

INTERCHAPTER TWO: HABITS OF YOGA MINDS AND WRITING BODIES



Your practice is your laboratory

—B. K. S. Iyengar

Yoga helps my writing more than anything else I've ever done.
—Student

In the contemplative tradition of yoga, it is customary for yogis to set *sankalpas*, or intentions. Intentions are reminders that yoga is just as often practiced off the mat as on it; that daily living is as in need of mindful purpose as *asana*, or posture practice, is. Intentions have always been a key part of my yoga practice and have more recently become just as important to my writing process.

Lately, I've been working with the intention of noticing without jumping to judgment—of simply being present and aware of the moment. I set this intention because in the last few months, I've been rushing through my practice and have ended my time on the mat with vague feelings of frustration. Putting my intention to work, I was able to see what's causing this habit: my struggles with forward folds. Just as I folded over my legs during sun salutations, I felt frustration bubble up and the urge to move quickly into the next pose. Staying with this feeling, I came into contact with self-judgment for not being as flexible as I'd wish to be. Knowing why I am disappointed won't necessarily stop this feeling, but that's not the point.

Now when the automatic lick of disappointment arises, I follow through with my intention to allow these feelings to surface. But rather than ruminating on what I can't do just yet, I purposely refocus on the sensations of my body, so that I maintain full presence in that moment of my practice. To learn from it. Can I notice the space in my back body? Is my weight in my heels? Am I lengthening my spine before I fold forward? Am I linking my outbreaths to my downward movement?

This intention-driven learning will eventually lead me to the flexibility I desire because it will increase understanding and acceptance of my present reality. And while respecting my current limits, it will also encourage me to set goals for

what I wish to work toward. These are lessons I transfer to my writing. I apply this present-centered attention to my writing process so that when I encounter stuck spots of writer's block, I rush toward awareness instead of ruminative judgment, which can discourage me from writing my way through these spots or understanding why a restful break may be necessary.

As with all contemplative traditions, contemplative education forwards the intention of awareness. Contemplative writing pedagogies are built on mindfulness in much the same way my yoga practice is. That is, they teach writers how to develop a practice of mindfulness and how to pay attention. These are skills all learning requires but few of us teach explicitly in our writing classes. We assume students know how to be aware, but that they often choose not to be. Attention is a switch that some aren't willing to flip. This refusal leads to shoddy drafts written in one sitting the night before a paper is due. I've found that this understanding of attention isn't quite right; my students often don't know how to sustain attention over the extended periods of time they may need to write and revise a paper or read and reflect upon a lengthy academic text. This is why they wait until the last minute, which brings at least a focusing urgency if not the attentive awareness of a carefully-carved reflective space. The multitasking methods of students' everyday lives have them toggling between Facebook, the latest writing assignment, their cellphone (vibrating to alert them to a new text message), the television on behind them and the Pop-Tart® in front of them—all at the same time. The continual practice of splitting attention creates a habit they understandably find hard to break. So while my students complain about the consequences of such split focus for their writing and learning, they tend not to know *how* to choose another method or *what* other methods exist. Indeed, they feel they have no choice at all.

Even when students do limit distractions enough to classify themselves as “paying attention,” they tend to approach this process statically, as psychologist Ellen Langer notes in *A Mindful Education*. Langer reports that when high school students are asked what it means when a teacher tells them to “pay attention,” either to “(a) keep your eyes steady on it or (b) think about it in new ways,” almost all students think the instruction means to “keep the stimulus constant” (1993, p. 48). No wonder students find this hard to do; it's the complete opposite of multitasking, which requires moving, albeit erratic, engagement. What's more, when most writing teachers ask students to pay attention, I'd wager we're after more than simply having students keep an idea still and fixed in their minds. When I invite my students to “pay attention” in class, for example, I want an active engagement that questions and creates paths for insight and creativity. It is this latter, more fluid and flexible form of attention that

contemplative writing pedagogies teach students. In contrast to paying attention as a means of fixing something in your mind, these pedagogies ask students to develop a practice of noticing: thinking actively about an idea or concept and seeing it from multiple perspectives without automatically rushing to judgment. Contemplative pedagogies do this by linking awareness to context and to the body, which interacts dynamically with the world.

When writers learn contemplative practices like yoga and meditation, they develop a felt understanding of awareness that changes the *intention* of paying attention and teaches them that attention is a choice under their control. For instance, when students attend to their breath during *pranayama*, or the practice of breath control, they develop a moving awareness that follows their inbreaths and outbreaths; they do the same when they learn to link inbreaths and outbreaths with *asanas*, or postures. In my application of contemplative pedagogy to the writing classroom, I ask students to integrate the mindful practices of yoga *within* their writing processes, seeing them as continuous with the typed or written words-on-a-page they inscribe. Not only does this teach students that mindfulness is developed by bridging body and brain, cultivated empirically and situated in their own flesh, but it also develops their conscious awareness of meaning as material, of writing as physical. Mindfulness is a kind of full body training, then, that helps writers develop flexible attention to thoughts, ideas and themselves as dynamically situated in material environments. In other words, contemplative writing pedagogies explicitly teach students *how* to pay attention. And, when students exhibit increasing flexibility of attention through mindfulness, breaking from automatic response and moving toward embodied, reflective awareness, they have earned their contemplative moniker, “writing yogis,” discussed in Chapter One.

A flexible mind isn’t only valued by contemplative educators; it has also been deemed one of the necessary eight “habits of mind” integral for college writing success by the recently-released Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. This report represents a joint effort of both secondary and postsecondary educators to examine what skills, attitudes, behaviors and experiences all students need in order to assume a level of “college readiness” (2011, p. 1) prior to their pursuit of higher education and to determine what they’ll need in order to exhibit learning excellence once enrolled in college writing programs. In short, this document marks a guiding intention for our field. As writing instructors, we should intend to develop students’ habits of the following: curiosity; openness; engagement; creativity; persistence; responsibility; flexibility; and metacognition. As with contemplative practices, these habits of mind are practical and help students make choices about their learning and literacy.

In addition to knowing rhetorical skills and how to apply them, the Framework establishes these skills as necessary for encouraging students to take an active role in their educations and for fostering the kinds of critical-creative thinking that will help them excel not only as writers but also as college-level learners and literate citizens. Habits of mind are tools for developing awareness. By prioritizing habits over discrete skills, even if these have a place too, this document argues against formulaic or rigidly standardized writing curricula; the habits are necessarily learned through activities and assignments that engage students in writing for real-world audiences with genuine and not solely assessment-related goals in mind. While rhetorical skills are necessary, the authoring agencies of the report suggest that they cannot be successfully developed and deployed by students who are not simultaneously encouraged to cultivate certain methods of approaching the learning and writing processes. In these ways, we might see the Framework as underscoring the importance of developed writerly awareness, or of approaching writing mindfully. Ways of thinking about writing become just as important as the means of actually doing writing.

