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Inventing Our Lives One Thought at a Time

By Sumya Anani

I fought the best female fighters in the world in a boxing ring. But the toughest battle I will ever have is the battle in my mind. My most vicious opponent is not "out there." The most vicious opponent I will ever have is behind my forehead.

Before I started yoga, I thought of reality as things I can see and touch. But through my study of yoga, I've learned that reality begins in my mind. The invisible realm (thoughts) creates the visible realm (matter). Thought always precedes matter.

The most difficult posture

The *Yoga Sutras* teach us that the most difficult posture is the posture of your mind. The mind is the creator. The mind's nature is to think. Yoga has taught me to make my practice of "just thinking" a very intentional practice. We must come to an awareness of what we're thinking. The thought level is the creative level.

Ask yourself these vital questions: What do I dwell upon? What are the thoughts that dominate my mental landscape?

All the masters teach us how to train and discipline our mind. Buddha taught meditation. He said, "We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we create our world."

One popular verse from the Bible informs us that "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." As ye sow in the mind (realm of heaven), so shall ye reap in the body (realm of earth). As above, so below.

If you plant thoughts of jealousy, you will be jealous. If you plant thoughts of kindness and love, you will be kind and loving. If you plant tulips, you won't get squash. You will reap what you sow. The most fertile soil in the world is the soil of your consciousness.

I'm grateful that yoga teaches me to pay attention to this inner world of thought. The New Year is a perfect time to set forth sowing new thoughts.

The science of yoga

I listened to an audiotape by Louise Hay. In it, she says that science has found that we have about 60,000 thoughts a day. Most of these thoughts, she says, are dwelling on the past: "Woe is me, what happened to me, what they did to me, I'm a victim." If we're not living in the past, we're worrying about the future.

We become scientists on the yoga mat. We watch, observe, and study the movement in our mind.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna that trying to control the mind is like trying to capture the wind. It's difficult to restrain, difficult to achieve. But it's not impossible. It can be achieved through the twin practices of *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (detachment.)

You can create your own reality

The more I study yoga, the more amazed I am at this practice and how it teaches me about myself, where my mind is dwelling, and how I'm creating my reality one thought at a time.

Yoga taught me that I have responsibility to envision and create my future, no matter what happened in the past. The past is gone, it's an illusion. What patterns are you creating now through your daily diet of thinking? What kind of thoughts are you cultivating in the soil of your mind?

A good healthy thought is like a good guest in your home. You want guests to have a good time and come back. But you want to entertain the right guests. If people come over and trash your house, break dishes, and insult you and your family, you're not going to invite them back. What are the thoughts you regularly entertain? We should guard our mind like we guard our things because thoughts are things. We must train ourselves not to invite unhealthy thoughts into our mind to wreak havoc.

Yoga continues to teach me to consciously choose thoughts of blessing, gratitude, generosity, love, tolerance, and abundance.



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The art of yoga

Atha yoga anushasanam , which means "Now, the study and practice of yoga begins." The message of the *Yoga Sutras* is "Choose again." Now, this moment, you can choose again.

Each of us is an artist when we step onto the yoga mat. Artists create. What do you want to create in your life? Create everything that you want in your life, for the highest good of all concerned, through the awesome power of your mind. Create abundance. Create health in your body. Create joy. Create generosity.

Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." We must train ourselves to think about what we want. This is the power of meditation. We give our mind the seeds of thought that we want to sow in our reality.

Once we become aware of these thoughts that dominate our life, we have power to undo those thoughts that don't serve us anymore. What we think about, we become. Through the practice of yoga and clearly setting our intention (*sankalpa*), we become who we want to be. It's our choice who we become.

Yoga begs the questions: What great destiny do I want to fulfill? Who am I? Why am I here? Or, as one of my teachers, David Lipschutz, asks, What am I trying to accomplish?

Invent yourself

You are an inventor, after all. We're inventing our life one thought at a time. Everyone has been given the gift of imagination. We all have unlimited potential to be, do, and create whatever we want.

Who do you want to be? What great thing do you want to accomplish? How do you want to serve the world? Everyone has a personal ministry. It's through a mindful yoga practice, paying attention to your thoughts, that you can lay claim to your unique life. Keep the mind on this present moment. In this moment, you have the power to invent yourself.

What are you passionate about? What excites you? This is how you will find where your gifts, talents and contributions wait. Your personal ministry is waiting to be discovered.

Yoga is calling all of us to find our service to humanity and the fulfillment of our destiny.

Yoga gives us the opportunity to explore our potential and stretch beyond our self-perceived limitations. Our limitations help us discover our full potential.

We move from contracted states of fear to expanded states of full expression of our gifts and talents. Yoga teaches us to stretch, to expand into who we're meant to be.

The poet Mary Oliver said, "What are you going to do with this one wild and precious thing called life?"

Yoga is an invitation to invent yourself. This is the beautiful and sacred practice of yoga. This is the promise of yoga. Happy New Year and happy new you.

Welcome to the path of a spiritual warrior. This is my path, and this is your path too. Namaste.

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Sumya Anani is a 4x World Champion boxer, 500-hour registered yoga teacher through Yoga Alliance, and personal trainer. She leads "Path of a Spiritual Warrior" yoga retreats to Jamaica, Guatemala, and Colorado and is available for yoga workshops at yoga studios or martial arts dojos. For more information, visit sumya.com.