

YOGA BULLETIN

Kripalu yoga teachers association

education inspiration community

fall 2013 volume 22 issue 3



Refining the vision for Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training A Q&A with Randal Williams

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Randal Williams, Curriculum Manager for the Kripalu Schools of Yoga and Ayurveda (KSYA), has been part of the Kripalu community for 20 years. A Kripalu Yoga teacher and teacher trainer, he is perhaps best known for his guided retreats that feature yoga nidra and nature-based mindful hiking, offered throughout the year at Kripalu. He answered our questions recently about his work with KSYA.

▲ **Yoga Bulletin** Curriculum Manager is a new position for the Schools—tell us a little about what you do.

Randal I'm supporting the Deans, Hilary [Garivaltis, Dean of the Kripalu School of Ayurveda] and Yoganand [Michael Carroll, Dean of the Kripalu School of Yoga], to focus their vision for the Kripalu curriculum and help guide it towards implementation. Over the years, Kripalu has organically expanded in many different directions, and we're working now to create a more coherent experience. Our aim is that what happens on one side of the building—say in a 200-hour Kripalu School of Yoga (KSY) training—is fundamentally in sync with what happens on the other side of the building, in guest programs such as R&R Retreat or Healthy Living.

▲ **YB** What does that look like day to day?

Randal The new administrative team has been very productive. We're updating the Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training manual, and we had a photo shoot in which we captured over 1,500 images of the essential Kripalu approach to assists, modifications, and variations of the core postures. The learning outcome is that each asana will have as many as 20 illustrated explorations as a support base for the journey of Kripalu Yoga and to nurture the development of our yoga teachers. Updating and improving our learning resources is a key initiative, not only for use by students coming to Kripalu but also for teacher trainers. This week we also shot three videos of Yoganand demonstrating his seasoned approach to teaching posture clinics, which will fortify our educators and improve the quality of our training programs. Our guest yoga team, R&R faculty, and our graduates are also in our gaze. Sharing this task is Steven Leonard, a Kripalu Yoga teacher and former KSY intern, who is now our Education Coordinator.

▲ **YB** What is the larger vision for the Schools?

Randal I've been using this inquiry to help us comprehend the emerging vision of the modern expression of Kripalu Yoga: *What is the sound of a foot landing, the sound of a hand lifting, and the sound of a heart opening?* It's about KSYA becoming conscious of the basic blueprints that we employ to promote and express our core curriculum. In the image of a foot landing, there

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A Q&A with Randal Williams

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exists the entire teaching of stability that safely anchors the practitioners of Kripalu Yoga—how do we stoke those primary feelings of being welcome and supported? The hand lifting is an image of growth—the signature aspect of Kripalu Yoga that invites practitioners to skillfully open to authentic aliveness and find their service on this planet. The sound of an awakening heart is the core of Kripalu Yoga, both on and off the mat—compassion is our push-up and kindness is our abdominal crunch. Buried in the sacred texts of our tradition, our yogi ancestors have always known that articulation of the heart is essential to the effective harnessing of the mind in meeting the intelligence of the natural world—exploring the miracle of the universe, the source of aliveness.

These three educational strategies—grounding, challenge, and compassion—are among the sets of tools to be used in comprehending the essential hallmarks of Kripalu Yoga. We could employ the terms of the three gunas—tamas, rajas, and sattva, or stability, activity, and harmony. The content of every educational event at Kripalu could be measured for creative and effective use of these three essential keys that ultimately support the skillful development of nonjudgmental self-awareness.

▲ **YB** What are some of the concrete changes you've implemented in YTT?

Randal We've created a Posture Training Series that includes all 26 core postures, which 200-hour students will practice every morning with the rising sun. Contemporary science confirms that repetitive action becomes a critical tool in the process of uncovering the variability of the mind. The postures don't change from one day to the next—the practitioner does. It's a fertile and rich opportunity for nonjudgmental self-awareness and becoming masterful in the natural environment of the "changing weather patterns of the mind," by finding the steady courage that resides in the heart.

