

# Chapter 12: BATTLE

I've always been afraid of conflict.

I associate the word "conflict" with violence, irrationality, anger, and fear. Not only does conflict scare the pants off me, it also seems at odds with the yogic principle of compassionate non-violence (*ahimsa*).

As you might imagine, my ideas about conflict have led to a few problems. Afraid of saying something that might disappoint or anger my partner, I have preemptively avoided possible confrontation by shutting down and withdrawing into silence. I have turned relationships into prisons where I felt silenced and constrained.

During my marriage, I rode this self-annihilation train to its last stop.

"I'm going to start drinking again," my husband says in our ship's cabin.

"What?" I say.

"I'm going to start drinking again. Just for a while. Just for this trip."

I freeze.

My husband and I are on an Alaskan cruise for our honeymoon. We chose to get married during our great immigration from New York City to Vancouver, British Columbia.

However, the day before our wedding, his mother had unexpectedly died. He had found her body. They had been very close. He was devastated.

"You want to drink for the cruise," I ask.

"I need to."

My husband has been dry for ten years. He is the kind of guy who spits out chocolates with liqueur.

There is a long moment. "Can I say anything to change your mind?" I say at last.

"No."

"Can you at least go to the Bill W. meeting first? They have them here. Go to a meeting first, and then decide?" Bill W. is code for Alcoholics Anonymous.

He pauses, nods slowly. "Yeah, I can do that. But it's not going to change my mind."

"Okay. Just go," I say.

He goes.

I wait.

He returns.

"They said I should do it."

"Drink."

"Yeah, when I told them what happened. How I felt. Just for this cruise."

"They said you should drink?" I am shocked. The world tilts.

"Yes."

"...Just for the cruise. And then you'll stop?"

"Yeah," he nods. "It's just to get through this."

Five months later, we are sitting in a bar in Vancouver.

"Could you..." I stop and begin again. He's looking at me. "...Maybe you could just stop at...three beers? Or maybe say, four?"

I know he's an alcoholic. Deep down, he knows *he's* an alcoholic. Yet, here we are. In Canada, across a bar table, staring at each other.

He laughs and it's not very nice. He looks down. "You know, you are so selfish."

*Am I, I think? Am I being selfish?*

"I know you think you're being reasonable, but you just don't get it." He starts getting angry. "Everyone drinks. It's not a problem."

I shrink. "Yes, but, you...you're...."

"No. Everyone drinks."

I am out of my depth. I hate myself for not knowing what to do. I have no solution: I feel deeply, sickly wrong when I don't protest his drinking, and then am attacked when I do.

I have become the co-dependent wife of an alcoholic.

He sits back in his chair. "Just when I think you're being supportive, you say something like that that. You are so selfish."

I feel something enormous rising inside of me that I don't recognize. It's a strange beast that I cannot name nor place. Although I don't know what it is in that moment, much later I realize that it is anger.

I shove the feeling down and it curdles into self-hatred. I am silent.

I am afraid of being yelled at, afraid of being a bad person, afraid of being alone, afraid of making someone upset, afraid of uncertainty, and afraid of backing out of a commitment.

It's easy now to look back and shake my head, "Why didn't you just leave? Speak up? Yell back? Draw a line?"

Because - most of all - I was afraid of being selfish.

## Selfish

"You're so selfish."

Was I?

"Selfish" is a loaded word. It's awful. When my husband called me selfish, my arguments withered. I recoiled so violently from the word "selfish" that I never questioned what it actually meant.

Because here was the trap: he was right. I was selfish.

But here was *my* confusion: being selfish wasn't bad.

When my husband called me "selfish," he was really saying, "You're acting a certain way, but I want you to do something else, so I'm going to call you selfish and shame you emotionally so that I can have my way instead."

Isn't that also...well...selfish?

I'm not sure what led to the turning point. Likely it was a combination of the emotional abuse, disconnected sex, and failed therapy. One night ten months into my marriage – after a particularly bad fight – I found myself in the kitchen, cutting my arm with one of our kitchen knives.

I stopped and looked down at the cuts, welling with blood. I found him in our bedroom.

"I'm cutting myself again." I hadn't cut myself since high school, when I used scissors to exorcise my displaced feelings of anger, desperation, and anxiety.

He didn't look at me. "Now you know how it feels."

I stepped back in alarm. I looked at my arm. While I could selectively ignore my *emotional* decline, I could not dismiss the quite obvious dysfunction of my *physical* actions. I was self-destructing. And my husband was so far into his own personal hell that he was happy for me to join him there.

