

I began practicing yoga in 1994. I remember taking DVDs around with me while I toured with my then tennis player boyfriend. I spent a lot of time alone while he practiced tennis. I would practice sun salutations or watch a VHS yoga class from time to time while he was away. In college, I became curious about mind/body subjects thanks to two brilliant professors, Dr. Roger Maley and Dr. Michael Doran. They opened my mind to new concepts and ways of looking at Psychology and could be considered my first gurus. I finished my undergraduate work at UH in 1999 with a double degree in Psychology and Journalism cum laude with minors in Anthropology and Speech Communication. I really didn't get seriously into yoga classes until later after I met the man of my dreams.

I married Thorsten, or Tossi as we called him, a beautiful German man in December 1998 and would drag him around to a few yoga classes with me in Houston. When he unexpectedly died in 2001, I really "found" yoga. Or maybe it found me. It was very strange how I developed a deep relationship with the practice. I think we all have stories about how we found yoga and they are all so amazing.

I rarely slept when my husband passed away from a heart issue; as anyone who has ever lost a loved one can attest, sleep is impossible. It's too painful and too shocking. Unable to sleep at night for at least 6 months, I often took naps in the afternoons. One afternoon I felt my eyes tiring from reading a book and in that space between waking and sleeping, I heard an older woman's stern voice clearly say, "Get up and go to yoga, NOW." It scared the hell out of me. I jumped off the couch in bewilderment, maybe even horror. I remember thinking to myself, "Great! Now I am hearing voices." At least one that I could clearly understand!

As if it wasn't already bad enough to be in heartbreak hell from losing my best friend, I was suddenly hearing demands from someone who I couldn't even see! And why would she tell me to go to yoga? That was the last thing I would have ever expected a voice from beyond to tell me to do. She didn't yell at me, she spoke with conviction, like she knew something I didn't. After the horror subsided, I found myself walking into the kitchen to find the phone book.

That really was the beginning of my great journey. I went to the phone book and opened it to yoga. Being only a dabbler, I felt that I hadn't really experienced its essence at the gyms where I had practiced. I saw *Bikram's Yoga College of India* and decided that it would be a nice place to experience yoga. I had no idea it would be so damn hot and I think I nearly died the first couple of times I tried it. I am not sure that I fought the fact or even cared that I was having a near-death experience right there on my mat.

I was very thin at the time. Losing Thorsten was a near-death shock itself and I literally couldn't swallow. That made it very difficult to consume enough calories to rigorously practice or exert myself in anything. With grief the weight had just fallen off. Luckily I began craving Gourmet Jose Fresh Salsa and chips. They had unfortunately discontinued carrying the salsa at our local grocery stores so I had to order it directly from the company. They were so kind to have it directly dry-iced shipped overnight to me. I later convinced Fiesta to restock it which only lasted a few months. I suppose I was lucky to have craved anything at all, this yummy salsa being fresh and full of antioxidants.

The first six months as a young widow were extremely difficult. There were days I seriously thought that I could die from the pain in my heart. I later learned that I had broken-heart syndrome. My heart changed rhythms and suddenly I had a murmur which was revealed in an exam nearly two years after his death.

Death has a way of making life real. And the pain that I felt was *very* real. It was also a *very* huge awakening of my spirit. I had crystallized the energy around my heart as one “seer” who I met claimed. Losing someone that close slices deeply through the layers of superficiality and can leave one feeling what I would describe as raw. Pain can shadow the work that is being done at a deeper level when we feel raw. I can say that in that *rawness*, and through the pain, the opportunity for yoga to become my guide swiftly blew into the cracks of my broken heart. Yoga helped me rekindle my soul and gather a few understandings that only a dark night of the soul can awaken one to journey. I remember reading during my grieving process a book by Rav Berg that told a story of a Rabbi who spoke of heartache to the children in his class. He said that only when our hearts break can G-d’s tear slip inside and feel it with love and compassion. Only then can we in turn help someone who is similarly bereaved. Understanding his statement so clearly, I wanted my heart to mend and it did as I found healing in helping others.

I am blessed. I lost a lot of fear in the grieving process mainly because during that time I was also given many gifts. A plethora of transpersonal experiences and awakened skills led me to where I am today. I attribute my initiation to the esoteric and philosophical teachings of spirituality and yoga to my guru husband from the other side. He, the universe began to show me many things. The process felt like what many have referred to as shaktipat. It was a shock of transition into the *shakti* of life.

