



# **Yoga for Life: A Journey to Inner Peace and Freedom**

*By Colleen Saidman Yee*

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From a rebellious young woman with a dangerous heroin habit to a globe-trotting fashion model to “First Lady of Yoga” (*The New York Times*), Colleen Saidman Yee tells the remarkable story of how she found herself through the healing power of yoga—and then inspired others to do the same.

*I've learned how to extract the beauty of an ordinary day. I've learned that the best high exists in the joy—or the sadness—of the present moment. Yoga allows me to surf the ripples and sit with the mud, while catching glimpses of the clarity of my home at the bottom of the lake: my true self.*

The very first time Saidman Yee took a yoga class, she left feeling inexplicably different—something inside had shifted. She felt alive—so alive that yoga became the center of her life, helping her come to terms with her insecurities and find her true identity and voice. From learning to cope with a frightening seizure disorder to navigating marriages and divorces to becoming a mother, finding the right life partner, and grieving a beloved parent, Saidman Yee has been through it all—and has found that yoga holds the answers to life’s greatest challenges.

Approachable, sympathetic, funny, and candid, Saidman Yee shares personal anecdotes along with her compassionate insights and practical instructions for applying yoga to everyday issues and anxieties. Specific yoga sequences accompany each chapter and address everything from hormonal mood swings to detoxing, depression, stress, and increased confidence and energy. Step-by-step instructions and photographs demonstrate her signature flow of poses so you can follow them effortlessly.

*Yoga for Life* offers techniques to bring awareness to every part of your physical and spiritual being, allowing you to feel truly alive and to embody the peace of the present moment.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*"Colleen Saidman Yee is an extraordinary yoga teacher and human being. And the genuine item. Read this book and enjoy her incredible story—and the healing power of yoga!!"* (Christiane Northrup, M.D., ob/gyn physician and author of the New York Times bestsellers: Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom and The Wisdom of Menopause)

"There are so many maladies that keep the body and mind from working optimally. Colleen Saidman Yee tells us her story and how yoga has unraveled the knots that have been stored from different traumas and everyday life. The yoga solutions she offers are a first aid kit that we should be schooled in. This book is a must for your library of home health." (Mark Hyman, MD, Director, Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine and author of #1 New York Times bestseller, The Blood Sugar Solution 10 Day Detox Diet)

"Colleen Saidman Yee's life has been a wild ride that, thankfully, led her to yoga. Her story, her insights, and her yoga sequences will improve your emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing, and help you onto the path of peace and freedom."

(Frank Lipman, MD, author of REVIVE)

"Colleen touches my heart from the inside out. She inspires me as a woman, a mother, and a girlfriend, always coming from a place of love and kindness. Her teaching is that yoga is as simple as a breath. Reading her book is like having a woman-to-woman conversation with the Colleen I know and love -- an honest, nurturing, and encouraging friend who shares and cares with all her heart. It is a powerful wake up call to the spirit within, with real down-to-earth strategies to empower yourself through this beautiful journey called life." (Donna Karan, Founder and Chief Designer of Donna Karan New York + Urban Zen)

"In Yoga for Life are fantastic instructions and sequences for feeling and releasing the stories and games that bind us. Colleen's confessions and experiences teach a compassionate embrace of the shadow. They let you feel the frightening underbelly of who you think you are. I highly recommend her book to anyone wanting to be free." (Richard Freeman, author of Mirror of Yoga)

"Courageous. Compelling. A yoga book you can't put down! Saidman Yee writes with ease and honesty and by example invites us to look at, embrace and embody our own complex life's circumstances in light of yoga and in context of others. I highly recommend Yoga for Life--a wonderful book for our times." (Mary Taylor author of What are You Hungry For? Women Food and Spirituality)

"Colleen Saidman Yee has written a beautiful book with generosity and loving candor. Colleen's wisdom and compassionate teachings in these pages are genuinely empowering; she gently leads you to the mat and guides you to breath through suffering and into grace." (Zhena Muzyka, founder of Zhena's Gypsy Teas and author of Life by the Cup)

"Like Gandhi, Colleen is *stayagraha*—meaning possessed by the truth. She tells her story honestly, without pretense, no makeup—totally fearless while at the same time gracefully imbuing every word with infectious joy, gratitude, and compassion. You will find no blaming or complaining in this memoir for this is the story of a remarkable woman who approaches life as an adventure, armed with a bewitching ability to transform obstacles into opportunities and the ordinary into something magical. She is living proof that yoga is for

life." (Sharon Gannon, Jivamukti Yoga)

