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Welcome to Yoga For All, Teacher Training, module 1: Principles & Foundations for Body Positivity in your yoga classes. I want to start by saying, Amber and I are grateful that you are here. We consider this community game-changers. I want to thank you for caring about accessibility of yoga to all body types, all genders, and creating diversity within this practice.

Amber and I created this training based on our own feelings around yoga, and being pretty much body-shamed when we went to yoga classes, and actually having compassion for yoga teachers who didn't have the training to help us navigate asana in our larger bodies, and also to help teachers feel more confident about their teaching.

I know when I was a new teacher, when somebody who was differently-abled came into my class, it was a real challenge for me, and I wanted to help alleviate some of those fears and concerns for you, as yoga teachers, and even possibly as yoga students to help you get through the yoga practice, ending up feeling inspired, and connected to your breath, and connected to the bigger energy that surrounds us.

This training is really about equalizing accessibility of yoga for everybody. I also want to make the point, when I'm talking about diversity and diverse bodies in this training, I'm talking about true diversity. I really want to talk about everybody who's invited to come to the mat.

So, usually, diversity is kind of perceived as a cold word for people of color, and when I'm using it in the context of this training, I'm talking about older bodies, larger bodies, bodies with disabilities, bodies with different-abled abilities or different abilities. I'm talking about all genders, I'm talking about people of all cultures. So when I talk about diversity, I'm encompassing everybody in that particular word. So I just want to clarify that before we start our training.

So, welcome once again. You've made an excellent choice to be here and we're here to support you and help you in any way that we can. We created a Facebook group. It's a secret group and it's just for people who have taken the training, and the diversity of

people within that group and their experiences is amazing. So, I'm very excited to share this group for you. We have an incredible array of yoga teachers with all kinds of training and all kinds of experiences, so make sure you use that Facebook group as support.

I also want to let you know, you have an entire year to complete the training and use the materials and materials are all downloadable so you can keep them forever. But you do not have to complete the training in five weeks. Some of you that may be a goal, and that might be available to you, but others, I know life gets in the way, and we get side-tracked and we pull away from the training. So, I want to remind you that this training is available to you for an entire year. So if you fall behind, or life gets in the way, don't worry, this is completely self-led.

Amber and I are available to you through the Facebook group. We're in there several times a day. As well as your colleagues and your co-workers in this field are there. So we can all help each other. So don't be afraid to post your questions in that forum and we will help you any way we can. You can also reach out us via email, which is the yogaforalltraining@gmail.com.

I am a lot more active in the Facebook group than I am in my email because I get so many emails I get bogged down, I only check my email about twice a day. I love social media and I love connecting with you. I consider you my family and my tribe, so I'll be in the Facebook group a lot more often than I'll be on email. So if you want an answer in a quicker time frame, I would really recommend that you post those questions in the Facebook group, and the beauty of that is too you'll get a lot of different answers, so you'll get a variety of opportunities to share different ideas to what your question may be.

All right. Once again, thank you for being here. So, let's get started with module one. Tips for success, and I think this is very important. Whenever I take a new course, and I've been away from taking an academic course for a while, I have to set up tools for success, and the first thing I do is I schedule time for the course. So, I set aside a day or an hour or whatever it is I'm going to have time for, and I write it in my calendar and I make it a priority.

So you've invested a great deal of money in this course, and you've made a big investment in yourself in choosing to teach and share yoga. So, I want you to schedule a time when you can tackle this project, when you can look at this information, and put it in your calendar. Like me, when I have anything that's really important that's due, I always put it in my calendar and I set aside a time for myself to complete it, and it's a lot less stressful that way. Take your time. I said it before, and I'll say it again, you have a year to complete the material in this course, and all of these material is downloadable, so you can keep it forever.

Listen actively and take notes. This was a very great piece of advice for me when I was in University, was to listen actively and take notes. So, I would suggest perhaps downloading the audio files to your iPod or to any mp3 players that you may have, and sit in a comfortable place, take out a note book, pen and paper. There is something really powerful about putting pen to paper and taking notes, or if you're more of a computer note-taker, I'm not so great at that, make sure you're making notes as you're listening to the material, because you are more likely to retain it, and embody it, and then listen on the go. This was also a good piece of advice for me when I was doing my teacher training. I had to commute an hour to my teacher training,

So, I used to record my notes and play them as I was driving. So that I could listen to the material, and the more often you hear the material the more you absorb it. So the first time that you go through this course or maybe the first time that you listen to this material, chances are you're only really going to absorb about 7% of it. Can you believe that? That's what studies show: you'll absorb about 7% of this material.

So you want to keep referring back to it, so layering it, so every time that you listen to it you will get something new out of it and you will be able to retain more of the information. So I'm going to invite you to listen to this as much as you can, and then take what you have learned from each module right to your class right away. Because that's another way to kind of firm it up or embody it in your teaching, is to start applying what you've learned right away.

And, again, I mentioned this already, make sure you interact with our friends on the Facebook group and stay connected with us. Beauty is not in the face, beauty is a light in the heart, and I wish as a society and culture we could really embrace that, but there is a lot of things that are working against us, that tell us that beauty is in our body, or beauty is really based on the way we look. So one thing I found in my yoga practice in my practice of self-study and self-inquiry which is a big part of my yoga practice, is redefining beauty and redefining the way I look at myself, and redefining my value.

Primarily, women within North American culture, a lot of pressure has been put on us to look a certain way; to behave a certain way, to not to stand in our own power. And as we move into the new millennium, this is 2016. These are the 2000s. It's really important that we remember that it's much more than that, and that we continue to spread the message of moving beyond what we look like, and having unrealistic standards of beauty for us. So we're really here to push through that - that barrier that's been holding us back for so long.

