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YOUR

LIFE

*is*

MEDICINE

*Ayurveda for Yogis*

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SECOND EDITION

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KRISTEN LILLIAN SCHNEIDER

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- » How Doshas influence our dreams,  
spending habits, and careers
- » Essential Oils for the Doshas
- » New Recipes
- » Home Remedies for Common Imbalances

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*“Ayurveda treatment begins with the narrative of the patient. It is the function of the Practitioner to direct people towards happiness. The Declaration of Independence declares our basic right to the pursuit of happiness. But I disagree—happiness is not something we achieve by pursuing. We find happiness by pursuing other things...our purpose. When we find our purpose, we achieve healing.”*

**—Gerard Buffo**

*Dean of Kripalu School of Ayurveda*

## *Letter from your Author...*

THIS BOOK WAS originally published just over three years ago. At the time of first writing this book I had been practicing yoga for seven years, and Ayurveda for five. I had completed Ayurveda school and earned accreditation as a Board Certified Ayurveda Practitioner. I was three years into owning a small Ayurveda clinic in Orlando, Florida, where I had already met with about five hundred clients. I had experiential data on how Ayurveda had transformed my personal life, and I was watching it do the same for others right before my eyes. Early into my practice, patterns of common themes and shared imbalances become obvious to me. The majority of my clients seemed stress, inflamed, and anxious. Most of us had battled with food and body image, and a hard time juggling all the balls in our life. Self-care had taken a backseat in the lives of most of the people I saw. And having enough time to work and sleep, let alone cook healthy meals and exercise seemed to be a ubiquitous challenge. My motivation for publishing *Your Life is Medicine: Ayurveda for Yogis* was simple. I wanted to impart Ayurveda's simple, yet profound wisdom onto my clients and students. I wanted to distill the principles that can seem complicated at first glance. My goal was to curate the core message of Ayurveda, which is to return to your True Nature in a way that was both approachable and applicable. I think it was a success! Now, just over three years and 3,000 copies sold later; I have decided to reformat that book and create a second addition that carries an even more salient message and added tools. The original book was used for trainings and

workshops. In such, it was large and looked more like a text book. The aesthetic of the larger book might have seemed intimidating for people who did not wish to “study” Ayurveda, or be students of the practice; but more so, just wanted to bring the concepts directly into their lives. I appreciate that, and that’s why this book is more compact. You can toss it in your purse and read it at the park while your kids are playing. You can bring it with you and reference it as you stroll through the aisles at the grocery store, and you can keep it by your bedside to read at your leisure at night. The subtitle of this book is *Ayurveda for Yogis*. But this book is in no way exclusively for people who practice yoga. This book is for everyone! Yoga was my gateway into Ayurveda. I teach classes and trainings all over the world. As an avid student and practitioner of yoga—I think like a yogi. I see the world through the lens of largely Eastern philosophies. My story that of a woman who practices yoga. That is my experience, and I find it most authentic to share from experience. So that is why it’s titled *Ayurveda for Yogis*. But I am not just a yogi. I am a daughter, a sister, a partner, an entrepreneur, an American, a modern woman, a student, a teacher, and sometimes, just like you—overwhelmed, exhausted, and seeking answers. This book is written as a source of inspiration, clarity, and ease. From my heart to yours, this book was written for you.







P A R T 1

# Dosha Balancing Lifestyle



*“Travel light, live light, spread light, be the light.”*

—Yogi Bhajan

## I N T R O D U C T I O N



### *Opening Story...*

YOU HAVE TASTED, experienced and embodied the benefits of yoga. If you are anything like me, on any given day you have been tired, wound up, anxious or stressed out as your ten toes made their way onto the yoga mat. Thanks to the generous and ineffable laws of the practice, you stepped off the mat just moments later feeling light, energized, calm, and at peace. You are well aware of how breath, movement, awareness, and intention meet time and space to transform your mood, day and even your life. You certainly have your own unique and inspiring story of how yoga has changed your life. Thank goodness for that. Thank goodness for yoga, and thank goodness for you. I salute you for having the curiosity, willingness, and commitment to improving your life. And by the contagious effects of energy, improving the lives of the people around you. No matter how your story began, fast forward and you find yourself here with this book in your hand. Perhaps you have the same intrigued, nervous, or trusting feeling in your heart as you did the day you entered your first yoga class. There is a deep knowingness that something is

