



DIVING INTO MIND, BODY & SOUL

Host:
Jennifer Bitner

Guest Expert:
Ashley Keefe

Moksha Yoga Waterloo

theentrepreneurialadventureguide.com

Healing Through Yoga

Ashley, owner of Moksha yoga studio in Waterloo, former personal trainer and journeying to become a holistic health coach, has an inspiring story through health challenges. "I suffered through anxiety as a teenager and went through a bad depression, and around the age of 16, I was hospitalized for 5 weeks for an eating disorder. I remember the first night there, I had someone watching me to make sure I wouldn't exercise or do anything that would worry them. When the doctor said to me I could have a heart attack due to how poor my health was, I knew in that moment that something had to change. From that moment forward, I made a commitment to dive into taking care of myself. It was a long bumpy journey!

After high school, I sent myself to boarding school the following year and it was one of the best decisions I've ever made - all surrounded by outdoor fitness! It was then that I felt strong in my body and strong in my skin again, and I was able to really move forward.

I then stumbled on a yoga studio, and I was there everyday! Within the first couple weeks of starting yoga, it was then I could stand in front of a mirror and feel self compassion for myself, and to really understand the tools and the simplicity of going back to your breath. It was that moment that I wanted to share this with others. Before doing my yoga teacher training, I completed my personal training certification and my group fitness certification. I wanted to create a space for people to find the type of healing that I found in my life. Here I am today 9+ years later owning a yoga studio in Waterloo, and investing into many more in Canada in the U.S!"

Jennifer: there are people like you who have these powerful amazing stories as they were growing up, and it has launched them into something so successful they're in now. It usually stems from something they struggled so severely with. A lot of us that go through our healing, go onto our life's mission of serving others and showing them the things we found in our journey. What would you tell to someone who may be going through that type of journey, whether they're a parent/teenager, having gone through this at such a young age?

Discovering Mindfulness

Ashley: one of the biggest things is patience because this doesn't happen overnight. One of the things for me, even though I went through treatment in the hospital and was seen by them as a 'healthy weight' and sent me home, the mental process was still something that I had to work on. The practice of yoga was instrumental, but when I started to practice more deep meditation and learn to be still, at first I thought I was crazy! What I had to layer on top of that was self-compassion and kindness. Be patient with yourself is essential because the little voice of self-doubt can still pop up. When you embrace the doubt, it actually has less of a hold on you! Whatever you resist, persists, so don't push it away! Celebrate the challenge instead, as you become stronger. Stand in the fire and discomfort.

Jennifer: what made you decide to take the avenue of holistic healing?

Ashley: when I started to practice with my sports team and get ahold of what it really felt like to be connected to my body again, I knew that it was something essential for my physical and mental wellbeing. With yoga, I was walking down the streets of London with a friend, saw a yoga program displayed, and told her we needed to go and try! After daily going for the week access that I purchased, I bought a pass and barely missed a single day because it really reconnected to who I am and experiencing much less mental stress.

Jennifer: what would you say to someone brand new to yoga/meditation, and just discovering this path of healing and mindfulness? What things could they expect to feel or experience when starting?

Ashley: one of the biggest things is getting out of the sympathetic nervous system stress. We constantly are on the go and too fast paced, so when you slow down and connect to the parasympathetic nervous system, you start to notice your sleep and digestion are better. You feel more energized throughout your day. Find a holistic form of health and wellness that feels accessible to you and feels right to you without hesitation!

Jennifer: if people were trying to look for an easy or simple addition to their routine to initialize that connection to the mind, body and spirit, what are some things they can do?

The Body as a Whole

Ashley: breathing! We are breathing all day and night long and not only is it something our body does automatically, but something we can control! Just focusing on breathing and expanding your rib cage in all directions. Placing your hands on the side of your ribs helps you to focus in getting your lungs to move in all directions. Deep breathing helps you to eliminate the stress, so your body can go back to your parasympathetic nervous system. Even with digestive issues many have, by taking 5 deep breaths and allowing expansion, your body then is allowed to digest food better and reduce the stress.

Jennifer: and this is where you can add in the essential oils! If you're practicing yoga and meditation, it's powerful to use the emotional aromatherapy to breathe in and trigger neuro-chemicals in your body to inhibit relaxation and balance. And for you, nutrition and movement is so important in your practice, connecting all of areas in the body! Why is that such a big part of your practice?

Ashley: they are non-negotiable and essential in my routine. When it comes down to it, make a plan as success loves preparation! With eating healthy, I just make sure I always have pre-made food always on hand for the times I'm busy. The same thing with movement, and making sure I've included it first thing in the morning as it sets the tone for the entire day.

Jennifer: and it allows your body to restore balance so you can effectively walk into new tasks at ease. Ashley, you have an amazing online series called 'Entrepreneurial Adventure Guide', starting on March 5th!

Ashley: Yes, I'm focusing on interviewing entrepreneurs in a wide range of backgrounds! They are from all over the world discussing strategies and tools to go from rundown to re-inspired! Even if you're not an entrepreneur, there are so many nuggets on how to stay focused and win your day! You can sign up at theentrepreneurialadventureguide.com

I also have a 6 month program starting in April and we will be focusing on different aspects of health and wellness such as nutrition and wellness, fitness, selfcare and productivity, vision and creativity! If you are interested and joining me, you can connect through ashley@ashleykeefe.com

Ashely, it's beautiful to see the journey you had gone through, where it has brought you now, and how you are giving back!

jenniferbitner.com