

## What Do You Want to Give and Receive?

I am in the camp that loves Christmas morning: tearing open the paper over a hot mug of coffee. The lights, the flannel jammies. While I'm fortunate to always receive thoughtful presents and look forward to seeing everyone open what I have purchased for them – the truth is we give and receive from one another, 365 days a year. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. The Japanese Practice of Naikan helps us explore that.

In The Art of Taking Action Gregg Krech describes Naikan, *"It is a method of self-reflection that has its roots in Shin Buddhism from Japan. Naikan was developed by Yoshimoto Ishin, a businessman and devout Buddhist who wanted to offer a process of self-reflection that would be accessible to people in daily life. Naikan provides a systematic approach to reflecting on ourselves and our relationships that helps us appreciate the ways we are being cared for and supported, many of which we take for granted during the course of an ordinary day. It also helps us become aware of the impact our lives are having on the world around us. In essence, we get to see ourselves from the world's perspective, instead of our own. The process of Naikan reflection is relatively simple. It is based on three questions:*

*(1) What have I received from \_\_\_\_?*

*(2) What have I given to \_\_\_\_\_?*

*(3) What troubles and difficulties have I caused \_\_\_\_\_?*

*These questions provide a framework for reflecting on parents, friends, teachers, siblings, colleagues, children and partners. We reflect by answering these questions within a defined period of time. The time period we examine can be as short as a day or as long as three to four years."*

Last year I was challenged by Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy to keep a 30-Day Naikan journal for the month of November. We know it takes 30 days to make a habit so November fit that perfectly. For 30 days, I logged at the end of the day what I received, gave and what troubles and difficulties I caused. Overall, it brought me more appreciation for the little things. Yes – I did gift pizzas from Peels on Wheels to my sister's house for dinner last night. I also received two free glasses of wine and a comfy couch to sit on. The world has a natural give and take, if you feel like you're giving too much or just the overall compassion fatigue that so many have been working through, this might be for you.

Over the past few years, I've been having couples who come in for yoga therapy practice Naikan with each other and have been privileged to witness clients express gratitude for their partner while at the same time being able to acknowledge their mis-steps in a safe, non-judgmental, humble space.

So what's the connection between this and the hectic holiday season? The holidays can be very depressing for many or load up some of us with feelings of restlessness and unnecessary anxiousness. These daily Naikan reflections encouraged me to appreciate the small things. A co-worker who found an email for me when I was swamped. The advice I get via text on near daily basis.

The Naikan practice reminded me of importance of presence. Trying to read a text message quickly, not reading it fully, responding and causing someone else a headache. Running late, frustrated at myself for not giving myself enough time I got short with the girl behind the counter at the coffee shop. Naikan can be a helpful reminder that the world is not always out to make life hard. Our actions have a ripple effect.

I if we could all make our ripple a little less negative, the world could find a little bit more peace this holiday season.

Bonus: A week of this may also bring a little bit of clarity around what you really need to get folks on your gift list.

Does embodied self-reflection interest you? Visit [TozziYoga.com](http://TozziYoga.com) to schedule a free phone consultation with Kaitlyn Vittozzi.