

Yoga Lifestyle

What is a yoga lifestyle? Attending a bunch of yoga classes every week? Wearing tight yoga pants and, every time you get a chance, flinging silk scarves made in India around your shoulders? If I say “Namaste” when I greet someone, or “Om Shanti” when I leave, does that make me a yogi?

While all of the above choices are perfectly in line with the newly-born and rapidly expanding yoga culture, yoga lifestyle means something entirely different. It has nothing to do with the style of yoga people practice, their style of clothing, the type of work they are involved in, or anything else that is externally imposed by fads and culture.

Yoga lifestyle is about one’s internal values: What moves or motivates a person to do what they do? Yoga lifestyle is also about the process: How one goes about performing their daily actions. That person can be an artist, a carpenter, a construction worker, a plumber, a car mechanic, a yoga teacher, or a cop. These external descriptions are like the seasons in New England – they are in constant change. They describe a temporary occurrence. Our essence remains the same. Our core values determine who we are and if we are living a yoga lifestyle.

Several years ago, I witnessed the following scene in New York City.

A hot and humid summer afternoon was drawing to a close. The busy sidewalk glistened in the slanted sunrays weaving their way through the tall buildings. A young woman with a baby carriage stopped at a street vendor to buy a bottle of water. For a moment, she let go of the carriage handle as she reached for her wallet to pay. In that moment, the baby carriage started to roll down the sidewalk and toward the speeding traffic.

All of a sudden, a teenage boy darted away from his ‘gang’ across the street and sprinted toward the rolling carriage while dodging cars. His sharp and urgent voice “Watch the baby! Watch the baby!” jerked the young mother’s head around. She grasped the invisible air handle realizing what happened, and ran toward the carriage, which was already falling over the edge of the sidewalk and into the hands of the teenage boy.

The mother broke into tears and hugged the boy. The boy smiled and shook his head. His friends across the street started clapping their hands. Several other people joined the standing ovation. The street vendor cheered the passers-by to notice what happened. For a few seconds, the busy street stopped, and celebrated the moment.

In those few seconds, a wave of love and gratitude rolled through the crowd. Everyone smiled. We all felt connected. We all felt compassionate toward one another and united in our human condition here on planet Earth, regardless of our background and beliefs.

What moved the young man to sprint through the traffic risking his own life? What moved the young woman to hug the boy? What moved the gang of young teenagers to applaud this event?

Many yoga masters and spiritual teachers have defined yoga as “perfection in action”. A perfect action means “an action that benefits someone and harms no-one”. It is an action rooted in non-violence and compassion coming from a deep source within. When we are living our life in accordance with this principle, we are living the yoga lifestyle.

Non-violence, which stems from compassion, is thought of as the most important yoga principle. It’s called “Ahimsa” in Sanskrit and applies to everything: our deeds, words, and thoughts. Gandhi dedicated his life to Ahimsa. He was a great yogi and a wonderful example of the yoga lifestyle.

There are four more yoga principles of social conduct: truthfulness, non-stealing, faithfulness, and non-greed; and five rules of personal conduct: mental purity, contentment with what we have, accepting suffering as purification, self-study, and surrendering of ego.

No one said it was easy. However, as you begin to quiet your mind and listen to your heart, the natural sense of compassion and non-violence awakens, and there’s no stopping it. All other yoga principles become our choices and the natural extension of the original awakening to the compassionate voice of your inner heart. The yoga lifestyle is the next step in the evolution of the humankind.

Surya Kolpakov, LMT, is a Certified Yoga Therapist. He teaches yoga and meditation around Boston area, loves to share his insights and tell stories about the yoga lifestyle, and perform traditional Thai massage. For more information on the yoga lifestyle, visit Surya’s website at <http://www.yogalifestylecoach.com>