I realized in that moment that I could not stay with him. No matter how tragic his circumstances or his loss, I could not be with someone who thought it was A-OK for me to take a knife to my arm.

Enabling his drinking hadn't helped our marriage. Silencing my feelings had made things worse. Joining him in his personal hell wasn't going help either one of us. I had become a shadow of my former self and no one (not even my husband) was benefiting from this sad transformation.

That's when I left.

Pema Chodron, "The places that scare you."

"The kindest thing we can do for everyone concerned is to know when to say 'enough.' Many people use Buddhist ideals to justify self-debasement. In the name of not shutting our heart, we let people walk all over us. It is said that in order not to break our vow of compassion we have to learn when to stop aggression and draw the line. There are times when the only way to bring down the barriers is to set barriers."

In my marriage, I suffered from a great confusion: I thought the self-interest was bad and that loving someone else meant being a doormat. Because of this confusion, I mistook co-dependence and enabling for support. Only when I had been stripped down to my emotional bones and was cowering in a deep corner inside of myself did I finally say, "Is this enough?" When I left, I recognized that I could not make him better by making myself smaller; giving up my strength did not mean that he would gain his.

It was time to learn to deal with conflict.

## Conflict

"Love is a battlefield." – Pat Benatar

Having an honest, authentic, and intimate relationship is going to require you to deal with conflict. There is no getting around it. At some point, someone is going to sulk about sex, forget to wash the dishes, or reach their wits' end with a screaming kid. Being a good yogi isn't about "nama-staying out of the fire," but about learning to navigate these moments with clarity and compassion.

You may be surprised to know that the yogis have thought long and hard about conflict. The art of war is exquisitely explored in the epic story of the *Bhagavad Gita* (the Lord's Song), one of India's most precious philosophical treasures. The *Bhagavad Gita* was Gandhi's favourite book, by the way. Makes sense, doesn't it? After all, it's hard to stand up to imperialism and injustice if you're not willing to jump into the fray.

Here's the story:

Our hero, Arjuna, is about to go to war with his own family. Before the battle, he gets into his chariot and rides out across the field. Across enemy lines, he sees his cherished friends and family members. Although Arjuna is on the right side of the law, he despairs over the futility of the impending violence, "No good can come from killing my own kinsmen in battle...we should turn back from this evil." He throws down his weapons. He will not fight.

### Bhagavad Gita

Part of a famous Indian epic, the *Bhagavad Gita* describes a great battle. The battle is a metaphor for the challenges that we experience every day. The *Bhagavad Gita* asks us to investigate how we can live a spiritual life in the real world. Our yoga practice does not occur high on a mountaintop away from the action; we are in the thick of our own battles, doing our best to live well in our daily lives. Yoga isn't about getting away from life and relationships: "yoga is skill in action."

The *Bhagavad Gita* recognizes that the world - at least the world of the Little Self - is not peaceful. On the contrary, it is a battlefield. We are in love with our enemies, engaged in struggle, and often confused about what we should do.

While we may not literally be in a life or death battle with our relatives, we can all relate to a situation in which we feel the need to stand up to someone that we love. As good yogis, we face the same questions that Arjuna is facing: should we take action, or should we stay out of the fray? How can we hurt people we love? How can we fight with integrity?

"On the field of Truth, on the battlefield of Life, what came to pass,  
Sanjaya, when my sons and their warriors faced those of my brother  
Pandu?"

- The first line of the *Bhagavad Gita*, translation: Juan Mascaro

Arjuna begs his charioteer Krishna (God in disguise) for advice, which is Krishna's invitation to teach Arjuna the true meaning of yoga. Through Krishna's

teachings, Arjuna realizes that practicing yoga isn't about sitting on the sidelines. Practicing yoga does not even necessarily mean non-violence.

To practice yoga, Arjuna must follow his duty (*dharma*) and uphold his soul's purpose. Contrary to what he may prefer, he must fight.

### Dharma

"Duty." Dharma is your path in life. Your dharma invites you to uphold your soul's highest calling. Arjuna is not fighting from a place of high emotion or self-righteousness; he is going to war because it is the *just* action to take. When we are gearing up for a fight, we need to ask ourselves if we are acting from a place of reactivity, or whether we are entering battle to uphold the highest good.

Arjuna is not engaging in battle from a place of reactivity or anger. He is not lashing out. He is *choosing* to engage in conflict – fully cognizant of the consequences – because it is the *highest* choice that he can make for his life's purpose. He is entering the fray to uphold justice and the greatest good.

