

move while you're moving ...



The story of Yogcar or “whoever would have thought doing exercises in the car could be a thing”

Yogcar is an audio app for drivers that provides guidance for safe subtle movements and positive messages inspired by yoga and mindfulness. Be more comfortable, more relaxed, and more focused while you drive.

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One night, after a long day of sitting in front of my computer, I was out with a friend looking for good live music.

We had just decided to leave one venue and head off to another. We got to the car, I opened the door and sat down. I felt the stiffness in my back that comes from a whole day of sitting down.

“Oh, my back is killing me,” I said as I got seated in the car, “I need to do yoga in the car.”

My friend and I looked at each other and said, “Yoga in the car!”

I had done a yoga teaching course about two years earlier. I knew the benefits. I knew the arguments. But like most people, I struggled to find the time.

I said, “It’s possible, you could do lots of little subtle movements. They all help.”

“Everyone would say it’s not safe,” opined my companion.

I said, “It could be safe, you just need to think carefully about what movements are safe. You could build an app that was audio only so your eyes were always on the road.

During the following week, the idea kept turning around in my mind.

A few days later, I bumped into my friend again and he said, “I’ve got a name for that yoga-in-the-car idea of yours.”

I said, with some anticipation, “Yeah?”



“Yogcar,” he said and I thought: that’s it, I have to do it!

And so began the Yogcar journey.

Over the next few weeks, whenever I was driving, I would experiment with various movements and examine whether they interfered with my driving. I tried small forward shoulder rolls, then backward shoulder rolls. They felt pretty good and I was sure they weren’t interfering with my steering. I found that simply turning my head gently from side as if indicating ‘no’ or drawing imaginary circles with the end of my nose made my neck feel much less stiff and tight.

I had been doing yoga for quite a long time so I had a pretty good repository of moves. And my teacher training had made me aware of some of the fine points: for example, how subtle, gentle, conscious movements could be just as beneficial as the more well-known yoga poses such as triangle pose and downward dog.

The challenge was to determine whether a beneficial regime of safe movements for drivers could be developed. Obviously, I wasn’t going to flip into plank pose while driving a car. I needed to think through all the movements and variations that were possible, useful and safe.

Pretty soon I had a basic list of around 20 movements. I started scripting each exercise, trying to come up with accessible descriptions that would enable listeners to easily visualise what movement I was trying to communicate to them without too much effort on their part. In some ways, this was much easier than trying to design a yoga class. The classic yoga poses involve a lot of awareness and care if they are to be done properly and one of the great skills that a good yoga teacher has is being able to help students understand all the refinements that are involved in moving towards perfection in yoga poses and movements. With Yogcar the challenge was different: I needed movements that were beneficial but didn’t require a great deal of focus or attention so that drivers would not be distracted from their primary task of driving safely.

As I added to my list of exercises, I began to classify them by what part of the body they emphasised. Pretty soon I had groups of exercises: neck, shoulders, spine, hips and abdominal. All of these areas could be accessed while seated, while driving, with beneficial results.

I began to describe the idea to trusted friends and colleagues and I noticed that their reactions fell quite starkly into two categories of roughly the same size. One group said things like, “That sounds dangerous to me” or “How could that be safe?” People in the other group usually paused for a moment before responding and said something like, “Nice idea” or “Interesting”.

Before I’d started working on Yogcar, from time to time I had downloaded some yoga apps or guided meditation apps and some of these were very good. A major limitation, however, with most of them was that after the third, fourth or fifth time I listened to them part of my mind switched off because I knew exactly what was coming next. I had more or less learned the sequence or the meditation.



I realised that for Yogcar this would be a deal breaker if I couldn't solve the problem. If people were going to use Yogcar frequently when driving then I had to find a way to make the experience the right mix of familiarity and novelty.

After thinking about this for a while I came up with the idea of Dynamic Session Composition. Each time drivers used Yogcar they would hear a 'Yogcar session'. Each session is composed on-the-fly from a repository of various kinds of content according to user preferences, a set of rules and a probability-driven content selection process.

I had already decided that Yogcar content could not be limited to simply exercises, and that other sorts of content would be a critical part of the experience. We could include, for example, ideas from yoga philosophy, concepts from mindfulness and practical things like driving and safety tips.

And then there was the music. Acoustic guitar music, of course. Over the years I had built up a modest but serviceable home studio. I felt optimistic about putting together a coherent and organic soundtrack to the Yogcar experience that enhanced the overall effect.

With these elements, I had most of the concepts in place to develop the Yogcar app. The next step was to get a team together and start development.

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If you would like further information on Yogcar or if you would like to schedule an interview please contact:

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