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YTT: ON THE COURSE

The art of teaching

What core skills and competences do students need to teach? *By Sally Parkes*



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ON THE COURSE

GREAT TEACHERS

AFTER THE COURSE

There is so much choice these days that when it comes to choosing a yoga teacher training programme that making that the right decision can be quite a challenge. Once you have decided what style of yoga resonates with you the next question a prospective student teacher should ask themselves is 'am I planning to teach at the end of this course?'

Whilst some people do teacher training purely for self-development and feel that they may like to teach somewhere in the future, others definitely want to teach directly after their course finishes and build a solid career doing so. If the latter is the case for you then you need to consider if the course you are looking at contains guidance on how to actually teach. Whilst this sounds like a very obvious aspect to be included as a course not all teacher trainings prepare you for work afterwards as the emphasis is more on developing your yoga practice. Yes, this is obviously invaluable, but teaching yoga as opposed to doing yoga is massively different and requires a very specific set of skills.

Communication skills

A great teacher training course should teach you to communicate with students of differing personalities, abilities and levels of yoga knowledge. And it should teach you to be accepting of your participants' various stages of their journey into yoga.

Teachers should be able to empower their students to accept themselves on the mat as well as be encouraged to progress their practice and enjoy themselves in the process. This can be achieved by teachers whose skills set includes being able to teach in a visual, auditory and kinesthetic manner whilst incorporating differing levels of each asana into the class. To make your class all encompassing, knowledge of modifications and progressions and how to integrate them is required as is a general knowledge of common conditions such as lower back ache, high blood pressure and knee injuries.

"Teaching yoga as opposed to doing yoga is massively different and requires a very specific set of skills"

Sequencing asana

Sequencing asana is also a huge subject that should be covered in your chosen course and how sequences should vary depending on what the teacher is trying to convey and achieve. It is ideal that, following a teacher training, you have several sequences you are familiar with so you are ready should you be asked to teach.

In addition to the order in which asana are taught in, the style they are taught in can dramatically alter the emphasis of the class. For example, the same sequence can be taught strongly with a fast pace and with an authoritative tone of voice and this class will come across as challenging. The same sequence can be taught with a softer voice and a much slower pace with an emphasis on relaxing into the postures, and this will again give a different edge. Both ways of teaching the sequence are effective but in different ways and an effective teacher will know how to change it up when it's required.

Teaching practice

So, if you are considering teacher training with a view to teach soon after the completion of your course, ask the programme leader about these skills and whether they are included within the course contact hours. And find out how much emphasis is given to teaching practice. It's also very useful to see how many teachers from a particular training school are actually working as yoga teachers as this is very telling of the course content. ☺

Sally Parkes runs 200 hour Lamis' Yoga (Hatha and Vinyasa) teacher training and pregnancy yoga teacher training. She runs courses in England, Wales, Spain and Dubai (sallyparkesyoga.com)

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