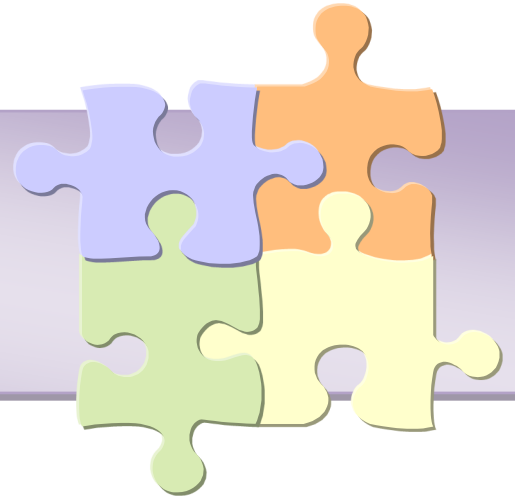


**Why 1,000s Of Hot
Yoga Students Are
NOT Getting What
They Paid For ...**

**... And How To
Make Sure YOU Are
Not One Of Them.**



**Learn The 7 Problem Areas
And How You Can Solve Them
In This Packed Guide!**



Gabrielle Raiz
"The Hot Yoga Doctor"
www.HotYogaDoctor.com

Who should read this guide?

1. **You are new or relatively new to your hot yoga practice (under 6 months and you are loving it!)** – but you are wanting ways to broaden your practice, deepen your understanding. You want hints and tips and the basics completely explained.
2. **You are a longtime practitioner of yoga or hot yoga** and want to lift your practice out of the routine, or move past a “plateau”. How do you keep your practice fresh and new so that it continues to evolve, surprise and delight you?
3. **You are a teacher who is looking to find a new edge** to teach to; to find new motivation and inspiration.
4. **You are a new teacher who wants to rise above ‘the dialog’** and bring to it something that will ALWAYS inspire and motivate your students and yourself.

If you are new to your hot yoga practice, you may not realize that many classes are taught by people who have learnt a ‘script’ or a set of words that they are required to recite each and every class.

Admittedly this works quite well ... as A STARTING POINT. But if you really want to advance quickly in your practice, you don’t need someone to sing the same song to you over and over again.

In this guide I’m going to expose some of my often controversial methods and views about this – views that I hope will inspire YOU to reach new heights, no matter where you are in your journey, yet still have equanimity with the perfect place we are all in ... the present.

I’d also like to offer my apologies in advance to the really inspirational teachers out there making a huge difference to yogis the world over. There are truly not enough of you to go around.

It’s possible some things in this guide may shock you.

And it is probably going to upset some teachers – the ones who may be unknowingly teach hot yoga poorly. They could be teaching anywhere, all over the world. It is not my intention to attack anyone personally, but moreover to give everyone reading this the opportunity to question their practice; to stretch the level of their instruction (if they are a teacher), so we may all gain deeper benefit and together work towards “practice excellence”.

The Hot Yoga Doctor, Gabrielle Raiz, Colete Pty Ltd and their associated websites, products and services are in no way endorsed by, sponsored by or affiliated with Bikram Yoga™. For more information about Bikram Yoga please visit www.BikramYoga.com

Whether you are a student or a teacher, or both, I encourage you to always “expect the best”. If you are a new teacher, please don’t take this personally. Allow yourself time to grow and blossom. And if you have been teaching for a while, don’t take offense but read this with curiosity.

I challenge you to use it as your guide to AVOID the mistakes of those who have gone before you. Uncover your greatness and inspire others! ☺

And if you are a yoga student (as you probably are!) then find out how to take responsibility for and profoundly benefit from practicing this yoga ... because ...

There’s something about a hot yoga or Bikram yoga class that is intensely satisfying, deeply addictive ... and contributes to a delightful feeling of well-being like no other physical activity I know.

But what if you were missing out on TONS of EXTRA benefit, just passing you by without you ever realizing?

And much worse, what if you were practicing poses and approaching your yoga in ways that could actually TAKE AWAY from the wonderful benefits?

Finally (this will SHOCK you) what if there were aspects of your current practice that could be downright dangerous to your ongoing health ... and you had NO idea it was happening?

Doesn’t sound good does it?

Yet it’s true.

For in my years of experience instructing Bikram yoga, including coaching interns and teaching everyone from hard-core yogis through to beginners, children and people with severe disabilities, I’ve become increasingly concerned that YOU are not getting what you paid for.

What You Will Gain By Reading This Guide

In this guide, I’m going to show you:

- 1. The 11 Warning Signs To Be On The Lookout For;**
- 2. 7 Key Problem Areas That PREVENT Your Practice From Developing;**
- 3. How To Check Whether YOU Are Suffering From Any Of Them; and**
- 4. What YOU Can Do About It FROM NOW ON.**

By the end you’ll understand how you CAN EASILY and SAFELY go further in your practice and re-gain those hidden benefits.

Firstly, let's explore 11 warning signs that may indicate where YOU could be missing out:

What are the warning signs?



Warning Sign 1

- You are asked to do something physically impossible for you – eg “touch your head to your knee or the pose has not started” ... with NO further help, explanation, hints, tips or alternative.



Warning Sign 2

- Exactly the same script is followed EVERY CLASS ... down to the EXACT words and even the EXACT intonation.



Warning Sign 3

- You are urged to PUSH into a pose ... and when you do, it HURTS, and maybe even hurts BADLY.



Warning Sign 4

- You don't seem to feel the same stretch as everyone else; you are not even sure where you are supposed to feel it.... or worse, you feel NOTHING at all where you are supposed to.



Warning Sign 5

- You just don't seem to “GET” a particular pose – for example RABBIT (Sasangasana) – if you still feel your head pushing into the floor ... that's DANGEROUS. I've personally witnessed students who have been practicing for over MANY YEARS (varying from months to 10 years, honestly!) not doing this pose correctly ... and fixed it in 30 seconds flat (if this is you, it will be a revelation to you, I guarantee!).



Warning Sign 6

- Or TRIANGLE (Trikonasana) for example – if you feel heavy or as if you are “falling forward” when you try to go deeper that's a warning sign that either your knee may be in danger of injury or you need to tweak a few key areas. Once again, this can be fixed in a few seconds with precision coaching.



Warning Sign 7

- You see new students doing things TOTALLY WRONGLY and maybe even DANGEROUSLY – for example extending the leg in Standing Head-To-Knee (Dandayamana Janushirasana) without FIRST being able to “*lock the knee” continuously for 60 seconds – without ANY correction being given.

*“Lock the knee” is the subject of another LONG discussion. This instruction is continually misunderstood. Clue: It has NOTHING to do with the knee. More later ...



Warning Sign 8

- You have NEVER had any personal attention to your own practice from an instructor before (or maybe only a little) during or after class. You do however continually hear “*Have faith!*” and “*the yoga fixes everything,*” with no further explanation, as if that is all you needed to hear to stop you asking questions.



Warning Sign 9

- You are belittled; castigated; yelled at; patronized for NOT pushing harder. (If you’ve ever heard the *ridiculous* phrase in class “... pain, not cheesecake ...”, you’ll know what I mean!).



