

May 2020 Newsletter



Namaste

Namaste means “I bow to your Self, the Blissful Divine Essence of your Being, which is within you and being you -- the same Blissful Divine Essence that is within me and being me.” And your Self is coronavirus safe There’s no handshaking or hugging: you just fold

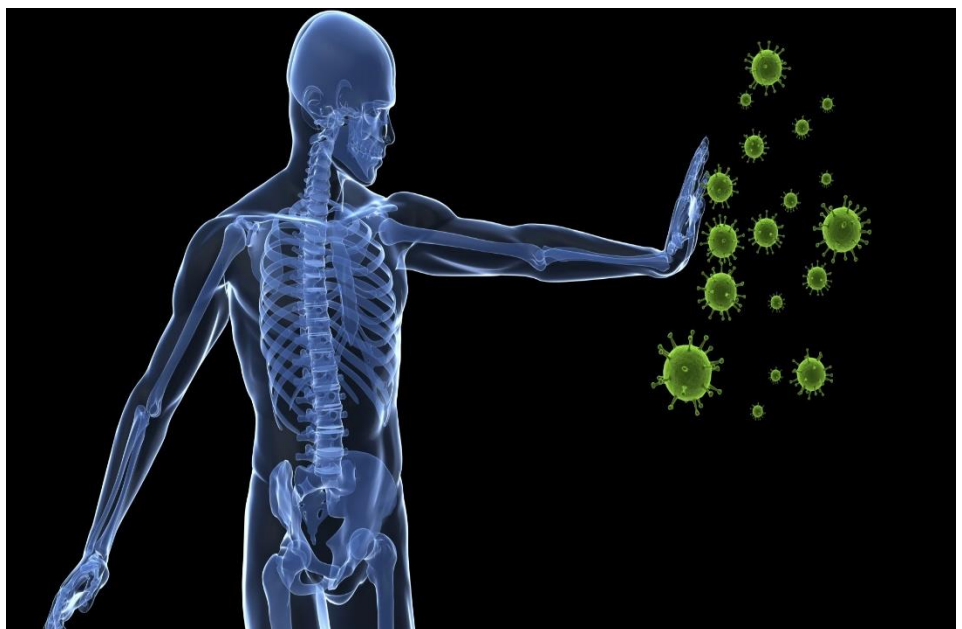


your hands next to your heart, as if in prayer. Namaste

Wishing you well and safe. May those who have passed rest in peace, and may their loved ones be consoled. May those who are ill be healed. May those who are terrified find strength and solace.

Here’s a reminder, something easy to forget, especially when the stress levels amp up: Your Self is indestructible. Your Self is safe from the coronavirus. It cannot be infected. Knowing your Self brings comfort, bliss, and strength. Your Self is a safe haven.

However, your body still can be infected, so I hope you are continuing to stay safe, practicing social distancing and all the other actions recommended by our health officials. You need your body in order to experience the Bliss of your own Being!



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Maintain a *healthy* body. Then you are less vulnerable to the virus, and while virus-free, less likely to be distracted from your bliss by other ailments. To maintain a healthy body, it is best to maintain a healthy state of mind. An unhealthy state of mind – one filled with worries, anxiety, constant terror,

and so forth – wreaks havoc on the body. A healthy state of mind will get you through this challenging time. You can experience peace of mind even in the worst times, even during a pandemic.

These past two months have been brutal in many ways, but they have also brought many opportunities for reflection and new avenues for growth. As Swami stated in April's contemplation article, "There's a yogic benefit to your seclusion..." She explains that now you can't look outside for your usual escape routes for bliss. That's good, because the bliss isn't out there anyway – not true bliss, not lasting bliss. For that, you must turn inward. You've heard this before, but now that you are in seclusion you have the opportunity to take a deeper look inward and see for yourself – that is, see for your **Self**. Turn inward. Practice more yoga. More meditation. Quiet the static of your mind to get a better signal from your Higher Self. Enjoy the blissful knowing of your own Self. Ultimately, knowing your Self will give you the greatest peace and the greatest health, on all levels of your being.

