

Release

and let it go, then reconnect.

A conversation with **Nadia Mishchanka**.
Yoga teacher and personal instructor.



HERSELF: *How would you define a state of perfect bliss? How do you achieve it?*

NADIA MISHCHANKA: My perfect bliss starts when I open my eyes in the morning. I read the gratitude note which I had written the night before going to sleep. The silence and feeling of peace and happiness of welcoming a new day. The feeling that the sun is shining even though the clouds may be grey. A cup of hot water and lemon and a few stretches, and my body slowly gives in and the joy of another day welcomes me. My morning green smoothie and the first taste of real food after a restful night sleep and being grateful for the simple joys. The first couple of hours build my day and allow me enough time to savour the moment. Then the whole day just happens to be amazing! I teach yoga every day and

every morning, and feel that seven mornings a week are not enough. It's not bliss how you define it by the book, but it's my bliss, and I do work and follow my regime to have this blissful feeling and share it with everyone around me.

H: *How did you discover yoga, what is your relationship with it today and where do you want to bring your knowledge in the future?*

NM: I discovered yoga when I could not find anything to keep me focused. Nothing made sense anymore. I lost my mum and sister in a car accident. I was always fascinated with the world, and wanted to be involved. I studied international relationships and politics at college in London, and in the end I knew it was not for me. The course of events in my life

completely changed my focus, and there I was looking for answers. I wanted to find peace and happiness and meaning...

It felt like some power brought me to yoga. I practiced five or more hours a day, and it slowly became my way of life. Yoga is real and has answers to everything. The answers are within us. And yoga can be the key to unlock whatever it is. We do lock everything in our body far far away, and yoga is there to unlock and to work with it to find your peace and your purpose in this lifetime.

Today I am living yoga. I embrace it in every shape or form. Yoga is how I start my day, how I eat my food, how I move through the day and communicate with people, and it's never enough. I always want to discover more and more, and yoga gives

me the ability. It awakes my body, and makes me aware of my ability and capacity, challenges my mind and always keeps me at peace with where I am today. It's never-ending development, and the more I learn and discover, the more I want to embrace and share.

It is a never-ending journey, just like being a child, teenager, grown-up woman, it helps you to

reflect on the choices you have made and embrace it, knowing that this is just a part of your path.

H: *You have defined yoga as an "introspective path to the self". Where does this path begin? And what is its destination?*

NM: My life changed on my first trip to India, when I began to look at yoga in a different way. It stopped being the goal or target – it became the way, and makes me feel that I am here and I want to stay. Yoga is a spiritual and extremely intense and demanding practice with the "side effects" of giving you a fit and healthy body, vast amounts of energy and a feeling of youth.

I breathe and live yoga now. It is the most important part of my life. I always say that yoga is not on the mat in your yoga studio, though initially it is. As you develop, you realise, whatever you do, it's yoga – whether at work, doing sport or your daily routine. Why do we need *asanas* – yoga positions – then? To keep this yoga spirit going, you need a healthy and vibrant body and vibrant mind. So, it's a never-ending circle.

It begins with yourself. You are feeling you. Yoga gives you the sensation of you.

You start feeling that you are a temple – how your body reacts to the things you do, how you feed your physical body and soul, matter. The more you learn, the more questions arise, and slowly good things happen in your life. You would imagine you can stop the journey here, but the desire to discover continues. You want to know more, you want to share with others. Have you ever met a person who practices yoga but hasn't told you how amazing it is and how much you have to do it too?!

And when you arrive at your destination, you know you've been there from the very beginning – but it takes time, discipline and dedication to know that! We are born as pure yogis, but life changes us. I am so grateful to the mothers who find time to bring their kids into tune with what they cherish themselves, when they teach their kids that apples grow on trees, show them cows and animals in nature, and bring them up alive.

Physical exercise and bodily movement are unavoidable, and should be embraced as a part of life. Seeing beauty in simplicity and appreciating simple things in life, like a smile from a stranger, gives you strength and peace of mind.

H: *Balance seems to be the most sought-after feeling. More than happiness, more than amazement, it's balance that is the number one feeling on a well-considered wish list. What are the keys, according to you,*

to make it happen, inside and outside the self?

NM: Balance gives you freedom and gives you harmony with who you are. Balance is an internal feeling, and when you are in balance, everything around you is in balance too!

Lack of balance means a lack of honest expression and creativity. When you're being yourself – honest – and expressing that, you create balance!

Create yourself as balance, visualise it and manifest that experience, and then you'll have it. The external world then starts changing, so that the experience of balance can be physically observed, as a reflection of the balance you attained within yourself. Managing tasks happen automatically and effortlessly when you are balanced.

A generous person doesn't give and then become generous. They are generous first, and demonstrate it through giving. Be balance, and then everything you do, say and touch will be lead to balance in the external environment.

Whenever you need to get back to yourself you can spend some time alone, in nature if you can, or just go for a walk and concentrate and observe your breath. Bring the awareness from your head to your feet, and feel the earth underneath you, supporting and grounding you. Concentrate on your breath for a few minutes, or be aware of where your breathing takes place in your body. Help yourself to

achieve the feeling of balance on the inside.

Balance in yoga is dynamic stillness, the state in which motion and rest occur in perfect harmony. Sometimes we mistake lack of ambition and depression for feelings of stillness and contentment. But balance is a steady energy. In yoga we move through asanas into balance. The three elements of nature are always in our life: inactivity (*tamas*), overactivity (*rajas*) and balance (*sattva*). The positive part of inactivity is that it draws us inwards. Overactivity makes us run in a hundred different directions and experience as many choices as possible.

Notice your feelings throughout the day. Sometimes you feel yourself turning inward while at other times you are active and energetic. Are you in harmony with what you are feeling?

When you feel out of balance, identify which state you are in. Be still for a few moments, and imagine that you are coming into balance. If you are feeling inactive (*tamasic*), do something active with your body mind or both. If you are overactive (*rajasic*), do something to soothe yourself, like listening to quiet music or simply taking a few deep breaths. Resist the temptation to feed the state you are in, and slowly balance will be here to stay.

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