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by Jennifer Lang

Eighteen years ago last September, I went to my first yoga class in my native Oakland, California. It was a two-hour class on a Wednesday morning with [Rodney Yee](#), and it was packed. I enjoyed the challenge, the opening of the body, and the lengthening of my muscles.

Until the end. "Lie on your backs and close your eyes," Rodney said, 10 minutes before class was over. He began to walk around the room, offering assists.

Uncomfortable, I got up and began to roll up my borrowed mat. My babysitter clock was ticking. My work deadline was looming. There was no way I was going to spend money and time sleeping. Rodney looked over and our eyes met. "Sorry," I mouthed and slipped out the door.

The following Wednesday, I returned. And again, at the end of class, when Rodney began to lead us into Savasana, I busied myself, putting on my clothes and rolling up the mat. I loved the practice, but spending precious time lying down made no sense to me, and I couldn't understand why everyone around me was complying. In all my years taking modern dance and aerobics classes, never had we taken the time to just lie still, doing nothing, as if asleep or dead.

Embarrassment unsettled me, so I turned proactive. Before class, I'd approach Rodney with some fabricated excuse—a doctor's appointment, haircut, meeting—apologizing that I had to leave early. Never once did he question, push, or reprimand me.

A couple of years passed, and I continued to get on the mat, throughout two pregnancies and then with my babies. I branched out to study with other teachers. And I continued to skip Savasana, thankful for the deep stretch in my body but always aware of the time.

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understand what you're missing?" Five years into this yoga journey, and I could count on one hand the number of times I'd stayed until the end,

"This is possibly the most important pose, the reason some people practice," Cynthia said. I loved her classes and her dance-like choreography, so I promised her that I'd stay for the last pose the next week.

It wasn't easy at first. I had to force myself to lie there, fidgeting, anxious, thinking non-stop. But, as I continued to stay to the bitter end week after week, something shifted. As I lay there, lavender-scented pillows gently placed over my eyes by my teachers' loving hands, warm with my socks and sweatshirt on or under a blanket, I began to relax and allow the pose to do its magic. I felt the rise and fall of my chest, and let my body become heavy and sink into the earth, knowing the earth would support me.

More years passed, and I went to class steadily once a week. Sometimes I had to hire babysitters or cut into sacred work hours to practice, but I no longer counted every minute or looked at any part of it as wasted time or money. On the contrary, I came to understand what my teachers—Rodney, Cynthia, and so many others—had been saying for years. Something about this pose called Savasana is perhaps the most important and challenging. We're not trying to fall asleep, but rather to be in a state of deep stillness, aware of each breath, emptying the mind as the outer, physical body relaxes. Some of my best practices are those with a Savasana that takes me away, to a place of clarity, openheartedness, and inspiration, where my mind empties and I feel as if I'm floating.

Jennifer Lang is a yoga instructor and writer who lives in Raanana, Israel, where she blogs about her adventures at opentoisrael.com.

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