



I'M AT PEACE, BUT I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT

Yoga saved me from chronic back pain. It also took away the ignorant bliss of living a numb, unevolved life

Excerpted from Globe and Mail

Paul McQuillan

I hate yoga. I also teach it and take it. I'm diligently committed to both, but at times I'd rather just be committed.

I listened to a yoga student go on and on the other day about how her life has changed dramatically since she started practising yoga.

She told me that yoga instilled in her enough courage to finally dump her abusive boyfriend, stand up to her domineering boss, get a new job, eat healthier, drink less, become more charitable, less selfish, and just an all-around better human being. In essence, she felt that yoga had saved her life, making her come alive to what was important and giving her the courage to initiate change.

I was thrilled for her, but I was also a little bored. I hear these life-changing testimonials all the time and they are beginning to form the legs of a walking cliché, even though, in all honesty, yoga essentially saved my life too.

I had a chronic back problem that would not go away. It was an intense pain in my lower back that showed as nothing on a CT scan and an MRI. Nothing. Just a deep pain that felt like someone was hammering a nail into my back every five seconds.

Yoga, along with the help of a holistic energy healer, took that away, and for that I am forever grateful. But it also took away my numbness, and therein lies the rub.

I'm not sure that I like being as present as I am since making yoga such an integral part of my life. I feel like that guy in *The Matrix* (not the pseudo-evolved Keanu character, the other guy) who loves tasting steak and living a numb, unevolved life so much that he chooses it over transcendence.

Please don't get me wrong. I am a long way from being Ghandi-enlightened. Just ask the vodka martini sitting next to me ... or the one before it. I can stretch out a vice a lot easier and longer than a yoga posture.

Being present and full of clarity has its high points, but the jury's out on how much fun it is. How many of us, for example, have stared with envy at the dumb, giddy blond girl without a care in the world or a thought in her head, wishing for a taste of that ignorant bliss? Nothing brilliant going on there, but nothing painful, either. Responsibility be damned!

I resent having to do all this work to live a "better life." And somewhere along the way, I started making other people's lives better too. I'm surrounded by "better lives," carving out "better paths," making "better choices."

So much conscientiousness and accountability are attached to all of this. At times, I actually care about the well-being of others more than I care about myself. It's fleeting, but it's there.

It never used to be. I spent 20 years as an actor and being selfish and presentational was more a part of my landscape than any sun salutation.

I was good too. I thought I was anyway. How would I have known? That was all before yoga.

Now, I know everything. At least some of my students believe I do. I'm Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, and Dr. Phil all rolled into one 90-minute yoga class.

Most days, I feel like a fraud, not because of my expectations, but because of theirs. Obviously, I've been looking to lower mine and return to that blissful state of being delightfully vacuous, but alas, my truer path has been shown to me and there is no going back. Not even a third martini will take me to that place again.

I know you think I'm being facetious. Thank you. I appreciate the sentiment. It's familiar and comforting to me. Nonetheless, there is a small hint of shallow truth to all of this.

I want to not recycle and feel okay with that choice.

I want to see where I can easily make a difference in someone's life by spending an hour with him or her, and then choose to go to a movie by myself instead.

I want to stop any kind of physical fitness. Yoga. The gym. I want out. I want to revel in the inane simplicities of laziness.

Uh-oh. I think I just felt a twinge in my lower back. Okay, okay. I'll continue to be present and move even closer to my own awakening through unselfishness, exhausting yoga asanas, moderation and a healthy amount of temperance.

But I don't have to like it. Even a yogi can be angry at the road less travelled. I want my non-life back.

Ouch. Another twinge.

Okay, maybe I don't. But a man can dream.



The reviews for Joel's book are starting to come in. Here are a few:

HEALING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF

End Inner Conflict by
Developing a Harmonious Inner Family



By
Joel Brass

"I read Joel Brass' book *Healing Your Relationship With Yourself* in 3 days and loved every word. It truly is BRILLIANT. He describes my arc through life and my healing journey exactly. I am once again reminded that there is no substitute for time and space to heal and grow, and I am recommitted to healing my relationship with myself and others after reading this extraordinary book. You can be sure I will be recommending it to everyone I know, and equally sure that only the brave-of-heart will want to travel there. I'm sure glad I did."

- Jill Walker, administrative support assistant, Langley, B.C.

"Congratulations on your book's completion. What a feat! ... I miss the work I did with you... Since then I've worked with life coaches, mentors, yoga teachers, gurus, saints, sinners, you name it - but nothing has reached the emotional depths and shone as much light into the hidden recesses of my being than working with your Inner Family model. I still use it, perhaps not as often as I could, but the connections are alive and well. Thank you for seeing me through some dark times."

