

A Glimpse of Yoga



Michelle Rae Sobi

Yoga is far more than a sequence of poses — it is a lifelong conversation with the self. Long before asana became the most recognizable doorway into practice, the ancient yogic path offered eight interconnected limbs designed to support human flourishing, emotional steadiness, and spiritual clarity. These teachings were never meant to be abstract or unreachable. They were meant to be lived: breath by breath, moment by moment, choice by choice.

The Eight Limbs invite us into a holistic way of being. They shape how we relate to others, how we care for ourselves, how we move, breathe, focus, meditate, and ultimately how we experience unity and connection. Each limb builds upon the previous one, creating a progression that is both practical and profoundly transformative.

This book offers a modern, trauma-informed, heart-centered interpretation of these timeless teachings. It is written for students, teachers, and seekers who want to understand yoga beyond the mat — who want to feel how these teachings live in the body, influence the mind, and soften the heart.

This is not a philosophical textbook. It is a companion — a guide you can return to again and again as your practice evolves. Yoga is not about performing perfectly; it is about becoming intimate with who you are beneath the noise, hustle, comparison, and expectations of daily life.

As you read, I invite you to move slowly. Take breaks. Breathe deeply. Let each section land in your body as much as your mind. These teachings are not meant to be memorized — they are meant to be felt.

May this exploration offer you clarity when life feels busy, steadiness when life feels uncertain, and inspiration when your inner light feels ready to expand.

May the Eight Limbs remind you that every part of your journey — the messy, the radiant, the tender, and the strong — belongs here.

Welcome to the path. Welcome home.

~ Michelle



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Acknowledgments

To my students, who are my greatest teachers.

About the Author

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1.1 YAMAS

The Ethics of How We Live Together

The Yamas are often described as the moral compass of yoga — the ways we interact with others, the commitments we keep, and the energy we bring into our relationships.

They shape our worldview and soften the edges of how we walk in the world.

The five Yamas are:

1. Ahimsa — Non-Harming
2. Satya — Truthfulness
3. Asteya — Non-Stealing
4. Brahmacharya — Moderation / Non-Excess
5. Aparigraha — Non-Possessiveness

What the Yamas Mean for Students

Each Yama asks us to pause, breathe, and choose what aligns with our highest self.

Ahimsa — Non-Harming

Gentleness toward yourself, others, and all living beings. This includes tone, words, self-talk, and everyday choices.

Try this: Notice your inner dialogue today. Soften one sentence.

Satya — Truthfulness

Speak your truth — but with kindness. Satya is never “brutal honesty.” It is clarity without harm.

Try this: Pause before speaking. Ask: “Is it true, is it kind, is it necessary?”

Asteya — Non-Stealing

Beyond material things, Asteya means not taking time, energy, credit, or emotional labor that isn’t freely offered.

Try this: Notice where you overreach. Practice enoughness.

Brahmacharya — Moderation

Balance in all things — energy, consumption, habits, impulses.

Not repression, not indulgence. Simply awareness.

Try this: Choose one area of excess and soften it by 5%.

Aparigraha — Non-Possessiveness

A lightness of being. Letting go of attachment to things, identities, or outcomes.

Try this: Release one object, idea, or expectation that no longer serves you.

What the Yamas Mean for Teachers

The Yamas are the invisible classroom — the atmosphere students feel when they walk in.

- Ahimsa → trauma-informed cuing, consent-based adjustments
- Satya → teaching what you know, honoring what you don't
- Asteya → crediting your teachers, honoring lineage
- Brahmacharya → pacing the class so students feel nourished, not depleted
- Aparigraha → letting go of expectations, comparisons, and needing approval

Teaching yoga is not performance. It is an act of service.
The Yamas help us remember that.

Reflection Prompt

Where in your life could practicing one Yama create a meaningful shift?



1.2 YAMAS DEEP DIVE

Ethical Living & How We Treat the World Around Us

The Yamas are the first limb of yoga and serve as the foundation for how we interact with the world.

They are not commandments or rigid rules — they are invitations. Guidelines for living in a way that fosters harmony, clarity, and compassion. In yoga philosophy, the Yamas help us peel away the layers that keep us from living authentically.

They remind us that our outer world reflects our inner world — and that our daily actions shape the energy we carry into our teaching, our relationships, and our practice. Let's explore how the Yamas meet us in everyday life, in our classrooms, and in our private inner landscape.

What Are the Yamas?

“Yama” translates to restraint — but not in the restrictive sense.

It means choosing actions rooted in integrity and care.

The five Yamas are:

1. Ahimsa — Non-Harming / Compassion
2. Satya — Truthfulness
3. Asteya — Non-Stealing
4. Brahmacharya — Moderation / Non-Excess
5. Aparigraha — Non-Possessiveness / Non-Grasping

These are not meant to be mastered overnight.

They evolve with us as we grow, heal, and expand.

What the Yamas Mean in Modern Life

The Yamas guide how we show up — in our relationships, our teaching, our self-talk, and our choices. They help us practice yoga off the mat, where it matters most.

And yet, they are not moralistic — they are compassionate anchors.

They ask:

- ✨ How gently do you treat yourself?
- ✨ How honest is your communication?
- ✨ Where do you overextend or take more than you need?
- ✨ How do your desires influence your energy?
- ✨ What would freedom look like if you let go a little more?

The Yamas remind us that yoga is a practice of becoming — not performing.

How to Apply the Yamas in Daily Life

1. Ahimsa — Compassion for All Living Beings

Ahimsa isn't just "don't harm." It is the presence of kindness.

It is choosing softer self-talk.

It is pausing before reacting.

It is guiding students with care and meeting them where they are.

Daily Expressions of Ahimsa:

- Speaking gently to yourself
- Choosing supportive movement
- Extending patience in difficult conversations
- Making your classroom an emotionally safe place

Ahimsa is the heartbeat of yoga.

2. Satya — Truthfulness ✨

Satya asks us to be honest — but also wise.

"Brutal honesty" is not Satya.

Truth without compassion is violence.

Live Satya by:

- Saying what you mean with kindness
- Being honest about your needs
- Listening to your intuition
- Practicing transparency in your boundaries

Truth is medicine when it comes from love.

3. Asteya — Non-Stealing

Asteya extends far beyond physical objects.

We practice Asteya when we:

- Honor people's time
- Give credit where it is due
- Avoid taking on more than we can carry
- Refrain from comparing ourselves to others
- Release envy as a form of self-harm
- Stealing comes in many forms — attention, energy, ideas, emotional labor.

Asteya teaches us to move consciously and generously.

4. Brahmacharya — Moderation / Non-Excess 🔥

In modern terms, Brahmacharya is about energy management.

Where does your energy go?

Where does it leak?

Where could you reclaim your power?

This Yama invites balance in:

- Eating
- Spending
- Social media
- Work
- Relationships
- Overconsumption of anything that drains us

It teaches us that discipline is loving, not limiting.

5. Aparigraha — Non-Grasping 🌱

Aparigraha is the art of letting go.

Letting go of the past.

Letting go of possessions we don't need.

Letting go of expectations.

Letting go of the illusion that we must control everything.

When we loosen our grip, freedom rushes in.

Daily practices:

- Decluttering your physical space
- Releasing attachment to outcomes
- Celebrating others' success without comparison
- Trusting that what's meant for you finds you

Aparigraha invites us into spaciousness.

Benefits of Practicing the Yamas

When practiced with sincerity, the Yamas:

- ✨ reduce inner conflict
- ✨ create healthier relationships
- ✨ soften the nervous system
- ✨ strengthen clarity and self-trust
- ✨ build emotional resilience
- ✨ deepen meditation
- ✨ support authentic living

They slowly shift the texture of daily life.

Less tension, more peace.

Less chaos, more purpose.

Less grasping, more spacious ease.

The Yamas do not demand perfection.

They offer practice — the kind that builds a lifetime's worth of inner steadiness.

Reflection Prompts

- Which Yama feels most supportive right now?
- Which Yama challenges me the most, and why?
- How does practicing the Yamas impact my relationships?
- Where do I notice opportunities for gentler living?

Use these as journaling pages, class themes, or personal inquiry.



2.1 NIYAMAS

Cultivating the Inner Landscape

If the Yamas shape how we move through the world, the Niyamas shape how we move through ourselves. These five practices help us build an inner environment that supports clarity, compassion, discipline, and spiritual growth.

They are the attitudes and habits we choose — intentionally — to nurture the relationship we have with our inner world.

The five Niyamas are:

1. Saucha — Purity / Simplicity
2. Santosha — Contentment
3. Tapas — Disciplined Effort
4. Svadhyaya — Self-Study
5. Ishvara Pranidhana — Surrender to the Divine / Higher Wisdom

While the language is ancient, the practices are incredibly modern. These are the tools that help us navigate busy schedules, emotional complexity, decision fatigue, and the pressure to do and be more.

The Niyamas help us soften into being.

What the Niyamas Mean for Students

1. Saucha — Purity

Saucha invites us to cleanse not only body and space, but also thought patterns, habits, and energy drains.

This can look like:

- Tidying your personal environment
- Hydrating and nourishing your body
- Creating mental space by pausing, breathing, and releasing tension
- Letting go of lingering emotional clutter

Try this: Before bed, choose one tiny thing to “clear” — a counter, an inbox, or a single thought that’s ready to be released.

2. Santosha — Contentment

- Santosha is being at ease with what is.
Not passivity — but presence.
- It is the art of acknowledging:
“This moment is enough. I am enough.”
- This doesn’t mean we stop growing. It means we stop fighting ourselves along the way.

Try this: Pause during your day and name one thing you appreciate — not in your life, but in this very moment.

3. Tapas — Discipline / Consistent Effort

Tapas is the steady flame of transformation.
Not burnout, not pushing — but consistent devotion.

Discipline becomes a form of self-love when it is aimed toward the person we are becoming.

Examples of Tapas:

- Showing up for your practice even when it's uncomfortable
- Making choices aligned with long-term wellbeing
- Setting boundaries that honor your energy

Try this: Choose one gentle action you can take daily for seven days — something small, steady, and realistic. Let it build heat.

