shallow when we are tense, or uneven when something feels uncomfortable. Sometimes simply noticing the breath helps us recognize what we might otherwise overlook.

We don't always need to change the breath. Sometimes the practice is simply noticing it and allowing it to be part of the conversation between the body and the mind. The breath can become a place to return when our attention wanders, a way to notice what is happening, and a reminder that we are here.

Today's Reflection:

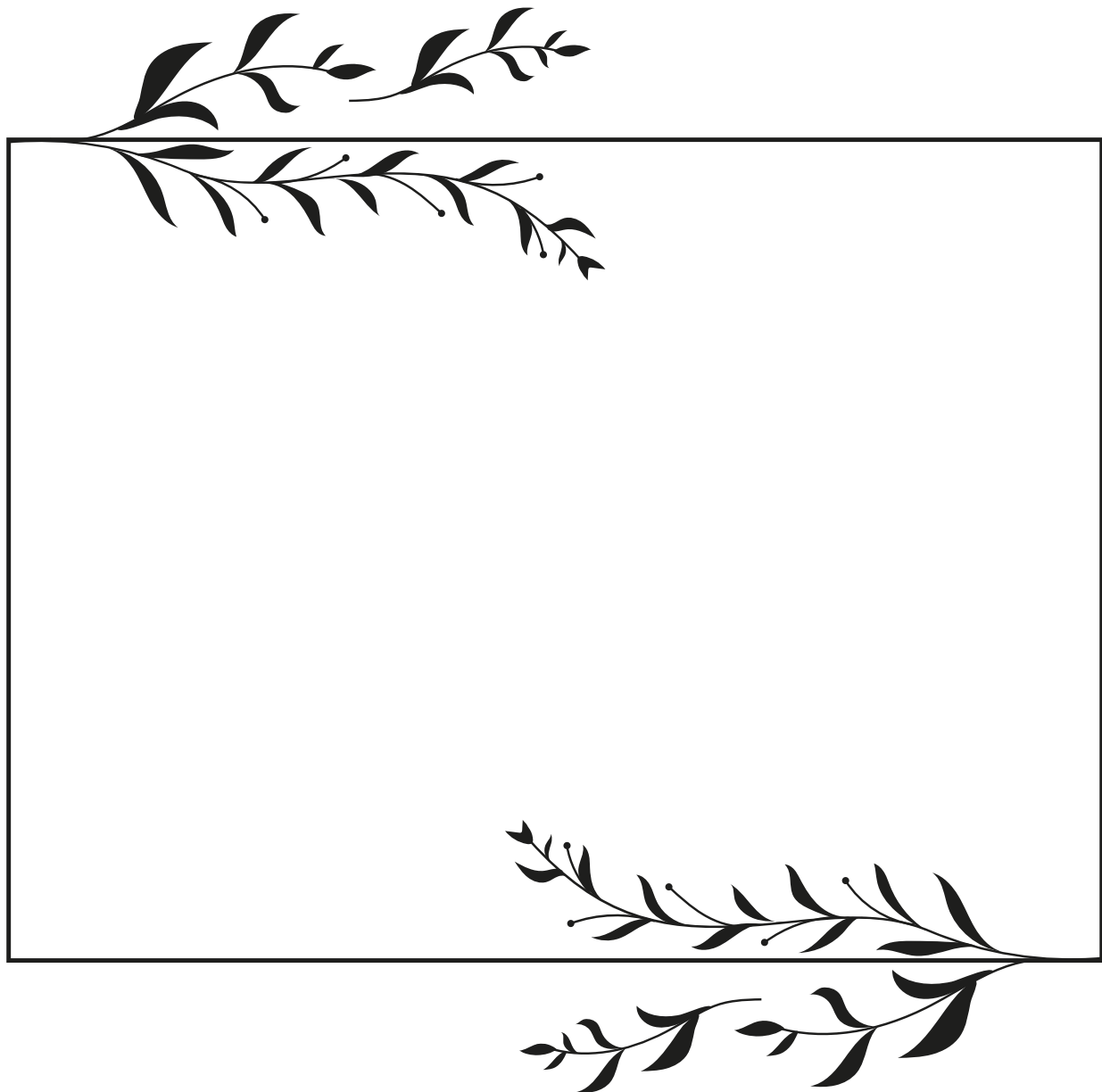
During your next yoga practice, spend some time paying attention to your breath without trying to make it different. What does your breath tell you about your experience? Does it change when you become challenged, distracted, relaxed, or uncomfortable?