- Lee Mason, principal, Iome eco-artisan carpentry, Salt Spring Island, B.C.

"If you're really ready to give up what's not working for you, this is the book for you. If you're willing to draw on your self-scrutiny, courage, discipline and humility to create what you want, to transform the places you've been struggling or stuck, this is the book for you. If you just want useful information, that's O.K. too. But if you're really ready for a change, really ready to step outside your comfort zone, you can get a great deal of help from this book. This book is terrific! It is full of rich wisdom, heart, great coaching and attention to detail."

- Leonard Shaw, M.S.W. A.C.S.W., Seattle, Washington, 43 years in the practice of psychotherapy

"This book is a remarkable tool for anyone who is on the journey of self discovery and personal growth. Joel's work not only creates an understanding of why we behave as we do, but provides the tools one needs to bring about personal change. Somehow he makes this journey a joyous adventure rather than a frightening struggle."

- Mary Gillanders, retired teacher, Abbotsford, B.C.

"Joel has done a good job with a difficult subject; highlighting the necessity for individual responsibility and hard work. He brilliantly defines the essential alliance between spiritual principles and sound self-healing techniques. His model and stories take the reader to the CORE of themselves, their debilitating inner conflicts and fears and their potential for emotional healing and reconciliation."

- Dr. Joe Goodman Psychologist, 35 years Private Practice, Managing Partner, Yonge Lawrence Center for Counselling and Consulting, Toronto, Ontario

"I just wanted to thank you so much for giving the gift of knowledge and allowing me the opportunity to read your book with our book club. We are only at chapter 2 but the awareness I feel I have gained from those two chapters is enormous; I thought I knew about ego but I see that it was very limited. I am really, really looking forward to working with my inner family and healing them. I was given up for adoption and not placed with a family until I was 10 months old & I can see now that there was lots of pain created by this and I am willing to now look at it because of your book. I can't thank you enough for writing this book and for allowing me to read it. Thank you again for this beautiful gift."

- Marnie, Revenue Supervisor Transportation Industry, Vancouver, B.C.



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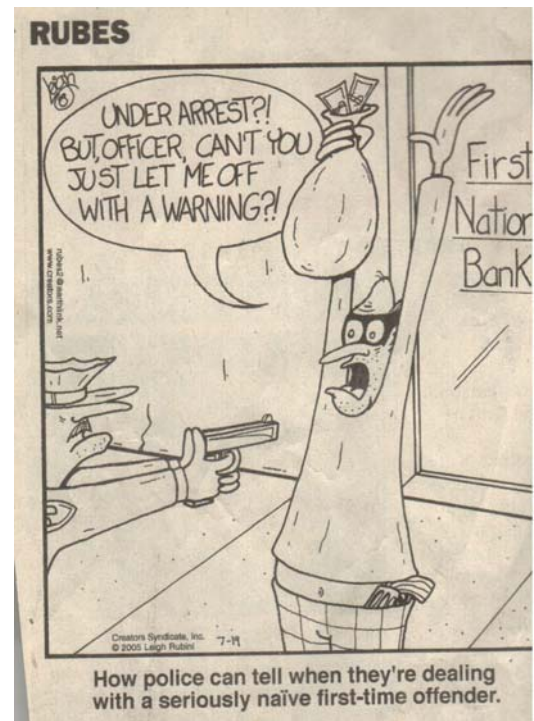
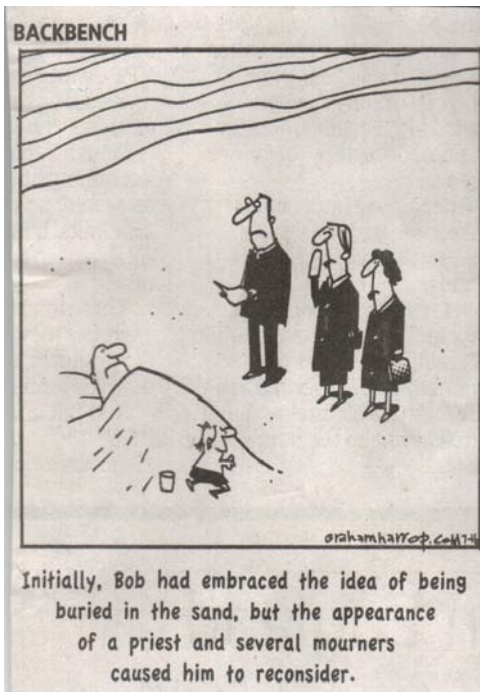
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**“At birth all people are soft and yielding.
At death they are hard and stiff.
All green plants are tender and yielding.
At death they are brittle and dry.
When hard and rigid we consort with death.
When soft and flexible,
We affirm greater life.”**

- Lao Tzu



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