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My Favorite Yoga Student

If you've ever taught anything, you know the joy of those moments when the line between teaching and learning is blurred.

I want to tell you about my favorite yoga student and what I learned from him.

In 2002, I taught at a private school for boys in Vancouver, British Columbia. In this class of eighth-graders, one of the students was blind. I had to put braille on his yoga mat so he could always know where he was in space.

Watching him practice filled me with delight. He wasn't a contortionist or a bendy social media yoga superstar. He was, in fact, quite stiff.

Yet even in a tight body, he was free of what I consider to be the biggest wrong turn we all take on the road to happiness: the need for the approval of others.

Because of his blindness, he had no idea what anyone else could or could not do, or how they looked in a particular yoga posture. Because he could not see outwardly, he had no means of comparing himself to anyone else. This gave his practice a calmness and a presence that it can take years for us to gain on the yogic path.

His poses emerged from within himself without struggle. They were body poetry; and his face reflected the pleasure of creating shapes that released previously stuck tightness.

Contentment is a key that unlocks the prison of comparison.

In Warrior Two, he was comfortable in his skin. He taught me how yoga and our lives could look the day we stopped seeking the approval of others. He moved with a relaxed breath showing no effort to prove anything. Comparison to others was not the thief of his joy.

In all aspects of our lives, we think the validation of others will make us happy, but it constrains us in the prison of our minds.

As I watched him settle into poses that felt good to him, I saw a living example of what life looks like when we realize that *contentment* is a key that unlocks the prison of *comparison*. If we learn this lesson on our mat, we allow this quiet, steady happiness to flourish in every other aspect of our lives.

Comparison is an unconscious download installed into our mental operating systems at an early age. We tend to compare everything to others and then grade ourselves accordingly. What does my car look like relative to others? How about my body? My social media likes? My hair? In an era where our social media feeds amplify the ego's need to see where we fit in on the bell curve of achievement staying content on and off the mat is easier said than done.

Since we all tend to look around and compare ourselves to others, we need a remedy. The comparison is not just on the yoga mat.

The need to make the poses look good to get the approval of others is a *cul-de-sac* on the road called *discontent*. It leads to joyless striving for future attainment rather than the simple yet profound joy of the miracle of breath filling our being.

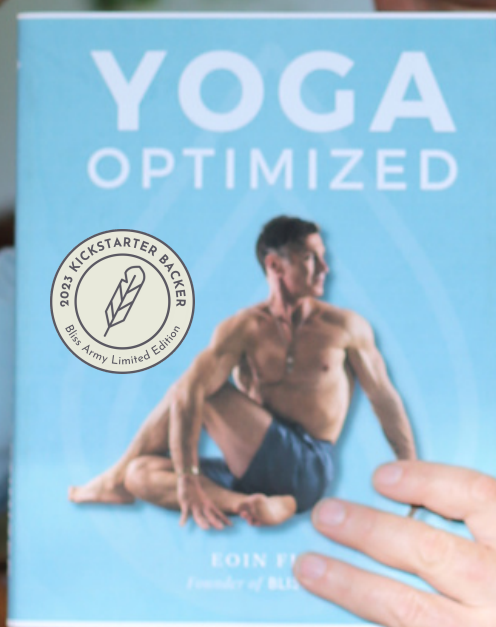


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