



The Path Less Travelled

To get where we want to go, Yoga Teacher Matthew Sanford sets aside willpower and embraces curiosity.

By Matthew Sanford

Think of your Yoga practise as a study in perseverance. Not a gut-wrenching, wilful approach that is sometimes demanded by a challenging class, but rather the kind of perseverance that can be sustained over time. A Yogi shows up each day, gets on the mat and starts doing poses. Every day is different, a different sensation or feeling appears, and a different insight reveals itself. A seasoned Yogi follows, explores, and tests whatever unfolds on that particular day. But what sustains the commitment to show up in the first place?! For me it's a sense of *wonder*, not the force of will. I am a Yoga practitioner and teacher who is paralysed from the chest down. I began practising Yoga when I was 25 – 12 years after a car accident claimed the lives of my father and sister and rendered me a paraplegic.

Over the past 17 years, my Yoga practise has been anything but ordinary. How does someone like me learn the subtle interplay between pushing your femur bones down, extending through my spine, and lifting my chest? I cannot do all the physical actions. I can never finish the pose, and no amount of wilful determination can change that. So what keeps me going?

I am nourished by the sensation of *wonder*. Each day that I get on my mat, I open to the vastness of Yoga rather than narrow myself to a goal for that particular day. I feel *wonder* as I realize that every pose is infinite and that ultimate mastery is not possible. I feel *wonder* as my practise teaches me to trust that time, dedication, and curiosity are what brings me progress, not the intensity of my will. Most of all, I feel *wonder* about the little things, how my breathing is such a sensual experience, how my lifted chest directs awareness through my extremities. Finally I am filled with a sense of wonder as I realise that my Yoga practise allows me to refine the quality of my existence.

This is what I wish for you. As you think about your goals, especially at this time of year, take a page from your Yoga practise: Relish the ride, not just the accomplishments.

Matthew Sanford

Yoga has something to offer everyone. This cannot be denied.....

