

YOGA PEDAGOGY:
WHAT ARE WE TEACHING?
HOW AND WHY ARE WE TEACHING IT?

What yoga postures do you include in the context of a yoga class? Do you typically have a plan for each yoga class that you teach? Do you teach a particular style of yoga? Is there a reason, intent, or specific lesson to be learned from the yoga class session? Do you understand the fitness benefits and/or intrinsic value for each yoga posture? Do you spend time before class planning, organizing, and *writing down* the class format (list of postures)? If you are familiar with the students that attend the class, do you take their interests, needs and capabilities into consideration? Or do you arrive at the studio without having put forth any preparation time at all regarding the class you are about to teach?

Which type of teacher would you rather have? Think about it. Would you rather have a yoga teacher that is prepared, attentive, obviously interested in what she is teaching, and cares about her students' welfare? Or would you rather have a yoga teacher who just 'shows up' for class?

Many years ago I paid good money to attend a 'Yoga for Back Pain' workshop with a nationally-recognized master yoga teacher. I was surprised and thoroughly disappointed with her presentation. Not only was she totally unprepared and unorganized, she seemed distracted and spacey. There was no apparent agenda, but there were several completely unnecessary rest breaks and a really long meditation session (to fill time?) Mostly we sat on our mats and she asked if we had any questions about back pain. The workshop was going so poorly that at one point she laughingly apologized for being so 'vata' (spaced-out). This comment would have been cute and endearing if it weren't true.

Many participants signed up for this workshop because the description stated that 'Yoga for Scoliosis' would be included in the program. When it came to scoliosis, she told us that the best poses are the Triangle and Extended lateral angle. Then we all went to our mats and practiced the Triangle and Extended lateral Angle. That was the extent of the scoliosis lecture and demonstration. Unfortunately this workshop experience left me feeling skeptical about future workshops, and to this day I give long and serious consideration as to whether or not my time, money, and energy will be well-spent by attending, or whether the workshop topic is something I can learn on my own.

The point of this story is that students can tell the difference between a well prepared, attentive yoga teacher and a yoga teacher that is poorly prepared, distracted and somewhat disinterested. This is not to say that students will not like and befriend a yoga teacher who is ill-prepared for class, but *they can tell the difference*. Don't kid yourself about this, even if you have been teaching yoga for a long time. There is a distinct difference in quality. This difference is based on caring; it is based on taking your responsibility as a yoga teacher seriously - and it shows.

In this course we will do some deep thinking about what yoga means to us, as well as how and why we teach it. We will learn several new and creative ideas for teaching different populations and types of yoga classes. We will study ways to refresh our teaching styles and become more educated, caring, and competent fitness professionals. But the most important lesson, which is a yoga-based lesson that applies to all aspects of daily life, is that when it comes to teaching yoga or when it comes to doing anything, anything at all, we should do it the best of our ability. We should care about what we do. We should care deeply.

If we truly are the dedicated yoga practitioners and yoga teachers that we say we are, then there is no place for apathy in our lives. If we don't care about what we do, why do it at all? If our long term yoga sadhana hasn't helped us to ease our own sorrows, aggressions, and ineptitudes, and to cultivate a zestful appreciation for the simple pleasures in our daily lives (in spite of the many ups and downs), we must wonder what we have really learned from our yoga practice. Have we learned and internalized any *important* lessons at all?

Many of you might be quick to agree that yoga is about (consciously) living in the moment. But yoga is really much more than that. *Yoga is all about living in the moment as best you can*. Certainly this should apply to how we teach yoga to others.

CHAPTER 4

NEW IDEAS FOR TODAY'S
YOGA CLASSES

