

# **Chapter Nine**

## **Self-Awareness: Yoga and Practicing**

### **Christa Rakich**

“Do your practice and all is coming.” ~ Sri K. Patthabi Jois<sup>1</sup>

Practice. It’s something you show up for. Every day. You practice when you’re eager, when you’re depressed, when you’re busy, when you’re calm, when you’re stressed.

A professional – a physician, an attorney – has a “practice” –a medical practice, a law practice. It’s something one is committed to, that one does every day and grows into over time, an enterprise that, to some extent, defines a person: “I’m a doctor; I’m a musician.” Practice is the continual realignment of energies (intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional) toward a chosen goal.

To a musician, practice is also the art of teaching and learning at once. A musician faces the unknown in a new piece, takes oneself by the hand and chips away at making the unknown known. It is through practice that a musician develops familiarity with a piece of music, and ultimately, melds a composer’s intent with one’s own.

A good teacher is patient and kind. A good student is open, willing, and consistent in effort. Whether teacher and student are one person (in the practice session) or two (in the lesson), they meet on the field of a great love shared.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jois (1915-2009) founded the Ashtanga Yoga Institute in Mysore, India. He has many followers in the U.S.

The word *yoga* means *yoke* or *union*.<sup>2</sup> The origins of yoga emerge from the Indus Valley Civilization, a Bronze Age culture from around 3300 to 1300 BCE that extended from modern-day northeast Afghanistan through Pakistan and into northwest India. Earliest written sources refer to an oral tradition that is already centuries old. In Yogic tradition, Patanjali<sup>3</sup> is revered as the sage who codified oral wisdom into four books of sutras.<sup>4</sup> Even this compilation, however, remained an oral practice. Its memorization and recitation was a part of yogic discipline.

Although yoga was born in a culture imbued with Hinduism, it is not itself a religious tradition, nor does it direct the practitioner toward any particular set of religious beliefs. Practitioners range from atheists to Mormons to Orthodox Jews to devout Catholic nuns. The practice is also widely adaptable, both for those with physical limitations as well as for those committed to a specific spiritual point of view.<sup>5</sup>

In Sanskrit,<sup>6</sup> the language of yoga, the word for *practice* is *sadhana*. The physical practice of yoga, the moving of one's body into postures, is called *hatha yoga*, and the postures themselves are called *asanas*. *Asanas*, besides stretching and strengthening muscles, also reverberate through the mind, emotions and spirit. There are parallels between how one behaves in *asanas* and how one behaves in life.

---

<sup>2</sup> Exactly what gets yoked or united through the practice of yoga is ambiguous. Common understandings include body, mind and spirit, the human with the divine, and the finite with the infinite.

<sup>3</sup> Patanjali is a surname that may, in fact, refer to more than one person. This accounts for the wide range of results in attempting to demarcate his dates, 400 BCE to 200 CE.

<sup>4</sup> The word *sutra*, taken literally, means "stitch." The English word "suture" shares the same root. Used in Patanjali's sense, the best definition may be "aphorism."

<sup>5</sup> For an example, see *Prayer of Heart & Body: Meditation and Yoga, a Christian Spiritual Practice*, by Fr. Thomas Ryan, C.S.P.

<sup>6</sup> Sanskrit is one of 22 officially recognized languages spoken in India today. Its ancestor, Vedic Sanskrit, can be traced back to ca. 1500 BCE, with roots extending even further back.

Someone whose postures are forward-leaning, for example, may have the habit of lunging headlong into the next project, without taking time to weigh choices and consider consequences thoroughly. Someone who approaches difficult poses with curiosity and humor may engage with a difficult job situation using the same tools.

The practice of yoga pulls together scattered energies and builds focus, concentration, and objectivity. Developing flexibility in the body also develops flexibility in the mind. Practicing warrior poses builds confidence as well as stronger legs. Practicing balancing poses will not only help prevent falls, but will also increase resilience in the face of emotional turbulence. Thus, the practice of yoga reverberates, and moving one's body into yogic postures has an effect on one's whole life well beyond the physical level.

