



# Bringing Yoga to Life: The Everyday Practice of Enlightened Living

*Donna Farhi*

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## **Bringing Yoga to Life: The Everyday Practice of Enlightened Living** Donna Farhi

Internationally renowned and bestselling author Donna Farhi moves yoga practice beyond the mat into our everyday lives, restoring the tradition's intended function as a complete, practical philosophy for daily living.

Expanding upon the teachings of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the core text of the yoga tradition, Donna Farhi describes yoga's transforming power as a complete life practice, far beyond its common reduction to mere exercise routine or stress management. This is the philosophy of yoga as a path to a deeper awareness of self. Drawing upon her years of teaching with students, Farhi guides readers through all the pitfalls and promises of navigating a spiritual practice.

Farhi's engaging and accessible style and broad experience offer important teachings for newcomers and seasoned practitioners of yoga alike. And because her teachings of yoga philosophy extend into every corner of daily life, this book is an equally accessible guide to those seeking spiritual guidance without learning the pretzel bendings of the physical practice itself. As one of the top teachers worldwide, Farhi's exploration of the core philosophy of yoga is destined to become an instant classic.

## **Bringing Yoga to Life: The Everyday Practice of Enlightened Living Details**

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Donna Farhi**

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# From Reader Review Bringing Yoga to Life: The Everyday Practice of Enlightened Living for online ebook

## Elizabeth says

Interesting and worth the read, but same materials are presented more dynamically in other texts.

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## Cat Woods says

There are many books on yoga, but not many really delve into what it means to study and engage in yoga practice beyond the mat. What makes yoga different to simply doing stretches or gymnastics at the local recreation centre?

In *Bringing Yoga To Life*, Donna has an easily relatable and no-nonsense style of writing and teaching. She can illuminate very complex ideas and concepts through stories, both personal recollections from her classes and retreats, and also from yogic texts like the Bhagavad Gita.

Essentially, though this concept is easily articulated, it is the very heart of yoga and cannot truly be appreciated and integrated into our practice and our daily living until we are open to learning. Yoga is the unity of not only our own body and mind, but a unity with the world. It is, as Donna tries to examine and explain, finding our self in every thing (leaf, animal, air) and every person and also, knowing that we are in everything around us also. Donna describes this idea as being like a matrix of energy, or a silence, that exists behind all the noise of daily living and our own mental chatter. It is our connection to the universe that hums along eternally. This is also the concept of Om, often chanted before and after class. The unity of our bodily selves with our infinite selves and with everyone and everything around us.

If I've lost you already, then this book may not be for you yet. If you have just done your first class, or your fifty-thousandth class, this book will confront and challenge your ideas about yoga and about your life. I know I have spent nights awake and stopped at the traffic lights considering everything from my approach as a teacher to whether I'm breathing fully and what my intentions genuinely are for every choice I make. As yogis, we aren't going to do everything perfectly. Donna recognises the obsessive and ritualistic approach of a well-known yoga instructor in her book and his rigid adhesion to his own practice is so determined, he leaves the class he is conducting to go and do his personal practice alone.

What this also illustrates, inadvertently, is that yoga is a diverse school and there are many approaches. Donna's most enlightening chapter, for me, was about seeking the teachers who resonate for us and recognising the traits that we most seek, require and benefit from in our teachers are what we really need to absorb into our approach to ourselves.

For me, I seek teachers who are frank, no-nonsense, challenging but also with a deep joy for living, movement, sharing and able to challenge my ideas and movement so that I push further than is comfortable, but doing so with a compassionate and attentive instructor overseeing.

I seek teachers who are passionate about what they know and always open and curious to learning and seeing what they know in a new light. I seek teachers who are exceptional students. I see this in myself as a deeply curious person.

Using anecdotes, spiritual texts, poetry, stories passed down from family and friends, Donna has not written a step-by-step guide for dummies on the spiritual life by any means. This is, however, not also a prescriptive text but one that like all great teachings, invites us to question what we think we are certain about and then to indulge new ideas and practices in our daily life and to also appreciate that our approach to life and to yoga will change with circumstances, age and experience.

My only niggles are very few really. I also think that with time and consideration, and more practice, I may

change my mind on finding them niggles at all. Towards the end of the book, one chapter makes a few references to what particular age groups, from the 20s to the 30s “normally do”. As a yoga instructor and a writer, I meet many people of all cultures, ages, gender identity and what I have learned, is that there is no “normal”. In yoga particularly, instructors are a wild and diverse group of spiritual seekers of all ages and physical abilities. To define age groups and what they should or should not be doing is an exercise in narrowing down what a life ought to look like. This is perhaps just my sensitive interpretation though! Donna is candid to a very controlled and short extent, in revealing family trouble that lead to an eating disorder in her twenties, exacerbated by dance training where her teacher made derogatory remarks about her less-than-bony physique. This is a common experience for many who studied dance or gymnastics as children and teens and found their bodies became battlegrounds for control and aesthetic worth. I know I have had my battles and it is enormously comforting to me to also know there are many well-known and honest international yoga teachers who speak about overcoming these lethal disorders to find a love and appreciation for their bodies through yoga. This may sound simplistic, and it is not through doing tree pose and having some amazing moment of enlightenment that acceptance and appreciation is nurtured in the body.

