



devoted yogi

For more than 30 years, Tim Miller has been refining his Ashtanga Yoga practice.

Tim Miller was one of the first Americans to get K. Pattabhi Jois's blessing to teach Ashtanga Yoga. He's been studying Ashtanga Yoga for more than 30 years and teaches it at his studio, the Ashtanga Yoga Center in Encinitas, California, and internationally.

How did you get into yoga? When I first moved to Encinitas, I worked at a psychiatric hospital and taught a stretching class to patients in 1976. I knew a little bit of yoga from a book by Swami Satchidananda, but I thought it'd be helpful to study yoga more. David Williams's students were running an Ashtanga Yoga studio a half block away from my house. In 1978 I took a class that totally blew me away. I felt like it was something I should continue to do. So 30 years later, I'm still at it.

What blew you away? Connecting with a deep place in my soul. At the time, I wasn't thriving. I had a stressful, low-paying job and hadn't had a date in over a year. I was lonely, depressed; I smoked and drank. Class was a life-altering experience that shifted my perspective 180 degrees in an hour and a half. That kept me coming back.

So you adopted a regular practice? I went to a class three evenings a week, but my work schedule interfered with yoga. So I switched to the swing shift so I could go to the morning class every day. I progressed quickly in the series because I was obsessed and mistakenly thought that the faster I mastered the series, the quicker I'd get enlightened. Eight months later, I met Pattabhi Jois. He made us try hard. We were all terrified of being adjusted and also afraid of being ignored. In 1982 I took my first trip to India. I was on a budget, and the Jois family was gracious enough to let me stay in their home.

What did you learn there? That I wanted to be a teacher. I left for India the day after finding out that my wife was pregnant. Not many people were practicing then, so teaching yoga wasn't a way to make a living. But at the end of my stay, I asked Gururji for a certificate to teach. He consented, and I came back all fired up to teach. My pregnant wife was about to stop working, and my father urged me to get a real job. To this day, I still haven't gotten a real job. But what I do is fun and keeps me off the streets. I get to travel a lot, so it's not a bad life.

In what ways have you found yoga to be a fountain of youth? It keeps my body healthy and my mind young. People say that Ashtanga Yoga shouldn't be practiced by anyone over 25. I think if you want to feel like you are 25, do the practice. At 58 now, I may not be as flexible as I once was or as strong. But I'm still pretty flexible and strong. And I rarely get sick. My quality of attention is better. I have a 7-year-old daughter and a 27-year-old son. My daughter wants Daddy to play with her. I conserve my energy so I have plenty for her. Plus, I'm still teaching. Pattabhi kept teaching into his 90s. Every once in a while, I'll bust out some advanced poses to show that this old man has a little bit left in the tank. ❖