4. Svadhyaya — Self-Study

Svadhyaya is the courage to look inward with curiosity rather than criticism.

It includes:

- Reflecting on your patterns
- Understanding your triggers
- Exploring your values
- Reading inspiring texts
- Listening to your inner landscape

This is where the yoga really happens.

Try this: Journaling prompt — “What am I learning about myself this week?”

5. Ishvara Pranidhana — Surrender

This Niyama is often misunderstood as giving up.
It is actually giving over — releasing the illusion of control.
It is a softening into trust.

A recognition that there is wisdom beyond our limited perspective.

This may look like:

- Letting go of perfectionism
- Releasing attachment to outcomes
- Offering your practice, work, or efforts to something greater

Try this: During Savasana, silently breathe the words: “I release. I trust.”

What the Niyamas Mean for Teachers

Great teachers don't “perform” the Niyamas — they embody them. When students walk into your class, they feel your inner steadiness.

Saucha: A clear space, a regulated nervous system, tidy sequencing, clean and respectful language.

Santosha: Meeting students where they are — without rushing or forcing outcomes.

Tapas: Maintaining your own practice, continuing education, and showing up with consistency.

Svadyaya: Reflecting honestly after teaching:
What went well? What needs refinement? What did I learn?

Ishvara Pranidhana: Letting go of perfection in your delivery.

You cue with clarity, hold space with care, and trust that the class will be exactly what students need. The Niyamas aren't rules — they are qualities of leadership.

Daily Integration for Real Life

Here are simple ways students and teachers can weave the Niyamas into daily routines:

- Saucha: Begin your morning with hydration and three deep breaths.
- Santosha: Practice being fully present at one meal each day.
- Tapas: Commit to a 5-minute consistency practice (meditation, journaling, stretching).
- Svadyaya: Read one paragraph from a favorite book or sutra.
- Ishvara Pranidhana: End your day by releasing control over one lingering worry.

These tiny daily rituals change lives over time.

Reflection Prompts

- Which Niyama feels easeful for you right now? Why?
- Which one feels challenging? Why?
- How might integrating one Niyama shift your relationships or inner world this month?
- What is one belief you are ready to examine more deeply?



2.2 NIYAMAS DEEP DIVE

The Practices That Shape Our Inner World ✨

If the Yamas guide how we interact with the world, the Niyamas guide how we interact with ourselves.

They are deeply personal, tender, reflective, and transformative.

They invite us into the ongoing inner work that supports a meaningful yoga practice and a grounded, steady life.

Where the Yamas help us create harmonious relationships, the Niyamas help us cultivate harmony within our own hearts, thoughts, habits, and choices.

The Sanskrit word Niyama translates as observances — practices that help us nourish our inner landscape so we can live from a place of integrity, peace, and purpose.

🌿 What Are the Niyamas?

There are five Niyamas:

1. Saucha — Purity / Clarity
2. Santosha — Contentment
3. Tapas — Discipline / Effort
4. Svadhyaya — Self-Study
5. Ishvara Pranidhana — Surrender to the Divine / Higher Self

These are not rules, expectations, or rigid rituals.

They are invitations for spaciousness, emotional well-being, and personal alignment. They help us build a relationship with our inner world that is compassionate, honest, and empowered.

The Niyamas show us that inner transformation is possible — and that it begins with the smallest daily choices.

1. Saucha — Purity, Clarity & Sacred Cleanliness ✨

Saucha refers to both outer and inner purity.

Outer purity includes:

- a clean home or practice space
- uncluttered surroundings
- tidy belongings
- healthy food
- intentional routines

Inner purity includes:

- clean thoughts
- emotional hygiene
- healthy boundaries
- mindful consumption (news, media, conversations)
- releasing negativity and resentment

A cluttered mind cannot rest. Saucha helps.

A cluttered space cannot inspire. Saucha helps.

A cluttered heart cannot expand. Saucha helps.

Saucha invites us to remove distractions so we can see clearly — and live clearly.

Daily Practice:

- Try tidying one corner of your space.
- Try replacing one negative thought with one compassionate one.
- Try approaching your body with respectful care.
- Small purifications open the door to big transformation.

2. Santosha — Contentment & the Art of Enough 🌿

Santosha is the quiet joy of accepting the present moment as it is.

It is not passive or complacent.

It is a deep, grounded “yes” to reality.

Santosha teaches us:

- ✨ Happiness is not in the next achievement.
- ✨ Fulfillment is not in external validation.
- ✨ Peace is not found in perfection.
- ✨ Contentment is available now.

It invites us to loosen our grip on “I will be happy when...”
and soften into “I can be at peace now.”

This Niyama is powerful for yogis, teachers, solopreneurs, mothers, dog moms, creatives, and anyone who feels the constant pull of “more.”

Contentment is a practice of coming home to yourself.

Daily Practice:

- Name one thing you appreciate right now.
- Breathe into the present moment.
- Release the internal chase for what's next.

3. Tapas — Discipline, Effort & Transformation 🔥

Tapas translates as heat — the purifying fire of commitment, consistency, and resilience.

Tapas is the spark that says:

“I will show up for myself today.”

It shows up as:

- sticking to a practice
- setting loving boundaries
- doing what you said you would do
- taking courageous steps
- staying focused on your growth

Tapas burns away old habits, stagnant energy, excuses, and self-doubt.

While discipline sometimes carries a harsh connotation, in yoga philosophy, Tapas is gentle yet powerful — a form of devotion to your future self.

Daily Practice:

Choose one small discipline:

- five minutes of meditation
- one glass of water every morning
- one yoga pose
- one journal reflection

Consistency over intensity always wins.

4. Svadhyaya — Self-Study, Reflection & Inner Knowing 📖💛

Svadhyaya is the study of the self — the deepest form of personal growth.

It includes:

- studying sacred texts
- reflecting on your patterns
- learning from teachers
- gaining self-awareness
- observing your reactions
- noticing your inner stories

Svadyaya helps us understand why we do what we do. It illuminates our blind spots with compassion, not judgment. It helps us grow into truer versions of ourselves.

This is where journaling, yoga philosophy, meditation, and therapy all intersect beautifully.

Daily Practice:

Ask yourself one reflective question:

“What is one thing I learned about myself today?”

Then... simply notice.

Awareness always precedes transformation.

5. Ishvara Pranidhana — Surrender to the Divine / Higher Self 

This Niyama brings us into the heart of spiritual practice.

It invites us to trust in something larger — a universal intelligence, inner wisdom, intuition, nature, or whatever your personal belief system aligns with.

You may call it God, Source, Love, the Universe, Higher Self, Grace, or something else entirely.

Yoga asks for no dogma here.

Only trust.

Ishvara Pranidhana teaches us:

- to let go of excessive control
- to release attachment to outcomes
- to move with faith rather than fear
- to soften into guidance
- to remember we are supported

Surrender is not giving up.

It is giving over — letting life meet you halfway.

Daily Practice:

Whisper one of your favorite phrases:

- “I trust the path.”
- “I release what is not mine.”
- “Guide me.”
- “Let this unfold as it should.”

The softening becomes freedom.

Practical Ways to Integrate the Niyamas








Try incorporating one Niyama each day for a week.

- Monday: Saucha — clear your space
- Tuesday: Santosha — gratitude practice
- Wednesday: Tapas — stick to one commitment
- Thursday: Svadhyaya — journal 5 minutes
- Friday: Ishvara Pranidhana — let go of one worry

This creates a gentle rhythm of inner care and awareness.

Benefits of Practicing the Niyamas

Practicing the Niyamas can lead to:

-  Increased emotional clarity
-  Healthy habits and routines
-  A deeper connection to yourself
-  A strengthened sense of inner peace
-  Greater resilience
-  Authentic self-expression
-  Spiritual connection (in your own way)

They support a life that feels aligned, spacious, and purpose-driven.

Reflection Prompts

- Which Niyama feels most supportive to me right now?
- Where do I resist inner discipline or self-study?
- What is one thing I can surrender today?
- How does contentment show up in my life?
- How do my habits support or sabotage my well-being?

Use these in class themes, journal prompts, or meditation cues.



3.1 ASANA

The Body as a Teacher

Asana, the third limb of yoga, is often the doorway through which many modern practitioners first enter the practice. What begins as movement becomes a language — a quiet conversation between the body, the breath, and the inner landscape. For some, asana is strength.

For others, stability.

For many, it becomes a mirror that reflects the subtler layers of self-awareness. Within the Eight-Limbed Path, asana was originally defined simply as a steady, comfortable seat for meditation. Over time, the repertoire expanded into the hundreds of postures we recognize today. But the heart of asana remains unchanged: We move the body so the mind can become still.

The Purpose of Asana

Asana is not about flexibility, perfection, or performance.

Its purpose is to:

- Prepare the nervous system for meditation
- Strengthen the body's capacity to hold awareness
- Release stored tension and emotional residue
- Rediscover alignment between physical and energetic centers
- Build discipline, curiosity, and self-study through movement

When practiced with presence, asana becomes a bridge — a way to move from doing into being.

Asana as Mindfulness in Motion

Each posture invites us into a moment of inner listening:

- What sensations arise?
- What emotions surface?
- What thoughts move through the mind?
- How does the breath respond?

Through this listening, the student learns to recognize patterns:

- Where they push
- Where they collapse
- Where they resist
- Where they soften
- Where they find steadiness

The mat becomes a living metaphor for life off the mat.

The Role of Alignment

Alignment is not rigid structure — it is intelligent placement.

Alignment helps us:

- Reduce risk of injury
- Find space in the joints
- Direct prana efficiently
- Maintain functional movement
- Support a long-term, sustainable practice

Teachers guide alignment not to force bodies into shapes, but to help practitioners find their own version of the posture — one that honors anatomy, history, trauma, and capacity.

The Nervous System and Asana

Modern yoga often emphasizes the physical benefits of posture, but the deeper gift is nervous system literacy.

