



soundyogastudio

Living Well - Season Survival 101

By Sage Knight

As I write this, the internet is down, and the Malibu fire is only ten percent contained. I pulled out and looked at my old June Messenger. The headline reads, “Topanga Faces Worst Fire Season Ever”. Now it’s October, and well, it is a doozy.

I’d planned to address holiday concerns in the next few issues, and I realized that the holiday season is a lot like fire season. As early as June, you have a vague idea that it may be approaching. You even have memories of the last one that hit, but when it comes, you still may not be ready. You may have gotten used to a daily routine that appeared altogether pleasant and manageable and then, “BOO!” It’s Halloween, then Thanksgiving, then the Gift Giving Orgy of choice. Do I sound jaded...? I’m not really. Just aware of what’s ahead, so I remember to take excellent care of myself and don’t get burned by the bingeing and buying blaze.

Have you noticed that fire seasons and holiday seasons are both tracked on the media by how much has been consumed? Now that’s food for thought. Maybe fire season comes as a warning. Hmm...Gratefully, you have some choice over whether or not your holiday season is disastrous or delightful.

Now is a great time to set up or juice up your self-care program. I guarantee you will enjoy your holidays more if you take care of yourself more. Here’s a fun fantasy: What would happen if you let everything go for an afternoon and decided to be pampered instead of pooped? What if by doing so, you strengthened your body, reduced your vulnerability to stress and became more able to handle life’s demands with confidence and insight?

Let’s add to that: What if it didn’t cost an arm and a leg? And what if you didn’t even have to leave the canyon? Or your house? What if someone came to you and cared for you while showing you how to care for yourself? (If you’re the altruistic type, you can always frame it as a way of ‘gearing up to give’.) Would you do that? I would! As a matter of fact, last week, I did.

Colleen Carroll is a Certified Yoga Therapist, who specializes in teaching us how to do yoga in any environment. She calls it, “Yoga at the kitchen sink level, which is where you need it most.” Since I assist folks in designing their own world class self-care programs, I can pretend to be the altruistic type and consider it my solemn duty to check out Colleen’s services in order to better serve my readers and clients. Yes, it’s a tough job, but someone has to do it! Here’s what I bring for your consideration:

I went to her studio, walked in and felt right at home. After a brief professional intake, we began a guided breathing meditation. She instructed me in the “exhale-pause-inhale-pause” technique described below. I could feel

my body and soul relaxing and balancing as I brought my full awareness into my breathing. Breath awareness is an ancient technique used to bring the mind back to where the body is. Some of my friends call it, “Keeping your head where your feet are.” We can all use more of that.

This specific technique has other benefits as well. As Colleen explains, “We seldom expire all of our breath. Typically, we crowd our breaths into each other, which increases our heart rate. When we exhale fully, pause, inhale fully and pause, we draw the nervous system into a balanced calming state, we balance our blood pressure, and we increase our longevity. The Sufis say that the space between the breaths is where God lives.” I can say from my own experience that I felt divine!

We moved into standing postures. I could see hummingbirds playing outside the window while I listened to Colleen inviting me to move the pose to fit the body, never twist the body to fit a position. How often do we attempt to fit ourselves into “imposed” restrictions, whether of our job, our relationships, our clothes or our old thoughts and self-imposed standards? What would happen if we allowed ourselves to relax into a new position, a new experience?

Throughout the session, Colleen alternated between doing the pose alongside me, which gave me a visual, and gently assisting me in adjusting my own posture. She spiced her instructions with quotes and information, naturally demonstrating her comprehensive knowledge and passion for the work.

Along with her expert guidance, I greatly appreciated her kindness, which led me to feel I was being mothered the entire time I was doing the practice. She moved my mat for me, adjusted my blankets, etc. All the while digitally recording the session which she then used to make a CD for me to take home, complete with hand drawn illustrations! It’s like putting her in my pocket as I walk back into the world.

For those who have not done yoga before, blankets are folded in different ways and used as props to support the body in different postures. Colleen works with a full array of props in order to be able to support people with a wide variety of physical needs.

Also, she will come to your home. “I went to one client’s house while she was pregnant and set up a yoga space for her in her bedroom. Now that the baby is born, I’m going back.” You need no prior experience or special props, as she will design a practice around you and your space and teach you how to use what you already have. It’s so great to know that what we have is all we need! Keep that in mind as the holidays approach...

I’ve practiced yoga for over twenty years, and I gained so much from this one session. I cannot imagine a more loving, joyous gift to give oneself or a dear one during either the holiday season or the fire season or any other season for that matter. We all benefit from the gifts of presence, health, peace of mind and acceptance. Yoga Therapy with Colleen provides all of this.

To Try at Home (or Anywhere!)

Nickname: Kitchen Sink Yoga

Benefit: Insight, Peace of Mind, Joy, Longevity. Need I say more...?

Dosage: As often as you like. Your only danger is increasing your quality of life.

Post It (for your fridge): *“Suppleness and tenderness are the concomitants of life, while rigidity and harshness are the concomitants of death.” Alan Watts quoting Lao Tze*

Four Part Breathing Technique:

1. Begin with a full, slow exhale. Follow the exhale all the way out.
2. Pause as long as is comfortable to notice the moment of inhale.
3. Slowly inhale as much as is comfortable.
4. Pause as long as is comfortable to notice the shift to the next exhale.
5. Continue.

Colleen Carroll, CYT can be reached at www.soundyogastudio.com or 818-887-2138. She has two workshops in November and is offering special deals to Messenger readers.

Sage Knight, ALSP is a spiritual coach with twenty years of licensed training in health and wellbeing fields. She is committed to an effective and enjoyable balance between Being and Doing. To set up a free consultation and design your own world class self-care practice, email her at sageknight1@gmail.com or call 818.264.6163.