



Marjorie Duffy

Type A Sabbatical

Cosumnes River College

Spring 2019

October 11, 2019

# FINDING BALANCE

Teaching with Connection and Inspiration

## Abstract

My spring 2019 Type A Sabbatical was a time of renewal. My goals were to take the time for personal reflection and revitalization through service and learning, and to bring balance and a refreshed perspective back to my students, my classes, and my life. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity, and do indeed feel revitalized.

In service, I volunteered at the Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services computer lab (SFBFS). There, I assisted students who were enrolled in an introductory class on computing skills. Additionally, I served my family in various ways which were not anticipated in the sabbatical request, but which were beneficial and ultimately, quite necessary.

In formal learning, I completed a 200-hour yoga teacher training through a Sacramento studio, One Flow Yoga. Although the activity was more about deepening my practice than becoming a yoga teacher, I was able to successfully complete the program and am now a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-200) through the national Yoga Alliance. Other formal learning required by the One Flow yoga teacher training was to complete an online 20-hour Anatomy for Yoga course and to read and discuss multiple books about yoga and Eastern philosophy (see Appendix A). Reading extensively was a cherished part of the sabbatical, and included not only assigned books on teaching yoga and philosophy, but also books I selected on philosophy, Pulitzer Prize winning novels and poetry, memoirs, and not least, the CRC one book selection, the Book of Joy (see Bibliography).

In taking time for personal refreshment, I purposely worked to slow down my usual pace. While reading was a favorite activity, I also attempted to daily practice yoga and meditate. Time was also spent with my family. These activities were personally regenerative. I was able to complete the goals as listed in my proposal, with the caveat that incorporating new teaching techniques that inspire and promote connections is an enduring goal, and one in which I believe there will always be room for growth.

## Activities

The Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services Third Avenue campus in Oak Park includes several computer labs and classrooms for their guests. Retirees serve as volunteer teachers and the program is set up to offer ten-week courses in Introduction to Computers, Excel, or Word. The students who attend these classes at SFBFS have very little, if any, prior exposure to computers. Open labs offer appointment times for students to receive help developing resumes, to search for job opportunities online, or to simply drop in and work on computer homework for a class. Students are required to sign up for the course they are taking, and are allowed to repeat the course multiple times based on the recommendation of the teacher or by personal choice. I assisted with one Introduction to Computers class in the spring. A number of the students had taken the class previously, but were still struggling with the concepts. The teachers that I worked with have been volunteering for many years, so my designated role was to roam and help students as needed. There was a constant need.

My second primary goal was to engage in a 200-hour yoga teacher training course. I worked to learn the skills necessary to teach yoga, and perhaps even more importantly, to broaden and refresh my techniques in teaching by experiencing something outside my chosen discipline and skill set. I attended classes at the Sacramento-based One Flow yoga studio for four hours on Thursday evenings, and eight hours each on Saturday and Sunday for ten separate weeks, beginning in January and ending in mid-May. During this period, in addition to the time spent with the cohort of yoga trainees in classes, I completed a 20-hour online Anatomy for Yoga course, practiced yoga regularly outside of our class, and read numerous books and articles about yoga and yoga philosophy assigned by the instructor in order to discuss them within the class.

A third goal was to apply what I learned to my courses at CRC. The activities around this goal are somewhat amorphous, but nonetheless I believe it was a realized goal. First, I experienced working with students who have almost no computer skills or resources in the SFBFS lab. The types of activities they struggled with are common for many students who arrive brand-new to computers at CRC. This experience, together with becoming a yoga student, helped me focus on how easily students can feel out of their element and intimidated

by something strange. I have been going through my courses, both online and on ground, to clarify, to repeat important concepts, and to draw more attention to those areas where students sometimes get hung up. I have been working on my presentation style with an eye to encouraging students even more than I generally do, particularly in Computer Familiarization for Beginners class (CISC 302) where I often have students who feel they do not belong in college.

With respect to the final goal of getting refreshed and revitalized, I am deeply appreciative for the time away from campus to read, to practice, to sing, and to slow down. An unplanned activity that I have continued after the sabbatical was to accept an invitation to join a German Club Choir. I have enjoyed singing choral music again, while practicing German pronunciations and translations. Additionally, I was able to spend time assisting family members without the experience of that nagging, internal dialogue that I ought to be grading or preparing for class instead. My mother-in-law lives locally by herself in a house. She turned 90 this year, and requires some assistance with regular daily tasks and errands. It was wonderful to be able to take her places and have the time in my week to easily drop in and visit over a cup of coffee.

Other Activities Beyond the Proposal:

In February, I was able to go see Douglas Abrams present his conversations with the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the Mondavi Center in Davis, CA. His video clips and talk were inspiring and uplifting.

