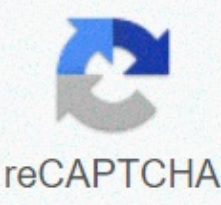




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Meditations from the mat pdf

Conversation with Rolf GatesQ: This is the first yoga or meditation book quoted by John Cougar Mellencamp, almost famous, Odysseus, a U.S. Navy SEAL and Lao-Tzu. What inspired a wide range of quotes and references to the book? A: I have always loved quotes. They offer a way for us to gain wisdom and strength from each other. A politician from 100 B.C give you an insight into your love life, the words of a 17th century sea master can give you the courage to ask for a raise. Good quotes are timeless. It's as if someone just before you on the life path is turning back to give you a helping hand as you come together in the back. When we repeat these quotation marks and pass them on, we in turn help those who follow in our footsteps. In Meditations of the Mat, the quotes also remind us that yoga is not an alien philosophy; rather, yoga helps us remember what we already know. Quotes show that we all practice yoga all the time. Yoga has a deep resonance in a great lyric; it is the essence of grandmother's advice; it's a galvanizing ethos from Ghandi or Martin Luther King Jr.; it is our mind reflecting god's mind over and over again. And we get a glimpse of it in quotation marks. Q: How do you match each piece to the day? How do you go about organizing text and quotes? A: The text itself flows along the lines of yoga Sutras, an ancient Hindu text that sets an eight-limbed path of yoga. Believe it or not, yoga Sutras are just as important to our lives today in 21st century America as they were thousands of years ago. Quite simply, Sutras explain what is wrong, why we are fighting it, what can be done about it, and what is possible in our lives. In Meditations from Mat I take all this information, consider it from a modern perspective, and divide it down into short, accessible daily readings. So, I didn't have to come up with a basic outline of the book; this was done 2500 years ago. But in the process of checking how I've lived and worked with Sutras myself, I also share my story of struggle and transformation. I could write about the path to enlightenment one day, and then, the next day, a message from the trench-recount anecdote from my life, quoting a student, to share a discovery I've made, offers a tip from a yoga class. After all, I give the reader a balanced, realistic sense of what yoga is, and how everyday practice can truly change their lives. This has certainly changed in the mines. Q: The progression of the book through each day is subtle and powerful, like the practice of yoga itself. As you come up with the format, it seemed like a natural progression? A: When I think back to how the book got together, the word I have to use is grace. I started with a vision of a book that would help American yoga students understand basic yoga theory. Most we don't have time to invest in a serious study, but we can all read one page a day. I knew that a daily reflection book could be very helpful to anyone, whether they were brand new students or had been practicing regularly for years. From this intent, essays magically began to flow. Of course, having 365 of them write, I had plenty of time to cover a lot of ground, and that really helped. But each essay is a little morsel; they are short and to the point. You take one bite a day, digest it completely, and then take another little bite the next day. In class, I emphasize one day's design —breath, perhaps, or surrender—and keeping it simple, working at only one point in an hour and a half, we can really fully explore this one concept. We experience it physically, emotionally, mentally. The time I give each concept in this book allows for the same level of integration, the same level of connection to the material. I can test every idea from different angles, tell a story, joke, see what another yoga teacher might have to say on the subject, come full circle, and in the process shine a light on something that you've probably never even thought about before. Through bits, every day, the reader's level of awareness and understanding grows and deepens. Q: Who would you most like to read and move with this book? A: I wrote this book to anyone who can benefit from it, or they have ever set foot on a yoga mat. You really never know what it takes to hear what you have to say. As a teacher, I get emails and letters and gifts from all kinds of people, thanked me. People often approach me after class to share their stories. They may say that they have been taking my class for three months or three years, but one way or another it has changed their lives. This to me is humbling. I am constantly amazed at the strength of men and women I meet every day, they can go through divorce or getting married, feeling old or feeling young again, dealing with illness or just getting well. You never know. All I can do is come from the right place, give out the right place, and let go of the results. Q: Do you see any dangers in the intussus putlation of yoga? Do you think people who practice yoga only for fitness are still practicing yoga? A: I categorically are not afraid of Westernization of yoga. I'm also sure no one is just working out. Anyone