

# Garth Hewitt on Shiva Yoga



Garth Hewitt, a 500hr E-RYT, Teacher Trainer, Yoga Therapist, Certified Yogaworks Teacher and Certified DharmaYoga Teacher was in Dubai as part of the X yoga festival.

His signature Shiva Vinyasa and Shiva Power classes focus on setting intentions, practicing gratitude, concentration, surrender, balance, non-attachment, and quieting the mind. Viki Shah finds out more.

## HOW DID YOGA HAPPEN?

I was introduced to yoga by a voice teacher when I was studying voice and movement and working as an actor in Toronto, Canada. I was playing a lot of sports and weightlifting and this teacher recommended that I do something to stretch out and keep my body flexible. I went to my first yoga class not knowing anything about yoga. It was an incredible experience. I remember that it was much more challenging than I thought it was going to be. An older woman practicing next to me pressed right up into a headstand. I was amazed! I also got a lot more out of the class than just exercise. I remember at the end of the class, just sitting in stillness, and it was the first time I think my mind had ever been quiet. It

was really incredible. That's what made me want to go back. The feeling of peace and the feeling of being connected to the present moment in a way I hadn't really experienced up to that point in my life — except on maybe a few occasions. I wanted to have that experience again and I wanted to figure out how that was happening. It was so incredible.

## WHAT IS SHIVA YOGA® AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE?

Shiva Yoga® is the brand, or modern style of yoga that I founded. I had studied with several Master teachers in different systems of traditional yoga and I wanted to create a modern style of yoga that combines all of the traditional systems of practice that I learned from my teachers

and brings them together under one roof. Shiva Yoga® emphasizes finding balance, quieting the mind, and moving into stillness, in order to experience a deeper connection to the Self and the Ultimate Reality.

## HOW DOES IT HELP TO BOND WITH OUR SELF?

My goal with Shiva Yoga® was to create a training program and style of yoga that meets students where they are and helps take them on a journey. I want my students to understand that yoga is more than just physical exercise. Yoga is wonderful for the body, but its true power lies in what it can do for the mind. I want my students to have both the knowledge and the practical tools that

they can use to experience a deeper relationship with themselves. When you change your relationship with your self it changes your relationship to everything and everyone around you. Shiva Yoga® definitely emphasizes the bigger picture of the practice. Yoga has changed my life in so many ways. It's so much more than just an exercise program for me. I want to help my students to have the same transformation I have been fortunate enough to have from my practice of Yoga and learn the teachings I learned from my teachers.

Asana practice is a big part of Shiva Yoga®. It is a great starting point and it can be a preparation for deeper seated meditation practices, or it can also be the deeper meditation practice itself. It all depends on how you are practicing and if you understand the Yoga technology. This is what is so unique about Yoga. You can be on your mat doing Yoga or you can be on your mat just doing Yoga Exercise. They might appear the same but are actually completely different. If you are just doing Yoga exercise you actually miss most of the benefits of the practice that you could be getting from Yoga.

If we understand the Yoga technology behind the practice, we can apply it to Asana, Pranayama, Meditation and even to how we are interacting with others as we move through the world off the mat. So, how do you practice Yoga and not just Yoga exercise? Patanjali would say that yoga practice consists of three things:

1. *Concentration which leads to intensity.*
2. *Staying in the intensity or discomfort, staying present, and observing the mind and the distractions of the mind.*
3. *Letting go of these distractions. These three things sound simple -- but they are so hard to put into practice.*

The mind is very good at distracting us when we try to concentrate. The conquering hero in Yoga is Virabhadra. The Warrior pose is called Virabhadrasana. The enemy Virabhadra conquers is -- the mind. The Yogis say that winning this internal battle between you and your mind is harder than any other battle you will ever fight in your life. Concentrate, stay present, and let go -- over and over again. This is Yoga practice.



#### HOW DOES ONE MAKE SENSE OF THINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT TIMES WHEN THERE ARE A NUMBER OF YOGA PRACTICES ALL AROUND? HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?

There is an old saying that there are many practices because different teachers taught different students' different things at different times which were necessary for those students to reach the goal of Yoga. Yoga is good for all ages and for all body types. There are several traditional practices of Yoga which allow all different kinds of people to experience the benefits of the practice. Some students will gravitate towards one type of practice and others to another type of practice. It doesn't matter. Each practice is like a different 'spoke' on the wheel of the bicycle. They all lead to the same place and meet at the centre of the wheel.

