



THE YAMAS

The first two limbs of yoga training your actions, speech, and thoughts in ways that create harmony. The first limb - the yamas, or ethical restraints - train you in relation to the external world, particularly how you are with other people.

To practice the yamas, we learn in the first chapter of the sutras that we must dedicate unwavering effort to noticing its results. To activate the mental dimension of our lives, we *must* close down the physical dimension. This means that it's not something to step into with the mentality "I'll just try it on" nor something you do socially. Rather, you're meant to step onto the path confidently giving it a "college try."

In college nothing is done for less than a semester and all of your efforts are individual. This is the way these meditations should be approached: with genuine, dedicated effort.

AHIMSA

Ahimsa means "non-violence" and the reason our ancestors have us practice ahimsa is written in *Sutras*, stating: "as a Yogi becomes firmly grounded in non-injury (ahimsa), other people who come near will naturally lose any feelings of hostility." This should be noted that *ahimsa* does not mean love in any way, shape or form. We do not balance violence by taking an opposing stance, rather the first step is to focus on releasing harmful connections at the level of actions, communication and thoughts.

Within *Gita*, Krishna makes sure we don't take this too fanatically. As the sacred yogi master, Krishna guides his discipline that while it's essential to not intend harm to anyone, this "does not under any circumstances countenance running away in fear." As a famous practitioner of *ahimsa*, Gandhi writes on this, "'cowards can never be moral. Where there is fear there is no religion."