

Tapas : Building and Maintaining Our Inner Heat

Yoga's third Niyama: Tapas

The word "tapas" in Sanskrit is often translated as "heat," though its implied meaning is having self-discipline. You might consider it as having a "burning enthusiasm," which helps us to achieve our goals, express our creativity, help others, and meaningfully contribute in the world. This happens because we make time for our passions and keep agreements we have made with ourselves.

Following your path/purpose (or dharma) is not always easy; often it takes tireless work. Tapas is the fuel to keep doing the work. Often, this means resilience amidst failure. When considering Tapas we might think back to Santosha (contentment). Some of the most rewarding things in life require hard work. Sometimes we use the fire within to push through to achieve what we most desire. But sometimes the inner fire becomes dim and it feels impossible to achieve anything. We must always remember the fire can never be extinguished, so keep your attention on it, and it will surely grow.

Personal reflection questions for Tapas:

> Do I make agreements with myself that I have difficulty keeping?

What holds me back from keeping the agreement?

> What are 2-3 habits I have that support my health?

> What are 2-3 habits I have that support my purpose/dharma?

> Do I observe silence? Do I speak unnecessarily?

> Do I make choices that are indulgent,
or choices that build my strength and character?