When I first read the Framework, I was struck by the congruity between the goals outlined in it and the reflective remarks my students made in their writing blogs about what they learned by integrating yoga within their writing processes and how they embraced mindfulness as a writing intention, concept and tool. Looking at both what writing teachers say we want—at least as represented within this recent document—and what my students say they have learned in the reflective writings recorded on their blogs, I would like to outline in the following pages how contemplative pedagogies can help sustain and foster the habits set forth in the Framework, goals we as a field have established as intentions for our instructional practice. By looking to the situated knowledge students produce within their blogs, I will argue that contemplative pedagogies provide us a novel and useful means of enacting these intentions with mindfulness and give our students means and methods of attending to their somatic development as writers.

The advantages of putting a well-researched, field document that represents the collective wisdom of composition studies in dialogue with my own and my students' experience of using yoga to rethink the writing process are many, but the one I have been most interested in within these pages is how new pedagogies can help us reach the goals of post-secondary writing instruction while encouraging us to examine the means we use to accomplish the educational ends we say we desire. I want to suggest that not only does a contemplative approach to the writing process help students develop the habits forwarded by the Framework, but also that it uses means that develop them as habits of mind *and* body,

penetrating students' lives at a deeper level and offering them a foundation to approach their educations contemplatively and their writing mindfully. These two words are never used directly in the Framework, but they still penetrate its implicit call for an education that cultivates inner awareness and teaches students to live more attentively in the world, which they can do to a greater degree when they are in the habit of seeing themselves holistically as body-heart-minds.

As I've earlier explored, feminist contemplative pedagogy is a thoughtful, embodied pedagogy responsible to our flesh and maintained by theories and practices that honor the intelligence of the body. Contemplative pedagogy recognizes the link between awareness and self-reflection and values how the body and mind must work together to synchronize acts of knowledge creation. Feminism adds a richer understanding of the stakes of respecting organic bodies as sources of intelligence; it refuses the split between body and mind complicit in so many of our pedagogies and traces this split back to fundamental structures embedded within Western patriarchy. It's been my intention throughout this project to show how feminism adds a valuable dynamic to contemplative pedagogy by making contemplative practitioners aware of how transformative a heuristic and practice of mindfulness is for the writing classroom.

Mindfulness, as both a heuristic for contemplative pedagogy and a body-minded habit achieved through consistent involvement in contemplative practice, can be seen as a frame for the eight habits of mind listed in the Framework. Consequently, development of these habits results from engaging students in the feminist contemplative writing pedagogy I've been utilizing, one that incorporates yoga within the process of writing. Other contemplative exercises may be used to cultivate a similar transformational mindfulness, as I noted in my introduction. And, certainly as Rick Repetti argues, "[a]most any classroom exercise may be transformed into a contemplative one simply ... by slowing down the activity long enough to behold—to facilitate deep attention to and intimate familiarity with—the object of study, whether it is a slide, textual passage, equation, claim, or argument" (2010, p. 14). While there are just as many ways of enacting contemplative pedagogy as any other pedagogical approach, the use of yoga to engage students contemplatively has been my focus in this project.

While I could go into great detail about how each of these eight habits of mind are developed and strengthened by bringing yoga into the writing classroom, I'd like to focus on three that I believe to be especially illustrative: openness, persistence, and metacognition. The Framework defines *openness* as a "willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world," or a responsiveness to differing and alternate perspectives, using these to inform our own; *persistence* as "the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects,"

or the ability to follow-through with tasks by applying focus and developing attentiveness; and *metacognition* as “the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes and systems used to structure knowledge,” or the ability to examine the writing process and how it structures knowledge and the contextual merits of personal and/or substantiated evidence (2011, p. 5). As defined, these three habits can be understood to largely encapsulate the others. Many would agree that anyone open to the learning process would have to maintain a strong sense of curiosity and eagerness to explore new and unfamiliar ideas, for instance. I will use these three representative habits to examine students’ responses to contemplative pedagogy and the ways yoga can support a writing process that strives for mindfulness and, therein, rhetorical awareness. As students use yoga to navigate their writing processes, they generate habits of mind that both ensure their present-moment success (since they are approaching it purposefully) and enable them to transfer these habits to other endeavors as their whole beings become engaged in learning.

HABITS OF THINKING AND BEING: OPENNESS

At the beginning of every semester, I revisit worries about the risks I take as a young faculty member engaging in pedagogy that attempts to teach writing in novel ways, ways some may deem strange because of their unfamiliarity. But the professoriate worries me much less than the student body. The bulk of my fear stems from the risks I take in the classroom, in front of students who I always imagine to be less interested in alternative ways of knowing than they turn out to be. Rather than allow these fears to mindlessly rule my teaching choices, however, I pursue them with the same mindfulness I advance in my application of contemplative pedagogy and practice as a yogi. These fears teach me that the value of taking risks as a teacher is that I might model for students what a contemplative process of learning looks like. They also remind me of what Ellen Langer claims is key to a mindful education, the “process of stepping back from both perceived problems and perceived solutions to view situations as novel” (1997, p. 110). Through Langer, I recognize that my understanding of appropriate pedagogical action in my writing class is shaped by what was modeled to me as a student and by the accounts of successful teaching I studied as part of my graduate education. Both the lore and the theory I inherited. But when I see each class as a novel way to explore what writing feels like to me as a writer and where my own mindful explorations of the creative process have led me, I allow openness to dictate my teaching and not only tradition.

Similarly, perhaps the most obvious benefit to an integrated practice of yoga and writing in the classroom is how it establishes a learning atmosphere of openness to various ways of thinking and being in the world at large, beyond that with which students may feel the most comfortable, because it is habituated and known. My self-coined “yoga for writers” practices—or other contemplative practices for that matter—are not standard fare in first-year writing classes at my university. Introducing my writing students to yoga is so different, in fact, that my first challenge lies in helping them piece it into the larger learning puzzle that college presents. While students enrolled in my courses are encouraged to open up the ways they think about writing and practice it, none of their friends or roommates are going through the same experiences in their composition classes, marking my classes and my students.