### ***Sukha / Dukkha***

Two more concepts will aid our understanding of how Yoga works. *Dukkha* (spellings vary) is a Pali<sup>7</sup> word that has no clear correlation in English. It's commonly translated as "unsatisfactoriness," "suffering," or "dis-ease." In its literal sense, the word refers to an axle that does not fit well into the hub of a wheel, a square peg in a round hole, as it were. *Sukha*, its opposite, often translated "ease" or "sweetness," refers to a freed-up wheel, a wheel that moves smoothly, that works. *Sukhasana*, or "easy pose," is simply sitting with the legs crossed, although for westerners accustomed to sitting in chairs, it may not be so easy.

How often do we say of a stellar performer, "She makes it look so easy." We say this of the perfect golf swing, a nothing-but-net foul shot. I've heard it said in high praise of a surgeon. The truth is, it *is* easy. Practice is about moving from *dukkha* to *sukha*, about becoming aware

---

<sup>7</sup> Pali, a vernacular dialect of Sanskrit, is the language the Buddha spoke.

of the little impingements, the hesitations, the unease, the *dukkha* in one's playing, and finding a way, one's own inherently best way, to ease, to smoothness. Making the rough places plain is a process of constant discovery. It begins with noticing, at first noticing difficulty, and then experimenting, finding the way in which a troublesome passage could be easier, softening the edges of effort, finding the way to ease, to *sukkha*.

### ***Cultivating Physical Awareness***

*Example from the organ lesson:*

Teacher: "What fingering are you using here?"

Student: "I don't know."

A teacher is likely to ask that question when she notices that a student has played the same passage using varied fingerings, and the result is a bit of a mess, or maybe just some hesitation in the sound. The teacher patiently points out a usable fingering, perhaps writes it into the score. The student attempts again, but uses a slightly different fingering from the one now in the score.

Teacher: "What fingering did you just use?"

Student: "The one you wrote."

Teacher: "No, actually, you used 4 here where 3 is written."

Student: "Oh." Tries again.

The problem here, of course, is not fingering. It's lack of body-awareness. The student does not really know which finger is doing what, or perhaps he does not think it important.

Teacher: "Does your hand prefer to use 3 or 4 for that note?"

Student tries it both ways. "Either one."

Teacher: "No, no, pay attention. Do it slowly. One fingering will feel ever so slightly easier than the other, or give the phrase a slightly more pleasing flow. Let your hand – and your ears – inform you which option is more suitable. It's like trying on pants. One pair might fit ok, but the next pair might fit great."

Student tries a few more times. "Actually, I think 3 is easier."

Teacher: "Great. Use 3. Use it all the time. And practice slowly enough so that your mind knows you are using 3."

And there is the root of the problem, the mind-body connection. It is not so much the student's fingers that need practicing, but his mental supervisor. Just as scales can be practiced by themselves, and practicing them can build strength and finger independence to improve ease and clarity in every piece one plays, so can awareness be practiced by itself. Its improvement will become evident in greater efficiency, ease, and focus. And yes, more reliable fingering, too.

### ***Sample Meditation: Body Scan***

Sit in a comfortable position. Be upright. Be at ease, but not so comfortable that you may fall asleep. You can close your eyes, but you don't have to. Then start noticing. How do you feel? Most of us have some physical complaint or other, a sore knee, a tense shoulder. Just acknowledge that, and continue to notice. Notice the temperature of the air on your skin, the feeling of the clothes on your body, the weight of your bottom on the seat. Feel your hands. Even when they're still and relaxed, without looking at them you can feel their energy. As you pay attention, you may notice them growing warm or tingling. Or not. There is no goal here beyond the noticing itself. Notice forearms, elbows, upper arms, shoulders. Take your time. You can focus your attention on one side, then the other, scanning the body. Neck, head, face, how do they feel?

Then move to your lower body. The order is not important. You can move from the top down, or from the feet up.

Then notice how your body moves as you breathe. Expanding, lifting, releasing. No need to exaggerate anything; just notice how it is. You're sitting still, but you're moving all the time. Notice the breath itself. Focus on the point where it enters your nostrils, cool and dry. And how it leaves your nostrils, a little warmer and moister. Just follow this activity. If you are human, after a time you will realize your attention has wandered, and you are thinking about heaven-knows-what, likely food, music, or an old injustice. Notice what has happened (remember, it's all about noticing), then notice if you have a spontaneous reaction ("Oh! Bad! I'm supposed to be focusing on my breath"), then smile. The mind is a busy place. Then notice that your breath is still there. In, out, in, out.