Once you establish a deeper connection with your Self, another connection develops naturally for you: you begin to connect more easily and deeply with others. Why? Because knowing your own Divine Essence, you come to recognize and cherish the same Divine Essence in others.

Even if you are living alone during this period of social distancing, you can still connect with others all over the world – thanks to phones, online communication apps like Zoom, and the internet. Ironically, before the pandemic, the overuse of cell phones was condemned (justifiably) because they took you away from human contact as well as the outdoors, but now they are welcomed as a vital means to maintain human contact. And they should be.

Social distancing can be extremely difficult. It can even affect your health. Human beings evolved over thousands of years to take comfort in one another's company. Research now shows that positive social interactions contribute more to good health than any other factor. So go ahead and connect with others in any way you can: online, landline, whatever. You won't be able to touch one another, but you can still see face to face, and more importantly, you can still connect heart to heart.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

Regarding connections and their blessings, we also can thank the internet and modern technology for our ability to stay connected with **you**. I am now offering online yoga classes so you can join me from your home. You will be able to see fellow students as well, at a safe distance! I am designing these classes to help you slow down, loosen up and regain peace of mind. The classes will be reasonably priced, and you have the option to pay only what is appropriate for your situation. I am also offering a couple free relaxation/breathing classes each week. You will find more information about the [online classes](#) below.

Please continue to stay safe. Stay home as much as possible. Maintain social distancing. These are surefire ways for curtailing this pandemic. Be patient. We will win, and if we all cooperate, we will win that much sooner.

Note: In the [Points to Ponder](#) section of this newsletter, there is a link to a sweet video of a father telling a bedtime story (The Great Realization) to his child, sometime in the future. The story tells about the pandemic of 2020, how and why it started, and what blessings we (today) can hopefully look forward to. Take a look. It's only 4 minutes long. There is hope! Also, for cheering up and musical/dance inspiration, and to see what young (and elder) artists can do together even while apart, make sure you see the Juilliard Arts School video rendition of Bolero. The link to it is in the [EnLighten Up](#) section.

Topics in this newsletter:

- [Contemplation of the Month](#)
- [Charity of the Month: Feeding America and its Coronavirus Response Fund](#)
- [New: Online Classes](#)
- [Free Zoom Intro this Wednesday](#)
- [Other Online Classes and Events](#)

- [Birthdays This Month](#)

- [Extras](#)
 - [Free online audio recordings of Sadguru Nirmalananda and her new book and more](#)
 - [EnLighten up!](#)
 - [More Wisdom to Ponder](#)

Contemplation of the Month

May's contemplation article is titled "[Living in Bliss.](#)" Swami Nirmalananda explores the meaning of Self-Realization, what keeps you from becoming Self-Realized, and what gets

you there. She describes some of the deeper dimensions of your being, including what she refers to as “Divine Emotions,” which include several levels of Bliss and Love. She writes:

“An early stage of bliss is inner peace, even contentment. A more powerful level is an inner happiness, but it’s not the kind of happiness that we seek in external events. Instead, this feeling arises independently – I’ll call it ‘delighted’ or ‘joy-ful.’ Love is another Divine Emotion, but its name is too often misused and too little understood. The love that arises from within is universal, a profound fondness or tenderness that extends to every person, every insect, every rock and galaxy. As you continue to delve inward, it keeps feeling better and better.”

So, by looking deep within, you have a lot to look forward to! You can feel better and better. Read all about it!

Charity of the Month: Feeding America and its Coronavirus Response Fund

Let there be a contagion of kindness!



The pandemic has left many Americans in great need, especially those who are most vulnerable. So this month we're raising money for Feeding America. Feeding America is the largest network of food banks, pantries, and meal programs in the country. It has launched the COVID-19 Response Fund, a national food- and fund-raising effort to support people facing hunger and the food banks who help them. Let nobody go hungry. Your contribution will make an impact, whether you donate \$5 or \$500. Every little bit helps, especially if everyone donates something.

