



Awakening to life

ANH caught up with CONNIE CHAPMAN, a life coach, writer and motivational speaker, to chat about her journey to awakening and tips for living a conscious life.





ON THE 'AWAKENING' MOMENT

I had a big 'wake up' moment when I was 19. At that stage of my life, I was struggling with a lot of anxiety, migraines, panic attacks and insecurity. My mum suggested we go along to an introductory eight-week yoga course. I knew nothing about yoga, but from the first class I fell in love with it. I loved the calmness and contentment I felt within myself after class and the tangible shifts the practice created within me. It was the catalyst for my soul-searching journey.

After those classes, I would borrow every book I could find on yoga and meditation, and I began devouring self-help books from Mum's bookcase by Louise Hay, Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer and Dr John Demartini.

This experience woke me up to the realisation that I was in charge of what I was thinking and feeling, and that I had the ability to change my life. It created an insatiable yearning within me to know more about consciousness, spirituality and how to master this human experience.

ON MINDFULNESS

I endeavor to be the observer of my mind and its thoughts rather than just believing them right away. If I notice a negative

train of thinking playing out, I like to use journaling to help me gain greater clarity and insight into what is going on. I put my thoughts out on paper so I can see them clearly and then work to shift them and choose some new ones. Once I have awareness around a key limiting belief, I do my best to catch it in the moment it starts and I then choose to shift it by consciously choosing thoughts that support and empower me.

ON THE PRACTICE OF YOGA

Yoga was the first practice that taught me how to become aware of my inner world and my inner self. It really pulled my awareness inwards and allowed me to observe the thoughts, emotions and reactions that I was never aware of.

My practice has taught me how to slow down, connect with my body and listen to myself. It has also shown me how to stretch beyond the limitations of my mind and its resistance.

Yoga has taught me that there is a beautiful space of love, wholeness, contentment and joy within us. We just have to create the space to drop into connection with it, and yoga really helps calm the mind and pull you in deeper so you can find this space within.



ON SELF-ACCEPTANCE

[Self-acceptance] is one of the most important things we can practise, yet it is incredibly challenging. To me, self-acceptance is really about learning to love everything about who we are right now, without feeling like things about us need to change or improve in order to be good enough or loveable.

Acceptance is about cracking our heart open to give unconditional love to ourselves, and dropping the rules and judgments we have about who we think we should be. It's about realising none of us are perfect. We all have flaws, weaknesses, parts of ourselves we are not proud of, but that doesn't make us any less loveable or mean there is anything wrong with us. Acceptance is our practice of embracing all parts of ourselves and then using the healing power of love to create change rather than criticism.

I truly believe acceptance is the first step to creating change, as when we are not in acceptance, we are in resistance – we are fighting with reality and this only keeps us stuck. So acceptance is about making peace with what is, and then from that place saying, 'And now, what do I want to create?'

ON BECOMING MORE COMPASSIONATE

It's important to remind ourselves that we are doing the best we can with what we know. We can choose to give ourselves credit and acknowledgement for the things we have done well, and then choose to forgive ourselves for the mistakes we have made. Compassion means being gentle, soft and loving ourselves through our challenges rather than beating ourselves up.

I often encourage my clients to practise inner child work when they are being hard on themselves. This means bringing an image of their four- or five-year-old self into their mind and imagining how they would speak to that child in that situation.

Imagine the child is experiencing the same struggle or challenge you are, and notice what you would say or do to support this child. This practice immediately creates an inner softening, where the heart cracks open and beautiful, loving words flow out that



are full of support and compassion. If you are finding it hard to be gentle with yourself, imagine your inner child, ask what he/she needs and then practise giving that to yourself.

ON GRATITUDE

I feel incredibly grateful that I have found my passion and purpose, and that I can do work every day that truly lights me up and fulfils me. On top of that, I am grateful for where I live and the incredible beaches at my doorstep. [I'm grateful] for my supportive family, the incredible group of women I get to call friends, my health and everything my body does for me each day.

ON LOVING OUR BODIES

I think we can shift our perception of our bodies from being something that gets us love – or as an object that we have to control and perfect – into seeing it as a beautiful vehicle that allows our soul to travel through this life.

I also think touch is incredibly healing and I encourage my clients to use daily self-love body massage as a way to connect with their body. In addition, I recommend they take on other body connection practices like soulful and intuitive dance, mirror work [and] really looking at their body and sending it love, and also listening deeply to their bodies and honouring them.

QUICK 5 WITH CONNIE

Favourite asana: Downward facing pigeon. While it is a challenging and uncomfortable pose, I love it for the incredible hip opening it creates.

Personal mantra: "Everything is always working out for me. The universe has my back. I am divinely supported and guided."

Style of meditation: A simple breath awareness meditation.

Favourite affirmation: "I am perfect, whole and complete just as I am."

Favourite book: That's a tough question as I have so many books I love. I would have to say it's a tie between *A New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle, and *Enchanted Love* by Marianne Williamson.

I think we need to drop the emphasis on how we define beauty. [It's] not how your body looks, but the beauty that comes from within. I also encourage people to be aware of the media images they are consuming. Fill your consciousness with messages of self-acceptance and unconditional body love.

ON LASTING HAPPINESS

[I believe happiness is about] appreciating what you have, who you are and where you are right now. There are blessings, magic, beauty, joy and abundance available in every moment, but when we're too busy trying to achieve more or do more, we miss it. I think happiness comes from slowing down and really appreciating what is in front of us. ■

conniechapman.com
@connie_chapman

EAT - SLEEP - YOGA - RETREAT!

BYRON YOGA RETREAT CENTRE

AFFORDABLE 8, 5 AND 3 DAY YOGA AND HEALTH RETREATS
IN BEAUTIFUL BYRON BAY



WIN A RETREAT
byronyoga.com/natural



BYRON YOGA RETREAT CENTRE
50 Skinners Shoot Rd, Byron Bay
info@byronyoga.com | 02 6685 8327
www.byronyoga.com

