

## August 2021 Musings

Hello Everyone Me again!



Hoping you are all well.

For me, this August break has been about walking, weddings, weeding and welcoming. How about you?

I have enjoyed some walks in the Forest. What a lovely place in which to live. This ancient Forest nestled between the River Severn and River Wye sitting on the border between England and Wales. I am appreciating the area so much. Taking time to stop and allow my senses to show me the things I take for granted.

The sights, the sounds, the smells, the taste – yes, I can even taste the Forest and the things I can touch – so many textures. The pine, the oak, the ferns, the water and so, so much more. Then there is that sense that isn't one of the five with which we easily associate. That "difficult to describe" sense/feeling. That sense that can come from deep inside somewhere and yet at the same time from outside. That feeling of connection with something small but yet so big. Like that microcosmic/macrocosmic connection. That feeling of insignificance but with the potential of such significance. Like a tiny stone thrown into the centre of a lake creating ripples or a seed dropping into soil. My offering of yoga I hope is a positive experience to those who try. Perhaps my stone thrown into their pond or my seed planted in their soil will ripple outward/grow tall and strong and multiply.



I went to a family wedding. It was one of those weddings that had been rearranged too many times due to the pandemic. It felt like such a triumph when it actually happened this time. It was so lovely to share the day with the new Mr and Mrs and other attendees. It was lovely to meet extended family and friends and welcome new links. There were all sorts of challenges and sadnesses along the route during the planning and replanning and even during the week before when Covid diagnoses lead to last minute cancellations and the “pingdemic” caused others. Even on the day, M4 closure and resulting gridlock delayed the ceremony with delays rippling through the rest of the day. I do think though that after all the challenges everyone has faced this last couple of years, lessons have been learned and everyone seemed to just accept that stuff happens, we adapt and get on – it was alright and very lovely in the end. Nobody got cross. We made the best of it. We even laughed. Who said “it will be alright in the end and if its not alright, its not the end”?

Weeding – boy the weeds are growing fast! The weather has just been perfect for weeds. There are some simply pretty weeds though aren’t there? And the definition of a weed? A plant growing in the wrong place. According to whom? The bees don’t seem to mind where plants are. Since keeping bees, I am much more accepting of a few weeds in the garden – certainly during their flowering period when I can watch the bees gathering pollen/nectar. Even the nettles. I think the nettles have rather taken over in the apiary though. I have to do something about them. The balance is off! Too much of a good thing? Crowding out other plants. Preventing me accessing the hives for maintenance. Stings.

Welcoming. We have welcomed friends to share meals, family for catchups. I welcome more training too and the self study and development that brings.

## **Yamas and Niyamas**

You may have heard me talking about Yamas and Niyamas. If not, these are like a moral code of conduct or ethical principles observed along the path of yoga. Rather like the ten commandments. Yamas are about self-regulation in relation to others and Nyamas are more self-observances - our inner world.

These have helped me enormously over the years. I often use one of these as a focus for lesson planning or a theme for my classes. I use them too in contemplation. How can I be of better service to others? How can I better serve myself?

Yamas are

Non-violence/be kind

Truthfulness/be honest

Non-stealing/be generous

Non-excess/respect boundaries

Non-greed/be okay with imperfection

Nyamas are

Purity/clean the slate

Contentment/be accepting

Self-discipline/commit to what is Important

Self-study/be a student of your own experience

Surrender/know when to let things go

Currently, Im exploring “judgment” as a product of my work through the yamas and niyamas. Its proving a huge piece of work. For me, judgement has relationship with all of the them.

I am noticing how judgement shows up in me and for me. I am noticing how much this is learned behaviour and how habitual it is. Im noticing too how judgement is one of the roots of misery, greed, disharmony, self-criticism, dissatisfaction and much more. I am questioning my reactions and trying to understand where and how they come about.

Once embedded into our habitual minds, judgement comes easily and so normalised that we don't even notice it happening. Its labels vary eg compare, test, achieve, strive, like/dislike, right/wrong, measure, decision, conclusion, opinion, discernment, choice. Eg in nature weed/plant.

Letting go of judgement allows us to consider, accept and respect other perspectives. It also allows us to get a break fro. Judging ourselves against and comparing ourselves with others. No more so than on our yoga mats.

On our yoga mats, we are there for ourselves. In our own body, with its history and its complications. We need to work with our body and with compassion for it rather than trying to move it, bend it, stretch and twist in response to some judgement. Here is a silly example. If I ask a large group of people to show me a tree, one might point at a mature oak, one at a decorated Christmas tree, an artist may draw one, or create a lego model, someone might show a family tree diagram and a group of yogis may each demonstrate a different style tree pose. The tree pose is often used as a balance. Balance is more tricky for some than others, but we can all attempt our own version, according to our references and what we feel is safe and right for our body. We can build strength and concentration as we practice a balance. We can practice self-compassion and non-judgement too. We just need to ask ourselves why we are doing what we do on our yoga mat. Then, we can take this off the yoga mat and into the rest of our lives.



Perspective and reference creates a variety of views/interpretations. How difficult it is to accept that our judgement is brought about as a result of our learning, our references. Seeing other perspectives and accepting that what we see/hear/taste/smell/feel/experience is simply our current flow.