Despite the challenges that novelty brings, I have continued to use these practices and have taken even more steps to more fully integrate yoga and writing in my classes—utilizing a practice of *pranayama* to start our sessions as I outline in the next interchapter, for instance. I have not simply charged onward as a pedagogue committed to contemplative writing who has found an integrated approach to yoga and writing theoretically-fulfilling: yoga has indeed become a means of literally embodying the writing process and teaching students to think of themselves more holistically than is typically encouraged in secularized school settings. This thrills me as a contemplative practitioner and a feminist teacher. Yet, as much as I love theory, my classrooms recursively inform the theoretical side of my pedagogy just as much as the reverse is true. I’ve continued to mark myself and my classes in these ways because I have found this integrated approach so meaningful to students that they practice yoga everywhere they write, even in between the library stacks—close to the cubbies in the library at which they type their drafts on laptops—defying normative social codes and risking embarrassment for the sake of a better writing process. I’ve simply never had students take so many learning risks nor reap so much understanding about the writing process before. If my students are willing to do yoga in the library, I am committed to keeping this pedagogical practice available to them.

My students’ appreciation of contemplative writing practice takes time, however; their openness to a new writing experience is limited by the immediate academic demands (“Will this get me an A?”) and social pressures they face (“Will this make me look stupid?”). Because I respect their concerns and want them to know I do, I pointedly tell students of our intentions from the very first day of class. I explain that I am interested in what changes when we think of the writing process as making both physical and mental demands on us and how we might construct a writing life¹⁵ that connects the writing process to our persons

as wholes and not just our need to fill pages for assignments. I talk to them about how yoga is being used in K-12 classes and teacher-training programs.¹⁶ I also discuss with them the ways mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)¹⁷ has proven to help students learn better and feel less stressed by the incredibly high demands of college life and academics. These are issues they relate to because they've been forewarned of these demands and begin to feel them from the moment they begin their college careers. Even so, I invite students to come talk to me about their reservations and/ or excitement and ask them to bring me questions or concerns immediately. While our practices are optional, I tell them I'm going to encourage them to try yoga, to take a risk with the hopes that it will pay off big for their growth as writers. By the end of the semester, most will have participated and will agree that it was a worthwhile risk. Taking risks is an essential element of developing an open-minded approach to learning.

Before we do yoga together, a process I narrate in my preface and conclusion, my students and I talk about it a lot and connect it to a larger discussion about writing as a physical process of creating meaning. This gives us a reason to investigate writing as a topic onto itself in our classroom, keeping us grounded in that even as we may explore additional themes within our units. Thinking about the writing process as physically-demanding is new for students, as I explore in my first interchapter. As I detail there, we work through what writing has meant to us, how we've approached the process, and how we've often ignored our physical writing habits. We begin to pay more attention to those. Do we listen to music when we write? Should we? What are the benefits of sitting up straight or writing in lounge chairs? What changes when writing at desk chairs or while lying on beds? How do our physical locations impact what we write about or how we write? These are all questions my students first grapple with as they learn to pay attention to their writing bodies.

Using their physical writing habits as a bridge, I explain to students that our yoga practice will be a common language for us to have conversations about the physicality of writing and the ways we create meaning through experience. Some students remain a bit apprehensive about using yoga to help develop their skills as writers, even if they are catching on to the idea of contemplative writing and beginning to think of themselves as writing yogi. Jimmy represented this common reaction of surprise in a blog post. Explaining that he discussed our planned but yet untested use of yoga for writing with friends, Jimmy notes that it is "a little unusual that we would do yoga in an English class, and everyone I told was like, 'Yoga in English? What?'" The incredulity represented here is usually a result of students' ignorance about contemplative practices and their general

uneasiness to do anything that seems “weird” or out of the ordinary. Important to his testimony is Jimmy’s record of sharing our upcoming yoga practice with friends outside the course. Because there isn’t much in the way of a contemplative educational community outside the bounds of our class at my university, Jimmy’s peers have no way of understanding our mission and only Jimmy, for whom the process is new and untested, can explain. For Jimmy, in particular, this was a major concern because he was an incredibly social male who often repeated his desire to pledge a fraternity on campus as soon as he was able. With difference sometimes seen as deviance, Jimmy was likely concerned that our practices would mark him in undesirable ways and provide him experiences to which his peers would not be able to easily relate.

The other reaction I most commonly receive is excitement, although not necessarily for the yoga practice itself. In many cases, my students are excited for a break from the standard, college class routine. The fact that we won’t be having a traditional class and will be doing something out of the ordinary is thrilling to students who hear and see classmates and teachers go through the same motions day after day. Sharing in this spirit, Jimmy’s classmate, Tori, remarks, “No matter what, at least we get a break from sitting in the classroom.” It’s the same thrill of change that motivates another student response: “My first day of class I was told that we were going to be doing yoga to help us with the writing process. ‘YOGA?!’ I thought. I guess so, why not try something new? After all, college is about new experiences and adventures.” Because this craving for something completely novel isn’t captured by our normal classroom activities, it can create new excitement for learning and passion for writing.

Aside from benign skepticism or interest in a new adventure, every semester there are a handful of students who have practiced yoga on their own and are committed to our integration of yoga and writing because of their appreciation of contemplative practice. These students, who often self-describe as athletes, often note how their bodies crave movement, even or especially when learning: “I always move my legs when writing. I have a hard time learning, listening to anything if I’m not moving. I learned to read while spinning in a circle. It just helps me,” says Gwen. This craving for movement characterized Gwen, for as long as I knew her, as she was always coming or going to an intermural practice on campus. Gwen even dabbled in yoga before entering in my class because prior athletic coaches encouraged the practice and cited its many benefits for athletes. I’ve found this last group of students to be the minority, even if they are also the fastest-growing segment in my classes. Every semester I see more students who’ve voluntarily practiced yoga, sometimes inside and often outside of the classroom, prior to their experiences in my course. These students help to

sway some of the more resistant simply by their positive presence and willingness to bring these two worlds together.

Despite initial apprehension, many students develop an embodied understanding of yoga after practicing it. For instance, Jimmy, who was reluctant at first because of fears of being criticized by friends, notes that after our first practice of yoga,

explaining [to inquiring friends] the reasons why we did yoga actually opened my eyes to the connection my professor was trying to make between the body, mind, and writing. Yoga required physical flexibility and strength Writing is somewhat the same way One can't get frustrated with how their first draft ends or how there are errors throughout the writing process.

Jimmy's comment mirrors research that learning new skills is best prompted by the adoption of a learning mindset geared toward openness and not closed, ruminative judgment. Openness can minimize the negative effect of stress, enhance feelings of calm and regulate negative emotions like frustration (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129; Holzel et al., 2011, pp. 542-544). Jimmy has a felt understanding of this link between yoga and writing after just one practice. His comments testify to what happens when writers practice mindfulness, which yoga forwards as attention that suspends immediate judgment: they remain calm in the face of "error" and become more open to progressive development. Openness also provides writers the mental and physical support Jimmy's classmate, the very active Gwen, details in her reflection: "[Yoga] does fit in with the rest of the classes so far. Yoga is about being in the moment, which is what you have to do when you write. If your body is loose but awake, your mind will be too Yoga can help us write because it helps us focus our mind and body on the task at hand and be open to actually doing it." Being open to the body's intelligence and recognizing its impact on their attentiveness are common themes among these student reactions.