Warning Sign 10

- You’ve been practicing a long time ... and reached a PLATEAU in your practice, your class has become “a routine” and you have NO IDEA what to do about it.



Warning Sign 11

- You are REQUIRED to march to someone else’s tune, for example: “No leaving the room!, No drinking water, no this, no that ... do what I say exactly” ... with NO ROOM for YOUR NEEDS to be met. You don’t feel cared for, or worse you can feel controlled but at the same time, ignored.

**Now maybe you are thinking that this is being picky,
fastidious, pedantic, or meticulous ...**

...but I don’t mind what people think, because I want YOU to have the BEST experience you can, no matter who teaches you, no matter which studio you attend and even if you practice at home.

So if you’ve experienced EVEN ONE of ANY of the above scenarios, the chances are, just like many THOUSANDS* of other hot yoga students around the world...

...you are NOT getting the maximum benefit from your practice.

*Take a look at the [Hot Yoga Doctor Forum](http://www.HotYogaDoctor.com) and you’ll see how many curious students are asking about situations EXACTLY like those I’ve outlined above.

OK – So What Can You Do To Avoid This?

I care deeply that you get the maximum benefit from your hot yoga practice because I know how much difference it made to my life ... so I'm going to show you HOW to change this right now by first outlining 7 KEY PROBLEM AREAS that are causing the issues above and then give you ANTIDOTES to each.

I guarantee you this guide will help you deepen your understanding of your own practice and help you improve it right away.

I only wish I'd had access to this information when I started my Bikram yoga practice!

The 7 Problem Areas That Prevent The Development Of A Full And Strong Practice



Problem number 1

Here's what happens when you hear the 'same old same old' every single class...

Before we go any further I want to set one thing straight. One of the great features of a hot yoga class is that the **same set of poses** may be **taught every time**. Yet somehow, despite the same environment, every class is different.

Even though you "do the same class", your emotional and physical resilience can change on a daily basis. So you can see that the changing factor in the equation every time you practice is YOU, and the way you are in your body and mind!

This is why doing the same class over and over again can actually be a window into your body, mind and soul, and a way to deepen your practice **BUT** ONLY IF you have the right conditions.

Why is this important for you to know?

Because you do have the CAPACITY to create a different experience every time, but that is dependent on you ... AND your teacher.

As much as we all like to think it is ALL up to us, the other variable in your class is your teacher. Now don't get me wrong, you do have to take responsibility for what happens to you and how you react to your environment.



But, like it or not, you just simply HAVE TO be influenced by your teacher's character and beliefs; their changing mental, physical and emotional states; and how these things interact with you.

You see, in my experience most people aren't even aware of what holds them back, and if you are like me, you want to keep making the most of your time in and outside of your yoga classes.

Stick with me, because I'm going to show you exactly what the issue is and how you can avoid it, all the while deepening your practice.

Repetition... the good and the bad

If you keep hearing the same rote-learned words and experiencing the same class, in time, and probably before you realize it has happened, your body and mind will become complacent; it could be a real effort to CHOOSE to learn. Either that or the rate of learning will just continue to dwindle... After all, a predictable class is, well, predictable. It offers nothing new.

Do you remember what it was like to have your Mom repeat the same question time and time again? Or what about when you go out, you can rely on a particular person to tell the same joke again and again? Kind of gets boring huhhh? It may well be an amusing anecdote...

...but how many times can you hear it before it loses its freshness, its appeal, its newness?

- Pretty soon, and it doesn't take long at all, you start to predict what is going to happen...
- What's worse, you make judgments in your head about it (and maybe even about the person themselves)...
- You may even switch off the moment that they start talking or even when you see them.

Now I don't know about you, but what I want from my interactions is connection. I want to feel involved.

Take this principle into the yoga room and I think you will draw the same conclusion I do: Hearing the same thing over and over again in exactly the same way is a way to:

- shut down to new experience.
- switch off and go on auto-pilot.
- dull your senses to your environment.

Meditation is all about SHARPENING your senses.

So it is really important to find ways to always have a heightened sense of awareness (rather than being reactive) to yourself and your environment. This creates a deeper connection to yourself and as a result, to those around you.

Turn it 'on' not 'off'

When our little girl was a toddler I learned pretty quickly that repeating the same question over and over again was what turned her attention off (not on). In fact if I asked her to repeat back to me what I was asking, she could barely remember what I asked. The times she did remember, she would repeat it back, and possibly comply, but there was always some resentment about it.

I learned that posing the question once and at the most twice, was the way to get the best results. But it also had to be worded in the right way. When my question was heard as a request, my daughter willingly carried it out, she wasn't just reacting to a demand and begrudgingly complying.

So what the heck does that have to do with yoga?

Well firstly it has to do with:

- 1. Assumptions;**
- 2. Judgment;**
- 3. Anticipation; and**
- 4. Procrastination.**

If you think you know what is going to happen (assumptions), your mind gets busy deciding how to behave. Whatever you do is going to be based on preconceived ideas (judgments) and your interpretation of them. So you will in some way either dread or look forward to the activity.

Make no mistake: Anticipation and procrastination are poison to your yoga practice...

... because what you are really TRYING to do is be in the moment and respond to things as and when you encounter them. Here's the thing. When you do yoga you know you are in a physically safe environment, so you don't need to make judgments as to safety. You just do it because the discipline requires you to let go of attachment and respond without emotion, by simply observing yourself with equanimity.

This can get you stuck! Over-familiarity kills curiosity

The problem with anticipation and procrastination, (when you just know what turn of phrase is coming up, or you can anticipate the pose timing) is getting habitually stuck. And when you are stuck you don't have the space in your head for growth. Both teacher and student habits can cause you to get stuck.

It probably won't surprise you at all that when I opened my first studio (the second studio in Australia and situated 700 miles from the original studio) there were no students at all that had done this yoga before. EVERYONE I taught was an absolute beginner.

Here is how it usually works:

1. As teachers, most of us rely on the regular students 'in the front row' to be there to demonstrate the class for the new students. I guess it takes the pressure off.
2. The new students watch the 'regulars' for their physical cues. And generally the descriptions used don't accurately match the movements**.
3. If there are mostly new students in the room, it is extremely hard work for the teacher, because the rote-learned words don't reflect the actual movements you want the students to carry out**.
4. Knowing the poses in the series (whether teacher or student) doesn't mean you know HOW to do them properly**.

If you think I am taking a dig at teachers, that is not my intention...

One of my very first students was completely blind. So whether I was ready or not, I had a 90 minute crash course in transforming my classes so that they can be understood by ANYONE.

**Think about this... Have you ever played that game where you instruct a partner how to tie a shoe lace. Sounds easy, until you know that you are not allowed to see what they are doing or help them with anything other than your words. It is just about impossible and the results are hilarious if not extremely frustrating.

Knowing how to tie a shoe lace doesn't make you good at teaching how to do it.



Careful effective word choice is key! Making words fit to the demands of each class is the responsibility of the teacher... period.

What if you only ever hear a fixed dialog? What chance have you got of learning how to do these poses? You have no choice but to be distracted and maybe even look around.