Practice this every day, just like scales. If you can do it for twenty minutes every morning and evening, great. If you can't keep it up for more than five minutes without your mind rebelling ("This is stupid; I have more important things to do"), or if your body gets antsy, notice and accept that, too. Any length of time is good. Always, always be kind, and be faithful to the intention to practice however you can.

If our sample student were to do this, he would gradually become more aware of exactly what his fingers are doing, and also more aware of tension in the shoulders, a weak left hand, and a vast array of other things. As unconscious habits become conscious, they yield to the mind's ability to mold them into something more skillful.

Returning the attention to the breath returns the mind to the present. Acknowledging how the body is – and it's different every day – improves the mind's power to influence physical health and well-being. It can even heal injury.

Say, for example, you've over-practiced. You become aware of some soreness or tightness in one forearm. Many of these strains involve mild or severe inflammation. Energy becomes blocked at the point of injury and fails to flow easily along its natural path. As you practice the body scan, focus your exhalation at the point of injury or tightness. Bathe the injury in your breath. Imagine the breath itself easing the edges of a blockage there. The breath encourages shortened muscles to relax, and carries that ease through the wrist, the elbow, the finger joints, the shoulder.

This is not to claim immediate cure for any specific injury, but rather to focus on the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system. The body's "fight-or-flight" response is regulated by the sympathetic nervous system. In most twenty-first century humans the

sympathetic nervous system is over-exercised, perhaps even stuck in the on-position. Restoring balance between the two systems frees the body to heal itself.

*Sample Asana: Pavana Muktasana (Wind-relieving pose)*<sup>8</sup>

*Pavana* = wind, *Mukta* = relieve, release, *Asana* = posture, pose

First warm up a bit, and ease the mind into noticing mode. Lie on the floor, or a rug or a mat. Imagine your whole posterior side has been inked, and you are leaving an impression on the floor, like a Rohrschach inkblot. Notice where your body is touching the floor, and where not, where it presses heavily, where it rests lightly. Now stretch your arms out on the floor over your head and press your fingertips and heels away from one another. Grow long. Then stretch out your whole right side, fingertips to heels. Stretch for three long, full breaths, then relax. Then do the same on the other side. One more full stretch, then relax. How does your inkblot look now? How is it different from before?

Draw your right knee into your chest and interlace your fingers below the knee. Inhale, relax your grasp. Exhale, pull the right knee in as you press your left heel away from you. (If you have back issues, you can leave the left knee bent, sole of the left foot on the floor.) Gently press your shoulders down away from your ears and back into the floor. Slightly tuck your chin toward your chest so the back of the neck gets a little stretch. You don't want to straighten the natural cervical curve here, just allow the muscles to lengthen.

Once you've felt your way into wind-relieving pose, find a "sweet spot," about seven or eight on a scale where zero is total relaxation and ten is a super intense stretch. Settle into the

---

<sup>8</sup> Asanas are most often named, some after people, some after animals, objects, or actions.



place where you can hang out for ten or more slow, easy breaths and feel no strain. As you do this, ask yourself the question: “How could this be easier?”

There is something else you could let go of in this *pavana muktasana*. It might be your jaw, or your attitude. Let the breath be deep and steady. Find the place where your body feels best, that edge between ease and challenge, firmness and comfort, and then, good teacher that you are, observe. Become deeply interested in feeling your body from the inside as you hold this *asana*. It usually takes about twenty seconds for the body to fully adjust to a posture. Your body may require a lessening or a deepening of the hold as it does this. Let little micro-movements be a part of holding the posture. Breathe, relax, feel, watch, allow.<sup>9</sup>

*Sthira sukham asanam*

*Firm and comfortable is the posture.*

Patanjali Yoga Sutras Book II, Sutra 46

There’s the concept of *sukha* again. Finding that perfect balance between effort and ease is very much the point of this exercise. Avoid sloppiness, on the one hand, and maximum effort on the other. It’s not about *trying* your best so much as *finding* your best. This is an attitude that is very much applicable to the practice of a musical instrument.

