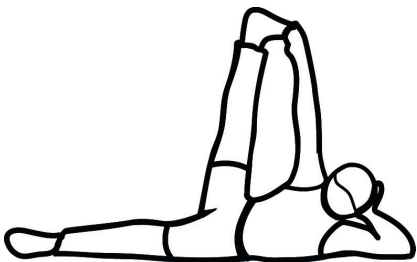


# Namaste, Newbie!



My **Hilariously Holy**  
First Year Practicing Yoga

and a Simple Guide to  
**Getting You Started**

by JIM DANT

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*For Harper and Andrew  
hoping they will inherit a more peaceful world*

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Finally, a shoutout to my daughters, who have each found their way to mindful practices—in one form or another—and have been wonderful examples to me.

To everyone who has helped me on this journey, namaste.

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## Foreword

It started with coins. Not just any coins—wheat pennies, buffalo nickels, and other unique pieces of metal from parts of the world that my six-year-old brain could not yet comprehend. I spent hours raking my hands through piles of shiny metal, examining images, dates, and other details (P for Philadelphia, D for Denver, etc.). I think back on the delight of finding that special piece, the thrill of popping that little coin in the cardboard cutout, and the satisfaction that another piece of the collection had been completed. Coin collecting was Dad’s first “thing” I recall. “Dad’s things” are what my sisters and I call his hobbies, passions, and pursuits, as we play phone tag amongst the three of us and joke, “Dad’s on to his next thing!”

Around age eight the thing was hunting. I remember sitting on the floor in the garage of our Baxley, Georgia, ranch home (geography plays a certain role in determining the things), working to perfect the turkey call. It wasn’t a loud guttural throat gobble disturbing neighbors multiple houses down. Instead, it required the use of a



unique box instrument with the lid rubber-banded to the base, chalk drying the walls of the box. When rubbed together just the right way, the lid of the box replicates the perfect turkey call. I was actually pretty good at skeet shooting with the little .410-gauge shotgun my dad actually LET ME SHOOT at age eight! I have a horribly embarrassing picture of Dad and me decked out in camo gear, getting ready for a day of deer hunting on Grandma's property. (My adult self cringes at this disregard for ahimsa, the yoga practice of nonviolence. But let's be honest: neither of us was ever going to really shoot a sentient being—at least I wasn't.)

Around the same age the thing was piano. Dad was taking piano lessons, and I was too. For me the piano lessons went on for six years. For Dad, not quite as long, but this propelled me into a music journey that extended to marching band and concert band in high school, pep band in college, and Dad and I jamming on our ukuleles during my wedding reception.

While growing up in his home, I observed Dad jump into a number of things through the years, and I'm sure there were many more things

during the years prior to my existence. I can recall him pursuing golf, running, biking, swimming, cooking, and guitar playing, just to name a few. I left my parents' home at age eighteen. For the past fifteen years I've been in my own space, exploring my own things. I no longer follow my dad's course, but clear my own. I appreciate he instilled in me the necessity of hobbies, passions, and pursuits outside of work. It's essential for community building, connection, and self-care. My own "things" have included local theatre, ukulele playing, Krav Maga, tarot reading, and yoga, just to name a few.

One connection I notice in each of "Dad's things" is the necessity of mindfulness and meditation. You have to practice mindfulness to sort through hundreds of coins, sit in the woods in complete silence, and play a piece of music. Running, biking, cooking all involve quiet time with the self. It makes sense that Dad would eventually gravitate to yoga.

Dad didn't initially tell me he was beginning a yoga practice; one of my sisters did. I called her to ask how her visit to Greenville went, and she said, "I went to yoga class with Dad. I think

this is going to be his next thing.” I was delighted to hear this, as I had established a yoga practice a couple years prior. Of course, in typical Dant fashion (if we get into something, we get ALL in), I immediately bought Dad a strap, blocks, bolster, all the necessary yoga props, to gift Dad for the next holiday. At a more core level, I could feel my inner child’s excitement that Dad and I again had a thing to share.

While my sisters and I banter about Dad’s things, I do acknowledge the minimization of passions in using the word “things.” Dad sets a great example of modeling his passions as a way of life, and necessity for balance and self-care. I am looking forward to seeing how yoga is incorporated into Dad’s lifestyle and how it continues to nourish him in mind, body, and spirit. This book, *Namaste, Newbie!*, provides a glimpse into Dad’s first steps into his new thing. I hope it will inspire readers to find their own “things” to enhance their ways of living.

The light in me honors, reflects, and respects the light in each of you. Namaste, newbies.

Lauryn Dant

# Introduction

I am not an authority on the practice of yoga. I am, in many ways, deciding to be the proverbial blind leading the blind. I am a beginner offering insight to other beginners. I am a novice sharing my embryonic experiences and pitifully sophomoric thoughts in order to get you past whatever anxieties and fears you hold with regard to yoga. Some may seem simple: What equipment do I need? How will I ever learn the poses? Will my body really do that? Other concerns may be deeper: Will this conflict with my faith? Do I have to be vegan? How will yoga affect my life?

I am making the assumption that my experience and subsequent thoughts will naturally address the mental and physical obstacles that have kept you from entering the yoga world, your local yoga studio, or your community center's yoga class. Some fellow novices will be astounded by the depth of my knowledge and commitment after having only practiced for one year. Longtime practitioners of yoga will probably smile and roll their eyes at my ignorance

and naivete. Both reactions will be expressions of truth.

I want this book to be informative and fun. I want you to laugh *with* me and *at* me. I will transparently expose my worries, missteps, and fumbles so that you can either avoid them or fall fearlessly into them. I would suggest the latter.

I'll admit it: I want to entice you into a world—no, into a way of being in the world—that makes the world a better place for all of us.