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★ Case Study: How I Came To Yoga

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I tried yoga years ago at school, but never really dedicated any time to it after I left, as it was more meditation, something I wouldn't have thought of as exercise at the time.

To lose the weight, I had tried running, aerobics videos, bike riding; the novelty always wore off and the weight piled on and on over the years from the usual bad eating habits, under-active thyroid and antidepressants, which seemed to affect me the worst out of the lot, piling on the pounds despite my diet staying the same.



However it was in 2002 at a weight of 13 stone (I'm 5'2), my heaviest, that I really needed to do something about it. I saw an advert on the TV for a yoga DVD that said you only had to do 10 minutes a day. I just thought, "even I can do that," and I remembered how I felt when we did the yoga meditations at school.

So I bought the DVD and started doing ten minutes at first, then thirty, until I could work up to the whole eighty minutes.

Within a week of doing just the ten minutes however, I had lost four pounds and I hadn't really changed my diet or anything, so thought it could only be the yoga, and that seemed a remarkable amount to lose in just a week - whatever it was, it spurred me on to continue the yoga.

From then I was hooked on doing it, sometimes even twice a day! I loved the way it made me feel, both physically and mentally.

Slowly I felt my tastes and attitude towards food were changing, and I only seemed to want or crave 'naughty' foods at the weekend and in smaller amounts; the rest of the time I just didn't want or need that kind of food.

After a year and half of doing yoga DVDs, classes and self-teaching, I was 6 stone lighter and feeling better than I ever had, and was eating healthier (although still had my weekend naughties!). My body looked and felt better than when I was 18.

I even started teaching it to my partner as he saw the obvious benefits it had given me, and was into it much more than I thought he would be, so both of us started practising together and studying yoga's history and philosophy.

All was going so well when I was suddenly struck out of the blue by the devastating news that my partner of nine years had committed suicide.

What can be said about this; there are no words to describe how this feels. Your mind cannot comprehend it in the slightest, that he didn't die naturally or by accident, but chose to.

I was so numb, and at first yoga, exercise or even eating was nowhere in my mind (except for trying to sit and empty my mind of the whirling bustle of emotions and thoughts that kept invading).



After what I believe was about a week, (although everything seemed to be going in slow motion), I felt a longing to do yoga, if only a little and the obvious need to eat. I suddenly felt this strange sense of strength in me that even to this day, I don't know where it came from or why, but things I previously felt unconfident in regards to, were no longer an issue.

Slowly, little by little, yoga crept back in and it helped. It helped calm the myriad questions and emotions I had swimming aimlessly in my head, calmed my breathing when anxious and tired from crying and I felt I still had to do it for him, so therefore there was a focus, a focus I so desperately needed at that time.

It took nearly three years to get through it; I wouldn't say get over it as I don't think you ever get over it, but you learn to live with and accept it and realize it was that person's choice, not mine. My life had to go on.

Hence to say there have been other situations since then that have tested me, as in everyone's life, and yoga has been there for me through them. Even if I wasn't able to concentrate fully on it, I could still do a little when I needed; I could study its philosophy, I could still learn.

That is what's so rich about yoga; there is always something new to learn, some inspiration from its teachings that you can implement everyday in life, not just on the mat.

And it was this that then led me on to wanting to teach others yoga, but I also wanted to counsel other people who had been through what I had.

A lot of the time I personally just wanted to talk to someone who knew how I felt and had been through it; I didn't know who to turn to a lot of the time, there didn't seem to be any group that I knew of solely for suicide 'victims' (or 'survivors' as I prefer).

I not only wanted to teach yoga but I wanted it to be more one to one, as at my heaviest I never wanted to go a class because I was too self-conscious and didn't know if I would be able to do it. Well of course I could've done it, anyone can, but I didn't know that before I started and a lot of people feel that way.

I wanted to combine the two things for both body and mind even though yoga already does this; I wanted to expand on that - yoga tailored to individual needs through yoga therapy and counselling for the times when you just want to talk and someone to listen or when you need help with certain issues.

So I studied Counselling, Psychotherapy and Yoga teaching/therapy and more, resulting in the umbrella title of Life and Fitness Coach.

Born out of this was Vernyoga Ltd and Sanctuary, my own website and business, entirely run by myself dedicated to yoga, fitness, counselling and alternative therapies to which I have had many positive responses and outcomes.

The wonderful satisfaction from seeing contented, calm, smiling faces at the end of my classes or sessions is something I feel blessed to be able to bring to people.

I hope that if my late partner were here now, he would be proud of me carrying on with something so wonderful and worthwhile.

Yoga really is the best gift you can give yourself for perfect health, body and mind.