To donate, go to [Facebook Fundraiser](#).

Last month, we (you!) raised **\$774** for DirectRelief, which has been working in overdrive to get protective gear and critical care medications to as many health workers as possible. You can continue to donate to [DirectRelief](#).

New: Online classes

You can now join me for yoga classes online from your home. Zoom along with me!

Zoom is a free easy-to-use app that you can use on your laptop, smart phone, tablet or any other device that has a webcam (video camera). Initially Zoom was most popular as a video conferencing application for businesses, but since the lockdown many folks use it for meeting with friends and family, and for taking classes online.

You can download the Zoom app onto your computer or smart phone.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

I recommend downloading the app to your device. To download the Zoom app, go to [zoom.us](#). To learn about Zoom, the Zoom website offers many excellent short instruction videos. You can find other instruction videos on YouTube as well. For tutorial information on how to join a Zoom meeting, see this video:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting>

Zoom includes a [FAQ](#) page with plenty of helpful information.

You can also join me for this free Intro to Zoom class tonight:

Free Zoom Introduction Tonight (Wednesday, May 6)

This is a free online introduction to Zoom, at 7:30 pm. You can ask questions. You can just come to say hi. Before class, try downloading Zoom and play around with it. If you open an account, you can start your own meeting and test the video and sound. If you are having problems with Zoom, I can try to help you tonight. To register, click on the following link now or anytime before start time (earlier is better):

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpf-6sqzosGNNaPRBuNvdpZJ_AYWKS7SFVA

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Then, tonight when you are ready to join the class, you click the link provided in the confirmation email. Or, go to [join.zoom.us](#) and enter the meeting ID and password. (BTW, this is the same procedure you will follow to join my online yoga classes.)

Alternatively, if you have the Zoom app as recommended, open the app and join the meeting by clicking on the **Join a Meeting** button and, when prompted, enter the meeting ID and password.

Only join from a device that includes video support (camera). Otherwise, you won't be able to see me and whatever I demo on my laptop.

When you choose to join this class (Zoom refers to it as a “meeting”), you will be in a waiting room. I will let you “in” for the class. For this special Zoom class, you don't need yoga props. We won't be doing yoga. You can be seated with your device in front of you, perhaps on a table or desk.

If you are not used to using apps like Zoom, do not let it scare you. It's quite easy, and it gets easier as you use it more frequently week to week, and we are here ready and gladly to help you.

Zoom Notes for Online Yoga Classes

- You must connect to the online yoga classes with a device that includes video camera. To make sure you are doing the poses safely as instructed, I must be able to see you. You can use your smart phone, but I recommend a tablet, laptop or desktop with video camera capability. With the wider screen, you get a better view.
- If your phone or computer has poor speakers, you can improve your audio experience by using a Bluetooth speaker. You connect (pair) the Bluetooth speaker with your device, and then you can have the Bluetooth speaker closer to hear more easily. If your phone or computer has a poor microphone, some Bluetooth speakers include a microphone. You will be heard more clearly when you speak. Some of these speakers are relatively inexpensive, as little as around \$20.
- For participating in a yoga class, choose a comfortable, quiet location in your home where you will not be disturbed (keep pets out: you can share the yoga with them after class!).
- Join early to make sure everything is connecting and functional, and to give us a chance to chat.
- When you join a class, you will be placed into a “waiting room” until allow you into the class meeting. Note: Zoom does not allow chocolate in the waiting room, so make sure you bring your own! 😊
- **Note:** If for some reason I do not “see” you in the waiting room, call me at 413 436-7374 or call my cell phone at 413 277-8765.
- When classes begin, and just before, we will chat. You can just sit near your device so your face can be seen. Then, we will go into shavasana (relaxation pose). Set up so that your head is toward your camera (your head will then be toward the teacher, just as in our studio classes). Make sure your whole body is visible from head to feet, if possible. When you need to change positions during class, such as to sit or stand, you may need

to adjust the camera/screen angle to keep you in view. Especially when standing, you might have to stand further away so that your whole body is visible. So make sure there's room behind you.