What is body image?

That is an evolving question, I'm going to be honest with you. When I first started talking about body image, I had a very particular understanding of it and it's evolving as I am evolving.

So, to start off, body image is defined as individual's concept of how their body looks, and it changes based on feelings about themselves, and I know that to be true. You could wake up and you are just having one of those bad days. My mother would call it, "Waking up on the wrong side of the bed," and you have a very distinct feeling about how you look on that certain day, and sometimes our idea of what our body image is, is really skewed.

It's influenced by a lot of other factors. Including, maybe what we've been taught while we were growing up, which I call root chakra conditioning, and that's the idea that you grow up to be a certain way. Maybe if you're female you grow up to get married, you have a couple of kids and this is your mission in life. Maybe if you're male the idea is that you

grow up, you get married and you provide for your family and you're always strong and you don't show emotions.

These ideas that have been generated for a very long time, and that are taught to us while we're children. This is what we call root chakra conditioning, and as long as we're aware of that, we can change that, and that's what we want to do when we're teaching our body positive yoga classes, or we're teaching people to connect themselves. We want them to examine some of the things that they've been told about their bodies, or they've been told about themselves, and to maybe question what those ideas are and where they come from, and if they really do benefit us as an individual, or are we just pretty much toeing a line of something that's always been said? Can we break out of that idea?

I really believe some of the most dangerous words in the world today are, "Because we've always done it this way." Okay? Because this is what I've been taught. I'm asking you to start to look at what you've been taught, and see if it really serves you, or if it's actually kind of making you miserable, because that's one thing I find about body image.

Body image refers to the way we perceive our own bodies. The way we assume other people perceive our bodies. Body image revolves around perception, imagination, emotion, physical sensation of and about our bodies. It's not static, so it changes every day all the time, and it's sensitive to moods, environment, physical experience, and for the most part it's not really based on fact, it's based on an idea, and it really influences our self-esteem.

Our culture constantly tells us how we look is the most important aspect of ourselves as individuals, and if you've been practicing yoga for a while or studying yoga for a while you know the philosophy if yoga tells us something else. Tells us that what resides in our soul and how we connect to each other and ultimately to supreme consciousness is one of the most important parts of ourselves. Yoga tells us that our spirit is the definition of ourselves and so we want to develop a healthy spirit. Develop a spirit that's actually about who we are.

How does practicing yoga affect body image?

Our body image is a major factor in the development of self-esteem. So, I know when I was growing up, a really popular thing for us to believe is, as a girl, growing up as a woman I identify as a woman, what I would be taught is that there is always a pretty one, and there is always a smart one. So I have a younger sister, and people would ask my mother all the time, who's the pretty one and who's the smart one? And my mother being a feminist, and really standing in her power would always come back with a rhetoric. You know, they are both smart - she would say that first, and they are very hardworking, and they are pretty.

So that question really started not only to annoy me, but I was really aware how my mother answered that question, and I put more focus on being hardworking and smart. Now, when I talk to my children about self-esteem, I don't often use the word "smart", and I don't tell them that they are smart all the time.

I tell them that they're very hardworking because I really think sometimes hard work trumps intelligence or intellect, and I don't want to set my kids up if they are having a problem understanding a concept in school, or they are having a hard time understanding an intellectual concept. I don't want them to feel like they are not smart because they are having trouble. But I want them to understand that if we're hardworking, we can often overcome some of the obstacles in our way, but we also need our community as well to help us.

So, body image is not only about the way we look, it's also about the way we feel, and when we're talking to our student and presenting yoga to them in the class, we want to be mindful of the way we present yoga. We want to be mindful of the way we talk about our bodies. We want to be mindful of the way that they talk about their bodies, and we really want to tune our language and our attitude around creating, if not a positive experience for them, at least a neutral experience for them because, some people, no matter what you do, will never love their body, and that's just a very sad reflection of where we are in society.

But if we can get those people to a place of neutrality, so when they are not hating their bodies, but they can come to a place of self-acceptance, then we're doing our jobs, right?

As yoga teachers we're here in the class to uplift our students. We're not here to make this another experience of fitness, another experience of weight loss; we're not perpetuating those goals here on the yoga mat. We are asking them to feel their bodies, to connect with their bodies, and to experience whatever that is come up for them.

Yoga has the power to affect body image both positive and negatively. So, again, it comes back to the way we talk about ourselves. It comes back to the way we sequence our classes for success for differently-abled bodies, and the way we see our students. Are we making judgements of students who come in to class with larger bodies or differently-abled bodies, just because somebody comes into class, and they appear to you to be different than, say, an able-bodied person that you are used to seeing, doesn't mean they can't do the class, right? And we welcome them with open arms.

We watch when we're doing our warm up where people are having struggles, and you never know what body is going to have a struggle. So, it's important that when you introduce your class, when you teach your class, you are coming from a place of neutrality. To develop positive body image in yoga. We must remember that yoga is a function of health, creativity and wellness, and not a function of beauty.

Yoga is self-care. Now this is huge for me. I just had a conversation in one of my classes, one of my yoga students owns a CrossFit facility in my town, and is very much about going hard and pushing hard, and she came up to me after class and said, this is a very new concept for me, not to push to the edge, not to go past the edge, not to go faster, and she has constantly invited me to constantly call her own class, and I don't do it publicly, but I come by and I say, "I see you Lauren," which is our code word for "It's okay to slow down."

