**Welcome to Justanga Yoga न्याय**

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*“Yoga is a lifelong journey.*

*We all tend to become lost in the world of immediacy, wanting instant or quick results.  The real depth of yoga takes time and patience.  It is like a tree growing in the forest.*

***The strongest trees grow the slowest!”*** *(David Swenson)*

I first discovered the benefits of yoga back in 1998. At the time, I didn’t realise there were so many different styles and didn’t quite know what people were talking about when they asked ‘what kind of yoga are you doing? How would I? It was a whole new world to me.

I was really lucky as I had recently joined a really wonderful health centre in the centre of London with lots of Yoga classes and I soon discovered, lots of *‘different yoga styles’* did exist. And after trying nearly all of them, I quickly found the Yoga styles to suit me.

I found something traditional and spiritual with a nice weekly Hatha class. I needed something dynamic, which would get my heart pumping and get me moving so, so I did a Power Yoga (Ashtanga Vinyasa) class – that’s how it was listed on the time table back then ‘POWER YOGA (Ashtanga Vinyasa). Madonna used to wax lyrical about Ashtanga, she also looked fab, so I wanted some of that.  The Power Yoga was fast-paced and there was little time to think about doing the correct posture, so I found a fabulous Iyengar class too, as I really wanted to focus on alignment and understand more about the postures we were doing and what they should *feel* like.

Almost immediately I wanted to teach Yoga; not only did I have a lot to learn, but I also had a lot of physical limitation in my own body*.  ‘How can I teach yoga when I can’t even reach my knees when I bend forward?’. ‘Who would come to a class with a teacher who can’t even sit up straight?’.* A forward fold for me was something that only happened inside my head! Don’t get me started on my recurring dream where I had this amazing forward fold, hands wrapped around my feet and my face close to my knees…. Some kind of crazy fantasy! And nothing hurt!  The stuff of dreams…….

So, my intention was *always* to become a teacher. When I would get there would be another thing!

After one incredibly ‘life changing’ challenging week back in August 2000, a week with all the elements to stress me out, drive anxiety and panic through the roof; I decided to practice Yoga at the health club every day of the week, and you know what? I made it through. I was calm, I was able to deal with *everything*, to take each day as it came, to over-come each problem as it arose and by the end of that week, I realised the **TRUE POWER OF YOGA**. What it did for me was transformational. The mind-stuff.  JUST WOW!

And it’s from there that I found my true Yoga practice.

I continued to practice on average 4/5 times a week – most weeks. As well as a busy work life in the music industry and then 21 years in TV, which meant sometimes I could only practice once a week if we were recording a show in the studio.  It was a massive focus and huge priority for me.  And not often understood by grumbling visitors who were put out by me disappearing for a couple of hours to practice.  They thought I was rude for practicing when they had come to visit.  I thought they were rude for visiting when I had already told them I had a Yoga practice to attend! Please don’t ask me to choose. You might not like the answer!

When I was really busy at work, the one or two yoga classes I would always makseure I attended was Ashtanga.

Back then, there were no Vinyasa flow classes.  You either got down and dirty in the Power Yoga (Ashtanga Vinyasa) class, or you got deep into your spiritual self in Hatha and did things with your eyes and your tongue, or you got comfy with 20 yoga blocks and hung out in the Iyengar poses.  The nearest thing to a Flow Yoga class was a mixture of Pilates/Thai Chi/Yoga in the form of a ‘Dance of Yoga’ style classes. With nice music to accompany them.

No flow! No one was Vinyasa flowing.  Apart from Ashtanga Vinyasa – the original flow!

The Power Yoga classes were crazy back then. Some people didn’t even make it through the sun salutations!  Big muscle gym-men would walk out half way through Suri B!  WOW! I must be doing something right as I stuck around for the full 90mins.

There was often no floor space either. These classes were packed! Mats jammed into every corner of the room. Sideways, forwards, against the walls, by the door, no room for personal space or arms swinging out.  INHALE DEEPLY EXHALE DEEPLY said they tiny muscle-bound lady from Brazil.  I remember her once demonstrating bow pose (Dhanurasana) and someone actually picked her up and carried her like a small bag!  She was amazing. I was stiff as a board, but physically quite strong. Forward folds were a joke for me, but I seemed to be ok with twists and the standing stuff…. Apart from sticking my bum out and not aligning my hips. But it felt good and that’s what counts.

2009 and 2012 I had two very large pregnancies and two ceceserian sections so my practice suffered. But I did notice myself being able to sit in a few postures at home more comfortably as my ligaments softened.   Sadly, my stomach muscles were terribly spilt!  (These days you can forget low boat pose! It’s just a big no no and not good for them – it has the reverse affect I’m afraid.)

As soon as I was able to, I was back on my mat and having a regular practice. Not without injury though!  Huge setbacks with lower back connective tissue issues and huge debilitating muscle spasms which would often leave me unable to walk or even stand.

I’m serious when I say that. Sometimes I cannot walk or even stand up.  The muscle spasms in my psoas muscle is sometimes so bad I can’t even stand up straight or use my legs. It worries me when it happens as I think I’ll never walking again. Thankfully, these spasms are few and far between and only last a few days. Not being able to stand or walk usually lasts 24 -36 hours. And then I begin to move with trepidation for another few days. Usually within 5 days I am back on the mat, but very mindful of back bending and anything else that exasperates it! Yoga massively helps and continues to support me.

I know it’s something I need to pay close attention to and modify my practice with. I’m figuring how to manage this and how to practice in a way that supports me and protects me. If I want to sit a posture out, I will. Sri Patthabi Jois would have called me a bad lady. I probably am.

