

# YOGA BULLETIN

Kripalu yoga teachers association education inspiration community spring 2014 volume 23 issue 1

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## Ayurveda and the city

*Five tips for thriving in an urban environment*

by **Kristen Rae Stevens**

**L**et's face it—regardless of where you live, stress will be a part of your life. But city dwellers often experience a particular brand of stress that emerges from sensory overload, a sense of compressed time, and the pressure to go, go, go! As a longtime yoga practitioner

and teacher, I arrived in New York City

with tools to work with, and a move from my tiny

studio sublet in NoLita to Brooklyn calmed me down and gave me more space.

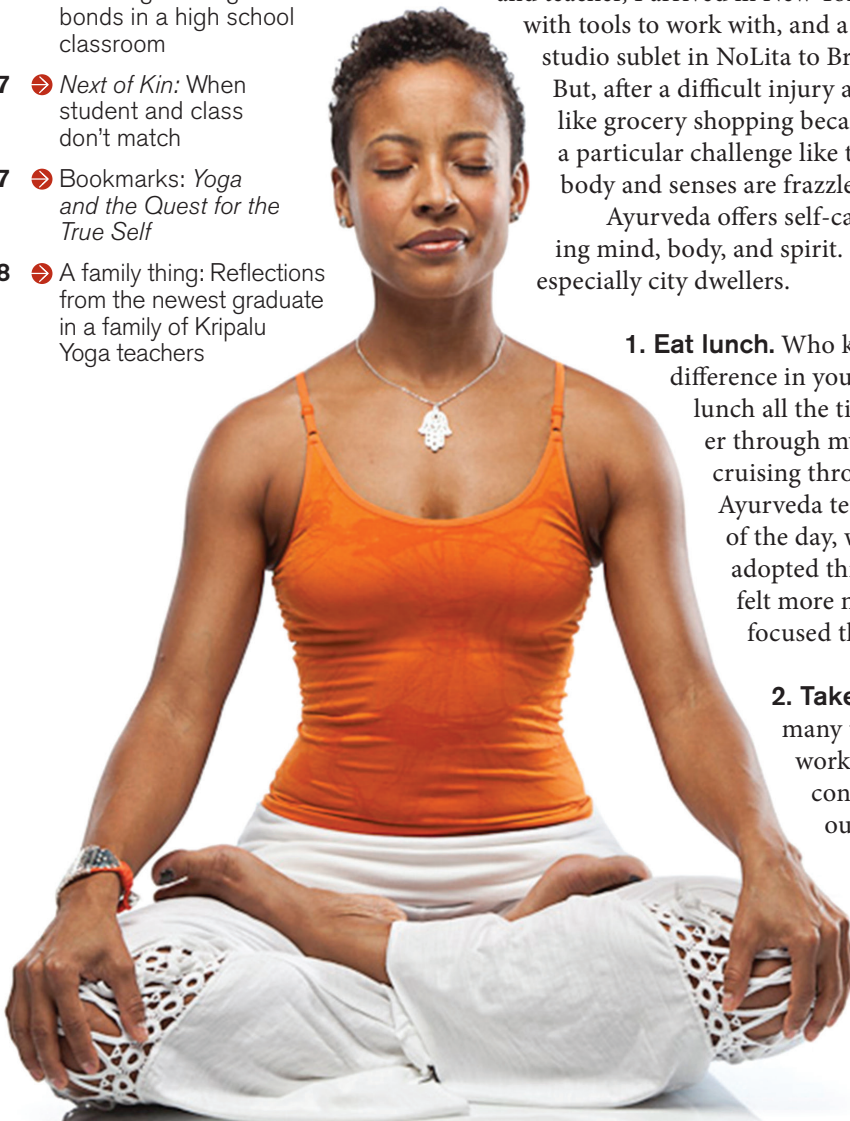
But, after a difficult injury and recovery, the city felt like my nemesis—little things like grocery shopping became a major feat. Even when you're not dealing with a particular challenge like this, your energy and enthusiasm can wane when the body and senses are frazzled.

Ayurveda offers self-care routines for supporting, nourishing, and rejuvenating mind, body, and spirit. Here are five tips that are beneficial for everyone, but especially city dwellers.