When we are about to put on our armour and wade into battle in our relationships, we must first *practice the pause* and be clear about our intentions. Like Arjuna, we can ask ourselves if our actions are in alignment with the highest good.

[Are we fighting for our egos, or are we fighting for a higher purpose?](#)

Arjuna's story is our story. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a call for us to live our yoga *in our relationships* as best we can. Like Arjuna, our yoga is "skill in action." Our yoga isn't just for the mat; it's demonstrated in every interaction that we have with the world around us. Mindful conflict – when it's pursued to uphold our highest self or the greatest good - is an essential part of this process.

## Anger

Anger is a signpost that indicates when our needs – explicit or unspoken – aren't being met. When we're angry, the world feels out of alignment because we are not getting what we want.

I was very angry during my marriage. But because I was afraid of anger (my own as well as that of my husband's), I turned my feelings into self-punishment rather than listening to them.

When understood and acted upon responsibly, anger can be directed towards clarification and purification. Anger is information that gives us clarity about when

we need to stake our boundaries and protect what is ours. Anger can be a mother bear: fierce, righteous, and healing.

"Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host. But anger is like fire. It burns it all clean." - Maya Angelou

## Manipura Chakra

Located at the solar plexus, manipura chakra is an energy centre that is controlled by the element of fire and is related to willpower and transformation. Manipura controls how we assert the ego (our little Self) in relationship to the world. When someone has excessive energy in this chakra, they may be controlling, overbearing and rigid. If they have too little energy, they may lack a sense of centered self and be overly accommodating. Physically, manipura is related to digestion, which uses fiery substances (acids, bile) to transform external material into sustenance. Similarly, manipura relates to our ability to emotionally "digest" and process our experiences.

Anger is a powerful force that must be managed responsibly so that its blaze is cleansing rather than destructive. Anger is an informative signpost, not a justification for bad behaviour. Most of the time, feelings need to be processed before we react. But conscious and accountable anger can be the energy we need to make positive change. Wildfires are sometimes necessary to burn away the underbrush and make way for new growth.

## Tapas

"The willingness to endure intensity for the sake of transformation." Literally, "heat," *tapas* stokes our inner flame, steels our discipline, and moves purposefully into the direction of our dreams. The fire reminds us that we have the power to slough off our old snakeskins and emerge clean and vibrant.

Fire has been a symbol of purification and sacrifice for thousands of years. In ancient yoga rituals, fire was used to send offerings to the Gods. As yoga evolved, these external ceremonies become internal rituals of purification. In our yoga practice, we stoke the flames of our inner fire, *agni*, and control this energy for purposeful and transformational use.

And just as importantly, once anger has done its clarifying work, we practice *letting the anger go*. In practical terms, this means that you don't bring up past issues that have already been laid to bed. "Remember the time that you..." Recognizing anger's power to clarify is far different than calling up and opening old wounds. The former is cauterization; the latter is pulling scabs.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna learns that there is a caveat to following his dharma. In order to practice yoga in action, Arjuna must remain unattached to the results of these actions. In other words, he has to let go. He must do his personal best to fulfill his duty, but surrender his attachment to the outcome. We cannot control the world, only ourselves. And once the battle is fought, we let it go.

Anger is strong medicine. Used wisely, it heals. Used indiscriminately, it becomes poison.

The poisonous trap of anger is blame.

## The blame trap

“He’s never on time.”

My girlfriend Shana is upset.

We’re in Starbucks, and she is fretting over her double decaf soy no whip latte with sugar free almond syrup – just one pump, please.

She’s that kinda girl.

“And when I’ve asked him, you know, why are you late, he rolls his eyes at me and tells me to take a chill pill. Chucks me on the shoulder and calls me his little control freak. Like I’m not relaxed about it enough or something.” She’s twisting her Starbucks napkin, “Last week, we were very late for my parents’ 50th anniversary because he didn’t pick me up on time.” Her eyes are huge, “I mean, I have to have some say in this. It’s not okay.”

Hearing Shana’s story, many of us will gasp in horror at Andrew’s behaviour. Late for your partner’s parents’ anniversary? How terrible! How inconsiderate! However, it might change your mind to know that Shana’s version of “late” starts at exactly one minute. Andrew was *ten* minutes late to pick Shana up that night.