who has had any success in physical discipline from driving to martial arts to volleyball, will, after reflection, admit that their success began with their attitude. Yoga is a systematic treatment adjustment. It teaches us personal responsibility. You can't take on a challenge like yoga, stay with it, make modicum progress, and don't work on your attitude in the process. If you have yoga, for some reason, you're also taking more responsibility for yourself. And it's very healthy. Yoga also opens the door to a wide range of positive, life-enhancing practices, from eating healthy meditation to openness that many people would not have had access to in any other way. So maybe you start with some yoga classes at the gym and then before you know it, you've added years of prosperity to your life and you've given yourself the means to enjoy those years. That's good stuff! And no matter where you are on this journey, Meditations from Mat will meet you there. Q: You are talking about your journey with yoga, a journey that took you away from selfish thinking. Where do you think yoga can take your students and readers after they have practiced for ten years? A: No telling what outside will look like, what kind of changes can happen physically, whether in terms of relationships, careers, or life decisions, although deep transformation can happen in all of these areas as we continue to practice yoga. But there are also huge, invisible changes from the inside—the way we relate to ourselves, our surroundings, and others, not to mention how we interpret the events of our lives. In all these areas, we experience a softening that is actually a kind of strength. Yoga practice encourages us to become flexible in the deepest sense of the word. The toughness that goes to the power of our culture is fleeting and unreasonable. Lao-Tzu said that the softest thing overcomes the hardest. Water destroys the stone. It is a kind of flexible force that will increase over time: the ability to sit with extreme sorrow and joy, loss and profit, over time, aging. We're really talking about being in the middle of life as an adult, observing peacefully, seeing clearly, and behaving compassionately. Yoga does not prevent life from happening; rather, it allows us to participate fully in our own lives with the dignity, efficiency, joy and compassion that is our birthright. Q: How does it feel to you when you feel that you have really reached a student who allows yoga to open up to your hearts and minds? A: We teach what we have to learn. People are regularly shocked to find that their yoga teacher is actually a normal, flawed person. We're all in the same boat, only people are trying to solve this thing called life. I really believe that therapists and yoga teachers are people who just need a bit more coaching than most, more confident than most. To truly understand the healer, one first grasp the healer must have healed. My experience of student progress is a powerful testament to the fact that my progress is possible as well. As I look after the world and see others getting better at making progress, I'm sure I'll also make progress in that there is hope for me as well. My commitment to the growth of my students is my commitment to my growth. We're alone. Q: Does writing come easily to you? How would you describe the differences between writing meditation from MAT and teaching and practicing yoga? A: Teaching it comes naturally to me. Both of my parents are teachers. and I have always known that my life would be just fine if I just allowed myself to be a teacher. Unfortunately for years I thought that in order to really teach I would have to work in the school system and that felt suffocating to me. So I danced around the edges of training, training as an army officer, teaching as an addiction counselor, teaching my friendship, teaching anyone who could sit still long enough for me to make a point. Eventually, of course, I ended up teaching yoga and finally allowed myself to become a teacher in the true sense of the word, highlighting the best in my students, recognizing and honoring what has already been held in each of them. Now my life is working out. Writing feels like teaching me. When I'm teaching, I'm taking the concept and fleshing it out, turning it over, studying its importance to me and my students. I'm not just reciting the answers, I'm asking questions, what is it? And how can we apply it in our lives? In my opinion, teaching is a means of

exchanging experience; together, we do what life gives us, and we learn how it fits into God's plan for us. This is what Meditation from Mat is all about, and that is the essence of all my teachings. Writing, teaching, learning are all the same as me. Q: What remains of the hardest aspect of yoga practice for you? A: Don't make it a specific result. It's so easy to think: I'm going to practice yoga today to get in shape, to get the right mindset, to get more comfortable in my body, to have a better experience at this point, to let go, to hold on, to be happy, to feel my grief, to get together, to be alone. But I work on letting everything go. I'm not really on my carpet or in my life until I'm there without an agenda. Agenda.

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