

Yamas

Learning to regulate the disturbances of body and mind is an important aspect of self-work. The five yamas are guides to managing desires and to creating healthy relationships in the world. They are the means to regain balance in life.

Ahimsa Non-Harming

Practicing the attitude of non-harming reduces insecurity with others, brings peacefulness and trust, and reduces the fear of dying.

Satya Truthfulness

When thought, word, and deed are aligned, the mind is put at ease. Saying what is beneficial and measured in a pleasant way is truthfulness.

Asteya Non-stealing

Stealing promotes a mental attitude that “I do not have enough” and “without having what others have I cannot be happy.” Non-stealing gives mental strength.

Brahmacharya Moderation of the Senses

When sense pleasures become the focus of life they create chaos. Managing the senses promotes health, reduces wandering thoughts, and heightens energy.

Aparigraha Non-possessiveness

The things of the world are ours to use but not to own. By having a correct attitude regarding our possessions we free our spirit for the joys of inner life.

Niyamas

Saucha

Purity

Storing impurities in body or mind leads to ill health and reduces our capacity for inner work. Purity means both cleansing and proper nourishing of the body and mind.

Santoshā

Contentment

With contentment we gain happiness. This does not mean being complacent. Accept what has come to you without expectation, jealousy, bitterness, or frustration.

Tapas

Self-discipline, spiritual practice

Tapas means “heat.” It implies effort. When we make a disciplined effort we build energy and enthusiasm for our task. Tapas leads to self-mastery.

Svādhyāya

Self-study

Self-study is the study of the Self, the Infinite dwelling in the finite. Through mantra repetition, a teacher’s words, and reading, Self-study inspires us to the Self.

Ishvara Pranidhana

Self-surrender

By learning to trust in the guidance and grace of the Infinite, the tension and burdens of ego are washed off. After our own full effort, grace enters.