I attended the CRC Professional Development panel, One Book -Joy Practices: A Panel of Religious & Spiritual Scholars, in April. It was a perfect fit with my sabbatical, with the premise that a "healthy perspective really is the foundation of joy and happiness, because the way we see the world is the way we experience the world" (Abrams, p. 192). The panel included English Professor and meditation teacher Constance Carter, as well as Mark Redmond, a Bhagavad-Gita scholar. Both of them were also inspiring!

In June I was delighted to take a brief trip to Colorado where I not only participated in the Telluride Yoga Festival, but met two friends from college and did some high-altitude hiking.

Some of the nationally recognized yogi's that I learned from at the Yoga Festival included Kia Miller, Beryl Bender Birch, and Eoin Finn.

Finally, I was able to increase my service to my family. Not only was I grateful to have more time for our local nonagenarian, but one of my daughter-in-law's had complications with her fourth pregnancy toward the end of her term. I was happy to have time to spend with my granddaughter's and to help out in their household with cooking and cleaning and things that their mom simply wasn't able to do. The baby was born safely in early May (see Appendix B).

### Critique of the Leave

I was very interested to see the program in operation at Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services in Oak Park. To volunteer, individuals must first go through a training workshop, complete an application and sign up for areas of interest. SFBFS is a mature organization with defined processes in place to evaluate their volunteers. There are numerous volunteer activities available, from teaching English as a second language, to offering legal help for immigrants, to handing out food or sorting clothing donations, to working in a computer lab. In the SFBFS labs they are teaching Microsoft skills on the Windows platform, and as mentioned, the teachers are primarily retirees who have been volunteering for many years. I was happy to have a chance to work with their students, but found that most have very low skills with computers, if any. In conversation with the lab supervisor, I was told that not many students sign up for the formal class they offer through Sacramento City College (Excel), nevertheless they are continuing to offer it in hopes they will encourage some to envision themselves as college students. I learned that counselors are occasionally brought over from SCC to encourage enrollments, and that the idea of taking a college class is a huge hurdle for many of their guests to overcome. When I asked individual students informally what they hoped to gain from the computer class the answers were varied, but seemed to fall into two groups: employability, and activity. Many expressed the need be able to use a computer to go to work, even in a warehouse or office, or they needed computer skills to fill out job applications online. Another large group of students seemed to attend the class as an activity in their week, a place to go, and people to be with, rather than because they hoped to learn something specific. In fact, some of this group did not appear to be invested in the idea of passing the class at all. Most had taken this same intro

class at least once before, and some had taken the class as many as four times. The lab accommodated about 25 students, and the class was overflowing at the beginning, but had dwindled down by at least a third toward the end.

Like the older students who decide to finally learn about computers at SFBFS or in my classes, I was the older student endeavoring to learn something challenging in the yoga teacher training. This was a firsthand opportunity to place myself in a sustained foreign environment where I was aware that I could have been the parent (grandparent?) for all the other students in the class. It was easy to feel self-conscious and out of my element. Part of the learning experience was to practice not minding that I was the only senior in the group. There were a few times though, when it was hard not to notice that the rest of the class seemed effortlessly agile, flexible, or able to balance in contrast to my attempts to master a pose with my artificial hip. Perseverance is one of my personal characteristics however, and with my tuition paid and my time set aside, I was committed to the process.

I was pleased to take the training at One Flow Yoga Studio. It is a bhakti studio and teaches Vinyasa style yoga. The word bhakti comes from the Hindu word bhaj, meaning devotion. It is a practice of compassion and love, for yourself and for all humanity. It is also a practice of the body. Vinyasa is the physical flow of a class, and as students we practiced weaving various poses, or asanas, into a sequence that makes sense for the body as well as for the mind and spirit. No two Vinyasa yoga classes are the same, and it is up to the teacher to create a sequence that fits together. Very often the class is asked to begin and/or end the physical practice by chanting Om.

Om is known as a universal sound, and reminds us that we are one in our humanity and connected in this universe. Beginning a practice by intoning Om as a group is a way to prompt us to set aside the time for practice and to join together with our individual intentions. Not that individual intentions are verbalized, just that we are reminded that we come to the mat to develop our mind and spirit, and not just for a physical workout. In the Hindu tradition, Om signifies the divine energy or Shakti, and for me, chanting in a group has an effect like communal prayer. The energy is focused and palpable, and each individual comes together

through breath and sound. In taking a moment individually to think about how you would like divine energy to be focused in your life or the lives of those you know, you are also keenly aware of the community you support in the voices around you. As a community college instructor, the voices are many and varied, but none less valuable than another.

The study of anatomy was critical to learning poses well and learning how to teach them safely. The particular school I chose put less attention on making a posture a specific shape than it did on making sure your body was safe. We were given a Pose Study outline and used both B.K.S. Iyengar's, *Light on Yoga* and Darren Rhodes, *Yoga Resource Practice Manual*, as well as photography and our anatomy studies to fill it in. We completed these for more than 25 assigned poses; certainly not a comprehensive study of all of yoga, but a great methodology and frame-work to allow us to continue our studies beyond the class (see Appendix C).

