

## Witnessing the Depth and Breadth of a True Ayurvedic Lifestyle

Lisa Grazan

Since my introduction to Ayurveda a few years ago and the remarkable transformation I experienced from my first series of *panchakarma* treatments, I welcomed many Ayurvedic practices into my life. I was already practicing a more meditative form of yoga, but the additions of an Ayurvedic diet and *self-abhyanga* massage, the incorporation of Ayurvedic herbs, and the use of the *neti* pot and *nasya* oil certainly enhanced my physical and mental well-being. I considered myself to be living and practicing an “Ayurvedic lifestyle”.

I came to greatly appreciate the structure that my Ayurvedic routine brought to my life when I lost my mother in August 2013. It was a comforting and stabilizing force in a particularly unstable time. My mother came to know Ayurveda in the last few years of her life. She was immediately drawn to its logical principles and gentle, nurturing ways. Moreover, she quickly developed a strong respect for its tremendous healing capabilities. My mother had a *vata prakriti* and, over the course of many years of what I now understand to be a *vata* aggravating lifestyle, she developed aortic stenosis — a narrowing of the aortic valve resulting from hardening or calcification. When she was introduced to Ayurveda a few years ago, she immediately adopted the dietary and lifestyle recommendations into her daily routine. As her condition became more of an issue, I began performing *hrid basti* treatments on her using *ashwagandha* and sesame oil. This series of treatments proved so successful for her that the cardiologists were able to perform a *second* valvuloplasty procedure and easily opened up the calcified heart valve to give her great relief in her breathing. The *arjuna* root powder brought strength and rhythm to her weak and irregular heartbeat and the ghee, *kitchari* and *chyavanprash* provided warmth

and nourishment to her. My mother still suffered from a lot of stress which she had difficulty managing and her health began to decline. She passed away on 2 August 2013 at the age of 87. It was her Ayurvedic routine, however, which brought her great comfort throughout her illness and unquestionably extended her life.



Needless to say, my mother's passing created a huge gap in my life; a vacant space where the anxiety, stress, fear and instability of *vata* came pouring in. I sought a series of *panchakarma* treatments in September of that year to re-establish the balance in my life. Although I continued to practice my “Ayurvedic lifestyle”, the effects from the *panchakarma* detoxification were still apparent weeks after my treatments. I felt emotionally out of sorts. Yet, in the midst of this emotional chaos came the idea (which I now characterize as wisdom) to incorporate more physical movement into my yoga practice. I felt it was this movement that I was missing in my daily life. In fact, this concept appealed to me so strongly that I envisioned substituting this more active form of yoga for my regular, intense work out routines. This was a radical change for me as I had “worked out” intensely at the gym for the last 17 years! Despite several others' opinions to the contrary, I decided to follow my inner wisdom. No one suggested this substitution to me. Rather, it surfaced from an inner clarity which was cultivated from my daily Ayurvedic practices and enhanced through my recent *panchakarma* treatments. Following this wisdom proved to be exactly what I needed to achieve a balance and flow of energy in my life.

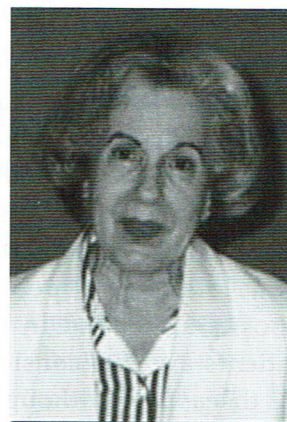
From a purely *physical* perspective, I lost some excess weight, my clothes fit better, I move more easefully and I have enkindled my digestive fire. I achieve through yoga what I was trying to accomplish with more intense physical training, i.e. strength, flexibility and a balanced metabolism.

The yoga movement I now practice and incorporate into my daily routine immediately balances my *mental* state and provides me with greater calmness and clarity. I notice that I can now sit focused and present throughout the work day. My reaction to emotional upsets has become more rational and even-toned. I have been able to hone a sharpened sense of awareness in general and automatically started to gravitate to more healthy habits which include going to bed earlier at night. I have become even more cognizant of the energetics of the food I consume and its effects on my body and mind.

*Spiritually*, I see yet another level of richness enter my life. I have begun to see the need to keep good company and make room for more beneficial relationships. My heart's passions have been re-ignited and I am taking steps to bring more balance into my life. I am able to work through my mother's passing with a greater understanding and sense of comfort.

By following this inner guidance, my body, mind and spirit continue to be nourished! But perhaps more significantly, I am witnessing first hand the depth and breadth of what it means to live an "Ayurvedic lifestyle". I see that my *panchakarma* treatments and daily Ayurvedic practices went beyond physical cleansing and nourishing. They set the stage for the clarity and wisdom of Higher Consciousness to surface. Putting this wisdom into action guided me to even *more* beneficial practices that continue to enrich my life on all levels. This experience sheds great light for me on the living, breathing, growing guide that IS an "Ayurvedic lifestyle". Witnessing this string of events unfold in my life establishes trust; trust in my Ayurvedic practices, trust in the inner wisdom and guidance that these practices cultivate, and trust in the decisions I make so that I can navigate through life with greater ease and confidence.

An Ayurvedic lifestyle nourishes the body, mind and spirit like no other system I know. Our daily Ayurvedic practices build physical strength, emotional stability and mental clarity to carry us through the day. Beyond that, these repeated practices nurture a spiritual understanding, they cultivate proper discernment and they encourage an impassioned flow of energy to successfully meet, evaluate and navigate life's challenges. What began as a daily routine of Ayurvedic practices has blossomed into a broader and deeper understanding of what living an Ayurvedic lifestyle truly means.



**Verna Todaro Grazan**

As a lifelong advocate of the natural approach to living and healing, my mother practiced yoga and followed an Ayurvedic lifestyle with enthusiasm and dedication. Together, we experienced the gentleness as well as the depth of both disciplines. I continue to admire how effortlessly my mother embraced and, in turn, radiated the beauty and wisdom that each has to offer.

**Lisa Grazan** is a practicing attorney, naturopath and Certified Natural Health Professional. Her interest in alternative medicine focuses primarily on the study and practice of Ayurveda. As an attorney, Lisa works toward educating people about the safety and efficacy of natural approaches to health care, while also advocating for legal protection in those areas. She sees a great need for people to be able to freely pursue natural means of treating disease and/or maintaining their health. Lisa is affiliated with Ayurveda Wellness Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and works closely with its Founder and Director, Dr. Lina Thakar, B.A.M.S.