A Meditative Practice: Follow Your Breath

Find a comfortable position and bring your attention to your natural breath. Without trying to change it, begin making a slow line across the page. Let the line move with your breathing. Perhaps it rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale. Perhaps it wanders, loops, pauses, or changes direction.

There is no pattern to follow and nothing to make “right.” Let the movement of your hand reflect the experience of your breath today.

When you finish, take a moment to look at your page. What do you notice? What patterns or rhythms can you observe?



Day 15

WHAT CHANGES WHEN I BREATHE?



A Little Something to Consider:

The breath is always with us, but we don't always practice with it. When we begin to connect our breathing with movement, the experience of a posture can change. A movement may become slower. We may notice when we are holding our breath. We may discover that a challenging pose feels different when we stop fighting it and allow the breath to remain steady.

The breath can also give movement a rhythm. Instead of thinking only about where the body is going, we can begin to experience the movement as something that happens alongside the breath.

There is no single way every movement has to be paired with every breath. The invitation is simply to experiment. What happens when you stop treating the breath as something happening in the background and allow it to become part of the practice itself?

Today's Reflection:

During your next practice, choose a few familiar movements and intentionally connect them with your breath. What changes when you allow your breath to guide or accompany your movement? What do you notice that you might not notice when you focus only on the physical shape?

Day 16

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRACTICE?



A Little Something to Consider:

We use the word practice all the time in yoga. We practice poses. We practice breathing. We practice meditation. We practice yoga.

But practice means something different from simply doing something.

When we practice, we expect to repeat. We expect to make mistakes. We expect some days to feel easier than others. We return to something we have not yet mastered, not because we have failed, but because there is always something more to learn.

This is one of the things that makes yoga different from something we simply accomplish and check off a list. There is no final version of your practice that you have to arrive at. You can practice the same pose for years and continue to discover something new about it, about yourself, or about the way you approach the world.

Today's Reflection:

What does the word "practice" mean to you? Think about something you have practiced outside of yoga. How did you change through the process of practicing, even before you became "good" at it?

Day 17

AM I PRACTICING OR PERFORMING?



A Little Something to Consider:

There is a difference between practicing something and performing it. Practice gives us room to experiment, make mistakes, change our minds, and begin again. Performance asks us to show what we can do.

Yoga can become a performance surprisingly easily. We may find ourselves practicing differently when someone is watching. We might push a little farther because we want to look capable, avoid a modification because we don't want to appear less advanced, or choose a pose because we know it will look impressive.

Sometimes we don't even realize we are performing. The audience may be another person, a teacher, social media, or simply the version of ourselves we think we are supposed to be

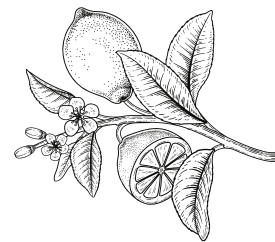
Noticing this doesn't mean there is anything wrong with enjoying challenging poses or sharing your practice with others. It simply gives us a chance to ask whether we are practicing for the experience itself or trying to produce an image of ourselves through our practice.

Today's Reflection:

Have you ever practiced yoga differently because you knew someone was watching, teaching, photographing, or evaluating you? What changed? What do you think you were trying to communicate through your practice?

Day 18

WHAT DO I NEED TODAY?



A Little Something to Consider:

Your yoga practice does not have to stay the same from one day to the next. What you need from your practice can depend on what is happening in your life, your energy, your mood, your body, or simply the kind of day you are having.

There may be days when you need some heat and intensity. You might gravitate toward a vigorous practice such as Bikram or another heated, physically demanding style. Other days may call for something quieter. Yin Yoga, with its longer-held poses and emphasis on stillness, or Restorative Yoga, which uses props to fully support the body, may offer a very different experience. You might want to move, sweat, stretch, rest, breathe, meditate, or simply spend some time on your mat without a particular goal.

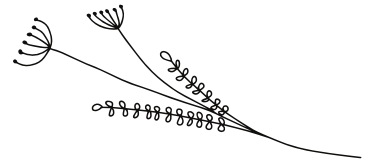
Learning to choose your practice intentionally is part of getting to know yourself. Instead of asking only, “What kind of yoga do I usually do?” you might sometimes ask, “What do I need today?”

Today’s Reflection:

Think about what you need from your yoga practice right now. Do you need energy, movement, strength, quiet, rest, grounding, space to think, or something else? What kind of practice might support you today?

Day 19

WHAT KEEPS ME COMING BACK?



