

SOME WORDS OF ADVICE FOR PEOPLE ON YOGA TEACHING TRAININGS

Over the past fifteen years, I have been involved in many yoga Teacher Trainings: as a participant, as an assistant, as a teacher. Much can happen! Expectations are disappointed, buttons pressed, hopes disillusioned. Inevitably there are fears, insecurities and negativities. Peaks and troughs. The triumphs and the feelings of being not good enough. Joys, insights and deep connections. All these elements are present in the pots of yoga TTs. Similar to relationships: delights, frustrations and smiles.

We can commit to these courses – the yoga TTs – and then realise it is not what we want to do. We can be triggered by other participants and the teachers. We will meet obstacles and our stories about self. That we cannot write essays. Or do a handstand. Or understand new ideas.

This is the same for teachers as students. As a teacher, I know that I cannot please everyone all the time. This is impossible. I know that some people do not warm to Yin yoga. That as much as some people value what I teach, some people wish I would talk less. Or not be political. Or not be so Buddhist. I know that I cannot please everyone all the time. I do my best: with gentleness, with clarity, with commitment to change.

Yoga TTs can be a real confrontation. We all have fears and insecurities. And we can choose how we respond to circumstances. When we are unduly negative and caught in spirals of complaints, then we are definitely feeding the already existing challenges. Discriminative wisdom (that is thinking clearly and carefully) and skillful speech (that is using words with sensitivity and kindness) are powerful tools. Discussions and opinions are essential elements for our growth. These TTs are excellent arenas for self-observation. How do we respond – or react – to other people? Sometimes what we see in other people – competitiveness, selfishness, meanness – is actually also in our self.

After all these years of trainings – and many other practices – I still feel jealousy and I still get nervous. And after all these years, I have come to believe that practice is primarily about curiosity and self-enquiry – not heads on heels nor balancing on forearms. Try to lessen adding layers of worry to the inevitable complexities and obscurities. Be grounded and stay steady. Ask for help when needed. Maintain an openness (as best as you can). Notice fears, insecurities and negativities when they arise (as they surely will). We can all learn from each other. Shifts absolutely happen. Our learning together is enriched by support, willingness to be vulnerable and compassion.

I remember Sarah Powers saying, “don’t give up the day job”. That is good advice. Know that wheels can fall off. That ideas once tightly clung to can dissipate like morning mists. That teaching yoga is often demanding, problematic and low-paid. That there can be rivalry, unfairness and individualism. And that we have started these things – the trainings – for reasons. To transform ourselves and to help transform others. To be guided on these paths and be guides for others. To realise that inner wealth is a calm mind and an open heart.

Good luck!

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This is an article that I have written about the skills of teaching – *Broken Gods, Breaking Hearts: Pedestals, Boundaries, Pitfalls*

http://www.yogawithnorman.co.uk/space/1ff1de774005f8da13f42943881c655f/pdfs/brokengodsbreakinghearts_1.pdf

(It is also a good example of how my writing has evolved from 2012 to 2017!)

This is an excellent article by Melanie Cooper on surviving yoga TTs:

<https://www.elephantjournal.com/2014/04/yoga-teacher-training-a-survival-guide-melanie-cooper/>

I teach intensives, retreats and workshops – details and dates here:

http://www.yogawithnorman.co.uk/workshops_with_norman.html

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