Opening the Body, Opening to Peace

This piece by Dr. Amy Webb, psychologist and writer, is excerpted from her book, Choosing to Shine (*in process to be published). Her writing bears witness to the everyday miraculous, and to the practices and hope that heals. She has served for more than two decades coaching senior executives through critical personal and work transitions. Her own odyssey through breast cancer called on those experiences and invited her to open to new ones in the continuing transition that cancer presents.*

by Dr. Amy Webb

Friday morning beginner yoga class started at 10:30 and ended about noon. When I worked full-time, right up to my breast cancer diagnosis a couple weeks ago, it was almost impossible to make this class. I hadn't found a weekend class, so I contented myself with a now-and-then relationship with the practice. While I've known that yoga stretches my mind and heart and spirit along with my body, today's was my first yoga class in many, many months. I've yearned for a more regular experience of this opening, this integration. It's not lost on me what it took to clear my schedule, to make room.

Lisa, a true gift of a teacher, offered her potent words with a serene voice to call us present. She invited each of us to start with movement, focusing on the breath to lead the way into a body stiff with resistance. How little I tuned into this body over decades, or gave it a chance to move in new ways. The default allowed it merely to obey the racing mind, living days distracted from the awareness of how the body itself knows deeply, if allowed to speak.

Sitting on my mat on the floor, comfortably cross-legged, I waited, breathing. Lisa invited us to sit in "Seated Mountain Pose" portraying as a mountain does its stable, strong, unwavering essence: "acceptable to what comes, to what can grow on its surface or cannot, fully connected to the Earth." The pose requires simultaneous pushing into the floor while raising up out of the waist. In that union of opposites, the body releases space and energy, giving the breath more room to move through the ribs. Tears streamed down my face as I was directed to ground myself in a body that I had so recently learned to distrust, and until recently so took for granted. I had felt strong physically, never considering cancer was having its way with me. That feeling of being betrayed, deceived, lost, so fresh. But here, in a roomful of strangers, I could face the mountain, and I could *be* the mountain.

I found a spaciousness to be alive to, beyond cancer.

Move after move, the sequence started to become clear: intending and allowing, breathing into what is painful or stuck, adjusting position, accepting what opens and what doesn't. It was profound, literally and metaphorically. My body worked through a series of poses that resulted in deep ease, a lightness; a sense of what in me doesn't change. I found a spaciousness to be alive to, beyond cancer. In the final "Corpse Pose," a posture of letting go and relaxing that ends each class, again I cried, but this time at the words that came from within me: "Remember this." In the uncertain months ahead, remember the wisdom in this body. Find that still point within, waiting to speak.

With 500 locations from Little River to Georgetown to Florence, chances are we're in your neighborhood.

natural awakenings

Join 30,000 readers and pick up your copy today.

Visit our website to find the location nearest you.

GrandStrandHealthyLiving.com