In 2017 @Triyoga Ealing opened! My second home. It was there I was able to fine tune my practice and get really back into Ashtanga. They offered a daily Mysore class, and led Ashtanga classes every day, and lots of different Yoga styles, all day long, seven days a week.  I was like a child in a sweet shop! I found myself practicing twice a day some days – sneaking off to Triyoga - pretending I was going somewhere else, as I knew people just wouldn’t understand why I wanted to do so much yoga. I even googled ‘addicted to Yoga’ to see if it was ‘a thing’.

*The need to teach* bug never left me. In each class I would imagine myself as the teacher (just wait until I rule the world, those yoga mats would be straight!! hahaha) – of course I was also focusing on my breath, so the fantasy teacher role only lasted a few mins. BUT I would be setting the scene. Playlists, what kind of incense, what kind of vibe. How I would make everyone feel welcome, how I would be mindful of what language to use to encourage the best and not make people feel awkward or self-conscious.  I remember a teacher telling me I looked like a duck with my bum sticking out in warrior 2.  It wasn’t my fault. I had tight hips back then!  But being mocked like that really upset me.

I remember an Uber flexible yogi – (almost on the Elhers Danlos scale of hyper mobility) not understanding pain or what tightness felt like. Because she had never felt it. She had always been very flexible. She was very lucky. I was the opposite. I had to work hard at being flexible.

I have hyper and hypo mobility. Some of me moves quite well, some of me doesn’t like to move at all.  And my muscles and connective tissue panic around the joints that want to move too much. It’s something I have learned to adapt my yoga practice to. Yoga massively helps as an all-round exercise for the whole body.

I have a couple of auto immune diseases and there are many links to connective tissue problems. I sometimes live with a lot of sharp pain in my hips and shoulders. It’s not just uncomfortable. It’s sometimes agony.

Some people say ‘you have to be really flexible to do yoga’. Yes, it can help. But it’s not *everything*. Being able to do the splits, does not make you a better or worse Yogi. But not being flexible IS the reason *you should* be doing yoga…!

I know how it feels to be the only person sitting bolt upright on blocks whilst everyone else does a forward fold with ease because I’ve been there. I know how it feels to be awkward and tight and not look anything like the uber flexi yogis who were moving into splits, binding and twisting with ease. Because I’ve been there. I know what that feels like. I know how totally rubbish it can make you feel. And I know how words, so lightly thrown by a teacher, can utterly crush you in class. I know what a lot of pain feels like. So it’s my aim to make people feel comfortable and never feel intimidated in class.

Anyway, it was at Triyoga where I found my Yoga teacher and settled on My Yoga course of choice with Ashtanga rebel Ryan Spielman. The ‘whispering monk’ and a secret Rocket man! (He still doesn’t know).

Ryan had an amazing advanced ashtanga practice (he’d been all the way to the very end you know!!), and a huge passion and respect for the sequences. It was in his Miami Mysore class where Kino MacGreggor started her Ashtanga journey; he was Sting and Madonna’s personal Ashtanga teacher back in the day, (full circle eh?) and he sounded like he knew what he was doing! He also mastered in Yoga Philosophy, so as far as I was concerned, he sounded perfect to me.

So, it was back in 2018 I did my 200-hour yoga teacher training course. I turned up to every session, every bit of yoga school, turned in every bit of work and more so!  And I got really into the anatomy of yoga. Something I felt was too important to gloss over.  I am the @BrokenYogi. Physically fit and strong, but I break very quickly. I would stiffen up within hours of our Mysore practice.  Sometimes I can’t walk if I sit still for a few hours. I used to joke and say I had rigamortis setting in.  I get very stiff, very quick.

As soon as Ryan said we needed to, I began teaching.  My first class had 14 people in and it felt amazing to teach!

So that’s how I got started teaching.  And I love it.  Ashtanga is a good foundation and it is the original vinyasa.   My intention was always to get the foundations of a yoga TT course and build from that and continue to learn and grow.

My training didn’t and hasn’t stopped there.  I am about to start a Yin course with The Yoga People. And…

….In October 2021, I did a 60-hour Rocket instructor course with Rocket Yoga Academy teacher Amber Jean, who spent 11 years working with Rocket Yoga founder Larry Shultz (there’s that lineage!).  And I have to say, it *Rocked*.  I came home from my very first rocket class (Rocket 3) and was *wired*.  It was late at night and I couldn’t park my car in a space outside my house as there was a low-level branch in the way. So instead of finding an alternative parking space, I ripped the dead branch off with my rocket teeth. Actually, that’s a lie.  I grabbed a saw from my front garden and sawed it off.

I wasn’t exhausted. Far from it. I was high on rocket fuel and wanted to do more!! But it was 10pm and I had to be back in yoga school at 8 the next morning, so I went to bed and attempted sleep. Not sure how to do that when you’re flying high. But nonetheless.

And it was there, I fell in love with The Rocket. It worked for my body. It worked for me on and off the mat. It has become medicine for my body.

So now my regular practice includes a couple of Rocket Yoga classes a week as well as keeping my foot in the ashtanga door and a strong Iyengar class. Plus, whatever I can get my hands on and more importantly, what works for *my* body and for the @brokenyogi, who, a few days before Christmas 2021 could not walk without a crutch for a couple of days after a HUGE muscle spasm.

My yoga. My yoga practice!

And when I teach, I use all that knowledge from my 23 years of practice and use all of my different training to influence my classes.

Join me on the mat for your yoga. Your yoga practice.

Just remember. The strongest trees grow the slowest and this sapling is only getting going......!