When you feel finished, gently, slowly, and maintaining that inner body awareness, release your right leg. Let it move however it wants to; your leg knows how to release itself. Is there a counter-move it wants to make to reestablish balance? Let it find its way back to the place where you started, both legs stretched out on the floor.

---

<sup>9</sup> Kripalu Yoga, a lineage established in the United States by Amrit Desai in 1966, uses the acronym BRFWA to describe the inner direction of this and all yoga *asanas*.

Notice how your right side now differs from your left. How does your ink blot look now? When you notice that your left side is eager for the same attention, take a moment to appreciate the desire itself. Then do wind-relieving pose on the other side. Notice if you have any inclination to rush here. Slow it down; let every moment have its due attention.

When you have finished the second side, how does your body want to move? You will want to find balance, perhaps by hugging both knees in toward your chest. Or you may prefer bent knees, feet on the floor, knees flopping from side to side. Your body knows what's best; your mind just needs to pay attention.

### *Sample Practice Session*

Find your stable position at the keyboard. Take a few deep breaths, center yourself. Begin to feel your body from the inside. If your body has been still for a while, some warmups may be in order.<sup>10</sup>

Select a passage you want to practice. I often select the passage I want to start with the previous evening, and have it open on the music rack waiting for me in the morning. My passages are short, never more than four measures, sometimes less than one. Notice how your fingers work at this. Slow it down. Refine the effort. Experiment. Notice excess effort. See if you can soften a bit around the edges. Work subtly. How could your playing of this passage be easier? What else could you let go of right now? How are you breathing? Holding the breath or a catch in the breath are sure signs of unnecessary tension. Release the breath.

---

<sup>10</sup> An excellent yoga-inspired series of warmups demonstrated by Kimberly Marshall can be viewed at [www.thediapason.com](http://www.thediapason.com). Click on DiapasonTV.

Release the idea of a goal, and just be curious about exactly what's happening right now. Find that "sweet spot" where the effort you are exerting is a pleasure. Hear the changes in the sounds you are making with each tiny adjustment. If you are frustrated, if it's just not working, slow down. There is a speed at which you can play this beautifully and easily. Allow yourself to move with pleasure in the direction of a sound that pleases you.

You are working on both the physical and aural levels here. As you discover things about your body ("Oh, if I lower my shoulders the trill can relax") you discover things about the music ("these long phrases actually have internal breathing points").

Welcome struggle. Where there is a hitch in your getalong, be delighted by the process of working it out. Slow it down. Be fascinated by exactly what is going on. If you notice yourself repeating something a lot, stop. Breathe. Be willing to live in this slow, hyper-sensing place for a while. Find the place where you can be completely in control and completely at ease at the same time. Practicing, even when not addressing a specific problem, is all about finding that balance between ease and effort. There is a parallel here to the Benedictine tradition of union between prayer and work. All practicing, done with attention and care, is prayer. *Sthira sukham asanam.*

Like yoga, practicing a musical instrument is both mental and physical. The best playing is playing that's just there, that has a sense of rightness, of just-so-ness in it, that seems to come from itself. Observing a master performer, one sees no thrashing about, in fact, barely any effort at all. The most sublime performances are those in which the piece seems to be playing the player rather than the other way around. And the music one hears in those performances is honest, profound, and moving. Music expresses truth beyond words, and touches deep truth in the listener. What an amazing gift to work in such a medium!

### ***Sample Meditation: Vipassana***

*Vipassana* means to see things as they really are. It is the style of meditation said to have been practiced by the Buddha<sup>11</sup> some 2500 years ago. In our century it is commonly called *Insight Meditation*.<sup>12</sup>

We begin the same way, finding a comfortable seat. As a feather floats down into a nest, find your place, land, and settle in. Close your eyes, if you like, and welcome yourself home. As in the body scan example, acknowledge your physical state. As you become quiet, notice your emotional state as well.

Feelings may present as thoughts, or as a physical reaction, either a tensing up or a letting go. Be hyper-aware of this. Anger: “So-and-so really hurt my feelings yesterday. I am so done with him!” (Jaw tightens.) Aggravation: “I wish my neighbor would quit mowing that oversized lawn.” (Palms begin to sweat.) Pleasure: “Lilacs! I love the smell of lilacs!” (Breath deepens.) Notice that thoughts and feelings happen like breathing or your heartbeat. You don’t so much do them as they do themselves, and you are along for the ride.