**1. Eat lunch.** Who knew that eating a good lunch could make such a difference in your life? Like many New Yorkers I know, I used to skip lunch all the time. It seemed so much more convenient: I could power through my day at work, grab a yogurt or energy bar, keep on cruising through, and save up my calories for a good dinner. But Ayurveda teaches that we should eat our main meal in the middle of the day, when the digestive fires are at their strongest. Once I adopted this very natural habit, I found that my body and brain felt more nourished, and I was able to be more effective and focused throughout the day.

**2. Take in the sky, trees, flowers, and natural light.** So many urbanites spend their days traveling underground and working eight-plus hours in buildings with temperature control and fluorescent lighting. Ayurveda teaches that it's our nature to be with nature. Getting outdoors to take a walk in a nearby park, sit in a garden, or just inhale fresh air can improve our outlook, calm the nervous system, and bring greater clarity. If I have errands to run, I often book appointments or look for establishments near a park or along the waterfront. It's not always the closest place I could go, but it

It's rush hour, and your subway car is packed. This is the opportunity to put meditation and deep breathing into practice.



➔ *continued on page 2*

## Ayurveda and the city

*continued from page 1*

gives me a reason to walk through Central Park with my dog after a vet visit, or take in the Battery Park waterfront after a meeting with my accountant. Along with setting aside larger blocks of time to connect with nature, find a few minutes throughout your day to simply gaze at a tree outside your window, or to cultivate houseplants at the office.

**3. Drink warm water.** In Ayurveda, the key to good health is through the care of the digestive system. This requires a good look at the foods and liquids we consume. Water consumption has always been a hot topic, and I've worked with many clients who thought they were doing their bodies a favor by drinking glass upon glass of ice-cold water. That's easy to do on those sweltering summer days in the city, or while you're waiting for your meal at a restaurant. But the digestive system is hot by nature, and we need these acids to thrive in order to properly digest and assimilate our food. Ayurveda suggests sipping warm water during a meal to aid digestion, and not chugging a glassful of water prior to eating, as it cools down the agni (digestive fire).

**4. Take a loving-kindness commute.** It's rush hour, and your subway car is packed. Or someone just grabbed that cab that you were desperately hailing, and you're already late. This is the opportunity to put meditation and deep breathing into practice. Every conscious slow breath will activate the parasympathetic nervous system, also known as the relaxation response. As you exhale and allow your body to soften rather than stiffen, you'll feel more open to those around you and begin to realize that we're all just trying to get somewhere together.



**5. Pay attention to your feet.** In Ayurveda, a hugely important practice of self-care consists of a daily self-massage, or abhyanga, using oil. If you don't have time to massage your whole body, focus on your feet, which get a daily workout pounding the city sidewalks. As a former ballet dancer, I was familiar with self-massage (our feet don't really fit into those pointe shoes as gracefully

as one might think), but the addition of warm oil was a game changer. Sesame oil is the recommended choice for cool weather, and coconut oil for warm. After a long day of hustle and bustle, a foot rub with warm oil will relieve stress and relax you before bed. Ideally, start your day this way, too, and take on the city feeling balanced and nurtured from head to toe. ■

*Kristen Rae Stevens, E-RYT, trained at Kripalu as an Ayurvedic Consultant and Ayurvedic Yoga Specialist. She is a contributing lecturer on Ayurveda for medical students and primary care doctors at Mount Sinai Hospital and for herbalists-in-training at the ArborVitae School. Kristen is classically trained in dance, and holds degrees in dance performance and pedagogy, as well as somatic movement therapies, yoga, and pilates.*

➔ [www.somarae.com](http://www.somarae.com)



## From the Berkshires to the Big Apple

**Kripalu's Foundations of Ayurveda travels to New York City May 1–September 21 (six weekends)**

Kripalu's Foundations of Ayurveda program is coming to ➔ [Yoga Vida](#) in New York City. Learn the core concepts of Ayurveda, yoga's sister science, a 5,000-year-old health system inspired by the wisdom of nature. A great beginning for anyone interested in pursuing Ayurveda professionally or personally, this nonresidential program is spread out over a five-month period and culminates in a graduation weekend at Kripalu.

