

YOGA

in the deep end

DAY THREE / Where the Mind meets the Magic

MANOMAYA KOSHA

Today's practice focused on the mind-layer, or manomaya kosha. It is seen as thoughts, knowledge, learnings, conclusions we've made in life, memories, and patterns, as well as the way we mentally digest our emotions - basically impressions that have been made in the mind.

Manomaya kosha is in direct control, through the prana, of the physical body and senses. It is like a supervisor in a factory, in that it gives instructions, but is not supposed to be the manager of the factory of life. Because of this, it naturally has doubts, and creates illusions. When it receives clear instructions from the deeper level, it functions quite well. However, when it is clouded over by its illusions, the deeper wisdom is also clouded over.

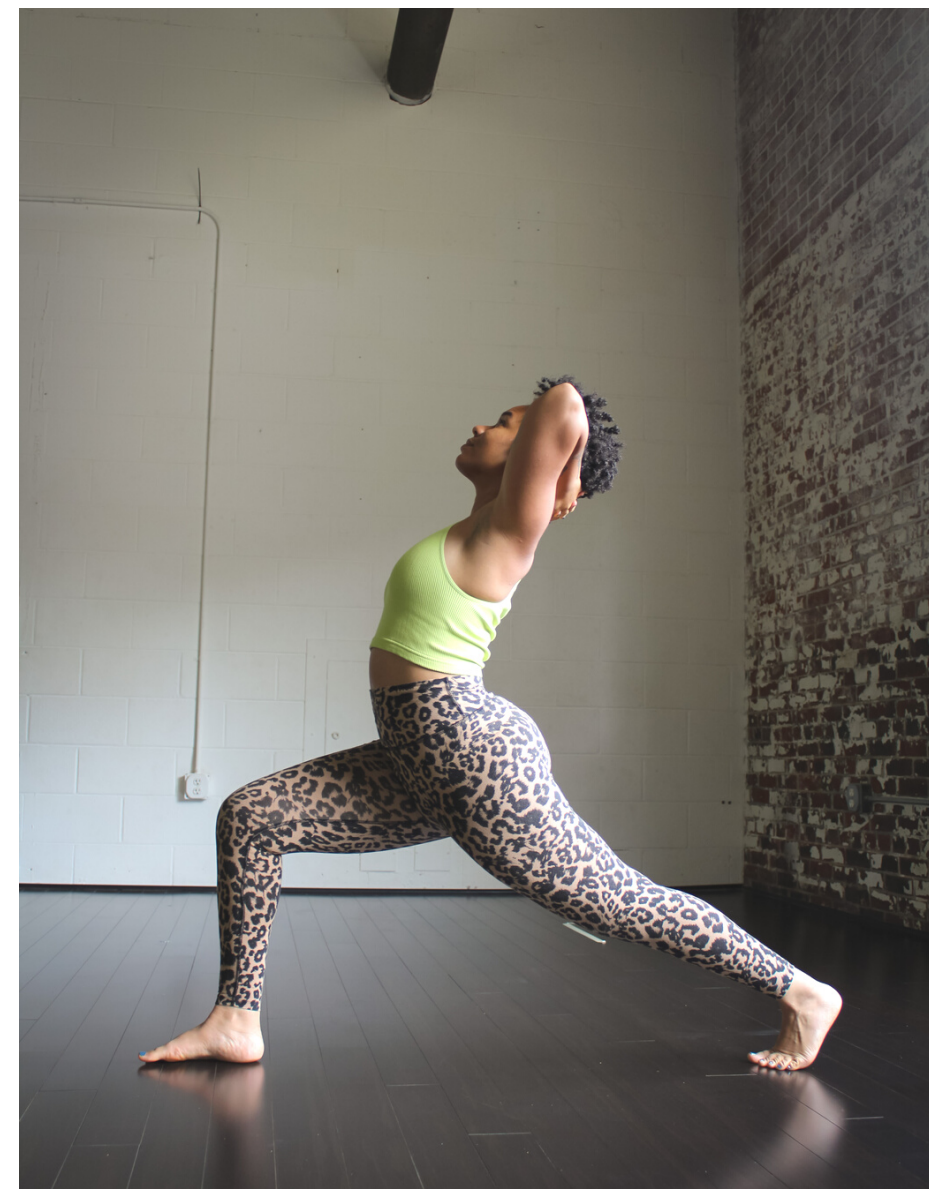
Manomaya kosha is what allows us to run on "auto pilot" without much thought. When we move through life passively, reacting to our environment rather than actively shaping it, our awareness is focused here. Many people, and most animals, routinely operate at this level.