Let your awareness rest on the noticing itself, rather than following a thought.

Let this:

become this:

Lilacs, they won’t last too much longer.

Lilacs.

Breathe.

---

<sup>11</sup> Siddhartha Gautama, born a prince but later known as the Buddha, lived c. 480 to 400 BCE.

<sup>12</sup> The Insight Meditation Society, founded in Barre, MA by Jack Kornfield, Susan Salzberg, and Joseph Goldstein, has ancient roots in the Buddhist Theravada tradition. For more information, visit [www.dharma.org](http://www.dharma.org).

Hope the summer's not too hot.

Speculating...

Breathe.

Last summer I didn't get to the beach once.

Regret...

Breathe.

Wonder where the cooler is.

Stressing out...

Breathe.

Gotta de-clutter the garage.

Breathe.

Realize you can label thoughts and feelings without following them down the garden path. Then realize it is unnecessary even to identify passing thoughts or feelings. They are inconsequential. You are not the equivalent of your body, or your thoughts, or your feelings. You are more than all three. There is a self that is doing all this realizing. What is that? The Kripalu Yoga tradition calls it 'witness consciousness.' Athletes call it 'the zone.' But naming it, or even describing it, involves thinking about it, and then we've taken a step back. It is more useful to experience it than to understand it.

There are options to explore from this place of silent witnessing. In the purest *Vipassana* practice, the object is simply to be in inner stillness. But who can resist the opportunity to inspect one's own thoughts? Meditation can work like a pensieve. Harry Potter fans will recognize the magical capability of removing thoughts from the mind, one at a time, and storing them in a stone basin called a pensieve.<sup>13</sup> This can relieve a mind overwhelmed with too much

---

<sup>13</sup> J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Chapter 30. The pensieve can also allow a user to enter into thoughts or memories taken from another's mind, a modern twist on the Vulcan mind-meld familiar to fans of the original Star Trek series.

information, and also provide the user with objectivity, the chance to review or consider one's thoughts from a distance.

Noticing how thoughts and feelings move through the mind, or get stuck there, looping or spiraling, can be a life-transforming tool. Many of our thoughts yield little or nothing. They often interrupt one another, and the tendency to think compulsively, to get carried away by repeating thought patterns, is common.<sup>14</sup> That's a lot of mental energy that might be put to better use.

Anything you do that quiets mental noise will benefit your musicianship, and your life. "All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness."<sup>15</sup>

Beyond technical facility, can one also practice the meaning of music? The surrender to music? The glory, the passion, the bliss of music? It is not uncommon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to hear playing in which a complex masterpiece is tossed off as if it were nothing. The player has ease, and magnificent technique, but the result has no depth. There is no *there* there. How does one become aware of such a problem, and address it in oneself or a student?

### ***Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tat nirodhah***<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> The oft-repeated meme that the average person has 60,000 thoughts per day, and that 95% of them are the same thoughts he had yesterday, is difficult to substantiate.

<sup>15</sup> Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*, page 24

<sup>16</sup> The process of translating not just language to language, but ancient concepts into modern ones, is a subtle and complex art. As with the Bible or the Quran or the U.S. Constitution, interpretations evolve over time and cultures. Here is a breakdown of the Sanskrit text taken from <http://www.swamij.com/>:

1.12 These thought patterns (vrittis) are mastered (nirodhah, regulated, coordinated, controlled, stilled, quieted) through practice (abhyasa) and non-attachment (vairagya).

- abhyasa = by or with practice, repeated practice
- vairagya = non-attachment, by desirelessness or dispassion, neutrality or absence of coloring, without attraction or aversion
- tat = of those, through that of
- nirodhah = control, regulation, channeling, mastery, integration, coordination, understanding, stilling, quieting, setting aside of

*Yoga is achieved through persistent practice and non-attachment.*

*Patanjali Yoga Sutras Book I, Sutra 12*

*Examples from the yoga class*

Student: “When I do yoga at home, while I’m holding one asana I’m thinking about what asana I’m going to do next.”