about to shift. I'm grateful you are here ready to explore, share, create, and shift. Whether we know each other by name or not, we share a connection. We share similar ideals, to love and be loved in return. We all do our best to treat ourselves with compassion and love, and to treat others with the same sentiment. We want to understand ourselves, feel vibrant, healthy, and happy. We are so much more alike than we are different. I'd like to introduce you to Ayurveda, the sister science of yoga. An approach to life that amalgamates science and spirituality. Ayurveda gives us the tools to celebrate our unity and nourish our individuality. Ayurveda is built on the premise that self-knowledge leads to self-healing. Ayurveda will be the perfect consort to your yoga practice. The heartbeat of Ayurveda is self-care. The way we care for ourselves and treat ourselves is the impetus for our individual health and the health of the planet. The process of learning Ayurveda, sharing the tools and even writing this book have enhanced my life in ways I would have never predicted or imagined. Like yoga, the science is infinite. The practice is continuously evolving, and we will all—always be students.

*“The body is your temple. Keep it pure and clean for the soul to reside in.”*

**—B.K.S. Iyengar**

I was twenty-three years old when I stepped off the airplane for my first adventure in India. The plan was to take a six week long yoga course. As fate would have it, I ended up staying six months and that was just the start of the journey. I was living in a small town called Rishikesh. This town was known as the yoga mecca

of the world. I found ashrams or spiritual communities, temples, and yoga schools galore. People walked down the streets draped in saffron robes and prayer beads. The aroma in the streets was a wafting cacophony of curry and cow manure, combined with the palpable aura of incense. You could not walk more than a few steps without passing beggars pleading for money, saints blessings your path, yogis standing on their heads, and shop owners trying to sell you trinkets. I stayed in an ashram with a couple girlfriends I met while living in China, teaching English the year prior. Oddly enough, I originally learned yoga in China. I did not speak Mandarin, so I learned purely off observation, trial, and plenty of error. My friends Naomi and Kathy, whom I practiced with in China decided they too loved yoga enough to fly to India and take a proper course. We arrived in January. It was freezing. Our accommodations had no heat or running water. The electricity was spotty and never functioned after 8am.

As I was accustomed to the constellation of modern amenities that keep us comfy, these conditions were almost comical by comparison. To wash my body, I had to take a big bucket to the middle of a courtyard and fill it with water to be carried back to my “shower”, which was actually a cement room with a water spicket. But every time, without fail, I would splash so much water from my bucket it was nearly empty by the time I made it back to my room. What may seem like menial first world dissonance, felt then, like I was stepping into a daring adventure— armed with independence and eagerness. One day I was walking down the street and I saw a sign that said, “Ayurveda Clinic—appointments for foreigners.” The term foreigner referred to me. It meant that the proprietors spoke English and welcomed tourists. I did not know anything about Ayurveda, I had never even heard of it. But the appointment was only thirty minutes and four dollars so I

