



FROM RESTLESSNESS TO RETREAT

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

WHAT VACATION FEELS LIKE AFTER 18 MONTHS

“There is no rest in a mind like a wind-churned pond” – Gil Fronsdal

I had not taken a true vacation since August 2019. For the last 10+ years of my life I have traveled a lot. Blessed and awed by scenes from around the US and Europe. Quaint fishing villages, gritty cities. During the pandemic I took joy in not needing to go anywhere or be anywhere. While so many folks were itching to get back to normal, I had no interest. I wanted simpler. But at some point in the last 18 months simpler became busier, just inside my condo instead of outside. As if nobody could see it, there was no evidence.

In December 2020 one of my long-term and favorite teachers Sarah Webb of Rochester (@tobejustsew) announced she would be hosting a meditation retreat in Monhegan, Maine. I knew in my gut in that moment that I had to join. Another favorite woman and long-term travel buddy, my sister, agreed to come with me; our time away together had been overdue.

Monhegan is a village where hearty fishermen and artists coexist seamlessly. It's island life mixed with fresh northeast air. What wasn't to love? Everything was perfect, except for me.

The first night, I was lying in bed, restless for three hours. Not at home, but on the Atlantic Ocean, on retreat. The week was supposed to be my sacred time to rest.

I work seven days a week in the summer. In love with what I do in the finger lakes, I don't mind waking up early each day June-September to teach SUP yoga, but the weeks are long. I looked forward to retreat. To be able to get good sleep. To reconnect to myself. Why do we think we can package and compartmentalize what is essential and schedule it 8-12 months out?

In bed, staring out the window at 11 PM—damn it, why am I not relaxed. My mind and my body had been so busy the last few months. My life was out of balance. As someone in a healing profession, I had never felt more fraudulent. I made a list of everything that was wrong with me. I do not recommend this as a late activity.

While I was angry and embarrassed in the moment, the contrast was powerful. Like smooth ocean that butts up against rocky terrain or the three houses with lights on in the pitch black, once you see it you can't stop seeing it.

In a perfect world, how do we prevent ourselves from getting to this point of so far removed from center? There's nothing wrong with earning a living, with striving. But what happens when that fills all of the space?

In the yoga community, it's so common to go on retreat at least once a year. (Yea, it sounds bougie but it's such a necessary reset.) From a number's perspective I thought how much could 5-10 days out of a 365 day year do? It does a lot. Woman to woman, I urge you to plan a break, as soon as possible. Now I

understand, you may not have a few hundred or a few thousand dollars to go on a lavish retreat. That doesn't mean you have to miss out.

In less than 48 hours I went from achy in bed, with a racing mind to joyful, contemplative, optimistic. Do this right at home, on your next few days off. You're worth it. No days off? Take them.

#1 Pick an evening to go to bed early and wake up with the sun: After nearly no sleep, my alarm went off for an early morning run at 6. I wanted to go back to sleep – but was terrified to oversleep and must repeat the previous night. Remembering my sweet Ayurveda instructor who always said get up with the sun and don't hit snooze, I threw the covers off. I got dressed, no coffee, no water, not thinking about it and my sister and I went for a run. It was step one.

#2 Move: Move, move, move. The research on exercise is proven for a reason. I knew I was hurting on the inside but that moving my body has always been the first step in making me feel better. The run began, straight up hill. A shock to my system. It also made me keenly aware that I had been at the bottom of my to-do list. Yoga, a brisk walk, some heavy weights, take some time to get out of your head and into your body.

#3 Meditation: Practicing meditation each morning can also be incredibly helpful, though I know when you're restless it feels like the last thing you want to do. Try inviting more calm in.

“We all only get 24 hours in the day. What gets in the way? What do you want to make time for?”



Inhale, and then take a longer exhale than your inhale. Repeat. If mind wanders away from breath, it's ok. Be patient with yourself. Take five minutes each retreat day for this.

#4 Self-Study: As we ran back down the hill, we passed a fishing boat. Its name was reliance. What had I been relying on? I had used busy as a distraction. My business and busy-ness as a replacement for my true self. This short life had started to circle money as my axis. I looked at my darling sister running in front of me. My axis is supposed to be connection. Some of us rely on alcohol, or food, or pills to numb. Mine was work. An excuse not to dig deeper and make a

shift. What are you relying on that no longer serves you?

#5 Connect to Nature: In the heat of the afternoon sun, we took a walk down to a beach to hunt for pebbles. This is where my shift finally came. I admitted to myself I was tired. In the safety of other women – and quite frankly – an extraordinarily safe island – I lied down on a giant rock. It was not perfectly shaped, I felt the curve of large rock not match the curve of my spine but I let myself relax into it. I could have adjusted and shifted but I let it be. Even in the cool upstate winds, bundle up and be outside. Take a trail walk or beach walk around Rochester or

the Finger Lakes. Bring someone with you. Look for unique stones, flowers, mushrooms, leaves. Really touch nature in a quiet space. Hug a tree, lie down in some grass, or consider just touching your hands to the earth.

We all only get 24 hours in the day. What gets in the way? What do you want to make time for?

To work one-on-one with Kaitlyn or find out about how to take your yoga off the mat and into the world, visit TozziYoga.Com.

