

LIVE LIFE INTENTIONALLY

Yoga for Real Life

WALK IN THE DOOR of Blue Lotus Yoga and you instantly notice how good it feels. The studio is beautifully designed, but it's more than that. It has good energy. Before you even unroll your mat, you feel different.

Jill Sockman, who opened the studio in February 2007, has the same impact on a personal level. That's not necessarily sur-

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prising from someone steeped in the world of yoga. But it's nothing short of remarkable when you learn the details of her last 19 months.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

When Jill arrived in Raleigh in September 2001, she had every intention of getting a “real” job, but the post-9/11 economy wasn't cooperating. So she decided to teach yoga...until she found something else.

It wasn't long before an idea for a different kind of yoga studio began to take shape in her mind. Knowing the timing wasn't right yet, she held her vision until the day she stumbled onto the shell of a building that would become the home of Blue Lotus. She walked in and “knew this was the space,” and also wondered, “How in the world will I make this happen?”

The answer? One step at a time.

STRESS, ANYONE?

When I sit on my mat and listen to Jill talk about accepting yourself right where you are, trusting the process, and staying



Jill Sockman

in the present, I wonder if this is her natural state. She seems so solidly, deeply, *permanently* grounded despite the stresses of owning a new business in which she wears all the hats – CEO, human resources, finance, and marketing – plus teaches seven or eight yoga classes a week.

When I ask her, she almost falls over laughing. “I'm groundedly challenged,” she tells me. “In fact, people who knew me 15 years ago wouldn't even recognize me.”

Back then; Jill had a successful career in New York's garment district, living life at a million miles a minute. A co-worker suggested she try yoga, and it quickly became integral to the rhythm of her life. At the time, she would have never guessed that yoga would become her profession. However, after a physical and spiritual journey that began in Prague and ended in Raleigh, with stops in Nepal, India, New Mexico and California, that's exactly what unfolded.

So, how does a groundedly challenged yoga business owner manage her stress? Especially when you consider the interesting paradox that the very thing that keeps her centered – the practice of yoga – also creates her stress – the business of yoga?

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LEARNING TO LET GO

When Jill started talking about the importance of allowing things to unfold, she hit on one of the hardest and most important lessons I've also learned.

“There was so much power in letting go of my picture of how it's going to succeed. All through the process of getting open, dealing with everybody along the way, the lesson over and over again was – yep, have to let go of that too. And every time I thought I was totally open to that, I'd get reminded again that here's something else you can let go of.”

Learning to let go is challenging, takes practice *and* is worth it. For Jill, the reinforcement came time and time again as a collection of diverse and brilliant people kept coming out of the woodwork to help. And it also helps that she has a strategy for noticing when she's holding on.

SIT, BREATHE, AND NOTICE

At its most basic level, this is the practice of yoga. It works just

as well for life. After all, yoga isn't meant to be separate from the rest of your life.

“It's easy for me to start spinning if I don't pay attention. What's the pace at which I'm moving, and am I breathing? What's important is to be aware of what it is I need right now. And sometimes that has nothing to do with my to-do list.”

I find it comforting that even someone who spends much of the day living and breathing yoga can get a little out of control. As Jill says, “It's the universal nature of the human experience.”

Her approach to managing stress is beautifully summed up in a favorite quote from Donna Farhi, a world-renowned yoga teacher. “The degree to which you do not believe you have time to spend even ten minutes sitting quietly is the degree to which you desperately need to spend ten minutes sitting quietly.”

On her website, the Blue Lotus description reads, “A place where people are welcome to arrive just as they are into a space of learning and laughter; a place of healing and rest; a place of spirit and self-fulfillment. This is yoga for real life.

Indeed it is.

For more information about Blue Lotus Yoga, please visit www.bluelotusnc.com.

If you have an idea or story to share about living with intention, or would just like to comment on this article, drop me a note at sessig@priorityventures.com.