A Little Something to Consider:

A yoga practice can be easy to love when everything is going well. We have time, our bodies feel good, and getting onto the mat feels natural. But most practices have quieter seasons too. We get busy. We lose motivation. Life becomes complicated. Sometimes yoga simply doesn't sound appealing.

So what keeps a practice going?

For some people, it may be routine. For others, it may be the way they feel after practicing, the curiosity they have about what they are learning, or the sense of connection they find on the mat. Sometimes we return because we remember something yoga has given us before. Consistency does not necessarily mean practicing every day. It can mean continuing to make room for something that matters to us, even when the way we practice changes.

Today's Reflection:

What keeps you coming back to yoga? Think about the times when practicing felt easy and the times when it did not. What has helped you return to your practice?

Day 20

YOGA HAS A STORY



A Little Something to Consider:

When we picture yoga today, we might imagine mats, downward-facing dogs, sun salutations, handstands, or a room full of people moving together. But the yoga we recognize today is only one chapter in a much, much longer story.

Yoga developed over thousands of years within the cultures and traditions of South Asia. There was never just one version of yoga, and there was never a single moment when someone “invented” it. Different teachers and traditions developed different approaches to meditation, breath, philosophy, devotion, self-discipline, and the body.

Here is something that might surprise you: the Sanskrit word asana, which we now commonly use to mean a yoga posture, literally means “seat.” In some of the earliest yoga teachings, asana referred primarily to the steady seat used for meditation. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, one of the most influential texts in the yoga tradition, says surprisingly little about physical postures. The elaborate collection of poses we associate with modern yoga developed much later.

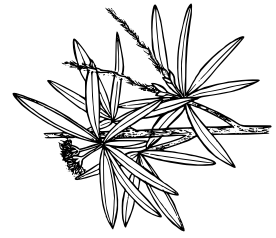
That doesn't make the physical practice less important. It gives us another way to understand it. The postures we practice today are part of a tradition that has continued to develop, change, and expand over time. Yoga has never been completely frozen in one form. Even the practice you are doing today is part of that ongoing story.

Today's Reflection:

What keeps you coming back to yoga? Think about the times when practicing felt easy and the times when it did not. What has helped you return to your practice?

Day 21

WHO AM I LEARNING FROM?



A Little Something to Consider:

Most of us learn yoga from other people. Maybe we have a teacher we see every week, someone whose videos we return to, or several teachers whose different approaches have influenced our practice.

But not every teacher has the same education, experience, or approach to yoga. Training programs vary in their depth and focus, and teaching styles can be very different. A teacher may be knowledgeable and experienced, yet still teach in a way that doesn't feel right for you. Another teacher may introduce you to something that completely changes how you understand your practice.

Being a student doesn't mean accepting everything a teacher says simply because they are the teacher. We can be curious about where their knowledge comes from, how they continue to learn, and whether the way they teach supports the kind of practice we are trying to develop.

Finding a teacher who is a good fit can be part of finding your practice. You are allowed to learn from different teachers, ask questions, and recognize when someone's approach doesn't align with you.

Today's Reflection:

Think about the teachers who have influenced your yoga practice. What do you value in the way they teach, and how do you know when a teacher's approach feels right for you?

Day 22

WHAT DOES YOGA ASK OF ME?



A Little Something to Consider:

We often talk about what yoga gives us. We practice because we want to feel stronger, more grounded, more flexible, more relaxed, more connected, or simply more like ourselves. But what are we willing to give to the practice?

Yoga asks us to participate. Sometimes that means showing up when the practice is not immediately rewarding. Sometimes it means paying attention instead of moving on autopilot. It might mean studying something we don't understand yet, sitting with an uncomfortable question, or practicing the same thing again without knowing exactly where it will lead.

This doesn't mean yoga should become another obligation or something we measure ourselves against. It means that a practice can give us more when we are willing to meet it with something of our own.

Today's Reflection:

Think about what you hope to receive from your yoga practice. Now ask yourself what you are willing to bring to it in return. Is there a difference between what you want from your practice and what you are currently willing to give it? What might that difference be telling you?

Day 23

HAVE I BEEN PREJUDICED AGAINST MYSELF?



A Little Something to Consider:

We all carry ideas about who we are.

Maybe you think you're not flexible. Maybe you believe you're terrible at balance. Maybe you're someone who always gives up when things get difficult. Maybe you consider yourself disciplined, impatient, competitive, uncoordinated, strong, anxious, calm, or someone who simply isn't "good at yoga."

Some of these ideas may feel so familiar that we stop noticing them as beliefs. They become part of the story we tell ourselves.

