

How I Conquered the Fear of Public Speaking through Kundalini Yoga

By Susan Jacobs

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Public speaking has never been my thing. My fear was so great growing up that through school I sat in the back of the classroom praying that I wouldn't be called upon. On those occasions when I was forced to speak, I panicked and froze. When I began a long career in public relations, my job often required that I make introductions at large events. I hoped this would help free me from my fear.

I was asked to speak to a class of college students about my illustrious career. "No problem," I said. As the date approached, I remained calm. "Great," I thought, "my fear is gone." During the introduction though, I experienced a true anxiety attack. No breathing or relaxation techniques calmed me down. There I was, with students waiting for me. I had to bite the bullet and make it happen. To this day, I have no memory of that hour. I continued over the years to try to overcome this fear by accepting other speaking engagements. But it was always the same and I realized that I was not meant for public speaking.

Because of this phobia, the idea of teaching was never on my radar. When I started doing Pilates, I fell in love with it and I wanted to share it with others. I decided to leave my comfort zone and try teaching Pilates. During my teacher-training, formulating words to instruct just one student was excruciating. Why was I so afraid? Why was it such a struggle to find my voice?

At the time, I was dealing with a hyperthyroid condition. To find ways to heal

naturally, I read about the chakras,¹ specifically the fifth, the throat chakra, and its characteristics: speak your truth. I was struck. Before I'd be able to find my true voice, I knew it was necessary to clear out old baggage. So, I practiced Kundalini Yoga and meditated often. Things began to release. My speaking and teaching voice changed. I rejoiced.

Teaching Pilates was fulfilling but as I continued to experience the power of Kundalini Yoga, I knew I'd teach it one day too. The opportunity arrived. I met my teacher, Krishna Kaur, and went with her and a small group to Africa for a six-week intensive teacher-training program. Because Pilates and Kundalini Yoga were such integral parts of my life and my passion for them was so strong, I realized that I did have a teacher in me.

During the yoga course when it was my turn to teach, it was still challenging and my heart pounded. Twenty-five pairs of eyes were focused on me. Krishna was watching too, so my nerves were really wired. I tuned in with *Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō*, and much to my surprise, relief came as the words started flowing out of my mouth. It was as though they were coming from somewhere else and I was just the messenger. I felt peaceful, strong, confident, and natural.

Now I teach Kundalini Yoga and Pilates professionally and never stress about it. Once on my mat, the words flow easily. Tuning in helped me to detach from my ego and allow the divine teacher in



The author with her teacher, Krishna Kaur, at the teacher training course in Ghana, January, 2005.

me to shine through. I felt connected to the Golden Chain of teachers and able to be a vehicle through which the teachings can be conveyed. And it continues to be remarkably easy!

Sometimes I wonder if the change came about as a result of the teachings. Or is it because my thyroid condition is more balanced? Has doing Kundalini Yoga daily for years had this impact? Regardless, it doesn't matter. Teaching Kundalini Yoga has helped me gain confidence about myself and realize the importance of these teachings. My generation is in line to keep Yogi Bhaḡan's teachings alive. There's no time for my voice to quiver or crack, and now it rarely does. I speak my truth and I teach the truth about Kundalini Yoga, for which I remain eternally grateful.

In addition to teaching Kundalini Yoga, **Susan Jacobs** is a Pilates instructor, Shiatsu massage therapist, and a freelance writer in Brooklyn, New York. Contact her at susanjacobs460@yahoo.com

¹ Eight energy centers in the human, seven correspond to nerve plexes in the physical body; and the eighth corresponds to the aura.