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JANUARY 20, 2011 · 10:39 PM

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An open letter to a new student on their first class

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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 fiancé (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.



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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

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53 Responses to *An open letter to a new student on their first class*

bonnie

January 20, 2011 at 10:54 pm



what a great post! this letter would really help a lot of new students understand the practice.

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 7:02 pm



Thank you so much Bonnie!

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elizabeth

January 21, 2011 at 12:18 am



Absolutely beautiful!

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Andrew Moniz

January 21, 2011 at 1:21 am



Amazing. I love it and I love you.

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 7:02 pm



And I LOVE you!! xo B

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nick ippolito



January 21, 2011 at 1:41 am



So lovely...thank you for this beautiful statement.

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 7:04 pm



Thank you so much for the nice comment Nick.

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Resh Gupta-Erichsen

January 21, 2011 at 3:41 am



You just made my heart sing...

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marcia

January 21, 2011 at 3:59 am



bikram has become part of each of us in different ways—for me so much—cannot imagine my life without it—and it is hard EVERY DAY and a source of comfort EVERY DAY

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Andrew Roan

January 21, 2011 at 4:05 am



Wow... truly a brilliant piece. Pretty much summarizes...well...everything that needs to be said. Well done.

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Tony Sugar

January 21, 2011 at 7:26 am



inspiring, deep, graceful welcome!!! thanks for sharing.. A.

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Patrice Papke

January 21, 2011 at 8:49 am



Wow. So beautiful, so true. This will be posted at my studio and...depending on how long it takes to read it, (90 minutes of work to do in 90 minutes!!!) I will read it from time to time. Maybe just excerpts. Thank you.

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Charlie

January 21, 2011 at 10:39 am



Hi,

This is very nice. I would like to show you blog in the "blogs I read" part of my blog.

Okay?

Charlie

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ohmybikram

January 21, 2011 at 12:29 pm



I would love that Charlie! Thanks!

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Sandra

January 21, 2011 at 11:05 am



So Inspiring! So well written

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Rachel

January 21, 2011 at 12:07 pm



This was just beautiful. I did get a tear in my eye a couple of times while reading it. I love teaching this yoga. This was very well written. Thank you for sharing this.

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Christine

January 21, 2011 at 12:25 pm



I love Bikram, it has healed me many times over the last 6 years of practice — which is how I came to it — and always will. I am what I am physically because of Bikram and know that a bad day in class is better than no day in class. I appreciate the direction and have learned (finally) to ignore the distractions, it is not the teacher but the dialogue, it is not my neighbor but everyone's energy, and it is not just 90 minutes — its my life now.

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jack

January 21, 2011 at 1:15 pm



i just cried reading this, thank you for reminding me exactly why i do the best and hardest job i've ever had. thank you for reminding me to keep trying so i can help others to keep trying. thank you for reminding me i am a happy servant.

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ohmybikram

January 21, 2011 at 3:34 pm



Wow, thank you for such a heartfelt reply!

happy teaching!

xo, Barb

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Jennifer

January 21, 2011 at 1:54 pm



This is a beautiful article. I wish I could take YOUR class 😊

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ohmybikram

January 21, 2011 at 3:35 pm



If you're in the Toronto area, I teach often at Bikram Yoga Toronto's Bloor location, check the website for schedule times! And don't forget to say hello!

Barb

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Pamela

January 21, 2011 at 2:30 pm



Thank you for this lovely letter. To all teachers, thank you for your love, your wisdom and encouragement. Every teacher with every class shares a part of themselves with their students and for that I am so very grateful. Namaste

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Marc

January 21, 2011 at 4:38 pm



AMEN!

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maureen

January 21, 2011 at 4:39 pm



I'd like to read this in class tonight...

its beautiful

thank you, you write well, but best of all: the truth, and from the heart!

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 7:09 pm



Thank you for the kind words Maureen, feel free to share this with as many as possible!

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Edith Laszlo Kovari

January 21, 2011 at 7:08 pm



what a nice letter, I am also sold on Bikram yoga. Wish I had more time to practice, but I go regularly, it's a treat at the end I feel happy. Thanks to all yoga teachers including my beautiful daughter Gabriella

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Kalee Maloney

January 21, 2011 at 9:46 pm



This is one of the most beautiful things I have ever read, brought me to tears. I am planning to be a Bikram teacher training in the fall & this is EXACTLY why. Thank you so much for the post. I really love it & am sharing it with everyone I know 😊

Namaste

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 6:57 pm



Thank you so much Kalee!

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Juliana

January 21, 2011 at 10:48 pm



Brilliant concept. This is great, Barb. Totally heartfelt and it really says it all. Thanks for writing and sharing!!

Of course we could tell them all of this on the first day, and most of them still wouldn't "get" it... If you'd read this to me on my first day, I'd have told you to get out of town! But the understanding comes in time (like a flower petal blooming), and it is so beautiful when it comes. 😊

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Lisa MacInnis

January 21, 2011 at 11:01 pm



Wow Barb, so amazingly well put I am in tears (but why does it not surprise me). You are an inspiration... words from a Bikram Angel 😊
Thank you for sharing all your love and passion for the practice with the community, especially all those just beginning their journey.
Love you so much.

