

Running In The Light of the Dark

Running Into The Unknown



Years ago, some friends and I were spending an afternoon in the paradoxical desert of the Great Salt Lake. The texture of the sand, crusted with salt, weather, and time is a sensational feast for bare feet. The landscape is very flat and is so flat that it's become a famous destination for racing the fastest cars in the world.

We decided to play a game. In this extremely barren, extremely flat land, we decided to close our eyes and run completely blind and at full speed in any direction for exactly 100 paces. Eager for the adventure, we closed our eyes and shouted, "GO!"

I bolted into the darkness of the afternoon sun. With my eyes

closed, my other senses came alive. I could smell the mud, the salt, the sulfur, the decaying brine. I felt the texture of crusty-soft sand beneath my bare feet as they beat across the surface of the desert. I could hear the sounds of my companions, their feet slapping the sand, laughing and panting, dwindling into the distance.

Then a worry entered into my head, "Hadn't I seen some ominous-looking spikes sticking out of the sand? I would really prefer not to impale my foot on one of those." Regardless of my worries, I tightened my closed eyes, quickened my pace, and began to laugh, wild with wonder and worry. ". . .53, 54, 55" My paces were whizzing by but the thought of me stepping blindly onto dangerous had almost now lathered me up into a full-blown panic. ". . .71,72,73 . . ." I could no longer hear my fellow runners and wondered if I'd veered wildly off-course. ". . . 83,84,85 . . ."

Only fifteen paces to go. I desperately wanted to stop and open my eyes. Instead, I let out all the stops, opened my running to as fast as I could, and sprinted madly in any direction, no direction, the only direction—forward. From deep in my gut came a raw and uncontrolled scream of anticipation and fear and fun, "98, 99, 100!" at which point I dug my feet into the sand and did an immediate halt.

As I stood there panting, I slowly opened up my eyes and looked down at my feet, muddy but unspoiled, unharmed. These feet who willingly leapt me through space as I ran through the darkness toward fear, away from fear. After a moment, I looked up and around for any spikes. None. Nothing for miles. What a rush!



Learning to See

An important concept as explained in the Yoga Sutras explores the relationship between perceptions and actions. If our perceptions are incorrect, we'll often find ourselves in difficulty or fear. If we know what creates such problems, it is easier to avoid them. If I knew for sure that there were no obstacles in my path, I'd have had an easy run. These misperceptions are called [Avidya](#). Interestingly, one of the most common misperceptions is called [Dvesa](#), the action of rejecting things because of fear. We have a difficult experience and are afraid of repeating it so we project the effects of the past to try to illuminate the future and end up making our present moment unpleasant. Unfortunately, the effects of Dvesa tend to make us reject things that are unfamiliar, even if we have no history with them.



Until we are enlightened, it is impossible to avoid all fears, and therefore we have a model to face those that remain with a sense of adventure. I've referenced a few times one of my favorite movies, [Wings of Desire](#) by [Wim Wenders](#). If you haven't seen it, find it and watch it tonight, but bring a glass of milk to wash it down-it's rich. In this film, an angel, Damiel, decides he'd prefer to live one life, fully human, sentient, and alive, than an eternity of the colorless, only observational life of an angel. The once-mortal, Damiel happens upon another mortal who was once an angel (who, interestingly, is Peter Falk playing himself). The whole movie is a great affirmation of life but the part I want to highlight today is when the once-angel Damiel pleads to the once-angel Peter Falk to tell him everything there is to know about being human. Whereupon Peter Falk turns to Damiel and playfully shouts, "You have to figure it out for yourself. That's the fun of it!" You've got to shut your eyes and run full out and experience what you are going to experience. Since we can't avoid all fears, to the extent that it is possible, we must somehow learn to see the beauty and adventure in them.

Even in our fears and failings there is amazement and beauty. Poet David Ignatow says, "I wish I knew the beauty of leaves falling. To whom are we beautiful as we go?" He says that even in our failing, there is a part of the Universe that finds us astonishing in that going. In yoga, we explore the relationship between what is personal and what is universal—the universe inside. Therefore, there is a corner of your heart that can grant a magnificence to the most difficult of circumstances.

Through yoga and mindfulness, we learn and experience more about our True Self, Home, who's opposite is fear and worry. With the remembrance of our True Self, we are less and less persuaded by Dvesa's misperception of fear. Against the backdrop of the magnificence our True Self, even in the smallest understanding of it, many of our fears simply dissolve. And from this courageous place, we face what fears remain with presence and boldness. We run into the darkness screaming, laughing, and fully alive.



To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

—Wendell Berry.

Scott Moore is a senior teacher of yoga and mindfulness in the US. He's taught classes, trainings and workshops in New York, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and L.A. as well as in Europe and Asia. Scott is the author of [Practical Yoga Nidra: The 10-Step Method to Reduce Stress, Improve Sleep, and Restore Your Spirit](#). When he's not teaching or conducting retreats, he loves to write for print and online publications such as Yogi Times, Conscious Life News, Elephant Journal, Mantra Magazine, Medium, and his own [blog](http://scottmooreyoga.com) at scottmooreyoga.com. Scott also loves to run, play the saxophone, and travel with his wife and son. Check out his [yoga retreats and trainings in places like Tuscany, France, and Hong Kong](#), his [online Yoga Nidra Course](#) and his [Yoga Teacher Mentor Program](#). Scott is currently living in Salt Lake City after living in Southern France with his family.