Spending the time alone continued to teach me. In silence I found the golden nuggets of another reality that spoke to all levels of my being beyond the person or physical. It was truth that I had never felt before!

Several occurrences over the first year helped me realize a few important esoteric things about energy. We really never die. We simply change form. What was shown to me helped me lose fear. The experiences were the things people write movies about such as *The Sixth Sense* or *What Dreams May Come*. When you begin to really see the “learnings” and what is all around you clearly, maybe for the first time in your life, the order is by no chance coincidence. It will change you. We die every moment at some level of our being, but losing someone close to you is a real eye opener to how you are living your life and whether your eyes are really open or closed. We need all three eyes, not just two, to really see the beautiful world around us! Beauty unfolds as you let the heart reawaken, even after it is broken.

The struggle is often part of the plan, I guess. One evening I was invited to a disastrous dinner only a month after Tossi’s death to a Mexican restaurant with all couples. They meant well, but sitting there as the only person not a couple, and being a new widow, I simply lost it. I barely made it to my car and as soon as I did, the turbulent river of my tears broke through the dam of my pride and resistance to accept the impermanence of life in this form. I cried the whole way home uncontrollably. I had never cried that hard in my life. I could not breathe.

That was the day the deepest of grief kicked in and when I got home, I walked into the house and locked the door from the inside with the key. I then fell to my knees with my puppy Henry, the Shelti I begged my husband to buy for me. He licked the tears as they fell from my swollen face. I remember saying out loud on the floor that if there was a hell, I was already there. I thought that all the demons and evil in the universe couldn’t hurt me more than I laid there suffering in that moment. And that night I had a dream that clearly showed me how fear attracts more to be afraid of. We manifest and project that which is inside of us, even in our dreams.

After finding enough courage to get up off the floor, I went to bed. Then something remarkable happened. I used to have a reoccurring bad dream where I could not wake up and it was always the

same thing - I would hear people walking around my room, opening and closing things. A few times I could feel something touch me or hear people talking. I would always become completely paralyzed and unable to awaken even if I prayed. It felt like I was sinking into something and I would desperately try to wake up with little success. The more I feared it, the worse it got over the years. At one time I thought maybe I had epilepsy. However it only happened when I felt tired or was about to fall asleep. Whatever it was, I knew it was probably just a dream but it scared me.

This night was different. Defeated, I made my way to bed expecting to lie awake once again. I began feeling a similar vibration that always came with the dream when it was about to reoccur, and instead of fearing it, I basically stepped into it as if saying, "Come on, show me what you got, because I am already there!" Then something happened as my energy went from fearing it to moving into it with fierce grace. The vibration totally shifted. Then as if I were one big eye, I began seeing very vibrant colors and began traveling from the ceiling of my room through to the rest of the house and then back into the bedroom. I remember there were a pair of purple shoes in the doorway of the master bathroom and then I woke up. Everything appeared normal as I lay there with my eyes wide open in disbelief that I had shifted the dream to something really sort of cool. After a few moments I jumped out of bed to see if there were by some strange chance a pair of very fancy purple shoes in the doorway of the bathroom. There were not. The purple shoes never existed. Or did they? Metaphorically I can see they were symbolic of immanent magic that was on the horizon.

I never had another bad dream. Something that I have lived with for 15 years was now gone, just like that! And all I did was acknowledge that there was nothing to fear. I was raw enough to finally realize that I created those bad dreams by fear and shifted it by moving with love! I now believe anything is possible and enjoy saying yes to life. There are only possibilities and the key is to gain love and lose fear! That is grace in action.

The keys that I locked myself into the house with that night had totally disappeared and were never found the next day. I had to find an extra set, Thorsten's, to unlock the door the next day. I looked everywhere, including the trash. To this day, those keys have never been found. A series of items began to disappear then reappear over the next year inexplicably and sometimes with others there to witness. Radios and other electronics had quite the relationship with me in *the field*. Lights would blow out in rooms that I would walk in, pictures would fly off walls, and other very strange occurrences would happen all around me. My life became anything but normal so I went all the way with where it was leading me. I did not fear it. Instead, I was awed by it.