Asana teaches students to:

- Notice activation
- Soften hypervigilance
- Increase interoception (inner sensing)
- Build resilience through breath-led movement
- Transition intentionally between states

A slow, mindful asana practice gently shifts the body from sympathetic activation (fight or flight) to parasympathetic grounding (rest-and-digest). This is why many students feel calmer, clearer, and more emotionally regulated after class.

Asana and Energetic Awareness

Each posture influences the subtle body — the chakras, nadis, and energetic pathways explained by ancient yogic texts.

Examples:

- Standing poses build grounding and stability.
- Backbends invite openness and courage.
- Forward folds cultivate introspection.
- Twists support detoxification and emotional unwinding.
- Balances strengthen focus and presence.
- Restorative shapes nourish the parasympathetic system.

As the body shifts, awareness shifts.

As awareness shifts, consciousness shifts.

Sequencing as a Form of Storytelling

A well-designed class is not random movement — it is a thoughtful arc.

Teachers consider:

- Warm-up and joint preparation
- Peak pose or energetic intention
- Counterposes
- Nervous system landing
- Integration and closing

When done with intention, sequencing becomes:

- A lesson
- A journey
- A safe container
- A space for transformation

Students may not always know why the class felt good — but they feel it.

The Teacher's Role in Asana

A yoga teacher is not a choreographer. A teacher is a facilitator of experience.

Their role is to:

- Hold space
- Guide breath and movement
- Offer options without hierarchy
- Model permission, curiosity, and compassion
- Avoid over-touching or over-correcting
- Honor trauma-informed considerations
- Respect cultural roots of the practice

A great teacher helps students feel successful — not because they achieve the shape, but because they feel connected to themselves.

The Student's Role in Asana

The student is not passive. They are an active participant in their own unfolding.

Their role is to:

- Listen to their body without comparison
- Honor limitations
- Celebrate progress
- Explore sensations
- Move with breath
- Ask questions
- Practice consistency over intensity

Asana becomes a lifelong companion rather than a performance metric.

Reflection Prompts

- What have you learned about yourself through movement?
- Which postures feel most grounding? Which feel most challenging? Why?
- How does your inner dialogue shift during practice?
- What would your practice look like if you prioritized sensation over shape?



3.2 ASANA DEEP DIVE

The Third Limb of Yoga: Embodiment, Strength & Presence

Asana is often the first doorway through which many people enter yoga. We step onto the mat.

We stretch, breathe, flow, wobble, balance, learn, unlearn, and slowly begin to understand that yoga is not something we perform — it is something we experience. Asana, at its root, means “seat.”

Not the shape of the pose itself, but the quality of the posture: steady, comfortable, intentional.

While modern yoga often focuses on the physical movements, the ancient intention of Asana was simple:

To prepare the body to sit with ease, to meditate, and to access deeper states of awareness.

This chapter reclaims that essence while honoring the evolution of yoga as it is practiced today.

What Is Asana?

Asana is the third limb of Patanjali’s eight-limbed path.

It brings us into relationship with our physical body — the only home we truly have in this lifetime.

Through Asana, we explore:

- Strength
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Embodiment
- Breath awareness
- Emotional presence
- Mind–body integration

Asana is not about mastering poses. It is about mastering presence.

Every posture is an opportunity to listen deeply:

“What is my body telling me?”

“What emotions are surfacing?”

“What happens when I stay?”

“What happens when I soften?”

This is the heart of the practice.

The Purpose of Asana

Asana is not meant to be a performance.
It is an inward journey shaped through outward movement.

The purpose of Asana includes:

1. Preparing the body for meditation

When the body becomes strong and steady, the mind can become still.

2. Reducing physical tension and mental stress

Movement releases stored energy, emotion, and patterns of holding.

3. Cultivating discipline and awareness

We learn to stay with sensation without reacting or escaping.

4. Encouraging mobility and longevity

A healthy spine and strong muscles support a healthy life.

5. Developing non-judgmental self-awareness

The mat becomes a mirror for our inner world.

Asana teaches us to respond, not react.

To witness, not cling.

To breathe, not resist.

Asana as Meditation in Motion

When practiced with presence, Asana becomes a moving meditation.

Every inhale becomes an invitation.

Every exhale becomes a release.

Every posture becomes a moment of self-study.

Even alignment cues — while helpful — are secondary to the inner experience of the pose.

As a teacher and practitioner, you may ask:

- What am I sensing?
- Where am I holding?
- What can soften?
- Can I breathe here?
- Can I stay present?

This is the true yoga.

Props in Asana — Support, Not Shortcut

Props can be:

- empowering
- stabilizing
- clarifying
- and deeply restorative

They help students explore poses safely, inclusively, and with proper intention.

Props are bridges, not crutches.
A block might bring the earth closer.
A strap might extend the reach.
A bolster might soften the heart.
A blanket might soothe the joints.

As a teacher, always explain what you want your students to experience rather than what shape to force themselves into.

Asana Through the Lens of Non-Harming

Ahimsa, the first Yama, is always our foundation.
The body is our guide, not our obstacle.
The breath is our boundary-keeper.
The goal is not depth — the goal is connection.

Students may come with:

- tightness
- hypermobility
- fear
- past trauma
- old injuries
- fatigue
- self-judgment

As teachers, we welcome them exactly as they are.

In your Edge Yoga School lineage, the heart of Asana is:

“How does this feel?”

not

“How does this look?”

This is trauma-informed, inclusive, student-centered yoga.

Breath + Asana = Transformation

Linking breath with movement helps students:

- regulate their nervous system
- stay present
- increase focus
- release tension
- find rhythm
- prevent injury

Examples:

- Inhale to lengthen
- Exhale to twist
- Inhale to lift
- Exhale to fold

Breath is the thread that holds the entire practice together.

Emotional Release Through Asana

The body keeps stories.

As we stretch, shake, breathe, tremble, and expand, old patterns can rise to the surface.

Students may cry, laugh, or feel unexpected emotions.

This is normal.

This is healing.

This is yoga working.

Asana becomes a safe expression of emotional release — without needing to tell the story out loud. Meeting students with compassion, warmth, and presence is essential.

Daily Life Applications of Asana

Even off the mat, Asana invites us to:

- stand tall with confidence
- breathe through challenges
- embrace balance in busy seasons
- soften when life feels rigid
- root down when life feels chaotic
- listen to what our body needs

The mat becomes a training ground for life.

What we learn in our bodies, we take into our relationships, our work, our homes, our conversations, and our internal world.

✨ **Benefits of Asana**

A consistent practice can support:

Physical Benefits:

- Strengthened muscles
- Increased flexibility
- Improved posture
- Better balance
- Enhanced circulation
- Joint mobility
- Pain reduction

Mental & Emotional Benefits:

- Reduced stress
- Improved sleep
- Increased confidence
- Enhanced focus
- Greater resilience
- Nervous system regulation
- Emotional release

Spiritual Benefits:

- Deepened self-awareness
- Heightened intuition
- Connection to inner wisdom
- Embodied presence

Asana is the integration of body, breath, and awareness — the place where the physical and subtle meet.

♥ **Reflection Prompts**

- What is my relationship to my body today?
- How do I respond when a pose feels challenging?
- Where do I feel spacious?
- Where do I feel guarded?
- What emotions arise on my mat?
- How does my breath support me?

These reflections help students deepen their practice with intention.



4.1 PRANAYAMA

Breath as the Bridge Between Body and Mind

Pranayama, the fourth limb of yoga, is one of the most powerful tools we have for self-regulation and inner transformation. While asana prepares the body, pranayama awakens the subtle pathways that influence how we think, feel, process, and respond to the world around us.

The breath is both involuntary and voluntary — which makes it a remarkable doorway.

When we change the breath, we change the body.

When we change the body, we change the mind.

When we change the mind, we shift our entire experience of life.

Pranayama is where yoga begins to move from the physical to the energetic.

What Pranayama Really Means

Pranayama is commonly translated as “breath control,” but the deeper meaning offers something far more profound:

- Prana – life force, the energy that animates all living things
- Ayama – expansion, extension, regulation

So pranayama is not merely controlling breath — it is expanding the flow of life force within the body.

Ancient yogis taught that prana travels through energetic pathways called nadis, influencing vitality, emotional stability, clarity, and spiritual growth. Through specific breathing practices, we learn to regulate this flow, creating harmony within both the body and the mind.

Why Breath Matters

Breath is the first thing we do when we arrive in this world and the last thing we do when we leave. Everything in between is shaped by how consciously—or unconsciously—we breathe.

The breath responds instantly to:

- Stress
- Joy
- Fear
- Movement
- Thought
- Memory

Most people breathe shallowly into the upper chest, which reinforces the body's stress response.

Pranayama retrains the breath to move with spaciousness and awareness, signaling safety and grounding.

This is one of the reasons breathwork is now supported not only by yogic philosophy, but also by neuroscience, somatic therapy, and trauma-informed healing practices.

The Nervous System and Pranayama

Each breath is a conversation with the nervous system.

Slow, deep breathing activates the parasympathetic system — the body's rest and digest response — and communicates:

- You are safe
- You can soften
- You can return to the present moment

Fast or forceful breathing may activate sympathetic energy, which can be helpful when we need clarity, alertness, or mobilization.

Pranayama teaches us choice. Choice becomes grounding. Grounding becomes empowerment.

Common Pranayama Practices

Below is a collection of practices that yoga teachers often incorporate into classes. Each serves a specific purpose and can be adapted for different bodies and needs.

Complete Belly Breath

Also called diaphragmatic breathing, this technique slows the heart rate, calms anxious thoughts, and invites the mind back into the present moment. It is foundational, accessible, and supportive for nearly every student.

Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

A powerful technique for balancing the left (cooling, calming) and right (activating, energizing) energy channels.

This practice is especially helpful for:

- Anxiety
- Rumination
- Overwhelm
- Emotional imbalance

It promotes clarity, steadiness, and emotional neutrality.

Ujjayi Breath (Victorious Breath)

Often used in vinyasa classes, Ujjayi adds a soft whispering sound at the back of the throat. It can:

- Build inner heat
- Increase focus
- Anchor attention
- Slow the pace of practice

Ujjayi reinforces the link between movement and breath.