But practice has a way of giving us evidence that doesn't always fit the story. You may discover that you can stay with something longer than you expected. You may find patience where you thought there was none. You may struggle with something you assumed would be easy. You may change in ways that make an old description of yourself feel less certain.

You don't have to replace one label with another. You can simply become curious about whether the story is still true.

Today's Reflection:

What is something you believe about yourself as a yoga practitioner that you have never really questioned? What might you discover if you stopped treating that belief as a fact?

Day 24

WHAT IF I MEET MYSELF WHERE I AM TODAY?



A Little Something to Consider:

There is nothing wrong with having goals in your yoga practice. You might want to learn a particular posture, become stronger, develop your balance, sit in meditation for longer, or simply become more consistent with your practice. Having something to work toward can give us direction and keep us curious.

But there is a difference between working toward something and believing that we have to become something else before we can fully appreciate where we are now.

Your practice will not feel the same every day. Some days you may have more energy, more strength, more patience, or more range of motion. Other days, you may have less. The practice that serves you today may look completely different from the practice that serves you a week from now.

Meeting yourself where you are does not mean giving up on where you want to go. It means allowing today's practice to be today's practice. You can have a goal and still pay attention to what is actually happening right now. You can be working toward something and still recognize that the person practicing today deserves your attention too.

Today's Reflection:

What are you working toward in your yoga practice right now? Can you hold that goal while also allowing today's practice to be exactly what you need today?

A Meditative Practice: The Words We Use for Ourselves

For this practice, you will need a timer and a little willingness to write without overthinking.

