

Knees, Yoga and Being 64

I roll out my mat and place the bolster in the middle, starting my yoga practice with a short meditation. As I sit in Sukasana, an “easy” crossed legged position for many, I reflect on how this position is not as “easy” as it once was for me.

Since my 2005 knee injury and 2008 knee replacement, not much is as easy as it once was. Yoga has always been in my life. I began practicing yoga in my mid-twenties and am now 64. Sometimes my practice was very regular and other times, only at night with yoga stretches on the floor. I have always been very clear how important yoga is to my well-being.

I am fortunate to have been born with long hamstrings and a flexible body. But since my injuries and surgery, I have to work harder to maintain my flexibility. Consequently, I have gained a greater understanding of tight bodies whether from an injury or due to genetics. I’ve always had compassion for those who come to yoga with challenges, regardless of the why or how. I now know what it *feels* like to struggle to assume a yoga posture. And *feeling* trumps knowing every time.

In these last few years, I’ve have learned to come to my yoga practice with much more patience and understanding of my body and what it can and can’t do, which may differ day to day. At first this was difficult for me and took a bit of time to work through the emotional issue of not doing yoga as I once did. What helped the most was yoga itself. The practice of yoga is about bringing us into our selves and our bodies. When I got my ego out of the way, the way through appeared. Taking yoga one step at a time, listening to what my body could and would do, little by little I learned how I could do the poses I had always loved and accept there are poses I will never do again.

Squatting had always been a big part of my practice since it was so effective at stretching out and therefore relieving discomfort in my lower back. I was extremely disappointed when my doctor and the physical therapist both emphasized there would be no more squatting after the knee replacement. At a certain point in my rehab, I decided to very mindfully, and using my best listening to my body skills, start trying to squat. I gently and persistently squatted and stretched a little bit at a time. Three years later, I can squat! It's not as deep as it once was but that doesn't matter, my heart sings when I squat. Who knows, maybe sometime in the future it might deepen a little more, and maybe not. The good news is the depth of my squat doesn't matter anymore. What matters is I have learned to come to yoga practice with more honor, patience and understanding than when I was younger and it was all so much easier. I have learned to listen to my body, allowing each pose to come from the inside out. A posture doesn't have to look like anyone else's, like the books or like mine used to look. Poses simply need to come from within, in a way that supports, opens and allows for personal growth.

Yoga was a major tool that helped me return to an active life after knee replacement surgery and continues to play an important part in my growth. Yoga has assisted in my desire to age gracefully and helped me become the person I am. Everything I've learned through yoga is directly transferable to my every day, walking around life.

Trice Bonney CMT



Trice has been a student of yoga since the mid-70's and teaching since 2000. She is certified through White Lotus Teacher Training Program and Joseph's LePage Integrative Yoga Therapy. Her 30 plus year back ground in structural realignment bodywork gives her teaching a creative and explorative style. Her hands on approach provides personal attention. She has taught mediation, visualization, has a private Shamanic and bodywork practice.