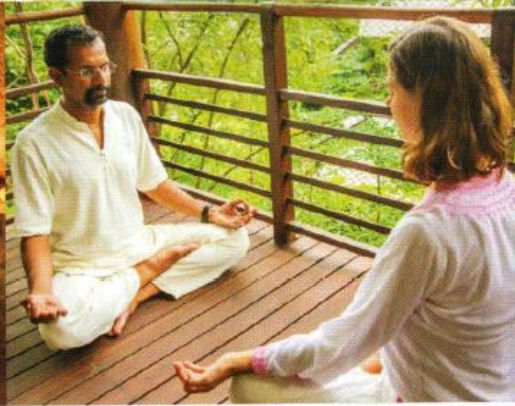
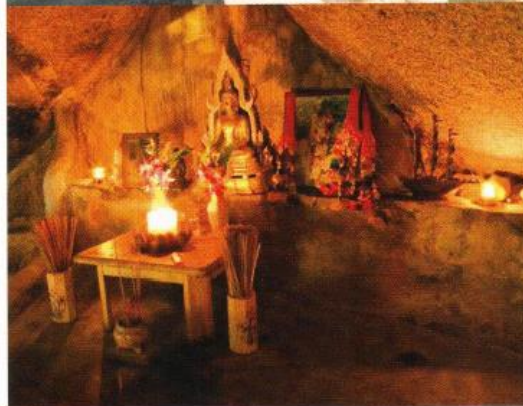


"I'm blessed that I'm in a situation where I get to see change in others," says Rajesh Ramani (pictured below, left).



## SPIRITED AWAY

*A meditation and life-enhancement mentor at holistic Thai wellness retreat Kamalaya, Rajesh Ramani shares the importance of nurturing your spirit as well as your body.*

As told to **Natasha Dragun**

I started my life as a banker, but at 23 I changed direction and became a monk in India. Around 21 you are looking for meaning in life, and at that time I met my teacher. For the next 14 years I was a teacher, working with people from all walks of life to help them to connect and become free of their issues and problems. The way I looked at the world changed. I became a happier person – I wanted to help others to reach that place.

After five years in India I was called to Sri Lanka. It was the war, and there were a lot of people suffering. When people have lost their children what do you tell them? Anything you say is superficial. That's when I realised it's not about teaching; it's about connecting and just being there, just listening. That brought more change than telling people what to do. People are all the same. Suffering is common for all of us, so there is no point in judging suffering.

The way to become free of suffering is to look into the story you tell yourself. We are all just normal people with our own stories. Our root cause of trouble is how we look at the world.

I stopped being a monk for a number of reasons. A few years earlier I had met the owners of the retreat John and Karina Stewart and we decided to deepen Kamalaya's offerings – expand the meditation and work more on the spiritual, mental and emotional side of wellbeing.

Now we are working on the body, mind and spirit. People are also learning tools to take back with them to real life.

We cover a huge area, from stress and burnout to creating positive habits to meditation. We take people through a process to put them in touch with themselves. Most people aren't used to this. I'm not pushing my ideas into them. I'm just like, "hey, this is where you are, how do you want to address it?" Then we help them address it through a process of awareness and non-violence. These are the pillars of my teaching: Awareness of one's self, and non-violence and gentleness with one's self.

We ask people to look at what they can and can't solve. If you can't solve it, you have to look at how you can embrace it and say, hey, this is also me. Then you become comfortable with it. When you say it is your

bad side you can't accept it and become free of it. That process of kicking things out is violence: "I don't want to be scared, jealous and stressed." That's not a solution. It's always going to be there.

Many people are living in the corporate world where everything is based on achievement and the need to be strong all the time. There are so many strong people out there who have disowned the softer side of themselves, because it's not cool to be soft. We're not in control all the time. That causes major suffering.

Relationships are also an issue. Externally we're connected but internally we're so disconnected. I work with a lot of people who have had heartbreak or disconnect with their relationships. Most people focus on the outside: What did I do? How did this happen? They're not getting any concrete answers by focusing on the outside. It boils down to what you want to believe and your inner state.

*Kamalaya offers individual sessions with life-enhancement mentors, regular meditation classes and talks about Stress Dissolution and Mastering Relationships. See [kamalaya.com](http://kamalaya.com).*