

Forty Days of Yoga

Breaking down
the barriers
to a home
yoga practice



Kara-Leah Grant

Founder & Editor of TheYogaLunchbox.co.nz

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"There is an esoteric secret to Yoga to receive its many wonderful gifts. You already do Yoga! You practice in the way that is right for you – actually, naturally and non obsessively until there is no issue. It's just like brushing your teeth or taking a shower – daily and no big deal. Yet we have an inbuilt resistance to practicing and overcoming obstacles to life. Please read Kara-Leah's book because she will help you through this and initiate you into daily practice. You will become a Yogi and dive deep into your intimate life in every way."

Mark Whitwell author, *Yoga of Heart and The Promise of Love, Sex, and Intimacy, USA*

"Forty Days of Yoga is absolutely brilliant. It is a powerful crystallizing of Kara-Leah's accumulated experience of flourishing her own practice in the reality of day-to-day life, complete with so many of the common challenges. The worksheets are a fantastic way for readers to put the wisdom shared in the narrative of the book into immediate action. I love that the whole reading experience feels just like sitting down to a cup of tea with KL. And that is a treat indeed!"

Kelly Fisher, Director of Urban Yoga, Wellington, New Zealand

"I've felt frustrated trying to find the right classes, times, and locations to keep yoga in my schedule. And most home yoga instruction is over-simplified, disconnected 'watch this video and follow along.' Kara-Leah takes you so much deeper, guiding you into a home yoga practice that is alive with customization and creativity. This is much more than a reference book about poses or a personal development pep-talk. If you're attempting to do yoga at home, this is a fantastic set of tools."

Slade Roberson, intuitive counselor and author of *Shift Your Spirits, USA*

“Forty Days of Yoga is a powerful resource for anyone interested in committing to a home yoga practice. Drawing from her years of experience, Kara-Leah beautifully shines a light on all the myriad obstacles, internal and external, that one can face when undertaking a self-directed practice while living an ordinary life in the world. Packed full of ingeniously practical worksheets and examples from Kara-Leah’s own life, this book invites one inwards to reflect honestly and creatively on one’s own process and aspirations. And it is all done in a wonderfully holistic, all-inclusive way, so that one’s whole life becomes part of the solution, rather than being seen as a ‘problem’. I highly recommend this beautiful book!”

Peter Fernando, Insight meditation teacher and creator of A Month of Mindfulness online course, Wellington, New Zealand

“From the first page, I was hooked. It’s not about what you practice, it’s not about which poses you do or if you can touch your knee with your nose in a forward bend. None of that matters. What matters is that you turn up to the mat every day and do a mindful yoga practice of some description. If you want a home practice, but for reasons known and unknown you have not been able to do it, I suggest you invest in this book. Truly, it’s a life changer.”

Sara Foley, Freelance Writer & Blogger, Smells Good, Feels Good, Australia

“Knowing Kara-Leah’s Musings from the Mat column, I didn’t even pause before considering downloading Forty Days of Yoga. Such a happy surprise to find it stays away from prescriptions of yoga poses but instead fills my practice with questions that have me thinking, and meanings that add substance. It is a truly enriching book.”

Cate Peterson, founder of YogaPass, Australia

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Introduction

More than ten years after I started practicing yoga and eight years after I started a home yoga practice, I still struggle to turn up to the mat daily.

It's not because I don't know what to do – I'm a yoga teacher. I know what to do.

It's not because I don't have enough time, or the right space, or a supporting environment. I have all of those things, and it still takes effort and determination to practice daily.

I know the same is true for you. You want to practice yoga at home.

But you don't. Or you do, but then you stop.

You may think it's because you don't know what to do. You may think it's because you don't have time or space or support.

It's none of those things. It's... something else.

It's the mind, getting in the way.

I know this, because over the last ten years or so, I've been committed to practicing yoga. Not always by choice – but because it was necessary for my physical, mental and emotional well-being.

When I was 16 years old, my spine was fused at L4/5. My back felt great for a few years, but I never addressed the underlying causes of my spinal issues and by the time I was 25, I was in daily pain. I had excruciating sciatic pain down my

right leg and my right foot was half numb. My situation had become so dire I was walking with a limp. I was facing a painful future with limited mobility and possibly more surgery.

I'd tried yoga four years previously – a ten-week Iyengar course. Travels and life had since intervened, but somehow I knew that yoga was the one thing that could help me heal my body.

I was right. Yoga classes made a world of difference and I was on my way back to physical health.

Four years after that decision to make yoga a part of my life, I had two psychotic episodes a month apart. Triggered by a combination of drug use (LSD), relationship difficulties and life stresses, these psychotic episodes also broke my mind wide open. I experienced Bliss – and a shocking comedown.

Nothing could ever be the same after that. This time it was my mental and emotional self that needed yoga – and not just classes, but a regular home practice. That was the beginning of my home practice. It wasn't something I started for fun, or because I wanted it even. No, I started my home practice because I desperately needed the small moments of peace it brought me on my mat. I needed my home practice to help me pick up the broken parts of psyche and put them back together again.

In the nine years since those two episodes of psychosis I persisted with my practice – no matter what obstacles arose –because of the enormous difference my practice made to my physical, mental and emotional well-being. Without yoga, life became a struggle and I could barely keep my head above water. With yoga, I was able to systematically work through the many challenges that came my way.

I learned, through application and practice, that the only thing ever standing

between me and my practice was my mind.

The same is true for you.

The only thing ever standing between you and your practice is your mind.

In this book we're going to examine that mind of yours and all the ways it can sabotage even the very best of intentions.

That means that if you're looking for a home yoga practice book that will tell you *what* to do, this is not it. I don't tell you how to do any postures at all, there's no instructions on pranayama and I don't talk about how to meditate. There's a myriad of other sources you can find for that kind of information (see the back of the book for a list of resources I use and love).

