



# Glenn Ceresoli

**Senior yoga teacher, Glenn Ceresoli, talks about how yoga can connect you to the core of who you are and how to remain anchored in that knowledge in day-to-day life.**

by **Alix Johnson**

Yoga teachers know that it takes years of dedication and hard work to establish a successful school. Why, then, would anyone walk away at the very moment that their class numbers are swelling, and they are receiving requests from abroad to guest teach?

That is precisely what Iyengar yoga teacher, Glenn Ceresoli, did when he left The Action School of Yoga in Fitzroy, Melbourne in 1997 and moved north to the blink-and-you'll-miss-it town of Uki, near Mount Warning in northern New South Wales. Yet, in spite of dire warnings that he would drop off the yoga radar, the move only helped inform his teaching style and amplify his reputation as a senior teacher of yoga in Australia and abroad.

Glenn Ceresoli began yoga reluctantly, agreeing to attend his first class only to appease his then-girlfriend. At the time, 19

year-old Glenn was more intent on pumping weights at the gym where he worked, racing his motorcycle around the streets of Melbourne and playing rock-n-roll on his beloved guitar. But in that first passive, gentle, hatha yoga class he attended at the Integral School of Yoga, something happened. He felt an inner awakening and he knew he couldn't ignore it. As he says, "Yoga swept me off my feet."

In the early 1980s he apprenticed with Shandor Remete and gained his qualifications as an Iyengar instructor. Shandor moved to Adelaide and left the school to Glenn. He then relocated the Action School of Yoga to Fitzroy. There he and his wife, Margaret, who is also an Iyengar yoga teacher, together expressed their life's interest in yoga while bringing up two boys.

Glenn teaches in the Iyengar tradition – on several occasions he has travelled to Pune to study with BKS Iyengar and the Iyengar

family. He is a Senior Intermediate Iyengar Yoga teacher, and volunteers his time and experience on the Teachers' Assessment Committee on behalf of the Australian Iyengar Yoga Association. His teaching style is unique; he upholds and aspires to high standards in his teaching and refuses to be a clone-type teacher. His teaching has evolved according to the twists and turns of his own life, especially in response to the trying obstacles that have ultimately taught him about inner composure and contentment in the face of adversities.

This ability to teach from his life experience and to relate the practice of asana to a broader practice of yoga off the mat – to life – is what makes him a highly regarded and sought-after teacher.

## Living from the Heart

This is an edited extract, from the book *Yoga: The Essence of Life* after further discussion with Glenn Ceresoli and the author Alix Johnson.

The core of yoga is to transcend identifying with your habitual conditions, preferences and repulsions. Instead of contemplating whether or not one likes doing a pose, be anchored in why one is doing it and use that intention as a yardstick to measure the purity of one's actions and behaviour.

It was my central motivation to be balanced in my life. In order to be that, I had to address an inner conflict between family duty and career ambition. Similarly, on the mat, in order to be well adjusted physically and not to suffer from knee and back problems, I had to address my natural tendency to dislike some poses and prefer others. Yoga shows one's tendencies and requires one to stop identifying with them and to be anchored in one's intent instead.

Even though the practice of yoga is a spiritual path, it is always possible to have false ideas and perceptions about yourself, and your motivations, about what you do and why you are doing it. I recognised this within myself. It became important to me to strip back external motivations to find the source of why I do what I do and consequently how I do it.

This is why I left a thriving school and moved my family to northern New South Wales. I believe that I have now reached a point where I am very aware of the intention behind everything I do. It allows my actions and behaviour to be less tainted by likes or dislikes; it has given me an anchor. Having found my bearings, I can go back into the world and act from stability, my own centre, which gives me a greater sense of orientation. The outer world doesn't sway me from my intent. I suffer less the dictates of the ego identity and express myself more from the deeper realm within – from the heart.

It has been a long journey that started with the physical plane. Through its challenges, the process deepened to the mental plane, which led me to the centre of being, the heart. Unlike the mind, the heart doesn't act with the expectation of a particular outcome. It depends only upon the experience of its own expression: unconditional love.

It is clear to me how obsessed our culture is with the doing factor. I had a lot of energy, enthusiasm and ambition to achieve; I was always very good at doing. But when I was only doing something, I had a heavy expectation on what the outcome of my great effort would be. One could call that effort an expense. The greater the expense, the more one expects a return. If, however, one acts from the being aspect, one acts because it is an expression of the heart, the deeper Self; then the experience becomes payment enough. Our obsession with the doing has become so great that we no longer have the impetus to even consider being. Then, to compensate for the lack of contentment in our doing, we try to do more and acquire more, but we keep looking outside of ourselves and contentment eludes us. There's rarely reflection upon the inner world: what is my experience of life as I'm doing this action? As I interact with the world, am I getting lost in it or do I still have some sense of my conscious self? What am I being in this instant?

**When I teach I hope that people will find that aspect of Self that will guide them through anything – whether that path appears right, wrong or indifferent to the outer world. Sometimes one has to deviate from the rules and regulations of the world in order to follow one's heart.**

To honestly know what motivates one's every action requires an orientation of consciousness; this is where yoga practices become the compass that always points north (the Inner Self). Should I wish to travel east, west or south, I know my bearings and I don't get lost; I always have an inner reference point to guide me. We are divine beings having an earthly experience, and we have been so lured and seduced by the sensory world that we have forgotten we are spiritual beings? and thereby forgetting who we truly are.

