**Theme Teaching & Practice**

* Connection / Union: Unifying or joining together that which is separate

**Your (The Teacher’s) Experience**

* How have you experienced this theme? When possible, meditate on the theme in the days before teaching. You may or may not share a part of your personal story; the purpose in remembering your experience is to help you embody the teaching so that you are speaking authentically.

**Introduce Theme**

* Take a moment to observe your body and mind. What one word describes your state right now? [Pause.] Most spiritual practices, including yoga, teach that We are One, that the nature of Reality is Unity. But what if we're not feeling that? What if the word that describes our state is distracted or anxious or separate or anything other than Oneness? How can we actually experience Unity?
* The word “yoga” comes from the Sanskrit root “yuj” which means “to yoke” as in yoking together a horse and cart.
* Often we hear the word *yoga* defined as “union,” which is correct. But it also means “joining.” The words union and joining may conjure up different meanings. Union may make us think of oneness or connectedness and joining may feel more like an action to bring together things that were previously separate. This is consistent with yoga being both a state and a practice. And since we’re here to practice, let’s explore the idea of joining.
* With practice, we unify that which is separate.
* Yoga practice unites body and mind. When we calm the fluctuations of the mind, we may experience the truth of who we are: connected and whole.

**Student Autonomy**

* If that focus doesn’t resonate for you today, please direct your practice in a way that best serves you.

**Related Concepts**

* Union, oneness, indivisible
* Separation, abandonment; Feeling like a “stranger in a strange and hostile land”
* Feeling connected, in harmony, safe
* Being whole, knowing you are whole, feeling whole

**Expand on Theme / Plant a Seed**

* With practice, we unify that which is separate.
* Yoga practice unites body and mind. When we calm the fluctuations of the mind, we may experience the truth of who we are: connected and whole.

**Invite a Personal Connection**

* Right now, in this pose, take a moment to observe your body, mind and emotions… Is there anything that feels separate or abandoned?
* If you don’t know what I mean by feeling separate or abandoned, another question could be: Is there something in your body that you’re trying to ignore or feelings that you are trying to forget?
* Or, is there a part of your body or a feeling that you can’t seem to connect with, even when you try?

Examples: The right side of your body? Your hamstrings? A feeling of anger or grief? A sense of independence or power? A thought you can’t seem to get rid of? Your heart or a feeling of compassion?

**Practice**

1. Right now, what feels separate or abandoned?
2. Take a moment to witness the alone-part.
3. Notice any judgment that arises. (I don’t want to feel that, I don’t approve of that, I want a break from that.) Allow the judgment to pass and simply observe with interest and compassion.
4. Consider inviting in the separateness, asking it to join you and your practice.

**Choose Your Teaching Nugget**

* The intention is to bring forth the energy of the teaching using fewer words, allowing more silence for students to process. Consider using fewer and fewer words as class progresses.
* Nugget 1: What feels separate? Notice and allow judgments. Invite in the separateness.
* Nugget 2: What feels separate?

**Don’t Abandon the Theme**

* Have a beginning, middle and end. Do not abandon the theme. But avoid too much teaching; allow some silence for going inward.
* As class begins to wind down, avoid teachings that require students to process using their left-brain. Instead, use more imagery and fewer words.

**Readings**

**Erich Schiffmann** – **Forming a union from a condition of separation**

*The interesting thing… is that union and joining do not mean the same thing. Union means oneness, wholeness, not separated or divided, indivisible. Joining means coming together, implying the formation of a union from a previous condition of separation. The implication here is that people who at one time felt separated, abandoned and alone, like strangers in a strange and hostile land, now feel connected, in harmony, safe and whole because of yoga.*

**Lorin Roche PhD** – **Yoga can refer to any junction or union**

*Yoga can refer to any junction—in astronomy and astrology, a conjunction of the stars or planets; in grammar, the connection of words together; in arithmetic, addition, sum, total. In alchemy or chemistry, mixing different materials together is yoga. In spirituality, yoga can mean the union of the soul with matter, the union of the individual soul with the universal soul, and the disciplines that serve this union.*

**Swami Anantananda** – **Union with present is the source of joy & aliveness**

*Union with the timeless present, the sage Patanjali tells us in his Yoga Sutras, comes not from grasping harder at the sense impressions and ideas that flood into the mind but from the stilling of the modifications of the mind. That union is the source of the joy and aliveness we are looking for.*

**Nischala Joy Devi** – **Yoga is the uniting of consciousness in the heart**

*Yoga is the uniting of consciousness in the heart. United in the heart, consciousness is steadied, then we abide in our true nature—joy. At other times, we identify with the rays of consciousness, which fluctuate and encourage our perceived suffering.*

**Off the Mat**

* During your daily routines, consider taking pause now and then to ask yourself, “Right now, what feels separate or abandoned?” Invite the separateness into your heart.

**See Also**

* [Teaching with Themes: Guidelines](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/themes-readings-introduction-main/teaching-with-themes/)
* [Theme Readings: Connection / Union](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/forgiveness-gratitude/theme-connection-union/)