

## Accessibility Considerations in Yoga

There are lots of things to love about drop in and community classes, the venues, the crowd, the vibe... But these things don't necessarily support **everyone** being able to find and join a practice.

I think as a result of this, we see yoga branching into **specialisms** – yoga for this and yoga for that.

The way my teachers taught me and the way that my first yoga teacher training approached accessibility has really shaped my ethos. We can integrate techniques into any class. While there are debates, I can confidently say that you will come across accessibility concerns from your first yoga teaching gig and that people deemed to be **special populations** like 'the over 50s', 'people with arthritis' and 'pregnant populations' are actually just the **general population**.

Research in this field has developed really quickly, even over the last 5 years or so and advice in the UK is that almost everyone can benefit from movement and mindfulness. I found in my case that sometimes up to 20% of my group classes were filled with people with additional **accessibility considerations** and many of those were referred to general classes by their GP.

### What is Accessibility and why should I consider this as a yoga teacher?

The dictionary defines **accessibility** as being easily reached, entered, obtain, use, understand or appreciate. The **Equality Act 2010** (or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland) states that all UK service providers must consider '**reasonable adjustments**' for disabled people.

So there are human characteristics that preclude people from accessing physical and digital services that we can impact positively by considering how, where and what we teach as yoga teachers.

### When should I integrate accessibility principles into my sessions?

To me just saying '**skip this move**' or '**take a rest if you need to**' is not a reasonable adjustment. I prefer to make reasonable adjustments to the way I approach planning my sessions, the types of venues I use and what props I make available for students at no additional cost.

Not only is this inline with legislative and ethical guidance. Increasing accessibility to your classes will help support more people to be able to practice yoga and I'd guess that that is top of the list for many of you.

## What are some of the ways I can make my offerings more accessible?

Not only is making services accessible good for you as a teacher able to reach additional people with your offering, it allows you to keep up with legal best-practice as well as satisfying moral and ethical reasons of balancing out inequalities that occur across society.

Here are some considerations that will help you to identify; I have turned this into an 'Accessibility Assessment Form' on the last page.

- **Venues:**
  - Is the space wheelchair accessible? Are there accessible toilets on the ground floor, what about size, parking, controllable heat and lighting? How will people pay and sign into the venue?; How much time will there be before and after a session? How will you tailor online sessions?
- **Practices:**
  - Are you suitable prepared for people who cannot get out of a chair?; What about those of us who struggle to get up and down off the ground?; Are there props that might help the floor feel softer or provide leverage where appropriate?; How will you guide people through postures? Will there be different approaches to pranayama and meditation techniques?
- **Class community:**
  - How will you as a class decide to accommodate a therapy animal?; people of different shapes and sizes?; How will you make yourself approachable to conversations that address participants needs?; How will you structure opportunities for feedback that don't require face-to-face conversations?; How will you impact the mood in the room to support diversity?

## Limits of scope

Remember it is not your job to **fix** anyone's ailments. You are there to guide them through the practice of yoga. Accessibility is not about ***inclusion*** it's about avoiding ***exclusion***.

'Quote Here'

This is a guide to help you **start** to **evaluate** how you can make your sessions more accessible. This will become more natural over time and is not something that can be perfect. It is certainly something that can be made better and you will start to see patterns and universal approaches to accessibility as you gain experience by chatting with your students.

Accessibility Assessment Form

Area	Consideration	Y/N	Detail of adjustments required
<b>Venue</b>	How will you assess participants prior to class? Ramp or wheel chair accessible front door? Door wide enough to fit wheelchair Controllable heat? Controllable lighting? Accessible toilets? Space between participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Yoga Practices</b>	Can the session be easily adapted to a chair? Those of us who struggle to get up and down off the ground? Are there props that might be helpful? How will you guide people through postures? Demos/verbal/mixture Will there be different approaches to pranayama? Will there be options to meditation techniques?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Community Considerations</b>	How will you accommodate a therapy animal? Consider People of different shapes and sizes? How will you make yourself approachable? How will you structure opportunities for feedback that don't require face-to-face conversations? How will you impact the mood in the room to support diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Venue:</b>		<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>		<b>Date for Review:</b>	