So, self-care is as important as all of your to-do lists; is as important as all the work that you need to do, things that you prioritize. You also must prioritize self-care because burnout is real, especially as a yoga teacher. A healthy and regular yoga practice can be, or is a vehicle for self-care and can be used as a tool for compassionate self-study. This is huge for me, and I really, really came to compassionate self-study in the past three or four years because I like to be really hard on myself. It was the way I was raised, it's part of my root chakra conditioning, but compassionate self-study is actually looking at yourself as

you are, without the filter of negativity without criticizing yourself, and being compassionate for yourself about what your limitations are; what your ideas about your body are, and where that conditioning comes from and truly understanding yourself. I think this is the primary tool in yoga - to create wellness.

What does self-study mean?

As I mentioned, it's time to look at yourself as you are, and I really invite you to create a journal. I have a compassionate self-study journal that I will actually share in the extras in the tool box, that if you're interested it's part of the Santosha Project, if you're interested in starting to cultivate a compassionate self-study around yourself, these are some tools to help you reflect on things you can let go of ideas that are not yours - time for care.

All those things that we always put on the back burner. It really means coming to yourself and accepting yourself and seeing yourself as you are. How can we embrace compassionate self-study as a practice? We can slow down, we can journal about it, we can come to our yoga mat, we can stop criticizing ourselves, and this is a really hard thing to do.

How can we start looking at how our bodies are beautiful no matter what they look like? And, again, this is really difficult. Some of us are ready for this self-expression of, "My body is beautiful. My body is acceptable. My body is mine to enjoy, and other people's opinions of it are none of my business or are irrelevant," we haven't been raised to believe this. So, it's very hard to break out of these old ideas of what my body or what my body looks like, or some bodies are good bodies and other bodies are not good bodies, like, this is something that's a very hard thing to change, but if you're coming to yoga practice and you're doing self-inquiry,

These are questions you have to ask yourself: "why am I so hard on my body?" "Why do I think these bodies are better than these bodies?" "And how can I get to a place where I'm okay with my body?" "If I don't love it, at least I'm not negative towards it." So that's something you want to start looking at in your compassionate self-study and perhaps

journaling about that, and I will put that journal in there to help prompt you through that. There is also your reflection book that you have. This is your work book to work through the course with. So that you can start embodying this information. There is a piece in that as well around compassionate self-study. So you can work in that particular part of the exercise book, and you can take it further through that Santosha journal that I will add to the extras if you want to explore that.

We must be careful not to induce harm on our students by bringing our own baggage to class. So, when I first started teaching yoga, I always taught from this self-deprecating place, and I was a training Anusara teacher, and when I was doing my final class and I was being evaluated by three Anusara teachers, one of the first things they said to me in my evaluation is that “you have to start putting yourself down while you're teaching.” You know, complaining about the size of your body because your students internalize that.

Instead, if you're struggling with a pose, you can say, "These are the things that I'm working on," which really helps your students to identify with you as a person also practicing yoga and not as somebody who's got all the answers, or who can do everything. So it was really eye-opening for me because I thought that self-deprecating humor was making my students more comfortable with their bodies, I didn't realize that we can internalize those messages in a way that can make us feel bad about our own bodies.

So I was really careful from that point forward, to really hone my language towards speaking positively about myself and my body, avoiding reading unrealistic goals for your classes, and remembering that your own genetic privilege may affect how your students are feeling in class. This is huge.

I am a big proponent of planning your classes out. Writing all your classes out and coming to class prepared. Sometimes I have this idea that we're going to do a whole lot of arm balances, or whatever, and then I get to class and the people who show up to class aren't particularly ready for that type of physical practice, or are still working towards a goal. So I need to step back from that.

I also have very flexible hamstrings, without warming up I can just pop into hanumanasana or splits pose, and sometimes your ego gets away from you when you

want to show your students how you can do these poses or give them inspiration to work towards something. That doesn't always work. Sometimes that can alienate your students. So you want to be really careful that you're creating a class, and this is what we're here to learn, that is progressive; that you can allow your students to be at different places in the pose, and to feel good about that, and to also identify that you have your own genetic privilege.

And now when I demo hanuman, for doing a hanuman class - and I had centered that as my pinnacle or pivotal pose in a class - I always acknowledge that I have that genetic privilege, and I also show different variations, "Some of us are going to look like this. Some of us are going to look like this. Some of us are going to look like this. All of it is good. All of it is a step on the path to knowing ourselves and to learning about this asana practice."

No showing up your physical prowess. I just talked about that. So no just lying into hanumanasana for me, but showing all the steps to get there, and acknowledging that not everyone has the physical capability to get there, but everyone has the ability to feel this pose in their own way in their bodies. Avoid highlighting students who have a string flexible practice. When I was a new teacher I was really guilty of this. Using the person who has a strong flexible practice to demo the more difficult poses. I learned that actually from teacher training, it seemed to me that we always chose the student who could do the pose, to execute the pose, and that always made me feel less than, and I kind carried it on to my own teaching.

So, I would really work on showing the poses in different stages of completion. So, this is where you might be stopping. This is where you might be starting from. This is where you might be starting from, and even if you feel comfortable, or if your students feel comfortable, inviting some of your students to share where they are in the practice, and that's really knowing where your students are, and that will be a personal call for you to make.

But I really am a fan of showing different stages of the poses and not using the person who can easily get into the pose, due to, maybe, genetic privilege, or longer practice because sometimes that feels discouraging to those who may not be there yet. And, really yoga

students aren't interested in coming to yoga class to watch flexible people do yoga. They want to be part of that practice, and it's really important when we are demoing, or choosing people to demo, or have a teachable moment with, that we're really sensitive to who we pick and how we display the pose.

