

THEARTOFYOGA

The Art of Yoga

I'm a lifelong musician, and over the years of practicing yoga I began to see that it was a lot like playing music. In music, we have scales, which are a collection of notes that work in harmony with each other to create a certain mood or feeling.

If you randomly play a bunch of notes, it will just sound like noise. So it helps to start with a structure or theory to guide your choices.

We don't learn musical scales for their own sake. They give us a solid foundation on which we can improvise and express ourselves.

In the case of vinyasa, the principles of skillful sequencing that we call vinyasa krama guide you to make choices and ensure that your practice will be safe, effective and enjoyable.

If you just practice a random bunch of asanas, you run the risk of injury or the practice just not bringing you into the state of health, balance and clarity that defines yoga.

Understanding the principles allows you freedom of expression while making sure that it is still yoga.

Any art — whether music, poetry, painting or dance — is the artists' response to life. Yoga becomes an art when we learn how to put the postures together in a way that expresses how we're feeling in that moment. Doing the same yoga practice every day would be like playing the same song over and over, without taking into account how you're feeling. For our yoga practice to be truly effective, it has to be a compassionate response to what we feel we need in that moment.

Sometimes you need an energetic practice that gets your blood pumping and lifts your spirits so you can go out and do what you need to do. Sometimes you need a practice that's calming and soothing to help you relax and let go of your day so you can rest and recover.

When you're able to improvise the perfect yoga practice for yourself or your students, it's like when the right song comes on at just the right moment and you get the feeling that everything in the universe is aligned.

The magic of yoga is that it allows us to create those perfect moments whenever we want. With the Art of Yoga, you are the musician, your body is the instrument and your yoga practice is the perfect song for that perfect moment.

What makes my father's yoga teachings unique is his insistence on attending to each individual and to his or her uniqueness.

If we respect each person individually, it naturally means we will always start from where each person currently is.

This requires many different approaches; there is not just one approach for everybody.

By this I do not mean that I have to give only private lessons, but I must create an atmosphere in my classes in which each student can find his or her own way to yoga.

— TKV Desikachar