It is, as Donna reveals in *Bringing Yoga To Life*, through questioning, studying, and also accepting the mystery of life and having faith. This doesn't mean worshipping God or Buddha or identifying with a religion. This means accepting the enormous joy and rarity of actually being here at all, of all the endlessly possible genetic and energetic combinations of a human being, you are here. This means accepting that we are not alone – we exist as part of the universe, and it exists in us. I am still considering what I read in Donna's book. Hourly, daily, weekly. It has inspired me to seek more reading and to approach my classes with a greater curiosity and desire to inspire that same curiosity and joy in yoga as a spiritual practice in which asanas are an element but not the end goal.

Originally published in 2005, this is a book that has not aged nor can I imagine it will ever be redundant. For curious yogis and those who seek to embrace yoga on, off and beyond the mat and the routines of daily life. I had the great fortune to read this book via SocialBookCo.

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## **Judy Liang says**

Absolutely wonderful book filled immensely with wisdom on every page. As Donna talks about understanding the sameness of us in others, she uses examples from her life to show the reader what she has gone through, so it is very relatable. Because of this book, I have started to see and understand my yoga practice and life experiences in a positive way. When I saw my Self as separate from the world around me, I have started to recognize the sameness of me in others, allowing me to be compassionate to strangers. She has also taught me to understand my inner dialogue so that I can show compassion to myself. Very essential book and will come back to it again.

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## **Lorelei says**

4.5 Stars. I was pleasantly surprised by this book which was recommended to me by a woman who lead a specific yoga class I took. It gently embodies a way of living that appeals to me through the principles of yoga although there is no requirement to master the entire philosophy. The focus is to practice daily and the lessons begin to naturally become part of your life. My copy is marked and highlighted from start to finish.

When yoga became popular, I imagined it was mostly geared toward physical strength and calmness. I began

classes 2 years ago. Beyond body alone, it has changed me slowly but profoundly, mostly through a kinder inner dialogue towards myself and the understanding that knowledge, inspiration and goodness are readily available to everyone if we can train ourselves to listen and be still.

I related to the succinct way she talked about emotions as a person who has received a lot of feedback on being calm to the point of 'not being reactive enough'. Farhi put it so well and it helped me strengthen my sense of self to read it. Most emotions are visitors who come and go but we don't allow harmful ones to take up residence. We all feel anger or frustration at times but making them a permanent fixture is damaging whereas letting things go over which we have no control opens up a day to day acceptance of what life has to offer with a calm and peaceful assurance that we can handle it.

And if you're wondering, she is not afraid of using herself and her students as examples of progress. Nothing here is preachy. It is really beautifully written.

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### **Laurie says**

I just finished skim reading this book, which is why no rating has been given. Skimming an entire book doesn't qualify me to rate it! It also doesn't exactly qualify me to review it, however, it's a book I was interested in and feel comfortable commenting on.

I am on a bit of a Donna Farhi kick these days, this being among four books I've read or skimmed plus an enthralled hour spent watching a 2017 youtube video of a talk given by Donna. Reading a book about yoga requires me to have an open mind. As a practitioner of yoga since 2005 and a teacher of yoga since 2016, I am often on the look out for yogis who can guide me to a deeper understanding of both the physical and spiritual practice of yoga.

What I have learned about myself, when it comes to trying to better grasp and perhaps internalize the more spiritual aspects of yoga, is that it may be days, months or years after first being exposed to an idea that I am open to being with that idea. I believe that my own spirituality is influenced by much of what I've encountered in my life and how I chose to face each encounter. But I also believe that beliefs are not static, that practice and experience change beliefs, sometimes in subtle ways and sometimes in very obvious ways.

When Donna wrote this book in 2003 I had not yet stepped onto a yoga mat. Though we are five years apart in age (I'm older ;-)) she is light years beyond in her practice and embodiment of yoga. I was curious to gather up more of her insight, which is what brought me to this book. Ultimately, as I began reading, I realized this may be a book I return to months or years from now, but at the moment her book (that I'm currently reading) Yoga Mind, Body & Spirit is the better guide for where I am.

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### **Zahrah Awaleh says**

One of the most important and relevant yoga books I've read and I loved it so much I'm going to buy it. Just a pure gem. It's philosophical, yet easily understandable to the average person. Very necessary in our current fast-paced lives.