- Make sure your space is well lit so I can see you easily. Suggestion: have a light or two above your laptop facing you, and if needed, a light to each side.
- So I can see you most clearly, wear clothing that contrasts with your background (the wall behind you and whatever you are lying on). Do not wear black or dark blue clothing.
- Have the following nearby, ready for use: a folding chair or kitchen chair, yoga blocks, blankets or pillows. If you don't have blocks, perhaps tie together two groups of books.
- For tutorial information on how to join a Zoom meeting, see this video: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting>
- If you are using a tablet or laptop, make sure your cell phone is off or in "Do Not Disturb" mode.
- If you have any technical issues with your Zoom account, you can contact [zoom.us Tech Support](https://zoom.us/techsupport) directly.

Schedule for Online Classes

Now here are the classes I am offering initially. I might adjust this schedule over time as demand changes and per student requests. These two classes are meant primarily for those of you who have been attending my classes in Westford (and Chelmsford, and Littleton....):

Thursdays 10:00 to 11:30 am

7:30 to 9:00 pm

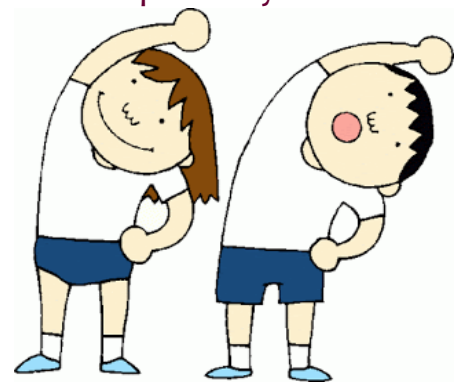
Notes:

You can switch around to other equivalent classes, but contact me at least 2 hours prior to the starting time so that I can send you meeting ID and password.

If the timing of either or both of these classes does not work for you, let me know. I have other classes available. See <http://thecenteredplace.com/online-yoga-classes>

For example, some of you might be interested in my Yoga+Meditation class, **Tuesdays 5:30 to 7:30 pm**. It's longer, deeper and the fee is different.

Suggested Prices for Online Classes



1.bp.blogspot.com Licensed [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

I want to keep my classes affordable, especially now, given the economic stress many of you might be experiencing. By “suggested prices,” I mean you can pay as fits your circumstances. No questions asked. My main intention is to give you an opportunity to recover from the stress of the pandemic: to relax and to move from being beside yourself to being centered in your Self.

Continuing and Experienced 90-minute Yoga Classes:

1 drop-in	\$15
4 classes*	\$54 (use within 5 weeks from purchase)
8 classes*	\$100 (use within 9 weeks from purchase)

* You register for a particular class. You can attend another class of the same kind but you must contact me 2 hours prior to the starting time so that I can send you meeting ID and password.

Yoga+Meditation 120-minute Classes

1 drop-in	\$19
4 classes	\$70 (use within 5 weeks from purchase)
8 classes	\$135 (use within 9 weeks from purchase)

To register for classes:

Registration signs you up for a class and gets you a meeting ID and password for the class you sign up for. It does not include payment. You pay in a separate step.

Thursday 10:00 AM class [Register](#)

Thursday 7:30 PM class [Register](#)

To register for the Tuesday 5:30 – 7:30 pm Yoga+Meditation Class [Register](#)

To pay for classes, either:

- Mail me a check (preferred because I incur no fees)

or

- Pay through PayPal (this is for your convenience, and that is important, too): <https://www.paypal.me/TheCenteredPlace> (BTW, you can download a [PayPal app](#))

Notes:

If you miss a class, you have an extra week to make up for it, or you can attend two classes a week to make up for it. If you are ill or on vacation for two or more weeks during the 4 or 8 weeks for which you made your purchase, let me know and I'll make sure you can attend the extra needed classes.

