

Yogi times™

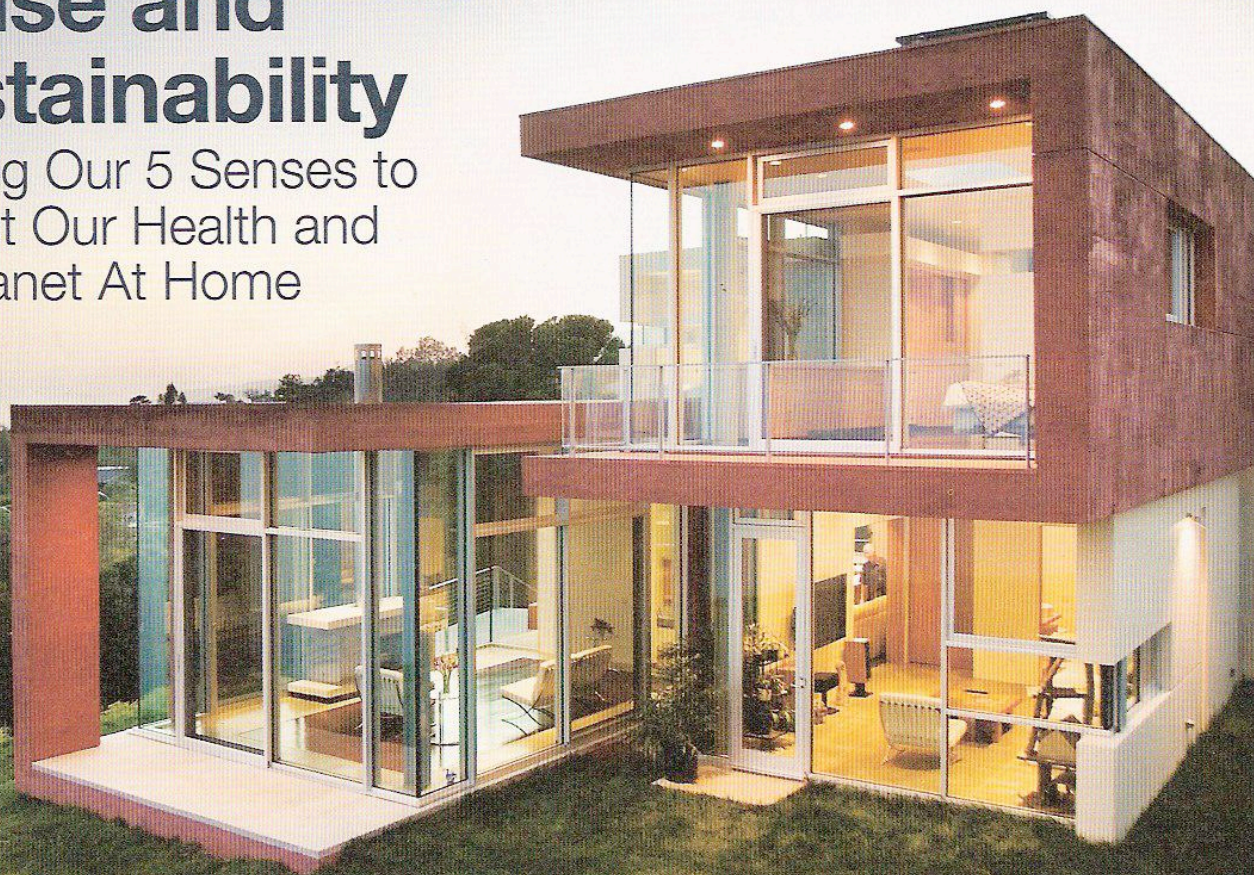
lifestyle for the modern yogi

june 2007 issue 53



Sense and Sustainability

Training Our 5 Senses to Protect Our Health and our Planet At Home



Tricks of the Trade

From Danny Seo, America's Eco-Lifestyle Design Guru

5 Elegantly Environmental Chic Summer Swimsuits

Berry Delicious

No-Bake Cheesecake



be the change

by anna getty

learning to respond with peace

When I imagine the world I want to live in, I see a world without violence, a world without suffering, fear and abuse. When it comes to our children, I imagine a world where every parent makes the choice to find stillness and compassion within themselves before taking disciplinary. I do the best I can to make this choice in my own life, but I continue to ask myself: How can I be a more peaceful parent with my child during challenging times? How can I be an example to her of how to be more peaceful in her ways?