"Colleen is a strong, empowering woman who I look to for sisterhood and wisdom. She has used every crazy twist and turn of her own life to find her spiritual center, and now she teaches us how to do the same. In *Yoga for Life*, her unfiltered honesty will break you open and give you courage to find personal freedom as you reevaluate your own stories. Colleen's funny, moving and compassionate approach helps women set down their shame and pick up their voices. Her work has helped me to find more joy and contentment through asana, honest self-reflection, and loving kindness. This book is a treasure." (Kris Carr, New York Times best selling author)

#### About the Author

Colleen Saidman Yee is an internationally respected yoga teacher who has been teaching since 1999. For twenty years before that, she was a top fashion model working around the globe, represented by Elite and Ford Models. Colleen opened her first studio, Yoga Shanti, in Sag Harbor, New York, and she and her husband, Rodney Yee, have studios in New York City and Westhampton Beach, New York. With Donna Karan and Rodney, Colleen created and runs the Urban Zen Integrative Therapy Program, which is utilized in healthcare facilities around the country. Saidman Yee has been featured in *The New York Times*, *New York* magazine, *Vanity Fair*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*, among many others. Mother to a daughter and three step-children, Saidman Yee teaches retreats, workshops, and conferences around the world, but calls Sag Harbor her home.

Susan K. Reed is former Editor-in-Chief of *Golf for Women* magazine and a writer whose work has appeared in *Golf Digest*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Conde Nast Traveler* and other publications. She is the co-author of the book *Yoga for Life: A Journey to Inner Peace and Freedom* with Colleen Saidman Yee. An avid recreational golfer, Susan lives in Sag Harbor, New York.

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*Yoga for Life*

## INTRODUCTION: KNOW YOU'RE ENOUGH

I watch women's chests. I watch the arches of their feet. I watch the positions of their pelvises and the placement of their heads. I watch women holding it all together, afraid that if they slow down, everything will fall apart. I watch women being ashamed that they are aging and feeling unworthy of love. I watch women collapse.

I also watch women's perfection, courage, compassion, and grace. We women can balance our heads over our lifted chests, supported by strong legs that are connected to the earth. We can raise the arches of our feet and we can soften our faces. We can carry ourselves in the world with confidence and ease.

I've taught yoga to thousands of women (and men) for close to two decades. Women are powerful and beautiful, and we are also in pain—physical, emotional, and psychological—stemming from past or present trauma. We're fearful about what the future may or may not bring, personally or professionally. Women in my classes cope with addiction, body and relationship issues, mother issues, competitiveness, and an inability to tell the truth. All of these things create stagnation and tension in the body. Yoga gives us tools to overcome the obstacles that exist between us and freedom, joy, and gratitude. I see why women come to yoga; they want to reclaim something in themselves. It's inspiring to watch women gain a different perspective and fall in love with their bodies.

I was a professional model for three decades and very confused about my value beyond my looks. I've experienced triumphs in life, but plenty of traumas, too. I've always been searching for something beyond what I can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. I've had glimpses of this mystery through prayer, intense exercise, and drugs. Yet it is yoga that takes me back to myself and has made me realize that the magic that I've spent my lifetime searching for is right here inside of me. All I have to do is stop running from it.

My yoga journey started in 1987 when a friend convinced me to go with her to a yoga class in New York City. When I walked out, I felt different than I'd ever felt in my life. As I stepped into the street and its lights, colors, and smells—all seemed different, so crisp and so clear. Something significant had shifted, and something opened up inside of me. I felt alive in a whole new way.

I love this definition of yoga from one of my first teachers, Sharon Gannon: "Yoga is the state where nothing is missing." When was the last time we felt nothing was missing? Maybe in utero.

The term *satya* means "truthfulness" in Sanskrit. So many of us are lying to ourselves; we're putting an identity out there that we want other people to see, and we're hiding, from ourselves and from others, who we truly are. In truthfulness as in yoga, nothing is missing. We are present, whole.

Even after all my years of practice and study, I can't claim to know what enlightenment is, or if yoga will take me there. But I do know that yoga lowers stress, improves posture, circulation, and digestion, while keeping joints fluid and muscles toned. It may also be the best antiaging regimen we have, and it can bring us to our ideal weight. Yoga eases everyday pains and frustrations and increases kindness and compassion. It hones the body and stabilizes the mind. Yoga can illuminate our spirits and free us from the shackles of our stories, which often limit our vision of who we are and what we are capable of achieving.

When you navigate the inner landscapes of your body through breath work, mindfulness, and postures, you notice if what you have just said, done, or thought makes you feel lousy or good. One day several years ago, my four-year-old nephew, Johnny, was talking to my oldest brother, Mark. Johnny said, "Uncle Mark, I really love everyone!" Mark replied: "Really, Johnny? I don't love everyone. In fact, I even have enemies." Johnny shook his head and said, "That's too bad, Uncle Mark. You must feel so bad inside." This awareness is the first step toward right thought, right word, right action, and maybe even peace. It could be that simple.