THE MIND IS ALWAYS AT PLAY.

One of the guiding texts of yoga is The Yoga Sutras of Pantajali - a collection of guidance around how to live life with less suffering. This text has four chapters and the first seems almost entirely dedicated to the mind - that's how critical our manomaya kosha is. The goal of "yoga" is actually not to achieve any specific physical feat - it is to quiet the fluctuations of the mind. It is to become steady in mind.

If we could sell our belongings and live on a mountain top, perhaps this would be easier but we live a modern life that is full & in some cases overflowing - and constantly asks more of us. So it's no wonder the mind can run amuck - can shut down - can get stuck and need to be rebooted. Our physical yoga practice can help with all of this. One way it does so is by allowing us to practice "learning" and not just obsessing on things we believe we already know. What if we looked to learn more instead of sitting in judgement (a place where we think we know already) so often?

In yoga when we are learning to move into more complex postures - it's not about "ego" - it's not even exclusively about physically strengthening our body - there is something "to" practicing our ability to learn. This helps us not "banish" though but to have a clear relationship with our "mind-layer"



LEARNING TO LEARN.

We can simplify the brain process of learning into two modes - "focused" and "diffused". "Focused" is a state of deep concentration & "diffused" is a neural resting state where consolidation occurs and knowledge is allowed to settle. Some researchers believe it may be easiest for us to learn if we alternate 25-minutes of "focus" and time to "diffuse". And if you think about it, in our yoga practice this is almost the mix that occurs... we move, we learn, we practice, we let go.

Boom! Just like that we reshape our awareness of manomaya kosha.

But it's key when we practice that we are able to actually do both - focus & diffuse. What stands in the way of focus? Shame, guilt, fear - a feeling of inadequacy, the voice in our mind of doubt. None of these feelings make it easy for us to focus. What stands in the way of our ability to diffuse? The need to do more, the feeling that we aren't enough, the cultural programming that "busy is better".



OBSERVING THE MIND IN PRACTICE

During today's practice - was there a specific instruction that you weren't sure of? Or some place in class where you felt a bit lost or unsure? Jot this down.

What is your mental reaction when you feel lost or left behind during a class?

Now is a good time to develop a quick little "mantra" of sorts that can help to ease or erase the feelings of doubt or failure that can sometimes surface in our practice. Understanding what your feeling in these moments - write down a short affirmation you can introduce.

The next time you're practicing - whether the doubt is from feeling physically lost in a class or from something you carried in with you before class started - introduce this affirmation. Let this become a "go to phrase" for mental clarity.

WHERE THE MIND MEETS THE MAGIC

What is one thing you can commit to learning in the next few months? Remember our goal in yoga is not to abolish the mind, to shut off thought - but rather to cultivate a clear, disciplined mental space... How can you practice "learning"?

What did it feel like at the end of class to recognize your physical body, energy body and mind body? Is there one connection that seems easier for you right now?

Was it possible to feel these three realms begin to meet each other? Why or why not?

When you think of the difference between knowledge & wisdom - how would you define this?

WHERE THE MIND MEETS THE MAGIC

Thinking about where you stand in life right now, if you were able to cultivate a steady relationship with physical, energetic, & mind bodies and allow these three "layers" to be infused with wisdom - how would you move differently? What would this feel like when you are meeting obstacles?

What one revelation can you take away from today's practice, this journal or the experience you've had on your mat so far this week?