Students like Jimmy and Gwen, when read closely, can point us to the ways a "yoga for writers" practice encourages writers to listen to their bodies and to see them as sources of learning and meaning. In other words, my students are beginning to recognize how their bodies are implicated in the processes of knowledge production; they are beginning to see meaning-making in terms of situated knowledge, as explained in Chapter Two, as their bodies are placed centrally in the process of knowing and implicated in their thinking about thinking. As writers start listening, they learn a practice of being open to themselves, of

approaching their intelligent bodies with wonder. In other words, students learn a process of self-monitoring, which can be used to better process new information. Mountain pose or *Tadasana* (see Figure 2), the first standing pose my yoga teacher, Holly, and I teach students as part of our first “yoga for writers” practice, facilitates the development of such self-monitoring. To practice this pose, students stand up straight with their shoulder blades pressed into the back and widened in order to sink them down and create space in the back-body.

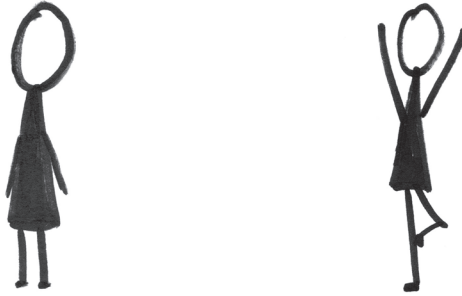


Figure 2. *Tadasana* and *Vrksasana*

This pose always amazes students because it is as simple as standing up straight, but in ways that make them aware of how engaging such an ordinary action can be when done with awareness of the body. When they concentrate on their bodies in this *asana* and begin to monitor their movements, students discover that they shift their weight between their feet and sway with the action of standing, something they’ve often not noticed before. When students subsequently learn tree pose, *Vrksasana* (see Figure 2), an advanced balancing posture that requires them to further direct to these subtle movements, Holly encourages them to accept sway as a constant in yoga practice, movement that must be met. I remind them that the same is true in writing, for without attention to movement, we cannot learn which side we favor, potentially impairing our balance if left unchecked. These corrective actions are less about dominance over the body, which could lead to injury, and more about working *with* the body, understanding it in order to make adjustments that entail a union of flesh and brain.

In their article on the advantages of adopting contemplative educational practices in traditional learning settings, Robert Roeser and Stephen Peck argue that practices like yoga cultivate conscious awareness of the self within an ethical-relational context because they engage students in these kinds of situated adjustments. That enhanced self-monitoring leads to students’ awareness of how both their bodies and brains are involved in processes of creating meaning is re-

flected in Ann's response: "Tree pose ... [is] my favorite. It's my favorite because for some reason I can balance pretty well in it and it represents balance in your life, which I'm working on ... personally ... and in my writing." And, as she practices tree pose and others like it, Ann's ability as a writer to stabilize new information in memory and develop subject matter knowledge while connecting this new information with prior learning improves because of the ways her brain changes during her practice of mindfulness through movement (Baime, 2011, p. 47). From developing her working memory to opening up her perceptions of writing, Ann changes her identity as a writer and the stakes she places on her process because she uses yoga to navigate the physical and mental demands of writing.

Ann's response also strikes a hopeful note. Her intention of balance testifies to the ways yoga helps develop not only students' openness to writing but also their receptivity to themselves. In other words, Ann is learning to exercise self-compassion. Compassion applied to the self and others is a goal shared by all mindfulness practices. In their article, Roeser and Peck note that the compassion taught through contemplative practice creates better students because contemplative learners "take a kind, non-judgmental, and understanding attitude toward [themselves] in instances of pain or difficulty rather than being self-critical" (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129). Essentially, mindfulness training "facilitates an emergence of a compassionate awareness and a change in the emphasis of the experienced sense of self" (Tirch, 2010, p. 119). Given that so many of my students describe the writing process as painful and that we often use dissonance to talk about learning, such an attitude is essential in our composition classrooms. As Ann balances in tree pose, she cultivates mindful awareness of how the body sways despite her best attempts to stay perfectly balanced. She learns that there is no such thing as perfect balance and that balancing is a matter of moving with the sway of her body and not staying rigidly still, which is impossible. This teaches her that stability isn't a fixed quality and that she must be plastic in her approach to strength.

As Ann does, all students can translate this plasticity to the writing process as a lesson in working with their bodies rather than overpowering them. From there, it is a short leap to also accept the fluctuations of the world and our environments in our writing habits so that incorporating "sway" as opposed to rigidly sticking to one idea to the utter exclusion of other points of view is not a sign of failure. The embodied lessons of balancing poses like *Tadasana* or *Vrksasana* serve as living metaphors for how yoga practice can serve writers, reminding my students to approach their and other bodies with openness, listening to all sides before hastily making a movement in their writing. The poses also serve an

immediate, material function for students, opening them to the intelligence of their writing bodies.

HABITS OF MIND AND BODY: PERSISTENCE AND SUSTAINED INTEREST

Persistence, as defined by the Framework, entails commitment and attention. It requires students to try on new ways of thinking about the writing process and new methods of managing their composing sessions and to follow through with these tasks over the course of the semester. The first lesson of persistence students learn when using yoga for their writing is that they must frequently practice both processes together for noticeable gains. After completing our first “yoga for writers” practice, blogs requesting their initial responses (some of which I share above) and subsequent class discussions, students begin using *asana* in their daily writing sessions. (See my appendix for a sample handout given to students outlining poses and connecting them to the writing process). We also start our practice of in-class *pranayama* and meditation, which I detail in my next interchapter. It is important that students practice this integration during class time and that they also approach themselves as writing yogis outside of class, for it is during these times that they execute a great deal of their composing.

Since I ask students to complete a weekly writing blog, wherein they document their process for our class (and, if they desire, for other classes as well), I also request students use this blog as a space to keep themselves accountable to incorporating yoga into their routines, before, during and after their writing sessions. Again, it is important that students see our yoga practices not as deviations from our class work but rather as connected. When students opt out of our yoga practice, I give them the option of using some other sustained physical practice like running or regular walking to take its place. Allowing students the autonomy of choice is a lesson in responsibility and also gives them nothing to react or rebel against, since our practice remains a suggestion rather than an inflexible requirement. Perhaps because of this flexibility, most of my students do choose to use yoga; I’ve only ever had a small handful of students who used another physical practice in place of it. And, even those students still typically joined in for our classroom-based yoga, even if they infrequently practiced on their own.

