



# The Power of Language

Can determine our point of view

Language is power, in ways more literal than most people think. When we speak, we exercise the power of language to transform reality. Why don't more of us realize the connection between language and power?





# Topics we will cover

- Why speech matters
- Creating a cease-fire zone with language
- Our impact vs our intent
- Limiting beliefs and setting expectations
- Empowering language
- Do's and Don'ts
- What you say is important
- Reframing our language
- Reflections and contemplations

# Power of language

Creating brave and impactful  
spaces that inspire and uplift

Considering the 'powerful force' of the words we speak when interacting with each other through vulnerable spaces, we want to choose the words we speak carefully.

To create a cease-fire zone, our language must be clear, thoughtful, concise and helpful.

Right speech is important. Be kind to all and speak words that are beacons of inspiration, enthusiasm and encouragement to all. Kind and sweet words are always music to the listeners' ears; it helps us connect humanity and empathy.



AS TEACHERS, YOU  
WANT TO LEAVE A  
POSITIVE IMPACT ON  
YOUR STUDENTS



SUPPORT YOUR  
STUDENTS BY  
MAKING THEM FEEL  
SEEN



MANAGE  
EXPECTATIONS AND  
KEEP THEM  
REALISTIC

# OUR IMPACT VS OUR INTENT



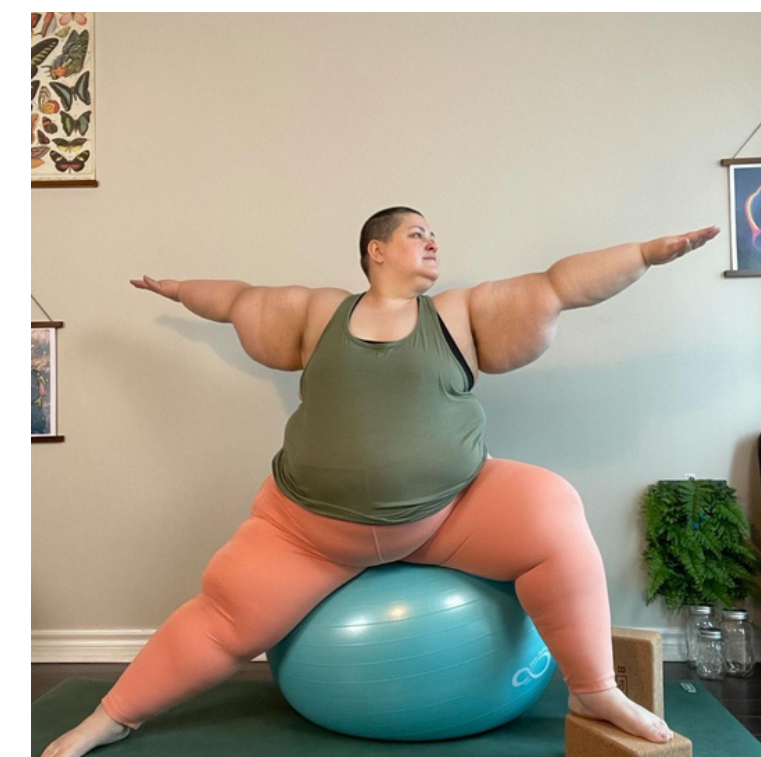
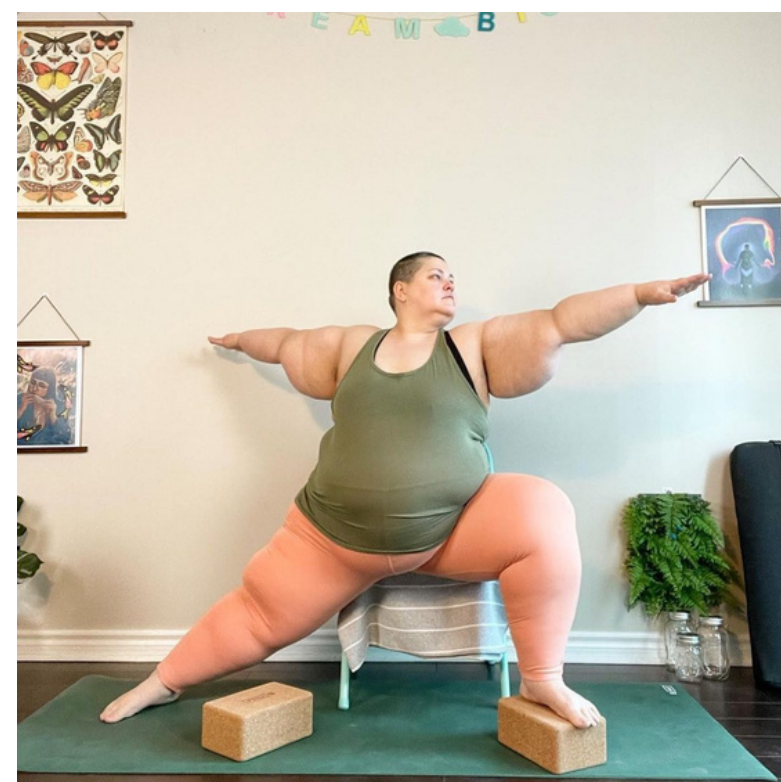
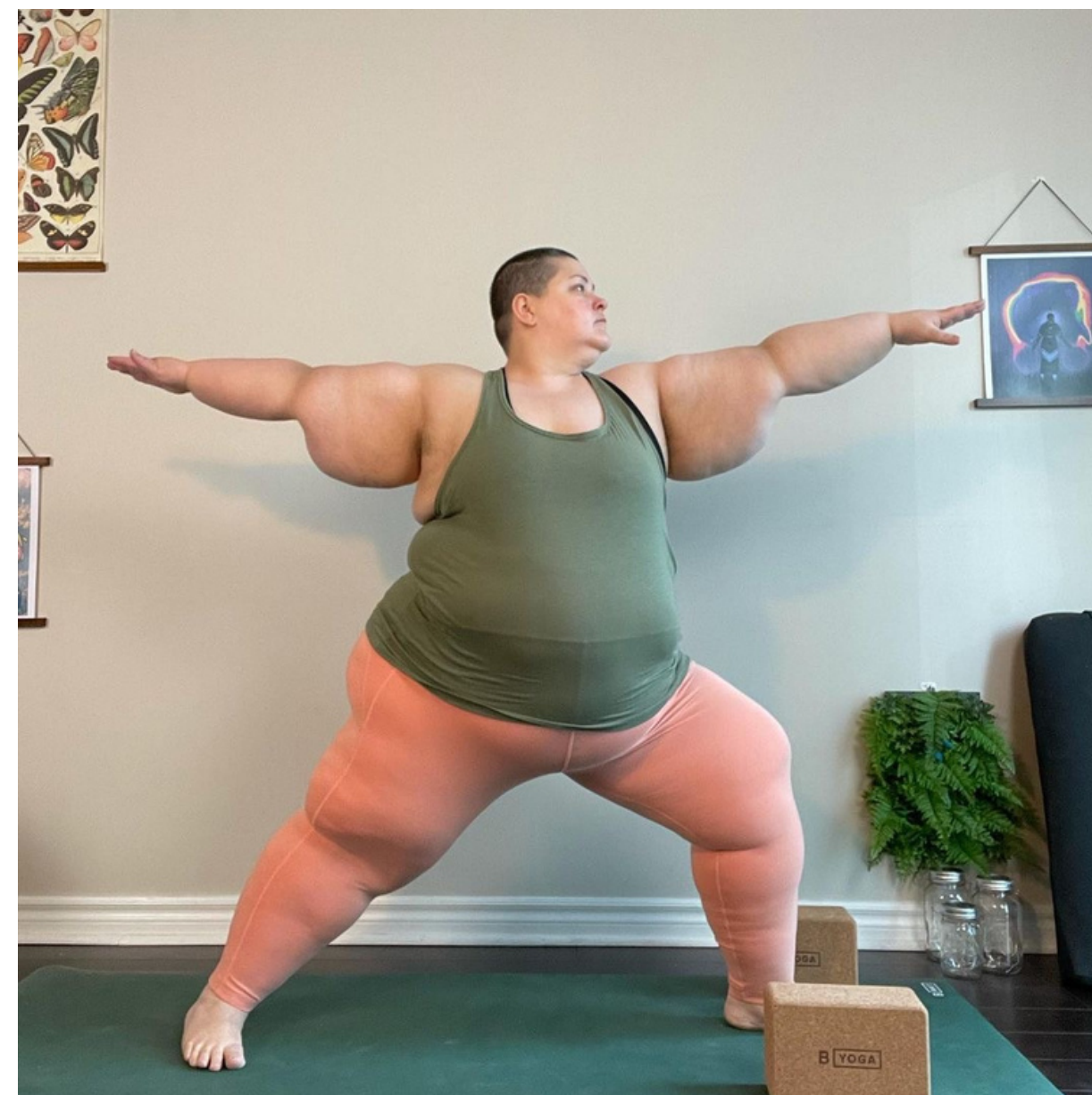
# Let's Stop Saying...