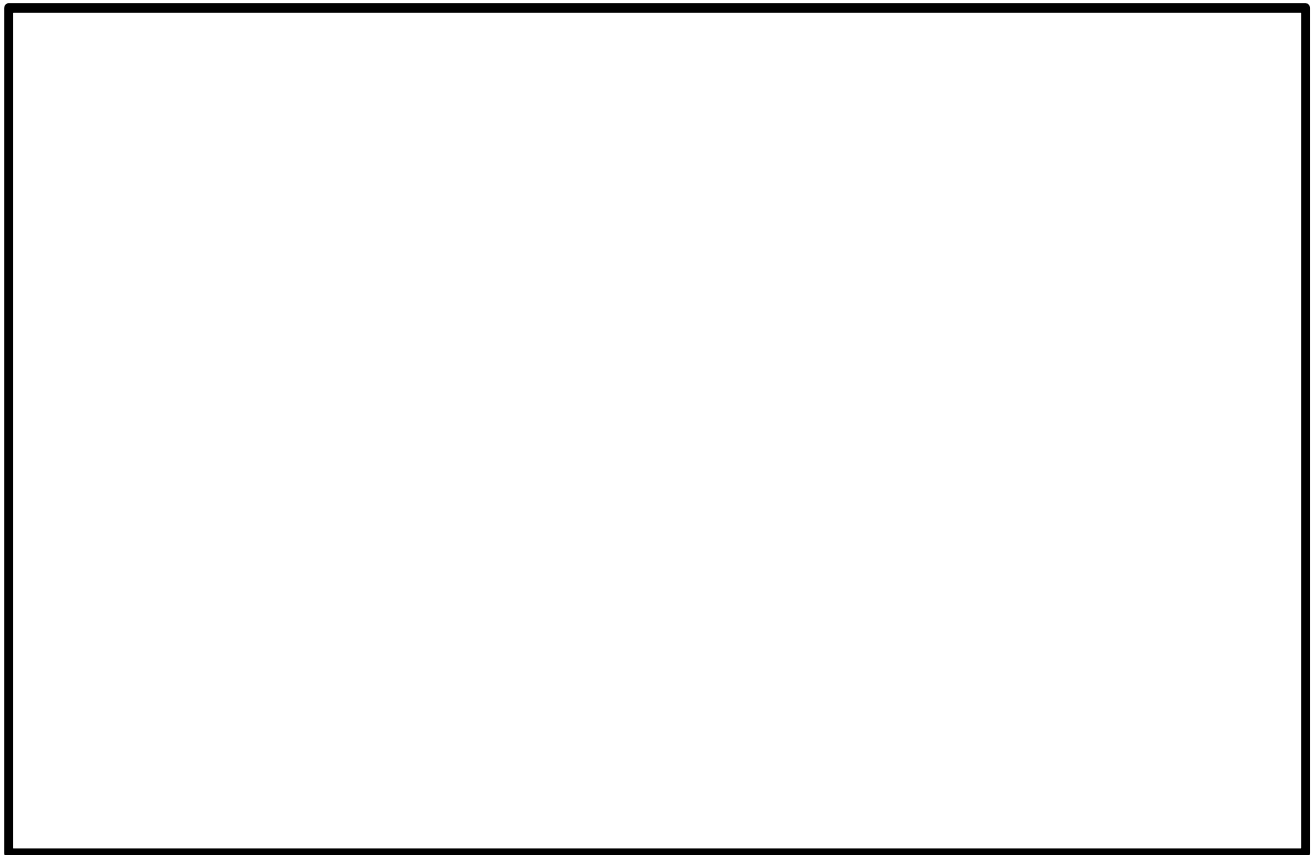
Part One

Set a timer for 5 minutes. When the timer begins, start writing words that describe you. Don't try to come up with the right words. Don't worry about whether they are positive or negative, important or unimportant. Let your hand keep moving.

You might write things about the roles you have in your life: mother, teacher, friend, partner, daughter, sister, student. You might write things about the way you see yourself: kind, impatient, funny, serious, messy, organized, stubborn, curious, quiet, loud, dependable, anxious, creative. You might write something you are proud of. Something you wish were different. Something you have been called by someone else. Something you have called yourself for years.

Write whatever comes. If you run out of words, write the first thing that comes to mind. There is no need to explain any of them.

You have 5 minutes. Begin.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to write their words during the 5-minute meditation practice.

Part Two

Take a breath. Now set your timer for 2 minutes.

In the box below, write as many words as you can think of that you admire in other people.

Again, don't overthink it.

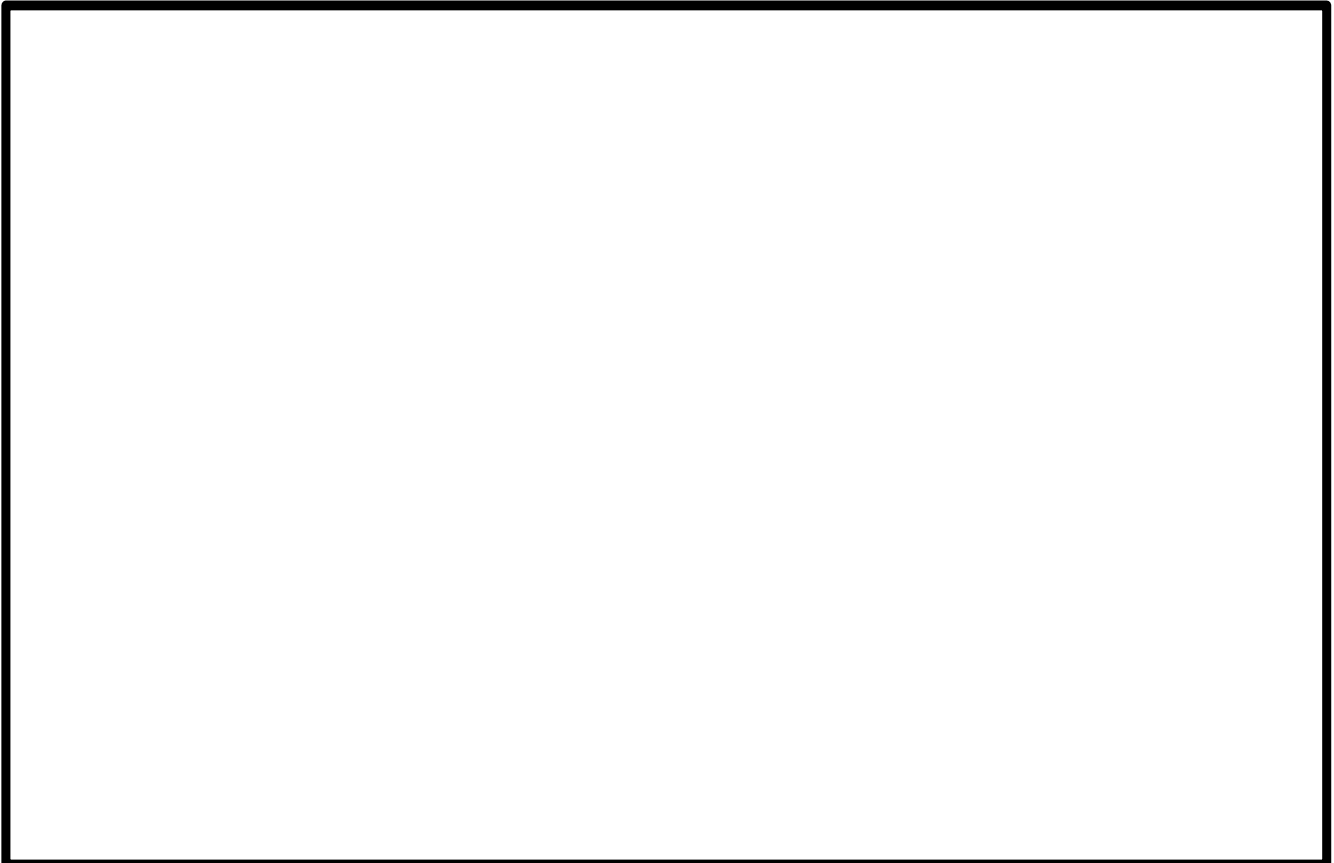
What qualities make you respect someone?

