

Yoga



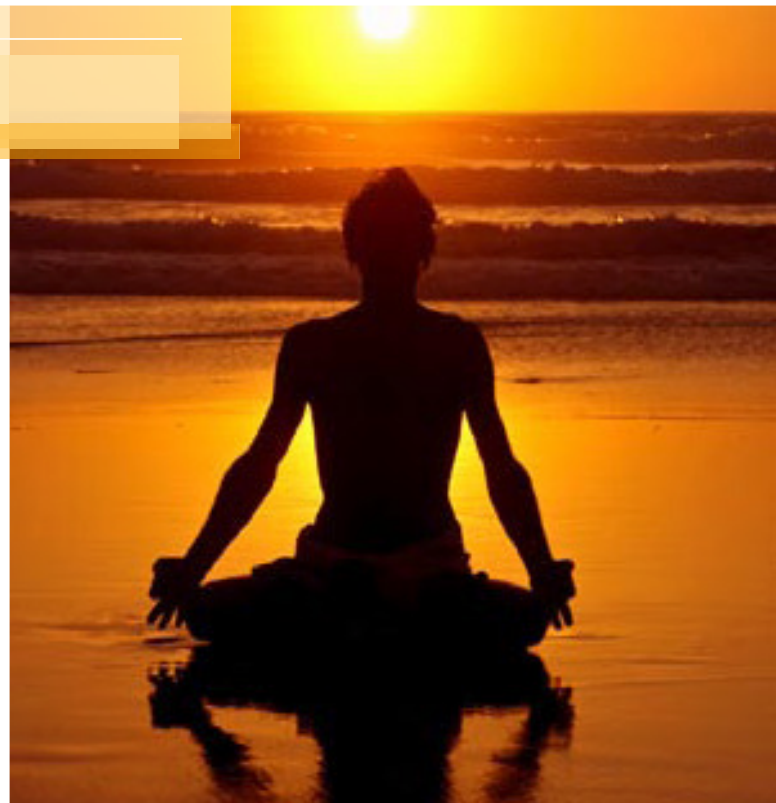
New Year's Resolution or Intention?

By Cheryl LeClair

The universe is transformation; our life is what our thoughts make it.
– Marcus Aurelius

Yoga is frequently thought of as a physical practice in the Western world. However, one that has studied and practiced yoga knows that its benefits go far beyond just the physical. “Yoga” comes from the Sanskrit word “yuj” or “to yoke.” Through the practice of yoga we yoke the body to the breath and intellect, or to the universal power or life force.

The changes one may experience through the practice of yoga occur over time, yet they can be profound. Physical changes may include increased cardiac and circulatory function, decreased weight, and increased muscle tone, strength and flexibility. Mentally, we may find ourselves able to handle stressful situations with ease, and experience increased focus. Yoga also promotes self-acceptance and a positive outlook. Finally, yoga builds awareness of yourself and others, promoting a



feeling of oneness with the world.

We experience yoga at its best when the pose is steady, the breath is deep and even, and the mind is at ease. We then take this same steadiness and ease of mind into our lives on a daily basis. In yoga, our practice grows through setting intentions. We may set an intention for our daily yoga practice to be aware of our breath. We may also set longer term intentions, such as to be mindful of our actions as to how they affect others.

It is through the power of intention that many of these changes occur through the practice of yoga. Yoga is not a goal; we have not achieved perfection when we do a perfect downward facing dog. The practice of yoga encourages us to look within and notice our breath as we hold the pose. Is the breath steady and even? What is our mental state while holding the pose? Are we at ease, or is our mind turbulent and unsteady?

An intention differs from a resolution. An intention involves a constant state of mindfulness that brings the intended outcome to fruition. This differs from a resolution in that a resolution might state “I am going to lose 20 pounds.” When our weight has dropped only one pound after two weeks and we only make it to the gym three days in the two weeks, we feel as if we’ve already failed and we give up. With the yogic practice of setting an intention, one may set an intention to live in a more healthful lifestyle in the coming year. When we bring this intention to mind daily, it informs our choices in selecting foods and we become more physically active, knowing we need to participate in daily physical activity. The intention helps develop a constant state of mindfulness that leads to lasting changes in one’s habits and the desired result.

Take a gentle approach to making a positive lasting change in your life. Quiet your mind and look within, set an intention and watch the transformation. ■

Cheryl LeClair is a yoga instructor and trained iRest Integrative Restoration teacher. Cheryl teaches at various locations along the Crystal Coast, and can most frequently be found teaching at Yoga for You in Morehead City. windroseyoga.com

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