Shana and Andrew had fallen into the blame trap. In the blame trap, someone is always right, and someone is always wrong. As per Shana, if Andrew is late, then he is wrong. And for Andrew, Shana’s demands seem too stringent, and therefore *she* is wrong. They each believe that both of them can’t be right.

However, here is the relationship magic trick: they are *both* right.

In Shana’s world, being on time makes sense and feels good. Timeliness is a form of respect. Being ten minutes late feels like two hours. However, in



Andrew's world, being flexible about time makes sense. Ten minutes is nothing to get worked up about.

Both Shana and Andrew have come to logical conclusions based on their own experiences and worldviews. Their "little selves" have had experiences that have naturally led them to these conclusions. But from the perspective of the Big Self, neither of them is "right," and neither of them of them is "wrong." (And if you caught yourself siding with one of them, perk up and take note of your own expectations.)

We default to thinking that everyone else is like us. It's a normal bias for working in the world. However, cultivating intimacy means discovering how your person is different from you. Sometimes these differences are benign: "I never knew you hated jazz, how funny!" Sometimes these differences feel like deal breakers, "I never knew you hated jazz, but I'm a jazz musician!" The road to intimacy is paved with stumbles, which is how we know that we're getting somewhere.

We often uncover these differences when our expectations are not met. When someone thwarts our expectations, they are usually doing something that we wouldn't. We like it when people act like we do, and we figure everyone in the world is going to do things like us unless we're proven otherwise. So when someone defies our assumptions, we can be surprised, disappointed, or even angry (depending on how invested we are in what they're doing). However, it's important to understand that we're generally not upset about the actual behaviour; we're upset about what we are making their behaviour *mean*.

Let's use Shana and Andrew as an example. For Shana, being on time is a form of respect. Being on time *means* she's respectful. Andrew's tardiness *means* that he is being disrespectful. For Andrew, being late is about being calm and not sweating the small stuff. For him, being a bit late *means* that he's relaxed and going with the flow.

Both sets of meanings are interpretations based on Shana and Andrew's experiences. In Reality, Andrew is simply ten minutes late.

When someone's behaviour irks you, take a breath and *practice the pause*. Separate their actions from what you are making the behaviour mean. Rather than jumping to conclusions, investigate what the "offensive" behaviour means to *the other person*. Sure, it's possible that Andrew interprets being late as a sign of disrespect and he is unrepentantly late anyway. If that's the case, then Shana should think twice about dating him.

However, it's also possible that being late *means* something different to Andrew than to Shana.

Digging deeper into moments of conflict is an opportunity to understand someone else's point of view. Understanding where your person is coming from does not mean that you have to agree with them or tolerate the behaviour, but it will defuse the impact of taking it so personally as well as give you an insight into who they are.

Understanding the nature of anger and blame can also give you more perspective when your person is angry with *you*. When you recognize that anger is the result of thwarted expectations, then you won't take someone else's anger so personally. Instead, you can get curious about what you person *expected* of you and why.

Mindful conflicts are the essential small tremors that relieve the pressure in a relationship; they break open the ground and create space for new discoveries. I was so afraid of conflict during my marriage that I shut down rather than communicate. Because I shut down, I stalled out the possibility of creating an organic and ongoing dialogue about my needs. I did not understand that mindful conflict is natural, healthy, and forward moving. For a relationship to stay vital and alive, it needs to grow. Growing pains aren't comfortable, but they create the opportunity for an evolving conversation about your needs, values, and boundaries. While these conversations aren't easy, they reveal the scaffolding of our underlying assumptions, which allow us to know both our partners and ourselves better. These moments are precious opportunities to cultivate intimacy.

### Ananda

Literally meaning "bliss," *ananda* describes the capacity of our heart to hold even the more challenging experiences as part of our journey. *Ananda* means finding deep love regardless of the external circumstances.

## Boundaries

Being afraid of conflict, I was naturally afraid to establish boundaries. Tell someone what I wanted? Horror of horrors! I'd rather have pulled my teeth out.

To me, a boundary was a hard and unforgiving wall designed to separate me from another person. Boundaries were unfriendly fences that promoted selfishness, ownership and exclusion. And wasn't love supposed to be about merging, sacrifice and inclusion?

To understand the importance of healthy boundaries, consider the cells within your body. Cell membranes form the boundaries between the interior of your cells and the body's watery world. Having a good cellular boundary means that the cell knows what should pass through the membrane and what should be kept out. The membrane is not a rigidly erected wall; it is a discerning, organic, supple

structure that invites in what is nourishing and keeps out what is harmful. What the cell needs may change over time. Without these flexible boundaries, healthy function would cease.