I found this quote really helpful. Its certainly helps soften some of the self-judgement I feel  
"A moment of recognition of judgemental mind is a moment of freedom and wisdom." Ch 7 p A  
Gradual Awakening Stephen Levine 1993 Gateway Books

Spookily, several hours after writing the above section of this newsletter, I spotted a Facebook Post by Sam including this picture. I just had to include it!

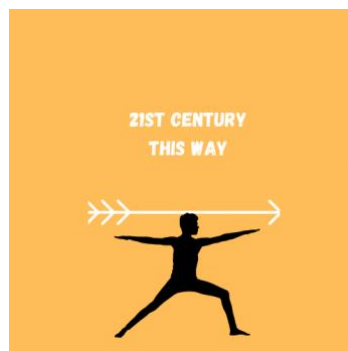


## August classes are ready to be booked

Yoga classes are now bookable online via my website. [www.freedomyogaandrelaxation.co.uk](http://www.freedomyogaandrelaxation.co.uk)

I am able to offer a second class per week for half price only if the second class is an online class at present due to face to face class number restrictions. If you wish to take up the offer of a second (online) class, do let me know and I will give you the code which will trigger the discount.

Bookings for the monthly class pass for the face to face classes are available to purchase before the pay as you go tickets which become available to purchase two days before the class. This is to help manage the restricted class numbers for face to face classes.



Any problems, give me a shout. I really don't want my journey towards efficiency to cause anyone stress.

## Meet Diane (not her real name)



I met Diane when she contacted me requesting online yoga.

Diane has Muscular Sclerosis and recently had knee replacement. Her mobility was increasingly limited, walking with aids and expecting to be reliant on a wheel chair in the near future. Diane was experiencing pain, tingling sensations and struggled greatly with balance and poor strength.

She has been very active and creative over many years with a physical and rewarding career. After diagnosis, as her condition deteriorated, Diane joined a yoga class which she enjoyed.

After chatting by phone to explore her needs, we set up a 1:1 online yoga session. As I learned more about Diane in this session, it became evident to me that a Yoga Therapy approach would be more beneficial. Diane was unable to lift one of her arms. She was unable to stand unaided. As a result of the MS, Diane's bladder and bowel control was unreliable.

Diane's aim for our sessions was to reduce the chance of further decline in her condition and make the best of what she had.

We agreed on six sessions. Through these sessions we worked with the nervous system and used somatic body check-in, information gathering, breathing techniques, meditation, strengthening exercises, breath-led, mindful movement, affirmation, visualisation and relaxations.

Between our sessions, Diane practiced using videos I created for her. I was really impressed with Diane's determination and dedication to the practice.

Progressively Diane strengthened and was able to stand from sitting, eventually using no hands. She was able to stand (mostly using counter tops for support but with a few minutes unsupported). She was able to manage modified downward facing dog, cobra, cat/cow and warrior postures among others. Through strengthening her muscles and learning to work her glutes, abdominal and pelvic floor muscles, her bladder and bowel control improved. By week two, she was able to raise both arms above her head. She could breath more fully. It was humbling to see Diane's delight at being able to stretch and open out through the front

of her body and particularly her pelvic/abdominal area which had been limited due to her posture difficulties for so long.

Friends and neighbours commented to her how much more upright she was. Her mood improved and she reported feeling joyful and positive and much less gloomy about her future.

It was so rewarding working with Diane. Its simply wonderful to observe the combination of client commitment and the power of Yoga Therapy in action and to witness such wonderful outcomes.

## Retreat Day

Rachel Shilston, Nemia and I have another Yoga and Mindful Mosaic day on 8<sup>th</sup> August. If



you are interested in coming along, you can book read more and book here. There are still a couple of spaces.

<https://www.rachelshilston.co.uk/store/mosaic-workshops/yoga-and-mindful-mosaic-retreat-8-8-21>

## Embracing the summer weather

Recently, on one of those very hot days, the Tuesday evening yoga class relocated to Lydney Harbour. It was a very special evening. I am really hoping we might have some more nice weather allowing us to arrange another session there.



Then this week, I was asked to lead a yoga experience for some holiday makers staying in the Forest of Dean. I took them to New Fancy View one morning. It was a fab spot for a



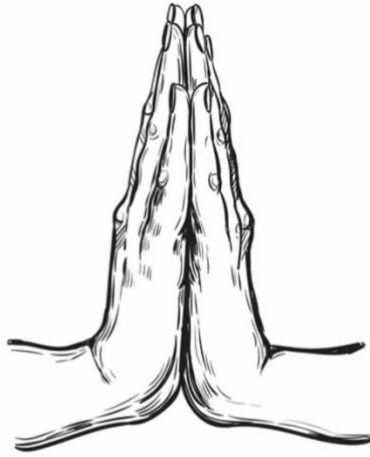
yoga session. The weather was dry and warm and we weren't disturbed by anyone else. The sound of the birds and the view were the only things distracting us.





To those of you lucky enough to have some time away on holiday, I hope you enjoy yourselves and I look forward to seeing everyone again soon.

Ooh – and before I finish, if you wouldn't mind clicking this link and leaving a review, I would be very grateful. X. <https://g.page/freedom-yoga-and-relaxation/review?rc>



*Namaste*