Many of the experiences I have had led me to ask many questions about life, deeper psychology, personal myth, nature, energy and patterns. Eventually I came across the teachings of the Qabalah and Qi Gong, chakra theory, past lives, quantum physics, the understanding of light and the wave/particle duality, singularity and dimensions, studies of the cosmos and how we are all connected. It has been a journey that to this day leaves me breathless. What a beautiful universe we live in. How cool is it for us to be here together. I love what I see happening with consciousness and truth. Yoga is spreading like a wild fire across the world. The next great awakening is here and be a part of the collective energy contributing to reaching the tipping point for a global transformation.

I began teaching yoga after one year of a solid practice to a group in Tomball, TX where I had purchased a little farm that became my sanctuary during my grief work. I basically raised farm animals as pets and studied yoga and transpersonal psychology for three years. I taught yoga on the side and privately began seeing clients to do more esoteric work. I think there is something truly special about being a conduit for

energy and understanding your dharma. In 2009, a colleague and friend gave me a Vedic Astrology reading and said that with my moon in Mula, double cancer, I am a catalyst for change. And the Goddess associated with my chart – Kali. I wouldn't understand the significance of this chart until the pieces began to later come together.

After a while the work that I began in Houston was beginning to blossom and I soon found myself in a beautifully strange opportunity to open a studio in River Oaks, a very central and upscale area of Houston. I sold the farm in 2005 and was already living centrally in Houston again. I felt ready to open the studio and promote yoga in a different way, something that had nurtured me through a transition that basically changed the course and intensity of my life path. Everything that I began to do somehow was wrapped around the discovery of how to help people using yoga and breathing techniques. But I soon began to realize that teaching yoga and running the business of yoga are two completely different animals.

My students convinced me to call it *Jennyoga* after a few weeks of trying out new names, none of which really seemed to click. I think that my approach to yoga is an amalgam of all of the things that I have learned over the last 11 years, personally and professionally, so I decided it was ok to name the studio after myself. I had to accept that I was worthy of stepping into my power and be Jenny that shares the y with yoga. Why? Because yoga became such a huge part of me when it entered into my heart and captured the moment to be here now with life more awakened! And it all began with a voice. I later found comfort about the voice from that afternoon by reading *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Rinpoche Sogyal. I highly recommend this book for anyone ready to make sense of a few things that have seemed unusual in their life.

Experience and time, life's MBA, helped me get through the first few years as a young studio which were not easy ones. But they were very magical. I am huge believer in client comfort and satisfaction. I am always happy to accommodate them! But any new business has growing pains. And all I want to do is share my love and the gifts I have been given.

I would say that I live a pretty synchronistic life. Every day I see the magic. It helps me as I am learning to let go and not worry so much. Things ALWAYS work out so I am learning to trust my relationship with the universe. I have attracted some of the most beautiful people to my studio and I feel safe to now let things flow as they are and focus on my other projects. One of my teachers told me recently that I was probably the most relaxed boss she has ever had. It is difficult for small business owners not to be too controlling. However, I learned that expectations seriously have a way of muddying the waters of reality. Expectation is control and how funny is our universe to show us just how much we are not in control! I am learning this delicate and fine line to managing people and a business still in its infancy. It isn't easy sometimes. Harmony takes skill and great sensitivity.

The last few months have been more stressful than usual. Studios and yoga training programs were served in Texas by the Texas Workforce Commission in January 2010. We were given the option to become licensed career schools or shut down. It would cost small yoga programs thousands of dollars to become licensed as a career school with no real added benefit. I geared up, began interviewing programs that were already served the year before in Austin, gathered a few allies and formed the Texas Yoga Association. We were ready to march in an effort to prevent the state from regulating yoga so that the intimate programs could remain untainted. www.texyoga.org

I had already dreamt of a Texas wide association to unite our beloved cities to promote yoga at large. The TWC letters simply jumpstarted my effort. And it all happened right around our premiere of the Texas Yoga Conference that I founded in 2009. Our first conference was a huge success. It was an amazing, and synchronistic, platform for us to get the word out to the community about the issue of regulation in our state. I learned a lot about politics and how those who work close to politicians move their pawns and survive in such an environment. It isn't very yogic. I have had to toughen up a bit to handle some of what I experienced and witnessed. During the first few months of 2010, I'm sure that I unknowingly began channeling Kali for the first time. Things were in such chaos! Though I would much rather express one of Shakti's more beautiful and graceful forms, I began channeling one that often wreaks havoc so that things settle down in better order for the highest good. I have learned quite a bit about Kali and now have such deep reverence for her. On my 40th birthday I wanted to paint my body blue. I had my demon heads ready to wrap around my waist. A red Popsicle was waiting in the freezer to redden my tongue just before the party. I would be fierce celebrating my 40th! I was ready to rip the heads off some demons and shake it!

