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## **Thank You, Yoga Students**

~Amy Cushing

It's 6:19pm. I'm lying on the cold concrete that makes up the base of our back porch.

I can feel the coolness seep through my shirt and onto my skin. I shiver slightly. My eyes are fixed on the beautifully streaked sunset as it disappears into twilight. Instead of sighing with contentment at the extraordinary sight, I breathe out frustration; contention from the day's struggle still weighing heavy on my chest.

It was a long day with my kids. We were all off in our own way, never quite meeting in the same place. The work of finding common ground compounded by a series of mishaps---a broken glass; lost keys; stubbed toe; crayon marks on the wall, furniture, and floor---simple fixes on an easy day, but mountainous obstacles when disharmony rules.

I tried to stay calm and work through the tantrums and disobedience. I did stay calm. Now I'm spent. I can handle most obstacles thrown at me, but clashes with my children pain me. They confuse my mind and trample my heart. It has been said many times the parenting is the hardest

job. It is, hands down. And some days your emotions are spent. Despite doing your best, you approach the night hours feeling defeated.

My husband must have seen the frustration on my face as he gathered the kids for a spontaneous evening walk. I, too, have chosen the cool night air as a distraction to clear my racing mind. I glance at my watch. It's 6:34pm. I have a yoga class to teach in an hour.

I spend another 10 minutes outside. Breathe in. Breathe out.

It's 7:17pm. I arrive at the studio. My mind is still full. I enter the yoga room. Six of my regular students are infusing the room with their smiles and laughter. One is sharing a humorous story from her workday. Their exuberance lightens my mind.

I make my way to the front of the room. One student who knows me well asks if I'm OK. I responded with a gracious "yes" and mention I'm a bit tired. She has three kids of her own and nods in understanding.

Three more students filter in. I greet each with a pleasant introduction. My heavy heart begins to lift.

We all gather our props for an hour of restoration and settle in for the introductory meditation. My words fill the quiet space. I actively try to listen to my own instruction and feel the words in my body.

Settle your body. Breathe in. Breathe out. Notice the space around you. Now focus on your breath. Inhale. Exhale. Quiet.

I ask for each to set an intention. I set my own as well: to receive; to let my cluttered mind and bruised heart accept the goodness in this room.

It's 8:31pm. We close with a final om and heartfelt namastes. I open my eyes and look at a sea of content and calm faces. I see smiles. I see serenity. I soak it in. My heart fills with love and nearly bursts.

I close each of my classes with a thank you to my students. I thank them for giving me the opportunity for continuous learning. It is through their presence and their practice that I become a better teacher. This night was more than that. My students repaired my torn heart. They honored the true sense of kula, the Sanskrit word for community. They wrapped me in their good intentions and lifted my spirit.

It's 8:46pm. I arrive home. My head is clear. My heart is full. I hear my husband and son upstairs. I make my way up to greet them. My husband catches me at the top of the stairs. He gives me the hush sign and points to our daughter's closed bedroom door. My son runs up to

me and hugs my legs. I kiss my husband and offer to put our son to bed. He accepts happily as my son runs toward his room filled with excitement.

As I snuggle into bed with him to read his favorite car book, I'm reminded of my intention: to receive. I received the help from my husband and the hugs from my son. I'm receiving this very moment, in this cozy bed as my little boy points out each automobile, trying to sound out each word. This is good.

Thank you, my amazing students, for showing up and clearing the debris. Without even knowing it, you brought me back to what matters: to kula, to family, to smiling with my son in his warm room as he reaches over and kisses me goodnight.

"I love you, Mommy," he says.

I am receiving.

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