If most continue to practice yoga willingly, all typically rise to the challenge of thinking about the movement of their bodies as an integral part of the composing process. And they benefit. Zach is a student who stands out because of his motivation. A type “A” myself, I recognize this quality in my students almost instantly.

He was one of those students who brought all the course texts to class on the first day “just in case” he’d need them. Zach’s organization and question-asking secured his success in my class but was driven by his perfectionism, which caused him a great deal of undue stress. Zach was won over by our practice of yoga because he found great relief from writing frustration in his practice—and therein a greater commitment to the growth of his papers. He states, “When I’m stuck, I can stop to breathe or [to do a] pose instead of staring desperately at the computer screen. Through the break I can relax and write longer and better without the added frustration.” Zach is successful as a writer because he exchanges desperation over the long-term nature of the writing process with short-term productivity guaranteed by yoga “breaks.” These breaks, he claims, become a part of the writing process because they help him reengage his attention rather than disengaging it, so much so that he believes the break and his process are continuous: “In fact, it is not so much a ‘break’ as it is part of the physical writing process. I can honestly say yoga has helped me develop as a writer.” Part of the way yoga has “helped” Zach is by developing his persistence, entailing the kind of commitment to an ongoing writing task that my student here demonstrates. The sustenance Zach finds in his yoga-writing practice is well-supported: research completed at the University of Kentucky found that students who engaged in contemplative practices like meditation when taking a break from their studies showed enhanced brain functioning superior to those who napped, watched television or talked with friends (Grace, 2011, p. 113).

Commitment can also be attributed to student writers’ abilities to trust that persistence will pay off in the end. Contemplative acts build that trust as they increase the strength of executive control processes. Students who engage in them are more likely to appreciate delayed gratification (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129), such as the benefits of rewriting a paper many times, which may reap rewards including more confidence in writing abilities and a higher grade. These delayed rewards begin to seem more attractive rather than the instant gratification of procrastination. Research has shown that with continued focus on contemplative awareness this self-regulatory “capacity to inhibit the dominant response tendency is associated with both social-emotional (e.g., better stress management) and academic (e.g., higher SAT scores) benefits” (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129). Take Sasha, a gifted artist, as a case in point.

Sasha claims that while she always knew procrastination wasn’t what you were “supposed” to do, there was previously something practical about waiting for the surge of energy she got when writing a paper at the last minute; even if it was confused and disorganized, the paper would get done. Plus, procrastination provides more time for her to “do the other stuff [she] enjoy[s].” But developing

a corporeal orientation to the writing process with yoga shifts her understanding of the effectiveness of this method so that a paper “done well” begins to mean more than simply “done.” Instead of being quickly written the night before, she notes that a recent paper for our class “took many different writing and brainstorming sessions to complete as well as two conferences and peer review.” For this student, becoming a writing yogi means slowing down and listening to her writing body—an impulse opposite from her typical tendency to procrastinate, which places unreasonable demands on her body and mind. Overriding her habitual responses by listening to her body not only makes the writing process more enjoyable, less stressful and therefore more accessible on a day-to-day basis, but it also helps my student write more imaginatively and carefully, factors that will make her drafts more persuasive which could (and did) lead to earning higher grades.¹⁸ Extending the amount of time she works to draft her essays also increases her ability to entertain new ideas as her drafts grow and incorporate her peers’ ideas and challenges to her thinking brought on by conferences, as her remarks indicate. This impulse of mindfulness, of slowing down and paying attention, is characteristic of a pedagogy that fosters contemplative awareness.

My students not only exhibit newfound persistence when completing their writing projects, but they also demonstrate corresponding changes to their thinking about writing. Noting his personal goals in using yoga for writing, Kevin states in a blog that growing in his abilities as a writer is equally important to committing himself to the idea that such growth takes time. Slow persistence is a remarkable insight for this particular student, a highly motivated second-language learner who desired a native speaker’s fluency from the moment he entered my class as a first-semester international student. Yoga gives Kevin a new model for progressive growth:

All I need to do to get better at a particular pose or my flexibility in general is that I need to at least try my best. My pose will be the closest to the one that instructor demonstrated in my best ability. I think it is same in writing. There always will be better writers than me or anyone in the classroom. There will be the best example on particular writing style or the way to write well in general. I am not saying it is impossible for anyone to get that level, but it will be pretty darn difficult. However, if I try my best ... I can say that is a great achievement.

Kevin recognizes that persistent effort, trying his “best,” may not make his writing process perfect or help him flawlessly execute yoga poses but that perfection

need not always be the goal. Rather than encouraging students to be dismissive of their efforts, learning limits helps students set realistic goals that keep them motivated to write and learn.

When students like Kevin see writing in terms of yoga, they keep in mind how they must notice gradual improvement in writing as in *asanas* and that flexibility—of body and mind—is hard won and slow to develop. Such acceptance may be attributable to the ways that contemplative practices like yoga have been shown to help students develop “motivational mindsets” (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129) that give them both concepts and scripts to use when navigating their abilities and any setbacks to their goals. That is, because “contemplative practices require the mastery of challenging mental and physical skills (e.g. sitting silently and watching the in-coming and out-going breath or maintaining a particular physical pose) (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129). It follows that “engagement in these practices ... provides numerous ways of understanding oneself and one’s attempts to learn and be resilient during the process of learning” (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 129).

Native speaker, Abby, who shared Kevin’s introspective nature, certainly expands her self-understanding by engaging in yoga, and this appreciably benefits her writing. She states that with yoga, she is able better recognize when her body and mind need more time to grapple with difficult ideas. Abby notes that yoga teaches her to slow down since always pushing herself to her limits leaves her burned out and ready to quit:

When writing does not go well, I will stop and do some yoga to relax my body and mind, rather than forc[ing] myself to go forward. Not only does yoga make the body feel more focused, it relaxes the mind more than anything I’ve ever done outside of running [Yoga also promotes] self reflection which helps me put things in perspective and can yield clarity and bring the body and mind closer I feel that the most important thing that yoga shows us is that slowing things down and having alone time can really clear the mind and body.

If the Framework suggests that persistence is about learning to “follow through, over time, to complete tasks, processes, or projects” and “grapple with challenging ideas, texts, processes or projects” (2011, p. 5), both Kevin’s and Abby’s testimonies reiterate the ways healthy persistence can be supported by engaging students in contemplative writing processes. Yoga, in particular, teaches them that persistence is sustained by learning how to best keep the fires of energy

burning long and slow over a period of time. Indeed, their comments exhibit persistence with a contemplative edge of self-compassion. Putting things “into perspective” is both a means of treating oneself compassionately and of placing a writer’s perspective in the body.

