



I was very excited to have the opportunity to interview Matthew Sanford. Matthew has dedicated his life to sharing the fundamental importance of the mind-body relationship. For him, mind-body integration is not just a personal health strategy. It is a movement of consciousness. To take hold, it must be both practical and spiritual, both inspirational and pragmatic.

Matthew works on a variety of fronts: author, speaker, non-profit founder, as well as yoga teacher. He teaches yoga to people of all abilities, but is a pioneer in adapting yoga for people living with disabilities. "We all live on a continuum of abilities and disabilities," he says. "The principles of yoga apply to all people, to all bodies."

#### Interview with Matthew Sanford



**Nancy:** What characteristics do you feel are most important for yoga teachers to develop?

**Matthew:** A yoga teacher must hone and refine a sense of wonder and depth regarding yoga. This is crucial if the teacher hopes to inspire others, regardless of their level of ability. A teacher also must accept and embrace that his or her own personal path through yoga is not necessarily the path of his or her students. Students must be met where they are, not where the teacher wants them to be. The beauty of yoga is that it does not discriminate; it can travel through any mind-body relationship. Its manifestation will look different depending on the particular student. Most importantly, a teacher must respect his or her students.

**Nancy:** Please explain your own philosophy of yoga and yoga teaching style.

**Matthew:** I believe that yoga can travel through any mind-body relationship, that the core of yoga does not change, only its outer expression does. I want my students to work with integrity within the body that they have, not the body they wish they had. I hope to inspire them to work hard but non-violently, and, most of all, to be patient. Yoga will give back exponentially over time to those who work hard and carefully. I also hope to inspire a love of the practice of yoga, sense sense journey and exploration even within what seems to be ordinary poses. Finally I hope to show my students that they are not just doing physical poses when practicing yoga, but rather are exploring the wonders of consciousness.

**Nancy:** What tools have you found in your own yoga experience or teaching career that have helped you the most to help others?

**Matthew:** A sense of wonder, patience, and compassion. I have made many mistakes. Mistakes are not failings; they are teachers and need to be learned from.

**Nancy:** Describe your own yoga practice and what it means to you.

**Matthew:** My practice is generally asana driven and is done slowly and methodically. I do not worry about how many different poses I can do or how long that I can hold each pose. Rather, my practice is a vehicle that helps me appreciate the experience of existence, an experience that can be deepened and refined.

**Nancy:** How do you help students stay interested or motivated in their yoga practice?

**Matthew:** I try to convey a profound sense of wonder and appreciation about the subtleties of the mind-body relationship. If I can help my students gain a glimpse of the vastness of yoga while simultaneously showing them a structured, disciplined way to repeat this experience, then I have done my job as a teacher. Then I have taught them to fish, not just given them fish.

**Nancy:** What do you want students to gain in general from your workshops or classes?

**Matthew:** A sense of lightness in their own spine, a glimpse that life becomes easier not harder as one becomes more conscious. I want my students to experience the insight that their bodies are the best home that their minds will ever have.

**Nancy:** Which yoga organizations or groups do you think are helpful resources for new yoga teachers or experienced yoga teachers?

**Matthew:** I think the best thing a new yoga teacher can do is foster an open, sharing relationship with a more experienced yoga teacher. That is how yoga has been passed down over the centuries.

**Nancy:** Thank you Matthew. It's been a pleasure.

---

**Matthew teaches and gives workshops all around the country. The best way to find out about these events is through his website at [www.matthew-sanford.com](http://www.matthew-sanford.com)**

**To learn more about our in-person and online yoga teacher training programs, click on the link below.**  
**[Yoga Education Institute](#)**