

Let's begin

In a world where being the expert is applauded, mother and yoga instructor Cheryl Parsons asks: Have we forgotten the joys of being a beginner?

I RECENTLY HAD THE CHANCE TO ROLL OUT MY MAT WHILE ON A TRIP TO MIAMI.

Stepping into the unknown environment, I was instantly glad I'd worn my newly purchased Lululemon outfit. I looked like I'd done this yoga thing a few times before. I didn't look like a beginner. Thank goodness, my mind told me - given the clientele. In one corner, Miss Spandex USA was limbering up with her pre-class routine (think deep lunges and wide leg forward folds), while in another, a muscle-bound guy was warming up his hips. This was serious stuff. By the time the heavily Sanskrit-tattooed yoga teacher bounced into room, my ego had already whipped itself into somewhat of a frenzy.

We're only human after all. It's totally natural to judge and compare. To feel the need to set an agenda for our practice before we've even spread our toes. I'll hold my hand up right now and say my mind was doing just that. It wanted to prove I could be as good as they looked. Hey, I was in Miami after all, the home of roller blades, tiny bikinis and the yoga-toned body. My ego needed me to put on a good show.

However, a few minutes in something shifted. I thought of my daughter, just 18 months old, who my husband and I had left with the grandparents for the first time to embark on this short trip. The look on her little face as she tried to push a triangle into a square hole with such passion and concentration. The joy in her eyes when she was learning to walk - fall down, get back up, stagger, repeat - undeterred by the amount of attempts it took. It made me wonder: when was the last time I really learned something new with such determination, yet often so little success? And when did I last enjoy the art of simply being a beginner?

In Japanese, there's a term called shoshin, which translates as the 'beginner's mind.' It's something that is revered in Zen Buddhism and martial art practices, as one of the highest forms



“You can learn new things at any time in your life if you're willing to be a beginner. If you actually learn to like being a beginner, the whole world opens up to you.”

—Barbara Sher

of attainment - a state of mind to continuously strive towards. In yoga, we also talk about coming home to our true self. Essentially, it means allowing ourselves to begin again every time we step on the mat - unaffected by our inner critique and detached from expectations or preconceived notions of how things should be.

Further into the class, that shift continued; the people around me melted away, the stresses and stories dropped a frequency or two. I began to enjoy the simple rhythm of moving and breathing, regardless of the outcome, and whether my mind deemed it 'successful' or not. I resolved to enjoy being open to new possibilities, to see where my body could take me that day, even if it was far from the confines of my extra flexi Miami beach neighbour. That's the beauty of yoga. Every day is different. Every day we can start afresh, with the chance to be a beginner every single morning. As that saying goes: “The expert in anything was once a beginner.” So, what will you enjoy learning today? ✨



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