

My 30 Day Yoga Challenge...complete, finito, sayonara, buh-bye.

As I shared with you in the last Coach's Corner I decided to try a little different version of my usual Summer Feast. I accepted the 30 Day Challenge from Open Space Yoga in Ladner to commit to yoga 6 times/week, meditation 7 times/week and cardio 3 times/week for 30 days. It is important for you to note that I did not forgo my usual summer feast of chips and beer on the patio or yummy barbeques with friends but simply added to it with this challenge. I feel the need to stress this point as whenever I tell people about the crazy schedule of yoga and fitness they undoubtedly look me over and seem somewhat underwhelmed by my appearance. No, I have not miraculously shrunk to a size two. That would require putting down the blue cheese burger and Shiraz. However, I can tell you when I run up our stairs I don't feel like my Auntie Trudy's jello mold is wrapped around my midsection anymore. But I'm getting ahead of myself, first let me share a few of my favourite moments during the challenge before revealing the **shocking** results.

- First day of meditation: *Why didn't I do this in the morning like everyone said to? It's 8pm and I haven't started dinner. OK, let's just get this done, I need a quiet place...the only spot in the house is behind my office door. I set my phone alarm for 15 minutes, settle in with a foam cushion and put my mid finger and thumb together and rest them gently on my knees. Why do I feel so weird like this? I put palms down and feel more relaxed. Time for my mind to go blank. 60 seconds in and I hear my husband coming down the hall and am convinced he'll crank open the door on my head. As quickly as possible I grab a sticky and scrawl "Do NOT Disturb- Meditation in Progress" and slap outside door. It works! He quietly walks by and goes into the kitchen...I hope he starts dinner...STOP thinking! I inhale deeply and feel my breath slowly exhale, I do this again. I visualize the thoughts in my mind spilling out the top of my head. This is working, I'm feeling so calm. Until, "...SHAKE IT LIKE A POLAROID PICTURE..." My husband has Outkast blaring from the stereo. Seriously?!! Is this even "allowed" during meditation? This better still count. I try to drown it out with my powerful meditative state and then "beep, beep, beep" the alarm goes off. I promise myself I'll do this in the morning tomorrow.*
- For cardio I'm going to Muscle Memory in Tsawwassen 3 times/week. I can't believe how much I love being told what to do (too easy friends...let it go ☺). I have been a "gym girl" for 20+ years (doing the same routines, waiting for equipment, dealing with the big boys hogging the free weights, etc) and being able to just show up and have one of the trainers lead me through a great workout for an hour is perfect. Although there was that one class after my debauchorous weekend at the Gorge with Kings of Leon. Really, seriously, no lie I thought I was going to barf on my treadmill. I think the only thing that stopped me was the thought of my adorable 25yr old trainer leaning over me saying "ma'am...maybe you should try the Fit at Fifty class."
- So, **obviously** with my Yoga classes I needed some new workout clothes. Duh! I indulged in a little shopping spree at Lululemon (again...duh!) and somehow felt more inspired to bend and pose. Although (why is there always an "although"?), during one of my first classes I was feeling like my pants were pulling up a little high in the front and upset that I'd worn them so couldn't return. When I got home I realized that I had indeed been wearing them backwards with the deep yoke dipping down my backside. I'm sure my Downward Dog was a real treat for whoever was behind me.

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- The one place you are allowed to pass wind without judgement...Yoga. I did not do this...swear! But, I can tell you that many do and the rest of us live in fear that we will.
 - I'm not sure about the partner work we sometimes do in our yoga classes. I can tell you that the possibility of that happening is what has kept my sister FAR from yoga. I told her that I've only been in two classes that we are partnered up and asked to either massage or stretch our yoga-mate but she shudders at the thought. For one of these classes I was asked by Michael (OSY owner and Yogi-extraordinaire) to demonstrate the partner work that would be done. He is ridiculously lovely (and adored by everyone that goes to OSY...maybe even everyone everywhere) and obviously doesn't know about my somewhat debilitating stage fright. OK, I may be exaggerating a touch but the sweating and blotchy blushing that occurs is not pretty, and definitely not Zen. Thankfully after the demonstration was over I actually relaxed and truly enjoyed the experience. As I explained this to my sister I think she started to come around...until I told her we all held each others **feet**.

The Shocking Results

OK, I shamelessly tried to hook you as I am hooked every time I hear "The Most Shocking Rose Ceremony Ever". Don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about. I can tell you that I absolutely loved my 30 Day Challenge. Here's the results:

- My husband and son have said that I seem calmer and less stressed. Wow! That alone is worth price of admission I would say.
- I am definitely more flexible and my headaches and muscle aches have been reduced by about 90%.
- Balance did not get ANY better. What's with that? I think I must suffer from some inner ear disorder. I can't even do tree pose with my foot on my ankle.
- As previously mentioned, jello mold belly is a little firmer. Also, I don't feel the need to dress in the dark.
- Meditation was my biggest struggle and I feel my biggest failure. I just felt annoyed every time I had to close my office door and sit on my block. I think I felt like when I was at yoga I gave myself permission to shut off my brain and breath. I didn't need to do this too.
- This may fall into the category of **too much information** but I do feel it's worth my humiliation if I can help even one fellow "crampy, bloaty, backed up" girlfriend. **Regular** exercise and **regular** morning protein smoothies have made me...**regular**. There, I said it!

Will I continue? Hells Ya! For the Fall I have signed up for 3 classes/week at Muscle Memory and bought an unlimited yoga pass at Open Space Yoga. I will win the battle against stress and jello.