Swami Kripalu said, "One ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory," and we're investing ourselves and all of our curriculum into that wisdom on learning. When practice happens, the skillful navigation guides the emergence and birth of the teacher. We're expanding not only the practice time for the students on their own mats, but also improving the diligence of both our facilitated and self-assessment practice teaches.

Another exciting project is improving the developmental support for depth practices. The 200-hour teacher training is a month-long practice that focuses on building a strong physical and willful container that kindles aliveness. As the body and mind become devoted to the experiment and sophistication of a personal practice, the deeper intelligences—emotional, mental, and spiritual—sprout naturally like a flower blooming.

As Curriculum Manager, my underlying contemplation is to see that KSYA becomes a world-class, leading expert in the field of yoga disciplines, growing skillful practitioners who inhabit their own body with strength, desire, and grace.

Find out more about upcoming trainings with the ➔ [Kripalu School of Yoga](#) and the ➔ [Kripalu School of Ayurveda](#).

The sound of an awakening heart is the core of Kripalu Yoga, both on and off the mat—compassion is our push-up and kindness is our abdominal crunch.



Images from the updated Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training manual



YOGA EVERYWHERE

Featuring recipients of Kripalu's Teaching for Diversity grants

Showing up just the way we are

by Rochelle Jewell

Twelve years ago, I met an amazing child—now a young woman—named Samantha. She has Down's syndrome. Samantha has been a friend to my daughter, the daughter of my best friend, and a huge part of my life and extended family. I have watched her grow, struggle, and grow some more. For many years now, she has practiced yoga with me every week. Our yoga sessions are times when she can challenge herself, yet also call the shots. If she is tired or sad, she is allowed to show up just the way she is. Sam has a beautiful yoga practice. Sometimes, when I watch her sit in meditation, I am moved to tears. She is an inspiration.

Sam was my first consistent long-term contact with someone with a developmental disability. Through my relationship with her and her family, I have been introduced to the larger special needs community, and have had many opportunities to teach yoga to children, teens, and adults with a variety of special needs, both in private lessons and group sessions. I've been teaching a group of developmentally disabled teens and adults in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, area for two years, and the benefits to this group are amazing. They are stronger, stand taller, and are more focused and relaxed than I could ever have imagined when I met them during the first few classes. They are by far the most dedicated students I have encountered in my yoga career.

Inspired by the success of this group, I applied for and received a Teaching for Diversity grant to bring yoga to a similar population in York, Maine. The most rewarding part of the new class was seeing the group gel in a relatively short period of time. There were two organizations represented, as well as participants who were homeschooled or from a different school, but it was an amazingly cohesive group. At the end of each class, we washed, dried, rolled up, and put away the mats. This was not an easy task for this group, but they really stepped up and it was a seamless endeavor.

For other yoga teachers working with this population, my advice is: Keep it simple. Use clear directions. Model, and provide hands-on assists where appropriate. Assume that each student fully understands all directions—because they probably do, even though they might not appear to—and only simplify or provide assistance if they really do become stuck. Even nonverbal and autistic students are extremely capable, despite their tendency to look as if they're not aware of what the instructor is asking. Walk into each class without expectations, because you never know what will happen. Teach with an open heart, and you will make a deep connection with your students.

What I've learned from teaching this population is that their abilities are greatly underestimated. They're not challenged nearly enough, and thus not able to achieve their full potential. We learn through the yoga sutras about the importance of challenge and struggle in developing the mind and making connections with the Divine. I've seen many people assume that Sam and her peers are less able, less accountable, and less worthy. Through yoga, people with disabilities are more likely to lead productive and happy lives. They are encouraged to become physically stronger, to make and measure progress, and to deeply breathe.