Bhastrika (Bellows Breath)

Strong, energizing, and uplifting.

Useful when feeling heavy, sluggish, or depleted — but generally avoided during pregnancy, high blood pressure, dizziness, or anxiety.

Breath of Joy

A dynamic, mood-boosting breathwork sequence often done standing.

It oxygenates the blood, energizes the body, and dramatically shifts emotional state.

Kapalabhati (Skull Shining Breath)

A cleansing technique where short, sharp exhalations clear the lungs and stimulate the digestive fire.

Excellent for revitalization, though best approached with care and proper guidance.

How Pranayama Serves Daily Life

Pranayama does not end on the mat — it becomes a life skill.

When you feel anxious:

Try slow diaphragmatic breathing or alternate nostril breathing.

When you feel distracted or unfocused:

Try Ujjayi breathing to anchor awareness.

When you feel tired or unmotivated:

Try Bhastrika or Breath of Joy for a natural lift.

When you feel overstimulated:

Soften into long exhales to release tension.

As the breath becomes steadier, life becomes steadier.

The Energetic Map Behind Pranayama

Pranayama affects not only the physical body, but also:

- Emotional states
- Energetic patterns
- Subtle body systems
- Chakra balance
- Mental clarity
- Spiritual awareness

Ancient yogis taught that breath is the vehicle for prana — and prana fuels consciousness.

Where breath flows, awareness follows.

Where awareness flows, transformation occurs.

Reflection Prompts

- What patterns do you notice in your breathing throughout the day?
- Which pranayama technique feels most supportive to your current season of life?
- When do you tend to hold your breath? What might that reveal?
- How does your thinking shift when your breath slows down?



4.2 PRANAYAMA DEEP DIVE

The Fourth Limb of Yoga: Breath as the Bridge Between Body & Spirit

Pranayama is often described as the heart of yoga.

Where Asana moves the body, Pranayama moves the energy within it. It is here — in the breath — that we meet the most accessible tool for transformation we will ever have.

Breath is rhythm.

Breath is presence.

Breath is information.

Breath is medicine.

Pranayama teaches us to regulate our inner world so we can navigate the outer world with clarity, steadiness, and grace.

What Is Pranayama?

Pranayama is the fourth limb of Patanjali's eight-limbed path.

It comes from two Sanskrit roots:

- Prana — life force, vitality, energy carried by the breath
- Ayama — expansion, extension, regulation
- Yama — restraint or control

Thus, Pranayama is both the regulation of breath and the expansion of life force.

It is not simply “breathing exercises.” It is the conscious relationship between mind, breath, and energy.

Where the breath goes, the mind follows. Where the breath becomes steady, the mind becomes still.

Why the Breath Matters So Much

We breathe over 20,000 times a day — mostly without awareness.

Pranayama invites us to reclaim the breath as a powerful ally in healing.

Breath reveals:

- Our emotional state
- Our stress level
- Our patterns of holding
- Our capacity to soften
- Our willingness to release

Breath responds instantly to thought. Thought responds instantly to breath.

This mutual relationship forms the foundation of all mind–body practices.

What Pranayama Means in Practice


Pranayama helps us connect to our inner landscape by:

 1. Slowing the breath

Which quiets the mind.

 2. Deepening the breath


Which nourishes the entire system.

 3. Balancing the nervous system

By shifting from fight-or-flight into rest-and-digest.

 4. Clearing stagnant energy

Allowing space for clarity, creativity, and intuition.

 5. Preparing the body for meditation

Breath becomes the anchor for the mind.

In essence:

Asana opens the body.

Pranayama opens the mind.

Meditation opens the heart.



What Pranayama Means to You as a Teacher

In your lineage, Michelle, Pranayama is taught with simplicity, safety, and awareness. Students learn that breath is a tool they carry with them always — far beyond the mat.

You teach breathwork as:

- a grounding technique,
- a nervous system reset,
- a meditative gateway,
- a personal empowerment tool,
- and a life skill that meets them wherever they are.

Students often report feeling:

- calmer
- clearer
- more capable
- emotionally lighter
- more present

after only a few minutes of guided breathwork.

How to Bring Pranayama into Daily Life

Pranayama is most powerful when practiced consistently — not perfectly.

Here are simple, accessible ways to weave breath into everyday living:

Complete Belly Breath (Diaphragmatic Breath)

Use when experiencing overwhelm, fatigue, or racing thoughts.

This breath slows the heart rate, anchors the mind, and soothes anxiety.

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana)

Use when ungrounded, scattered, or emotionally activated.

This balances both hemispheres of the brain, calms the mind, and restores equilibrium.

Ujjayi Breath (Victorious Breath)

Use during yoga practice or under stress.

It creates internal heat, improves focus, and supports emotional regulation.

Bellows Breath (Bhastrika)

Use when feeling low-energy or sluggish.

It increases vitality, boosts mood, and awakens the senses.

Breath of Joy

Use to elevate mood and increase oxygen flow.

Perfect for morning practice or mid-afternoon resets.

Skull Shining Breath (Kapalabhati)

Use with caution and awareness.

Clears mental fog, increases energy, and warms the system.

Each technique supports a different aspect of the human experience — emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual.

Why Pranayama Works: A Look Inside the Nervous System

Science and yoga agree:

Breathing slowly and deeply activates the vagus nerve, which signals the body to relax.

This shift moves us from:

- Sympathetic activation (fight or flight)
into
- Parasympathetic regulation (rest and digest)

This physiological pivot is why breathwork can transform:

- anxiety
- insomnia
- chronic tension
- emotional reactivity
- burnout
- stress-related symptoms

Deep breathing:

- lowers blood pressure
- slows heart rate
- increases oxygen flow
- calms the mind
- improves digestion
- enhances immune function

The breath is the bridge between the seen and unseen.

 **Emotional Benefits of Pranayama**

Pranayama teaches us emotional literacy — a gentle ability to name, feel, and regulate our emotions.

Students often experience:

- reduced stress
- fewer emotional spikes
- more emotional resilience
- deeper inner peace
- better sleep
- clearer thinking
- heightened intuition

Breathwork becomes a spiritual pause button — an invitation to return to self.

 **Spiritual Benefits of Pranayama**

Pranayama is a subtle but powerful gateway into the inner world.

It helps practitioners:

- quiet the mind
- connect with intuition
- feel a sense of spaciousness
- soften ego-identification
- access deeper meditation
- sense energetic shifts

In many lineages, breath is seen as the carrier of consciousness.

When the breath expands, awareness expands.

When the breath steadies, presence deepens.

Benefits of Applying Pranayama to Your Life

Here are some well-documented benefits of regular breathwork practice:

Physical Benefits

- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Lowered stress hormones
- Better sleep
- Greater lung capacity
- Increased energy
- Muscle relaxation
- Improved cardiovascular health

Mental Benefits

- Improved clarity
- Increased focus
- Enhanced mood
- Improved memory and cognition

Emotional/Spiritual Benefits

- Deepened self-awareness
- Greater resilience
- Softened reactionary patterns
- Heightened sense of inner connection

Pranayama is one of the most accessible healing tools available — free, portable, and profoundly transformative.



Reflection Prompts

- What does my breath reveal about my emotional state today?
- Where in my body do I feel the breath move easily?
- Where does the breath feel restricted?
- How do I respond when breathwork feels challenging?
- What happens when I slow my exhale?
- What would it feel like to bring breath awareness into my daily rhythms?



5.1 PRATYAHARA

The Art of Turning Inward ✨

Pratyahara is often described as one of the most misunderstood limbs of yoga, and yet it might be the one our modern world needs the most. It is the fifth limb of Patanjali's

Eight Limbs — the bridge between the outer practices (asana and pranayama) and the inner practices (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi).

We live in a time of constant stimulation — notifications, noise, movement, and the pressure to respond instantly. Pratyahara invites us into the opposite direction: a gentle return inward.

Whereas asana refines the body and pranayama refines the breath, pratyahara refines awareness.

It is the practice of withdrawing from external distractions to reconnect with the self — not by pushing the world away, but by softening our attachment to it.

What Is Pratyahara?

The Sanskrit word pratyahara comes from:

- “prati” — against or away
- “ahara” — anything taken in from the outside world

So pratyahara literally means “to withdraw what we normally take in with the senses.”

But this does not mean shutting the world out or entering a trance.

Instead, Pratyahara invites:

- Inner listening
- Discernment
- A pause before reacting
- Awareness before action
- Space before emotion becomes behavior

It is the practice of reclaiming your energy from everything that pulls your attention outward.

Why Pratyahara Matters in Modern Life

We are constantly absorbing sensory input: sights, sounds, conversations, social media, expectations, and emotional cues. Without realizing it, our energy becomes scattered.

Pratyahara is the yogic antidote to overstimulation.

It teaches:

- How to remain centered even when the world is busy
- How to notice sensation without becoming overwhelmed
- How to respond instead of react
- How to stay connected to your own needs and boundaries
- How to build emotional resilience and inner steadiness

It's not about isolation. It's about sovereignty.

What Pratyahara Feels Like

Students often ask, "How do I know if I'm doing pratyahara?"

Here are some common experiences:

- Feeling the world become quieter even if external sounds remain
- Noticing your breath more than your surroundings
- Being aware of sensations but not distracted by them
- Feeling a sense of inner spaciousness
- Experiencing a soft detachment from external pull
- A warm sense of returning home to yourself

Pratyahara is not outward silence — it is inner stillness.

Pratyahara in Asana Practice


Asana is a beautiful doorway into pratyahara. You can guide your students inward by teaching them to:

- Focus on how the posture feels (not how it looks)
- Notice the breath in each shape
- Tune into subtle sensation
- Relax effort where it is not needed
- Use drishti (gaze) to steady attention
- Reduce external comparisons

When students begin observing their internal landscape more than their external environment, they are practicing pratyahara.

Pratyahara in Daily Life

Pratyahara is not limited to the mat — it is a life practice.

 When you feel overwhelmed

Pause.

Close your eyes.

Take one slow breath.