When you do yoga:

- You don't just want focus.
- You want to minimize the amount of distractions.
- You want to keep your eyes on yourself and off your fellow students and the teacher.
- If you have to look around all the time then your yoga class is less effective from the get-go.

“So exactly how do I make my practice more effective?” Get curious!

For me, learning how to be perpetually curious is one of the most important life skills I have developed. Unless you are in danger, then being curious can get you out of a whole lot of trouble.

To be curious means to take every word taught as potentially important and meaningful. Decide how well or badly they describe your task, and then work out how you can move into your poses safely and if you need more distinctions.

Your unconscious mind wants to learn, but it needs variety

THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND is CURIOUS and LOOKING for MEANING: It wants to learn, expand and be surprised if it's going to pay attention and create NEW learnings for you. It is tracking for stuff that it can file under 'sameness' so that it can add in the new stuff in order to build deeper understanding; a place from which you can grow.

It doesn't want to be lulled into complete familiarity where it can 'go to sleep on the job'.

Be careful of your auto-pilot ...

When you are doing a unique class (not rote-learned) your unconscious mind stays alert and attentive for changes so it can learn more and more. This is what helps rewire your mind, reconfigure your beliefs and bring about lasting change. The same class over and over again dulls the mind's ability to stay alert and you risk operating on 'auto-pilot'.

... because every word sinks in

Here's the real truth: EVERY WORD in your class gets pumped directly into the conscious and unconscious mind.

Make what you hear count.

So I ask you, how long can you remain curious about someone's conversation, joke, or class if they keep saying the same thing day in day out? Now I think you are probably guessing where I am going with this 😊.

For me, the answer is definitely “not far”. When I first went to yoga I would look around and have a story going on in my head about how focused everyone ELSE was. Over time, I started to become aware that sometimes 'they' were focused, but only sometimes. Something else was happening...

I will let you in on a secret so that maybe you can start to see things differently too. Sometimes those apparently-focused-looking faces you see in class are actually people in a 'trance', yogis who have zoned out to the teacher and only going through the 'yoga-motions'.

Don't just go through the yoga-motions

The same words used time and time again will trigger the same reactions in you. When you do a different class every time, your mind stays curious, and keeps looking to make sense (differently) every class.

Basically, you get 'unstuck' and move away from those same habitual reactions. And voilà! Your practice is once again full of discovery. Your self-connection deepens and you access your font of limitless potential...

So what is the answer?

Here we are, thinking about the things that may not be right about hot yoga when there is SO MUCH that is GREAT. I mean, what CAN you do, when the heart of many teacher trainings (especially in hot yoga) require the trainee to learn the words of the 'dialog' off-by-heart. The stellar graduates have added the vital ingredient (their personality) and have personalized their classes largely by moving away from simply reciting words.

I guess then you could be asking yourself:

How do you continue to grow when you don't have the optimum kind of environment? What can you do about it when you are not offered the distinctions that you need to progress?

Well here's the good news. There are other ways to discover these distinctions.

Bear with me, because I am going to show you how to learn how to find the resources to get everything you can out of your practice.

Your answer comes initially as a word of caution! You ought to be on the lookout for classes that are taught exactly the same way, with the exact same words every time. Because if you do encounter them, then **you may as well be switching on some heaters, playing a CD at home and be done with it.**

But you may not want to practice at home. So, you need to come up with a way to keep your approach fresh. You want a way to discover your own distinctions, especially when they are not available to you, so that you can keep deepening your practice, enhancing your focus and opening up your body and mind.



Here's What To Do ...

1. **Make it YOUR practice.** Have an eternal mindset of "curiosity". Being curious about every aspect of your practice will lead you to become more curious about your life – and that can result in some very surprising and pleasant breakthroughs!

2. **Focus on your breathing during class.** This will help you remain present every time and assist in your development of the “curiosity mindset” above.
3. **Develop and refine your body awareness** – so that it is impossible for you to “go through the motions”. Having an intense body awareness and proprioceptive skill-set is an essential path to a strong and beneficial hot yoga practice!
4. **Improve your skills in each pose.** Set challenges for yourself in how much you know and can actively engage in each pose. Segment the pose into various parts of the body:
 - a. head & neck;
 - b. shoulders & upper body;
 - c. arms & hands; core/abdomen & hips;
 - d. legs – thighs;
 - e. knees;
 - f. legs – lower & feet.

Assess what distinctions you can uncover by meditating on, and tuning in, to each section as you perform the pose.

5. **Chunk down the various elements of the pose** to help you set some self-learning goals. My favorite method is easy:
 - a. Pose setup;
 - b. Pose entry;
 - c. What happens during the pose;
 - d. Any mistakes you are aware of during the pose to correct?
 - e. Exiting the pose.
6. **Use eye contact with yourself in the mirror wherever possible.** This will help you stay present and disassociate from any “same-old, same-old”.
7. **Educate yourself continuously!** Visit our thriving forums and browse through the typical questions asked in each pose – maybe there are some specifics there that YOU can relate to?
<http://www.hotyogadoctor.com/index.php/site/forum>
Did you know that it is the most popular hot yoga forum in the world? Use it as a valuable (and free!) resource to study all the nuances and variations and warnings advised by the community (consisting of hundreds of instructors – including me – and students from all over the world).

8. **Force yourself into experiencing variety** – practice in different areas of the studio, especially if you do have a tendency to enjoy a favorite spot! Here are some other ideas for you:

- a. Practice at home with a friend (use my [audio class](#)!);
- b. Attend Pose Clinics whenever possible (a great way to shake yourself out of routines and stretch your practice further).
- c. Visit other studios;
- d. Try a different (hot or not) yoga style for a change;
- e. Attend a hot yoga retreat;
- f. Go on an extended yoga journey of discovery: Expose yourself to as many different styles and teachers as you can.



Problem number 2

People believe that they must feel pain to grow

Oh boy! I can feel it. Here comes talk about cake, and that oldie but goodie, “no pain, no gain”. If life is hard for you... if everything is a struggle maybe you are living your life based on some disempowering beliefs.

Does “no pain” equal “no gain” for you?

I wonder if you can identify with this experience where the opposite happened, where in fact pain equaled NO gain.

Before I discovered yoga there were a few times in my life where I decided to get fit at gym. The first couple of times I went. I went in, exercised. I felt good about getting there and congratulated myself on working HARD. After class I could barely walk down the stairs because my quads were aching so much.

I wish I’d learned my lesson the first time. I’m sure you know what it’s like – you feel worse the next day and there is NO WAY you are going back when you can barely walk. After a while the enthusiasm wanes til you don’t really WANT to go back anymore.

Still, there are plenty of folks around who will spout the old “no pain, no gain” myth at you. You know, the kind of person who goes to gym and loves hard workouts, takes pride in thrashing themselves til they can’t do anything else. What if this person comes to yoga with the same attitude to “kill themselves” (as even some teachers tell students to do)?

When the rubber hits the road you know that they are in danger of TRYING too hard and risking real damage.

Be careful what you are telling yourself... because you might be listening

Here's the problem: If a person lives by "no pain, no gain" then it can actually become one of their core beliefs around health, diet, fitness and yoga. There is a good chance that **they will injure themselves because they are looking for the pain.**

Yoga is a discipline within which exists a delicate balance between effort and surrender. When you force the pain you could possibly end up with ripped ligaments, torn muscles and tendons, and strained backs (among other things).

