



APPLYING YOGA'S ETHICS FOR BALANCED RESOLUTIONS

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

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No matter when your culture’s New Year is on the calendar, it is a time for reflection and hope in the start of something new. So often this turns into something demanding, rigorous, and short lived. What if we applied a more balanced approach for sustained resolutions?

While many folks in the USA think of yoga as just exercise, the postures are just one of yoga’s eight limbed approach. The first limb of yoga is the less known Yamas or ethics. There are five of them, here along with their English translations:

Ahimsa: Non-violence

Satya: Truthfulness

Asteya: Non-stealing

Bramacharya: Energy Moderation

Aparigraha: Non-grasping

While the Yamas are nonlinear, at yoga’s core, non-violence should always be held in the highest regard. If you are reading this article odds are you likely don’t intend to harm your another person, but what about the negative self-talk we impose on ourselves that we HAVE to be different instead of letting ourselves be enough? The thoughts that we are too fat, too thin, the wrong shape? If you find yourself creating a new restrictive diet each year that doesn’t nourish you, or is bound to fail – is that really health and wellness?

Much of it comes back to the yama of truthfulness. This is why often I recommend February resolutions – take January to reflect on what really matters to you. To paraphrase an Instagram

post from Gary Vaynerchuk, think about who you trying to impress. Is it the people who fill you up, or some made up societal norm? For me, when I realized much of the life I was creating was to stick it to ex-boyfriends, things changed. I was able to form a health and wellness routine that I liked, even enjoyed! So if you are prone to a less balanced approach of health and wellness, take a few different classes, visit a few gyms, cook and takeout some vegetarian and some meat dishes. Do some self-study on what resonates with you and how your body responds. If your body doesn’t respond well to the mediterranean diet, it’s okay! Don’t force yourself into it.

Apart from learning to love oneself a little bit more, a lot of what I see in my yoga therapy practice this time of year is a lack of energy moderation. Over exercise or overly repetitive exercise that causes injury. Or swapping out sleep for exercise. We all really only get this one body, this one earth walk. Be kind to yourself, your muscles, your joints. If you need to slow things down and pick up less weight initially to get your form correct in strength or cardio classes, take it. The same way a house needs a safe foundation, so does your movement practice. If you are exhausted, be easy on yourself those days – either take time to rest or if there’s something that fills up your spirit about moving that day, move gently.

Nongrasping can also be translated to nonattachment, and this time of year we need less attachment to the outcome. Hopefully if you do take

some time to reflect on what your true why is for building a healthy routine your longings will be satiated. But if the goal is to lose weight and you find yourself building muscle instead, are you going to spiral into a negative headspace? Punish yourself? Instead, be open to what arises. Maybe you start going to the gym and you don’t lose that extra weight but you might make new friends, hear new music. Try to be present to what is here, it truly is the journey not the destination.

Years ago I was at the gym on New Year’s Day in the weight circuit room. I was 21, super fit, and had super type A personality. The gym was closing at 1 PM. It was about 12:50 and in my head I HAD to get my three sets on the adductor machine in so I hopped on the machine to get my workout completed. Well I was so focused on checking it off my list that I didn’t notice the woman next to me who wanted it, which resulted in her yelling at me and also feeling so upset that I didn’t get MY perfect workout in. Remember, 80% is perfect – be willing to shift and adjust. Maybe one day’s run becomes a walk, or a meditation turns into a yoga practice or an apple turns into an orange or string cheese. Be flexible. That brings me to the last Yama, non-stealing. Enjoy the process. We often find ourselves stealing from the present moment for our future self or upset with our past self simply by letting our mind wander. What if you tuned into how good it felt to be outside in the cold, (or inside in the heat) in the moment? If your body is craving a stretch, why are you forcing it into a run?

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Does this feel like it just threw your new routine out of whack? Don't let it, anything is a worthwhile experiment as long as the Yamas apply. Here are some good places to start:

- Build a morning routine
- Carve out time for rest and play
- Consult a physical therapist to check

in with any muscles or joints that bother you

- Reach out to a dietician who practices HAES (Health At Every Size)
- Seek out joyful movement
- Practice self-massage and body oiling (or book a professional one!)

Feel like you need more help than this

article to get back in balance? Visit PenfieldYogaTherapy.com to schedule a free phone consultation.

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