Topics include

- The Ayurvedic doshas (vata, pitta, kapha)
- The basics of cooking and nutrition
- Yogic psychology and practice
- Introductory Sanskrit
- Pulse reading
- Lifestyle and stress-management tools.

Find out more:

➔ [kripalu.org/ksanyc](http://kripalu.org/ksanyc)

Questions?

e-mail ➔ [ksya@kripalu.org](mailto:ksya@kripalu.org)

or call 800.848.8702.

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Updates from the Kripalu Yoga Teachers Association

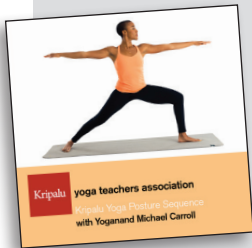
#### Mark your calendar: Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17

Presenters include Sudha Carolyn Lundeen, Todd Norian, Amy Weintraub, Larissa Hall Carlson, Yoganand Michael Carroll, Sheila Magalhaes, and more.

- Explore anatomical studies, working with imbalances, trauma, and chronic conditions.
- Learn Ayurvedic pranayama techniques for mood regulation and well-being.
- Get an overview of mindful yoga therapy, chair yoga, yoga for pregnancy, and yoga for children and adolescents.
- Experience the healing power of yoga, meditation, and relaxation.

Yoga Alliance CECs available. KYTA members receive 10% off housing costs.

#### School of Yoga releases 25-posture audio instruction and photo guide with Yoganand Michael Carroll



*One ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory.*  
—Swami Kripalu

Watch your mailbox for our first 2014 KYTA CD resource, *Kripalu Posture Training*

*Sequence*, with Yoganand Michael Carroll, Dean of the Kripalu School of Yoga. This recording—along with the supplemental photo guide—is a valuable reference for emerging teachers, as well as a substantive practice for established instructors.

We've also provided an extended two-hour version, available exclusively to KYTA members, featuring all 25 core postures taught in our 200-hour teacher training. The asana practice is supported by extended pranayama, closing integration, and deep meditation.

➔ [Download the extended version.](#) For the password, refer to your KYTA membership confirmation e-mail, sent after you joined or renewed.

#### Also coming in 2014

Gentle Kripalu Yoga, with Rudy Peirce  
Moderate Kripalu Yoga, with Janna Delgado  
Bhakti Kripalu-palooza: Kirtan for Yoga Class

#### Introducing a new KYTA membership benefit: 50 percent off full-priced items from Prana

➔ **prAna:** breath, life, vitality of the spirit. These qualities infuse not only their name, but also their aspirations, the things they make, and how they make them.



Clothing for people who live life fully, play long, and travel well. Welcome to mindfully designed, built-to-last products. prAna uses sustainable materials in styles that work well for yoga and your other passions, while promoting conservation and positive change. ➔ [Join the prAna Influencer Program.](#) Be sure to include KRIPALU2014 in the ID#/Code field at the time of application and select Yoga Instructor in the Classification field. Once accepted, you'll receive 50 percent off full-priced items, a direct link for feedback and communication, and a first peek at prAna's latest happenings, product releases, and videos.

➔ [View all KYTA discounts.](#)

#### Using ASCAP-represented music in class

Recently, the ➔ [American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers \(ASCAP\)](#) has been seeking to collect a fee or "royalty" from studios it believes are playing music owned by artists it represents. It's important that you have the proper rights to the music you play in your classes or studio. Music is protected by US copyright laws and, in general, playing music in your studio (versus playing music in your home) is considered a "public performance." Public performance rights can be obtained from the owner of the copyright to the music. Note that ASCAP's name would likely be on the back of the CD or listed on the storefront, if purchased digitally, for any artists they represent.

#### Congratulations to our Fall 2013/Winter 2014 200-hour graduates, and welcome to KYTA!

On behalf of the Kripalu Professional Association, we welcome our most recent graduates to the Kripalu Yoga Teachers Association. ➔ [Find out more about your membership benefits.](#) ■





## BLOCK BY BLOCK

*Focusing on the business of yoga*

### Social media to expand your student and client base

by Kat Street

First came Friendster. Then Match.com. When Match began pairing me up with coworkers, I hopped over to MySpace. When Facebook rolled out in 2003, I took the plunge with so many others into the abyss of status updates and “likes.” There was a brief affair with Twitter, a profile on LinkedIn, and a few blog articles.