Teacher: “And off the mat, when you’re doing one thing, are you thinking about the next task on your to-do list?”

Student: “All the other students in this class can do headstand, and I’ve been practicing yoga longer than most. When am I going to achieve headstand?”

Teacher: “Do you ever notice yourself paying attention to others, and wanting what they have? What might you be missing when you do that?”

Perhaps the most widely discussed aspects of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras are the sections on the *yamas* and *niyamas*, or restraints and observations. These are terse guidelines on the basics of living. They are, so to speak, the Ten Commandments of Yoga.

***Ahimsa satya asteya brahmacharya aparigraha yama.***

*Non-harming, truth, non-stealing, continence/abstention, and non-grasping are the restraints.*

*Patanjali Yoga Sutras Book II, Sutra 30*

The last of these, *aparigraha*, means non-grasping, freedom from possessiveness or greed, freedom from the urge to acquire, or to hold on to what one has. What is it that we grasp for? In a field where stable, gainful employment is scarce, it is common to be always on the lookout for a job, or a bigger/better job. This is *parigraha*, grasping, and it impinges one's ability to live fully in the present moment. Instead of being here now, one is focused on hope for the future. This mental habit can be highly self-defeating, because the future never really arrives. There is always more future, another bigger/better something, to capture one's focus, and distract one from the present.

The object of our grasping may be wealth or status, but it is even more likely to be acknowledgement, recognition, respect. It is a common human trait to want to influence how others perceive us. This too is *parigraha*. *Parigraha* is so ubiquitous it may even be difficult to imagine what the mind would be like without it.

What about the desire for perfection? Do not all musicians yearn for that perfect performance? "I hope the concert goes as well as my last rehearsal." Sadly, this too is *parigraha*. Ironically, if one's mental energy is focused on *wanting* to play that problem passage perfectly, the wanting itself can be the cause of falling short, or playing it perfectly and then stumbling in the next (easy) passage.

How else does *parigraha* manifest itself in music? On the subtle level, grasping is akin to having a sense of urgency, which can actually be exciting in some contexts. More obviously, a grasping performance will exhibit rushed beats and unstable rhythm, like a truck barreling downhill with unreliable brakes. Or, if too much mental energy is expended in grasping, the resulting music may sound vacuous, every note studiously practiced into place, but signifying nothing.



In a musical context, *aparigraha*, non-grasping, can lead to evenness of energy. A brilliant harpsichordist and teacher<sup>17</sup> once advised me to “pretend the easy parts are hard, and the hard parts easy.” The effect this had was to even out my energy, to mitigate mental tension before a difficult passage, and balance it by actually increasing mental tension after the difficulty had passed. She did not use the word *aparigraha*, but that’s what she taught me to practice.

*Aparigraha* is also often translated “releasing the fruits of the practice.” This is a tricky concept. After all, what is all this practicing for, if not to achieve something? A parable from Matthew’s Gospel may shed some light. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”<sup>18</sup>

Treasures on earth? Treasures in heaven? I used to think this was about doing good in this life, committing to self-sacrifice and meatless Fridays, in the hope of a joyous afterlife (heavenly treasure). But a more adult way of thinking about it is: on what is your heart set? Earthly treasure is a wholehearted focus on wanting. It’s *parigraha*. Heavenly treasure is a wholehearted focus on being. It’s *aparigraha*.

When *parigraha* lessens, what fills that void? If we notice and lighten up on grasping, where does that energy go? If we release the veil of wanting, is there anything behind it? This is a fascinating process of discovery. The answer may differ for every person. I suggest that the practice of *aparigraha* leads to pure devotion.

---

<sup>17</sup> Lisa Goode Crawford, Oberlin College, early 1970’s.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 6:19-21

Everything we are is reflected in the music we make. Joy, peace, generosity, deep love, and graciousness are all audible. So are fear, anxiety, and grasping. Ah, but those moments when we hear *heart*, those are the real treasures. And when those performances happen, the playing is easy.

*Christa Rakich has practiced organ since 1964. She has practiced meditation since 1975, and yoga since 1982. She joined the organ faculty of the New England Conservatory in 1979, and became a certified Kripalu yoga teacher in 1998.*