Studies on the merits of contemplative education show that students who develop self-compassion are more likely to approach setbacks with a positive mindset and less likely to correlate academic failures with their sense of self-worth. Self-compassion is specifically linked to students’ understanding of moment-to-moment fluctuations in perception. And, monitoring of these fluctuations is taught by balancing poses, as detailed above. With my students in mind, we can see how yoga helps writers develop an increasing acuity becoming aware of habitual responses. Learning to redirect these automatic responses can play a key role in fostering informed and self-endorsed behavioral regulation, which has long been associated with well-being enhancement (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 823). Self-compassion inspires greater feelings of confidence and competence among student writers and an increased, intrinsic desire for growth and improvement. Students who exhibit self-compassion are more likely to focus on their learning and improvement as opposed to their performance in comparison to others—key for the transfer of learning.

In contemplative pedagogy, compassion is developed by tuning into the body, which strengthens the areas of the brain that stimulate caregiving behavior (Tirch, 2010, p. 118). “Being aware of my body helped during the writing process because when I felt tired and sore from working and writing, I knew to take a break,” says Sasha, echoing Zach’s earlier comments. Because Sasha spent a great deal of time drawing (her favorite pastime), she notes that she also used these moments of learned awareness to monitor her art sessions as well. Even though Zach’s worries stemmed from his ability to produce a successful paper and Sasha’s from concerns for her waning creativity and tired body, both students benefitted deeply from yoga. Breaks, instead of becoming a waste of time, become a necessary part *of* rather than deviation *from* the writing process when my students attend to their writing bodies. And breaks embody the compassion these writers are learning to feel for themselves. Neither recognition is trivial. Sasha continues, “[i]f I try and overpower my body and complete too much in one session, I end up with poorly written paper that looks like it was written in a hurry. I am also a lot less creative when my mind and body are tired and need a break.” With such attention comes a healthy dose of respect for how the body shapes the results of our writing sessions and our writing products themselves.

Mindfulness doesn’t just encourage focused attention on the experience of writing at any given moment; it also helps writers find peace within themselves

when they feel weary or worn out. Whether we practice mindful breathing as we move through yoga poses or as we sit quietly and solely focused on our breath, “[o]ur resentments, angers, regrets, desires, envies, frustrations, and feelings of superiority and inadequacy” fall away Of course they return, but the remembered experience of peace acts as proof that these obstacles are not insurmountable; they can be detached and disposed of (Iyengar, 2005, p. 97). And when they are disposed of, we can refocus on our goals. Yoga teaches students that embodying their imaginings of focus and peace helps them to reenter them. Holly and I stress to students the importance of remembering the peace and balance they create during practice; for, if they can remember this, they will be assured that peace is never too far away. But, if they can’t recapture this peace, they can just as easily re-create it. This is why another student, weary and about to completely lose focus, practices yoga in the library, where she happens to be writing her paper:

I was working a long period of time with no breaks on an assortment of assignments, not because I was in a rush just because I had the time. I studied to the point that I couldn’t concentrate and my body just felt like I needed to walk around. Since it was a crammed library day I did not want to lose my spot and I was still leery of leaving my stuff around, I went in an aisle of books and started doing [*asanas*].

That my student is willing to risk being seen doing yoga in the stacks loudly speaks of her belief in its efficacy for her ability to sustain focus. The need for her mid-library practice can be summed up by one of her classmates’ responses: “The yoga rituals bring in a focused, calming energy that allows me to expand upon and spread out my writing. I find I can actually write for longer periods of time if I incorporate different exercises throughout the writing process.” With such comments, my students demonstrate that they are learning how a united and calm body and mind are necessary for awareness and that yoga can aid them in cultivating such calm attentiveness.

Because yoga helps students develop mindfulness, it can increase the quality of their attention, which has a direct impact on their success as writers. Just ask my students. Their experiences with a yoga-writing practice show that “the practice of focusing awareness on a single object (e.g. a physical pose, the breath) promotes sensory inhibition and a ‘relaxation response’ ... and can cultivate nondirective, open, vigilant, and receptive forms of awareness” (Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 128). My students respond to these gains because they often combat debilitating stress and mental anguish over the writing process that interferes

with their ability to focus on the task at hand. Practices that enhance their mindfulness develop “a greater ability or willingness to allow and be present with negative emotions rather than attempt to suppress or avoid them” (Robins, Keng, Ekblad, & Brantley, 2010, p. 119).

HABITS OF MIND AND BODY: METACOGNITION

The data I continue to collect from my classes convinces me that approaching writing through yoga has the ability to increase writers’ embodied awareness of themselves and the world in which they live because it places their writing bodies at the center of the composing process and not at the periphery. In turn, student writers become more attentive to the other bodies to which they are connected by virtue of their shared materiality, prompting both self- and other-awareness. In other words, yoga helps students develop a corporeal orientation to themselves, to others and to the writing process by making them mindful of the ways their bodies help create meaning in their papers. They see how their bodies shape their perspectives as well as the evidence they cite to support their arguments, and they notice the physical dynamics and demands of the writing process itself. In the contemplative tradition, mindfulness is used to describe awareness of the present moment and attentiveness to experience. Rather than getting ruminatively “caught up with the ‘internal chattering’ of the mind or other contents of awareness, individuals who engage in mindfulness practice learn to observe their thoughts, emotions, and sensations in an objective and receptive manner, focusing on the *process* of awareness, rather than the *content*” (Robins et al., 2010, p. 118). Developing mindfulness allows writers to become aware of and then monitor their thoughts and feelings. With awareness, they can begin to regulate their thoughts and emotions in productive ways that transcend automatic habits and thoughtless reactions. Practices like yoga that cultivate mindfulness are not simply relaxation techniques then, but are “rather a form of mental training to reduce cognitive vulnerability to reactive modes of mind that might otherwise heighten stress and emotional distress” (Bishop et al., n.d., p. 6). For instance, restorative poses such as *Savasana*, a supine position on the floor, encourage us to become aware of our feelings of restlessness, imbalance or rigidity so that we may release and relax into an attentive calm we might not otherwise achieve if we never consciously attended to those feelings.

