

Abby Spotskey

When I sit down to join Abby, she's just finishing a final, neat bite of what looks to have been a colorful dish of many different tastes. She smiles her warm smile. Her long strawberry-blonde braid hangs down her back. She just went to a yoga class, and has that calm glow about her. I open a package of dark chocolate, and hand her a small, square piece. She sips on the rest of her tea and we start talking about all the big and small things of life, and yoga.

About ten years ago, Abby was working for the forest service, and was experiencing sharp shooting pains through her legs. For a while she just ignored it, thinking it was normal: unfortunate effects of the job. It turned out it was severe sciatica. She went to a chiropractor, and over time, the series of adjustments worked. By now, she was "highly motivated to not be in pain." So, when her chiropractor told her, "yoga is the best self chiropractic," she showed up to The Yoga Experience not too long after. Her back pain has been gone for about ten years now. So, that's it: end of story? More like: beginning of story.

When I ask Abby how yoga has affected her life, she smiles and lets out a deep breath, holding her mug gently, with two hands. Then she says: "It just fulfilled a need I didn't even know needed to be filled." What is that need? Much of how Abby describes it, it seems to be in the details. And, it sort of makes sense: right now, she and her husband own a map-making business, and before that, she worked as a chemist. Notably, both fields are extremely detail-driven. So when Abby says for her, yoga, "is about energy at the smallest level possible," it makes sense. For her, the bigger picture has come by investing in the smaller. Just as the details of a map build together to form an entire landscape, the details in poses, like straightening a leg, hugging in your knee, steadying your breath: these, too, can create something greater. Now, she says her practice of yoga, "matters on a cellular level." The need yoga has filled has transcended to such small places that before, she didn't even know they existed.

Throughout the hour Abby and I sit, she repeatedly mentions her "enormous gratitude" for the teachers at TYE, and all of the different gifts and similar "intuitive nature" which they offer. "They all have that ability to do that mind reading thing," she says, and then laughs, "which is probably part of the reason I'm addicted, I'm sure." It strikes me that one of what the best things the teachers give to us *is* their attention: a precise concentration they give to us, and then, teach us to give ourselves.

If some of the changes Abby's experienced exist at the microscopic level, there are other changes more visible to a wider lens. People tell her she

looks amazing, and seems “different.” She believes she’s become more joyful. She feels more centered. She rarely gets sick anymore. It’s created a calm core within her that allows her to do things like row the Colorado river, and remain strong and steady, one rapid at a time. But it seems like the deepest things came first. It may have been invisible when it started, and she may not have known it was happening. But it seems the changes (beauty, health, joy, an outrageously good backbend repertoire) are the visible branches and leaves of what is really her ultimate focus in yoga: and that is, her roots.