

peace maker

After decades spent studying yoga and Buddhism, Frank Jude Boccio travels the globe teaching practices for inner peace.



Frank Jude Boccio knows his yoga. He has trained in Anusara (he took John Friend's first workshop for teachers), Ashtanga, Integral, Iyengar, and Kundalini. He has a similarly wide-ranging knowledge of, and deep commitment to, Buddhism and Ayurveda. An interfaith minister, he wrote *Mindfulness Yoga* and is penning another book, called *Body of Peace*. He resides in Tucson, Arizona, and teaches internationally.

How did you discover yoga and meditation? In 1976, my marriage was falling apart; my job was soulless. A friend suggested yoga. That first Savasana was a whole new world opening up. I left classes blissed out, but the rest of my life was depressed and stressed. I also discovered different kinds of Buddhism. The teachings rang true, and I felt so much better that, within a couple of years, I stopped practicing! I spent a decade in the punk music and filmmaking scenes and didn't practice. Then in 1989, during another breakup,

I returned to practicing hatha yoga and read the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. I went on four retreats with him and was ordained in his Buddhist order. In 2007, I was ordained a dharma teacher under Korean Zen master Samu Sunim.

How do you see the connection of yoga and Buddhism? There's a lot of interinfluence between the two. I say yoga predates Hinduism and Buddhism. The yogic endeavor is really dealing with *dukkha* [suffering] and transcending it. It's based on ignorance of who we are. We aren't the small self that we tend to identify with. And when we do, we suffer. Yoga and mindfulness are designed for *moksha* [liberation].

How can we find freedom? Real freedom is being mindful of what is, not what we think is. You can be mindful of mental formations as mental formations and pull the rug out from your thoughts' power over you. Our thoughts are mostly inaccurate. So, don't believe everything you think. We tend toward grasping or aversion. But if you can see there's nothing to hold or push, you lighten up and let go of reactivity because nothing's lacking.

Your parents lived with you for a time. How did your practice help with that? Taking care of aging parents is a great opportunity for practice. My 88-year-old mom has dementia, and my dad has episodes in which he loses consciousness. When I spend five hours in the ER, I see impatience arising in myself. I see people suffering. My mom just isn't the person she used to be, so I remind myself that nothing is permanent.

How does yoga affect your relationships? Yoga and mindfulness practices offer me tools. My wife, Monica, and I use the "peace treaty," taught by Thich Nhat Hanh. When we have discord, there's a cooling period; then we simply listen to one another. And if you approach a partner with what Samu Sunim calls "don't-know mind," the other person remains a mystery that you stay interested in and don't take for granted. ❀

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