But as online life evolved for me personally, in my professional life I noticed mainstream brands entering the social media realm. Along with television and print campaigns, digital media approaches were more and more frequently requested at the agency where I worked. The strategic approach was different, and the real trick was creating content that consumers would actually engage with and want to share.

That was roughly a decade ago, and while technology has progressed by leaps and bounds, some things haven’t changed. Whether you’re a mainstream brand, a yoga studio that’s been around for 10-plus years, or a new teacher trying to launch into the yogasphere, you still have to answer the same question: How do you use digital media in a way that benefits your brand and helps you stand out from the competition?

The beauty of digital media is that it’s a constant evolution. What works for you this year may not next year, and that’s okay. But before you start adding pages to the infinite Interweb, the best place to start is with a piece of paper. Take a few moments to ask yourself the following questions:

How do you use digital media in a way that benefits your brand and helps you stand out from the competition?

1. Who is your audience and where do they “live” online?
2. What are your expectations for digital media?
3. What are the benefits for people who engage with you?

#### Set reasonable expectations.

If you aren’t sure where your audience is, then chances are you’ll try everything. Effort will be high. Expectations will be high. The return, however, will be a big bummer. Instead, think about what you want your content to do for you and, realistically, how much effort you’re prepared to put into it. Are you a new studio owner who needs to get people through the door, fast? Or an instructor who teaches 15 classes a week and wants to let students know where to find you? Do you plan on updating your channels daily, or only a couple times a week? By defining your current needs and interaction level, you’ll be able to narrow down which platforms are best for you and your brand.

#### Know your audience.

When it comes to digital content, laser focus can often be better than casting a wide beam. Once you’ve defined your target audience, find out which networks they’re active on, and go there. If you don’t know, ask. It’s not necessary to be on absolutely every platform, and gathering information will give you a lead on where to start the conversation.

For video content, YouTube is a no-brainer. (Unless you don’t want people to deal with the random ads, in which case, try Vimeo, a media player that looks great and displays videos in excellent quality.) For shorter video content (15 seconds or less), I’ve had many yoga teachers ask me about Vine, a mobile service that lets you capture and share short looping videos. Personally, I find Instagram’s video feature to be better, but if your audience is on Vine, then that’s where you should go.

#### Give friends some benefits.

What makes you interesting? Maybe you post feel-good pictures of asanas in tropical places. Maybe you make yoga props and have a store on Etsy.com. Maybe you’re shooting a film about the world’s greatest yoga love stories and looking for couples.

For studios, consider promo ideas that grab attention. For example, “Twosday”—two classes for the price of one. Or “T.G.I. Friendly,” when Facebook users who bring a friend get their class for free. You could offer discounted private sessions to your Twitter followers. Or pose a 30-day challenge on Instagram, and ask students to post yoga-related images, adding your handle and hashtag. If you keep your customers engaged and happy, their word of mouth will keep your business happy.

Having a strong online presence is truly a practice, and a bit of an experiment. There’s no magic template for content in this constantly evolving world. Ask new students, clients, and followers for feedback: How often do they see your posts and what do they find most interesting? Listen to comments, be consistent, and pay attention to what works. This will help your brand vision stay strong. ■

*Kat Street spent a decade with Crispin Porter + Bogusky, building brands and creating work for clients such as American Express, Old Navy, Best Buy, Domino’s, and BMW. She is the cofounder of Sunshine Robots, LLC, a Miami-based creative design and development company specializing in brand sites, mobile app and game development, and digital prototyping. Kat is also a yoga teacher who helps other yoga teachers and studios develop social media and advertising campaigns. ➔ [www.buddhama.com](http://www.buddhama.com)*



## THE STUDIO SPACE

*Kripalu Affiliate Studio owners and managers share their keys to success*

Dream Yoga employs 17 teachers and eight healing arts professionals, and offers 36 classes weekly for students of all ages and abilities (including Gentle Yoga for Creaky People and Family Yoga), plus workshops, private sessions, and teacher trainings. Owner Luann Fulbright shared some of Dream Yoga's strategies, successes, and visions for the future.