Every teacher is putting out a signal and vibrating at a certain frequency. You are also vibrating at a certain frequency. We are all vibration. Same attracts same. You will be drawn to the teacher who is right for you at this time in your life. They may not even be the most enlightened teacher but that's

okay. Sometimes you will be drawn to a teacher who is only a little farther down the road than you and that's okay because they will understand what you need to do to get where you need to go and you will probably connect very well with them. If you continue to practice and become more aware and become more open to receive more knowledge and more truth -- you might be drawn to a different teacher who is offering more knowledge and more truth. In this way we all progress together, helping each other along. There is no right or wrong path and not every path will be right for every person. I wouldn't have been ready for my current teacher when I first started practicing yoga. I wasn't ready for so much knowledge and so much truth. Try a bunch of different styles and teachers and find who is right for you and then stick with them and learn as much as you can. It's best not to jump around too much once you find your teacher because this just becomes another distraction and will not help you with your progress. If you learn everything you can from your teacher and you still want more knowledge -- then look for another teacher who can help you with the next stage of your journey. »

yoga matters

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#### **HOW CAN YOGA THERAPY HELP US? WHAT KIND OF CONDITIONS CAN BE TREATED WITH YOGA THERAPY?**

I completed Yoga Therapy Rx training with Dr. Larry Payne at LMU in Los Angeles. Yoga therapy is an excellent modality which makes use of yoga practices to help treat specific injuries, diseases, and age-related degenerative conditions. Many problems we experience are due to imbalance and imbalance is often not recognized due to lack of awareness. Yoga helps us increase our awareness and Yoga therapy can give us specific tools to help bring us back into balance. The body really does the healing. We just have to create the conditions that allow the body to do its work and not get in our own way.

Yoga therapy is especially wonderful at treating musculo-skeletal problems, injuries to muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints, and especially repetitive stress related injuries, like injuries sustained from doing the same movement over and over again, or sitting long hours at a desk for work, also different spine conditions, like herniated discs and spinal stenosis.

Yoga practices in general are going to encourage balance and help prevent a lot of things but if you have a specific condition you will want to have a program designed for you that addresses that condition and not only helps you ease symptoms but identifies the underlying root cause of the problem. Some modalities that only focus on the symptoms look at the problem and only 'cut down the weeds' instead of pulling them out at the 'roots'. You might feel some temporary relief, but the pain and discomfort will only come back. Yoga therapy looks at the whole picture and tries to determine the cause of what happened and 'pull the weeds out at the roots'.

#### **ARE RETREATS AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR YOGA PRACTICE?**

Yes. Absolutely. I have now led 11 International yoga retreats. We've been on retreat to Costa Rica, Greece, the Galapagos Islands, Bali, Maui and at several locations in California. I'm looking at leading a retreat to Thailand and India next. The yoga retreat experience is the closest way for students to experience something similar to a teacher training without doing one of the Shiva Yoga® teacher training programs. The retreats are scheduled similarly to the training programs. Each day begins with a deep practice in the morning with lots of philosophy discussion. Breathing practices, pranayama and meditation is in the afternoons and evenings. I will usually teach two themed workshops on each retreat to help the students deepen their practice further. This is combined with being away in a beautiful and peaceful location, surrounded by like-minded people, and eating very healthy and





nutritious food the perfect conditions for some powerful healing and transformation. Most retreats also involve a little adventure and exploring the area with retreat centers usually offering different excursions. These retreats have become a wonderful way for my students to deepen their practice and for us all to explore the world together. Most students who do a retreat tell me that it affected them for several months after they came home. It's a chance to recharge and reconnect. It's so easy to get out of balance in our modern world. This is similar feedback we receive about the teacher training programs. The program will change your life. My 200hr and 500hr Shiva Yoga® programs are designed for students who want to deepen their practice as well as for those who want to become teachers. You could do these programs just to deepen your practice. You don't have to become a yoga teacher. Witnessing the transformation in my students who have come on retreat or done a teacher training program with me is one of the greatest things about being a yoga teacher. It's incredible!

#### **WHAT WOULD BE YOUR WELLNESS TIPS FOR READERS IN DUBAI?**

Practice yoga. Eat a healthy diet. Try to eat more plants and plant-based foods. Avoid processed foods. Don't eat too much. Practice gratitude. It's such a simple way to shift your perspective. Be kind and compassionate to others. And enjoy this incredible gift of life that we have been given. ❄️

*Images supplied.*

Visit <http://www.garthhewittyoga.com/> to know more.

