

## **Pause and Possibility, Exploring the Space Between.**

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There's a time in every Alaskan summer when sunny days yield to a period of rainy gray before emerging again to illuminate fall. Some years I welcome this period with relief and as permission to take leave of frenetic activity associated with long days of sun. This year's rainy gray was, a longer "pause" than usual and deferred the return of blue skies for days. Observing my discomfort in this period and resulting inertia, I looked to yoga to explore the seemingly never-ending grayness in another way.

As described in the yoga sutras, yoga is the resolution of conflicts of consciousness that present as fluctuations and dualities in our experience. (It's too sunny/It's too rainy.) The concept of "space between" is fundamental to stilling the consciousness and is an element in each of the 8 yogic limbs. Spaciousness of mind and heart allow contemplation and commitment to the vows and practices of Yama and Niyama. In Asana we practice actions that provide space for muscles and joints to expand in movement. Many of the specific breathing practices of Pranayama use a "pause" to segment and lengthen the cycle of engaging the life force. Pratyahara (Sensory Withdrawal), Dharana (Concentration) and Dhyana (Meditation) are the practices that specifically pause the stream of senses and thought then lengthen the space between thoughts. It is in this space that the possibility of Samadhi (Absorption and Integration) presents. Each of these practices initially guides our attention into the pause versus what came before or what will come after it.

My initial response to gray skies is everything but contentment: resistance, longing for sun, depression, irritation and inertia. Each of us has yoga practice days with the same presentation: resistant muscles, lack of attention and motivation, or an overly busy mind during meditation. Such days, like the weather, ask us to find contentment with what is at any given moment. So, I've been asking. Could possibilities present in the gray period between summer's peak and autumn's glory? Is there space for observation and introspection provided by slower, perhaps more deliberate actions? Can I consider inertia as necessary rest? Will introspection and recharge enhance both the shape of poses and the shape of life in the coming months? Perhaps. And therein lies the possibility that comfortably being in "the space between" provides. Resting in the pause moves us from focus on what comes next to contentedly experiencing the present moment (and weather condition) and the possibilities presented within the space itself. Namaste.

*Be still my longing.  
Abide now, in spaciousness.  
Discover anew.*

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