

Chris Thornley

It's a Monday afternoon before Alvaro's class. We're at a coffee shop, and the rain drips down the windowpanes outside while we talk. Chris tells me he's a little tired today. I ask why. He says, "Well, I went on a long run yesterday." Long, as in, 40 miles. In the Grand Canyon.

Chris has been running a long time. And, he's been running a long ways for a long time; marathons and ultra marathons since high school. Right now he's training for two "ultras": 62 miles and 100 miles. But during the week, yoga practice actually comes before running.

Chris has been "hooked" ever since 2006, and he says now, "I have to do yoga, in order to make a living." He owns Agassiz Tree Cutting Company in Flagstaff. Yoga provides him a way to meet the physical demands of his job. He even buys all his employees memberships to the studio. But it's more than the physical that brings Chris back to class; it's the connection he has with the instructors, and the mind-body connection that their words provoke. It's the inner strength that's brought about practicing intention with action, and in this light, some of the instructors have affected his life in a potent way. "Especially Alvaro," he says.

Chris explains that there aren't too many occasions in life where someone consistently pushes you so hard. "You're not going to skate in one of Alvaro's classes. He'll make you try 100%, because you showed up, and that's what he expects." Chris points out that this level of challenge isn't always comfortable, but it's valuable. Although I agree, I find myself asking, but why?

Why do we humans like pushing ourselves so hard? Why do we set out to run 100 miles, through moonlight, into the sunrise? (As Alvaro often asks,) why do we show up to his 2-hour classes, knowing it could be difficult to the degree of being irritating? Chris explains where the connection lies for him, the big Why: "Because when it's time to focus on something in your life, it's the yoga that gives you that. Whether it's a quick, short moment, or not. It's there." You're ready for it. It's like you've been practicing.

He thinks about this for a second and then adds with a smile, "I'm going to get worked tonight."