decided, what the hey, I have nothing to lose. I sat across from a big boned Indian woman who wore a sweater and jeans. She had enormous bug eyes, with one lazy eye that veered off away from where she was looking. She spoke “Hinglish”, half English and half Hindi. She asked to see my tongue as she grabbed my hand to take my pulse. She asked me a few questions like: ”Have you always been this thin?” and “Do you get hungry a lot?” I didn’t know where she was going with the questions, but I appeased her inquiries. “No, I haven’t always been very thin and no ma’am I don’t get hungry a lot.” Hunger used to be a bad concept in my world, so I terminated the thought. I wasn’t about to admit to her that I had incessant gnawing hunger pangs. After scribbling down a few notes on a small piece of paper, she looked up at me and said I was Pitta/Vata. These words meant nothing to me. I had never heard them before. She proceeded to tell me that because of my strong fire element I can get very hungry and angry easily. I immediately turned beat red and shouted, “What?! No, I don’t!” I heard myself and wanted to recoil. Oh my goodness, I just got very angry. Very easily. Hmmm, maybe this woman was on to something. She continued. She told me to avoid spicy foods, coffee, onions, tomatoes, and alcohol. I loved those things by the way. Then she told me to stay out of the heat, try not to be competitive, and never sunbathe because my skin is sensitive. *Woman! First you call me out on being hungry and prone to anger and now you’re telling me to eliminate all my favorite foods and activities?! We are not off to a good start!* It was time to go. I brought my hands to prayer over my heart, bowed, grabbed the paper, stuffed it in my back pocket, and left. During that trip we visited an Ayurvedic clinic where the doctor was dignified and poised in his appearance. He invited us into his clean and air conditioned office. I know clean and air conditioned might not seem deserving of a mention, but believe me, after four weeks in 100 degree weather, covered in flies, this was heaven.

He proceeded to take our pulses and revealed to us things we already knew. The enthralling part was, how did he know these things? He knew I was prone to having bouts of constipation and anxiety. He knew I was ambitious, but got irritable and impatient easily. He knew coffee gave me heartburn. He knew all of this by taking my pulse! Needless to say, I was aroused. Maggie and I left feeling inspired by this system of medicine that was somehow covert or dismissed in our part of the world. Jump ahead several months. I'm at home in the town I grew up in—sleeping, one of those deep sleeps where the outer world disappears. Suddenly, I hear this voice as clear as day. The voice says, “Study Ayurveda. You must study Ayurveda.” I open my eyes. It's just me. Me and pillows. Who said that? The voice sounded like a Guru or Gandhi or someone important. I'm not arguing with that guy. It was 3am. I jumped out of bed, got on the computer and immediately started researching Ayurveda schools. To my surprise, there were not many schools and they were all very expensive. I decided to go on Amazon and order every single Ayurveda book I could get my hands on. My mom was sweet enough to buy them for me as an early Christmas present. That Christmas morning was hilarious. I opened my gifts and every book had dog-eared pages, highlights, sticky notes and writing in the margins. My mom said, “Sweetpea, did you open your gifts early?” Oh I did. I dove into those books with a overwhelming curiosity for every word and meaning. There was no way I could wait until Christmas to read my gifts. Maybe this is what the bug-eyed lady meant when she said I was always hungry. Maybe that's what the poised doctor said when he hinted I was impatient. Whatever the case may be, I had fallen in love. I felt like I was downloading all the information I needed to help me understand myself and the other individuals in my life. I even began to see glimpse of how the universe functions. I know that may sound like a bold statement, but it's sincere. It didn't take



long for everyone around me to catch wind of my new found interest. Initially, I held a free workshop at my yoga studio. Over fifty people attended. I was eager to share everything I recently uncovered. I talked for hours while facilitating Ayurvedic quizzes, giving suggestions, and answering questions. Much to my delight, my passion sparked a genuine interest for Ayurveda in my yoga community. I carried on with my yoga studies learning about philosophy, breathing, meditation, and how to contort my body into unusual shapes. My yoga program ended six weeks later, but I wasn't ready to go. I felt like I had just tasted an appetizer and I was still starving for more. I wanted to be further immersed in this culture and way of living. Fortunately, the yoga school invited me to stay free of charge and help teach the next course. I was elated. The only downfall was that I was out of books. I had read every fiction, non-fiction, poetry, philosophy, and romance novel on the shelf. There was only one book store in town and I had read almost all of the books they carried. The final remaining book was none other than a book about Ayurveda. I was less than enthused to read it, but I needed something to entertain me at night—after all there was no TV. After flipping through the pages, I found the principles to be interesting but relatively hard to understand. I didn't fully grasp it. I finished the book, gave it to a friend and never thought about it again. Well, until now.

