

The Yoga Fear Factor

Written by Shelley Lowther
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Trying something new can be intimidating. Going to a yoga class for the first time, where you may be asked to contort yourself into some kind of twisted pretzel can be down right terrifying. “You want me to do WHAT???”

Enter the yoga fear factor.

We all know that yoga is good for you. So what keeps people from rolling out the mat? The number one thing that clients tell me kept them from attending their first yoga class was FEAR. Fear of looking foolish. Fear of not understanding. Fear of failure. I have heard this from young and old, weak and strong, couch potatoes and athletes. The unknown is scary.

But even the most experienced yogi was once a newbie. We have all been there, and most of us remember it.

I remember the trepidation of that first class, walking into a room that, though inviting, seemed strange and alien. Hearing words in foreign language, and watching others respond, when I had no idea what to do.

But if you are thinking about trying a yoga class, there are a few things that may allay some of

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those fears: You will not be judged. You will not be laughed at or ridiculed. You will not be asked to stand on your head (at least not right away!).

You *will* be asked to let go of ego and competition, and to bring an open mind. Yoga is a practice to be nurtured, and if you try, you will succeed.

We call it a practice (and not a perfect) because for all of us, the newbie to the experienced practitioner, yoga is an organic, ever-changing thing. Some days our bodies will cooperate with the poses, and some days will be more challenging. Every time you roll out a mat, however, your body and mind will thank you, and your practice will grow.

The strange words, the Sanskrit, become familiar over time, but fear not: most yoga teachers use English, even if they do give the Sanskrit translation for the more seasoned yogi.

Even the most advanced poses, the ones that make you look like a pretzel, have modifications for beginners, as do the basics. Yoga can be adapted for every body and for every level, so there is no reason to fear.

Sadly, I have been to studios that felt cliquish and judgmental. If you ever walk into a class and feel like you are being judged or worse, ignored, walk out. Find a teacher, atmosphere and class that fits you and your needs. Try a beginner's class. Try a gentle class. When calm is offered, fear has no room.

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