

## A Testimonial for Beth Sparks

I enter the yoga room with my new companions, fear and anxiety. This year I add three major surgeries to the chronic illness I bring to my practice. Clearly, I am the oldest person in the class and what was comfortable to me for years is not fully available to me now. Fear grows as I consider the possibility that the yoga practice which has sustained me for over thirty years could be lost to me.

Beth enters the room and I sense her gentle movements, feel the joy she brings. She smiles warmly to me and greets me with the eyes I recognize as deep pools of one who has a profound spiritual practice.

I give her the “headlines”-- partially blind on the left side-- I need a corner. She smiles and focuses on me as if I were the only person in class. Something says to me, “she gets it”.

The room slows down, I feel cradled by her voice and I lay my trepidations on the mat, resting in the tenderness I feel in the room.

Beth invites us to set an intention for the practice and what is constellating around me comes pointedly clear, I will support my health. The room is calm, Beth speaks about the practice and the gift of it all, and she brings me home to the moment and the practice I love more than any other. Without my teachers, it is so easy to lose my way. In her style I remember the exceptional teachers I have studied with in the past. These teachers offer something inimitable to me. With them I remember there is no difference between the practice and my life. Beth begins and ends the class with a reminder of the greater purpose of yoga. She does this in a spontaneous way which I understand comes from an integration of the principles rather than a recitation of platitudes that feel empty and exclusive to me. Evangelism does not suite me no matter how subtle or what the substance. It is clear that Beth lives the practice.

On my mat in her class, I feel safe. This means to me that I can let go and follow Beth’s instruction without concern that something she asks me to do will cause me to injure myself. There is no feeling of competition yet all are welcome to reach into their strength and advance each asana. Like Eric Schiffmann, Beth guides me through progressive stages of preparation sometimes without my awareness until; there I am holding a posture that I didn’t think was available to me. And like my best teachers it is done without effort or force. I feel Grace and graceful. And I am once again confident that my practice will lead me back to health.

With each direction I feel an offer, an invitation to be aware of my body. Beth’s instructions and her class structure is a bridge across the rough waters of my life and my practice.

Finally, I recognize that Beth’s classes incorporate a quality that is essential for me, namely, movements which support balance, work and vitality for my brain. Because I sustained a head injury, I am aware of the gift that yoga offers in training the vestibular system. For this, Yoga has been my salvation. But I know of only a few teachers who

understand the benefit of postures which cross the midline or rotate the body along the vertical axis such as moving from Trikonasa to Virbhandrasana to Parsvakonasana and so forth. These postures challenge the brain and balance system and as we age, this movement is essential. The same principles apply in Beth's class design regarding keeping my knees, hips and shoulders safe, aligned and flexible.

And did I mention the class is fun?

I have been blessed to have some of the finest yoga teachers available and to have studied in several teacher training workshops. I bow to all my teachers and now as I recover my health I am so grateful to Beth.

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