YOGA TEACHER CENTRAL

Sacredness, Devotion, Honor & Respect



VERSION 3.1

Theme

* Sacredness, Devotion, Honor, Respect

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

* One of the meanings of “sacred” is “highly valued and important: deserving great respect.” (Merriam-Webster) How can we demonstrate that something is “highly valued” and “deserving great respect?”
* We do this with Intention & Presence.
* Sacredness is not defined through particular rituals. It’s not the acts themselves that signal honor & devotion, but rather the intention behind them, and the presence while undertaking them.
* The *Namaste* greeting, for example, is commonly understood as, “I bow to you.” The spiritual purpose of the greeting is said to honor the divinity (or “Light”) in those we meet, and to remind ourselves and others of the oneness and divinity of all life.
* When done with presence and intention, greeting with *Namaste* can be a way of making ourselves into an offering, and demonstrating our respect for the other person as well as ourselves and all life.
* But *Namaste* is just one example. With conscious presence and intention, we can demonstrate the sacredness of anything we love.

Student Autonomy

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

Related Concepts

* [Sacred Space & Ritual](https://yogateachercentral.com/study-library/art-of-teaching/art-of-teaching-2/sacred-space-ritual/?highlight=sacred%20space)
* [Namaste / Namaskar](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/forgiveness-gratitude/namaste-namaskar/?highlight=namaste)
* [Intention & Sankalpa](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/dharma-intention-goals-main/theme-resolutions-goals-intention/)
* [Presence & Present Moment Awareness](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/wise-practice/theme-present-moment-awareness/?highlight=presence)

Expand on Theme / Plant a Seed

* We can have the intention to treat our whole lives as sacred, as something deserving great respect.
* The breath may be used as a tool for uniting the microcosm of the inner body with the macrocosm of the entire universe.
* If it resonates for you, you may offer a whole body prayer to the sun as the light that sustains life and reflects the divine light that resides within.

Invite a Personal Connection

* You can intend to make this moment sacred by acknowledging that life is precious.
* You can make anything an offering or a prayer. Your offering can be to any form of the Divine that resonates for you, or to the sun.
* You can have the intention of your breath uniting you with the universe.

Practice

1. Remember that life is precious.
2. Make your pose an offering or prayer.
3. Offer your presence to this moment in your life, a sense of openness and respect for whatever is happening.
4. Have the intention to make this moment sacred, maybe even rejoicing in it.

Choose Your Teaching Nugget

* The intention of a nugget is to bring forth the energy of the teaching using few words, allowing more silence for students to process. You may use fewer words over a succession of teaching moments.
* Nugget 1: Remember that life is precious. Be present. Rejoice.
* Nugget 2: Remember.

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

Norman Allen – Whether life is eternal or not, it is precious

*In the end, I don’t think it matters much whether we conceive of life as eternal or as bounded by the events of birth and death. Either way, we must treat it as the precious experience that it is. For me, the lesson is one of awareness and observation — to look at a partner, child, or friend and see them fully, rejoice in them, laugh at the beauty of them. The same is true for clear skies, gathering storms, Redwood trees, bad drivers, potholes and humidity.*

Wendell Berry – Nothing is Unsacred, Only Desecrated

Breathe with unconditional breath

the unconditioned air.

Shun electric wire.

Communicate slowly. Live

a three-dimensioned life;

stay away from screens.

Stay away from anything

that obscures the place it is in.

There are no unsacred places;

there are only sacred places

and desecrated places.

Pema Chodron – The preciousness of a brand new sun

*The Navajo teach their children that every morning when the sun comes up it’s a brand-new sun. It’s born each morning, it lives for the duration of one day, and in the evening it passes on, never to return again. The adults take the children out at dawn and they say, “The sun has only one day. You must live this day in a good way, so that the sun won’t have wasted precious time.” Acknowledging the preciousness of each day is a good way to live, a good way to reconnect with our basic joy.*

Gurudev – Experience the sacredness of yoga

*Enter the sanctuary of your soul. Treat your body as a temple, explore the sacredness of the embodied soul… Experience the presence of the spirit and the glory of the divine. Manifest it as peace, love and joy in your heart. This practice offers you direct passage to the soul’s innermost corridors. It retrieves, recaptures and integrates the sacred wisdom of yoga. It elevates the ordinary practice of yoga to a level of sacredness of the soul. You experience it more like a prayer than posture; more like a divine dance than strained discipline.*

Swami Lalitananda – Making poses an offering

*I asked people to do a pose of their choice as an offering to [The Divine] and to observe, “What makes it an offering? … I could almost hear the competitive, judgmental and insecure parts shuffling aside as the heart was given the chance to come forward. People chose many different poses… It wasn’t that any particular pose embodied devotion, but that devotion could imbue any pose—from the most dynamic to the most gentle. All practitioners agreed that it was their intent that created the alchemy.*

L.R. Knost – All things can be mended—not with time but with intention

*Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.*

Off the Mat

* During your daily routines, consider taking pause now and then to remember that life is precious.
* Even when we see the brokenness of the world, we may still believe it to be sacred and make ourselves and our Life into an offering.

See Also

* [Teaching with Themes: Guidelines](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/themes-readings-introduction-main/teaching-with-themes/)
* [Theme & Teaching Toolkit - Sacredness, Devotion, Honor & Respect](https://yogateachercentral.com/plan-sequence/themes-readings/forgiveness-gratitude/theme-devotion-sacredness/)