We're all about creating a safe space for inclusion. So we really want to see everybody that's in our class, just not the strong, flexible people, or just not people who may be struggling, but everybody - making this a really inclusive practice.

The power of yoga. Our primary challenges as yoga teachers are to shape consciousness. This was big. My yoga teacher said this to us within the first, I don't know, fifteen or twenty minutes of teacher training. How we present yoga and how we talk about yoga and what we share in yoga really does shape the consciousness of our student, and we want to always come from a place of accessibility and inclusion. That's why you are here. So, really be careful about the words that you choose, and how you want your yoga to look, or how you want to present your yoga. We really want to come to our students meet them where they are.

Elevate awareness. That's the next thing, and that has been a lot of what Amber and my work has been, is to elevate awareness around who comes to yoga, and how do we serve them? So we really want to be careful with that. Assist our students into tapping into their own personal power. This is big, and I taught this at a workshop recently, that we do not want to take credit for our students' successes, we want to remind them that we are all students of yoga. We may be teaching the class or holding space in the class, but we're here holding space for our students to have their own experience of yoga, and we want to be as supportive in that space as possible.

So that may mean we use supportive language or may mean we use props. It may mean we create new variations for poses, but we always give the power back to the student because it's the student showing up, and it's the student giving it a try, and it's the student feeling their own body, or trying this posture, that's tapping into their own power. We just happen to be there to help. So we never want to take credit for our students' successes.

We are working towards health and wellness by teaching self-love and acceptance, right? By not criticizing our bodies, by accepting where we are in the practice, and reminding our students it is okay. Not every day is a great day in life on general, but sometimes in your asana practice. Sometimes when I practice in the morning, I'm far more powerful and able to do a really intense practice, but my balance is off because it's the first thing in the morning.

Like, every day we come to the mat is a new day and a new experience, and we're really trying not compare ourselves to the last time we came to the mat. Or to the person who is sitting beside us, or the images we see in the media. We're here to have our own experience of yoga, and that's accepting where we are on the mat. We are asking students to come to know themselves, as opposed to the traditional "teacher knows best."

I find this whole model very problematic, and I first kind of observe this model in my Anusara training, where the teacher is always the expert, and the universal principles were supposed to work in everybody, every time without question, and, for me, as a bigger body student, they didn't always work, or teachers in smaller bodies weren't able to see my alignment in a bigger body. You know, there were things that were blocking their ability to see what the pose looks like, even though I was following all the steps and all the spirals and the loops. For any of you who are familiar with Anusara yoga, there is a lot, and I was doing all those things but it looks different in a bigger body, than it does in a smaller body.

So teachers couldn't see that I was doing what I was doing, or that I was doing all the steps. We want to ask the students, or we want to give autonomy back to the students; they know their bodies best. We may have some education in alignment and anatomy but we don't know what's going on in their bodies, what injuries they've had, why their hips are tighter, why their shoulders are tighter, why this pose looks a certain way, we want to rely mostly on how the pose feels, and looking for good alignment, right? Is the in line with the ankle? Are we pushing energy in through our legs? Are we encouraging people to firm their core for support?

We want to look for those general alignment cues, but we also want to give the student autonomy to play with these pose the best way they can in their body, and help keep them safe by providing props, and providing suggestions, but we do not know best. Everybody is a steward of their own health and their own practice, and everybody knows their own body best, we're there to support them in that knowledge.

Yoga and self-study. This is huge for me. My yoga is still a physical practice, but, primarily it's a spiritual practice for me, and a practice in knowing myself better, and this has really helped me to develop this training. What do I want to offer in the world? How do I want to approach this practice so that it's available to everyone, and how do I share this information? And this came to me from self-study. Shifting our awareness to health at every size is the key to understanding and appreciating different body types, and abilities.

I'm really excited to be a part of ASDAH, which is the Association for Size Diversity and Health, and, really, it's kind of breaking through some of the myths around what big bodies are, what healthy bodies look like, what a fit body looks like, that a fit body doesn't only look a certain way, and that's really how we've been conditioned and trained, that there's fitness that happens at every size, and we want to promote the idea of a healthy body.

And when we do that, when we promote the idea of "Heath At Every Size," which is HAEZ by the way, an excellent book written by Dr. Linda Bacon. If you're interested in this approach to health and wellness, I suggest that you look at that. It is understanding that some of us are just built bigger, and no matter how much weight people lose, they will always be bigger.

And the idea that weight loss isn't always a kin to good health and shifting our focus from a culture that's obsessed with weight, to a culture that's obsessed with personal health. That healthy bodies look different and that health is different for everyone. So that I think is a really important way to start shifting our awareness around this weight loss culture, and everybody, you know, we're always congratulating people when they lose weight,

what is the first thing people say to you? "Oh! You look great! You must have lost weight."
Is shifting away from that idea

That if we feel good and if we love ourselves then we're more inclined to do healthy activities we're more inclined to eat healthy. We want to stop shaming people into what we perceive as fitness. This involves avoiding assumptions when it comes to ourselves and others. So when you see a person in a bigger body, we don't automatically assume that they are unhealthy, and we don't automatically assume that they're not going to be able to do the practice, and we don't automatically assume that they're going to need our help.

We want to give them the autonomy and what I say to everybody, 'cause I always sign everybody in in my own classes is, "How can I serve you? Tell me what you need from me." As opposed to just coming and saying, "I'm here to help you and I know what's best for you," right?