Years ago I went to a Tony Robbins course and studied his books. I will admit that some of the information is extremely useful. But there is one phrases that rings warning bells for me: "if you can't, you must".

What happens when you bypass your built-in protective mechanisms?

Talk about not listening to your intuition. Talk about not responding to your own commonsense. This simply doesn't work in all contexts. What if I operated this way every time I went to gym?

How on earth does "if you can't, you must" marry with yoga philosophy?

While yoga helps you break through your own self-imposed limitations it teaches you to do so by being in tune with your body and your intuition. It doesn't teach you to bypass your innate intelligence, turn your back on your reactions and thumb your nose at what you know you really should do.

Let's put that into perspective. If you are running your life by "if you can't, you must" then you may just push past your body's own protective mechanisms and cause real damage to your body's tissues.

You don't have to break through the pain barrier to experience growth

I am going to address "pain and struggle" a little later on, but the point I want to emphasize for now is this: If you let go of the belief that you have to break through some kind of pain threshold to experience growth then you will find your path to personal growth is actually easier and fraught with less pain. Did you realize it could ALL be in your head? ☺

You get to choose the way you want it to be.

I would much rather entertain what Humberto Maturana has to say about growth and change. Change is what happens when you embrace what works, the other stuff falls away through disuse; habits are changed.

Infuse your practice and your life with the idea that change does not HAVE to be painful. That the pathway to change can involve practicing what works instead of focusing on stopping what doesn't work.

If you have ever been to class when you have been told to

- “push, push, push”
- “push past the pain”
- “go back until it hurts”
- “kill yourself”
- or even told that “this is going to hurt like hell”



then maybe you are being asked to ignore what your body is telling you in order to reach a place where someone else judges you ought to be. The only person you can rely on is yourself.

Yoga teaches you that “if you CAN, you must”.

In other words use your body's intelligence and your mindfulness to do what you can, when you can, without causing undue stress, or pain. Start tracking for that satisfying feeling where you challenge your body to work in an effective way that contributes to opening and growth. Stop experiencing unnecessary pain.



Here's What To Do ...

1. **Pretend you have a new belief:** “This is easy; Change is easy” and use it as your mantra during class (and outside class too ... why not?!).
2. **Try to find yoga instructors that can make the distinctions** between discomfort and inappropriate pain. Ask them about any poses where you DO feel pain!
3. **Whenever you feel pain that is tightening the body/muscle groups – BACK OFF**, do NOT “push through the pain” at all.
4. **If you have an injury** or a previously nagging injury or are re-habilitating, do see a physiotherapist or specialist if your hot yoga practice is regularly casing you pain. NEVER push through the pain in the “hope” or encouragement from instructors that this is fixing the issue.

5. **Study the way the body works.** Some understanding of basic anatomy in yoga can be extremely helpful – but only if you want to deepen your practice and enjoy more benefits without the risk of injury.
6. **Be equanimous and practice non-attachment (Pratyahara).** You do not NEED pain to progress.
7. **Take time to understand the relationship between your beliefs** and your physical body's real needs. Is the “pain” somehow “proving that you must be doing *something*” to yourself?
8. **Get therapy!** (Just joking ☺ ... that would be hard, expensive and could take years.)



Problem number 3

“You’ll do it my way or it’s the highway” and it really is all YOUR ‘stuff’

If you’ve visited the forum at www.hotyogadoctor.com chances are you have read some fascinating viewpoints about class and the way it is delivered from students AND teachers.

Here’s a classic scenario experienced by many:

You go to a class, and a teacher has some great distinctions to offer: their class is technically interesting and you learn a lot.

But what I am hearing over and over again is that yogis like you are finding it really hard to ignore the fact that some instructors:

- have no respect for the students in the room;
- shout to get results or response from the students;
- goad people by commanding them into action instead of using ‘invitation’ to allow others to follow them;
- teach by force.

You’ve maybe even heard others refer to them (and I hate this) as yoga nazis. Frankly, although I find the term absolutely offensive, it evokes a militant style that most of us can imagine immediately so I use it here.

Are you offended?

Perhaps, as has been my experience, the teacher is rude and shouts directly at particular students or even seems to enjoy trying to humiliate them. I mean, try this real quote from a teacher in Northern California (told to me by a student):

“have you been eating too many cookies you have a big fat stomach today”.

Would you go back if this happened?

Imagine how much more confronting that comment is when you discover it was said to a young teenage girl in front of 30 students. Do I need to tell you that she never went back to class?

“No, no, no... not like that!”

Maybe you have heard stuff like “no, no, no, no, no – not that way, that’s wrong, not like that” and other admonitions.

Here’s the thing though... you still go back. Because when you talk to your yogi friends they proclaim somewhat wisely and philosophically:

“I wonder what you are supposed to learn by being in that teacher’s class”, or “I wonder what it is that YOU have to learn by your reaction” as if there is some higher learning to be had from it all. You start to question your own intuition, even when your sensibilities have been justifiably offended.

Sometimes it really IS your STUFF

Please don’t get me wrong. You may actually be reacting to something because you have had a particularly hard time emotionally; you could be going through a break-up, or your kids are misbehaving and you feel helpless that you have found no solutions.

You come to yoga and something that your teacher does or says has you reacting to them and you blame them for it rather than taking responsibility. There will be times when you DO have to accept that it really is “your stuff”.

But there are plenty of times when it isn’t your stuff

So here is something else to think about. Have you ever heard the expression: “when the student is ready, the teacher appears”. This resonates for me because generally you don’t learn something until you are ready.

I wonder if you get annoyed like me, that you are supposed to subscribe to the new-age notion that you should put up with crap in the name of ‘self-exploration’. Some would have you believe that it is you alone who is somehow attracting the teaching you are receiving. Is this the way that poor instruction is now being justified? By placing the onus on the student to ‘put up or shut up’?

You can’t be responsible for mis-treatment

Do some research into yoga, meditation, or many spiritual practices and...



**...you will be hard pressed to find someone who believes
that provocation, force and humiliation
are the keys to personal growth.**

It's true that some teachers can provoke you into "shifting out of your stuff" better than others and also do it in a loving way. But, it's all in the delivery.

However, if it comes to **forcing their views** on their captive audience or even **personal attacks**, well, what can I say, it just simply isn't showing empathy, respect, consideration or due care and attention.

**This kind of behavior just isn't synonymous with yoga or
even being a teacher.**

Shouting, victimizing, admonishments, abuse and ridicule have no place in any teaching environment. **Physical or mental force** in the form of **humiliation** or the **insistence of irrelevant or ridiculous rules** is just plain tyranny from someone who just might be labeled as a 'control freak' by some.

Have you ever been in a studio where you can't wear a certain color? What about being told you must NOT drink water? Heck, I have even witnessed a student being thrown out of class for this! What about being told what color towel you are allowed to bring?

A teacher is a facilitator – NOT a dictator.

Facilitation is about presenting students with tools of change and leading them to making their own intelligent decisions to get the very best outcomes. The learning becomes their own and rather than being force-fed dogma they easily incorporate effective change without resistance.

