



Wabi Sabi Well creators Briann Boal and Caitlin Nowland explore how yoga helps us find balance, on and off the mat.

IN A CULTURE that's preoccupied with physical appearances, we're taught to see our bodies as a separate entity - hunks of meat to be manipulated, controlled, coaxed and whittled to a prescribed shape and size. The focus is on how we look rather than how we feel. So we learn to forfeit the connection to our body in the pursuit of an outward, superficial goal.

Disconnecting comes naturally to us because we are biologically wired to move away from pain of both the physical and emotional variety. So when we're in pain, confronted, or even mildly uncomfortable, we concoct exit strategies that take us further away from our bodies. The type of escape varies for each of us - overeating, over sleeping, losing ourselves in online wanderings and virtual realities, numbing out with addictions or compulsive behaviours, and the list goes on.

Habitual disconnection is a slippery slope that leads to a fractured sense of self. We forfeit our sense of wholeness, making it easier to further trash, abuse or mistreat our estranged bodies. In this state of dissociation, our inclinations inevitably lean toward more harmful habits such as eating disorders, self-harm, addictions, and toxic relationships.

However, we can interrupt the evolutionary reflex to dissociate when the going gets tough by retraining ourselves to learn how to be comfortable with feeling uncomfortable. We don't have to suppress feelings or sensations, but we also don't have to identify with them. The magic middle ground is equanimity, or as meditation teacher Shinzen Young puts it, "the balanced state of non-interference". By accepting, but not identifying or interfering with feelings and sensations, we suffer less through unpleasant experiences and derive deeper fulfilment from pleasurable experiences. Through equanimity, we are able to live in a state of deep awareness and non-attachment, which are the keys to embodiment.

Maintaining a state of embodied equanimity has a positive effect on all aspects of life. Young explains that, "when feelings are experienced with equanimity, they assure their proper function as motivators and directors of behaviour as opposed to driving and distorting behaviour". In other words, we eat, sleep, move and act consciously, in harmony with our natural rhythms. We tend not to over eat or under eat, or under or over exercise for that matter. We become less reactive

and less inclined to outbursts. Our relationship with ourselves and others flourish. We make choices in line with our highest good.

A practice of embodied equanimity on the mat allows us to cultivate the tools we need to maintain equanimity off the mat. By creating challenging physical conditions and then noticing the inner dialogue we learn to stay (rather than leave or resist) and listen (without judgement or attachment). Try this: come into Warrior II and hold for 1-2 minutes. As the physical intensity builds, watch what happens with an attitude of friendly curiosity. Consent to the sensations, acknowledge and accept them, then let them pass.

Off the mat, pay attention to emotions. Feel it all, let it move through you without trying to stop the tears, escape the sensations or suppress the sorrows. Sense as the feeling naturally spreads thin and dissipates. On the flip side, when you're experiencing pleasure - a sweet savasana, a favourite food or stunning sunset vista - take a swan dive into presence. Notice how much more fulfilled you feel just by giving yourself permission to enjoy without denying, fixating or grasping.

Embodied equanimity is the art of staying. And it's an art that's worth devoting yourself to. Give yourself radical permission to feel and you'll experience less resistance and reactivity on and off the mat.



Briann Boal and Caitlin Nowland are co-creators of Wabi-Sabi Well, a holistic wellness method that covers a host of mind and body bases. The Wabi-Sabi Well method is a comprehensive formula fusing metabolism-boosting movement, mindfulness, bioenergetic techniques and deep relaxation. The method integrates not just the physical, but also the emotional and spiritual elements to help you reconnect and return to a healthy state of balance, harmony and wellbeing. It's the antidote to perfection-seeking, bikini boot camps and will leave you feeling liberated, motivated, and wildly free. Workouts, guided meditations and more available on www.wabisabiwell.com