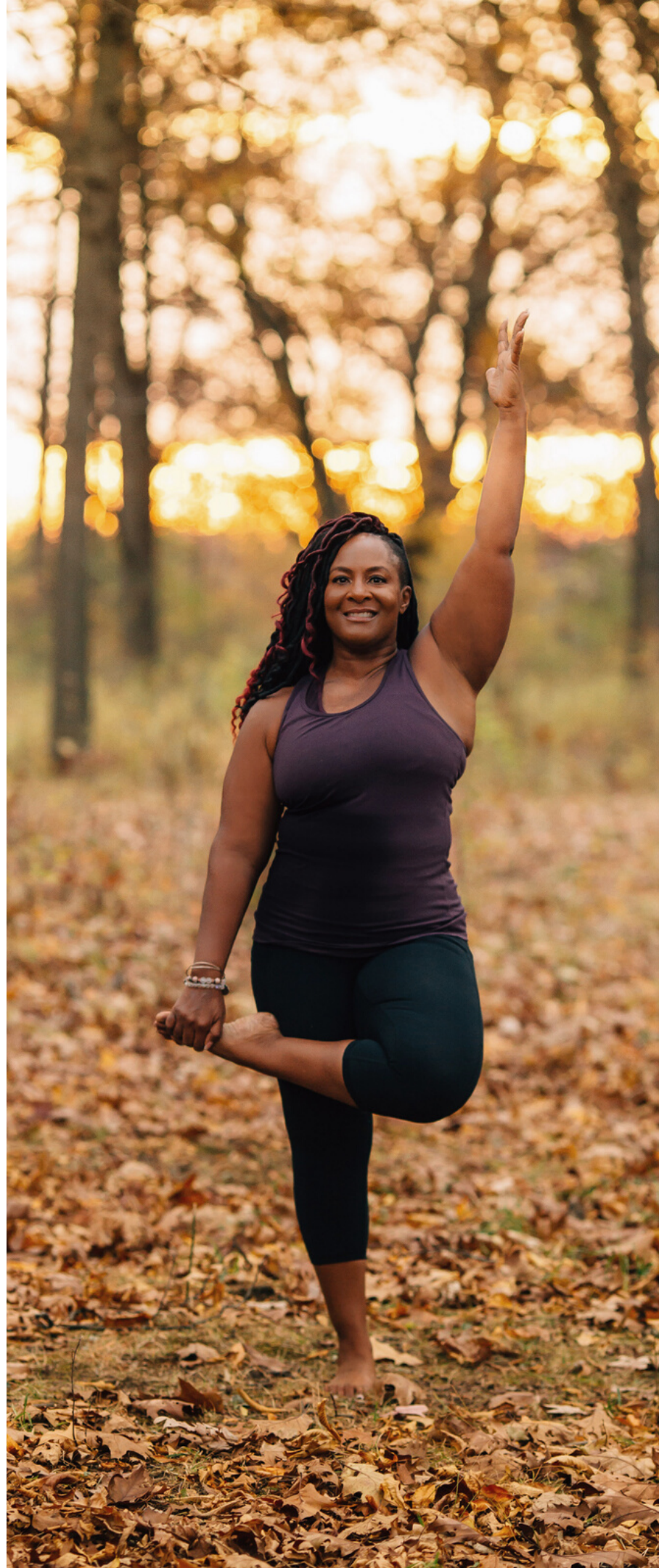
- Using the phrase “full expression of the pose” can often create triggers and defaults to unrealistic images on the cover of YJ
- What may bubble up into student’s consciousness is that limiting belief: “I will never be able to do that”
- Instead, try expressions like “**come to your own individual expression of the pose**”
- Give students access and permission to explore the pose in their own way