What you can't get anywhere else is my detailed process for deconstructing the many obstacles that prevent us from practicing.

Like yoga itself, this book is about the process – the process that will carry you to, and through, *Forty Days of Yoga*.

I know – you're looking for a magic bullet. That perfect home yoga practice that will turn you into a yogi. I know this because at workshops and in classes, via email and feedback, student after student after student asks me, and other teachers:

'What's your home practice like?'

Students have this idea that there is an ideal home yoga practice, and if they could just find out what it is, they'd be able to practice it and all would be well. Hopefully this ideal home yoga practice would be short-ish, easy-ish and work miracles on the body, mind and soul.

But you know what? There is no standardized ideal home yoga practice. There is only *your* ideal home yoga practice. What that is depends on many factors, including your body, your stage of life, your living environment, your work environment, your culture, your climate... *your everything*.

That's why I can't tell you what to do. But I can take you through a process that unlocks your own desire and ability to discover your ideal home yoga practice.

What does it mean to practice at home every day?

It means you move, mindfully.
It means you breathe, mindfully.
It means you simply *be*, mindfully.

You move, breathe, and be in your life.

The *what* of practice ceases to be important, as the *how* supersedes everything else. Because the *how* is the Yoga. More on that later.

This book won't be easy though. It's going to make demands.

It will demand that you stop reading, pick up a pen and write. It will demand that you dig deep into your psyche to get to the truth of your motivations and intentions for a home yoga practice. This book will demand that you take an honest look at your life and the people in it to see who supports your yoga practice and who doesn't. It will demand that you make changes, of your own choosing, but changes nonetheless.

If you're not up for this – if you're not ready to take action, you might as well stop reading right now. Give this book to someone else. Because it won't help you. Instead it will only be another distraction, another thing separating you out from life, and from Yoga.

But if you're up for the challenge, if you want to experience a changed life, and a changed way of seeing life, then keep reading. This book will give you everything you need to commit to *Forty Days of Yoga* and stick to it.

Gather a pen and a notebook – something you can use to record your experience of this book and complete the worksheets, and something you can add to over time – as you track your practice.

Together, we'll make a yogi of you yet!

How to use this workbook:

How you use this workbook is up to you.

You may read it through from beginning to end and then go back and do the worksheets. You may stop at each worksheet and do the exercises immediately, taking time to consider the implications of each process.

All the worksheets have been included at the end of the book for easy printing, so you can fill in your answers. Or you may wish to use a journal or loose leaf paper in your own binder. You may even wish to create a file on your computer.

The trick to the worksheets is to work fast, getting past the internal censor. Don't think about answers, just start writing whatever comes to mind, no matter how 'right' you think it is, or how silly it sounds.

If you feel resistance arising to anything, notice it. Breathe into it, and give yourself a pep talk. Something simple like,

'I want to easily complete these worksheets because it's going to help me commit to a home yoga practice.'

In this way, the process of reading the book and filling in the worksheets becomes your yoga.

The final chapters of the book look at on what happens once you start practicing. It is useful to read through these chapters before you start your *Forty Days of Yoga* so that when things happens on the mat, or even before you get on your mat, you remember.

'A-ha! This was mentioned in the book!'

Finally, the book has been written as a reference. It's something you can return to again and again throughout your practice.



Yoga moves us from the inside out, a dance with breath and life

Start Practicing

Congratulations! By now you have read everything you need to know about creating your home yoga practice. If you haven't yet done the worksheets, this is the time. Either print them out (using the handy Print Package at the end of this book), or grab a journal, or loose leaf paper and start making your way through the worksheets.

This will take time. In many ways, it is the beginning of your daily practice.

Each day, decide to complete one worksheet until you've done them all.

Make sure you take the actions outlined in each worksheet. For example, when you're working out who your allies are, call them and get them organised to be an

ally, with all that requires. When you work through the worksheet on Space, make the space for your yoga practice.

While reading the book has been great, and doing your writing is also great... now it's time for action.

So do what you need to do.

Set up what you need to set up.

And start your practice.



Like what you've read?

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for ***Forty Days of Yoga***

"Readers of Australian Yoga LIFE magazine have often asked "What is the perfect home practice?" and our answer every time is – there isn't one. What's the answer to getting on the mat is another question, once again there isn't one , but there are things that can help you. *Forty Days of Yoga* has some great clues, information and insights from yoga teacher Kara-Leah Grant and if you are struggling with either of these questions this is a book we would recommend. Easy to read, well thought out, things to do – its a definite for your collection." – **Australian Yoga LIFE Magazine**

Take a journey into your psyche and find out what really stops you from practicing yoga regularly.

Forty Days of Yoga teaches you how to design strategies that make daily practice possible in your life – no matter what your life is like.

This is not a one-size fits all solution – this is a journey into your mind to tease out your personal reasons for blocking or sabotaging your home yoga practice.

"*Forty Days of Yoga* is an in-depth study and practical guide for a 'home yoga practice' – a step by step plan for beginners to advanced yoga students. Kara Leah's experience and passion for yoga is imbedded in every page Can you stick to a discipline for forty days? Kara-Leah's book throws out the yoga gauntlet. A tempting, terrifying but ultimately life changing challenge." – **Kate McIntyre Clere, Director, Yogawoman**

"*Forty Days of Yoga* is a powerful, down to earth, and super accessible guide to help you reconnect with your commitment and reignite your passion for home yoga practice. Always an authentic voice, Kara-Leah shares unflinchingly from her own personal experience and asks you to explore your own. This book is full of potent questions, useful worksheets, and pragmatic guidelines for getting to the heart of what fuels your practice." – **Katie Lane, Yoga Teacher & Therapist**



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