People want guidelines. They want to do the right thing. A few words or rules on how you are to set up in the room or an outline of what is and isn't acceptable behavior or clothing is perfectly acceptable. But as an adult I don't want to be told off. I want to exercise my free will.

**I don't want my teacher to be
a surrogate parent...**

As an adult you are responsible for your own learnings. And really, it should be free of any need to be told how great you are or how well you are doing something.

Like it or not, you WILL respond better when someone uses at least some positive reinforcement in the room (whether or not it is directed at you).

Tuning out your teacher comes at a big price

If your instructor is offensive you are likely to tune them out. If they are offensive AND they teach a recited class then good luck with staying present to your practice! There is only so much of the bad stuff that you can take. So if you choose to stay there anyway, you will do the next best thing and operate on autopilot.

Then, you won't really be doing yoga, you will just be doing a set of stretchy positions (not that there is anything wrong with that!).

Here is something else to keep in mind: A nice teacher isn't necessarily a good teacher! But they are certainly a whole lot easier to put up with than a badly behaved 'good' one. I mean, who wants to go to a class that serves up the same words, ideas and concepts every single time? At least if it is delivered with a honey-tongue it is more pleasant.

There are other ways to get your learnings and you may be struggling to find them. Maybe...

- You go to a studio where you have limited choice.
- You can't go to another studio.
- There are inexperienced teachers who haven't yet found their way and you could even be more experienced than they are.
- Finding another instructor is not an option for you. And ultimately you have to take responsibility for your own learning.



Here's What To Do ...

If you have a forceful dogmatic teacher where it's "their way or the highway", then here are some ways to get the distinctions to your practice if you are not already getting them.

1. **Approach the studio owner/instructor** and discuss their approach. Is there something you are not getting? Express your needs!
2. **Demand quality customer service:** You are a paying client and your needs deserve to be heard at the very least!
3. **Use this opportunity to focus even more;** to go deeper in your practice.
4. **Learn more about the poses and their techniques** so you CAN help yourself. Learn to develop YOUR practice, not that of your instructor's! many techniques are too subtle for the "do it my way" style of instructor so they fly "under the radar". That way you'll have the satisfaction that no matter WHAT that particular instructor tries to "make" you do, you'll still be developing YOUR technique.

5. **Suggest the studio run some pose clinics** where you can get outside of the “do it my way” mindset or “the script” and learn more effective techniques.
6. **Find another studio to practice in;** or practice more at home using higher-quality resources.



Problem number 4

Another huge problem is being told to “push harder” without providing any distinctions for progressing with CORRECT ALIGNMENT.

So how do I go deeper, safely and still have great alignment?

For me the physical side of yoga is about:

1. Breath;
2. Alignment; and
3. Depth.

If you are breathing all the time (which I assume you are ☺) then the next thing is alignment. The hierarchy is extremely important. With breath as your number one concern you want to make sure it is fluid and connected, constant and conscious.

Mindfulness: your guiding principle

If I could put a yoga ‘umbrella’ over those 3 considerations it would be labeled ‘mindfulness’. Or in other words the guiding principle with your practice is to be mindful of firstly your breath, then your alignment and then your depth in the pose. Use intelligence to guide you through.

Use your breath as your ‘barometer’

When breath gets ragged or very shallow (panting) it is a sign that you are trying too hard and or going too deep.

1. Come out just enough to firstly recover your breath;
2. Correct your alignment; and
3. Then work on your depth.



Not enough students work within this framework. Have you seen others struggle trying to make sense of the difference between alignment and pushing hard? You can see them trying so hard and at the same time creating bad alignment and wham, they lose the benefits.

Are you in danger of missing out on your benefits?

It all boils down to using the right physical techniques so that you can focus on getting the benefits of a solid practice – part of the reason you go in the first place! Once you have the physical habits of a good practice you will ‘get’ the other stuff.

It will probably come as no surprise to you that most westerners firstly approach yoga from a physical exercise standpoint with spiritual development put aside. Isn't it incredible that once you have a regular frequent (hot) yoga practice that the physical stuff becomes the secondary reason most people come? We start to acknowledge our spiritual development, all the while our minds and bodies are getting seduced into calm and peace.

Are you listening to your ‘body’s intelligence’ or surrendering to the strong will of your teacher? Because many students have told me that they feel compelled to listen to their teacher even when it goes against what they feel they should do. Do you find feel compelled to push through the pain? To TRY HARD and do it right? This behavior is putting you at great risk.

Yoga is about finding (not losing) yourself

Start second-guessing your intuition too many times and you will begin to ignore what this powerful inner-voice of yours is saying.

The ability for your body and mind to cope changes on a daily basis. Whatever you come to the table with on any given day is purely and simply, just the way it is! Trying to change that, by pushing through these barriers without proper care and attention is surely asking for trouble.

This means accepting that some days your movement is easy and flexible, other days it can be fraught with challenge and you won't get where you were before.



Here's What To Do ...

Pushing harder requires great awareness by you and your teacher of the correct way (knowing HOW) to do this.

In a nutshell there are a few instant fixes for you in the following recommendations:

1. **Listen to your teacher with a discriminating ear...** but ...
2. **Pay attention to your breath as your highest priority.**
3. **Allow yourself to enter the pose with correct alignment**, only then do you allow yourself to explore the depths of the pose
4. **Leave your ego at the door.**
5. **Your practice may change daily.** Observe it, without expectation.
6. **Learn precision techniques that allow you to progress** with much finer distinctions about:
 - a. WHY you are doing this;
 - b. WHAT specifically you should be doing and feeling;
 - c. HOW specifically to attain this and understanding the various MODIFICATIONS;
 - d. ADJUSTMENTS and REFINEMENTS that are not only effective, but SAFE to practice.

**Once again, it all boils down to knowing
the right physical technique**

And another thing: When you pay extra attention to your set-up without caring about the depth, you will create for yourself a better practice, hands down. A great set-up means better results all round: not just from a persnickety pedantic point of view, but because:

1. From great alignment comes great awareness;
2. From great external awareness flows better inner self-awareness;
3. Improved inner-self-awareness means dissolving mental and emotional barriers;
4. And from that you learn how to deal with any stressful situation whether it is physical mental or emotional stress.
5. Result? The stresses of your life melt away.



Problem number 5

**Insufficient understanding of anatomical principles and physiology. Misleading advice based on untrue statements of ‘fact’.
For example: “The sweat releases toxins.”**

There do seem to be a number of hot yoga myths that have become accepted as truth. Now, you’re probably wondering what I am talking about.

Some things get blindly accepted as truth, simply by being passed down from teacher to teacher

You see, it really upsets me when misinformation is bandied around as if it were the fact.

The biggest hot yoga health myth is that “sweat releases toxins”.

Like me, you have probably heard that one so many times from so many teachers that you probably started believing it as well.

You know what? I am ashamed to say, in the beginning I was guilty of spreading that one too. Yeah, it is sometimes comforting (and easier) to regurgitate what others have ‘taught’ you. But just like when you discover that Santa is not real (oh, sorry if I spoiled that one for you ☺) once you know the truth, you can’t go back.

