

So, you have decided to teach Yoga!

By George Zarnowski, founder of Wind of Prana International School of Yoga

You have been practicing asanas or perhaps learning a bit more from your Yoga teacher about what Yoga is and felt a need to embark on this journey much deeper. You continue the learning of both asanas and the essence of Yoga, and you keep embracing the science of Yoga, not just for its benefits but because you realize that it is much more than just asanas. You come to the point where you would like to alert everyone else of it, so you tell your friends and family members about it asking them to come with you to Yoga classes. But it still is not enough, and you come to where you realize that you need to become a teacher of Yoga.

It is a very important moment in your life, but you do not realize how important it is. Not yet. But something is telling you that you need to do it, so you go for it. You find a studio which teaches so called Yoga Teacher Training courses and you enroll in one. You start the 'training' after paying a sum of money you cannot really afford but something is telling you that you must 'invest' in it. Let's stop here for a moment.

It is important at this moment to realize why you wanted to become a Yoga teacher. I am sure you have done this exercise already, but is it because:

- a. you benefitted from the practice of Yoga yourself and would like to share it with others,
- b. you discovered a passion to teach Yoga,
- c. you'd like to make a living by teaching Yoga, and/or,
- d. you want to continue learning about Yoga and yourself?

I am not sure why you decided to become a Yoga teacher, but I hope the main reason was the 'b' above, and not because you wanted to make a living by teaching Yoga.

Each one of us has a different reason(s) for it. Some of us just want to teach others what we consider to be an important practice. Some of us want to learn more about yoga and associated philosophies and sciences because we are curious and want to expand our own spirituality and practice of Yoga. Some of us want to learn about ourselves, to find out who we really are, and these are just the starting points.

Whatever the reason is, I hope you can find a teacher who can teach you first what Yoga really is, the teacher who lives by Yoga principles, the teacher who knows that Yoga is not just the asanas but the oneness we all are. That practicing Yoga postures (asanas) is not even the beginning of Yoga practice, that there is no such a thing as a 'practice' of Yoga. That life is Yoga, and that to teach Yoga one must become the teachings, one must live Yoga.

So, due to your commitment and diligent practice, you graduated from the Yoga Teacher Training course! I hope you now realize that you have not become a Yoga teacher, that becoming is a long journey, that becoming never ends. Congratulations! You just took a first step on your never-ending spiritual journey of a Yoga Teacher.

So, now you teach Yoga!

I hope you enjoy taking others on that spiritual journey you have embarked on some time ago. As you noticed I did not say “So, now you are a Yoga teacher”, because you are the same person as you were before you were certified as a Yoga teacher. You may not even know who you really are yet, as this takes some time.

As you place yourself in front of the class and are ready to teach your students, you feel gratitude for being able to share this beautiful and powerful science of Yoga with them. You also realize that they completely trust you and will follow your teachings during the class and after the class, as what they learn during your class impacts their lives. Yes, it is a big responsibility, and because they trust you, your teachings are not being questioned.

As you teach them body-Yoga, the small but most popular part of Yoga, you ask them to change their body shape to something that you described in a foreign language most of them do not speak nor understand. You asked them to stretch, to compress, to place stress here and there, to open one place after another, to breath to different places of their body and to be become still from time to time, sometimes for a very long, perhaps too long time for some of them. You most likely threw at them some names of muscles, bones, and joints involved. Perhaps you also mention connective tissue, fascia, a meridian or two, a chakra, a drishti, grounding, mantras, mudras, etc., without knowing if they know what these are. From time to time, you might have given them a few moments of silence, so they can explore their experiences. You then finished with what you called a resting posture and once they were up, they all went slowly home, some of them relaxed feeling light and ready to continue. You were also relaxed, satisfied, and grateful for the opportunity to teach others what you found to be a good exercise.

Perhaps next time they come you will go a bit deeper into what Yoga really is. You will even tell them that Yoga is the union of all of us. That it is not that we are connected to each other but that we are each other. That the purpose of Yoga is to realize that unitive state. You can also read them what the Rishis, the Seers said about Yoga, as you remembered it from your Yoga teacher training study of Upanishads, which goes like this:

“When the five senses are stilled, when the mind
Is stilled, when the intellect is stilled,
That is called the highest state by the wise
They say Yoga is this complete stillness
In which one enters the unitive state,
Never to become separate again”

You will then continue teaching them how to achieve that stillness that unitive state and there will be no need to name the posture as each posture will be different to every one of your students. You will then finish with the most important part, when they lay down on their back to distance themselves from their bodies, their breath and their mind, so they can explore who they really are, so they have an opportunity to engage in mystical experiences, in a posture you used to call Savasana.

Next time you see them you will take them even deeper into the spiritual awareness and you will continue teaching them Yoga that was practiced for centuries when there were no asanas.