

Changes and new challenges

some feedback about hybrid classes

In these changing circumstances, one strategy from some studios has been the hybrid class. This is simultaneous online livestreaming while teaching a physical class. Personally, I have not taught a hybrid class – I have just taught online. Personally, I used to say that I would not teach online – and then since March all my teaching has been online. Things change...I am also conscious of my privilege that allows me to continue teaching online (at the moment, I expect teach online until spring next year).

I thought an interesting exercise would be to ask teachers who taught hybrid classes since early August what their experience has been like and how they are finding it.

I asked ten teachers and got these responses:

“I find it strange having a laptop in front of me while I am trying to teach people in the room, and focus on both sets of people at the same time. I teach in another studio where I don’t stream online too and it’s soooo much better. I would definitely say it’s more demanding as you have to be teaching to cater for 2 different audiences, online/in person.”

“So far I am finding it ok, I actually quite like it. I don’t really find it a problem. I imagine this might be more of an issue for newer teachers.”

“I’m not a big fan of hybrid classes at all! I do teach it sometimes – but I don’t like it. The way I teach is a bit different online vs in person: and dare I say it: it HAS TO be different because it’s a different format! I totally agree that it’s more work for the teachers. And for the students: none of them get an optimal experience: even if the teacher is handling it well, they can’t focus fully on both! It feels a bit like ‘a way for studios to be cost efficient: instead of paying the teacher for TWO classes, they pay the teacher for just one...’ Am I grumpy?”

“I have to say, the classes that I teach purely on line or purely in person are much more enjoyable and less stressful than those hybrid classes, it really is hard work doing both and I feel like I’m not giving my best to my students in this split focus.”

“A hybrid class is significantly harder work than a pure IRL or pure Zoom.”

“It takes a bit of getting used to - and quite definitely more work for the teacher. I will find myself from time to time focussing on one and possibly not giving full attention to the other! It’s a whole new world we’ve created!”

“Being able to share attention between people in front of you physically and via Zoom is tiring and I would consider it more demanding.”

“I am feeling more under pressure now but I’m not sure whether it’s because I’m just generally teaching more classes again or if it’s because I’m teaching in this hybrid way. I think it’s the former. I am enjoying being able to teach in person again. Quite a contrast to see people properly, rather than on a little screen with a view of their knees or their wardrobe.”

“I, as many, have had to learn quickly without any ‘guide book’ or expert to reassure...The general stress of the Zoom-live streaming can easily creep in to the tone of the voice... Generally I find the classes more tiring. In terms of the work load I can’t say it is much different.”

“Hybrid is funny. In some studios, depending how they’ve set things up, it’s very demanding, in others you’re left wondering if anyone is there!...The brain is swapping between the two modes and it’s challenging. When you correct the online people you feel you’re ignoring the live people! At the other extreme there are studios that have no screen because they want to focus their efforts to get people back into the studio. There you don’t know if people are still online as you’re unaware of any technical difficulties... Hybrid is definitely harder than teaching both ‘old fashioned’ studio and online classes.”

A range of different opinions. Certainly new skills have to be learnt – and then there is the challenge of attempting to relate reasonably equally at the same time to a screen of faces and three dimensional bodies on mats in front of you. There is also the valid point that having to do extra work means that the teachers deserve more pay.

Yoga teachers are not machines who maintain perfectly poised equanimity while dealing with increasing demands. Nor are we radiant bodies of light effortlessly floating our way through life (some might be – but I definitely am not). Nor are we all technological geniuses (some are but many are not). We are just yoga teachers trying to do our best in very difficult circumstances. Hybrid classes certainly work for some people – but not for everyone. If it does not work well for you, then it is good to say no rather than feeling obliged to do them.

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