

Volunteer Spotlight

Finding Balance

Rachel Frazee is an IYNAUS volunteer and a CIYT at the Intermediate Jr I level. She studies and teaches at The Yoga Place in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and also teaches a college-level physical fitness laboratory class. Rachel, along with her husband, Joel, a high school woodshop teacher, and her two boys, Harry (3½) and Charlie (1½), live in Sparta, WI. Together they created and enjoy a backyard with laying hens, a few hive of bees, and many garden boxes.



Can you say a little about how you came to Iyengar Yoga?

I started taking yoga classes while pursuing a degree in fitness and human performance. By the time I came to Iyengar Yoga I had studied and taught many forms of physical fitness such as yoga, pilates, kickboxing, spinning, group weight training, step aerobics, water aerobics, boot camp, and many more.

Yoga had always stood out to me and eventually I decided to try out the Iyengar Yoga studio in hopes of learning more about yoga. And that is just what I found: more. A much deeper practice than I could have ever imagined.

When did you know you wanted to teach yoga, specifically?

Within a year of taking classes, I jumped at the opportunity to attend an Iyengar Teacher Training course offered at our local studio. I was certified in 2011 and have continued with the certification levels. I feel like I found Iyengar Yoga and Iyengar Yoga found me—not just as a student but also the art of teaching. I find both practice and teaching so incredibly challenging and yet fulfilling at the same time.

When you volunteered, you took on a brand new role: gathering advertisers for Yoga Samachar. This is a money-maker for our organization and you've done a great job. Did you have experience in this field?

After certification, I attended more workshops and conferences. With more exposure to the Iyengar Yoga community, I realized that I wanted to get more involved in order to network and to give back. I am impressed that everybody seems to be giving in some capacity. This was especially noticeable to me in the certification process as my mentors gave so much of their time and support to me. Also, in my current role of organizing ads for Yoga Samachar, I continue to be surrounded by kind, helpful, and serving individuals. When I started my volunteer role I had very little experience. My goal was to do my best to secure advertisers and, more importantly, to build relationships. It's going well!

How do you find the time to volunteer, teach, be a mom to two little ones, and everything else going on?

It can be very challenging to balance family life, work, volunteering, and personal time and practice. Some days I am better at it than others. I try to take one day at a time and to reflect on the bigger picture every now and again. If things seem out of balance, I readjust. I am always readjusting—where should I be spending more/less of my time, effort and attention.

Also, I could not afford to pursue yoga without the support of my family and friends. My family is so supportive of my work and passions—from my mother-in-law who watches my kids to my husband and sons who travel with me to conferences and workshops!

What are you working on in your practice right now?

I do my best to practice *asana* and *pranayama* most days of the week, and I try to practice with as much equanimity as possible—whether in a difficult *asana* or situation in my daily life. For example, I have really been struggling with *Salamba Sarvangasana*, especially while holding it for any length of time. When it becomes difficult I want to separate my legs, catch my big toe, change to some variation or move onto another *asana*. I tell myself to stay even just a little bit longer and to breathe and keep an open mind for what change is possible or necessary. I encounter the same obstacle day after day, and some days the pose is better, and overall there is improvement.

Another example: when going for a daily walk with two little boys and a dog, I can easily become overwhelmed and pulled in many directions. The dog is pulling, my older boy is biking way ahead, and my little guy is mad because I have buckled him in the stroller. If I grow angry and frustrated with what is in front of me, not only does the walk unravel but I grow tenser. I try to take a deep breath, realize I am not going anywhere, and face the situation with as much equanimity as possible.



So whether I'm trying to find balance in *asana*, on a walk with my boys and my dog, or while doing daily tasks, I find that my attitude is a little thing that makes a HUGE difference. As Mr. Iyengar says, "Balance does not mean merely balancing the body. Balance in the body is the foundation for balance in life. In whatever position one is in, or in whatever condition in life one is placed, one must find balance. Balance is the state of the present—the here and now. If you balance in the present, you are living in Eternity."

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