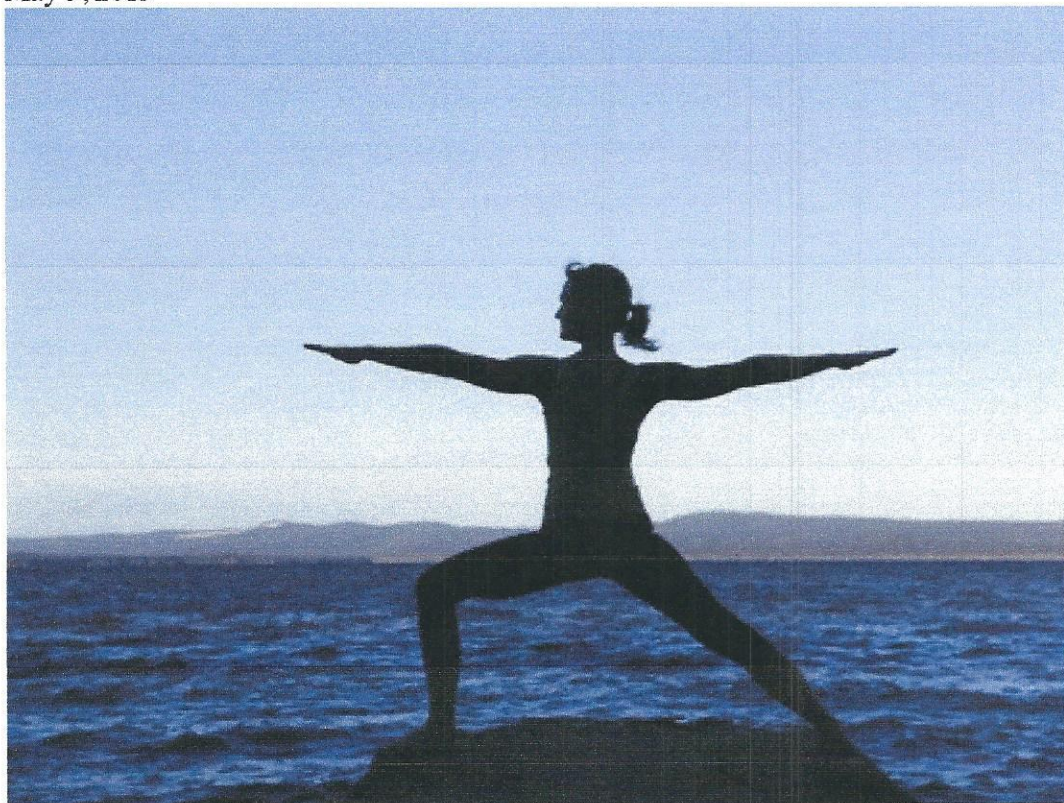


# My Warrior II: A Recounting of My Day at the Boston Marathon Bombings. ~ Carlene Benelli

May 3, 2013



## *Where Warrior II and Real Life Meet*

I was recently asked, “What is your favorite yoga pose?”

Easy answer: “Warrior II.”

“What?” that person said to me, “Warrior II is brutal!”

*Warrior II*, arms stretched front to back, powerful stance, laser-gaze forward.

It’s a beautiful pose to me, but hold it for more than 20 seconds and things start to heat up! That little voice in your head starts talking. Shoulders tense and burn as sweat drips down your forehead and back.



“Just set your gaze and stay,” the teacher says.

Now, the voice in your head is really talking—sometimes screaming. I refer to it as my “Debbie Downer” voice but really, it’s just fear. What is the reality here? I’m just holding a yoga pose. I can choose to focus on the discomfort and write an entire story in my head. In record time, I can ask myself how long we are going to be here, question whether or not should I just let my arms down or maybe just adjust my ponytail and take a drink of water. **Or, I can stay.** Stay in my breath, in my gaze and focus inward. I found that place in Warrior II.

At a recent teacher training, I found the **other side** of the burning, sweating and shaking. It felt so good. It was the other side of my comfort zone. There is no story, only the present moment. I can be in each moment. Hold the pose for *this* moment.

## This past Monday my husband ran the Boston Marathon, as he has many times before.

It’s a tradition for our family. We run to remember our mothers and raise money for cancer research. The kids and I wait at mile 25 for Matt to come by, cheer him on to his last mile then head to the finish line or a family meeting area. This year was the same. We were so happy to see him ahead of schedule at mile 25, considering a significant Achilles strain. We quickly cheered him on and sent him on his way to relish the last mile. Within seconds, everything changed. Matt passed us at mile 25; I took the kids and began to walk toward the finish line. Then someone next to me said, “There are bombs going off at the finish line.”

*That was my Warrior II.*

Reliving the fear of those hours and writing a mental story of “what if’s” is worthless. The reality is, I had to get my two children safely through the chaos, find my husband and pray he wasn’t injured by the bombs, or worse.

I just decided to walk away from the crush of people on the streets, just keep my children calm, hold their hands and get where I could find Matt. It took us an hour to go less than a mile. Each step, each moment, it became clear how bad it really was. We went from sunny day, cheering on runners to helicopters, police with weapons drawn, national guard, swat vehicles, and everywhere we turned were frantic, stunned, injured people.

I had a husband to find somewhere at the finish line. We couldn’t get through to the finish and could only go back to the nearby hotel where we were supposed to meet after the finish line.

As soon as my phone started working, I had 30 texts:

“Are you okay? “Is Matt okay?” “They said there are more bombs?” “Stay away from big crowds.”

Within moments of frantically searching the hotel for Matt, we were evacuated, still no Matt. Back on the street, still only able to receive texts and a very few phone calls, I was becoming more and more aware that I needed to reassure the people I love and love us that we were all okay...even before I knew it was true.

*That was my Warrior II.*

We practice yoga and take it out into our world. As a yoga instructor, I want to share how powerful yoga has been in my life. How you are on your mat is how you are in your life.

If I could scream this out on the page, I would: *You are stronger than you think!*

Practice this in your everyday life. Don't let your arms down to adjust your ponytail or take a drink of water. Find your strength, set your gaze and breathe. Take each moment and stay in the present.

The story is, there I was, in my breath, laser focus, powerful stance, one arm outstretched toward where I needed to go and one stretched back hold my children's hands. Calm: inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale. Through phone calls, texts and Facebook posts I learned more and more. Hours passed and I finally reached my husband safely. He was okay, we were okay and we walked out of the chaos together.

*That was my Warrior II.*