



with a disability, as an ambassador for the national awareness campaign “Don’t DIS My ABILITY”.

When did you get serious with yoga? In my early twenties I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. I knew I had to get out of the city and I became a hippie for about five years, living in communities around Byron Bay. Yoga is designed to recede your awareness inwards. Chronic fatigue turned my life upside down, it made me look inwards and start to ask important questions. Only when that happened did transformation occur.

What is yoga therapy and when did you incorporate it into your teaching? My main introduction to yoga therapy was through T.K.V. Desikachar. His yoga institute is set up like a doctor’s surgery. The person who is ill comes in, describes their symptoms and is prescribed with asana, pranayama, Yoga Nidra, diet modification, and instructions to minimise things that are not conducive to healthy living. I learnt that yoga is anything that helps you move towards supporting wellbeing.

wellness warrior

Mark Breadner, 45, attended his first yoga class when he was seven—at home with his mother as the teacher. It was not until he was 27 and studying with T.K.V. Desikachar that he understood yoga as a way of life. Over the past 20 years, he has used his holistic and therapeutic approach to yoga as a teacher and trainer with leading yoga schools in Sydney as well as working with elite athletes including swimmer Ian Thorpe and surfer Mick Fanning. Last year he established YogaCoach, a holistic teacher training school that helps yogis and their students reach full potential in all aspects of life. *Interview by Erin O’Dwyer*

How would you describe your mother’s teaching?

She taught from home, in a room downstairs, and the classes were always packed. It was the early 70s and there would be up to 30 women there, all in shiny leotards and leggings. What she taught then reflected what yoga truly is. The classes always had a component of pranayama, meditation, relaxation and sense withdrawal. When I was a teenager I used to assist her with asthmatic and Down Syndrome kids. I’m still involved with kids

How important is a holistic approach to overcome blockages in body and mind? Asana is an important component to expanding our consciousness but when taken out of context, it renders the system of yoga meaningless. It’s also ego-based. People think, “If I can get my foot behind my head, I’ll be happy”. You won’t be. You need a body that is steady and comfortable; breath and a nervous system that is clear and calm and a still mind that allows you to examine all the habit patterns with non-attachment. When all those obstacles are removed then your true nature flows and you have a compass that guides your life.

In 2006, a surfing accident cost you your left eye.

How did yoga help you? I didn’t really skip a beat when it happened. The board went through my eye and smashed my cheekbone. I lost the eye and had steel plates inserted in my cheekbones. My mum saw me at the hospital and she was really moved by my response to it all. She was really upset about my eye and I said, “It’s ok, mum, I’ve got another one.” I never really went through any grieving process. Maybe that comes from long-term spiritual practice. I was able to understand the impermanence and I was back in the water as soon as I could.

What does your daily practice entail? I meditate three times a day and I try to do pranayama before that. Each time I sit for around 30 minutes or an hour. I do very little asana these days. I just do it as a tune up, five minutes to stretch out any kinks. I used to think that asana was the be-all and end-all. My practice early on was about me trying to achieve something for myself. Now it’s about helping others and making a difference. ❀