The Full  
Expression of  
the pose

vs

Your  
Expression of  
the pose





Encourage students to come to know themselves by choosing positive words and phrases like:

- Feel
- Explore
- Experience
- Engage
- Accept
- Embody
- Be curious
- Invite
- Sensation
- Choose Your own adventure
- Take the opportunity

Learn empowering words that encourage your students to feel good and safe their own bodies.

Give students the opportunity to explore yoga in their own way without adding your own expectations.



# Power of language

## Do's and Don'ts

- Avoid placing judgements and expectations on your students with statements like “you should be feeling it here”  
Instead say things like “**explore what sensations you are feeling**”
- Allow students the opportunity to stay with their first sensation or add more sensation by exploring their own limits
- Remember we are holding space for our students to grow and learn
- Don't make comparisons
- Don't overshare (TMI)
- Be adaptable and open to receiving feedback

A background image showing several rolled-up yoga mats in various colors including teal, purple, and blue. The mats are stacked and partially unrolled, creating a sense of depth and texture.

# What you say matters.

- Remove gender specific language from your teaching
- Stay away from slang or stereotypes that cause offence
- Know the music you are using and what messages are expressed in the music
- Peaceful inclusive language is best
- Avoid the word “can’t” and the phrase “you should”
- Always remember: **students are either empowered or devastated by the language we chose as teachers**



# Perception Matters

Reframing the language around what modifications of the pose involves:

- Looking at modifications as enhances or refinements
- Seeing props as a way to bring the floor to you and to make your pose more accessible
- **No body blaming allowed.** Speaking about the body in a positive and appreciative light
- Changing the language around talking about the body
- No shame and no blame. We are all learning together