So we want to give the students their autonomy, and we want to start avoiding the assumptions, and you will learn this through your compassionate self-study exercises. What biases you already have, and how we continue to perpetuate those biases in our yoga classes. Our bodies have different strengths and abilities. Absolutely! I have a lot of bigger bodies in my class, that are really, really flexible, and are a lot more flexible than maybe some of the smaller bodies in my class.

And I really played at the idea that everybody has their own strength when I'm teaching. So some of us are going to be great at balance, and we can balance all day long, and that's not a problem, and not all of us are going to have that, and some of us are going to be great at strength poses; that we can hold ourselves in different variations or playing for long amounts of time, and that's not going to happen for everybody.

So we really just want to celebrate the diversity that exists within the ability of the body. Each student should be celebrated as the unique and special snowflake that they are. I love that saying, I got that saying from Miss Tina Veer, another body positive person who does this work as well.

I love that idea that we appreciate everybody exactly as they are when they come to the mat. This was also a lesson that my teacher taught me, is to meet students where they are, but not to leave them there. Help to move them along the path with their asana practice any way we can, and this is a big attainment that even Desikachar talks about in his teachings of yoga, is that we meet our students where they are, and we don't criticize them, and we don't shame them. We just allow them to have their own experience, and we ask them what they need from us, as opposed to thinking we know what's best for them.

Celebrating what the body can do. I'm a big fan of that. Start by identifying that everybody in North America culture has some kind of body issue. I was in the grocery store the other day, and my husband was with me, and then we were looking at the Men's Health magazine, with somebody like super-shredded on the front, and their eight-pack, and all this kind of stuff, and my husband called this a low self-esteem magazine for me, and I thought that was kind of interesting.

When I was in university, I took a women studies course and we actually talked about body image in media, and, I mean, this was in the 90s, and then we were talking about this stuff in the 90s, I think it's only really taken a hold in this Century and this decade but it was really interesting to see.

What my professor had said is that, we really focus on body image with women, and we've trained them that they need to be thin, and we've spent a lot of time really drilling into the female culture; that this is what is expected of you, and my professor had said, if we continue along this line, it is going to start to kind of permeate all culture. We're going to start to see this in male culture as well, and that's what we're seeing. We're seeing these really hairless bodies, these really strong bodies, and, you know, we're not really celebrating them. We're celebrating this aesthetic that's impossible for a lot of men.

And so, it's really important that we recognize, in North American culture that we are really obsessed with how we look and we've really taken that assertion to make the yoga practice about being the physical, and not the spiritual, and not more than that, and we need to come back to really identifying ourselves, and everything is not a physical thing.

Yoga doesn't have to be about body beautiful, yoga can be about spirit, spirit enlightenment, spirit beautiful, spirit and connection. So, I really want you to start to look at the images around you, and notice what are cultures obsessed with, and how we cannot buy into that whole piece of ridiculousness.

We don't have to continue with this circus of what the expectation is for body image. We get to opt out, and how you opt out is by you opt out with your \$\$ because that seems to make the most sense to big corporations, is that we can opt out of the messages that they're constantly trying to push on us, by not engaging, and boycotting publications, and products that are about body shaming us.

We've been taught to constantly seek self-improvement as opposed to self-love. There is a whole industry that profits off of self-hate, it's one of the most powerful generators of revenue for big companies, is, "I can make you better. You can do this better. You can have a better life."

How can we be content with the life that we already have and know that if you're living in North America and you're sitting in front of a computer and you know where your next meal is coming from, you are doing better than 80% of the world, right? If you're in that place, if you have shelter, if you have food - and even in North America there are lots of people who don't have those things. So can we start appreciating the things that we already have, and know that there's nothing you can purchase that's going to make your life any better.

You were the steward of your own life, and the way you choose to look at your life, is the way that it makes it better for you. The key to helping students feel successful is to remind them to simply "come as they are" and that was my big message, and my first point about meeting your students where they are at. Meet your students where they are at, but don't leave them there.

Obviously this is an important message to me if I keep repeating it, but I think it's important for you to see that meeting our students where they are is the key to self-acceptance, right? This is why I'm good where I'm at. This is Santosha in the making. Yoga For All. That's our message.

Keeping in mind the opportunity to teach a yoga class is a gift. Every class is an opportunity to dig deeper, and to learn more about redefining our asana. So, every day is an opportunity to learn, and some classes are going to go better than others, and my secret to making every class fantastic, just give everybody a long supported [***] and people will forget that class maybe wasn't the best class you ever taught, but we also want to pose and take time for people to feel their poses, to ask questions, and to redefine asana. Meaning that we get to define ourselves, we get to choose the poses for us, keeping in mind there is no such thing as the traditional form of the pose, or the full expression of the pose.

That's really a phrase that bothers me. That there's only "your" expression of the pose. Not all students will be comfortable in a large public class, smaller classes and semi-private classes are sometimes better for students, with greater limitations. I like that.

When I first started teaching and I had a yoga studio and I would have fifty or sixty people in my class, and they used to love the energy of having all those people in my class, but I wasn't able to serve the people that really needed me in those classes. Sometimes people got left behind because there was too much going on.

So, sometimes it's nicer to have a smaller class - a smaller class dedicated to working with different body types, to working with people who are going to have some challenges, so that you have the time and the space to get to them. So, keep that in mind. That every class can be a Yoga For All class, but if you really want to define asana for bigger bodies, or you want to get an opportunity to really connect with your students, sometimes a smaller class is the way to go, because you can have some real conversations and there is time to explore different types of asana.

