



## **Forrest Yoga Teacher Training...a Year Later**

***By Jennifer Yarter***

On a dark Texas morning one year ago today, I walked in the door of Yoga One to begin my Forrest Yoga Foundation Teacher Training. In complete trepidation, I had no idea what to expect. I rolled my mat out in the furthest corner away, with my back to the wall. Ana Forrest entered the room, and I could feel the collective group senses perk up in anticipation and excitement. I however, was scared...scared that I lacked the physical, mental and emotional strength to make it through a full month of training with this powerful woman.

I had spent the month prior to this training practicing kicking up into handstand. I had the idea in my head that I would completely embarrass myself if I showed up at this training unable to kick up into handstand. That skill would somehow define me as something "less than". Feeling physically "less than" dominated my thoughts leading up to this training. I had attended a yoga class with Forrest Yoga Guardian Tayla Ring a month prior, and found it so difficult that I nearly quit the teacher training before I even started. To combat this fear, I prepared by going to many intense yoga classes. I joked during training that I was going to yoga six days a week and therapy once a week,

when I really should have switched those around...I would have been better prepared.

I surprised myself by making it through that first morning practice feeling strong. All that fear about the physical aspects of the training dissipated somewhat. Then, I came back to the afternoon practice and learned what I really *should* have feared all along. “Get up in front of this group,” Ana says. “Teach a pose.” My mind went blank.

Thousands of asanas exist in the yoga arsenal, and I couldn’t think of a single pose. I wasn’t even planning on being a teacher when I entered training. Now, after having taught hundreds of classes, I look back on that first day with amusement. Teaching a simple forward fold seemed so out of reach, so damn near impossible. I cried that first day and felt like a failure.

It has been exactly one year since that day.

Where am I today?

- I teach regularly – four to eight classes a week. I have regular students who look to me for guidance and wisdom, and I’ve ironically learned that it is my willingness to openly share my questioning journey of life, my raw truth of the moment, that defines me as a teacher. Learning to share my faults and my stumbles along with my beauty and joys is what has softened me as a teacher. My beautiful mentor guardian Kelley Rush told me on my first mentorship weekend, “You teach like someone who’s been fucked over in life.” And although I’ve had a lot to be angry about this year, it has been my journey to rely less on anger to give me strength, but to find my Warrior Woman in softness.

- I've gotten divorced. Of all the internal life changes that I expected to arise during training, I *never* expected to question so deeply my relationship with my husband and come to the conclusion that I needed to go forward in my life without him at my side. During Ana's infamous Death Meditation, I was unable to even picture my husband's face in my mind. Through each subsequent process meditation Ana took us through, I asked the same question over and over: "Should I stay with him?" The answer was always no. I fought this answer for eight months after training, but the answers you discover during Forrest Yoga teacher training come from a very deep place within, and cannot be ignored, or swept under the rug. Trust me, I tried.
- The day my husband walked out the door, I stopped practicing yoga for two months. For a while, I felt hypocritical and shameful and downtrodden on myself for not practicing, even as I taught others and encouraged their yoga practice. But then I realized that this is yet another opportunity to teach from a place of raw truth. I am currently gently bringing myself back to the practice, one compassionate step at a time. My first personal practice was Ana's morning workshop during the Wind Horse Forrest Yoga Conference last month.
- I finished the certification homework in a year's time. Through that homework, I learned I was holding myself up to an unrealistic goal, pressuring myself and finding failure in not meeting those goals. I learned compassion for my own process through the homework, knowing that it would unfold in its own time. I learned not to judge my fellow mentees when they were not proceeding through the homework as I thought they should. I learned the homework isn't about learning more about Forrest Yoga...it's about learning more about me.

- I've delved deep into the recesses of my soul, and I'm not afraid of that self introspection any more. Even when my husband gathered up all my dark demons and threw them in my face as to the reasons for our divorce, I was able to bravely examine my faults, stalking my fear. I was able to confidently realize that even though I am all of those dark things, I am also so much more beautiful things, and all the things are ok.

Ana once told me I had a victim mentality. I'll be a good teacher, she said, once I get over feeling sorry for myself. Maybe she was right. I tell you these struggles I've had this year not for pity, not to encourage the victim mentality, but rather to celebrate the beauty that can be found in the messy, unpredictable chaos of life. "Evolve or die," Ana says, but we can never really be sure how that evolution will reveal itself when you choose to enter a door in life. When I walked into that door of Yoga One on Day One of training, I opened myself up to the possibility of unimagined change in my life. I wouldn't change a thing.

Oh yeah...I mastered that kick up into handstand.