The PRIMARY role of sweat is to cool the body.

1. There are some other roles but there is less than 1% ‘toxin’ content.
2. There are NO heavy metals excreted.
3. A tiny amount of urea is present at a concentration of 130th of that found in urine.

You can believe me when I say that when you practice hot yoga, the wastes you get rid of are due to:

- Your lymphatic system activation
- The activity of your healthy kidneys and liver
- Your intestinal tract

So basically, (and this is a little uncouth) if you accidentally peed a drop or two of urine during class, you would be getting rid of more urea than the stuff you would find in your sweat.

And while we are on the subject...

When did waste products take on a whole new identity and become toxins?

Why do we now talk about our poo and pee as brimming with toxins and not just containing waste? Did it all get upgraded so that the urgency of your actions is seen as far more important?

It is this basic misunderstanding of the body's systems that means that it is hard to rely on the information given, and for the listener to decide what is true and what is, um... rubbish.

Anyway I don't want to go into any more specifics about which system does what. But between you and I, be on the lookout for someone who at least has some intuition about how to deal with all types of conditions.

To give you an idea of what I mean ...

- Do you know where the quadriceps muscles are?
- What about the biceps?
- You know where the knee is?

Stupid questions huh?



The truth is ... it's not simply knowing where things are, but how they work together in function and dysfunction.

It is absolutely no use to know what the leg muscles are if you don't know what you need to do to make ecological movements of the knee that won't risk damage. Understanding the body is more than terminology. It is about motion.

Is it good for someone to know where supraspinatus is and that it is a rotator cuff muscle (and little else)?

Or, would it be OK if your teacher didn't know where it is but knew how to teach you how to avoid rotator cuff injuries?

I want the teacher who knows how to do the latter. Knowing the name of it is a bonus.

You see, yoga trainings involve knowing the basics of the body's systems and the arrangement of muscles and joints and bones in the body. Unfortunately the 'crash' courses in most yoga trainings are just not enough to knowledge ANYONE up enough to make intelligent and worthwhile associations.

Recently we interviewed my good friend Steve who did yoga training with me in LA. He has studied massage therapy in Canada which is a professionally regulated, 4 year full time course. Now there is someone who knows the body inside out.

**But what if you don't have access to that knowledge?
What CAN you do ?**

If you've:

- Ever wondered why your knee hurts in Fixed Firm pose AND wanted to know what you can actually DO (and I DON'T mean just not going in so deeply) to prevent further damage and facilitate healing;

If you've ever had:

- a rotator cuff injury
- carpal tunnel syndrome
- frozen shoulder
- shoulder reconstruction rehabilitation
- knee surgery
- fused cervical vertebrae
- herniated discs
- inguinal or abdominal hernias
- arthritis
- sore ankles
- heel spurs
- or one of hundreds of other conditions or disease states then

**I know this is controversial but...
... being told to just do the yoga and be careful,
instead of being told how, why or what to do...
just isn't good enough.**

You need to know what you can modify and why that is going to help, and that it will in fact, help!

Wouldn't you want to be in the presence of someone who can help you deepen a better self-understanding, helping you foster greater proprioception and to unearth, and learn to rely on, your body's innate intelligence?

**Having a dogmatic teacher who has
inadequate body system knowledge and
limited body intuition is a dangerous combination.**

For example, for years when I was practicing as a dentist, many patients would arrive with a broken tooth. Mostly (and I am not kidding) they would say:

“All I did was bite on a marshmallow”, or “a cheese sandwich”, (really! It was rarely something hard) “and my tooth cracked”. Looking in their mouths I could pretty much instantly diagnose whether the problem arose from poor oral hygiene, poor brushing or flossing frequency or technique, quality of filling, grinding, trauma, neglect, or a number of other causes.

Would they expect to get that sort of professional diagnosis from someone who is guessing the answer, based on what their neighbor told them because they once had a cracked tooth?

Exactly! So make sure your yoga teacher knows their anatomy and physiology and particularly how they work in yoga poses, before obeying their every word.



Here's What To Do ...

1. **Ask these questions:**
 - a. Why?";
 - b. "How do you know this?";
 - c. "What is the scientific principle behind this idea?";
 - d. "Where can I research this further?"
2. **Study anatomy and study the poses!**
3. **Do some research of your own about the heat; so-called “de-toxing”** (and why it's a made-up idea to sell products!) so YOU understand the principles for yourself and how the benefits are created.
4. **Buy David Coulter's book, 'Anatomy of Hatha Yoga'.** It is dense, long, heavy, and very detailed. Although it is written in fairly friendly terms, it is still a textbook, so not for the faint-hearted. Brilliant nevertheless.
5. **Learn to question the pseudo-logic behind “New Age Pseudo-Science”** – and ask about any “hot yoga facts” on our forum if you are unsure.
6. **Be skeptical of claims that “this yoga fixes everything”** ... it's YOUR BODY and you may need specific help or coaching to get YOUR benefits. Be especially careful if you have an injury or are rehabilitating – or if you have an unusual condition or body shape. Find someone who can assess and understand YOUR situation and tailor the instruction professionally to suit.

7. **Take some private classes.** Though more expensive, the breakthroughs you can make may be worth more than an entire year of mediocre instruction! (Can't find private classes? Checkout our [Online Pose Clinics!](#))
8. **Use the huge range of resources here:** www.quickfityoga.com and www.hotyogadoctor.com that will help you make distinctions whenever you need them. Feel free to come over and ask questions.



Problem number 6

**Only “mass instruction” is given ...
without being tailored to the individual.**

One of the issues with a rote-taught class is the inability to teach everyone BOTH as a group and individually.

- Mostly classes get taught to the masses. This is dangerous.
- Amass a whole lot of individuals in a room and you will find many unique individuals with unique and varied needs.
- I am wondering if you know someone who has felt encouraged to push beyond their body's limits, and then maybe regretted it later?
- Ever seen people in risky positions that have not been noticed by the teacher? Such as someone extending their leg in Head to Knee with their leg in a dangerous position which you just KNOW will cause back strain.
- Or maybe someone doing Awkward pose with their legs at odd angles and feet fanning out.

**Perhaps you have even thought, “if I can see that,
how come they are not being corrected?”.**

If the individual is left out then you may be pushing for depth rather than alignment and not be aware of it.

Remember that the benefits come with great alignment but on the flipside nothing good happens with poor alignment. Add too much depth to the mix and it could be dangerous.

**So ... how on earth can you tell the difference between
good and not good instruction, or between
a good and not so good class?**

And how is this for both a blessing and a curse?

The magic of many hot yoga classes means that regardless of the instruction skill level, the body cleansing and emotional clearing can be so good that you can leave any class feeling pretty darn good.

And as a result, even if you realize it was not even close to an optimum experience, that 'yoga glow' seems to almost extinguish the poor stuff and even remembering what happened in the room is difficult!

And why is that a curse you ask?

Because if you don't know what a truly GREAT class is, if you don't have the opportunity to have an incredible experience every single time, then you are definitely missing out.

Has this ever happened to you?

Ever been to class when you did not feel resilient, when you didn't feel like being there? Maybe you positioned yourself in the studio so that you would not be noticed by the teacher.