Try not to be discouraged or rattled by a student who's different from you. This is going to happen all the time. We had a situation in the town where I live where a blind student showed up to class, and she showed up to like a powerful Vinyāsa class, and the teacher was so rattled by the fact that they had a blind student in their class.

That she invited this student to leave, which I can't even imagine. What she failed to note was that the student had a regular yoga practice. They had hired a yoga teacher to work

with them privately, and the yoga teacher had given them strategies for navigating a class where they couldn't see, and for using the wall as a prop, or using their sense of awareness through their own bodies on how to navigate the class.

And I thought it was very sad, because that student ended up having to seat in the lobby, and waiting for a ride, right? Because somebody had dropped them off, and said, "I'll be back in an hour and a half to take you home," and they were effectively excluded from the class. You need to, again, meet the students where they are. So if you have somebody with an obvious physical challenge like somebody who is blind, or somebody who is deaf that comes to your class, you need to talk to them about how you can serve them.

So if this teacher had taken the opportunity simply to talk to this person, they would have known that they had a regular yoga practice, and had been practicing for several years, and knew how to modify the class, or create variations for themselves in the class, and that didn't have to end up as a situation that it did, where somebody was excluded.

Whenever somebody who is different from you, or is outside of your teaching experience comes to your class, think of it as an opportunity to learn; an opportunity to learn about yourself as a teacher, and to learn about your students. This is like an opportunity to create new variations, and to even open your class up to the idea that, "See, everybody can practice!"

That our narrow idea of what asana practice looks like has just been blown away because we have somebody in the class that is showing us asana is for everyone, and I'm not saying, like, center them out in that moment, but be open to them being there, so that we can all see this practice is for them.

So, again, this keeps coming up, the critical step is to meet your students where they are but not to leave them there. So, what are some of the challenges? This is what we are going to look at in the next part of our training, and I'm going to pass you off to Amber, who's going to introduce you to the foundations of creating a body-positive class and meeting those challenges to asana head-on. Once again, thank you for being here. We are off to a fantastic start. Make sure you take lots of notes. Make sure you take your time with this material, and enjoy the process, and I'll see you in the next module. Namaste.

AMBER KARNES

Hey! Amber here. We're going to talk about the Foundations of a Body Positive yoga class.

Some best practices to put in your teaching toolkit. So, here is a quote that goes along with the theme of some of the things we're going to talk about: *"Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never the cowardly."* Gandhi said that.

So, three foundations of a body positive yoga class that we'll talk about in this course are: agency, consent and permission and we'll talk more in depth about each of these at periodic times throughout the course. But just briefly, agency, reminding the students that their practice is their own, and that they are the ones that hold the power.

Consent - consent around touch is paramount, and the ethical burden is on us as teachers, to obtain consent before we touch our students.

Permission - encouraging students to give themselves permission, to be okay with where their body is today. So this might mean opting out of a pose taking a break, or maybe even trying a more challenging variation on a pose. These foundations are all based in the yogic principle of ahimsa.

The Yoga Sutra says: in the presence of one firmly established in non-violence (non-harming) all hostilities cease.

Swami Sachi Ananda, according to the Swami, hostilities cease because the person committed to non-harm emits positive vibrations. And even a little bit of ahimsa is enough to elevate us to a higher state. So, then the good news is, we don't have to be perfect. We just need to try. And, in essence, this is what I'm trying to do when I teach yoga in general, but especially when I teach the students who are in larger bodies.

By acting with the intention to reduce or eliminate harm to my students, I'm creating a space where they can be safe, welcome and where hostilities that they normally face in fitness environments cease, and, hopefully, some of the hostility directed at themselves, in the form of negative body image, or negative self-talk can also be alleviated.

As a yoga student, when I choose to show up, take care of myself and be a positive force in yoga classes, existing in my larger body being visible that way, I'm also helping to create an environment of less harm, by being an ambassador of sorts. By showing that it's normal to practice yoga in a fat body, and that a body with limitations is okay. This can really encourage students when they see someone else that looks like them.

And I have said before that: my mat is where I have a cease-fire zone with my body, and so, no negative talk or judgement is allowed, and I try to create that environment in my classrooms a lot.

We need to be able to take up space, and we have the same right to space as the others, just because we're in a larger body doesn't mean that we're worthy any less even though society ends up telling us a lot of times, and we need to encourage our students to stand in their power as well.

Setting expectations at the beginning of a class is a great way to let your students know that they're entering a body positive space. So, the question, do you have any injuries I need to know about? Is something that most of us have been asked when taking a yoga class, or maybe we even ask our students this before a class, but, in my experience, unless a person is recovering from surgery, or has recently broken a bone,

I rarely get an answer to that question. However, when I ask a different question, like: what is going on with your body? Or simply ask, how are your knees, your ankles, your wrists, your back your neck? When I name a few body parts I almost always get more information. Something like, "Oh, I'm fine. I don't have anything going on, but I can't really be on my hands and knees very really. That really hurts." That's pretty common, and that also is going to change my idea about teaching cat and cow, or balancing on the hands and knees at the beginning of class. So I'll find another warm up. Or I'll find a modification for that student that's going to work.

When you ask for more information about your students' bodies, they also start to understand that it's okay to talk about their bodies, and it is okay that their bodies aren't in perfect working order. This is empowering for your students, and it creates that culture

of permission, that it's okay to practice yoga with this imperfect, injured, or broken body that they have today.

So, at the beginning of most of my classes, I give a little [***]. I tell my students that I have two rules: no suffering and no judgement. And so I'm just going to run through that language for you, the language that I use, and you can feel free to steal or borrow any of it that works for you. So, I'll say something like, I have two rules in my classes. The first rule is: no suffering. One of our goals in yoga is to reduce suffering.