What characteristics draw you toward a person?

What makes someone admirable to you?

Write the words that come to mind.

You have 2 minutes. Begin.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompts above.

Part Three

Look at both lists. Without changing anything, circle or highlight every word that appears in both boxes. Take a moment to notice the words that overlap.

Maybe there are qualities you admire in other people that you already recognize in yourself. Maybe there are qualities you admire that you have never thought to associate with yourself. Maybe there are words in your first list that you hadn't realized were part of the story you tell yourself. There may also be words that make you uncomfortable. Just notice.

The words we use to describe ourselves can become surprisingly powerful. When we repeatedly tell ourselves that we are impatient, disorganized, difficult, shy, stubborn, unreliable, or bad at something, those words can begin to feel less like descriptions and more like facts.

The same thing can happen with the qualities we admire. If we think of ourselves as kind, dependable, thoughtful, brave, or creative, those words can influence the way we move through the world too.

Think about how the words in your first box might show up in your life. Do they affect the way you handle a difficult conversation? The way you approach your work? The way you respond when something goes wrong? The way you show up in your family or friendships? The problems you believe you can solve? The risks you are willing to take? The amount of patience or kindness you give yourself? And then consider your second list. What qualities do you admire in other people that you would like to make more room for in your own life?

Not because there is something wrong with you now. Simply because noticing what we value can tell us something about the person we are becoming.

What does this Have to do with Yoga? Yoga asks us to pay attention. We pay attention to the body, the breath, our thoughts, our reactions, our habits, and the stories we carry with us. That attention doesn't have to stop when we leave the mat. Perhaps your practice can also become a place where you notice the way you speak to yourself, the assumptions you make about who you are, and the ways those assumptions follow you into the rest of your life.

You don't have to decide which words are true and which ones are not. For now, simply become curious about them. What might change in your life if you became more aware of the story you tell yourself about who you are?

Day 25

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MAGIC WEARS OFF?



A Little Something to Consider:

There are moments in yoga that stay with us. A practice that feels unexpectedly good. A posture that suddenly makes sense. A quiet moment when everything seems to settle. We may leave the mat feeling different from when we arrived, and it is easy to believe that those moments are what make a practice meaningful. But not every practice feels like that.

Sometimes yoga is simply ordinary. We do familiar poses. Our mind wanders. Nothing profound happens. We finish and go on with our day. Sometimes we may even wonder why we bothered.

A long-term practice has room for these days too. The value of practice does not always announce itself while we are doing it. Repetition can teach us things that novelty cannot. Returning to something familiar gives us the chance to notice what has changed, even when the practice itself looks almost exactly the same.

Maybe part of having a practice is learning to appreciate what happens when we stop expecting every practice to give us an experience worth remembering.

Today's Reflection:

What do you expect to get from yoga each time you practice? What happens when you practice without expecting to feel different, better, calmer, or changed immediately afterward?

Day 26

HOW MUCH OF MY YOGA IS ACTUALLY MINE?



A Little Something to Consider:

Most of us did not invent our yoga practice. Someone taught us how to move. Someone introduced us to a style. We learned names for postures, ways to breathe, ways to structure a practice, ideas about alignment, and perhaps even ideas about what yoga is supposed to feel like.

Over time, those things can become so familiar that we stop noticing where they came from. We may follow a sequence because that's how we were taught. We may avoid a certain posture because someone once told us it wasn't right for us. We may believe we need a particular kind of practice because that is what we've always done. Learning from others is part of being a student. So is developing the ability to think for yourself.

Your practice does not have to be completely original to be yours. It becomes yours through the choices you make, the things you question, the things you keep, and the things you eventually understand differently. Perhaps having a practice of your own is not about creating something no one has ever done before. Perhaps it is about becoming an active participant in what you have been given.

Today's Reflection:

Look closely at your yoga practice. What parts have you consciously chosen, and what parts have you simply inherited? Is there anything you've been doing simply because you were taught that you "should"?

