

Yoga For All

Teacher Training

Module 1:

Principles & Foundations for
Body Positivity in your Classes



Tips for success in this course



- Schedule your time. Set aside time to take this course
- Take your time. You have a year to complete the course material.
- Listen actively and take notes.
- Listen on the go. You can download to your music player for phone
- Interact with other students in the class-join the Facebook Group to stay connected

“Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart.” - Kahlil Gibran

1.

What is Body Image?

- Body Image is defined as an individual's concept of how their body looks and changes based on their feelings about themselves.
- Our culture tells us that how we look is the most important aspects of ourselves as individuals.
- Yoga tells us that our spirit is the definition of our Self.

2. How Does Practicing Yoga Affect Body Image?

- Our body image is a major factor in the development of self esteem.
- Yoga has the power to affect body image both positively and negatively.
- To develop positive body image in yoga we must remember that yoga is a function of health, creativity and wellness. **Yoga is not a function of beauty.**



3.

Yoga as Self-Care

- A healthy and regular yoga practice is a vehicle for self care and can be used as a tool for compassionate self-study.
- What does compassionate self study mean?
- How can you embrace compassionate self study as a practice?
- How can we start looking at how bodies as beautiful and valuable no matter what they look like?

4.

Yoga as Self-Care

We must be careful not to induce harm on our students by bringing our own baggage to class.

- Avoid creating unrealistic goals for your classes and remembering that your own genetic privilege may affect how your students are feeling in your classes.
- No **showboating** or showing off your physical prowess.
- Avoid highlighting students who have a strong flexible practice.
- Instead, we need to create a safe space for inclusion.

Our primary challenges as yoga teachers are to:

- shape consciousness
- elevate awareness; and
- assist our students in tapping into their own power

We are working towards health and wellness by teaching self-love and acceptance.

We are asking the student to come to know themselves as opposed to the traditional 'teacher knows best' scenario.

- Shifting our awareness to health at every size is the key to understanding and appreciating different body types and abilities.
- This involves avoiding assumptions when it comes to ourselves and others.
- All bodies have different strengths and abilities.
- Each student should be celebrated as the unique and special snowflake that they are.

7.

Celebrating What the Body Can Do

- Start by identifying that everyone in North American culture has a body issue.
- We have been taught to constantly seek self-improvement as opposed to self-love.
- The key to helping students feel successful is to remind them to simply “come as they are” to the mat and focus on what they **can**.
- Meet the students where they are but don't leave them there.

- Keeping in mind the opportunity to teach a yoga class is a gift. Every class is an opportunity to dig deeper and learn more about redefining the asana.
- 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.

- Try not to be discouraged and rattled by a student who is different from you.
- Every class is an opportunity to learn about yourself as a teacher and your student as person. You can learn from each other.
- The critical step is to meet students where they are but don't leave them there.

10.

What Are Some Of Challenges?



Foundations of a body-positive yoga class





Foundations of a body-positive yoga class

**“Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for
the brave, never the cowardly.” *Ghandi***

1 Foundations of a body-positive yoga class

- **Agency** - reminding the students that their practice is their own, and 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

Foundations of a body-positive yoga class

- 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.*
- Hostilities cease because the person committed to non-harm emits positive vibrations
- Creating a space where they can be safe, welcome and where hostilities they face in fitness environments cease
- My mat is where I have a cease-fire zone with my body.
- We need to be able to take up space, and we can also encourage our students to stand in their power.

3 Setting expectations in class

- Ask about injuries, but ask for more information
 - What is going on with your body?
 - How are your knees, ankles, wrists, back, neck?
- It's okay to talk about their bodies, and it's okay that their bodies aren't in perfect working order.
- My rules: No suffering and no judgment
 - No suffering: talk about good and bad sensations
 - No judgment: don't compare yourself to others
 - Permission: no medals are given out for doing every pose, normalize opting out

Setting expectations in class

- “Listen to your body” is too simple
 - Students might not be attuned to body sensations
 - Sometimes injuring ourselves doesn’t “hurt”
 - Relationships to pain
 - Ego, baggage around “pushing through”
 - Wanting to please a teacher
 - Peer pressure to “keep up”
 - Negligent or harmful adjustments
- Talk about sensation, what it means, what to do
- Normalize opting out or taking another variation

- Diets do not lead to permanent weight loss for over 95% of people
- The 5% “success stories” only keep off about 5-10% of body weight
- The dieting industry is a \$60 billion dollar industry with a 95% failure rate
- We propose a different way: Health at Every Size®

- Respect, including respect for body diversity.
- Compassionate self-care
 - Eating in a flexible and attuned manner that values pleasure and honors internal cues of hunger, satiety, and appetite
 - Finding the joy in moving one's body and being physically active.
- Critical Awareness
 - Challenges scientific and cultural assumptions;
 - Values body knowledge and people's lived experiences.

- Focus is on behaviors, rather than body size
- Based on evidence
- Body size and health are two different things
- Setting goals around habits
- See the body as an ally, not an enemy

For more information, visit lindabacon.org or haescommunity.org.

- **Think about:** What is one way you can apply *ahimsa* to your own yoga practice? What about your teaching practice?
- **Take action:** write your mission statement as a yoga teacher.
- **What's next:** *Using body positive language to empower students*