



# The Lotus always blooms

By Dawn Reiss

**Peace. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart. – author unknown**

**A PEACEFUL BEGINNING** Inner peace is a magical term that many subscribe to, but it's seemingly impossible to obtain. No matter what type of lifestyle you live, every year the minutes, days and hours seem to go by faster. Cell phones. Email. Blackberries. iPods. Instant messaging. Text messaging. The list goes on and on. All the information out there and all the new electronic gadgets we use to connect with others have, ironically, left us more disconnected than ever. Societal pressures from work, family, friends and busy social calendars often leave us more tired and anxious than before.

No matter your state of mind or being, you can find peacefulness even in the most stressful situations. There might be total chaos going on around you, but inside, your mind can be a temporary tropical oasis. The physical, emotional and mental effects of finding temporary relief helps add clarity in times of stress and confusion.

Like many others, I've had my fair share of stress in the past several years. I've survived two major car accidents – being hit by an oil tanker and a Mack truck – and other interesting experiences.

I was in the midst of driving to every NFL city in the country for four months with two other interns for The Sporting News. The three of us were driving to Indianapolis on a sunny clear morning, the day after covering a game in Foxboro, Massachusetts in December 2000. I was sitting in the back seat of a Chevy Impala, when, I'm told, the driver in front of us, spun out of control in the left lane. In response, the driver of my car swerved right into the path of an oil tanker. I don't remember the accident. It is like a blank VCR tape. I awoke in the hospital, after being unconscious with a punctured lung and several broken ribs, internal bleeding, a concussion and many other problems. Then the hospital released me too early, just a few days later, and the air pressure on the flight from

Massachusetts back to my home in Chicago broke two more of my ribs. Years of physical therapy, myofascial release and other alternative treatments helped restore my once damaged body.

A former collegiate rower at Indiana University, I was used to working hard, but at first I struggled with basic functions. It was nearly unbearable, but gradually this dissipated. I made a pact with myself to accomplish something momentous by the five-year anniversary. I chose a triathlon. As I trained and competed, my goal was not just to finish but to finish well. With my friends and family cheering me on, I did just that, completing a sprint triathlon along Florida's Gulf Coast in the summer of 2005. Then, a little over a year later, I was driving in Florida, going through an intersection as the lights were changing, when a MACK truck hit my Honda Civic. This time I remembered everything. With five herniated discs, I had to learn how to adapt my lifestyle. For a while I was angry. I kept asking, "Why me?" Eventually I realized it didn't really matter. It happened and I had to make peace with it. Several friends and co-workers suggested that I try yoga. I had tried it once before, but it didn't seem right to me. Then, this past January, I found a teacher who helped open my mind. As I started feeling more peaceful, some of my physical pain began to dissipate. It wasn't about forgetting – it was about letting go. Extra baggage clouds our judgment and creates more stress. Now on trips I try to find a yoga center because I find I'm calmer, more centered and yes, closer to achieving inner peace. It is an ongoing process. There are many different types of yoga and meditation. What is right for one person isn't necessarily right for another, but it's worth a try, because the effects can be astounding.

For 44-year-old Enrique Cayeiro, of Miami Beach, yoga and meditation has helped change his entire lifestyle and has even helped him go off his diabetic medication.



In January 1994, Cayeiro decided to begin training for a half-marathon, but after drastically losing 20 pounds in a few weeks, dropping his 5-foot-9 frame from 165 pounds to 145, he decided to see his doctor. He was diagnosed as a Type 2 diabetic and began taking 1,000 milligrams of Actos and two 1,000-milligram pills of Fortamet daily.

"Before that, I was just sitting on the couch watching TV," Cayeiro jokes. He tried working out, jogging on a treadmill, cycling, and lifting weights, but nothing kept Cayeiro's interest for very long.

"I'd start doing something and then I'd get bored," he says. "For some reason, yoga and meditation have kept my interest for six years. I guess its because yoga includes a combination of things that are done in a group, and every class is different."

Cayeiro was working as an accountant for the New World Symphony in Miami Beach when a co-worker suggested he try yoga at the Synergy Center for Yoga and the Healing Arts in the fall of 2002. Still on the medication, Cayeiro's blood sugar levels started decreasing, little by little. Hooked, Cayeiro gradually made yoga part of his daily routine. A few years later, in the fall 2007, Cayeiro and his wife, "Pom" Waraporn Cayeiro, moved to Nasik, India to study yoga and meditation at an Ashram, Yoga Vidya Gurukul (yogapoint.com). First, Cayeiro went to an Ayurvedic doctor, who went by the name of Dr. Yardi.

"I told the doctor about my situation and said, 'One day, I'd like to get off my medication,'" Cayeiro says.

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"You can do it now," the Ayurvedic doctor told him.

Cayeiro says he then began taking two herbal medicines, Neem and Karela. For the next five weeks, Cayeiro and his wife followed a strict regimen, including a vegetarian diet at the Ashram. Men and women slept separately. Each morning they awoke around 5:15 a.m. and began meditating and chanting. Along with practicing yoga and meditation several times a day, they attended anatomy lectures and group discussions in the evening.

"It was a complete lifestyle change," Cayeiro says. "My blood sugar levels drastically dropped. Losing the stress, changing my diet and everything else helped me a lot."

Since moving back to Miami Beach, Cayeiro says he's been able to stay off his diabetic medication by maintaining his new lifestyle, partly due to Thai Luna Sol ([www.thailunasol.com](http://www.thailunasol.com)), a business he opened with his wife that promotes healthy living through the healing arts. He now practices yoga six or seven days a week and eats healthier. Undoubtedly, adapting his lifestyle to maintain optimum health has been a big factor. Cayeiro enjoys and believes in what he does for a living, perhaps a huge health factor in today's stress filled world.