We're going to do that right here on our mats. We're going to start right here. So that means we have to pay attention to the physical sensations in our bodies, and we watch for good sensations and bad sensations. So we're going to talk about what these are. Good sensations would be like feeling a muscle stretch or work, shaking and trembling, those are good. That means we're working deep muscle fibers. Sweating, your heart rate might come up a little bit. Those are okay, and for most of us it means we're building strength or we're doing some work.

But in contrast, there are bad sensations we don't want. Sobbing, throbbing, aching, burning pain, we don't want tingling. If you get pressure in your face and your breath gets away from you, if you're gasping for breath, shortness of breath, these are all signals that we need to back off the pose or try something else. So, only you and your body, only you know the sensations that you're feeling.

So I ask that if you feel one of those bad sensations, you just back off the pose, try other variations that will be offered. Or just wave at me, we'll try something different. There's really no one magical pose in yoga, and there is lots of other ways to get the same benefits. You will not be hurting my feelings or disrupting the class if a pose doesn't work for you. We'll find another way to do it. So, rule number one: no suffering.

Rule number two: no judgment. So we have people in the room who have been practicing yoga for more than a decade, and we have people here for the very first time. Welcome. We're so glad that you're here. I want everyone to remember that your practice is your own.

So, if you look next to you and you see somebody stretching further, or doing something that you think is a more advanced variation of something your mind can kind of start to play this dangerous game, you may start to say to yourself, like, "I should be able to do that." "I used to be younger or thinner," or, "I used to have such a good practice then now I'm taking this break and my practice sucks. Like, I'll never get there.

And the minute you start to do that you come out of your body and you're on your head, and these comparisons that you're making are stealing away the benefits of your unique practice. So, our goal for the next hour is to connect with our own bodies, feel our own breathe, do our own variations of these postures, and take home our own unique benefits of the practice. So, no judgement is going to help us get there.

So, this is obviously a lot of language. You're welcome to use any of that that seems like it will work for you and your students. I usually do this when I have new folks come in to the room, or I have a big wave of new students, or I start a new class series. This really goes a long way in setting up an environment where you're not going to have competition, you're not going to have people pushing themselves, or striving in ego, and it also helps the student start to attune to their bodies, and realize what sensations are okay, and what's not.

It's that whole listen to your body, this starts to teach them to do that. So, soon after a class starts, I have one more little thing that I usually state, and usually I'll do this in the first difficult pose, like down facing dog, or somewhere where the students are going to start feeling work happen in their body and I'll say something like: "there are no medals given out at the end of the class, just so you guys know, for doing every pose or holding a pose the longest."

So if you want to take a break, take a break, come down out of the pose, come to hands and knees, take child's pose, you can sit, you can lie down, you can leave and go to the bathroom, if your breath gets away from you, please take a break. Just back off. Choose another variation. All variations that we do in class are going to get you the benefits of the pose, and so if one is not working for you, try another one. If you try a pose and you get

frustrated, or where emotions come up, just skip it. It's fine. You can do it next time if you choose to.

Your practice is your own. So, all these things start to create that culture of permission, and let your students know that it's okay to opt out of a pose, to take a break, to not push themselves past their ability, and to respect their bodies. So, how many times have we heard a teacher say this in a class? Don't push beyond your limits. Listen to your body, but I think this phrase is too simple. What the heck is that supposed to mean: "listen to your body"?

So, for students who are new to asana, they might be completely new to reading their body's signals, to understanding sensations, and differentiate between the myriad of signals that our body can throw at us. So all these different sensations that we experience during yoga, and especially for students who have been disconnected from their bodies, whether through poor body image, or disordered eating, or self-harm, or even people that are going through gender transitions, or that just have had a lifetime of living from the neck up, and not embodying their physical form.

This can be really difficult to learn, and it's something that you do have to learn. There is that learning curve. So there are lots of reasons why students might not be attuned to their bodies' sensations, not to mention that sometimes injuring ourselves doesn't actually hurt. Tearing a labrum isn't going to hurt because cartilage isn't innervated. There is not nerves there. It won't actually start to hurt until there is referred pain in nearby muscles that are tracking around an injury, or bones are knocking together because cartilage has collapsed. So, that's another reason that listen to your body might not actually be great advice.

We also all have different relationships to pain. So, women have a different relationship to pain than men do. Women who have given birth have a different relationship to pain than other women. Or, think about these people's relationships to pain: people who are survivors of childhood or domestic abuse, masochists, athletes or professional dancers and musicians, people that are used to pushing their body to an extreme, and besides pain,

there are lots of other factors that might make listening to the body not so simple for some students.

So, ego, or cultural baggage around slacking off or having to push through, wanting to please a teacher, and so taking or holding a pose that causes discomfort, peer pressure to keep up with the rest of the class, or even negligent or harmful adjustments on the part of a teacher, can all keep a student from really tuning in and listening to their body.

So, my point is that listen to your body, as a phrase is just like a simple catch phrase. It's not enough. We want to teach our students to listen to their bodies, but first we just have to teach them to recognize sensation. Talk about sensation. What's okay? What's not? What to do when they feel a certain sensation. We need to talk about the breath. We need to describe emotions; good and bad, and mindful awareness could help to cultivate this skill, but, ultimately, we as teachers can never know really what's going on in another person's body.

