



The Difference of Discipline

Renowned yoga teacher Loraine Rushton reveals the profound difference yoga is making to our troubled youth

When I asked Tom, a 15 year old student, what he liked best about his yoga class, he replied very deliberately, The discipline of the class is what makes it. One of the things lacking in today's society are high standards and guidelines of discipline. It's up to us as teachers, role models and parents to provide this. Isn't it interesting that the classes we turn to for guidance are things such as yoga and martial arts, which are referred to as disciplines?

We have collapsed two very different things: developing the trait of being disciplined and disciplining poor behaviour. Maybe if we fostered the first we could alleviate the second. Yoga does this. I have seen it, schools have experienced it, teachers have witnessed it and parents have thanked me for it.

Here are some examples of how the discipline of yoga was used in place of traditional discipline.

An end to bullying

Bullying has become virtually non-existent at the school, the principal replied when I asked him if he had seen any effect from the weekly yoga sessions run throughout the year for the entire Catholic high school. Whenever I've shared this story, most people think how great that the bullies stopped bullying, but that's not what happened. It was the students who were being bullied that built a belief in themselves and an inner strength and confidence that resulted in them no longer allowing bullying to ever happen to them again.

Traditionally, we would look at how to discipline the bully, but what yoga provided was a direct elimination of the problem for no longer letting it be allowed.

Meditation v Detention

Early one morning I received a call from a local boys high school asking if I'd be interested in teaching them meditation. What transpired was a progressive teacher who believed in the power of the mind to change behaviour and wanted to trial a meditation class instead of detention. The boys chose whether to go to detention or sit in meditation. So, rather than a punishment, they had the opportunity to quiet and train their minds. The result was that the boys left calm, relaxed and rejuvenated. The true testament of the impact the class had was that students continued to come for the practice of meditation even after they were no longer required to as part of their detention. The class became increasingly popular with the teachers as well as the older years suffering from stress and anxiety.

Yoga in Juvenile Detention Centres

Should we be building discipline in those who are being disciplined? It's becoming clear that the disciplining of poor behaviour is not enough.

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, Fifty five per cent of juvenile detainees reported a prior episode of detention... 79 per cent of juvenile detainees progressed to adult corrections and 49 per cent of those progressed to adult imprisonment.

One institution in Victoria for teen boys has decided to take a different approach. Initiating a yoga program has become increasingly popular and a highlight for many of the boys, who have found a place of peace and calm within themselves for the first time.

The best way to understand the significant impact yoga is having on our troubled youth is to hear from one of them. Nineteen year old Kayla expresses what the classes are doing for her, Before learning yoga, if I got angry, I would hurt someone. So not only is my life saved, but their life is saved from me.



Loraine Rushton is the founder of Zenergy Yoga. She has over 18 years experience teaching yoga to children of all ages. zenergyyoga.com

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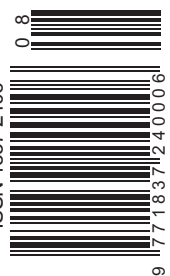
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