▲ *What are some of the advantages/benefits that teaching at your studio offers?*

Because we're a Kripalu Affiliate Studio (KAS), our teachers receive benefits from Kripalu, such as discounted KYTA membership fees. But I think the biggest benefit is having each other and working together within the "container" of a KAS dedicated to upholding the yamas and niyamas, and other yogic guidelines. It's taken us 12 years, but now every yoga teacher at Dream is certified in the Kripalu lineage. Because we're all on a similar page in our training and intentions, both our teachers and students benefit. I'm especially proud of our growing Dream Teacher Kula, which gives our teachers, as well as teachers from other traditions, an opportunity to share conversation and experiences in a supportive environment in order to strengthen our abilities and inspire us. We meet quarterly to share tips, and recently established an online group to share resources and strategies on an ongoing basis.

▲ *What tip, information, or approach can you share from your experience that might be helpful for fellow studio owners?*

In the face of increased competition for students, where drop-in passes and Groupon specials reign, Dream continues to offer class registration primarily by session rather than on a drop-in basis. This promotes coherence and continuity in classes, better instruction, consistent student attendance (which leads to students experiencing greater benefits from yoga), a sense of community, and a safer environment in which students can explore and grow.

▲ *What classes, workshops and/or therapies are popular at your studio right now?*

Yoga parties, in which we design a yoga experience for a kids' or adults' celebration, are on the rise. We've just started offering tai chi, and we have a new healing arts therapy for pain relief, the Bowen Technique. Our private therapeutic yoga sessions are also increasingly popular.

We were happily surprised last November when three graduates from our recent on-site Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training program offered, for the first time, a benefit class on Thanksgiving Day. We had no idea if anyone would come, but we were at full capacity, and there was such goodwill and positivity in the room. We raised nearly \$500 for our local women's center.

▲ *Why did you decide to affiliate with Kripalu? What benefits has the affiliation offered?*

It has enhanced our ability to provide and promote the compassionately transformative yoga of Swami Kripalu. This is my 35th year as a yoga student and my 15th as a yoga teacher. I received my first 200-hour teacher certification in another tradition, but it wasn't until I found Kripalu Yoga in 2000 that I was truly inspired to teach.

I realized early in my journey that sangha, along with service, is essential for my spiritual growth. Kripalu provides a community that advocates and models many of the yoga and teaching ideals I aspire to uphold and wish for others to embrace. Being a KAS gives our teachers and students a connection to the "mother ship," and strong roots from which to grow and manifest our full potential.

A student who came to Dream Yoga for the first time last week said she had never felt so welcomed anywhere in her life other than her church. I believe that what she feels is a direct extension of the spirit that inspires our teachers and helps transform us and our students—the spirit of Swami Kripalu, the "pilgrim on the path of love."

▲ *What is your vision for your studio as it evolves?*

More outreach. We're increasing the number of classes we offer in the community, including bringing yoga to early childhood centers, schools, and senior living facilities. This year, we'll have at least three of our teachers trained and involved in the ➔ **Kripalu Yoga in the Schools initiative**. We're excited about becoming ambassadors of Kripalu Yoga in the world. My dream is that we continue to be an even greater respite and catalyst for health and healing, deep peace, great joy, and unconditional love. ■

➔ [Learn more about our Kripalu Affiliate Studios.](#)

### Dream Yoga Studio and Wellness Center

Owner: **Luann Fulbright, MA, E-RYT, IYT**

Location: **McLean, Virginia**

Website: ➔ [www.dreamyogastudio.com](http://www.dreamyogastudio.com)

# Holding the pose, side by side

*Yoga strengthens bonds in a high school classroom*

by Elizabeth Shepardson

**P**ositive and healthy relationships among students and teachers in a classroom play an integral role in the level of success in the academic arena. Teachers are obligated to prepare students for the real world, and provide them with opportunities to learn and master 21st-century skills to help them achieve their dreams.

