

TEACHER TRAINING ANNUAL

AUSTRALIAN

yoga

JOURNAL

SPECIAL REPORT:
the right course
for you

Into the future
Where yoga
is headed

**Strong,
balanced
& happy**

16 poses
to help
you stand firm

**Find peace in
a busy world**

New science on
how yoga keeps
you healthy

HEALTH FITNESS FOOD MEDITATION HOME WORK NATURE RELATIONSHIPS SPIRITUALITY TRAVEL

JANUARY 2014

YOGAJOURNAL.COM.AU

JANUARY 2014
A\$7.95 NZ\$8.50 inc. gst

ISSN 1837-2406



PLUS

Food for life:
the Mediterranean diet

YOGA TEACHERS SHARE:
"WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN"

contents January 2014



departments

practice

34 | BASICS

Upward Extended Foot Pose: build core strength while developing stability and stillness with Urdhva Prasarita Padasana.

By Nikki Costello

49 | HOME PRACTICE

Well grounded: rooting down through the earth lets you stay strong and flexible, even when life tries to throw you off balance.

By Deborah Burkman

79 | MASTERCLASS

Depth perception: use this quieting twist to pause and check in with your inner life.

By Annie Carpenter

86 | ASK THE MENTOR

How important is your voice when teaching?

92 | ASK THE EXPERT(S)

Our experts share: why I became a teacher and what I wish I'd known back then.

inspiration

15 | OM

Find your happy place; keep cool with sweet treats; tame tension in your neck and shoulders; get outdoors for ultimate health; spot a safe self-tanner; up your vitamin D levels.

26 | LIVING YOGA

It's a woman's world: why are more women than men drawn to yoga? By Katie Manitsas

30 | WELLBEING

Bypass burnout: learn to take time out before you work yourself into a rut. By Diana Timmins

64 | ESSAY

What catching pneumonia taught Victoria Penko about yoga teaching - and herself.

90 | NEWS AND REVIEWS

Books, DVDs, apps, websites and worthy causes: our pick of the best.

114 | THE AYJ INTERVIEW

Tibetan Buddhist Robina Courtin on having the courage to change your thoughts.

By Tamsin Angus-Leppan

travel

72 | FINDING NEVER NEVER LAND

A traditional Sri Lankan working village offers a rare yoga retreat experience. By Kris McIntyre

health

22 | JOIN CLUB MED

The Mediterranean diet just got even better for you. By Lavinia Spalding

reader offer

96 | SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe for two years and we'll add two bonus issues to your subscription!

bypass burnout

Burnout doesn't mean the end of a yoga-teaching career - it can be the beginning of a liberating lesson about taking time out, writes **Diana Timmins**

As another year draws to an end, some yoga teachers may breathe a secret sigh of relief at the looming Christmas close-down. Those abundant with inspiration and energy may continue teaching the eager who merrily forego mince pies and champagne to mindfully manoeuvre their way into the New Year; whereas others wearily cross the finish line with a thud. That almighty clunk was me a couple of years ago - a burnout that prompted a sabbatical of stressless self-enquiry.

I worked in the fast-paced entertainment industry until, at 24, I threw in the TV towel to pursue yoga teaching. I was passionate about sharing yoga with others, yet misguided about realities of teaching and - to a degree - what yoga is. With an unbalanced focus on yoga's physicality, combined with mastering the art of people-pleasing and motherhood, I quickly headed for third degree burnout. Most days involved numerous nappy changes, bottles and burping, copious coffees on the run, pleading with sluggish traffic and eventually barrelling into classes breathlessly attempting to dump my dishevelled desperation at the door. I became an actor with teaching yoga my role; not entirely what I - or my students - signed up for. My former cure for burnout became my cause. My love became my living, and I was desperate for a break.

Around this time, my teacher

from India's International Centre for Yoga Education and Research (ICYER), Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, wisely said, "If you love and live yoga, where is the need for a break? If it's just another profession for you, then please take one at the earliest". This reinforced that teaching yoga is a privilege, not punishment; hence I took leave until I could practise what I preached and teach with integrity. I had dug myself a hole, and needed time to climb out.