Other Online Classes and Events

As with online yoga classes, you register and pay separately for each (the Shavasana/Ujjayi class is free, so it requires registration only):

- **Free** 30-minute Shavasana/Ujjayi mini-retreat starting week of May 11
Take a short break to unwind and improve your immune system and sleep.
No video – just sound.
 - Mondays 8:30 to 9 pm [Register](#)
 - Wednesdays 8:30 to 9 pm [Register](#)

As you will see, you can register for individual or multiple Free Shavasana/Ujjayi classes

- **Laughter Is a Good Release**
Friday May 15, 6:30 to 8:30 pm
In tough times, laughter serves as an antidote to stress and fear. Laughter is the best medicine. Join Phil for some fun and laughter. Learn how a cents of humor pays you back and uplifts you from calamity, depression, and pretty much you name it. Will include a few stretches and shavasana.
Wednesday, May 20th 6:30 to 8:30 pm \$25
[Register](#)
Pay by check (preferred) or <https://www.paypal.me/TheCenteredPlace>
- Free Satsang (Optional Donation to Ashram accepted)
Friday May 29th 7 to 8:30 pm
[Register](#)
Donation: Send us a check made out to Svaroopaa Vidya Ashram or go to <https://svaroopaa.org/donate>

Birthdays This Month

We wish the following active students and friends a very happy birthday.

Chris Gounaris (26th) and Ingrid (Indigo) Wellhoerner (26th)



If you have a birthday this month and were omitted from this list, either let me know the missing information. Thank you!

Free Audio Recordings of Sadguru Nirmalananda and Her New Book and more

Free audio recordings of Swami Nirmalananda discourses online. Listen from home or during your travels. Listen from your cell phone or PC. <https://svaroopaa.org/audio-recording>

Swami's new book *A Yogic Lifestyle* is now available on amazon or at the ashram's [online site](#).

Swami invites you to join her Japa Club, a free service available by conference phone call (and Zoom). No video required. It meets for a few minutes twice a day, once at 11:45 am and the other at 6:30 pm. Swami gives a short wisdom reading and then leads Japa (mantra repetition) for about 6 minutes. In the evenings, she leads a second round dedicated to all those who have died from COVID-19, are ill, or who are affected in any way by it (that makes all of us!). It's like praying for others, but more powerful because of the mantra. For more information, click [here](#).

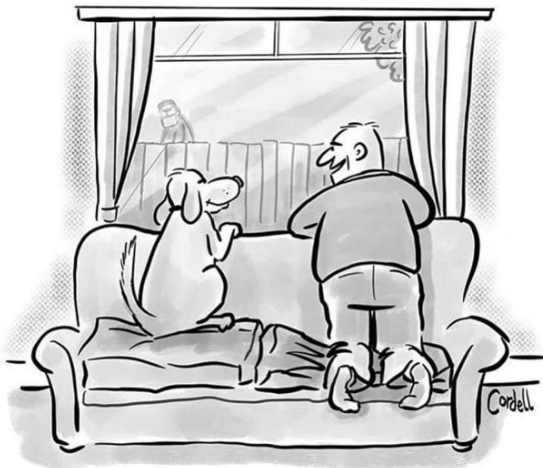
Enlighten Up!

“The world has turned upside down. Old folks are sneaking out of the house, and their kids are yelling at them to stay indoors!”

“Can everyone please just follow the advice of health experts so we can knock out this coronavirus and be done?! I feel like a kindergartner who keeps losing more recess time because one or two kids can't follow directions.”

Anyone else's car
getting 3 weeks to the
gallon at the moment ?

Staying indoors, we begin appreciating things that used to pass us by:



*“Until now, I never understood why you got so excited
when someone walked past the house.”*

Bolero Julliard, April 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqzkn-jX-JU>

(Julliard students and staff: delightful!)

Wisdom to Ponder

“The Great Realisation” – a bedtime story for children, a wake up for adults:
<https://www.facebook.com/probablytomfoolery/videos/925284527912453/>



Giving thanks to you, for giving us the opportunity to support you!

In loving service,

Phil Milgrom

Philmilgrom@comcast.net

www.thecenteredplace.com



(413) 277-8765 (cell)

(413) 436-7374 (home)