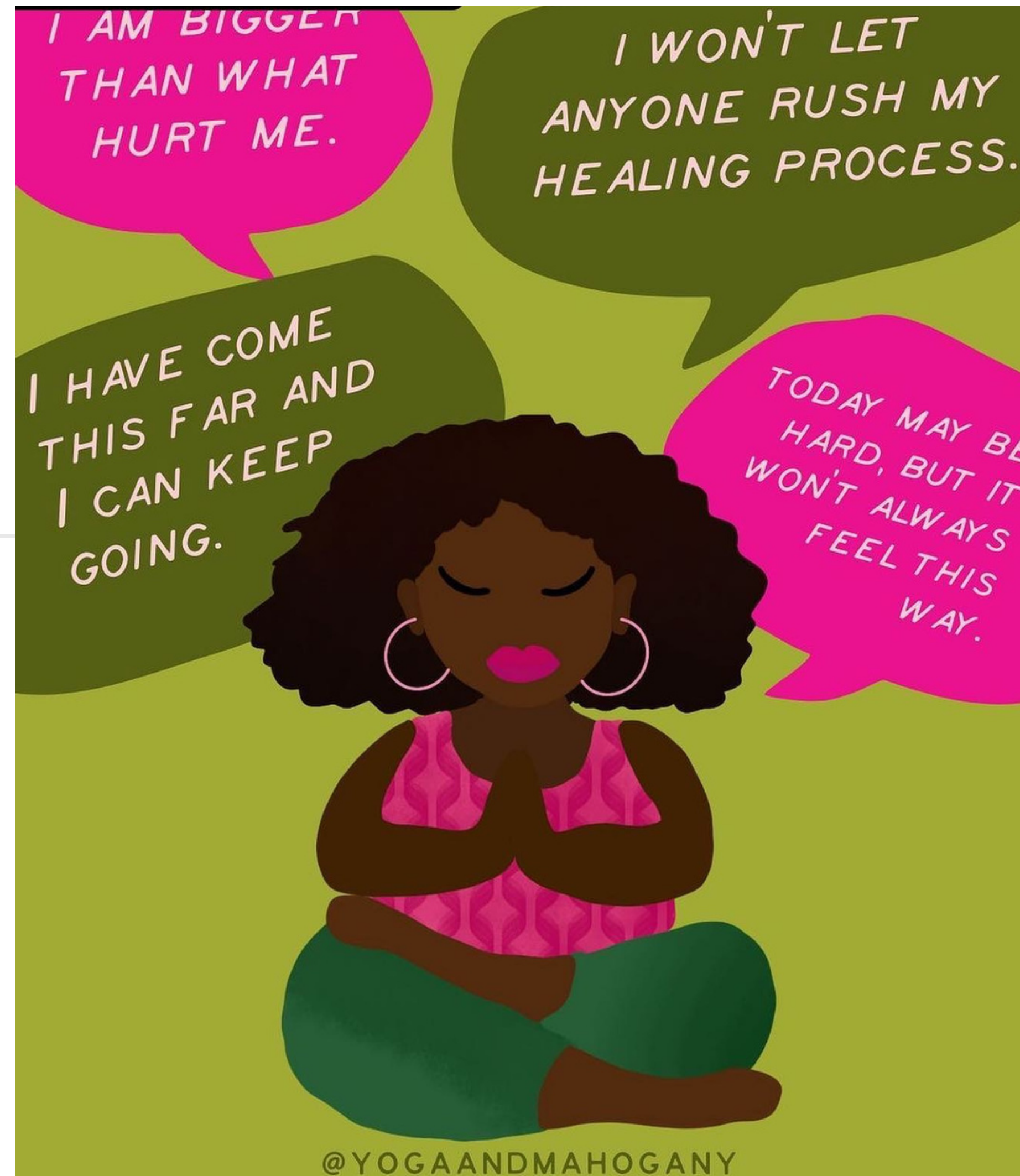
# Contemplation points

- Listen more and talk less
- Ask your students how you can serve them
- Slow down if you are cuing breath and actually take the breath with your students
- Encourage time for asking questions either before or after class
- Allow your students to express themselves without judgement or attaching your personal feelings to what is being said or expressed



# Triggers

WHAT WE CAN DO TO MINIMIZE TRIGGERS



# What are triggers or triggering language?

Avoiding triggers can be difficult.

- Negative language that focuses on the body “Feel the burn”.
- Focusing on size or shape.
- Offering fasting or cleansing for weight loss.
- Focusing on size or shape of a particular body part or type.
- Referencing bathing suit season, yoga body.
- You never know what can be triggering for people.
- Some of the common ones for people with bigger bodies are putting focus on size, shape or changing the body to subscribe to a certain aesthetic.
- Toxic parts of fitness culture like body shaming.



## Phrases to avoid

"Let's work on toning our flabby  
(fill in the blank)"

"This will get rid of muffin top!"

"Get your pre-baby body back!"

"You look so skinny in that"

"That looks good on you"

"Did you lose weight you look  
so good"



"Doing twists will detox your  
body"

"Fasting will help you lose  
your belly"

"This will help with cellulite  
on your legs"

"People with your body type  
always..."



"Let's work off that  
Thanksgiving dinner"

"Welcome to our detox class"

"Congrats for coming to  
class if you keep at it you will  
lose weight"

"You are not fat you are so  
pretty"



# Words and phrases that are affirming and empowering

- "Let's take this opportunity to honour our body by breathing deeply."
- "This posture can be helpful (insert daily task here)."
- "We can get stronger through our practice both physically and mentally."
- "This pose can help relieve back pain and sciatica. You're exactly where you need to be"
- "Remember, this is your practice, and your body takes a moment to be kind to yourself."
- "Creating custom variations and modifications helps to make you feel stronger in your body."
- "Creating modifications is creating a boundary."