WORK WITHIN YOUR LIMITS

Burnout appears widespread nowadays, and difficulties discovering personal limitations is a common cause. Jet-setting instructor Amy Ippoliti burnt out in 2001 from frantically racing around New York on a scooter, teaching up to six classes daily. Hectic international teaching commitments coupled with a painful divorce landed her in hot water again in 2009.

"I packed my schedule to the brim and had recurring injuries and constant meltdowns from the frustration of being unable to establish a healthy routine or social life," she says. "I was acutely aware that I had to step off the hamster wheel, because nobody wants to feel like their teacher is the most unbalanced person in the classroom."

Many teachers can relate, even in laidback Byron Bay. In 2009, Byron Yoga Centre instructor



Lila Kirtana witnessed two teachers suffer with unsustainable workloads to the point of surrender, and soon struggled personally when her initial eagerness saw her saying "yes" to every opportunity.

"Suddenly I was teaching 10 classes weekly, supervising trainees and lecturing as well as cooking and cleaning for the centre," she says. "My personal practice dwindled and I was teaching similar sequences daily, as I had no time to play with variations."

"As water finds its own level, I realised teaching so many classes wasn't for me. I learnt to say *no* to some things and prioritised my own practice to find a happy balance. Now I feel inspired to do something creative for each class I teach, and my passion to share yoga philosophy has returned."

The ideal number of weekly classes is purely individual. Some – like me – select quality over quantity and find one class daily or even one class weekly is ample. Owner of Vinyasa Yoga Wollongong Steven Hinchliffe, on the other hand, comfortably instructs four to five classes on most days.

"Listen to your body and mind, and set your own rhythm," he says. "Regardless of personal limits, it's important to have at least one day off weekly, to recharge physically and mentally. When you're teaching, you're giving a lot of energy to your students. You need time to re-centre yourself."

REPLENISH YOUR ENERGY

When running ragged, the very things we instil within students are often those we cease prioritising: personal practice, down time and diet. Being self-sacrificial isn't noble, but could tip the scales for teachers zapped of energy and teetering on the brink of burnout. Taking time out to practise, play or pause one day weekly, one hour daily, even one minute hourly adds up incalculably; refilling our own cup allows its energy to abundantly overflow into others.

"Regardless of personal limits, it's important to have at least one day off weekly, to recharge physically and mentally"

ILLUSTRATIONS THROUGHOUT: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ABSOLUTELY_FRENCHY



"It's crucial to take time out and recharge," says Sydney-based celebrity yoga teacher, Charlotte Dodson. "Start each day with your own practice. This could be 20 minutes of pranayama and meditation, or going to your own personal teacher."

Both Dodson and Hinchliffe have avoided significant periods of burnout despite busy schedules, perhaps due to committing to regular practices extending beyond the mat. "The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (classical text) states that physical practice is only preparation for deeper practices of *raja yoga* (mental development), yet many teachers get hung up on doing their asana practice," says Hinchliffe.

"It's like a student chef spending all their time perfecting food preparation skills, but never cooking or eating anything. Most important of all is learning to develop a sense of presence every single minute of every day."

Engaging in daily activities that cultivate a sense of presence fosters an awareness that alerts us when our cup is in danger of drought, and mindfully presses the brake pedal when running on empty. It may be walking in nature and listening to the ambience, immersing ourselves in creative outlets or simply momentary pauses between tasks.

Dodson also reiterates the importance of replenishing energy physically – which doesn't constitute takeaway coffees between classes!

"Ensure you eat healthily and in small amounts," she says. "Have a banana and nuts handy when you're on the go. Keep well hydrated by putting chlorophyll in your water bottle and refilling it throughout the day."

COPING WITH CRITICISM

Many teachers remember the fear of their first few gigs, often ending in a post-class plunge similar to a sugar rush. My fear escalated. *What if I don't portray the ideal "yoga persona"? What if my body wobbles and mind freezes? Worse – what if people complain?* Even if hundreds sung my praises, just one unhappy camper knocked me off my perch. Harsh self-judgements constantly consumed me; a far cry from Patanjali's description of yoga in the *Sutras* (1.2) as the "cessation of the fluctuations of the mind".