Feel the body from the inside before responding.

 When you are tempted to react impulsively

Withdraw inward for three breaths.


Let the stimulus soften before making a choice.

 When you feel overstimulated

Step into stillness — even for thirty seconds.

Rest your senses.

Return home to yourself.

 When you need clarity

Turn away from external noise and toward inner truth.

Answers rise in quiet places.

Daily Pratyahara Practices

Here are simple techniques you can share with students or integrate into your personal practice:



Softening the Gaze

Instead of closing the eyes completely, soften the gaze and allow the periphery to blur.



Ear Withdrawal (Karna Mudra)

Gently cover the ears with your palms and listen inward.



Breath Tracking

Follow the breath as though it is the only sensation in the room.



Sensory Pause Practice

Pause before reacting to a sound or visual stimulus. Recognize it without attachment.



Savasana Awareness

Notice how thoughts rise...

Notice how they drift away...

Practice non-attachment.

How Pratyahara Supports Emotional Regulation

Pratyahara helps us:

- Interrupt automatic reactions
- Notice emotional cues early
- Prevent overwhelm
- Build somatic awareness
- Stop absorbing the energy of others
- Strengthen inner boundaries
- Restore inner peace

It is one of the most trauma-informed limbs — not because it avoids sensation, but because it teaches choice about where attention lands.

Pratyahara as Spiritual Practice

When the senses withdraw, the inner light grows brighter. This is why pratyahara is considered the turning point in yoga — the moment we shift from physical practice to meditative practice.

Pratyahara prepares the mind for:

- Dharana — one-pointed concentration
- Dhyana — meditation
- Samadhi — unity

It is the quiet doorway between the known and the unknown.

Reflection Prompts

- Where in your life are your senses overstimulated?
- How might you create more sensory rest?
- What happens when you close your eyes for three breaths?
- What emotions become clearer when the outer world quiets down?
- What inner truths become audible in stillness?



5.2 PRATYAHARA DEEP DIVE

The Fifth Limb of Yoga: Turning Inward Toward the Quiet Wisdom Within 🌙🧘

Pratyahara is often described as one of the most mysterious limbs of yoga — not because it is complex, but because it asks us to do something profoundly countercultural:

Withdraw from the noise of the world so we may finally hear ourselves.
In a world built on distraction, Pratyahara is the sacred pause.
It is the moment the senses take a gentle step back, and the inner world steps forward.

🌿 What Is Pratyahara?

Pratyahara is the fifth limb of the Eight-Limbed Path.

The Sanskrit breaks down beautifully:

- Prati — away, against, back
- Ahara — food, intake, what we take in

Thus, Pratyahara means:

“Withdrawal from that which feeds the senses.”

It is not deprivation.

It is not isolation.

It is not shutting out the world.

Instead, it is:

learning to remain aware of the world
without being controlled by it.

🌙 The Art of Sensory Withdrawal

Pratyahara does not mean becoming unaware of your surroundings.
It means becoming unhooked from them.

Examples:

- Hearing a sound without being disturbed by it
- Noticing a sensation without reacting to it
- Being aware of distraction without losing your center
- Feeling emotion without being consumed by it

It is the subtle shift from:

- reacting → to observing
- absorbing → to witnessing
- consuming → to discernment
- externally driven → to internally guided

This limb prepares the mind for the deeper practices of concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyana), and union (Samadhi).

Why Pratyahara Matters

Pratyahara is the turning point of the Eight Limbs — the moment attention shifts from the outward-facing world to the inward-facing landscape.

It teaches us:

- inner quiet
- emotional spaciousness
- mindfulness without effort
- clarity before action
- the art of non-reactivity
- boundaries that protect peace

In a culture of overstimulation, Pratyahara is medicine.



What Pratyahara Means to You as a Teacher

In your lineage, Michelle, Pratyahara is taught as:

- the bridge between physical and meditative practices
- the foundation of self-awareness
- the pause before wisdom
- the place where emotional maturity grows

You help students understand that peace is not the absence of noise — it is the ability to hear noise without losing your inner ground. Your trainees learn that Pratyahara is not stillness for stillness' sake. It is stillness for awareness' sake.

How to Apply Pratyahara in Daily Life

Pratyahara is not limited to meditation. It is a life practice.

1. The Pause Before Reactivity

Before responding to a difficult text, email, or conflict, breathe.
Step back.
Withdraw from the initial impulse.
Then choose with clarity.

2. Sensory Simplification

Turn off notifications.
Choose quiet when possible.
Reduce unnecessary input.
Your nervous system thanks you.

3. Mindful Media Intake

Ask:
“Does this nourish me or deplete me?”
Pratyahara teaches you to be selective, not avoidant.

4. Resting the Eyes, Ears & Mind

Close your eyes during Savasana.
Cover them with a mask.
Let the senses have a moment to rest.

5. Single-Tasking

One thing at a time.
Bring full presence to each task.
This builds inner steadiness.

6. Day-to-Day Mini-Retreats

Moments of silence.
Moments of stillness.
Moments of intentional disengagement.

Pratyahara restores the nervous system in small, meaningful increments.

Pratyahara in Asana Practice

Asana is the doorway into sensory withdrawal.

You might guide students to:

- soften the gaze or close the eyes
- feel the posture from the inside out
- notice the breath as a sensory anchor
- release the habit of comparing
- listen inwardly rather than externally

This shift transforms:

- distraction → into embodiment
- performance → into presence
- effort → into awareness

The more inward the gaze, the more profound the practice.

Pratyahara & Emotional Wellbeing

Pratyahara helps students:

- avoid impulsive decisions
- respond rather than react
- understand their own emotional patterns
- create internal boundaries
- navigate overstimulation
- stay grounded in discomfort

It is often the first time a student realizes:

“I can feel something without being consumed by it.”

This is emotional freedom.

Spiritual Significance of Pratyahara

For many practitioners, this limb is the moment they begin to sense:

- inner stillness
- intuitive wisdom
- energetic subtlety
- the quiet voice of Self
- the spaciousness beneath thought

It is the shift from “doing yoga” to experiencing yoga.

This limb prepares the mind for the deeper, quieter states of concentration, meditation, and ultimately, bliss.

Reflection Prompts

- What distractions tend to pull me away from myself?
- How do I respond to sensory overload?
- When was the last time I chose stillness?
- What does “withdrawing inward” feel like in my body?
- Where do I need better boundaries around sensory input?
- What happens when I momentarily close my eyes and breathe?



6.1 DHARANA

The Practice of One-Pointed Focus

Dharana is the sixth limb of Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga — the stage where all prior practices begin to converge into a single stream of awareness. If pratyahara is the quieting of external distractions, then dharana is choosing where the mind gently lands once the noise settles.

In a world full of multitasking and constant stimulation, dharana is revolutionary. It teaches us how to be fully here — not partly here, not almost here, not thinking ahead while listening here — but completely rooted in the present moment.

Whereas:

- Asana stabilizes the body
- Pranayama steadies the breath
- Pratyahara softens the senses

Dharana steadies the mind.

It is the art of choosing one mental point and holding it with gentle consistency.

What Is Dharana?

The Sanskrit word dharana comes from:

- “dhri” — to hold, to sustain, to maintain
- “ana” — tool or practice

Dharana literally means “to hold the mind steady on one object.”

That object may be:

- The breath
- A mantra
- A candle flame
- A point on the floor
- The sound of a bowl
- A sensation within the body
- A visualization or symbol

A moment in your heart you want to stay present with Dharana is not about forcing the mind.

It is the practice of gently returning to a single point again and again.

Dharana vs. Dhyana — What's the Difference?

Students often confuse these two limbs.

Here's the simplest way to explain it:

Dharana = Concentration

You hold the mind steady.

Dhyana = Meditation

The mind becomes naturally steady.

Dharana is effortful.

Dhyana is effortless.

Every meditation practice begins as dharana — the sustained practice of focus — and eventually transforms into dhyana — the state of continuous flow.

Why Dharana Matters More Than Ever

Our world constantly interrupts focus:

- Notifications
- Noise
- Scrolling
- Rapid task-switching
- The emotional load of daily life
- The pressure to always be productive

Dharana retrains the mind to:

- Stay with one thing at a time
- Resist the pull of distraction
- Remain anchored during emotional waves
- Build cognitive stamina
- Develop inner clarity
- Reduce anxiety
- Deepen self-awareness

Focus isn't a personality trait —
it's a yoga practice.

How Dharana Supports Emotional Resilience

Dharana helps you:

- Notice thoughts before they spiral
- Pause before reacting
- Anchor attention during discomfort
- Maintain internal presence during challenges
- Build tolerance for emotion without dissociating
- Stay grounded in triggering environments

When you hold attention on a chosen point, you reclaim your power from the things that pull you away from yourself.

Dharana in Asana Practice

Asana can become the perfect training ground for one-pointed focus.

Encourage students to explore:

Breath Synchronization

Focus on the breath as the steady anchor through movement.

Drishti

Use a visual point to stabilize balance and concentration.

Sensation Awareness

Stay with one sensation at a time instead of scanning the whole body.

Holding a Shape with Presence

Notice when the mind wanders.

Gently return to the breath or the feeling of the posture.

Repetition

Sun Salutations become a moving meditation when students focus on one repeated anchor.

When students learn to maintain focus on the mat, they begin doing the same in daily life.

Dharana in Daily Life

Here are simple, real-world applications:

1. Single-Tasking

Do one thing with full attention — washing dishes, brushing your teeth, writing an email.

2. Three-Breath Reset

Before responding, breathe.

Before reacting, breathe.

Before deciding, breathe.

3. Morning Anchor

Choose a single focus for the day

a word

a quality

a mantra

a breath pattern

Return to it whenever you drift.

4. Timed Presence

Set a timer and give your entire attention to one task until it rings.

5. Candle Meditation

Gaze softly at a flame.

When thoughts arise, return to the flame.

These simple practices transform the mind over time.

Common Dharana Techniques

Here are classic concentration tools used across traditions:

Trataka (Candle Gazing)

Stare at the flame until tears come, then close the eyes and see the after-image.