So, we can normalize opting out of a pose, or taking another variation and say this explicitly in class. Say, "If you need to take a break, go to the bathroom, or you just don't like the way a pose feels, you can come out, you can rest at child's pose, you can rejoin the class when you feel ready. Say out loud. Say specifically: nobody will think it is weird, you won't hurt my feelings, it's normal to opt out of a pose or two. It's no big deal. Saying this to your students will give them the signal; that it's okay to give themselves permission to work where they are.

So, we'll talk more about how to use empowering language in classes later in this course, but let's move on and address one more issue around body image and self-acceptance that Dianne and I both feel strongly about. So, society tells us that the way to end stigma and discrimination of those in larger bodies is to make our bodies smaller through dieting.

But in study after study, it's been proven that diets do not work. Diets just don't lead to permanent weight loss for over 95% of people. I'm just going to emphasize that for a moment. 95% failure rate. One more time. So, 95% of people that go on diets do not permanently lose weight. Yeah. Studies on long term dieting show that the vast majority of people regain their weight after five years, many regaining more weight than they lost.

Meaning that dieting does not meet the criteria for ethical evidence-based healthcare. In every study that follows up with dieters five years out finds this: that's why most studies only follow up after two years or some even one year.

So, the next thing you're probably wondering is, "Well, how much weight do these people keep off?" So, for most participants it's between 5-10% of body weight. That means for a woman who weighs 200 lbs. when she starts her diet, she ends up between 180 and 190 lbs. and this is only the 5% - the success story.

So, this is what the diet industry considers long-term success: the anomaly they might only lose 5-10% of their body weight. So, but even though this has been proven again and again, lots of us go on diets all the time, chronically, and this leads to weight recycling that up and down lose-gain cycle, which can really cause all sorts of health problems and that's been proven in a study, from cardiovascular problems to all sorts of different health maladies.

So, maybe you've even experienced this - the chronic dieting, the weight recycling, but this is an important question to consider: have you ever blamed the plan or have you always blamed yourself? It's really common to blame yourself, and, in fact, lots of us believe that we need to blame ourselves in order to feel motivated to try again.

But the sterling truth is that the diet industry is a \$60 billion industry with a 95% failure rate. They need repeat customers and our self-blame works against us, and for them. So, we propose trying something different, which is: a health and wellness paradigm called "Health at Every Size," which Dianne and I have both adopted, personally.

Health at Every Size principles help us be at peace in our bodies. Supporting people of all sizes, and finding compassionate ways to take care of themselves, and it includes the following basic components:

- Respect, including respect for body diversity. Recognizing that bodies of all different shapes and sizes are natural. It's a natural part of human evolution.
- Compassionate self-care. This includes: Eating in a flexible and attuned manner that values pleasure, and honors internal cues of hunger, satiety and appetite. So,

instead of eating based on a calorie intake, or some list of foods that an expert has prescribed, or cutting out entire food groups, we learn intuitive eating. We tune into our body signals, and we eat to honor those.

- Finding the joy in moving one's body and being physically active. Looking at movement and exercise, as just part of your birth right as a human to use your body in ways that bring you pleasure, and that keep you strong, flexible and healthy.
- Critical awareness, and this includes: challenging scientific and cultural assumptions about fat, weight, diet, health; so, when a study comes out asking questions like: who funded this? What was the sample size? Is the click-bait headline on the article that I'm reading actually accurate compared to what the study actually says? How did they follow up with these people? Following the money. That kind of thing.

And finally, values body knowledge and people's lived experiences. Values the trust and the inherent wisdom that's been in our bodies since the day that we were born. So, a weight-centered approach to health-like dieting suggest that we try to manipulate our body into a specific height and weight ratio, and just hope that health comes along for the ride.

But Health at Every Size is a practice where the focus is on the behaviors, rather than a body size and it's based on evidence, and that evidence says over and over in every study that: habits are always a better determinant of health than body size. Now, Health at Every Size does not say that everyone can be healthy at any size. It says that body size and health are two different things, and that people of all sizes should get to choose how highly to prioritize their health, and the path that they want to travel to get there.

It also says that the resources that we need to support those choices should be available and accessible. So, Health at Every Size, the focus is on choosing behaviors, and then allowing our bodies to settle at whatever weight they settle. For those of us that choose this method of health and wellness, [***] rules are choices: our foods and activities are chosen based on our prioritization of our health, and are focused around nurturing our

bodies and increasing our odds for good health, rather than trying to make our bodies a certain size, or height and weight ratio.

So, goals might be centered around movement, for example, I want to be able to lift my grandkid, or walk around the block, or they can be set around habits themselves. So like getting 100 minutes of activity a week. Or eating five servings of vegetables a day. So, for most of us it's an ongoing process.

But for lots of us Health at Every Size and living diet culture behind is a big step towards self-acceptance. We can appreciate the bodies we're in today, instead of trying to force them to become some arbitrary beauty standard or [***], or height and weight ratio and we can start appreciating our bodies for everything they do today.

I can make choices as if my body and I were on the same side, as if my body was my ally, rather than my enemy, rather than struggling with my weight. Or just seeing my body as the enemy. So, for more information you can visit: lindabacon.org. Dr. Linda Bacon wrote that excellent book "Health at Every Size" and "Body Respect." She's also done a lot of research around this, and you can also visit: haescommunity.org for further resources and information.

Dianne and I have both adopted Health at Every Size as a paradigm and it's been an absolute game-changer as far as our physical health goes and our mental health, and so we encourage you to explore that for your students.

So, congrats. You've made it to the end of lesson one, and now it's time to reflect on your learning. Check the page below to find out what the homework assignments are for this lesson, and how to submit them, and we'll see you in the next module, which is Using Body Positive Language to Empower Your Students.