



Stephanie Hager

Workshop: *Bringing Comfort: Yoga for the Seriously Ill and Dying*

For more than two years now, I have been providing bedside yoga to people in residential care who are seriously ill or dying—and I have learned more from this experience than from all my yoga classes put together. Our volunteer bedside yoga program has been a powerful reminder that yoga is not what we do but how we do it. Yoga is something that happens inside, a practice of the heart.

You know how at the end of the story, the grinch's heart is three sizes too big? That's how I feel every week when I leave The Bailey-Boushay House. I have had the amazing opportunity to help people feel better, to create some peace and happiness. I see people in pain, people feeling depressed or anxious, people feeling pretty good, some not so lucid, some recovering, some dying. Sometimes I stretch someone's legs or back; sometimes I rub their feet or hands; sometimes we talk and laugh; sometimes we are just quiet together.

No matter what the situation, the healing begins with my ability to simply be present with each person. With no need to make anything happen, I can allow our time together to unfold. By cultivating the witness in myself, I am open to seeing the limits of the human condition and the limitlessness of the human spirit. For me, this is yoga in action. I am able to see how beautiful these students are, how beautiful I am, how beautiful life is, and how death is an inevitable part of the incredible process of being alive. I truly experience yoga in these moments of service. Recently, as I was rubbing one man's feet, he asked me, "It's all going to be okay now, isn't it?" And I could respond without doubt, "Yes, everything's okay."