

Special Feature

Advice for new yoga teachers



Valerie Wilson Trower

Hong Kong is a beehive of teacher's training courses and new yoga centres at the moment: Michel has just

completed the first Sadhana course for practising teachers at Yogasana; Patrick is about to run the first teacher's training course for Pure Yoga; Michel starts a new Ashtanga teacher's training course in the autumn as does mYoga, the beautiful, new California-backed yoga studio in Mongkok; Yoga Limbs recently opened their second centre in Clearwater Bay; and The Iyengar Yoga Centre has relocated to new premises in Sheng Wan. This seems a perfect moment to ask experienced yoga teachers: what advice would they give to new teachers?

"Don't practice *Urdvha Dhanurasana* (Wheel) alongside your students unless you have warmed up with them first..." quipped the first yoga teacher I asked, smiling ruefully!

Many teachers including Jon (right) at Pure Yoga, and Icy, now leading yoga at mYoga, stressed the importance of knowing what you teach. As Icy explained, "Own your practice." Jon added, "Share it with everyone." "Keep

a sense of humour, be compassionate," explained Michel.

The importance of practising every day was stressed by many, even though this can be tiring: "No one told me how exhausting it is," explained a new full-time teacher, "Especially Ashtanga: it's like hard manual labour!" A second



teacher agreed: "I wish someone had mentioned how difficult, how physically tiring it is to teach."

Most yoga teachers that I spoke to responded with comments about the pleasure and privilege of sharing something that they loved with their students. A typically thoughtful comment included a teacher's pleasure



in seeing a student learn, or trying an *asana* (a posture). Sravaniya (left) added: "Never write anyone off as hopeless: if you can suspend that judgment and keep doing your job for them, and if they are regular students and don't stop practising, the day will come when even the slowest student will surprise you. This process is magic."

Eva (above with a friend) who teaches at California Fitness and mYoga, stressed the importance of meditation, contemplation, and understanding the self first. As she explained, with meditation practice teachers become calmer people, using their voice to change the mood in a class. Almost all the teachers I spoke to stressed the importance of never ceasing to learn for themselves. Jon described this beautifully as "shedding light on another person's practice," adding "If you have the ability to love, love." Maggie, who leads mYoga with Icy, explained that new teachers needed to "Learn to teach from the heart, and to practice from the heart."

I also asked teachers what advice did

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