Yoga programs like mine are welcomed both by those with disabilities and by their care providers. This is very important work, and there are far too few of us doing it. My ultimate goal is to see yoga programs led by yoga teachers, parents, and staff members of the organizations that provide services to our disabled citizens all over the country. ■

Rochelle Jewell is a Kripalu Yoga teacher, personal trainer, and founder of the nonprofit SATYA: Seacoast Area Teachers of Yoga in Action, supporting yoga teachers who work with underserved populations (👉 www.seacoastsatya.com). Rochelle is the creator of My OmAbilities Yoga, and offers a teacher training for working with special-needs students October 18–20 in Dover, New Hampshire; e-mail 👉 rochelle@myomyoga.com.



Rochelle and Samantha

👉 Find out more about Teaching for Diversity grants, which support teachers bringing yoga to underserved populations, and Rachel Greene Memorial Fund grants, supporting education for yoga teachers and classroom teachers taking yoga into disadvantaged schools.





👉 Donate to the Teaching for Diversity program or the Rachel Greene Memorial Fund and help bring yoga to children and adults facing severe challenges.

View 👉 a slide show of Teaching for Diversity participants.

👉 Read six stories of transformation from past Teaching for Diversity recipients, including teachers working with inner-city children, cancer patients, and aboriginal teens.

Sneak peek: New workshops at KYTA Conference 2013, October 8–11 [➔ Register now](#)

A look at seven new workshops—developed specifically for this conference and led by some of our best-loved presenters—scheduled for our 22nd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, titled *Community, Philosophy, and Practice: What Is the Impact of Your Calling?* Check them out and then [➔ register for the conference](#).





			 
The workshop	Beyond the Stretch: Asana and the Deeper Tissues	Zen Mind	The Challenges and Opportunities of Teaching Yoga in the Workplace
The presenter	➔ Randal Williams	➔ Steven Leonard	➔ Angela Wilson and Cristie Newhart
Who s/he is:	Curriculum Manager for the Kripalu Schools of Yoga and Ayurveda	A Zen enthusiast, musician, and Kripalu School of Yoga Education Coordinator	Lead faculty for Kripalu's ➔ Frontline Providers Program
What you experience	The Ayurvedic model of the sapta dhatus—the seven tissues—as a framework to enhance prana	The shift in momentum that arises from the practice of meditation	A discussion on the challenges of bringing yoga into the workplace, and how to navigate them
What you take home	The revitalizing effects of this exploration on your practice and teaching	New inspiration for introducing sitting, walking, and sound meditation into your classes	Ways to make yoga accessible for every body, in every setting becomes an act of karma yoga

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Sneak peek: New workshops at KYTA Conference 2013, October 8–11

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➔ Register now

		 	 
<p>Your Heart's Full Potential</p>	<p>Come Together Right Now</p>	<p>Balance and Heal with Restorative Yoga</p>	<p>Teaching Yoga in the Schools</p>
<p>➔ Grace Jull</p>	<p>➔ Jovinna Chan</p>	<p>Jacci Reynolds and Shelbi Miles</p>	<p>➔ Janna Delgado and Iona M. Smith</p>
<p>An anatomy and physiology teacher, poet, and faculty member for the Kripalu Schools of Yoga and Ayurveda</p>	<p>A faculty member for the Kripalu School of Yoga with a background in dance and martial arts</p>	<p>Kripalu and Pranakriya Yoga instructors</p>	<p>Lead faculty for the ➔ Kripalu Yoga in the Schools (KYIS) program</p>
<p>A profound experience of movement and mindfulness</p>	<p>How group dynamics can enhance our ability to stay present</p>	<p>A deeply relaxing restorative class</p>	<p>What a yoga class is like for a KYIS teen, including exercises pulled directly from the curriculum</p>
<p>Tools for creating deeper connection with your students and community</p>	<p>An understanding of how the use of presence can nurture our interactions with students</p>	<p>Ways to make the healing aspects of restorative yoga accessible to every population</p>	<p>Tips for teaching yoga to adolescents ■</p>



The high school brain on yoga

by Iona Smith

I came to teaching yoga for the same reason many people do—because yoga transformed my life and I wanted to share the gifts it had given me with others. I chose Kripalu, quite simply, because of Stephen Cope. Right around the time I discovered yoga, my cousin recommended that I read *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*, and from everything that Stephen wrote about Kripalu I felt it was my “yoga home.” Several years later, when I started thinking about becoming a teacher, I don’t think I even considered studying anywhere else. I graduated from teacher training in 2006, and Kripalu still feels like home.