Mantra Repetition

Repeat a mantra or affirmation to give the mind a steady rhythm.

Breath Counting

Inhale “one,” exhale “two,” up to ten, then begin again.

Object Focus

Hold a flower, mala bead, or symbolic object in the hands and let it anchor awareness.

Inner Visualization

Focus on the point between the eyebrows (ajna chakra) to cultivate inner clarity.

Sound Concentration

Drop into the vibration of a bowl, chant, or tone.
Each technique becomes the doorway into deeper concentration.

What Students Often Experience

As concentration deepens, many students describe:

- A sense of time slowing down
- A mild internal warmth
- The world becoming quieter
- Thoughts arriving but losing intensity
- A soft feeling of absorption
- A “sweetness” to focusing
- A growing ability to stay present

All of these are signs that dharana is working.

Reflection Prompts for Deepening Dharana

- What distracts you most frequently?
- Where does your attention go when you’re stressed?
- Which object of focus feels natural to you — breath, sound, visualization, mantra?
- How long can you stay with one focus without drifting?
- What emotions surface when you practice stillness?
- How does focus feel in your body?
- Your answers highlight exactly where your practice needs to evolve.



6.2 DHARANA DEEP DIVE

The Sixth Limb of Yoga: The Art of Gentle, Steady Concentration

If Pratyahara is the soft turning inward,
Dharana is the moment the mind gently stays.
This limb is often misunderstood as intense focus or forced attention, but in the classical yogic sense, Dharana is far more compassionate:

✨ It is the practice of choosing one point of focus — and returning to it lovingly whenever the mind wanders.

Dharana is the art of one-pointed awareness.
It's where scattered energy becomes steady energy,
and steady energy becomes inner clarity.

What Is Dharana?

In Sanskrit:

- Dha → to hold
- Rana → steady, firm

Together, Dharana means:

“A gentle holding of the mind on one single point.”

It is not rigidity.

It is not strain.

It is not perfection.

Dharana is simply the discipline of returning.

Returning to the breath.

Returning to the intention.

Returning to the present moment.

The returning is the practice.

Why Dharana Matters

In a world designed to fragment attention, Dharana is a profound act of self-care.

It strengthens your ability to:

- stay present
- finish tasks
- quiet mental noise
- deepen meditation
- feel grounded under stress
- cultivate inner discipline
- build emotional resilience

Dharana is also essential preparation for Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (union). Without the ability to hold steady focus, the deeper states of meditation cannot unfold naturally.

💛 What Dharana Means to You as a Teacher

In your lineage, Michelle, Dharana integrates:

- intention-setting
- mindful awareness
- emotional presence
- connection to breath
- internal focus over external perfection

Your voice teaches that Dharana is not just a skill — it is a relationship with awareness.

You help students understand that focus is not achieved through force, but through softening and redirecting.

The mind wanders. It's what minds do.
The yogi gently brings it back.
That's the practice.

🔥 How Dharana Shows Up On the Mat

On the yoga mat, Dharana may look like:

- focusing on a single drishti (gaze point)
- counting breath cycles
- repeating a mantra
- noticing the sensation in a specific posture
- keeping awareness on one chakra
- staying with a meditation object (flame, sound, symbol)

Even something as simple as anchoring to “inhale... exhale...” is Dharana.
The posture becomes the container.
The breath becomes the anchor.
The mind becomes the witness.

How Dharana Supports Daily Life

Dharana is more than a meditative technique — it becomes a way of living.

Here are everyday expressions of Dharana:

1. Single-tasking

Doing one thing at a time with full awareness.

2. Returning to intention

Reminding yourself why you started.

3. Breath awareness in stressful moments

Returning to calm instead of reacting impulsively.

4. Focus before action

Pausing to choose the highest response.

5. Mindful listening

Being fully present with another person.

6. Cultivating emotional focus

Noticing one feeling at a time without being overwhelmed.

7. Mental clarity rituals

Journaling

Breathwork

Meditation

Soft gazing at a candle

All of these sharpen concentration and deepen inner steadiness.

Examples of Dharana Practices

Candle Gazing (Trataka)

Focus on the flame until the mind quiets.

Mantra Repetition

Use a single word or phrase like “Peace,” “Surrender,” “I am here,” or your class intention.

Visualization

Holding a mental image — a chakra color, a symbol, a place of peace.

✨ Breath Counting

Inhale 1, Exhale 2... to 10.

✨ Chakra Focusing

Holding attention at the heart, third eye, or crown.

✨ Intention Holding

A single concept repeated mentally throughout class.

Your trainees already practice Dharana more than they realize — every time they return to the breath, refocus the gaze, or soften the wandering mind.

🌸 What Dharana Feels Like

Students often describe Dharana as:

- a gentle steadiness
- a quiet center
- a softening around thought
- a feeling of inner spaciousness
- a dissolving of distractions
- “the world softening to the edges”

When Dharana deepens enough, the practitioner naturally slips into the next limb: Dhyana — unbroken meditation.

But the doorway is Dharana.

🪷 Reflection Prompts

- What helps me feel most focused?
- What tends to break my concentration?
- When do I feel the most mentally scattered?
- What single-pointed practice feels natural to me?
- What intention do I want to return to daily?
- How might I incorporate Dharana into my asana practice?



7.1 DHYANA

Meditation as a State of Being, Not Doing

Dhyana is the seventh limb of yoga — the quiet flowering of everything that comes before it.

If dharana is the practice of holding focus, dhyana is what happens when the holding becomes effortless.

Dhyana is often translated simply as meditation, but in yoga philosophy it refers not to the act of meditating, but to the state of meditation — a continuous, unbroken stream of awareness.

It is a level of mental stillness where you no longer feel like you are trying to meditate. You are simply being.

What Is Dhyana?

The Sanskrit root dhyai means:

- To contemplate
- To observe deeply
- To become absorbed

Dhyana is the sustained, unbroken awareness of one point — where the gap between moments of focus disappears.

Imagine:

- A river flowing without interruption
- A candle flame unmoved by wind
- A bird gliding effortlessly on a current of air

This is the essence of dhyana:

Consciousness becomes steady, spacious, and quietly awake.

How Dhyana Emerges Naturally from Dharana

These two limbs are inseparable:

Dharana → Effort

You bring the mind back to one point again and again.

Dhyana → Effortless Continuity

The mind stays steady without being pulled away.

This transition is not dramatic.
It is gentle... almost unnoticed at first.

You may suddenly realize:

- You've been breathing without thinking about it
- You've been present without trying
- You've slipped into a soft, still place
- Time feels fluid
- Thoughts feel distant or light
- Awareness has deepened into something quieter

Students often describe it as “catching a moment of peace.”
That moment is dhyana.

How Dhyana Feels for Most Modern Practitioners

While ancient texts describe profound inner absorption, most people today experience dhyana in small glimmers:

- ✦ A moment when the breath and mind match
- ✦ A soft melting of tension in the chest or throat
- ✦ A sense that everything has slowed down
- ✦ A feeling of being gently held by the present moment
- ✦ A window of stillness before the next thought appears
- ✦ A peaceful spaciousness inside the mind

Dhyana is not an escape —
it is a gentle coming home to yourself.

Dhyana vs. “Meditation Techniques”

Dhyana itself is not a technique.

Techniques such as:

- Breathwork
 - Visualization
 - Mantra repetition
 - Body scan
 - Candle gazing
 - Sound meditation
 - Counting the breath
- ...belong to dharana, the concentration limb.

These practices prepare the mind for dhyana.

Dhyana arrives when:

- The mind stops gripping
- The breath becomes soft and rhythmic
- Awareness widens
- Thoughts drift by like clouds
- You observe without reacting
- Presence becomes effortless

It cannot be forced.

It can only be allowed.

Why Dhyana Matters for Yoga Practitioners and Teachers**Dhyana teaches:**

- Emotional neutrality
- Stillness in motion
- Responding rather than reacting
- Clarity of perception
- Compassion born of spaciousness
- Witnessing without judgment
- Moving with intention instead of habit

When you develop the ability to quietly observe your thoughts, the entire nervous system shifts:

- Stress decreases
- Heart rate lowers
- Mood stabilizes
- The mind becomes more resilient
- Creativity increases
- Insight emerges naturally

Dhyana is not only a spiritual practice —
it is a profound psychological and physiological reset.

A Simple Way to Explain Dhyana to Students

Here is a gentle, student-friendly way to describe the difference:

Dharana

“I choose my focus.”

Dhyana

“Focus rests on its own.”

Or even simpler:

Dharana is trying.

Dhyana is being.

Guided Entry Into Dhyana

Close your eyes and settle your body.

Let your breath become smooth and steady.

Choose one point of focus:

- The breath
- A gentle hum
- A visualization
- A sensation in the heart

Stay with it softly, with no pressure.

When the mind wanders, bring it back without judgment — like guiding a puppy gently to sit near you again.

Now... imagine the breath widening...

Not deeper, not stronger — just widening.

Notice the edges of your awareness soften.

Thoughts pass like ships in the distance.

You are here, witnessing.

Present.

Quiet.

Stay in the stillness that naturally emerges.

Let the moment breathe you.

This is the doorway to dhyana.

Everyday Applications of Dhyana

Dhyana is not just for meditation cushions.

Students can integrate it into ordinary life:



Upon Waking

Remain still for 30 seconds before reaching for the day.



During a Morning Ritual

Let the moment of sipping tea or coffee be a meditation.



Walking Meditation

Place awareness in the soles of the feet.

Let thoughts move past like scenery, not commands.



In Asana Practice

Hold a posture and observe the breath without trying to change it.



In Conversations

Listen fully — not preparing a response — just receiving.



Before Sleep

Watch the breath at the nostrils until awareness softens.

Common Experiences Students May Share

As a teacher, normalize that:

- The mind will wander (always!)
- Dhyana may last only a few seconds at first
- Silence may feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable
- Emotions may rise
- Sensations of floating or expansion are common
- Time perception often changes
- The nervous system may feel unusually calm afterward

Your reassurance helps students trust the process.