### Viveka

"Discernment." Viveka is what allows us to separate the beneficial from the harmful.

Similarly in relationships, boundaries are not rigidly deflective, nor are they so porous that they lose all integrity. Boundaries invite us to be wise about what we give and what we take. What do we allow in? What do we keep out? Our health, vibrancy, and resiliency depend upon this flexible and keen discernment. While I couldn't change my husband's drinking, I could set a boundary that would clarify what I would tolerate and what I would not. Saying, "If you drink, I will leave you," would have been a good start.

### Kali

The gods and goddesses of Hinduism embody different facets of the Universe and our human experience. Kali is a terrifying and loving goddess who reminds us that expressing great love can sometimes require courage and ferocity. She is a reminder that death is required for rebirth and transformation; we must be willing to let go in order to create something new.

Boundaries establish conditions of satisfaction. Conditions of satisfaction are explicit agreements that are made about behaviour. Establishing boundaries with my husband would have clarified my terms of satisfaction for our marriage. He may not have done what I asked (and he may have blamed me for delivering an ultimatum), but the responsibility would then be shared. Do I want drinking more than Rachel? He may not have liked making a decision, but then choice would have been his. As it was, the drinking was so muddled by the drama between us that we both capacity to see where we were accountable.

In our relationships, we get to choose: what do we let in, and what do we keep out.

When we realize that we need to create a boundary, we need a bridge across the divide. This bridge is communication.

As obvious as it might seem, your partner won't be able to honour your boundaries if they don't know what they are. Had I been able to articulate my needs in my marriage, perhaps my ex-husband and I could have hashed out some of our problems. Perhaps. Whatever the outcome, being clear about what I could and could not tolerate would have helped *me* find a more centred sense of my own self.

By communicating our boundaries, we can value our differences while upholding what we need.

### Vishuddha Chakra

The throat chakra, Vishuddha governs our self-expression. When the energy of this chakra is over-stimulated, we ramble on and over-share our point of view. When this energy is under nourished, we are unable to find "our voice" or express our feelings. When it is well balanced, we are able to powerfully articulate who we are in the world, while at the same time leaving space for others to be heard.

In Shana's situation, she might tell Andrew, "Hon, we have a different understanding of time. However, it's important for me to get to this anniversary party before the event starts. If you don't want to pick me up on time, that's okay. But in that case, I would prefer to meet you there." Shana has taken responsibility for her own desires and her own expectations. Rather than resent Andrew for being different, she is setting up parameters that will let her be free to do what she feels that she needs to do to uphold her personal values. While Shana cannot control Andrew or change how he understands time, she can explain why promptness is important to her and make her own conditions clear. And Andrew can choose whether or not he wants to meet those conditions.

And of course, if Shana decides that her timeliness value is a deal breaker, and Andrew doesn't want to change, then she has the choice of whether or not she wants to stay with Andrew. The takeaway here is to recognize that both parties are making choices.

As you start communicating your needs, beware of emotional manipulation or "feigning the bridge." If you are setting a boundary, then you have to set it without strings attached. If Andrew tells Shana, "Hey pookie, you know what? I really am very lax about time and I can't guarantee that I'll get you there when you want. It's probably better if I meet you there." Well, then it's not fair for Shana to turn around and sulk. Alternatively, if Andrew does make the choice to pick Shana up on time, then it's not fair for him to sigh grievously and feign "sacrifice."

There was a brief interval during my marriage where my husband stopped drinking. When our therapist asked him why, he pointed a finger at me: "She's making me stop." By blaming me for his decision, he got to be a victim of circumstance rather than take responsibility for his own choice.

Not taking responsibility for our own choices is a kind of lie. We are *always* responsible for our choices – even the ones that suck. Unless someone has a gun to our head, decisions cannot be forced upon us. Unfortunately, as a co-dependent wife, I bought into my ex-husband's victimhood spiel hook, line, and sinker. At the time, I felt guilty for "making" him do something (as if I could!). My

guilt in turn validated his indignation, which caused me to feel more guilty, which made him feel more validated, blah blah blah. The cycle of confusion continued.

We are responsible for our choices. Even when we're dealt the worst hand in the world, we are responsible for how we play our cards. Blame and resentment are signs that we have given away the responsibility for our choice – and happiness – to someone else. They are another kind of Missing Piece confusion. In this case, rather than ascribing someone else responsibility for our *happiness*, we are blaming someone else for our *pain*.