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 7:09 pm



Love you and miss you Lisa,,,,, we need a big catch up soon!

xo

B

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Ruzica LeBlanc

January 22, 2011 at 8:39 am



Dear Barb, what beautiful connection you have sparked among us. I read somewhere heaven is where everything is connected and hell is just the opposite. Thank you for taking us to that place of heaven in us.

Would love to have you teach sometime at bikram yoga toronto east.

Love,

Ruzica

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Yvetta

January 22, 2011 at 1:37 pm



Barb I am so proud to be your mom. You reminded me why not to procrastinate and just do it. Love your M:)ma

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Mille

January 22, 2011 at 2:15 pm



It's a well written article, no doubt about that!

But I'm not so sure about Bikram Yoga. Tomorrow I'll finish my dayli 30-day practice. I seriously have given it a try, but my conclusion is that there is to much missing in this practice – especially inversions. I've practiced Ashtanga yoga (Mysore-style) on a dayli basis for six years and from my viewpoint Ashtanga has a lot more to offer an experienced student.

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Mille

January 22, 2011 at 3:54 pm



daily 😊

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 7:08 pm



Hi Mille,

The reason for not doing inversions in Bikram is simply because it is aimed to be a beginners practice and accessible to all at any level, body shape or injury. Bikram is a great way to promote overall body health. What I find satisfying about the practice is that it works the body so completely... I'm never left feeling, 'I wish we would have done more

hip openers.' Still I understnad your comments, maybe you want to combine the two? I personally can't do a daily practice, it drives me insane, so I do other things on other days that I feel add to my life and allow me to feel balanced. I'd hate to see someone leave the practice all together, so I would encourage you to mix it up and still come back to the hot room a few times a week.

Happy Bending!

Barb

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Nuzhat Jillani

January 22, 2011 at 4:27 pm



Dear Barbora,

Truly inspirational, as a new student to Bikram yoga I can relate to each and every word you wrote.

I wish you could come and teach a class at Mississauga studio, I'm sure we'll all learn tones of wisdom from you.

Student @ BYM

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ohmybikram

January 22, 2011 at 6:54 pm



Thank you so much Nuzhat, I certainly will try make my way out there this spring. Enjoy the hot room! xo B

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Alexis

January 22, 2011 at 7:57 pm



This is simply wonderful. Thank you for putting this so eloquently!

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Elene

January 23, 2011 at 12:03 am



I love this letter and it's so true, I hope when the day comes when I become a teacher that my new students will understand Bikram Yoga. I'm going to read this over and over. I do Bikram in Dallas and my teachers have saved my life.

Elene

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Lou

January 23, 2011 at 9:00 am



Beautiful article, it has brought tears to my eyes. I cannot imagine my live without this practice 😊

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Mazi

January 23, 2011 at 10:44 am



Thanks for translating your arrogance and self-righteousness into a fluffy new age language. It was very amusing.

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ohmybikram

January 24, 2011 at 11:22 am



Thanks for being honest Mazi, I am glad that our readers feel like they can express both positive and negative reactions to our work here.

Barbora

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stacey

January 23, 2011 at 12:39 pm



Awesome post, even for someone who's been practising for a year and a half! Thanks Barb! Hope to see you at Beaches again soon!

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Sharon, Bikram Yoga Teacher

January 23, 2011 at 2:38 pm



I am moved to the core. Thank you, teacher, for your words of loving wisdom and inspiration. I would like so very much to share this with my community. namaste

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mattceni

January 23, 2011 at 10:27 pm



What a great letter! I read this thinking back to my first Bikram class over 9 years ago. My practice is my journey and my journey is my life. I wish every class could be my first class because of special my practice is to me. Thanks for putting me back there. Nameste! MC

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Yoojin

January 23, 2011 at 11:05 pm



I've got impressed..

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Alexa

January 24, 2011 at 12:21 am



Well put! I'll definitely be sharing this in my classes =)

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Lisa

January 24, 2011 at 2:53 am



Thank you Barb for reminding me if why I teach everyday. I am honored to be the humble servant of this yoga. I remind myself everyday that I am just the voice in which this song(dialogue) is sang to every soul that wants to hear.

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Cheng-Hwee Tan

January 24, 2011 at 4:04 am



I normally DO NOT waste time posting comments and anyway someone sent me the link to this letter which I read straight through without a halt. After reading this candid and extremely well thought out and well written letter, I just feel COMPELLED to say that it is a REALLY REALLY BEAUTIFUL letter and I wish that when I was a new student to yoga 5 years ago, someone had told me all these. Yes, I have tried Bikram yoga. No I DO NOT like it, I can't really explain why. But this letter has totally changed my attitude and thinking. I resolve to book and attend a Bikram class tomorrow. And the day after. I'm NOT a new student but I shall start afresh with positive thoughts and new awareness. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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Stephanie

January 24, 2011 at 7:24 pm



It's a real effort to get to class right now for a variety of reasons. Your letter is bigger than all of the reasons put together. Thank you!!!

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Pingback: [bikram](#). « [just plain savannah](#)

Amanda Price

January 25, 2011 at 12:58 am



Wonderful! Well said! Thank You I love this!

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