Day 27

WHAT AM I WILLING TO QUESTION?



A Little Something to Consider:

As students, we are given a lot of information.

We are told what poses are called, how they are traditionally practiced, what certain words mean, how a class should be structured, what we should do with our bodies, and sometimes what yoga itself is supposed to be.

Learning requires trust. We cannot begin by knowing everything ourselves, and there is value in listening to people who have studied something more deeply than we have.

But being a student does not mean that every idea we encounter has to become a permanent belief.

We can respect a tradition and still ask questions. We can appreciate a teacher and still wonder why they teach something a particular way. We can learn a practice deeply enough that we begin to understand which parts resonate with us, which parts we need to investigate further, and which ideas we may no longer agree with.

Questions do not have to be acts of rejection. Sometimes they are acts of attention. A thoughtful practice leaves room for both learning and questioning.

Today's Reflection:

What is one belief about yoga that feels so familiar to you that you have never stopped to ask whether it actually makes sense to you? Now that you've questioned it, what would you like to learn or understand about it for yourself?

Day 28

WHO AM I WHEN I AM NOT ON MY MAT?



A Little Something to Consider:

For a while, yoga can feel like a place we go.

We step onto the mat, enter a class, follow a teacher, practice a sequence, and then eventually roll the mat back up and return to the rest of our lives. But over time, something interesting can happen. The things we explore in practice can begin to follow us.

Maybe we notice ourselves responding differently to frustration. Maybe we become more curious before judging. Maybe we learn to recognize when we need to slow down, or we become more willing to sit with something we would once have rushed past.

But yoga does not have to become our identity for it to matter. You don't have to think of yourself as a "yogi." You don't have to practice every day. You don't have to make every decision through the lens of yoga. Perhaps, today, you are a person who practice only physical yoga. It may be time to pay attention to whether the practice has changed anything about the way you move through the rest of your life.

The mat is only one place where we practice.

Today's Reflection:

Who are you when you are not practicing physical yoga? What, if anything, from your time on the mat seems to come with you into the rest of your life?

Day 29

WHAT QUESTIONS WILL I CARRY WITH ME?



A Little Something to Consider:

When we finish learning something, we often look for the answer.

We want to know what we are supposed to understand, what we are supposed to remember, and what we are supposed to take away. But some learning doesn't end with an answer.

Sometimes it leaves us with a question we didn't have before.

Over the past several weeks, you have been asked to look at yoga from different directions. You have considered your reasons for practicing, your assumptions about yourself, what you have been taught, what you are willing to question, and what happens when the practice becomes part of the person you are beyond your mat. You may have changed your mind about something. You may have found an idea you want to explore more deeply. You may have discovered that something you once felt certain about is more complicated than you realized.

You don't need to resolve all of that before you move on. Some questions are worth carrying. They give us somewhere to return to when our understanding changes, when we encounter a new teacher or tradition, or when life gives us an experience we did not expect.

Today's Reflection:

What is one question about yoga, your practice, or yourself that you are leaving this volume with? Why do you want to keep asking it?

Day 30

WHAT IS YOGA TO ME NOW?



On the very first day of this journal, we asked a simple question:

What is yoga to me?

You answered that question before we had added anything new. Before we talked about the history of yoga, the breath, attention, effort, teachers, expectations, difficulty, self-study, questioning, or what happens when we carry our practice beyond the mat.