Reflection Prompts for Deepening Dhyana

Invite your students (or yourself) to explore:

- What does stillness feel like in my body?
- What thoughts or emotions arise when I stop moving?
- Is silence restorative or uncomfortable? Why?
- What helps my awareness soften?
- How do I know when I'm in a state of dhyana?
- What shifts when I let myself simply be?

These prompts encourage inner awareness and emotional intelligence.



7.2 DHYANA DEEP DIVE

The Seventh Limb of Yoga: The Flow of Meditation 🌙🧘

If Dharana is concentration —
Dhyana is the moment concentration flows.

Dharana holds the mind steady on one point.
Dhyana dissolves the effort.

What begins as focus
softens into presence.

What begins as intentional attention
becomes effortless awareness.

This is the quiet river of meditation.

🌿 What Is Dhyana?

In Sanskrit:

- Dhi → to contemplate
- Yana → to move, to flow

Together, Dhyana means:

“A continuous stream of awareness.”

No breaks.

No interruptions.

No tugging of thought.

Just a quiet, steady flow of consciousness directed inward.

Where Dharana is the intentional holding,

Dhyana is when the holding gives way to simply being.

✨ Dharana vs. Dhyana — The Subtle Difference

Imagine a candle flame.

🔥 Dharana:

You consciously choose to focus on the flame.

You redirect your mind each time it wanders.

Dhyana:

You are no longer “trying” to focus.

The flame, the focus, and the observer merge into one quiet experience.

The shift is subtle — like drifting from gentle wakefulness into a dream.

There is no “doing.”

There is only being.

How Dhyana Unfolds Naturally

Dhyana cannot be forced.

It cannot be commanded.

It cannot be achieved by willpower.

Instead, it appears naturally when:

- the senses have softened (Pratyahara)
- the mind has been anchored (Dharana)
- the breath is steady
- the nervous system is safe
- the heart is open
- the practitioner feels supported

When all of these parts align,
the mind begins to quiet itself.

Dhyana is not a technique.

It is a state of consciousness that arises when the conditions are right.

What Dhyana Feels Like for the Practitioner

Students often describe Dhyana as:

- time disappearing
- a sense of floating
- deep, peaceful stillness
- a soft hum inside the mind
- spaciousness in the heart
- a gentle merging with the object of focus
- absence of inner commentary
- a feeling of being both deeply inside oneself and beyond oneself

Some experience a subtle inner glow.

Some feel pure calm.

Some simply notice the absence of mental chatter.

There are no “right” sensations — only honest ones.

What Dhyana Means to You as a Yoga Teacher

In your training lineage, Michelle, Dhyana is approached with:

- gentleness
- accessibility
- spacious permission
- emotional intelligence
- trauma-informed pacing
- invitational language

You teach that meditation is not transcendence alone —

it is presence.

It is the ability to sit with oneself
and simply be.

With kindness.

With curiosity.

With breath.

You model meditation not as perfection,
but as inner companionship.

How to Guide Students Toward Dhyana

1 Create safety first.

A regulated nervous system is the foundation of meditation.

2 Guide them into Dharana.

A single focus must be established before Dhyana naturally arises.

3 Use invitational cues.

“We’re not forcing the mind — we’re simply allowing it to soften.”

4 Normalize wandering.

The wandering is not a failure.

The return is the practice.

5 Let there be spacious silence.

Silence is the teacher.

6 Soften the sensory field.

Low lighting, soft breath cues, steady pacing.

7 Offer duration, not expectation.

Teach “sit with yourself for a moment” instead of “empty your mind.”

You help students build a relationship with quiet — and that relationship, not perfection, is meditation.

Examples of Dhyana Practices

These practices help students slip from Dharana into meditation:

Breath Awareness

Following the breath without controlling it.

Mantra Flow

Repeating a mantra until it becomes a background vibration.

Sound Meditation

Letting sound waves wash through awareness.

Internal Visual Meditation

Focusing on an inner image, symbol, or chakra.

Loving-Kindness (Metta)

Sending silent phrases of goodwill to self and others.

Noting Awareness

Noticing thoughts like clouds drifting by.

Presence Meditation

Simply sitting with what is — breath, body, mind.

With time, the effort dissolves, and meditation begins to meditate you.

How Dhyana Supports Daily Life

Students often report:
“I feel like I have more space inside my thoughts.”

That space is Dhyana.

Meditation reshapes the whole way you move through the world:

- greater emotional regulation
- clearer thinking
- reduced reactivity
- improved focus
- deeper self-awareness
- enhanced compassion
- feeling more peaceful
- better decision-making
- less anxiety and overwhelm

Reflection Prompts for Trainees

- What helps me drop into stillness?
- What interrupts my meditation the most?
- What expectations do I carry about meditation?
- When have I felt a moment of effortless presence?
- How might I bring more Dhyana into my asana practice?



8.1 SAMADHI

The Eighth Limb: A State of Unity, Bliss, and Deep Inner Knowing ✨

Samadhi is the eighth and final limb of yoga — the culmination of every practice, every breath, every moment of presence cultivated along the yogic path. It represents not an achievement, but a natural unfolding of the mind's deepest potential.

If dharana is focused effort...
If dhyana is sustained flow...
Samadhi is pure absorption.

It is the moment when the meditator, the act of meditation, and the object of meditation merge into one seamless field of awareness. Rather than something you do, Samadhi describes a profound state of being — open, expansive, deeply connected, and free.

What Is Samadhi?

The Sanskrit can be broken down as:

- “Sam” — together, integrated
- “A” — toward
- “Dhi” — to see, to perceive, to be absorbed

Together, they express:

“To bring all parts of yourself into complete integration.”

In classical texts, Samadhi is the state in which:

- The mind becomes still and luminous
- The heart becomes soft, open, and expansive
- The sense of separation dissolves
- Awareness becomes pure and undisturbed
- A deep inner peace arises — not tied to circumstances
- One feels connected to all beings and all of life

This is not an escape from the world.

It is a fuller perception of the world — unobstructed, unobscured, and fully alive.

The Experience of Samadhi: What Modern Practitioners Describe

Students sometimes imagine Samadhi as an unreachable, exalted state reserved for monks or mystics.

Yet in reality, Samadhi can be tasted in small, meaningful glimpses, such as:

- ✦ Sitting in meditation and feeling a moment of profound stillness
- ✦ Experiencing a sudden wave of love or unity with all beings
- ✦ Feeling time pause — just for a breath
- ✦ Recognizing your thoughts have softened into background noise
- ✦ Sensing your inner voice become clear and compassionate
- ✦ Feeling deeply connected to yourself, the room, the world
- ✦ Having a moment of clarity or insight that feels divinely guided

These are small windows into a much larger awakening — but they are meaningful, accessible, and real.

Samadhi in the Classical Tradition

The Yoga Sutras describe several forms of Samadhi — not to complicate things, but to show the continuum of experience.

Two broad categories are often referenced:

Savikalpa Samadhi

A temporary state of deep absorption in which:

- A sense of “I” still exists
- Awareness merges with a chosen object
- Insight or bliss arises
- Deep peace is felt

Most practitioners experience this form at some point in their journey.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi

A state described as:








- Beyond form
- Beyond identity
- Beyond thought
- Beyond time

It is rare, profound, and not something one intentionally “tries” to reach — it unfolds in those with deep practice.

Modern yoga teachers rarely speak about these states in literal or prescriptive ways. Instead, we invite students to stay open to their inner landscape and move gently toward presence.

Samadhi as a Soft Awakening Rather Than a Grand Event

In everyday life, Samadhi may feel like:

-  A moment when everything feels connected
-  A flash of intuitive certainty
-  A feeling that all is well, even without a reason
-  A quiet “knowing” inside your chest or belly
-  A softness that expands through your whole being
-  A spacious peace that lingers after meditation
-  A sense of returning home to yourself

These gentle awakenings are just as valuable — sometimes more so — than dramatic descriptions in ancient texts.

They are accessible, grounding, and deeply human.

The Role of Samadhi in a Yogic Life

Samadhi is not the end.

It is the beginning of a new way of relating to life.

When someone has touched Samadhi, even briefly:

- Compassion expands
- Patience deepens
- The world feels less threatening
- Decisions feel more aligned
- Ego softens
- Love becomes easier
- Inner peace becomes more reliable
- Spiritual insights integrate into daily life

Ultimately, Samadhi is less about transcendence and more about embodied presence — living from the heart rather than the mind alone.

Misconceptions About Samadhi

Many students believe:

- Samadhi is permanent
- Samadhi can only happen to advanced yogis
- Samadhi requires renouncing everyday life
- Samadhi must be dramatic, ecstatic, or supernatural
- Samadhi = enlightenment

These are myths.

In reality:

- ✦✦ Samadhi can be fleeting or sustained.
- ✦✦ It can happen to beginners and seasoned practitioners alike.
- ✦✦ It can rise out of ordinary moments.
- ✦✦ It can feel subtle, not explosive.
- ✦✦ It is not a final destination — it is a deepening of presence.

Your job as a teacher is not to promise Samadhi, but to help students cultivate the conditions in which it may blossom.

How Teachers Can Support Students on the Path Toward Samadhi









You cannot “teach” Samadhi — but you can create the environment where it becomes possible:

- Encourage slow, mindful transitions
- Integrate breath awareness throughout class
- Offer space for stillness
- Invite self-reflection without pressure
- Emphasize presence over performance
- Normalize wandering minds
- Teach students to observe without judgment
- Keep language inclusive and trauma-informed
- Allow silence to be a co-teacher

The greatest gift you can give students is the permission to arrive as they are — knowing that inner peace is already within them.

Simple Ways Students Can Cultivate Samadhi in Daily Life

Samadhi is nurtured through small, consistent practices:

-  Sit quietly for 1–3 minutes each morning
-  Watch the breath during daily tasks
-  Practice gratitude at night
-  Take a short pause before responding in conversations
-  Notice beauty without rushing past it
-  Spend time in nature without distractions
-  Use asana not just as movement but as meditation
-  Slow down enough to feel life, not just think about it

These micro-moments of awareness accumulate.

