

## Rob Hastings

Rob and I meet at Macy's to drink coffee and talk. Somewhere near the end of our time together, all the power in the coffeehouse dies, with a slow whirrrr, and with that, heads turn, conversations hush, eyes raise, fans slow, and employees start milling about. Rob turns toward the front counter, raises one fist, and gives a little cheer. I laugh.

Rob has been telling me that 2009 has been a challenging year, where a lot of different beliefs have been on the line. I ask what sort of beliefs. He explains: the kind of beliefs we find ourselves with, that we never remember choosing. "I think we define who we are at a very young age, and then we hang onto that for the rest of our lives, and never really evaluate it." He says for whatever reason, he grew up with low self esteem. He even struggled with suicide at times. Yoga provides him a place not only to learn about beliefs, but to evaluate his beliefs.

"I think of church and going there and being real passive.... but I think of yoga (as) a very active form of church. Especially the way they teach at TYE. That's why I go there... It's a way to key in to the things going on in my head, and to figure out if they're serving me. And maybe, try to change them."

And, this year he has changed some of them; he's had some important breakthroughs in class. When I ask him to describe those breakthroughs, he starts off by saying it's always been hard for him to attempt a difficult pose for the first time, and so, he started questioning why that was the case.

"When I was a kid, we used to jump off of buildings and jump off of trees, stuff we'd never done before, and there was no fear of performance. It was just for the fun of it. So I started to realize that I could probably try poses, just to see if I could do it, see what it feels like... Like play," he says.

Learning to have this attitude in class has allowed him to move beyond what he had believed were limits. For example, because he's a cyclist, he's been regularly told he has tight hips. He says at one point, though, he simply stopped approaching certain hip poses with this limitation in mind. Then he says, "Lately, I've been finding myself in pigeon, with my chest on my leg, on the floor, having to turn my face to the side."

Rob continually emphasizes that it's not just practicing yoga that's so meaningful to him, and that's led to such breakthroughs; it's practicing here, at The Yoga Experience. And in particular, it's the teachers here.

Although this is probably true for several reasons, I think one of those is because Rob is such a student of himself, and so, our teachers encouragement to do look inward is very welcomed by him. He tells me:

“I’ve spent the majority of my life trying to make my life better... be more happy, be more free. And I think I’ve yet to find anything else that helps me to achieve that like this does.” He says finally, “it’s like school for life.”

And, the teachers: teachers of life.

So this gets me thinking, what does one learn at school for life? Well, each pupil has a curriculum that is at once individual and also, universal. But for Rob, it looks something like this: he looks back toward his childhood and finds secrets to his adulthood. He lets go of certain beliefs, and nurtures others. He tries to, “be more happy.”

Each time I get to meet and talk with one of the yogis from the studio, I leave inspired. Though the inspiration holds true with Rob, I also feel something bittersweet afterward. By the time this newsletter goes out, and by the time we ring in 2010 in our humble-but-bright Flagstaff fashion, he’ll be moved in to his new home in sunny Tucson, beginning a new chapter in life. He’ll be sitting in new classrooms (both yoga, and graduate school alike). He’ll be heading into new light and new darkness; to learn and also, to play.