In his book *Mindfulness at Work*, research and evaluation officer for Geelong's Preventative Health Initiative Dr Stephen McKenzie classifies good teachers as "light on their mental feet".

"Being light on your mental feet means being mindfully agile enough to get out of the way of your thoughts – such as how well or badly you're doing – before they land on you," he says. "Good teachers just do what they're doing without needing to create their sense of self through it... Good teachers transcend their selves: *I help others to realise their full potential to be more than they think they are, by firstly being more than I think I am.*"

Says Dodson, "When we begin teaching, it's easy to try guessing what students are thinking, but you'll never really know what anyone is

online/ technical resources

If freedom and finances don't stretch far enough to attend regular classes in person, mobile phone apps like Yoga Studio, All-in-YOGA and Daily Yoga (All-In-One) offer accessible alternatives. The internet also offers a range of general support to keep you connected, including:

- yogaclassplan.com
- teachasana.com
- 90monkeys.com
- facebook.com/APlaceForYogaTeachers
- charlottedodson.tv
- yogagio.com
- myyogaonline.com
- yogadownload.com
- yogatoday.com
- yogapad.com.au

“Good teachers just do what they’re doing without needing to create their sense of self through it... Good teachers transcend their selves”

thinking. All you can do is teach with sincerity and be the best you can one moment to the next.

“An instructor’s aim is to encourage positivity and love from within every student. Some find this confronting if they aren’t ready to face their own challenges. It’s important to honour this situation, just as it’s important for students to respect their teacher. Remember that as a teacher, you’re guiding students to find the teacher within. Any criticism is a great observation worth taking on board, but not taken personally.”

EDUCATION FOR INSPIRATION

Gaining teaching certification shouldn’t be the end of education. Many yoga associations recognise the best teacher is also the best student by implementing professional development policies to maintain registration. Furthering knowledge in areas that are rusty or of specific interest not only prepares us for various classroom encounters, but also maintains freshness and enthusiasm.

“As more health practitioners recommend yoga to patients, trainings specific to anatomy, psychology and therapeutics are particularly recommended,” says Ippoliti.

In 2011, Ippoliti co-founded 90 Monkeys (90Monkeys.com), an online educational resource for yoga professionals to polish skills and build business know-how. Already, 90 Monkeys has helped over 1500 graduates in 43 countries enhance confidence and grow class attendance by approximately 42.7 per cent.

Of course there are other accessible ways of being studious that don’t burn holes in the back pocket, like attending *kirtan* (devotional singing) or *satsang* (spiritual teachings) within the yoga community, or autonomously revisiting old textbooks and yogic scriptures.

“Simply spending 10 minutes daily reading up on subjects that need strengthening is an

instant boost of life-force for weary teachers,” Ippoliti says.

Making a New Year’s resolution to make conscious efforts to continue learning is the perfect way for a yoga teacher to remain inspired and inspiring for others – this year and beyond.

Repeatedly digging your own hole, battling to dodge it and going through the process of re-emerging is not a healthy lifestyle – nor sustainable. It’s far better to use your vast yogic toolbox to prevent digging the hole in the first place. Things will then naturally flow with greater ease; energy, class structure, student numbers, perhaps even traffic en route to classes! ❖

Diana Timmins is a freelance health and wellbeing journalist and certified Hatha instructor in Wollongong, NSW.

EXTRA

Charlotte Dodson is kindly offering all AYJ readers **FREE** membership valid for one month from the date of registration to access her online classes, live chats and tips. Visit charlottedodson.tv/promotions and enter code AYJ-EXCLUSIVE before 31 January, 2014.

symptoms of burnout

Could you be on the brink of burnout? While it’s best to seek expert advice for medical diagnosis, possible indicators can include:

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

- negativity
- reluctance to teach
- unenthused to provide adjustments
- uninspired to practise or plan
- irritability
- weepiness
- anxiety
- depression
- irritability

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- dizziness
- muscular tension
- insomnia
- fatigue
- weight fluctuations
- breathlessness
- frequent colds and flus
- gastrointestinal disturbances