They shift the nervous system, the mind, and the heart.

Reflection Prompts for Samadhi

- What moments of unity or peace have I experienced in my life?
- What helps me feel connected to something larger than myself?
- What practices allow my mind to soften?
- How does silence feel in my body?
- What does “oneness” mean to me?
- When do I feel most guided, supported, or aligned?

Invite students to explore these gently and without expectation.

A Modern, Accessible Definition for Your Students

Here is a simple, inclusive way to define Samadhi:

“Samadhi is a moment when your mind becomes quiet, your heart feels open, and you sense your connection to everything around you.”

It is accessible.

It is human.

And it is one of the most beautiful gifts of the yogic path.



8.2 SAMADHI DEEP DIVE

The Eighth Limb of Yoga: The State of Unity, Bliss, and Remembering Who You Truly Are ✨🧘

Samadhi is the quiet culmination of the yogic path — not an achievement, not a badge, not a spiritual trophy, but a return.

A return to your essence.

A return to your inner light.

A return to the truth that was always there, beneath the noise of daily living.

Samadhi is described in many traditions as:

- bliss
- unity
- pure awareness
- liberation
- enlightenment
- absorption
- oneness

But underneath all the poetic language, Samadhi is simply:
The moment the veil dissolves and we remember that we are already whole.

🌟 What Is Samadhi?

In Sanskrit:

- Sam → complete
- A → toward
- Dhi → to place or to hold

Together, Samadhi means:

“To place the mind into complete stillness.”

or

“To unite with the object of meditation.”

It is not a state you force. It is not a state you earn. It is a natural unfolding when the preceding limbs have rooted deeply into your life. Samadhi is not an escape from the world. It is a deep, embodied presence within the world.

How Samadhi Relates to the Other Limbs

The Eight Limbs form a progression not of accomplishment but of embodiment.

- Yamas stabilize your relationship with the world.
- Niyamas stabilize your relationship with yourself.
- Asana stabilizes the body.
- Pranayama stabilizes the breath.
- Pratyahara stabilizes the senses.
- Dharana stabilizes focus.
- Dhyana stabilizes awareness.
- Samadhi arises naturally from that inner steadiness.

Each limb softens resistance.

Each limb clears noise.

Each limb unravels one more layer of distraction.

Samadhi is not a destination.

It is the quiet opening that becomes possible once the groundwork is lovingly tended.

Different Descriptions of Samadhi Throughout Tradition

Yoga philosophy offers variations of Samadhi that reflect different depths of absorption.

While teachers may explain these differently, they commonly fall into two categories:

1 Savikalpa Samadhi (With Distinctions)

A state of profound absorption where the practitioner is aware of bliss and unity but still perceives subtle distinctions such as:

- “I am experiencing this.”
- “This is peaceful.”
- “This feels expansive.”

The ego is quiet, but present in a softened form.

2 Nirvikalpa Samadhi (Beyond Distinctions)

A deeper absorption where:

- there is no separate “I,”
- no object of meditation,
- no distinction between observer and observed.

This is described as pure unity consciousness — a timeless, boundless awareness. Some lineages consider this the pinnacle of human spiritual experience.

Others consider it one of many natural states that consciousness returns to, again and again, when the heart is ready.

What Samadhi Feels Like for the Practitioner

Descriptions vary, but often include:

- a quiet, expansive bliss
- stillness without effort
- an inner glow or radiance
- feeling “merged” with everything
- a lack of time or space
- the absence of inner commentary
- being awake behind the mind
- deep connection with all living things
- profound contentment
- clarity so sharp it feels like truth itself

Students may describe it as:

- “Everything dropped away.”
- “I felt enormous love.”
- “I felt whole.”
- “I disappeared and yet felt more myself.”
- “Time wasn’t happening.”
- “I was home.”

These experiences cannot be forced. They unfold when the practitioner is safe, supported, present, and ready.

What Samadhi Is Not

To support students with emotional safety and realistic expectations, it’s important to clarify:

Samadhi is not:

- escapism
- spiritual bypassing
- perfection
- emotional numbness
- the elimination of all thought
- evidence of superiority
- a prize for “good yogis”

Samadhi is:

- a moment where the mind becomes transparent
- a glimpse of one's true nature
- an inner alignment so pure that nothing is missing
- a state the nervous system can recognize
- a posture of the heart

Samadhi is inclusive, not exclusive.
It belongs to everyone.

 A Modern, Trauma-Informed Understanding of Samadhi

In your lineage, Michelle, Samadhi is not introduced as a mystical goal floating far beyond reach.

You teach that:

- glimpses of unity can happen in Savasana
- a moment of clarity can be a form of Samadhi
- a feeling of oneness during meditation counts
- the simple awareness of “I am whole” is part of it
- students can experience micro-Samadhi without even knowing the word

You normalize that:

- nervous systems vary
- trauma histories influence access to stillness
- safety is the first gateway to spiritual openness
- students never need to “transcend” to belong
- meditation is an invitation, not a requirement

Your trauma-sensitive approach honors:

- agency
- pacing
- consent
- choice
- grounding
- non-coercive teaching
- the wisdom of each student's body

This makes Samadhi not intimidating,
but a state of peace that gently meets them where they are.

Can Samadhi Happen More Than Once?

Traditions differ, but many modern teachers recognize that: Samadhi comes in waves.

Small ones.
Big ones.
Unexpected ones.
Life-changing ones.
Some consider it a fleeting glimpse.
Some consider it a doorway.
Some consider it something that grows as the heart grows.

Rather than debating philosophy, you teach students:
“Trust your experience.

If it brings you closer to love, inner peace, and wholeness — it counts.”

How Samadhi Appears in Everyday Life

Samadhi isn't limited to a meditation cushion.

It can arise:

- during childbirth
- in deep prayer
- while painting
- while walking in nature
- during music
- during stillness
- during grief
- during joy
- during moments of awe
- during profound love

Samadhi whispers:

“This is what connectedness feels like.”

It gives people the inner knowing that:

- they belong
- they are whole
- they are more than their thoughts
- they are not separate from life
- love is real

How Yoga Teachers Can Hold Space for Samadhi

Your teaching philosophy naturally supports the conditions where Samadhi can arise:

- soft invitations
- spacious pacing
- grounding before expansion
- autonomy over experience
- slow breathwork
- silence as medicine
- gentle transitions
- emotional safety
- clear language
- culturally sensitive teaching
- non-hierarchical guidance

You teach students:

“Peace is not outside of you.
It is something you uncover.”

This alone makes Samadhi more accessible to your community.

Reflection Prompts for Trainees

- What does unity mean to me?
- Have I ever experienced a glimpse of Samadhi?
- What practices help me feel connected to something larger?
- How might I introduce the concept of Samadhi to students gently and inclusively?
- How do the Eight Limbs support my emotional, spiritual, and mental wellbeing?



Closing Reflections

Thank you for taking this journey through the Eight Limbs of Yoga.
May these teachings continue to meet you exactly where you are — in your breath, in your choices, in your relationships, and in the quiet moments where growth begins.

Yoga is not a destination.
It is a lifelong returning to yourself.

As you move forward, may you feel supported by the wisdom of the Yamas and Niyamas, strengthened through Asana, steadied by Pranayama, softened by Pratyahara, focused by Dharana, expanded by Dhyana, and gently guided toward moments of Samadhi.

The path is not linear.
It spirals.
It deepens.
It reveals.
And with every practice, you come home to yourself again.

May your study be kind.
May your practice be steady.
May your heart remain open.

Acknowledgments

With gratitude to every student who has stepped onto the mat and trusted me with their practice. Your presence, questions, and courage continue to shape the heart of my teaching. A special thanks to Edge Alum, Haley for her endless commitment to her yoga practice which shines through in her photoshoot. It was my honor to capture her practice with my lens.

Yogi: Edge Alum, Haley S.
Photo Credit: Michelle Rae Sobi, RYS



About the Author

Michelle Rae Sobi is a seasoned yoga educator, creative mentor, and lifelong student of contemplative practice with more than a decade of experience supporting purpose-driven learners on their paths of growth, teaching, and leadership.

As the founder of Edge Yoga School and Arts and Sobi Art School, Michelle has guided hundreds of yoga teachers, wellness professionals, and creative entrepreneurs in cultivating confidence, clarity, and authenticity, both on and off the mat. Her teaching is rooted in real life, honoring the rhythms, responsibilities, and seasons people move through while remaining deeply committed to integrity and embodied learning.

Michelle holds the highest distinctions available through Yoga Alliance, including E-RYT 500, RPYT, RCYT, and YACEP credentials. She is a Level Three Teacher with the American Yoga Council, through which she offers formal mentorship programs and maintains active registration. She has also received the Yogi Raj Award, recognizing a minimum of ten years of active yoga teaching and demonstrated depth of knowledge in yoga philosophy. Michelle is additionally an ordained Buddhist Minister, bringing contemplative ethics and mindfulness into all aspects of her work.

Known for her warm, encouraging presence and her ability to make complex concepts accessible, Michelle blends yogic philosophy, trauma-informed pedagogy, mindfulness, and creative exploration into her offerings. She believes learning unfolds best when students feel safe, seen, and supported, and when progress is measured by integration rather than perfection.

Michelle has developed multiple Yoga Alliance–registered training programs, including 200-Hour and 300-Hour Yoga Teacher Training, Prenatal Yoga, Trauma-Informed Yoga for Children, and Yoga Mentorship certifications, along with a wide range of continuing education workshops. Her specialty offerings, including AI for Yogis and the Crown Pathway, reflect her commitment to helping modern practitioners integrate ancient wisdom with contemporary tools in grounded, ethical ways.

A visual artist and storyteller, Michelle also weaves photography, art meditation, and mindful creativity into her teaching as an invitation to reflection beyond words. Through movement, stillness, and creative expression, her work encourages deeper self-trust, presence, and agency.

Her mission is simple and deeply felt: to help students return to themselves, cultivate steady inner ground, and feel supported as they step into their next, most authentic chapter.

Much love,

Michelle

