

Sadhaka Newsletter Article: “I Love the Teacher Training!”

By TT *Sadhaka* Jill Frere

Life before the “Life of a Yogi” 500 hour Teacher Training was like swimming in the ocean, but not in a good way. I was tossed and pulled in whatever direction the currents of desire took me. I was swimming for survival in a big city.

Gratitude is the feeling I have now, towards Dharma and fellow teachers for providing me with a foundational spiritual practice. This, in combination with some drastic changes in lifestyle and location, has given me solid ground to stand on. But, even after months of practice, I feel as though I am only beginning to learn to walk on it.

When I arrived for the first weekend of training I was injured. My thoracic spine was tender and painful. I was nervous that I wouldn’t be able to participate fully, and if I did, I would injure myself further. Something magical happened. When we were doing the *Asana* practice, Jeremy, my mentor for the weekend, protected me. Whenever I did a pose that was potentially dangerous, Jeremy was standing near. Slowly, and a little nervously, I would begin a pose like *Bhujangasana*, and I could feel this safety coming from outside. Much to my surprise, it didn’t hurt.

Another remarkable thing occurred just by meeting the other people in the training. Six months or so before the training, I had surrounded myself with people that were very different from me, in order to move forward in my career. Most of our interactions were awkward and unnatural. I did not feel welcome, and I felt small. After meeting the other trainees, I realized that I had more in common with them than any of the people I had so zealously tried to befriend previously. I was grateful to have found like-minded people. They supported my beliefs and built me up from the first few moments and ongoing today. A collective consciousness has formed between us. When we do Sun-salutations altogether, it’s transforming. I feel like a small part of a huge organism. The movement becomes effortless, and my body naturally goes deeper, without strain.

The guest musicians Krishna Das and Bhagavan Das were inspiring. Before the nights were over, energy blocks in my spine had been broken down, and it was no longer any effort to sit up straight. The *Kirtans* left me feeling joyous, enchanted, and intensely happy to be alive and on the path.

During the training, we learned about *Karma*, and it has been a great source of peace in my life since. *Karma* reminds me that I get exactly what I deserve. I love the peace I get when I remember Dharma or the mentors saying “Everything is perfect.” When I think of this, any misfortune seems less personal. Negative events are just something that has to play out and burn up.



Dharma Yoga

Life of a Yogi Immersions

Mouna (spiritual silence) was another important lesson during the training. The days which I spent trying to be quiet were always rewarding. I had more energy and there was less tension in my head. I felt like I didn't need anything from anyone. God felt more present in my heart, and I could see God a little clearer in other people.

Getting to know the different Dharma levels has fundamentally changed how I approach teaching Yoga. Steeped in the solitude of home practice, I have come to know these sequences so well. I loved learning about how "Less is best," and watching the teachers live that way. Especially Dharma -- the master of the profoundly simple.

Before this training, I had never heard of the consciousness of the pose. Now, when teaching, I can relate whatever pose we are doing back to one of the originals. This helps the students connect in a deeper way mentally, energetically and physically. It also allows me to know where to touch them to help them go further in a pose I would have previously thought of as complete.

Dharma Yoga has also introduced the idea of transmission to me. I had heard of it before, but I thought that power was only for great masters. Many of the mentors during the training sent out clear transmissions: Jeremy – healing; Lori – acceptance and love; Rebecca – devotion; -- just to name a few. If they can do it, I can learn to do it too. Olga constantly transmits *Sattvic* energy. Even now, months later, whenever I think of her, my consciousness is elevated.

Dharma makes things so simple. When he says, "Who is suffering? The body and the mind," nothing more needs to be said. This uncomplicated phrase has continually helped me detach from my lower self. That is what teaching Yoga has come to be about for me. To be a good Yoga teacher, I must keep burning away the ego, or the small self. This creates a vacuum for God to fill. The Higher Self can use my "bag of bones" to teach others.

Dharma is transforming just to be around. His way of being is so complete. His words are simple, yet profound. It is an honor to be near him, watch him move with grace, and hear him speak with concise clarity. What he knows, he lives deeply. I am so grateful to Dharma and everyone at the Center for transforming my reality.

