

Caregiving in America

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ISSUE

Many Hearts, One Roof

How one family's
open door policy
is working

Meeting Mother Teresa

and how it changed
my life forever
- Jim Towey

How to Clear Out Your Parents' Home

without igniting a family feud



Rosalynn Carter's

8 Tips

for Family Caregivers



After a devastating car crash left him paralyzed, Matthew Sanford has turned tragedy into transformation for himself and others.

Photo by Rubinstein Photo

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BODY, MIND & SOUL

by Matthew Sanford

Wonder, Not Will: Finding Nourishment

We all face trauma. You may doubt that you have the determination and perseverance to get through it, but is there a different way to persevere? I believe that there is and I think it is more fun.

I have found my yoga practice to be a study in perseverance. If you have a yoga practice of your own, you may feel the same. It is not sustained by the same gut-wrenching, willful approach that is sometimes demanded in a challenging class. Rather, the essence of perseverance must sustain over time. The yogi shows up each day, gets on the mat and starts doing poses. Every day is different, a different feeling or sensation appears, a different insight. A seasoned yogi then follows, explores and tests whatever unfolds on that particular day. What sustains the commitment to show up in the first place?

For me, it is wonder, not will. I am a yoga practitioner, teacher and paralyzed from the chest down. I began yoga when I was twenty-five; twelve years after a car accident claimed the lives of my father and sister and rendered me a paraplegic. Over the last seventeen years, my yoga practice has been anything but ordinary. Imagine me trying to do a simple asana — how do I learn the subtle interplay between hitting my femur bones down, extending through my spine, and lifting my chest. I cannot do all the required physical actions. I can never “finish” the pose. So what keeps me going?

I am nourished by the sensation of wonder. Each day that I get on my mat, I open to the vastness of yoga, not narrow myself to the goal of that particular day. I feel wonder as I realize that every pose is infinite, that ultimate mastery is not possible. I feel wonder as my practice teaches me to trust time. Time and practice are what bring progress, not the intensity of my will. Most of all, I feel wonder about the little things—how my breathing is such a sensual experience, how a lifted chest

directs awareness through my extremities. Finally, I am filled with wonder as I realize that my yoga practice allows me to refine the quality of my existence.


This is what I wish for you. As you navigate the challenges of everyday life, take a page from the practice of yoga: relish in the ride, not just the accomplishments.

Wonder as a Mind-Body Sensation

Wonder can be experienced and practiced as a mind-body sensation. It requires, however, a sense of openness and vulnerability. It requires you to reclaim your innocence. Take a moment and find a childhood memory that you associate with innocence. Remember what that feels like. Breathe. Bring that feeling forward into the present. Breathe.

I imagine that when you went “looking” for this memory, you literally went inward. I imagine that you stopped noticing your surroundings as much—the sounds, the lights, the smells. Your mind stopped pushing outward through your body to perceive the world around you. Rather, your mind went inward, and also through your body, to find your innocence.

Keep that feeling and now add the clarifying influence of the asana. Connect to your base — your feet on the floor, your sits-bones on the chair seat, and allow a graceful sensation to move from the base of your spine, upward through your lifted chest. Breathe. Now use the discipline of the asana to spread the sensation of innocence throughout your body. Breathe.

Wonder is the sensation of innocence turned outward. It is, at core, a mind-body sensation, not an intellectual achievement. Namasté. 

Matthew Sanford

At the age of 13 Matthew was paralyzed from a tragic car accident that killed his father and sister. In the years since he has become a nationally recognized yoga teacher, public speaker and author who has dedicated his life to transforming trauma, loss and disability into hope and potential by awakening the connection between mind and body. A leader in adapting yoga, his non-profit, Mind Body Solutions, offers adaptive yoga classes, workshops and other resources for people living with mobility disabilities and their caregivers. Matthew's story has been featured by numerous media outlets including the NBC *Today Show*, NPR's *Speaking of Faith* and *People Magazine*. Contact Matthew Sanford at www.matthewsanford.com.