As a paraprofessional at Positive Options, an alternative high school education program in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, I was recently given the unique opportunity to attend a 15-week Kripalu Yoga in the Schools program along with the students. The Kripalu instructors, led by Janna Delgado, came to our school and worked with us each week, training our minds and bodies to become better equipped to focus on everyday tasks, and better prepared to face the challenges that life throws our way.

Janna created a space of safety within a setting that pushed our minds and bodies to new limits. The general consensus among the students and myself after the first session was that, even though Janna made the environment as safe and comfortable as possible, we all felt a sense of vulnerability as we entered the unknown territory of yoga practice. We found out quickly that, in order to make this activity successful, we had to trust each other and work together.

For instance, the first time we attempted Side Plank, which requires a great deal of shoulder and upper-body strength, my muscles immediately began to tremble uncontrollably. I was in the front row, and I glanced up quickly to check in with the students. I wanted to see how they were managing the challenge at hand, but I think I was also looking for a hint of support and reassurance. In those few seconds, I made eye contact with many of the students, and I noticed something profound in the looks we exchanged. That was when I first felt what it means to be “in it together” with the students. We were all riding the wave, totally engaged in the effort, noticing our different strengths and weaknesses. We were fully aware of ourselves in the moment.

As time progressed, everything seemed to come together. The anxiety disappeared, and yoga became one of the activities we most looked forward to each week. I learned that there was a gift in sharing my weaknesses with the students, and having them observe me struggle at times. We laughed. We talked. We opened up, but never blurred any boundaries. The program gave us a new perspective on how we each tend to handle stress, and what we look for in other people when we need additional support.

When the students and I talk about our experiences with yoga this year, we tap into those times when we knew our class felt connected. We had the opportunity to relate to each other on a level that rarely happens inside a classroom. The students appreciated my commitment to practice what they were practicing, and we respected each other’s efforts unconditionally. That alone has improved the quality of my relationships with them—and all I did was show up and practice yoga. ■

*Elizabeth Shepardson is a paraprofessional at the Positive Options program in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.*



## Kripalu Yoga in the Schools Teacher Training, June 27–July 4

**For educators and yoga teachers interested in bolstering their skills and enriching the lives of high school students through yoga.**

Yoga can be a profound vehicle for cultivating adolescents’ self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-expression. This training provides

- Practical guidance on how to partner with high schools, nonprofits, and after-school programs serving teens
- A scientifically validated yoga curriculum appropriate for high school physical education and health classes, or extracurricular settings
- Developmentally appropriate lesson plans outlining the introduction of postures; centering, breathing, and relaxation techniques; and key yoga concepts
- An exploration of the teen experience through role-playing, discussion, and lectures on adolescent development
- Verbal cues appropriate for adolescent practitioners
- Opportunities to practice teaching in a simulated classroom environment.

➔ [Get more details and register.](#)



## NEXT OF KIN

*Addressing teaching topics from our online community*

**When student and class don't match**  
by Sudha Carolyn Lundeen

In this new feature, we answer questions and share stories from our close-knit community on the KIN (Kripalu International Network) e-mail list. ➔ [Join the conversation.](#)

▲ *Recently, KIN members discussed the most effective way to approach a situation in which a student comes to a class that's not appropriate for their special needs or skill level. Is it necessary to modify a large class around one or two students' needs? Or should the teacher advise them that the class isn't suitable for them? This is particularly challenging when there's a lack of alternative classes available locally for special populations (the elderly, the physically challenged, etc.). We asked Kripalu School of Yoga faculty member ➔ [Sudha Carolyn Lundeen](#), who leads the 500-hour teacher training module Therapeutic Approaches to Yoga, to respond.*

**Sudha** How I wish there were one way that would be effective for all students and situations. Of course, there is not. That said, whatever the situation, if the student is approached with respect and sensitivity, the most positive outcome can be found for both student and teacher. As in the Hippocratic Oath that physicians take, I believe that it is equally important for yoga teachers to maintain a strong intention to “do no harm.”

Handling situations in which a student wants to take a class that the teacher believes they are not able to safely handle can be very tricky. The student might think they're capable, and they might be very attached to taking the class. Yet, as teachers, it's our responsibility to assess and hold clear boundaries—for our own comfort, for individual students' well-being, and for the class as a whole.