Our society is not like that of yesteryear, where the yogis used to withdraw into caves and isolate themselves from the demands and influence of the mundane world. Those yogis achieved great heights and states of consciousness, but they didn't learn the practicality of how to deal with the world – they'd learned how to deal without the world.

In today's world it's more appropriate for us to be able to do both: to be equally aware inwardly and outwardly. Our task is not to hide from the outer world, but rather to withdraw into a reflective inner state for a portion of each day during the yoga practice until it is firmly established. Circumstances in the outer world will always challenge our ability to remain present and express the Inner Self.

In my life and experience of practising yoga, it was contemplation upon the severest setback that ultimately allowed for the greatest revelations and understanding. When something appears to be a major obstacle, it often turns out to be a blessing that leads to greater understanding of who we are. From greater understanding comes greater strength and confidence to continue being and expressing the Inner Self through our actions and behaviour. All

too often we are tempted to compromise in fear of the difficulties. Life no longer means making right or wrong actions, but simply complying with the consciousness from the heart. By transcending the mind's habitual conditions we can live from the heart.

As a result of everything that has happened in my life with the practice of yoga, my teaching has changed drastically from just doing yoga out of pleasure to why yoga is practised. How yoga is practised is informed by why you are practising it.

Teaching yoga means being as clear an instrument as possible so that what comes through is the yoga and not our own personal conditions. I try to minimise any negative aspects of my personality from intruding upon the teaching of yoga by reinforcing my intent. I am just the speaker box; yoga is the stereo that plays God's music.



What are we aware of while we are in the process of doing our asana practice? What do we learn about ourselves whilst we are attempting the poses? Yoga is to be practised for the process we go through, and that experience cultivates our awareness, our consciousness. If we are not satisfied or fulfilled by the process, we look for some form of outer reward or gratification to justify our efforts.

We may think we are doing this pose to stretch our hamstrings, but our whole being is undergoing a transformation. If we don't acknowledge the process, only gaining flexibility will satisfy us. In the event that we don't get flexibility, we will be disappointed and remain forever attached to being flexible. When we're engaged in the process and the experience of our actions, a contentment arises which allows us to be more detached from whatever results may or may not come on the physical level. This helps to bypass the mind's need to have a sensual payback for our output of effort. We become less attached to the outer outcome and more established with the inner process.

The primary theme of my teaching is to present the essential elements of yoga as I have come to understand them. Developing an attitude and an approach that will free the student from his habitual conditions and enable him to reach the core of his being is the intent and responsibility of every sincere teacher. I teach from the intention of unwrapping the package to reveal what is inside.

When I teach I hope that people will find that aspect of Self that will guide them through anything – whether that path appears right, wrong or indifferent to the outer world. Sometimes one has to deviate from the rules and regulations of the world in order to follow one's heart. Know the rules well. Know your morals and your ethics well. Understand them. Live your life by them. But when your heart requires you to go against a rule or regulation, you must follow it because that is a prompting much deeper than rules of the material kind. This is not an invitation to be a rebel without a cause, but rather to be a sincere person with conviction in what you believe.

Teaching yoga means being as clear an instrument as possible so that what comes through is the yoga and not our own personal conditions. I try to minimise any negative aspects of my personality from intruding upon the teaching of yoga by

reinforcing my intent. I am just the speaker box; yoga is the stereo that plays God's music.

Being a yoga teacher also means living for inspiration. Just as a musician lives to allow the music to come through him, a yogi lives for the discovery of finding a new chord or a new expression of movement of energy that brings one to life and sustains enthusiasm and inspiration to do one's optimum best.

Hatha yoga is union with God, or whatever name one feels comfortable with: cosmic force, higher intelligence, or simply, without trumpet fanfares, unconditional love. There are so many words to describe something that words will always be inadequate to describe. If one's intention is to make a connection with God or the inner Self, then that's what one will gain from yoga. That is its ultimate purpose and essence. Yoga is a pathway to the ultimate. It re-orientates one's perception from the outer world to the inner world. It is like a street directory that can show where one is and how to get to where one has to go. In the beginning I was attracted to yoga for its physical challenge, and later for its mental challenge. After I had pursued the practice for some time, it took me from that shallow intention to something much deeper and never imagined. The practice of yoga takes one as deep as one is prepared to go and ? without one knowing it ? a little bit further. That's what the practice of yoga offers; that is its job, that is its purpose.

I can't imagine where I'd be without yoga, what I may have grown up to be. I may have achieved high standards in whatever field I chose, because my nature is to strive and challenge myself. Whether it would have given me the same contentment, the same depth of understanding and fulfillment, I very much doubt. I can say that I am happy. I often ask myself that question. "Am I happy?" I'm not talking about being ecstatically or giggly happy, or happy because of what I have achieved in the world. I'm talking about a feeling of inner contentment in spite of the outer world's unpredictability. Because of yoga I can say, yes I am happy. I am eternally grateful for what I experience in life.

Alix Johnson is a Sydney-based journalist, who writes for major newspapers and national magazines, and is a graduate of the Yoga Arts Teacher Training Certificate IV. The Essence of Life published by Allen & Unwin [www.allenandunwin.com](http://www.allenandunwin.com)