One night, my husband, Rodney, and I were surfing YouTube videos when we stumbled on a video of a Fiona Apple concert. It was an "aha!" moment for me. I thought: This woman is telling the truth with her body. She's not what you would typically call a good dancer, she was jerky and unconcerned about looking pretty, but something about her was raw and real. She was moving with her wounds, with her limitations—she was moving truthfully. She wasn't hiding, and she wasn't afraid to be vulnerable and expose herself through her voice and movements.

Her courage and honesty made her dance mesmerizing and powerful. It penetrated something deep inside me. When you bow to someone and say, "Namaste," it means, "The deepest part of me acknowledges the deepest part of you." Fiona Apple's performance was a Namaste from her body to mine. I want to have the courage to be as honest in my life, my teaching, and in this book as she was in that dance.

Yoga can bring you to this kind of truth by helping you to observe, then to let go of, the habits you cling to and the stories you use to protect yourself. As you practice, you become intimate with your body, which many of us spend a lifetime either alienated from or waging war with. Yoga practice can pierce emotional places that most of us guard or avoid. Our bodies are intelligent, more a source of direct truth than our minds, but we rarely listen to the wisdom that's buried in our beautiful chambers.

I became a yoga teacher because I have experienced the real change yoga can create. With yoga, I'm at home in my skin. Yoga has helped me to become more honest. It has helped me discover my body, and through it, my voice.

In the modern yoga world, yogis were often put into little boxes and expected to be celibate, or cult members, or tree-hugging, granola-eating hippies. I'm here to tell you that today a yogi can be anyone, even an Irish Italian girl from the heartland of Indiana.

Yoga has given me a larger family, my yoga community, a congregation of people willing to work to find the connectivity that's sometimes hidden. It brings to the surface what we need to feel and know. The late B. K. S. Iyengar, perhaps the most influential yoga teacher of our age, said that you can only be as intimate with others as you are with yourself. Alone and in community, we use yoga to get to our essence. Yoga peels away layer after layer of debris to uncover what has been there all along. It's like the Bob Dylan lyric: "How long, babe, will you search for what's not lost?"

This is the story of one woman's life, my life, in and out of yoga. It isn't always pretty, but it's as honest as I can be, and as memory allows. I've tried to extract from my journey some of the painful and exuberant lessons I've learned, and I've embodied each of them in a unique yoga sequence. For dealing with suffering, the sequences are intended to be soothing and nurturing; for dealing with growth and other life passages, the sequences are intended to be celebratory and to lead you to your own insights. The sequences I've designed address issues of alienation, addiction, and insecurity as well as finding one's voice and participating in the endless potential of acceptance and love.

The goal of a yoga sequence is to create a physical effect, an emotional effect, and a spiritual effect. The key is to investigate and listen to your body, to increase intimacy with it in order to understand cause and effect. What sequence of poses, breath work, and meditation creates greater peace? (Not just peace in our joints, but peace in our guts, our hearts, our nervous systems, and our lives.) We're all "sequencing" every day. If you need to drop the kids off at school and go to the bank, the post office, and the grocery store, you figure out an optimal order in which to complete those tasks. When it comes to the body, the same lessons apply. Yoga is skill in action; part of that skill is learning the right sequence, on and off the mat.

A beautiful yoga playground awaits you in these pages, and, I hope, the sequences I've created will reveal the blue sky that's waiting inside you.

Today, I'm fifty-five years old and happily married. I don't do drugs, and I'm a vegetarian. Instead of chasing synthetic highs, I've learned how to extract a high from the beauty of an ordinary day. I've learned that the best high exists in the joy or the sadness or the mundaneness of the present moment, unfiltered. Yoga allows me to surf the ripples and sit with the mud, all while catching glimpses of the clarity at the bottom of the lake: my true Self.

I hope this book will help you do the same. Namaste.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Ana Steadman:

A lot of people always spent their very own free time to vacation or go to the outside with them household or their friend. Did you know? Many a lot of people spent these people free time just watching TV, or maybe

playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity honestly, that is look different you can read any book. It is really fun for you personally. If you enjoy the book that you read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a reserve. The book *Yoga for Life: A Journey to Inner Peace and Freedom* it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of individuals who recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy often the e-book. You can more effortlessly to read this book from your smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book offers high quality.

**Jacqueline Campbell:**

*Yoga for Life: A Journey to Inner Peace and Freedom* can be one of your basic books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in words, easy to understand, bit entertaining but still delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to get every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing *Yoga for Life: A Journey to Inner Peace and Freedom* but doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource info that maybe you can be one among it. This great information may drawn you into new stage of crucial contemplating.

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