Like most of us, I would not want to relive my teenage years—unless I could do so knowing what I know now. Even so, I’ve been drawn to working with teenagers in my adult life. As a high school biology teacher back in my twenties and in my current role as a yoga educator for the [Kripalu Yoga in the Schools](#) (KYIS) program, I’ve been able to pursue my passion for providing teenagers with tools for coping—tools I wish I’d had at their age.

Five years ago, I helped Kripalu’s [Institute for Extraordinary Living](#) (IEL) launch a pilot research study on how yoga affects teenagers. To date, we’ve found that KYIS does indeed have beneficial effects on students’ resilience and ability to manage anger. As I head into my sixth year teaching yoga in a high school setting, I’m confident that I’m providing students with the wisdom and tools to help them navigate their teenage years in healthier, more skillful ways.

Parents, educators, and kids themselves often can’t quite figure out teenage behavior. It was long thought that hormones running amok caused teens’ mystifying behaviors and attitudes. However, new research in neurobiology has challenged that theory and places the onus squarely on the fact that the teenage brain is still very much under construction. It turns out that the brain is the last organ to fully mature—it develops well into our twenties.

During adolescence, the frontal lobes of the brain (the seat of language and reason) are still being formed, leaving teens to overly rely on their amygdala (the seat of emotions). As Sheryl Feinstein, author of *Secrets of the Teenage Brain*, puts it, “Teens are navigating a cerebral hurricane without a compass.” The brain’s malleability during adolescence marks a crucial stage in both cognitive and emotional development. Luckily, researchers are now able to paint a clearer picture of some of the factors that allow students to thrive throughout high school and into adulthood, such as self-awareness, managing distressing emotions, empathy, and navigating relationships smoothly. When students hone these skills, they are not only happier and healthier emotionally, but are also better able to focus on academics.

My work with the IEL has been to develop a curriculum that combines the practice of yoga with the techniques to help students thrive in yoga class and beyond. The curriculum that my fellow program leader, Janna Delgado, and I created combines breathing and centering techniques, community-building exercises, and experiential activities, yoga postures, relaxation techniques, and loving-kindness meditation to help students cultivate healthful ways to manage their emotions and stress levels. Our qualitative research, conducted in partnership with Dr. Sat Bir S. Khalsa of Harvard Medical School, has shown that students in the yoga program experience improved well-being, especially in the areas of sleep, emotion and stress regulation, and reduced interest in substance use. In teaching to more than 500 students, I’ve seen examples of these effects time and again.

One female student, who started the program with such a severe anxiety disorder that she could barely participate in the yoga classes, was confidently teaching a yoga posture to her peers by the end of the program. A few students who entered the program with severe ADHD symptoms were able, over time, to lie completely still and relaxed for a full five minutes. As one of my female ninth-graders reported, “Yoga relaxed me, made me much calmer. I was less grouchy, less snappy toward people, and I don’t have as much of an attitude with my mom as I used to.” A male ninth-grader reported feeling, “a lot happier lately ... I feel like a better person, making better choices, and staying out of trouble.”