# Progressive Teaching as a Tool for Body Equity

- Building slowly from stop to stop
- The bus stop method is a great way to teach progressively by offering different shapes and stages of the pose
- This is a great way for making poses accessible in unique and exploratory ways
- The bus stop method requires some planning ahead
- Teachers must examine poses and group similar poses together

# Bus Stop Method

***Building slowly from stop to stop!***

It is important not to create a hierarchy of poses.

Everyone can get off at the stop that works for them.

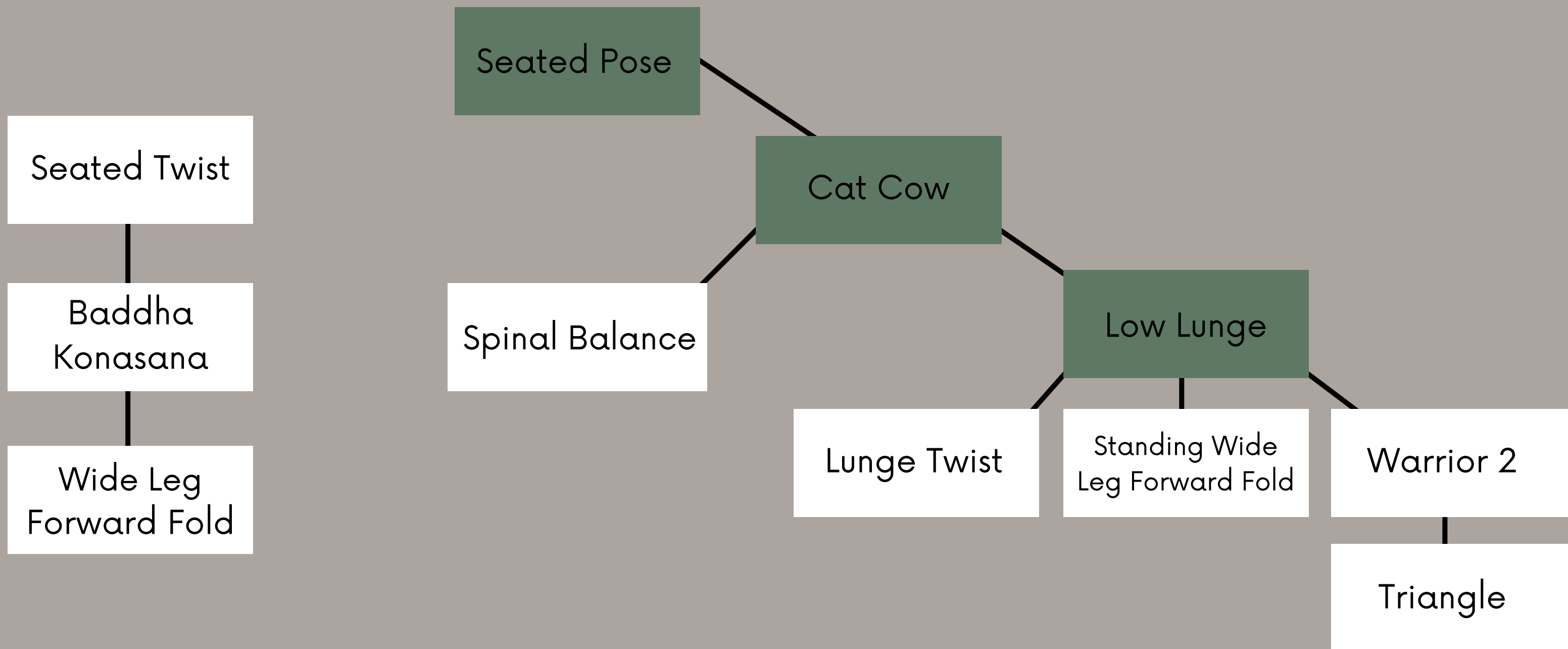
# QUICK TIPS

- Group standing poses together that are similar in shape and orientation.
- Try to have 2-3 options for students to try.
- Introduce props right away.
- Reduce the ups and downs in movement
- Create functional movement sequences for bodies that may need more help. For example, focus on balancing or stepping up and down for students prone to accidental falls or who may have trouble climbing stairs.
- Slow down your teaching.
- Repetition is key.