Because mindfulness engages students in monitoring their thoughts and re-directing them, it can be understood as a metacognitive skill, or one that engages students in thinking about thinking (Bishop et al., n.d., p. 11). The Framework

for Success in Postsecondary Writing defines metacognitive abilities as including the ability to analyze epistemology, or the ability to reflect on one's own thinking in ways that puts it in dialogue with "cultural processes and systems used to structure knowledge" (2011, p. 5). In writing courses, metacognitive acts draw students into an analysis about their thinking processes and about their writing practices and the ways writing creates meaning (and doesn't simply reflect it). This analysis encourages writers to make epistemological conclusions about context, place, form and audience—or, most simply, the situatedness of meaning. Attentiveness to situatedness is a direct application of our yoga practice and is embodied every time students make choices about which poses to integrate from our yoga labs. I encourage my students to apply the embodied knowledge they gain from the integration of yoga and writing strategically and mindfully based on their needs, developing physical writing habits that are best for them: those who find a practice of restorative yoga poses helpful to promote focus and clarity are encouraged to use these; others who find more energetic poses beneficial to generate ideas are encouraged to use those. And all are encouraged to mix and combine these methods since their bodies and minds are dynamic and therefore unification of their energies can proceed in different ways on different days.

Because they are both involved in generating new knowledge about the visceral and situated nature of writing and in contextually applying these ideas to their own composing processes, students who practice yoga and writing together are, I argue, thinking metacognitively on a consistent basis. Using their blogs to spur their reflections simply enforces this kind of thinking; writing about writing leads to thinking about thinking. What's more, because students approach such metacognition from an activity of mindfulness, they more readily assume a learning orientation "characterized by curiosity, openness and acceptance," the state of a mindful mind (Bishop et al., n.d., p. 9). The return on this orientation is open acceptance of writing bodies, as I've shown, and a growing acceptance of the physicality of the composing process. Students' blog responses further enact what we might understand to be the three primary elements of metacognitive thinking: planning an approach to a given learning task, monitoring comprehension and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task (Lv & Chen, 2010, p. 136).

APPROACHING WRITING

As I've illustrated in my previous sections, consciousness of how the body bears on the process of making meaning changes how students think about and complete writing tasks; students confront the ways they may have narrowly cat-

egorized the writing process as a “brain activity,” a conception that previously encouraged mindlessness in regards to bodily influences on their writing. Now conscious of their writing bodies, they begin to attend to the shaping powers of materiality on meaning and on the meaning making processes of writing. For instance, Terry notes that a regular practice of doing yoga helps him “get ideas for writing.” Terry believes that if not for yoga, his brainstorming would suffer:

Had I forced myself to sit and write in front of a laptop, I doubt if I would come up with ideas so easily. Had I limited myself only to the mental aspect of writing, I would never have enjoyed writing at all. Who would love writing if he has to sit for three straight hours and struggle to write his papers? This is the reason I become obsessed with writing overnight.

Terry examines the mindset he takes into the writing process and finds that yoga helps sustain motivation because it gives his body a release from the stress of staring at a blank Word document. His reflective response represents the ways he has learned to use yoga specifically for brainstorming, which has worked so well that he has become “obsessed” with the writing process as a result of our class. If metacognition entails being able to notice changes to ways of thinking and to adapt execution of the writing process in order to respect these new ways of thinking, then my student here demonstrates this ability.

Students also begin to do the metacognitive work of unpacking how their bodies’ intelligence transfigures the meaning, and not just the transmission of ideas, in their writing. Terry tells us how he begins to tap into the intelligence of his body in order to create more effective and creative writing sessions. In contrast to his yoga-writing practice, approaching writing as only a mental task, as he did prior to our course, is a “limitation,” he tells us. The metacognitive act of thinking about writing spurred on by our yoga practice and supported by our classroom discussions helped another student reconceptualize writing similarly. Peter states that he began “to see writing as an animating physical task rather than a monotonous mental chore.” He reports in a blog post that this changes his relationship to writing, as he begins to understand how the process of writing was physically demanding in ways he hadn’t typically respected, as all-nighters meant to finish papers ignored up until their due dates confirmed. New understandings of the writing process, of “writing physically” as he calls it, also breed new ideas about meaning creation for this student. Reassessing the content of his writing, Peter remarks that even when he isn’t writing in first person, his ideas “originate from what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste, what we feel, with everything being alive and activated.” Conceiving of writing in

this way brings my student not simply motivation for process drafting but also increased respect for the ways knowledge is sensory and visceral.

MONITORING COMPREHENSION

While I've already explained the ways contemplative activities such as yoga help students develop a self-monitoring mindset to the end of increasing their attention in my section on persistence, this mindset also applies to the metacognitive processing that these activities encourage. As they explore their changing approaches to the writing process, students must come to terms with how changes in the execution of the writing process positively impact their understanding of writing too. As they write differently, their concept of composing substantially shifts.

Sarah's new appreciation for writing as an embodied process is such a liberating one for her that she begins to critique standard forms of academic writing. She sees these in a new light because of how successful integration of yoga and writing is for her. While she frames her understandings in common language since I provided little framework and no jargon for these insights in class, she specifically questions the masculinist bias inherent in those standards of keeping "yourself out of your writing, even when it's you always writing." Instead, she believes it's important to "respect our bodies" as writers. Writing a decidedly feminist statement in regards to the liberatory potential of embodied writing, Sarah claims a newfound appreciation for the importance of experience as evidence in her writing and how "remember[ing] how our bodies affect our emotions" can help her draft more persuasive arguments. While these new recognitions specifically "help when writing more creative pieces," they also pique her interest in hybrid, critical arguments that require recounting and analyzing personal experiences alongside other forms of substantiated evidence. These inclusions are "something that we don't usually do, we usually compartmentalize our minds from our bodies and even parts of our body from our body as a whole" according to Sarah. Developing her feminist message, she goes on to say, "and this happens more with women; women tend to be partialized." In a conference with me, Sarah disclosed why she was so passionate about critiquing the ways women are encouraged to see their bodies in parts: this stemmed from her experience with seeing fellow competitive figure-skaters succumb to disordered eating because of the pressures they felt to stay thin. Sarah noted that she herself had only just begun to value her strength as a competitive athlete over her thinness. Because Sarah thinks "it's harder for women to think of their bodies and minds as wholes instead of individual parts," she believes in the feminist potential for contemplative writing practices that validate the body's felt intelligence. For Sarah, a female

writer and a lifelong figure-skater, the embodied imagination of the writing yogi is necessarily a part of a feminist epistemology which changes her understanding of how certain choices in writing lead to the creation of different ways of knowing and being in the world. Certainly, these are life-changing conclusions that were spurred on by our contemplative agenda.