In addition to learning yoga poses, I learned numerous techniques for controlled breathing, mindfulness, and meditation. Some of this I had experienced before, but it was so life-affirming to learn in a structured fashion, and practicing daily over a period of time helped to internalize the inherent value of these activities. I know this connectedness within comes across to students in my classes.

#### Methods of Sharing Results

Since I returned to the classroom, I am encouraging my students to move, to stretch, and to breathe during our breaks or when we approach a difficult concept or activity. I have also spoken with our current Professional Development coordinator, Lisa Abraham, about putting a yoga class in the PD schedule to teach. We are aiming for just before finals as a fine time to offer something for stress relief.

#### Conclusion

My heart is full of gratitude for the sabbatical opportunity granted to me by Cosumnes River College and my colleagues on the Professional Standards committee. Thank you.

Appendices

Appendix A





# ONE FLOW YOGA®

## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

### Marjorie Duffy

For completing all of the requirements in teaching technique and methodology, yogic philosophy, anatomy & physiology and the practice of kindness, compassion and love, this certificate recognizes and celebrates:

200 HOURS TEACHER TRAINING  
VINYASA YOGA

May 19, 2019

Kate Q

Kate Saal, E-RYT  
Founder, One Flow Yoga

One Flow   
One Love

**This is to certify that**

Marjorie Duffy

**has successfully completed**

Anatomy for TT Level 200 (20 hours)

May 6, 2019

Date



YOGANATOMY.COM

Duffy  
Instructor

Appendix B



*Figure 1: Ruth Duffy with newest family member, Artemis Joy Duffy, May 2019*



*Figure 2: Duffy Girls; big sisters for Artemis Joy, April 2019*

## Appendix C

## Pose Study Sheet

1. Name & Page Location in LOY: (Sanskrit)

Adho Mukha Svanasana (110)

2. Name (English):

Downward facing dog (36)

3. Meaning/Translation:

adho mukha = having the face downward, svana = like a dog.

4. Benefits:

Removes fatigue. Relieves pain + stiffness in  
hips + strengthens ankles. Relieves  
stiffness in shoulder blades

5. Contraindications/Cautions:

6. What Asana Family/Category Does it Belong in?

forward folds

7. Describe the
- basic shape
- of the pose? Upside down V

(In simple, easy to understand English, as if speaking to someone who has never done yoga before.) From hands + knees, move knees back about 6" + curl toes under. Lift hips up + back as you straighten legs. Push hands down + forward. Relax neck + gaze back.

8. What are the parts/components of the pose?

Component Parts of Posture	Other Poses Sharing Component Parts
4 points of contact hands + feet	bharmanasana - table pose
Flat back	"
hands are up by ears	
	child's pose (balasana !!)
	plank
straight legs	ta
arms are straight forearms pronate Rotate shoulders back + down	



Figure 3: Down Dog in Studio

## 9. Preparation for the Pose

What muscles need to be prepared?

What are the joint positions?

List preparatory poses for these parts.

Muscles/Muscle Groups	Joint Positions	Preparatory Poses/Strategies
Hamstrings Calves	knees straight ↳ extension	tadasana
<del>calves</del> Glutes	↳ Flexion hips bent + up	uttanasana
Deltoid	shoulders - flexion	balasana (child's pose)
Triceps	Extend elbow	cat/cow
Latissimus dorsi spine	straight	cat/cow forward fold half-way lift

## 10. What is difficult in the posture pose?

How can you modify this posture to make it more accessible?

Difficulty	Modifications
tight hamstrings or calves	bend knees
	shorten stance
sore wrists	go to forearms

## 11. What are common misalignments and key actions?

a. What can typically go wrong with the posture?

b. What corrections or key actions are needed to address these common misalignments?

Common Misalignments	Key Actions/Corrections Needed
shoulders rounded ✓ curved spine	bend knees for tight hamstrings
collapse shoulders head thru arms	put more strength in arms - balance strength raise pelvis up + back
	rotate forearms in + upper arms + shoulders back
passivity	- engage!

12. Use the exact description in Light on Yoga and write out the step-by-step instructions for this pose.

1. Lie full length on the floor on the stomach, face downwards. The feet should be kept one foot apart.
2. Rest the palms by the side of the chest, the fingers straight and pointing in the direction of the head.
3. Exhale and raise the trunk from the floor. Straighten the arms, move the head inwards toward the feet and place the crown of the head on the floor, keeping the elbows straight + extending the back.
4. Keep the legs stiff + do not bend the knees but press the heels down. The heels + soles of the feet should rest completely on the floor, while the feet should be parallel to each other, the toes pointing straight ahead.
5. Stay in the pose about 1 minute with deep breathing. Then, with an exhalation lift the head off the floor, stretch the trunk forward and lower the body gently to the floor and relax.

13. Yoga Stick Figure. (Draw Yours)



14. Shape Study (Complete One for each pose)

Keep space between shoulders engaged + widened.  
Raise hips up + back.

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