Seated Poses	Standing Postures Lateral Facing	Standing Postures
Baddha Konasana <i>Butterfly Pose</i>	Trikonasana <i>Triangle</i>	Tadasana <i>Mountain Pose</i>
Janu Sirsasana <i>Head to knee pose</i>	Parsvakonasana <i>Extended Side Angle</i>	Virabhadrasana 1 <i>Warrior 1</i>
Paschimottanasana <i>Seated Forward Fold</i>	Prasarita Padottanasana <i>Standing Wide Legged Forward Fold</i>	Anjaneyasana <i>Lunge Pose</i>
Upavistha Konasana <i>Wide Legged Forward Fold</i>	Virabhadrasana 2 <i>Warrior 2</i>	Utkatasana <i>Chair</i>

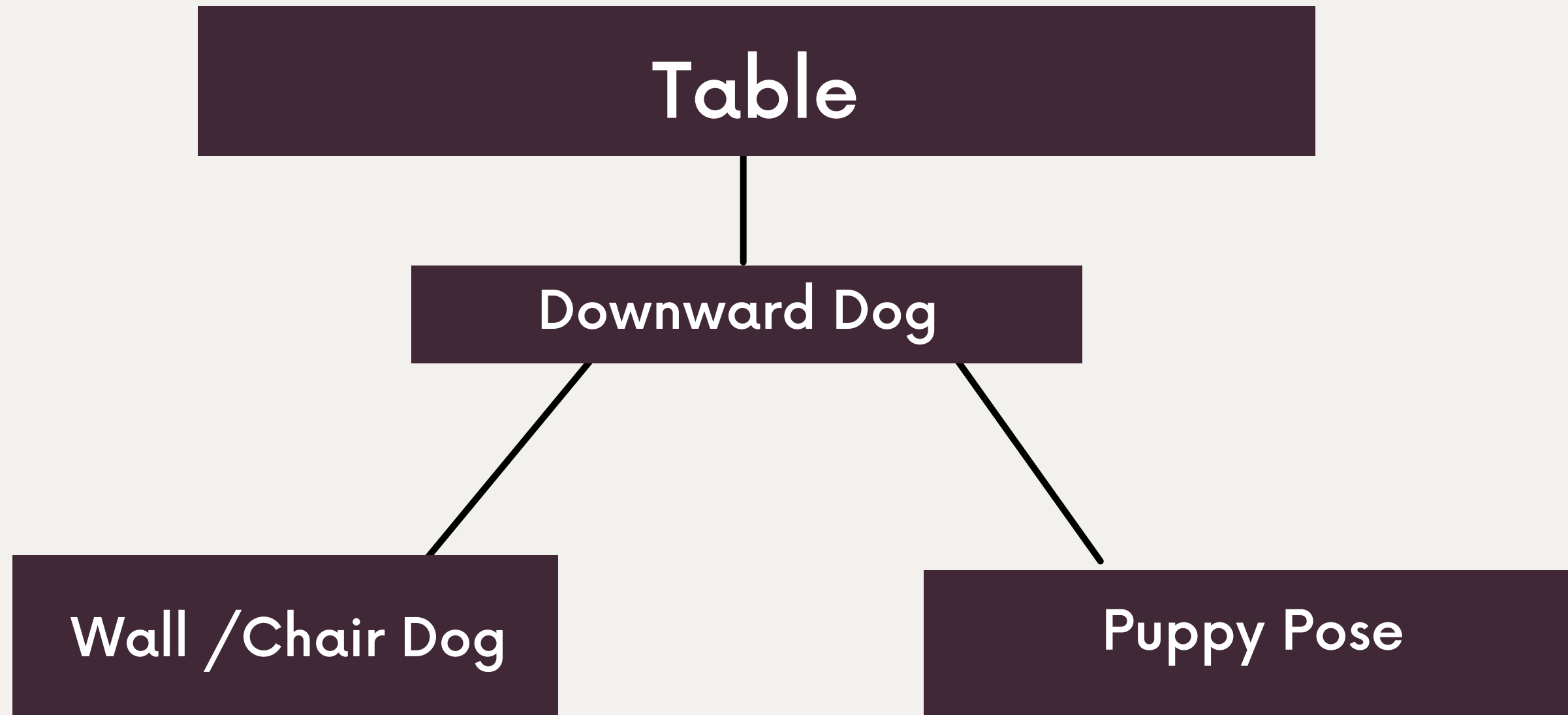
# THE BUS STOP METHOD



## Quick Tip

Make sure you have 2 or 3 variations for each pose. Work out these variations on your mat before you teach them in class. Take the time to break down each pose in this plan.

\*See the example diagram below



# CLASS STRUCTURE

**To keep classes flowing continuously while maintaining accessibility, try to minimize the up and down movements. Try structuring your class by grouping similar poses together.**

## **Beginning of Class**

Create a centering, and group all seated warm up poses together.

## **Body of Class**

Group all standing poses together.

## **End of Class / Cool Down**

Group all seated and reclining poses together.

# MAKING PROGRESS

Class structure and examples of poses:

- **Centring:** savasana, reclining twists, bridge, happy baby, alternating knees to chest, reclined pigeon, half happy baby
- **Body of the Class:** cat/cow, spinal balance, down dog, lunge pose, mountain, chair, chair twist, forward fold, warrior 2, wide-legged forward fold, extended side angle, triangle, peaceful warrior
- **Cool Down:** cat/cow, seated twists, butterfly pose, head to knee pose, forward fold, bridge pose, reclining pigeon, legs up the wall, supported inversion, savasana





# Bringing it all together

## How to Make Yoga Asana Equitable

- Progressive teaching + adapting poses.
- Using appropriate language & communication.
- Creating variation + using props.

## Creating a Well Sequenced Class

- Create variations and options for poses/places to grow.