Other students note changes in their understanding of writing on a smaller scale, in terms of their confessed weaknesses. A weakness many students' metacognitive remarks coalesce around is the value of focus and the means to sustain attention, which is helpfully developed by our practice of yoga. Summarizing her peers, Samantha states, "My personal writing pain comes in the form of focus." But yoga helps Samantha to relax: "I was trying to brainstorm over the weekend and I laid [sic] on the floor and put my legs up and thought. My roommate thought I was crazy, but I think I actually like what I thought up. I was relaxed and when relaxed, it's easier to connect to my body and mind Hopefully my narrative will benefit from this connection and ease I felt while brainstorming." And it does, perhaps because she develops this metacognitive insight: "When writing [the second paper] I kind of answered each point individually, and I think next time I'm going to try and avoid doing that. Instead I'll try to make [my analysis] more focused and connected so I'm not just answering one part and then another." From this metacognitive vantage point yoga becomes a means of problem-solving. Devon uses yoga to solve his problem of jumpiness as well: "Yoga gave me a way to see inside my writing. My writing can be extremely jumpy from time to time. Yoga paired with the breathing exercises helped minimize the jumpiness ... with my improved focus, my papers began to make more sense and stick to one topic."

That yoga can help my students "see inside" their writing and can help them describe the process of creating drafts that exhibit cohesion and clarity testifies to the power of contemplative acts to bring about metacognitive awareness of the writing process. Yoga gives writers new methods to plan the writing process and work through the stages of writing from drafting to revising. It also helps them monitor their understanding of audience, exhibiting a sense of mindfulness about how audience, purpose and organization are connected.

SELF-EVALUATION

Finally, yoga writing can give students a new method for self-evaluation, or for gauging their learning progress and determining successful completion of writing goals. My student Sarah says, for example, "The whole process [of using yoga for writing] has also brought me to see writing on a grander scale," because yoga exercises "allowed for self-evaluation" when writing. Yoga helps

Sarah become a more flexible thinker and writer. And as she notes, “I think that emotionally, I got a lot more relaxed about writing, and that is growth.” Sarah continues her self-evaluative reflection and states that yoga helped her see how writing should be like “a person on a page, and that’s not perfect.” What this means to her is that rather than hiding from ambiguity in her writing, she should embrace it:

Confusion can be shown in the paper, though not by confusing the reader, and instead by asking questions about the world and our being ... though initially chaos may ensue from the lack of concrete knowledge, the ultimate result of imagination and exploration of self will be incredible Then we can continuously redefine ourselves without fear of change, without fear of loss.

While Sarah’s formulation may be one of the more direct and perceptive I’ve received, her classmates responses rally around the shared understanding that by alleviating anxiety and prompting self-evaluation, yoga helps student writers successfully cope with ambiguity at the level of meaning making in their writing. That yoga becomes for students a new way of understanding writing as well as a set of practical tools to help them cope with these negative emotions of writing is telling of the lessons students can potentially learn as writing yogis, which have both imaginative as well as lived consequences.

Sarah is not alone in her growth. Nicole also believes that yoga helps her to stop ruminating on her “flaws” as a writer and helps her to accept them as points for future growth, not signs of present failure: “To be able to know that you can improve in the future [as a writer], and to be able to find your own flaws is growth. I don’t understand how I was never able to do that before.” And this growth helps Nicole approach writing more joyfully, now that she better recognizes her own thinking: “My writing process is so much more relaxed, so much less tearful, when there is less pressure on me to make it perfect, and I never really realized until this year that the majority of that pressure was not placed upon me by my teacher or peers, but instead by myself.” This revelation transforms my student’s attitude toward writing and learning and releases the intense pressure she felt when writing previously—so much so that she confided in me shortly after writing this blog that for the first time, she enjoyed writing and hoped to find more ways of making it a part of the fabric of her life.

As my students have shown, contemplative writing pedagogies can help writers develop habits of mind consistent with the Framework for Success in Post-secondary Writing. When I began this chapter, I noted that I would not fully

explore the cultivation of each of the eight habits the Framework lists out of a concern for space but would instead focus on just three. In the exploration of those three, I believe it becomes clear how one habit unfolds to reveal the others. Before I end, however, I'd like to draw everything together by reviewing this unfolding and bringing these three habits in dialogue with the others once more. I remain general in my closing, hoping the reader will reference specific examples from my case studies above.

Because approaching the composing process through yoga necessarily involves students in a novel process of inquiry that has them asking creative questions about the physicality of the writing and meaning-making process, it piques students' *curiosity* about how writing works, what it can do and also about different, culturally-contingent ways of knowing. In thinking about how their bodies shape the writing process and, therein, the written product, students confront the Western conception of knowledge as removed from the body and complicate this with Eastern concepts of the body-mind exemplified by our practice of yoga. This *engagement* helps them *open* up to new ways of thinking and being in the world, especially those that are less dualistic. As students notice how simple things like posture affect the meaning they create in their papers, they begin to wonder how knowledge is impacted by even larger material and social factors, so much so that one of my students developed his own theory of situated composing he later reduced to a personal mantra of "where I write is what I write." This is *creativity* at its strongest.

Understanding knowledge as situated helps students *flexibly* adapt to context, genre and audience and to recognize the value in certain writing conventions, which can help foster communication with and through a myriad of differences. Practically, students also learn to work with their own embodied differences as writers, figuring out how and when to integrate yoga poses and techniques in their writing process in order to become more *persistent*, focused writers who can sustain interest and attention. Sustained interest, students learn, is partly accomplished by learning to be *responsible* to both their writing bodies and minds, which cannot be easily accomplished in all-nighters that produce a first-and-last draft paper. From a yogic perspective, these lessons of navigating our inner worlds translate to external applications so that as students become responsible to their own bodies, they extend this responsibility to other material beings by virtue of their connectedness to them. In the writing classroom, this application starts with students' classmates. Students come to see how peer review, for instance, derives its meaning from its ability to foster resonant, material connections between writing bodies with dissimilar ideas, less so because of its function as a tool to catch errors before a paper is due.

All these efforts represent a new way of thinking about the writing process as well as a new method of doing writing that includes attention to the body and a working with it. These changes, therein, encourage students to entertain a level of *metacognition* about their writing that may otherwise be absent or at least not enthusiastically exercised in classrooms where the reflective stakes are lower, often because students can mindlessly pass through while remaining within their learning comfort zones. My experiences have shown me how contemplative writing pedagogies encourage authors to reflect on themselves as embodied, as writing yogis, to experience the writing process as physically demanding and to recognize the writing product as materially saturated. With these habits of mind and body cultivated and enacted, students exposed to this pedagogy become embodied imaginers in all the ways I describe in previous chapters. In the next chapter and interchapter pair, I turn to the last element of imagining: feeling. Chapter Three explores how contemplative pedagogues might attend to feeling using understandings of flexibility from yoga and Interchapter Three tests these theories out, applying them to examine the consequences of integrating exercise of pranayama, or focused breathing, in the writing classroom.