

A letter from Bikram teacher to new student..... ;)

An open letter to a new student on their first class
(by Barbora Simek)

Dear New Student,

Welcome. Like it or not you are now a part of the Bikram Yoga family. Whether today's class will become something that is laughed about with friends and never attempted again, a daily routine, an occasional pass time or obsession, your experience today will stay with you forever. This means I have ninety minutes, and ninety minutes only to show you a practice I have dedicated a part of my life, my heart and much of my body to. So listen carefully, because this is important, this can change your life in ways you never thought possible.

I know the room is hot, and the poses are difficult. This is not because we are trying to prove something. This is because these specific elements: the postures, the heat, the mirrors, the style of teaching — are the perfectly combined to heal your body, heart and mind.

I know there are a lot of people. This is not because the studio is interested in a big pay-day. This is because the more we can practice together, the more we can share energy. Your neighbors will help you get through class, inspire you, become your friends and maybe even your future fiance (it's happened more than once!) So be kind. Be patient. Because the more patient you can be with people here, the more patient you will be with them out there in the world.

I know my voice is loud. This is not because I want to dominate you. My voice is the best tool I have, along with the dialogue (the directions), to help you through your class today. When you feel weak, my voice will be strong to support you. When you are tired my voice will be energetic to help you off the floor. When you are discouraged, I will encourage you. All this is I will do with my volume, my intonation, my words. I want you to hear just how much I care about you and your practice.

Yes, our outfits are small. This is not because we are vain. This is because it is hot and because when you can see your body in the mirror fully, you can more easily make adjustments and learn to appreciate what you see. Small clothes stay out of our way, so we can focus more on our practice than on adjusting our shorts for triangle. In time, we've learned in this room that contrary to what the world says, every body is beautiful and every body should be appreciated. So we wear short shorts and we LOVE them on us and on each other.

No, New Student, you cannot talk. Not because I want to silence you. I want your voice to fill the halls, the change-rooms and lobby. I want your voice to be one of the many threads that builds the ever-expanding web of our Bikram Yoga community. But in the hot room, I want you to listen. First to me, so that you can do the class safely, but more importantly to yourself. I know you try hard and listen to so many other people all day. Today, you start to learn to listen to yourself: your breath, your heart, your true thoughts. Enjoy that opportunity, don't waste it by chatting.

You must stay still New Student. Not because I want to control you. You must stay still so you can let go of all distractions and connect to the vast benefits of this practice. You work hard in your poses to open your body, and when you stay still your cells recover and begin the process of healing. Give your body the chance to heal.

I know sometimes my jokes are not funny. But we do not call this the "torture chamber" because we enjoy your discomfort. I try to make light of how hard this yoga is because we all know that it is hard. Every teacher you will have, including me, has cried here, hurt here, wanted to leave here. So we joke because we understand how hard this is. The fact that we persevere is the one thing that connects us all in the hot room. I want this experience to be at least a little bit fun.

I am not correcting you because I think badly of your effort, New Student. I know you have taken other yoga classes, or your body is aching from your injuries and you have been through a lot in your life. Knowing all of these things makes me want to help you even more. And the best way I know how to help you, is to teach you how to do the postures to the best of your ability. I promise your best is enough. If today, you simply imagine your posture a different way because of a correction, then you are on your way to an improved practice, body and life.

It's okay to feel emotional. This is a safe space, we've all been there. Remember this is a place of healing and sometimes your body hangs on to your emotions even when the mind has released them. Just cry, everyone will think it is sweat anyway.

Come back New Student. You did well today. Remember the worst class is the one you don't come to. I can't wait for you to see how this series can change your life and I am here to help every step of the way.

Love,

Your Bikram Yoga Teacher