I’ve deeply enjoyed hearing from my students about how they incorporate yoga into their lives, from using their breath to calm down during a stressful situation to stepping back and not sending the angry text message they’d written. Some students put their legs up the wall for several minutes before going to bed to help them fall asleep faster and to sleep more soundly. Others use alternate-nostril breathing to help them engage both hemispheres of their brain and relax before taking a test. It’s an exciting prospect to think of more schools offering yoga to allow teens to more skillfully navigate their way through adolescence and help build themselves happier, healthier brains and more fulfilling, safer teenage years. ■

➤ *Iona M. Smith, MEd, CYT 500, holds a master’s degree in education from Harvard University and a 500-hour yoga teacher’s certification from the Nosara Yoga Institute in Costa Rica. She and* ➤ *Janna Delgado coteach the workshop Teaching Yoga in the Schools at KYTA Conference 2013, October 8–11.*





Thinking body, feeling mind

How yoga can help shape our emotions

by Megan McDonough

You know this to be true: Yoga improves your emotional state. That's obvious to anyone who has stepped onto the mat, or taught others and noticed the shift in the room as the class progresses. What is it about the Breath of Joy that actually makes us feel joyful? Or the strength of Warrior pose that makes us feel powerful? Or the surrender of Child's pose that makes us feel nurtured?

There's an intimate link between the movement of the body and the thoughts of the mind. People call this the mind/body connection. A more accurate phrase may be mind/body unity. The mind and body are cut from the same cloth. The body and mind are two sides of the same coin. This intimately linked feedback loop between body and mind is what psychologists call ➔ "embodied cognition" or "embodied mind." Although the phrase may mean different things to different researchers, a yoga teacher can learn much from this emerging field.

Embodied cognition: A definition

Cognition refers to the thought process of acquiring, integrating, and applying knowledge. It includes taking in information, forming concepts that put that information to practical use, and making judgments based on that understanding. It's a mental process that includes reasoning, language, awareness, perception, and judgment.

As yoga teachers, we know the term embodiment. We live it on the mat through the awareness that we hold in a posture—giving intimate, detailed attention to the length of our hands all the way to our fingertips, the grounding of our feet on the earth, the lift of the top of the head to the sky. Asana informs us about what it feels like to inhabit every part of our physical being. We fill the container of our own skin with our mind's eye. The more we include the whole of our body in the yoga experience, the richer the practice.

Philosophers, psychologists, and even artificial-intelligence researchers who study embodied cognition and the embodied mind contend that the body shapes cognition. Or, to put it more simply, yoga postures shape how we think and feel—and, by extension, how we act. At Wholebeing Institute, we call this embodied cognition Yogaspire, the practice of using yoga postures to consciously cultivate positive emotional states.

The confidence of Tadasana

Imagine leading the posture Tadasana (Mountain pose), holding the posture for two minutes. You ask your students to put the hands on the lower back, supporting the back and pelvis as they lift up through the heart.

It might be clear how Mountain pose affects the body—perhaps the shoulders feel more spacious, or the breathing deeper. But how does the pose affect the mind? According to Amy Cuddy, a researcher at Harvard University, that two-minute pose has a direct impact—both in terms of hormonal changes (attitudes in the mind) and on subsequent behavior (actions through the body).

➔ **In one study**, participants' saliva was tested for the hormone testosterone, which is associated with power and confidence, and cortisol, the stress hormone. After the swab, they were asked to strike either a low-power pose or a high-power pose, for two minutes. The low-power posers took up less space, crossing arms and legs protectively and curling the spine. High-power posers took up lots of space. Think of Wonder Woman with her legs wide and hands on her hips, or the Mr. Big executive type with feet on the desk and fingers intertwined behind his head.

At the end of two minutes, the saliva was tested again and participants were given two dollars and asked if they wanted to keep it, or gamble with a roll of the dice, with a 50/50 chance to double their money. After only two minutes, the high-power poses caused an increase in testosterone compared with low-power poses, which caused a decrease. High-power poses also caused a decrease in cortisol compared with low-power poses, which caused an increase. In later studies, participants who adopted dominant poses displayed higher pain thresholds than those who adopted submissive or neutral poses, and high-power posers performed better in high-stakes situations.

