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Founder and Chief Executive Yogini, Balance Integration Corporation

Ten years ago, I got a cosmic kick: In the midst of making a great corporate salary, I recognized fully that this yoga thing, this harmony thing, is the only thing that matters. Not an auspicious moment, it happened when my most bitter co-worker came by my office. I tried to look busy hoping he'd go away, but then I heard that voice inside – listen to him, it said. Through his bitter lamenting of every injustice, I found myself comparing him with my boss at the time, someone who let nothing throw her mood. I remember thinking about harmony in nature and knowing that a blade of grass is not complaining about being a blade of grass. The wind is the wind because it blows.



At this point I'd experienced yoga throughout my life, first at the hands of my Montessori-teaching father followed by countless skilled yoga teachers across many lineages. I'd wept with emotional release in hip openings, trembled in headstand and struggled against the lure of savasana. I'd cursed instructors who counseled I wasn't ready for caturanga, rolled my eyes at impossible breath counts, and resisted uttering any part of opening or closing Om. I'd even gotten through all those yoga growing pains and completed a teacher training, but this moment with my coworker was my biggest yoga lesson ever: The differentiator among us all is how we think. And so my company Balance Integration was born. Ten years later we've grown from me teaching every single class to now hundreds of teachers serving best-practice corporations with yoga in over 15 markets nationwide. In one client alone we count over 8,000 employees touched with yoga-based programming, all of which has been driven by the conviction that how we think about life really does matter.

In heeding the call of yoga, we respond to a conviction that we can feel good, that life is not a burden, and uncovering bliss within is our ultimate work no matter our life circumstance. From moments of presence on the mat, we begin to glimpse that there is a different universe dancing around us, not one of concrete or pixels, but one of longing and passion, of learning and asking. Our convictions become curiosities, and our irritants become our teachers. These insights beg for our attuned notice, and in training our inner eye to adore them, we shift the landscape of our lives from being an unfolding we endure, martyr-like, into a vibrant expression of – and dialogue with – the heart.

My biggest aha moments have come through studying everyone I meet as a master, not just the old gurus in caves or the new gurus in fancy houses. When we truly listen to each other, we can hear the realities that are manifested by specific mantra and beliefs. In wisdom, we learn to choose very carefully our own repeated sacred truths. My public classes and work in corporations are dedicated to reminding us all to choose our convictions carefully, to feel actively their power, and to hold ourselves as precious energetic assets to be wielded with purpose and delight.

Whether I'm the teacher or the student, there's a sacred moment in each class when we become soup, not just an ingredient, say a potato, carrot or onion. A shared laugh, a needed child's pose, a challenging hold – no matter the catalyst, our union emerges as the dominant force among us. Like the alchemy of cooking or the harmony found in nature, the elements merge into a single, delicious expression. My work in corporations and my public classes are fueled by the desire for more of us to experience this more consistently.

How do we get there? In asana, it means movement that invites freedom and personal expression, sequences that honor our desire for familiarity but help us recognize our attachments and expectations, and vibes that remind us that we are each the captain of our own life ship. In creating corporate yoga programs, I get the awesome challenge of abandoning the mat as a tool and must craft other ways to integrate these awarenesses through self-inquiry, mindful direction of attention, mastery of narrative throughout the day-to-day so folks can feel better connected to themselves more of the time.

As much as we all crave practice as retreat to self from our busy lives, if it were only that, it would be a spiritual martini. As hatha yogis, if we're lucky we get hooked and realize there are ways to feel that alive off the mat, as well. As practice saturates us with higher awareness and we begin to recognize how good we can feel, it becomes clear that our next steps must be focused upon aligning our thoughts and actions to support that state more consistently. I can't imagine a more awesome task to make our own.