When it is time to discipline our children, knowing what is best can sometimes be difficult. When I was growing up, my mom used to give the occasional slap across the face, and I didn't like it, but it seemed to be what parents did back then. I remember seeing other moms and dads at parks, the zoo or in buses, publicly slapping their children. Others looked on

with little reaction or emotion. Nowadays, slapping one's child would be considered abusive, and I believe that it is. As a child, I accepted the stinging sensation across my cheek, but the moment I could run faster than my mom, I did. I have never slapped my daughter, and I don't intend to. But I can tell you that as she is developing her own will and testing my boundaries, I understand and feel the anger that can lead parents to strike children. My daughter India recently went through a biting phase. In the Resources for Infant Educators philosophy of parenting, a lot of behavior is tolerated when it comes to child development, but biting is a *major* no-no.

At first, when India bit her friend, I told her firmly but kindly that biting was unacceptable. The next time I raised my voice, letting her know that it was unacceptable. But the third time it happened, I could feel this rage inside me that I wanted to unleash on her. I did not

act on the impulse; I carried her into her room, isolating her, and suggested she think about it. We are all inclined to follow the examples of the people who brought us up, and many of us spend our lives working to overcome those inclinations. Many parents choose not to control their anger, frustration and rage, whether or not it pertains to their children. There was a time in my life, not so long ago in fact, when I thought nothing of giving another driver "the bird" out my car window in traffic. Though I have released my judgment and forgiven myself for those actions, I, like most people, have a first-hand understanding of the impulses that drive people to act violently with anger.

But how can we expect our children to master their own anger and cultivate a culture of peace if we as caregivers are at war inside ourselves? I have searched for the answers everywhere: from books, family, friends, teachers, the media and my

own experiences and mistakes. What I have discovered so far is that just as we are born with the ability to love so deeply, we also come into this life with the innate capability to harm, destroy and wreak havoc on those we love as well as those we don't even know, including plants, animals and the environment. I see people all around who are battling threats like global warming, poverty, war and sickness. Yet as I see these outward battles raging, I wonder what steps can be taken to eliminate the inner seeds that result in the violent circumstances we are battling on the outside. I realize that I can show my child that it is possible to be patient, compassionate and kind in her life, because I am able to be so with myself.

Debbie Robins, my dear friend and author of the book *Where Peace Lives*, said, "Peace is not an ideal. Peace is a discipline. It is a muscle that needs to be strengthened or else it grows weak. It is something that needs to be studied, learned and practiced till practice makes perfect." I believe in her words. Debbie is one of the most peaceful people I have ever met. In my observation, she has accepted all of the parts of herself, embraced them and made peace with them. She has taught me that by acknowledging, accepting and understanding the inevitable presence of emotions like rage, jealousy, hurt, fear, anger and despair, we gain the power to control them and keep them from ruling our lives and leading us down a path of violence. I believe this is possible. Debbie is on a mission of peace and I have signed up permanently on her mission for my daughter's future, and for the future of all children. I plan to keep *Where Peace Lives* on my nightstand and let the book become my mantra by intending peace, studying it, visualizing it and holding the space for it inside myself. *Where Peace Lives* has inspired me to look more deeply at my own thoughts, feelings and actions as a wife, daughter, friend, mother and most importantly, as a human. Let us envision peace, if not for our own sake, then for the sake of our children. For more information on Debbie and her beautiful and inspiring book, please visit wherepeacelives.com.

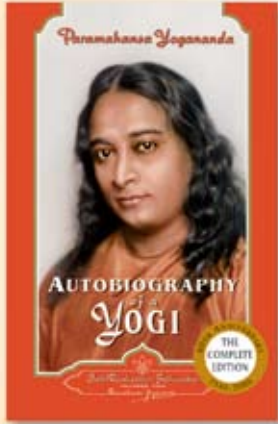
Post scriptum: For those of you who read last month's column and are wondering whether my daughter India weaned herself from nursing, she finally did. Two years, five months and five days from the day she was born she announced, "No more booby! I did it!" And she did. It has been bittersweet, but I look forward to this next chapter of our relationship.

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