

## Sentenced to Yoga

*By Carolyn Reynolds*

A judge sentenced a man to a year of weekly yoga classes for battery on his wife. This is even a Texas judge, not a California judge. Judge Larry Standley ordered that a man take weekly yoga classes for a year as part of his probationary period. Of course, the traditional requirement for anger management counseling and community service was also levied. The yoga sentence was a creative addition to the traditional judicial course of action. When Judge Standley was interviewed he explained that anger is a feeling of loss of control. Judge Standley explained, "...it is hopeful that maybe this as well as all the other conditions will help him realize his control ends with himself. And he has no control over anybody else." He adds, "And the people that are really into yoga, just being in their presence, it is calming. And if this takes effect, I think it will help this individual." The man's wife was pleased that Judge Standley is trying to get to the root of the psychology of her husband's anger.

So how does this work? How does yoga illicit a feeling of peacefulness in people who practice? The judge didn't sentence the man to pilates or taekwando or aerobics or a stretch class. He said people who are into **yoga** have a sense of calm about them. Yoga is different from all the rest because Yoga is a comprehensive mind/body/spirit discipline that grounds one in the present moment using the mind, the breath and the body during Hatha Yoga classes.

As a psychologist, I say that the basis of all anger is fear and the fear of loss of control is very real to many people. Yoga teaches that fear is forgetting. It is forgetting where you came from and who you really are. You really are an eternal being who is part of all that is. In reality, everything that is really important is provided for you. Each breath is waiting for you to breathe it in, the rain falls from the clouds to quench your thirst, and the seeds sprout up food for you to eat. And every night if you can get your controlling mind out of the way and really trust in the universal intelligence and your body's intelligence, you can drift off into a wonderful sleep knowing that your body will heal and rejuvenate itself so that you can wake up refreshed. Yoga is relaxing into the flow of life. It is the understanding that getting more stuff, more power, more sense pleasures, etc. will never bring you the peace you crave.

Practice this: be aware of the place in your body where your heart rests. The heart is the physical center of anahata chakra, a spinning wheel of unconditional love energy. The color of the spinning wheel of energy is emerald green. Arrange a large pillow on the floor and lay on it so that the chest is raised. Make your head comfortable. Open your arms out to the sides of your body and image this beautiful chakra in your raised chest. This is assisted fish posture. One of the ten senses in Yoga psychology is grasping or aparigrapha. And this chakra is the home of this outward going sense. While in this supported posture bring to mind all the things you are grasping at or for. Then ask yourself, "At the hour of my death, how important will this have been?" Perhaps there are many things you can reappraise. When you think of one, open your fists and

symbolically let it go. The more unconditional love that is felt, the less grasping controls our lives. Instead we really, really enjoy all of life's pleasures without having to hold onto them or feel the need to recreate them. There is a knowing that the pleasures will continue to come and go. Let them come. Let them go.

There is another scenario that is fun to play with to clarify just who is responsible for what. Imagine that there is a judgment day. One of the rules will be that no one else's name is permitted to leave your lips. In other words, only you are responsible for the course of your life. And everyone else must take responsibility for his/her own life. How's that for letting go of control over other people?