- Learning how to appropriately group poses together.
- Using the bus stop method to structure and sequence your class.

## Using What You've Learned

- Taking what you've learned and using it in your personal + professional practice.
- Preparing well before teaching a class to make sure it is sequenced well.
- “When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.”- Confucious

# Student Play Time

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

— **Plato**

- Adding a few minutes of experimental playtime to your class allows students to really explore their practice on their own.
- Set aside 5-8 minutes per class to invite students to ask questions and have some playtime on their mats.
- Be attentive, walk around, answer questions and offer encouragement.



**Play  
Time**



What to do if there  
are no props?

Time to use your  
ingenuity!

It is a brave new world during and after a pandemic when it comes to props. We must be careful sharing our yoga tools.

One of the best props around is a wall or a chair, a tree, a bench.

This may be a great time to consider creating individual prop kits for students or teaching them to create their own by substituting household items for props.

Create a prop kit including books, food storage containers, thick cardboard boxes and other household items.



Be Creative and  
Innovative

## What are some innovative tools we can use as props?



**Dog leashes, ropes,  
neckties...**

- Water bottles
- Pool noodles
- Gardening pads
- Skipping ropes
- Couch cushions
- Pillows
- Yoga mats
- Blankets
- Wipe containers
- Small beach balls or soccer balls
- Leggings/sweaters

## Customized Classes



**What are some items you may have around you right now?**

**What are different kinds of classes you can teach if no props are available?**

- Handsfree vinyasa
- Floor practice
- Chair practice
- A practice just using a blanket
- A practice just using a block

# Let's get started

The challenge if you choose to accept it:

- Create a custom accessible class with a single prop
- Or no props
- Or props you have created with household items



Ready, Steady, Go