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## Ali Gibbs says

I love this. I started reading it sporadically and only in the last 1/3 or so did I read it consistently and finish it. It's a dense book, jam packed with quotable wisdom and insight. I'll definitely have to let that marinate and read it again after a while.

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## D says

Getting the idea of the power of practice, and discipline.

"Counter to the plethora of 7-step solutions and quick-fix formulas offered by so many contemporary self-help guides, the ancient science of Yoga does not pretend to be simple, quick, or easy. It is a practice that takes into account the very messy and often complex phenomenon of what we call a human being and the equally challenging task of everyday living. What yoga does promise, however, is that through sincere, skillful, and consistent practice, anyone can become peaceful, happy, and free."

Pantanjali lists 5 causes of suffering, or kleshas:

- 1) Avidha: ignorance of our eternal nature
- 2) Asmita: seeing oneself as separate and divided from the rest of the world
- 3) Raga: attraction and attachment to impermanent things
- 4) Dvesha: aversion to the unpleasant
- 5) Abhinivesha: clinging to life b/c we fail to perceive the seamless continuity of consciousness, which cannot be broken by death

Four attitudes to develop:

- 1) Friendliness toward the joyful
- 2) Compassion for those who are suffering
- 3) Celebrating the good in others
- 4) Remaining impartial to the faults and imperfections of others

Our spiritual fitness can only be tested in relationship to others.

The Latin word, disciplina, means 'to impart knowledge' and 'to enlighten.'

The constraining, discipline is any practice that contains our thoughts, energy, and actions so that we can use ourselves in a potent way. Lack of containment of our physical, psychological, and psychic energies sabotages our best intentions.

"So what is to be done?"

I'm suggesting a return to a primordial language.

One that exists as the deepest knowledge and expression that humanity knows.

It predates spoken language, it has its roots in the emergence of awe.

It is present in everyone, as an elemental music and reflection of molecular and stellar movement.

It is a genetic design built into leaf patterns and the bobbing of sea horses.

It is eminently present to children, we have educated it out of them.

But it is the story of our place in the universe and we must begin to tell that story again.

What we are losing is our ability to speak to the whole.

The songs of celebration, the poetry of praise." - Author unknown

Health, a light body, freedom from craving,  
A glowing skin, sonorous voice, fragrance  
Of body: these signs indicate progress  
In the practice of meditation.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad 2.123

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**Raven Tiger {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says**

Review to come.

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**Heather Murphy says**

Informative for those wanting to go deeper into their practice. Reading it for yoga teacher certification - a lot of great points and insight into the individual's daily practice and what to look for as a teacher.

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**Io? says**

Un libro fondamentale per un approccio spirituale allo yoga, da tener sempre vicino e da rileggere mille volte.

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**Elaine E. Forney says**

This is a book I'll return to often. Donna creates an expansive life-giving context that opens up a deeper practice. As a late comer to yoga and her book has been very inspiring to me and my new practice.

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## **Clara says**

I'm really pleased to see that this book is so well regarded by others who have read it. I thought it was exceptional. Farhi writes about Yoga with a capital Y--not simply the physical (asana) practice, but the Yoga of which asana is but one of eight progressive methods designed to liberate the soul. There was something on nearly every page that I wanted to write down and remember.

I can see returning to this book over and over and dipping into any part of it and finding something that I need to hear at that moment. I read it over the course of a month, a few pages at a time each morning. It was a good way to reflect on Farhi's words, because there's much wisdom here. Farhi continually reminds us that yoga is not just a practice but a way of being; that if we surrender to it it will disclose our true nature. If we pay attention, the issues we encounter in and around our practice reveal the ways in which we relate and interact in the world.

If you're looking for a book on yoga postures, this isn't the book for you. But then, there are many books like that out there; there are very few like this one.

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## **Gail says**

As I embark on 9 months of intensive yoga study, this book (part of the required reading) is a wonderful guide to daily practice, staying present and principled intention. It's a lovely book for anyone practicing yoga - or anyone curious about yoga.

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## **Emily Alp says**

This book is incredible. As I approached the end, in fact, I was amazed that only one person wrote it and that she wasn't 100 years old. The wisdom and the clarity with which Farhi writes is a true gift to take in. I am a yoga teacher and I think this book is a must for all who take on this role. Farhi makes highly-anecdotal references to Yoga, one's practice and the whole process of finding one's path through dedication to these. She published this in 2004 so it's really a tapestry of modern insights on a tradition that dates back thousands of years. The conveyance of the above is no easy task, yet Farhi makes it seem as if it were. Indeed, she shares parts of her own path that comfort and assure the reader. The only caveat to this raving review would be: If you are facing demons, engaging in destructive behaviors or dealing with emotional issues, this is truly the book--but be fully prepared to let it change you because it likely will (especially at that 'seed in the consciousness level' on patches of thought you will be best to water).

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