The party never happened. That morning my father died. How about that for expectations? Life has a way of making things very real with death. I later reflected how strange it was that my husband and father would both die in my birth month of July – two weeks and one week prior to my 31st and 40th birthday respectfully.

My father was always saying things were good. My *pappa bear* knew how to simply be in the moment. This heart-break encourages me to let grace rekindle some of the softer forms of the feminine as I once again face grief. I left for Lake Tahoe to be on the water a week after my daddy's passing and is where I am now writing this. How nice to let all windows open so that I can hear the sounds of the small waves hitting the shore and rocks. We went sailing a few days ago and the water intensely reflected my mind as waves of consciousness. The water ripples the memories that come and go. Water is the element that I most cherish to be near when I am reflecting and feeling the need to go inward.

I have been giving my life path a new focus. I am teaching now only a few classes per week and trying to focus on my graduate work. I am in my third year of my Ph D program in Psychology and am really enjoying the enrichment that the program has given me. It has helped me develop Breathe the Cure, Texas Yoga Association and One Yoga USA. They are three projects that I feel are my contribution to seva and to making the world a better place through giving back and building community.

Breathe the Cure came to me in a shower, the beautiful water element again there to facilitate an inspiration! I had spent already three years working with cancer patients at MD Anderson Cancer Center. I am a "facilitator" of yoga in the Integrative Medicine Program at the Place...of Wellness. It took two years for Breathe the Cure to become a 501(c)3 and we are currently producing a training program that I initiated with Alejandro Chaoul, Ph D, and publishing children's activity books called the *FUNdamentals of Breathing*. Crow Collection of Asian Art Museum sponsored the printing of the first book. I collaborated with Beth Reese, founder of Yoginos: Yoga for Youth after meeting her at the conference in 2010. I thought there was great synergy. We wove the story of Ganesha into our first activity book and used many of Crow's art pieces to fill in the story. I am interested in threading nutrition through the second book. Plus, I feel it might be time to introduce the various forms of Shakti to our readers. Shakti is the bringer of ideas into manifestation. Building community, which she births, is simply a good idea!

One Yoga USA is a project to unite the United States with seva in 2012! SEVA 2012 is but one project initiated by One Yoga USA. We are collecting ambassadors in each state to stand as One Yoga. Sean Johnson, Swami Maharaj, Hemalayaa, Ricky Tran and Alison West are standing with me so far and representing their states. I have about 43 more states to go! Basically each state will represent one week of seva beginning in January 2012 and all the way through the end of the Mayan calendar in December 2012. We are looking for sponsors and journalists to help us make that happen. Imagine all 50 states rocking in the year 2012 as we ride the wave of global transformation and the "great shift!" Isn't that what we are all anticipating and excited about as we watch yoga make a huge splash in our communities? www.oneyogausa.com

Other plans with One Yoga USA are to offer difficult to obtain benefits for our members and a yoga training that unites all variations of yoga using experts in each form through a tiered platform that encourages oneness, life experience, transpersonal training and resume building.

We each play a role in this process of becoming one. Nothing is by chance. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Promoting seva, sustainability and "we" consciousness is exactly how we can *be the change...together*.

I love it when people on the same wave length unite to make change happen. Giving up is fear-based and is not what I wish to align myself with. There really are only possibilities when great minds come together and lead with integrity.

The Texas Yoga Conference was a community effort that was inspired by my vision for Houston. In 2009 after I called a meeting of roughly 12 yoga community leaders to do something annually together, we formed the conference. It was so amazing to see people come together to do this project. We shared ideas and four studios participated in the organization of the first year. Houston's YogaOne and Jennyoga are the owners of the Texas Yoga Conference.

We anticipate an even greater turnout than the first year on February 25-27, 2011 at the University of St. Thomas in the Jerabek Athletic Center. We are kicking off the event with a Bhakti Bash on Friday night! MC Yogi, Sean Johnson and The Wild Lotus Band, Duncan Wong, Sadie Nardini and many of our amazing Texas yogis and yoginis from all over our great state are in the line-up for 2011. www.texasyogaconference.com

In a nutshell, that's it!