So, let me ask you this? What would you rather?

1. Escape your teacher's gaze so that you don't feel 'picked' on, or
2. Practice anywhere in the studio knowing that your teacher is always sensitive enough to pick up on your emotional tides?

One way to sort the teacher 'wheat from the chaff' is...

... to see how recognized and acknowledged your emotional and physical states are and how well your skill level is catered to every class. Be on the lookout for times when you feel that your needs have not been met.

1. From a technical standpoint, if there are a number of newbies in the room, how well do the advanced students get catered for?
2. Are there enough special tips for them to feel included in the mix?
3. On the flipside what is it like if you are inexperienced and somehow the class seems to be being delivered for the sole benefit of the regular students?
4. Can all the multiple skill levels in the room get managed to everyone's satisfaction?
5. Are all the different conditions and disease states taken into account?
6. Are they teaching the same old class or is every class delivering plenty of 'aha' moments to everyone?
7. Are everyone's errors being taken into account and cleverly engineered in for all to benefit and learn from?



It is possible to please everyone in the room.

But the problem is that it usually doesn't happen that way. Usually people can 'hide' and either their mistakes are not noticed at all or there is not enough bandwidth for the mistakes to get airplay.

How can you become aware of this? Well you can use this guide and the '7 problem areas' and look for:

- Misinformation;
- Lots of dogmatic forceful instruction;
- If a rote delivered class is having the effect of students 'tuning out' the teacher; and
- If students are pushing past the pain into poor alignment or dangerous positions (and the list goes on)...

What if you don't have access to the great stuff all the time?

Ultimately you want to rely on great teaching. You still need to take responsibility for your own learning. It will be harder to get all your needs met in the class if all the conditions are not optimal. You want your teacher to know more than you do – in some arena; physical, spiritual, philosophical – otherwise it just isn't fulfilling enough to keep going.

If instruction doesn't pique your interest, if it is not clear, or if you don't have rules to follow, you will naturally make up your own (and these may not be giving you your best results).

An important part of learning HOW to teach is something that I teach to all my interns. Partly it's an awareness of what 'chunk' size the conscious mind can process without becoming overwhelmed. I call this the '7 plus or minus 2 rule'. Did you know that the conscious mind can willingly and reliably process, remember and even repeat back an average of 7 items? The range is from 5 to 9.

Now listen to this because if you have ever experienced overwhelm then this will really help you, either the next time someone asks you to do some complex things, or you have to teach something to someone yourself.

Limit your 'chunking' to this magic number (about 7, and in the case of something BRAND NEW: 3) and feel confident of greater success in either understanding or being understood!

So, if too many chunks are coming your way, you may feel overwhelmed.

'Too much information' is the way some people put it.

And when that occurs, a few things can happen:

1. You can check out (and lose your attention and maybe even find it hard to pick up the thread again).

2. You could make mistakes that could be risky to your body in some way.
3. You could get annoyed that you don't seem to be 'getting it'.

When you can't pay attention because of too many chunks, you don't just limit yourself to paying attention to the 7 automatically, you tend to lose the plot and not be able to do any of it. For a newbie this can be so hard because this is the time when they don't know the poses. If they can't pay attention to the physical task at hand...

Take a guess at what the newbies will now pay attention to?

That's right, the things that they shouldn't focus on:

- The heat and how hot they perceive the room to be;
- How hard a time they are having breathing;
- And how everyone else seems to be doing it easy and they are the only ones having a hard time.

I am not exaggerating.

Typically a new teacher will recite the class they learned for a little while with almost no awareness of the students in the room. This is perfectly acceptable and expected for most new teachers. It takes a while for the awareness to blossom.

An inspiring teacher will teach a class to multiple skill levels, multiple conditions and disease states, with beginners thrown in, giving the basics to the first-time yogi as well as enhanced distinctions to the student who comes 6 times per week.

They are able to be "hands-on" with a student helping them modify something while teaching the rest of the class and still pick out aspects of particular student's practice that need improvement at the other end of the studio. This is no mean feat and does take practice.



Here's What To Do ...

1. **Take some responsibility to learn more about what is "best for you":**
 - a. **Arrive early with some specific questions** in relation to certain poses;
 - b. **Ask for adjustments** in class;
 - c. **Be confident to make requests** for your needs to be met;
 - d. **Stay after class and get further coaching.** Ask "What can I improve?"

2. **Research the poses** (again, our forum is a great starting place).
3. **Again, try a private class – or get together with 2 or 3 other yogis** and have your own private pose clinic!
4. **Ask other students for tips and techniques** (but see problem 5 where untruths are stated as facts). Beware that the advice you get may be interesting but not valid! You still have to work out whether the tips are misleading advice based on untrue statements of ‘fact’. You can double-check by going to the [HotYogaDoctor Forum](#) where advice, hints and tips are tried, tested and true and discussed by the hot yoga community.
5. **Vary how and where you practice.** If you can, try other studios, try different teachers. Vary your physical position in the room. If you regularly are up close to the mirror, try being in the second or third row, try the back row. Vary it to sometimes stand in full view of the mirror and other times right behind different people so that you rarely see the mirror. Varying your practice means you amass your own knowledge, you take the time to sift through the results and make your own conclusions. This may take you some time however!
6. **If you can also vary WHERE you practice** and who with, this will help you understand the class from multiple perspectives. Invaluable (did you know the ability to consider problems from multiple perspectives is a known ingredient of “genius” capability?).
7. **Put your hand up and ask “What do I do?”** whenever you don’t ‘get’ something or don’t know how to adapt it for your body and ability. Seriously though, I love it when students come out of a class and ask me how they would specifically follow instructions more precisely.



Problem number 7

There is no understanding of the key difference between STRUGGLE and PAIN as a guide to pure alignment and the development of YOUR practice.

By now you are probably asking yourself: If my teacher is telling me to push through or go to the pain, and this is wrong, what should I do?

Pain is really useful!

You probably know it too. If things weren't painful we would too easily cause damage without knowing how to avoid the problem. The probable result is that we would become a race of complacent people too afraid to hurt ourselves for fear that we could die at any moment. Sounds overly dramatic.

The flipside of the story is that we can use pain and STRUGGLE as a guide to discover what works, to stop us from damaging ourselves and to help ourselves grow.

Beware of teachers who encourage you to feel pain

Instead, seek out ways to understand how you can use struggle as your guide to some of the key distinctions to pure alignment and the development of YOUR practice. Here are some 'struggle' tests:

1. Is your breath still smooth and even (whether deep or shallow)?
2. Are you scrunching your face?
3. Are you feeling pain?
4. Have you got so much on your mind you feel lost?

I can't stress this enough: Spiritual growth doesn't have to come with pain.

You know, I was a New Age Skeptic wondering what all this hoo ha was about growth anyway? Even though I knew there were things I wanted to change, I wasn't sure how to do it.

Then I discovered this yoga. And without paying ANY attention to my spiritual evolvment and emotional liberation, I realized that it was happening *all by itself*. What a revelation. OK, OK you can see I had a terribly long way to go!