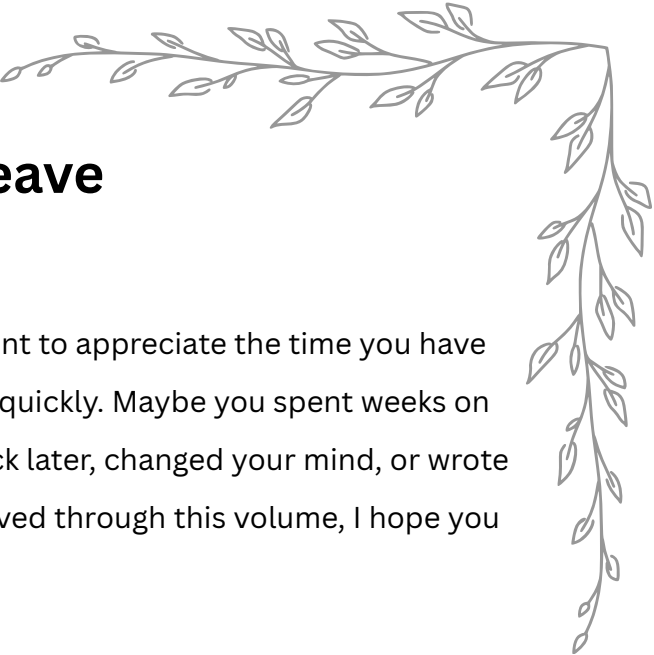
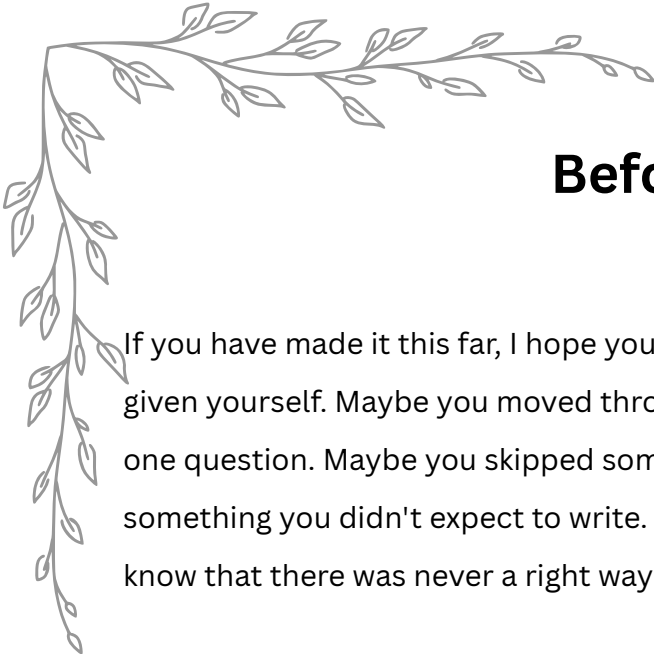
Now you have spent some time looking at your practice from different directions. Maybe some of your ideas have become clearer. Maybe some have become more complicated. Maybe something you once felt certain about has become a question. Maybe you have discovered something about yourself that you weren't expecting to find. And maybe very little has changed.

There is no particular answer you were supposed to arrive at. Yoga is not a subject you finish learning. Your practice will continue to change as you learn more, experience more, question more, and move through different seasons of your life. The answer you write today does not have to be the answer you carry forever. In fact, perhaps one of the most valuable things we can learn is that we are allowed to keep asking.

So let's return to where we began.

Today's Reflection:

What is yoga to you now? Look back at your answer from Day 1 before you begin. What has changed? What has stayed the same? What are you still curious about? Take your time with this one. There is no need to make your answer sound wise or complete. Write what is true for you today.



Before You Leave

If you have made it this far, I hope you will take a moment to appreciate the time you have given yourself. Maybe you moved through these pages quickly. Maybe you spent weeks on one question. Maybe you skipped some days, came back later, changed your mind, or wrote something you didn't expect to write. However you moved through this volume, I hope you know that there was never a right way to do it.

My hope was never that you would finish these pages with a perfect understanding of yoga. Honestly, I don't think that exists. I hope instead that you leave with a little more curiosity about your practice and a little more willingness to listen to yourself.

You may find that some of the questions in this volume stay with you. You may forget others completely. You may come back to something you wrote months from now and realize that your answer has changed. That doesn't mean your earlier answer was wrong. It means you kept living, learning, practicing, and becoming someone slightly different from the person who first opened this journal.

That is part of why I wanted this to be a practice journal rather than something you simply complete and put away. There is so much more to explore. The next volume will bring new questions, new ideas, and probably a few things that make you stop and think. You don't need to be ready for all of them today. Take your time. Come back when you can. Bring whatever version of yourself happens to show up that day.

And wherever this practice takes you, I hope you remember that you belong here.

Your practice will be here waiting for you.

And so will you.

A Few Words We Encountered



Asana

A Sanskrit word commonly translated as “posture” or “seat.”
In Day 20, we explored how the word originally referred primarily to a steady seat for meditation, rather than the elaborate physical postures we commonly associate with yoga today.

Patanjali

An important figure in the history of yoga philosophy, traditionally associated with the Yoga Sutras, a foundational text that we briefly encountered in this volume.

Yoga Sutras

A collection of concise teachings traditionally attributed to Patanjali. The text explores yoga as a practice involving much more than physical postures.

Extra Writing Space

The space provided for a particular day may not always be enough to complete your thoughts. If you need more room, simply use one of the blank pages in the back of the book.

Write the corresponding day at the top left-hand corner of the page, then place the page behind the original day's page. This will help you keep your thoughts together and your answers organized by day.

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