

Yoga/Philosophy weekend – Nov. 5-7, 2010 at Yogaview, Chicago

*(For advanced teacher training & the public)*

## **An Evolutionary Approach to Spirituality**

**Talks by Joel Kramer & Diana Alstad**

### ***The Yoga of Relationship*** *(Friday 6-8:30 pm)*

The spiritual quest to “Know thyself” is usually presented as an inward activity—but as social beings, one cannot fully know oneself in isolation. The Yoga of Relationship reveals what can only be discovered in relationship, bringing openings and insights that deepen connection. It offers new frameworks and practices for breaking out of limiting patterns and reactions, unraveling “knots,” and resolving control issues. Like physical tightness and blocks, conflicts and differences become edges to explore with interest and sensitivity to feedback. Dealing consciously and creatively with the unavoidable issues of control, power and self-centeredness can be an on-going source of discovery and mutual growth that foster intimacy and passion over time. *(Make this a date night – bring your partner for ½ price.)*

### ***Unmasking Spiritual Authoritarianism*** *(Saturday 9:30 am-12)*

This engaging, taboo-challenging dress-down of spiritual ideals and clichés explores dogma vs. dynamism, livable vs. unlivable ideals, certainty vs. openness. Can practices make you spiritual? What’s the dark side of enlightenment? Is total selflessness desirable? Why are our loftiest spiritual ideals beyond human capacity?

What we hold sacred urgently needs reexamining: making truth-seeking sacred instead of tradition is a key to a viable future. Defending outmoded beliefs blocks insights and problem-solving, which is now deadly. Unlivable spiritual ideals create inadequacy and self-mistrust, sabotaging relationships and making people easy to manipulate as they seek saviors. Awareness of disguised authoritarianism disempowers it, increasing freedom and possibility. This creative frontier unleashes the intelligence and care needed to meet our epic challenges.

### ***Spirituality and Evolution*** *(Saturday 2-4:30 pm)*

We humans are at a cusp point in our evolution that will determine our survival. This is not only predictable, but is in a sense necessary. Evolution uses crises and necessity to forge change. As old ways crumble or threaten our very survival, we individually and as a species must forge a more evolved relationship to spirit and each other. This is the evolutionary and spiritual challenge of our times.

“Spirit” is the embedded force within existence that is the invisible driver of evolution. Spirituality is ignited by how people connect with each other, the planet and their epoch. As spirituality itself participates in the evolutionary momentum, it needs to be periodically reframed to mesh with new discoveries, potentials and challenges. A major urgency of this epoch is to broaden our spectrum of awareness to further the deep worldview, values, and identity transformations underway.

### ***Yoga of the Mind*** (Sunday 9:30 am-12)

This magical evolutionary gift, our mind, can develop greater clarity and wisdom through inner inquiry and sensitivity to feedback. Being conscious with a capacity to self-reflect is a doorway to growth and expanding human potential that each of us can tap into.

Physical yoga offers a way to loosen tight spots and bring energy through the body. The mind also takes on conditioning and habit patterns that filter the way information is perceived, internalized, and acted upon. Many of the assumptions, values, worldviews, and very identities people operate from become more rigid over time. Exploring and opening the mind can be approached as a yoga, broadening awareness and bringing more flexibility, insight and an adventurous quality to life.

### ***Bringing Spirituality Down to Earth*** (Sunday 1:30-4 pm)

Humanity is on an evolutionary and spiritual cusp as to whether we will mature and use our untapped potential to remain viable. Spirituality has traditionally been viewed as in another “higher” realm—pure, otherworldly—to be personally attained, instead of as a creative force infused in the fabric of living. This age-old, fateful split between the spiritual and the mundane views spirit as “unearthly” and humans as flawed. Any worldview that separates spirit from living is no longer viable in our world of accelerating change and crises.

Bringing spirituality down to Earth involves ending the destructive rift and extending spirituality into social relationships and global issues, bringing more care, purpose and connection into daily life. A modern evolutionary framework for spirituality can bring a needed shift in awareness, values and relationships to meet the challenges of our lives and times.

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**Joel Kramer** is considered a founder of modern American yoga for his seminal contributions to re-visioning yoga in the West. A pioneer and innovator of physical and mental yoga, his evolutionary vision of yoga is foundational for many of today’s teachers. His book ***The Passionate Mind*** illustrates mental yoga. His widely influential “**Yoga as Self-Transformation**” (*Yoga Journal*, 1980) presents many principles of his original mind/body approach that have become an integral part of American yoga. After graduate studies in philosophy and psychology, Kramer was a resident teacher at Esalen (1968-70) and taught yoga seminars with Diana Alstad until 1982, both returning to teaching in 2006.

**Diana Alstad** led mental, physical and relationship yoga seminars with Joel Kramer from 1975-82 at Esalen, Omega, and other centers. She created a foundation for a yoga of relationship in “**Exploring Relationships: Interpersonal**

**Yoga**” (*Yoga Journal*, 1979) by extending Kramer’s yogic approach to the social arena. A Yale Ph.D., Alstad taught the first Women’s Studies courses at Yale and Duke and trained in several therapies.

**Joel & Diana** have been life partners working together since 1974. They coauthored ***The Passionate Mind Revisited: Expanding Personal & Social Awareness*** (2009) concerning individual and social evolution and ***The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*** (1993) unmasking hidden social, mental and spiritual authoritarianism. Their articles, You Tube and podcast links, book reviews and overviews are at **JoelDiana.com**.