"I feel fantastic," Cayeiro says. "It's hard to say if it's just the medicine or the reduction in stress, but with the combination of everything, I feel great."

## How to Meditate

Meditation can be done in various positions. The two most common positions are in a lotus or half-lotus position where one sits and crosses one's legs in a triangle-like fashion where one or both feet are placed on the opposite leg. Sit upright. If your knees don't reach the floor, place a pillow under them or sit on a pillow. You can also meditate in a chair or while lying on your back with a bolster under your knees for support. Put your hands and palms upon your knees with thumbs and index fingers touching to form an "okay" like symbol. Don't talk. Just concentrate on rhythmic breathing. Inhale and exhale at the same rate. Start with three seconds, then take five seconds and then try to go to seven or 10 seconds as you slow your breathing. Continue this deep breathing for five or more minutes. If your mind begins to wander, bring it back by focusing on breathing in and out.

While meditating, you can recite mantras. The original is Om (ohm). According to The Sivananda Companion to Yoga, by the Sivananda Center, "Om is the root of all sounds and letters, and thus of all language and thought."

Start by saying "O," as if you were holding a note, while singing in a choir. Let the vowel hang in the air with your lips open as you gradually close your mouth to a hmmm "M" sound. Try doing this as long as possible. Repeat the mantra for as long as you can. Some do this for 20 minutes or longer to feel calmer.

Another mantra is "Soham" (soh-hum), which according to The Sivananda Companion to Yoga means "I am that," or put another way, I am beyond the limitations of the mind and body and at one with the absolute. This mantra is unconsciously repeated each time we take a breath - inhaling "So" and exhaling "ham."





# 10 Tips for a More Peaceful Life

**Belly Breathe.** As you inhale, stick your stomach out to make your profile like “Santa Claus.” Make sure you feel your stomach expanding out. If you feel your chest rising up instead of out, you are “shallow breathing,” which will not help you calm down. Belly breathing helps the lungs fully expand, allowing oxygen to circulate through your body, thus releasing carbon dioxide. The result, “an internal massage” for your organs that will help you feel relaxed and calmer. Some say this helps with digestion, blood flow and your ability to ward off bacteria.

**Meditate.** It’s hard, especially for type-A personalities who always like to be on the go. Know that it is okay just to be. The purpose of meditation is to help the mind go into a deeper state of relaxation and awareness. It’s about letting the mind go so you focus only on breathing. By doing this, you become more peaceful and can have clarity in your life after you finish. Meditation helps reduce stress so you can sleep better and feel healthier.

**Laugh.** As the saying goes, laughter is the best medicine. Life is short. Life is simple and complicated. Life is beautiful. Having a sense of humor to laugh at oneself and at the things that happen to us and around us helps everyone. In a recent phone conversation with celebrated poet Dr. Maya Angelou, she told me “a cheerful spirit is good medicine.” In the last 10 years, it has been found that a cheerful spirit allows the factories in the body to create more endorphins that are healing blocks in our DNA, and we just do better. Physically, we are more complete.

**Be thankful.** Every day, when you wake up in the morning and before you go to sleep, say and/or think about at least one thing you are thankful for. It can be simple: “I’m thankful I had spaghetti tonight or I’m glad I had a chance to take a 10-minute shower this morning with clean water.” It can be profound: I’m glad I had a chance to say goodbye to my (grandmother, father, friend etc…) before they died. Being thankful helps us to be positive, which helps create a better outlook on life. Positive energy attracts positive people.

**Give back.** It’s not just about donating money. When we focus on helping others by volunteering, we are less self-centered and our problems don’t seem quite as imposing as before. Everyone has a gift. Share your talent. Show someone how to balance a checkbook, plant a garden, play a sport, sew a button, craft a sentence, negotiate a contract, pitch a tent, navigate the legal system or read a book. Such efforts can have a far greater impact than you’d ever imagine. It will do as much for you as for the person or group you are helping.

**Do something physical.** Even someone who is bedridden can still perform simple exercises, even if it’s only fluttering their eyes. But most of us are capable of walking, riding a bike or going for a swim. Give your routine variety. Try something new, like a rowing machine, one of the best all-around workouts, or take up yoga. Try a variety of new things until you find something that is right for you. Trying a new activity doesn’t require a lifetime contract. Try a variety of activities and see what’s best for you long-term.

**Simplify and de-clutter.** Having more does not always bring happiness. Not being able to find anything makes your life more stressful. The less time you spend looking for things at home, in your office, in your vehicle or even in your handbag, the more time you can spend enjoying life.

**Be mindful while eating.** It goes without saying that drinking more water and eating more fruits and vegetables are healthy changes. More importantly, be aware of each bite of food. Taste it slowly. Discover its texture. Know what it smells like. The more pleasure you take in each bite, the less you will need and the more fulfilled you will become. Focus on the food and conversation. Eating while reading or watching television isn’t healthy because you tend to ignore just how much food you are consuming, plus you lose track of the pleasurable sensory experience.

**Take time for yourself.** Even if you have to lock yourself in the bathroom for 10 minutes, give yourself a few moments of peace and quiet. Take an Epsom salt bath. Two or three cups of Epsom salts in a warm tub will help detoxify your system and will physically relax your whole body. Drink a cup of tea or do something else you enjoy for a few minutes of relief.

**Set goals.** Create your own “bucket list.” A bad plan is better than no plan at all. Even if it is just a list of dream places you’d like to visit, you will feel better about yourself once you have direction. It will give you a sense of accomplishment, and that will help calm your nerves. Envision what you want so you can go after it. When I go on a vacation, I like to research where I’m going so I know the available options. I may change my original plan several times, but having options keeps me spontaneous. It’s like earning a college degree – having background knowledge helps open doors so you can explore more.