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“We accept the love we think we deserve.” – Stephen Chosky, from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

When we blame someone, we get to be the hero and make the other person the villain. My husband blamed me for his feelings and his rage. I blamed him for his drinking. We were so busy pointing fingers that we didn't get address the root of the problem.

While it would be convenient to make myself the hero and my ex-husband the villain, it would not be honest. I would be doing him – and myself - a disservice. He is a good person. It's way too easy to make the world black and white; our work as yogis is to remember that the world is shades of gray. Each human in their personal virtual reality suit is doing the best they can with the experiences that they have had.

Now when I think of my ex-husband, I feel a great sense of sadness and empathy for both of us. I remember that he could be angry, resentful and cruel. But I also remember his creativity, curiosity, and relentless passion for his art. I remember that his own experience in the darkness gave him enormous empathy for others; he devoted great energy to helping the homeless and other less fortunate people.

Remembering my ex-husband with love doesn't mean that I think we should be together. It just means the my Big Self gets to see the larger picture while I also uphold the boundaries and conditions that my Little Self needs. I can have compassion for both of us and recognize that we did the best we could. It would be easier to try to make him the bad guy, but then I would deprive myself of the opportunity to see my own responsibility as well as to see him as the whole human that he is. Choosing to see his goodness is more truthful (*satya*) and compassionate (*ahimsa*) to us both.

Having boundaries means that we can still love someone and not love their behaviour. Having boundaries means that we can love someone – and ask for what we need. Having boundaries means that we can love someone - and still choose to leave them.

## Dating

Dating offer us excellent practice for articulating and upholding our boundaries. From the very first text message, you are feeling out the other person's edges and establishing what kind of exchange feels good. Setting healthy boundaries from the start of a relationship creates the mutual trust and respect that will sustain your relationship as it deepens.

Signs of healthy boundaries:

- Clear, respectful communication
- He or she fits into your new life; he or she doesn't become your new life
- You make decisions because you feel good about them internally
- You are okay being alone sometimes
- You feel like you can solve your own problems

Unhealthy boundaries set up an unsteady and unsustainable foundation. While it's normal to lose yourself a little in the early stages of romance, stay alert for these signs of trouble:

- Going out of your way to be available whenever they call, no matter what's going on
- Never being available when they want your attention
- Disrespectful or dismissive communication
- Giving or taking gifts or time without integrity
- The rest of your life disappearing for one, new person
- Fuzzy expectations
- Feelings of obligation

Practice communicating your needs and expectations clearly from the start of the relationship. When you are honest about what you need, you give someone else permission to do the same. This valuable practice also allows you to take ownership of your unique expectations rather than blaming someone for not reading your mind or having different assumptions.

# Practices

## **Journal: Anger and Fire**

Journal and record when you get angry.

- Where is your anger coming from?
- What boundary is being crossed?
- What expectation is being thwarted?

## **Life Practice: Feel**

Your anger is opportunity to deeply feel. Rather than react to it, sit in your fire and experience the myriad of sensations in your body.

- Channel anger into action. Fuel your best vision for yourself with the potency of this energy. Rather than lash out, what's a better way to affirm what you need, or what isn't working for you?
- Sacrifice: know when to send the smoke to the Gods. When it's done, it's done. Be willing to let it go.

## **Dating Practice: Boundaries**

Practice setting boundaries that reflect your needs. From the very first text, we are telegraphing what is okay and not okay with us.

Notice when you fail to uphold your own boundaries:

- Do you respond to texts at midnight?
- Are you always available?
- Do you accept all behaviour without batting an eye?

If your boundaries fail, do you know why? Was it for a good reason? How could you support yourself to uphold them?

## **Meditation Practice: Boundaries**

We often have a hard time setting boundaries because we are afraid. For your meditation practice, choose one word (*mantra*) that evokes a sense of your inner power. For example, you could choose a word such as, "strength," "power," "goddess," or "clarity."

- Find your meditation seat (see chapter two for more detailed instructions if needed).
- Follow your breath.
- On each inhale and exhale, repeat your chosen mantra silently to yourself.
- After about five minutes, take a few normal breaths and notice how you feel.

## **Yoga Practice: Boundaries**

- Locust
- Floor Bow

Feel the fire of your practice. Use the connection of your hands to create more space and opening through your heart. Notice how the strength of your boundaries (the hands together, the connection of your legs, the rooting of the pelvis into the floor) facilitates greater space and ease.