

The girl behind the bowls

When I walked into London's first Bikram studio, I didn't know that this would be the threshold that would change my life forever. A typical Vata type, I've always disliked the cold, so when I heard the words, 'yoga in a hot room', I was sold. I had danced since the age of three and practiced yoga regularly, so movement came naturally. But understanding the power of the breath was life changing for me.

At 24, we lost my Aunt. She was young, vibrant and a firm believer of other worlds. As I held her hand, she transitioned beyond the veil of this life. Watching my mother, her remaining siblings and their parents helpless, was crippling. Blurred vision stung our faces as tears of utter pain fell hard. In years to follow, we lost my father's sister and mother, so my family carried sadness in their bones.

Yoga was now integral to my everyday life. It aided the grieving process and guided me very quickly from a physical practice to understanding the foundations, principles and history of the wider path. Fascinated by the ancient Indian Sanskrit language and methods of Ayurveda, I found myself knee deep in books and questions. The key to life was balance. But everywhere I looked, the scales seemed to be tipping more and more away from it.

There were no meditation apps, self-care events or any sign of a well-being movement. So, I would sit after asana (the physical practice of yoga) and attempt to identify what was happening in my body, my mind and at the very core of my soul.

I walked out of a highly paid, award-winning career as an advertising copywriter and into the world of yoga. Yet, teaching yoga had its own struggles. It felt like a very personal display of the soul in the form of public speaking. I carried the weight of a very masculine advertising world. Barriers of ego, shields of self-doubt and ghosts of my truest voice, followed me around each studio. One class was admired and the next, criticized. Naturally, or unnaturally, I went faster and harder, trying to 'fix' or 'better' myself. As many of us do, I looked outside myself, instead of entering inwards.

I was not at peace or making wise choices and as time passed, I became a former shadow of myself. I lost weight, as if trying to hide from the world. My strong physical practice came to a halt and my cycle was nowhere to be seen. I was diagnosed with a connective tissue disorder, Hypermobility Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. Both brain and body, having been rejected for so long were now utterly exhausted. I was spiritually depleted. I began teaching less and focusing mainly on private and corporate clients, spending much of my time at Buddhist centres and in restorative classes.

Years of teaching and many, many trainings (yoga, yin, pregnancy, Buddhism, Reiki, light healing, meditation, chakras, shamanic circles, mindfulness- I am a perennial student of life) later, I began to rediscover the amazing art of softening. To embrace and rejoice in my vulnerability, femininity, not just as a woman, but

as a sentient being. I began to slow down. To stop pushing. To relinquish the fight.

In doing so, I created space. Space in my body and mind to remember and respond to life instead of reacting. Overtime I trusted my gut, until my intuition became solid, unwavering. As I look around today, it amazes me how much our bodies are willing to put up with. It also concerns me just how hurtful our thoughts towards ourselves can be. I encourage others not to judge themselves too harshly and to watch whether their words/thoughts to themselves are truthful, hurtful or kind.

My practice of yoga is threefold. I breathe, I move, and I find stillness. I do not follow a teacher (although I have one or two I admire a great deal) or have a guru. I am my own.

Two years ago I went to a sound bath in Bali where the second phase of my spiritual chapter began. I cried as my spirit thanked me for finally listening in. It rooted me back to my childhood piano playing days and I fell back in love with music. Soon after, the magical Alchemy Crystal Singing Bowls effortlessly found their way into my world. The beautiful collaboration of breath, movement and sound is the essence of our being. With our breath we create space, with movement we can find stillness and with sound we can align our mind, body, spirit.

If we look beyond the skin and bone of our bodies we can, in time see and feel the etheric/vital bodies. If imbalanced, these energy bodies can hugely impact our health and wellbeing. We are Homo Sapiens, aka the 'wise ones' and it is our greatest fortune that our body's intelligence tells us when something is wrong. It is also our greatest misfortune that we often fail to take notice.

I am most blessed to have a home with my very own studio. I have carved out my vision and now I share what I have learnt over the many years with others, under the iridescent skies of Selda Soul Space.

In truth, it has taken the best part of seventeen years to fully grasp the power of true balance, and I am still working on it. Now meditation takes pride of place in my life and I cannot be more grateful for this simple practice.

I carry my crystal children with me wherever I go. They emanate pure joy and are the portal to healings that I share.