Applying power postures

In other words, taking up lots of space with your body increases the power hormone and decreases the stress hormone. It changes your physiology. These changes affect decisions, actions, and behaviors. High-power posers were more likely than low-power posers to focus on rewards—86 percent took the gambling risk, vs. only 60 percent of the low-power posers.

Finally, high-power posers reported feeling significantly more powerful and in charge than low-power posers did. The researchers state, "A simple two-minute power-pose manipulation was enough to significantly alter the physiological, mental, and feeling states of our participants. The implications of these results for everyday life are substantial." The implications for yoga teaching and yoga therapy are equally substantial. ■

Megan McDonough is CEO of the ➔ Wholebeing Institute, an educational organization cofounded with Tal Ben-Shahar, PhD, lead faculty for ➔ Kripalu's Certificate in Positive Psychology, beginning February 24, 2014.

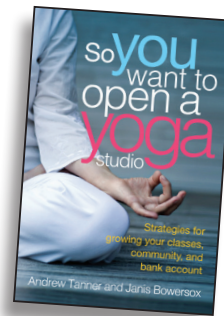


So you want to open a yoga studio: Six tips for navigating the territory

by Janis Bowersox

Thinking about taking the next step in your yoga business and opening a studio? Here are some words of wisdom from Janis Bowersox, former owner of Yoga for Everybody, a Kripalu-affiliated studio in Fairfield, Connecticut, and coauthor of the guidebook

➔ *So You Want to Open a Yoga Studio*.



1. Take responsibility. With great success comes great responsibility. Students often come to yoga wanting something different in their lives. It's a privilege and a responsibility to create a sacred space where human beings feel safe enough to begin to peel back the layers of protection they have built up over the years, the layers that now hold them back from an authentic life. By practicing yoga on the mat, people are able to open their hearts off the mat.

2. Be an oak and a willow. Winston Churchill said, "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life." You can't please everyone all the time. By the same token, be open to feedback. You will grow as a person from this business of yoga. You could not ask for a more conscious, loving, supportive group of human beings to hang out with than yoga teachers and students. In the end, you need to be strong, but don't forget to bend when the wind blows.

3. Get help. In *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, Sam says to Frodo, "I could help a bit, I could carry it, share the load ..." Invite people to help you! Hire staff sooner than you think you can. Shoot for a full-time manager, or two part-time ones.

4. Get a life coach. M. Scott Peck said, "Life is difficult. This is the great truth, one of the greatest truths ... because once we see this truth, we transcend it." Consider working with a life coach to help you transcend the difficulties; with his or her support, you will keep the vision of your thriving studio alive. You'll move toward that reality by identifying and setting goals, and then taking steps. How long should you work with a life coach? Forever! There's always a bigger game if you want to keep playing!

5. Network. Make friends with other business owners. Having compatriots in your field will help you get through the lows and revel in the highs. Form a mastermind group, where you meet in person or virtually and serve as each other's board of advisors. The group can be all studio owners and managers, or people from a range of industries. When Andrew Tanner suggested to me that we write this book, it was my mastermind group (of non-yoga entrepreneurs) that challenged me to do it, and held me accountable to make it happen.

6. Have fun!

➔ *Janis Bowersox is a KYTA member, yoga business consultant, and certified life coach. She and ➔ Joan Dwyer, founder and owner of the Kripalu-affiliated yoga studio ➔ All That Matters, coteach ➔ The Business of Yoga for Teachers and Studios: Tap Into Your Vision, Create a Plan, Get Results, December 8–11 at Kripalu.*

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YOGA BULLETIN of the Kripalu Yoga Teachers Association is published by Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, P.O. Box 309, Stockbridge, MA 01262.

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Edited by Tresca Weinstein.

Designed by Derek Hansen.

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Kripalu

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Studio owners, do you run a Yoga Alliance-registered school? Starting in November, the Yoga Alliance is implementing a number of changes that will affect all Registered Yoga School (RYS) programs. ➔ [Find out more](#) about RYS requirements and evaluation.