Being honest about one's skill set and experience level is valid when determining if a student can stay in your class. If having a student in your class with a special need (such as hip surgery, back issues, heart conditions, or not being able to get up and down from the floor) causes you concern for their safety or for your readiness to handle that extra challenge, then I encourage you to talk to the student. Share honestly and kindly about your concerns. Be clear about what you're willing and able to do.

It's a good idea to establish clear written policies about such situations, and make them available to students to read before they attend a class. These guidelines will help you stay clear should a student push you to “make an exception, just this once.”

Telling a student that you cannot accommodate them may be awkward at first. If the student has hurt feelings or gets angry, listen. Be compassionate while holding firm to what you feel comfortable with. You are the teacher. You are in charge of setting the tone and safety of the classroom. A friend recently passed along a quote she'd read that sums it up well: “Keeping students safe under my watch is a daunting and glorious responsibility.”

Honor your own boundaries, and also consider getting more training to give you the skills and confidence to work with students of greater diversity. This theme of this year's KYTA conference, October 14–17, is yoga therapeutics; see page 3 for more information. ■

➔ *[Sudha Carolyn Lundeen, RN, E-RYT 500](#), is a faculty member for the Kripalu Schools of Yoga and Ayurveda. Her Kripalu Yoga Gentle DVD has won three prestigious awards. Sudha works with private clients and leads workshops internationally in group and corporate settings.*

Take your teaching to the next level: ➔ [Read an overview of 500-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training.](#)

## BOOKMARKS

*Highlighting passages from our favorite texts*

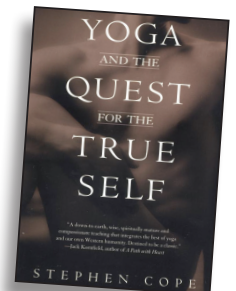
### A living relationship with spirit

The best transformational spaces recognize that the practices and symbols of transformation only serve to set into motion and support the normal development of the human being. The glory, as it were, is given to human nature, or to God, or to the soul, and not to the transformational environment itself. There is a heightened awareness that it is our inherent potential humanness that is made sacred—not the vehicles that bring these potentials into realization.

It is of utmost importance that teachers not be deified. Nothing undermines the potential of an environment to be truly transformational more than a teacher who is seen to be perfect, all-knowing, or “the ultimate authority.” In the best transformational spaces, even brilliant, charismatic, or truly enlightened teachers are understood to be exemplars and guides, not gods. They are simply representatives of our own highest nature, that serve to evoke our own essential humanness. They may for a time become highly charged presences, surrounded with love and respect. This is quite normal. But even these powerful guides are understood to be transitional. They must, finally, set us free to be ourselves. ■

—from ➔ *[Yoga and the Quest for the True Self](#)*, by Stephen Cope

Find out about upcoming programs with ➔ [Stephen Cope.](#)





# A family thing

*Reflections from the newest graduate  
in a family of Kripalu Yoga teachers*

**By Zac Hills-Bonczyk**

**M**y mom was the first family member to become a Kripalu Yoga teacher. She completely immersed herself in the yoga and Ayurvedic lifestyle after her cancer diagnosis and during her subsequent recovery. After completing the 200-hour training, Mom plunged straight into the 500-hour, and started a yoga studio in our house. Word spread through our Minnesota neighborhood, and the most amazing students, people who I would not otherwise have met, came through our front door for yoga class.

My dad, who works in the airline industry, came to Kripalu next. He's the grounded one—lots of kapha in him—and he wanted to support my mom. The studio was growing, Mom occasionally needed a sub, and Dad also joined my mom and sister to lead yoga retreats around the world.

My sister is a dancer and experimental artist. She was instinctively curious about the expression of yoga, which influenced her decision to enroll in Kripalu's 200-hour yoga teacher training. Yoga is her muse; it inspired her certification in JourneyDance at Kripalu, and her master's degree thesis, which combined yoga and art.

Then it was my turn. This past January, I earned my 200-hour Kripalu Yoga teacher certification. I've also set my sights on the [Kripalu Yoga in the Schools Teacher Training](#) in June. And I'm planning to enroll in the [500-hour training program](#).