But it certainly made it easy for me to see how even the most diehard gym go-er who just wants to pump their body into tip-top shape can get even more from yoga-ing their body into shape. The exercise is more than just the physical work, from which springs a whole raft of other life-enriching qualities that you just can't ignore.



Pain can be just as likely associated with the shedding of emotional baggage as it is with the opening up of a tight enclosed body.

Not only should you not even think about going to the pain, you should never move further in your poses beyond the physical discomfort of your stretches, into pain. There are many schools of thought about the peeling away of the layers of emotional pain. Many of them insist that you “re-live” the experience and get the visceral sensations all over again. That means going through the ‘pain’, the heartbreak, whatever it is, AGAIN, and possible cementing it further. Luckily, with an effective hot yoga practice this won’t happen to you.

Here’s why. The body physiologically responds to stresses in exactly the same way whether the stresses are physical, emotional or mental.

Doing yoga opens up your body and allows you to experience stress in a controlled environment where **you may or may not experience the emotions of past experiences.**

The good news is, in opening your body you release some of what we can loosely term ‘emotional crystals’ harbored in your body, during your yoga class.

This opening:

- May or may not be difficult;
- May or may not evoke the original ‘painful’ stimulus; and
- May disappear (with enough practice in an indeterminate time) either with or without discomfort.

In time you notice that previous triggers that used to stress you in your life don’t have the same impact, plus you understand yourself a little better through your heightened awareness and increased receptivity.

Always give priority to listening to your own voice

If you continue to disregard your body’s own voice you may find that you start to bypass the protective mechanisms in place and put yourself at risk. I don’t want that for you, and my guess is, neither do you.

Honor your own definition of pain and don’t measure your yoga practice by applying someone else’s!



Here’s What To Do ...

1. **Realize that “pain” is completely and utterly subjective.** So if someone says you need to feel pain in this pose, what do they mean? Every person extracts their own meaning for their sensations in their body. For example, some people experience Camel as emotionally painful, others it is physically painful and yet for others it is a release.

2. **But ... make sure that firstly your ALIGNMENT is SPOT ON, BEFORE** you go anywhere near a “pain point”. Poor alignment CAN cause pain ... and worse, cause an injury ... and it may NOT be obvious to all instructors how subtly “out” your alignment is. Get some feedback from your instructors about any poses that cause you pain.
3. **“Intensity” may be OK ... “PAINFUL” demands further exploration** of what your body is telling you.
4. **If something is painful then that in itself is enough of a warning** to confirm your need to examine what is going on in your body and to work out if there is something wrong with your technique. The line in the sand for pushing past comfort into discomfort or pain is different for everyone. It could be alignment or technique related. Are you experiencing pain due to fear of what might happen, have you tensed up due to previous trauma, or are you hanging on to something emotionally, fearful of letting it go? The list is LONG and hard to work out alone.
5. **Make some distinctions between “muscle stretch pain”** (not altogether unpleasant and results from micro-tears to the muscle-fiber which, believe it or not, is one of the ways a muscle develops) and “joint pain” or “ligament pain” neither of which should be endured (BACK OFF immediately!). See a specialist for anything that lingers or inhibits movement.
6. **Rather than face pain as your guide, go first to discomfort,** then let struggle determine where you should be.
7. **One person’s pain CAN be another person’s pleasure.** So don’t rely on this very loaded word to determine your yoga experience. For example some love a heavy handed massage, others can only bear a light touch – only YOU can decide where your threshold is and how you code it.
8. **Many instructors teach to work to your edge using pain** as the measurement. This is quite different to gaining inner understanding. The only pain definition that matters is your own.
9. **If pain is physically manifested: stop and back off,** because it is your body’s way of telling you that you are risking damage.
10. **Make distinctions about what the pain is telling you.** Just because something is physically painful doesn’t mean that you need to release it by going deeper. Yoga is about finding a challenge that can involve intense discomfort. You may not want to do it at the time, but that is totally different to recognizing the type of pain that you SHOULD NOT be venturing into.

11. **Know how to recognize the first signs of STRUGGLE, NOT PAIN.** Use struggle as your guide. Focus on making distinctions in your own body about your best alignment and disregard all commands to push through pain, push harder or go beyond what your inner voice advises you.
12. **If you think you are feeling pain, try relaxing your face,** and if the struggle dissipates then work with best alignment and move on. But if you are feeling PAIN in your knee or hip or any other physical spot, then see your teacher or come to the forum at: www.hotyogadoctor.com. It may take just a tweak of your technique to sort out your problem.
13. **Injury: Allow 24 hours for inflammation to settle before GENTLY** re-acquainting yourself with your practice. Ask for pose modifications from your instructor or on our forums so that you can still practice and engage the cardiovascular and organ-related benefits ... and keep your body healing (and maybe heal faster) as a result. Leaving too long a gap after an injury before returning to yoga make only make it harder to break down scar tissue, so I recommend you return as soon as the initial healing is underway and any inflammation has subsided. Of course consult your physician or specialist and do not take the information in this guide as medical advice. (Do feel free to use our forums though.)

Conclusion

The truth is, there are many ways to improve your practice.

Some easy, some hard. Others take a long time and are simply just not practical.

Or they don't fit into a busy lifestyle where you want to have the answers at your fingertips, fast.

And detailed, accurate resources can be hard to get your hands on.

Until now.

Introducing: The Hot Yoga MasterClass™

Whether you are just starting your hot yoga or Bikram method yoga practice, or you are a hard-core regular, this **brand new resource** will accelerate your results and have you enjoying a new depth of benefits like never before!

I purchased the entire package and have not stopped reading and rereading yet! I choose one pose to critique in my 90 minute Bikram session and make the adjustments suggested in the text. My backbend has never been this deep! How do I know, the instructor commented that it looked good!

FayeJ, FL, USA

Wow... Gabrielle, you and your team, have developed a fabulous resource - I love the whole set. Even though I am new to Bikram yoga, I practice at two studios because I value the different perspectives offered by each teacher. Your gorgeous book is filled with amazing pictures and explanations, and it offers a whole new insight. I had been resisting some poses in class. Because I now understand the intent of these poses, they have become favorites! You have fuelled my addiction to Bikram yoga... and of all the addictions to have, I believe it is a pretty good one!


Shona, Brisbane, Australia



www.HotYogaMasterClass.com

Totaling 304 pages, with 744 full-color photographs, you'll find everything you need to know about all your favorite (and not so-favorite!) hot yoga poses:

- The Essential Elements;
- "What Makes This Pose So Difficult To Get Right?"
- Step-By-Step Instructions For Getting In-And-Out Of Every Pose;
- Common Mistakes – And How To Fix Them (With Photos – This Information Is NOT Available Anywhere Else!);
- Modifications For Injuries / Restrictions / Different Body-Types;
- And much much more!

If you want to know more about how exactly The Hot Yoga MasterClass™  304-page manual and 2-Volume DVD will TRANSFORM your practice, GUARANTEED, head straight to:

<http://www.hotyogamasterclass.com/>

[and see the package deals!]

May your journey continue to delight you ...

Namaste

gabrielle

Gabrielle Raiz

I love getting your feedback! Email me directly at gabrielle@hotyogadoctor.com, I read them ALL and reply to them ALL! (Maybe you are one of those people!)