



A Guide to Trauma-Informed Yoga

“Yoga became a major cornerstone in our understanding that it is imperative to befriend one’s bodily sensations to overcome the imprints of trauma.”

—Bessel van der Kolk—

Yoga can offer you a greater connection with yourself – both bodily and emotionally. It’s important to find a trauma-informed class and instructor who can cater to your individual needs. Below are things to consider when you search for a yoga class.

- **An instructor who is willing to understand your needs.** Talk to the instructor beforehand and let him or her know your boundaries. Look until you find an instructor you think will be willing to work with you.
- **A location that makes you feel safe.** Scout the location ahead of time. How does it make you feel? A small amount of anxiety is normal, but if the place is triggering then you should look elsewhere.
- **You can stop any time.** There is no rule that says you have to keep going if you are uncomfortable during the class. Give yourself permission to stop if it’s too much for you – physically or emotionally.
- **Leaving is always an option.** It’s okay to leave if you need to do so. Place your yoga mat in a spot by the door that will give you an easy exit if you think you’ll need it.
- **Counting can help.** Timing what you’re doing can help you stay in the moment. It can stop you from dissociating as you go through different poses. If the instructor doesn’t count, do it for yourself.
- **Pace yourself.** Some instructors will encourage you to keep pushing yourself. This can lead you to pushing too hard and getting hurt. Make sure you’re staying in contact with your body and mind.
- **Do what’s best for YOU.** Keep checking in with yourself. Yoga is, ultimately, about healing. Find an instructor and class that will help you on your healing journey.



Suggested Reading

Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga by David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper