

Surrendering Control?



As I have repeatedly noted, yoga has helped me enormously in managing my multiple sclerosis and staying in tune with my body's abilities.

But sometimes it helps me recognize and come to terms with my body's occasional LACK of ability.

I love the Friday-morning "yoga for strength" class offered at my local studio. I can count on the teacher (my favorite!) to challenge me—in the most loving and supportive way possible. I get a strong sense of empowerment from rising to her challenges, and starting the day by, say, rising carefully and with control into a headstand.

But the other morning, nothing went right. My head wasn't fully in the game; my mind kept drifting away, thinking thoughts that had nothing to do with what was happening on my mat. I started strong, holding a plank position for a very long time with relative ease. But things went downhill from there. At one point our teacher had us try squatting, our bottoms resting on one heel, one knee crossed over the other, our elbows crossed in eagle arms. Everybody in the class managed it with aplomb – everyone, that is, but me. I actually toppled over, making enough of a thump that my teacher had to ask if I was okay. "My body just can't do anything right today," I told her.

"Then maybe you should listen to your body and back off," she suggested.

I am not one to back off. And despite her encouragement to do so, I took the opposite tack, powering through the next few postures, proving to myself that I was in control. Things mostly went better, and by the time we hit savasana at the end, I felt a lot better about

myself and my practice.

But I've been thinking about that experience ever since. Would it have been better to do as my teacher suggested, to not press so hard, to surrender control for a change?

I don't know the answer. And I don't know how my experience on the mat might translate to my experience with MS. I do know that those of us with MS are not fully in control of our condition or the effects it has on our lives. Is it better to acknowledge that lack of control and learn to accept it? Or to fight on, trying to retain as much control as we can for as long as we can?

You tell me.