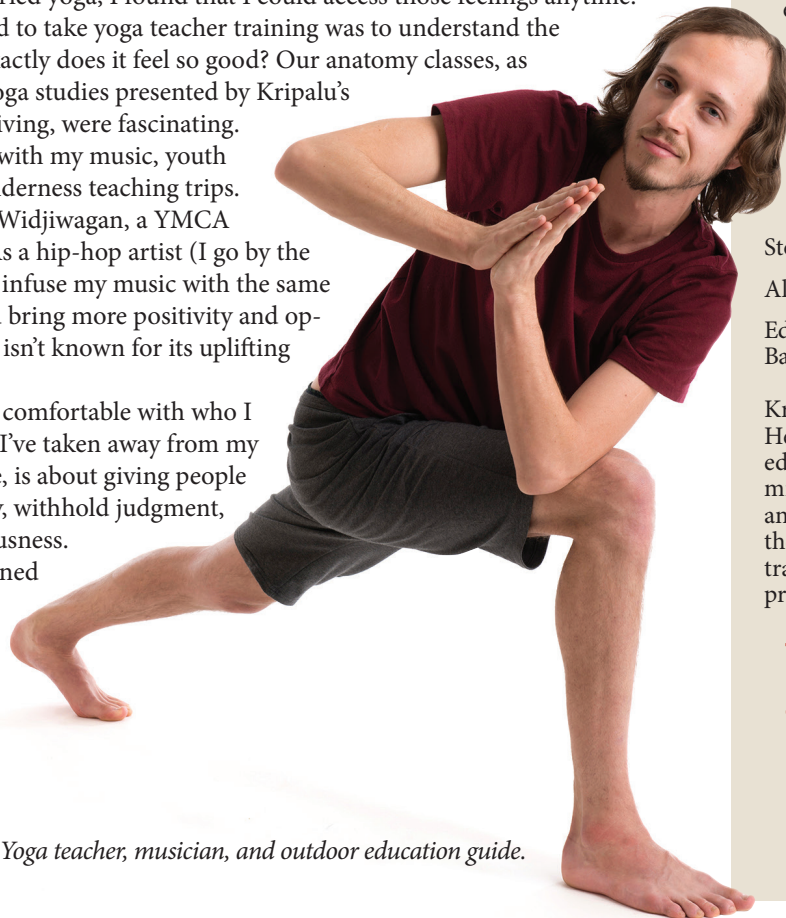
My parents never pushed yoga on us; they wanted us to find our own way. My interests were always rooted in nature and the outdoors. I didn't start my yoga practice until five years ago, when I was 19. It was the first time that I experienced the same sense of connection that I felt when I was immersed in nature. Out in the wild, I learn so much about myself, and I feel completely at peace. Once I tried yoga, I found that I could access those feelings anytime.

One reason that I wanted to take yoga teacher training was to understand the science behind yoga: Why exactly does it feel so good? Our anatomy classes, as well as the evidence-based yoga studies presented by Kripalu's Institute for Extraordinary Living, were fascinating.

I want to combine yoga with my music, youth leadership programs, and wilderness teaching trips. (I work as a guide for Camp Widjiwagan, a YMCA outdoor learning program. As a hip-hop artist (I go by the name Forefeather), I want to infuse my music with the same values and spirit as yoga, and bring more positivity and optimism to a music genre that isn't known for its uplifting messages.

Feeling safe, secure, and comfortable with who I am is one of the biggest gifts I've taken away from my training. Kripalu Yoga, to me, is about giving people the space to awaken vibrancy, withhold judgment, and develop witness consciousness. Along the way, I've strengthened ties with my family and become part of a new family—my Kripalu graduating class, which has evolved into a united, loving sangha. ■

*Zac Hills-Bonczyk is a Kripalu Yoga teacher, musician, and outdoor education guide.*



## Contact Information

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**Kripalu Schools of Yoga and Ayurveda**

tel: 800.848.8702

website: [www.kripalu.org/yogaandayurveda](#)

e-mail: [ksya@kripalu.org](mailto:ksya@kripalu.org)

**Teaching for Diversity**

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