Motivations of Yoga Teachers and the Impact of Training and Teaching

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MOTIVATIONS OF YOGA TEACHERS & THE IMPACT OF TRAINING AND TEACHING

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Most research on yoga focused on efficacy with health conditions.

Mental health professions increasingly acknowledge body-mind interventions such as yoga.

Nearly 38% of US adults use complementary and alternative medicine approaches.

Little research available on the experiences of yoga teachers and best supports.
Research questions:

What motivates yoga practitioners to engage in yoga teacher training?

What is the impact of training to be a yoga teacher and of teaching yoga on the individual?
1. Please tell me about what brought you to yoga teaching. What are your intentions or plans regarding teaching? What are your concerns?
2. Did you experience any barriers to engaging in yoga teacher training?
3. What have been the most challenging and/or notable aspects of training and teaching?
4. How do you or will you take care of yourself as a yoga teacher?
10 individuals in Portland, Oregon metro area interviewed.

10 women
9 Caucasian, 1 Latino
Ages: 22-56
4 single, 3 in a relationship, 3 married
9 heterosexual, 1 Queer-identified
* Realized significant benefits from yoga and wished to share with others
* Complexity and risks of teaching
* Financial barriers, difficult to make a living
* Importance of own practice
* Practicing and teaching led to personal growth and a sense of community and spiritual connection
Wish to share benefits of yoga

- Yoga helped me improve my body image and the image of myself. It helped me love myself again and just have a life again...It surprised me and made me feel really good and that’s what I wanted to share with people.
- I guess that it was that I loved yoga. It changed my whole way of thinking about life and the world around me and my body especially.
- I just knew it had changed my life.
My first training, it was such a different language for me. It’s like learning a new language.

Just the all inclusiveness of training, touching on all the aspects, philosophy, spiritual, physical, emotional aspects…I’ve been struggling with how to bring that into each class, how to throw in philosophy here and there.

As a yoga teacher you have absolutely no idea of what you’re walking into every day…You don’t know what your experience is going to be and you absolutely don’t know what your students’ experiences are.

It’s always a concern of mine that I’ll encounter something that I don’t have the knowledge to face.
Financial barriers

It’s hard to teach at a yoga studio because many yoga studios want you to work at building a clientele and want you to have yoga instructor insurance and want you to have all this training and they pay you very small amounts…That’s very hard because you can’t make a living by working at a yoga studio.

I sometimes think it’s a hustle. I just got tired of that. I didn’t want to try to hustle to find that type of work.

I need more education but it’s a concern paying for that education.

My concerns are that we’re producing a lot of teachers and that’s because for studios to make money, they hold teacher training. It produces a lot of teachers very quickly and they often don’t know a lot of things about yoga and it’s saturating the yoga world. It makes it very challenging to make a living.
You have to commit to a practice of your own.

The more I can get to my own practice, the better it all is. The better my teaching is, the better it is for me, the more I can connect to the authentic that I can offer people.

I think yoga teachers almost need yoga the most...I’ve been developing my own personal practice. Just learning to honor my body, my needs that day. Just honoring my whole life.

I feel like it’s becoming more a part of my life. Just the eight limbs of yoga, being true to myself, and recognizing what I need.
What I’ve been loving about teaching is just developing the community…I wasn’t anticipating that. I just thought it would be great if I could do this and teach some classes. I didn’t think about the connection and the community.

My intention for teaching is to create a situation where people can experience their own inner divinity. That excites me.

My job is to create a place where people can experience yoga or union in whatever form they can.

We are all one and that is something that yoga has brought to me.
Teaching yoga led to personal growth and was regarded as part of living a spiritual life.

Yoga teachers faced challenges in terms of training and finances.

As yoga becomes recognized as an intervention for health and wellness, we will need to know more about how best to support yoga teachers.