Sixteen months later, I found myself back in America where I slowly molded my life into a career teaching yoga. I began leading dozens of classes a week at studios, gyms and corporate events. I was doing what I loved but was itching for another adventure. My time in India had left such a lasting impact on my life, I decided to go back. But this time, I went with my friend, Maggie, to Kerala, which is in southern India. Little did I know, Kerala is actually the motherland of Ayurveda. The streets are littered with

signs for Ayurvedic herbs, massages, foods, and clinics. I wasn't particularly interested in Ayurveda, but you don't have to twist my arm to get a massage. Services in India are very affordable, so I indulged. I received all sorts of fascinating Ayurveda treatments. I had oil rubbed all over my body, dripped on my forehead, and administered into my nose and ears. I received treatments where my body was rubbed down in herbs and clay, patted with sacks of plants and spices. I even had tiny domes of warm melted butter (ghee) poured into my eyes. I am not kidding, I tried it all. And I loved it. I was not going to stop eating spicy food, drinking coffee or sunbathing, but this I could manage. A few months later, my friend Maggie received an email from a physician in our community who owns an Urgent Care Clinic. He was reaching out to see if my friend would teach yoga as part of a corporate wellness program, and added "P.S. Do you know anyone who is knowledgeable in Ayurveda?" My friend showed me the email and I immediately leaped up to respond to his request. Here's a tale of serendipity. The physician offered to pay for my formal Ayurveda education (remember, that's the same education I couldn't afford so opted for self study instead). In return, I would to bring Eastern Medicine into our community while working at his urgent care clinic to pay him back. Deal! I studied at Kripalu School of Ayurveda in Massachusetts. I opened my Ayurveda clinic under the Urgent Care Doctor's office. I can't help but think there are invisible forces in the universe that are powerful beyond measure. Forces that support us and guide us. Forces that clear paths, create intentional hurdles and invite us to fulfill a purpose we ourselves may only be on the cusp of recognizing. I spent the next several years expanding my business to my own clinic, studying intricate aspects of Ayurveda like pulse diagnosis, Marma (like acupuncture) and psychology. I traveled back to India to intern at an Ayurvedic Research Center. I created an organic

Ayurvedic product line for self-care called Wellblends, and I came full circle to teaching Ayurveda to yoga students who participate in very similar courses as the one I originally took in India years ago. Perhaps I wasn't initially attracted to Ayurveda because I wasn't ready for it. Maybe it wasn't delivered to me in a way that resonated with me. Maybe I didn't understand it. For whatever reason, it was not love at first sight. But now, Ayurveda is integral to my life as my heartbeat. These principles and tools have changed my life—not only because I got to make a career out of it and help people on a daily basis, but because Ayurveda gave me the framework and language I needed to understand my body, mind, and emotions. It guided me to realize the shifts and changes that come with everyday life, the turning of seasons, and the metamorphosis into new phases of life and how to adapt to these natural undulations of time.

You'll discover this book is split into two sections. Section ONE: Dosh Balancing Lifestyle is all about discovering your constitution, understanding the mind-body connection, and incorporating harmonious activities, such as self-care practices, and daily rituals into your life. This includes daily habits, meditation, breathing practices, yoga, intention setting, and cultivating awareness around how our thoughts impact our reality. Part TWO is Nutrition and Healing. In this section we'll debunk the false information we've been fed regarding food and diet. We'll uncover the key concepts of Ayurvedic nutrition, and learn how to eat for our Dosha. We'll address cravings, emotional eating, stress eating, and how food effects our psychology. This section includes meal plans, Dosha pacifying diets, recipes, and home remedies for common imbalances. This book is meant to be a compressive guide that will accompany you as you integrate Ayurveda into your beautiful life. I hope you enjoy reading the pages of this book as much as enjoyed writing them.