

How to have your best practice year yet (without discipline, self-judgment, or shame)

*Curvy Yoga Studio Bonus Podcast
Dec 2019*

[00:00:02] Hey, everybody, hello and welcome to the Curvy Yoga Studio Bonus podcast. So we are heading into our eighth year together as an online Studio, which is extremely hard to believe. And just a few heads up and reminders for you members and anybody listening who might be interested in joining this year coming up, 2020. We have a new website -- that's actually already launched! And the new website, it easily allows you to Chromecast or airplay right from each video. And by mid January, we're going to have apps! I know!! I'm so excited. We're going to have mobile (iOS and Android) and TV (Roku, Apple TV, Fire TV, Android TV). So exciting. So you really can have a Curvy Yoga Studio with you now whenever and wherever you want it. And if you're listening to this in relative real time, our annual sale is coming up December 28 through January 4th. So if you're not already a member, it's the perfect time to join.

[00:01:13] OK, so I'm going to talk a little bit about how to use the Studio. So if you haven't looked at it before or lately, you might want to do that. But first, I'm going to talk about how to have your best practice year yet without discipline, self judgment or shame. And this part is for anybody, no matter if you're part of our online studio or not.

[00:01:38] So first, I thought we should talk about why would we want to have a practice year without discipline, self judgment or shame. So let's look into them. Discipline, I find, is just one of those words. For many of us it can be really loaded. I know that I have tried in the past to reclaim my relationship with it. So I've done a few times where I thought, OK, discipline doesn't have to be something that is really hard for me to relate to in a way that doesn't just send me in a spiral. What if I have a positive relationship with it? And if that has worked for you or will work for you or whatever, more power to you. But for me, it has just never worked. It has always come down on me like a ton of bricks. And I think that that's all just baggage from family, childhood, society, media. You know, all the different things. I barely need a hop, much less a hop, skip and jump to get from the idea of I'd like more discipline in my life -- not even I should be more disciplined because obviously that right away is problematic -- but from I'd like more discipline in my life to, Why do I screw everything up? I can never get anything right. I can never follow through. Not helpful! That's not the energy we're bringing with us into a new decade. So, no thank you to that.

[00:03:12] Now, not working with the concept of discipline doesn't mean you have no structure in your life. If you're like me, you're a little bit either or .I'm completely either or. I try not to be. And I really am better about it than I used to be. But I definitely am like, oh, no discipline. Okay, great. Well, then I guess my life is just comes at me once it comes at me and I have no say or structure. OK. No. Once again, not the energy we're bringing into a new decade. One concept that I learned many years ago from a coach that I worked with. We kind of walked around, what are the things that are most supportive for me individually? So not fitting myself into, for example, a personality type test, but rather, what are the things, what is the language around those things, that really helps me? And one of the things that we came up with is this idea of a fluid container. And I came up with that language because I do like having some structure in my life. I do not live completely spontaneously. I don't really know anyone who does so. But I like to have some space and

flexibility. If things are too rigid, and it doesn't matter what we're talking about, we're talking about my relationship with my body and how I move it or we're talking about our approach to making dinners or ,I don't know anything really, how I'm going to do my work. I have to have some flexibility because if it gets too rigid, I just really hate it and reject it. So I wanted to bring in this concept here of the fluid container and figuring out some structure that works for you and having space to adapt within if that's useful for you. I also like this idea because it means it's responsive to my life because as I'm sure you know, because you're also living a human life, things change. They don't go as expected. Our timelines are different than we thought they would be. The amount of time available to us is different. Our energy changes. So giving yourself some space can be really helpful. And that brings me to the next one.

[00:05:34] Why wouldn't we want self judgment? So I think sometimes we get this idea of: Oh, if we would only be a little bit harder on ourselves, if we wouldn't let ourselves off the hook all the time, then we would be living this idealized life that we wish that we had. So the main reason that I think self judgment is not helpful is it doesn't work. So there's a ton of research out there, Kristen Neff comes to mind, around self compassion and how that is what actually helps us stay on our own sides. And I know that this can feel really countercultural, like, OK, sure, I'll just be nice to myself and then I'll get the things done that I want to get done. But when I think about this in relationship to my own life, I see how it's true that the times when I was really, really hard on myself maybe I got some things done for a little while. You know, kind of almost anything can work in a very short term. Over time, it just makes me hate those things. I feel really bad about myself. Pile on other things that I'm not happy with myself about. It just really is not helpful.

[00:06:55] So that brings me to the third one, which is why wouldn't we want shame in our new year practice, and it's the same! So, it is definitely not helpful. It's not accomplishing anything that we think it will or should or whatever. And, Brene Brown is such a great person on this. So if you're not familiar with her work, basically just check out any of her books and she talks a lot about shame and the role that it plays in our lives and how we can move instead towards vulnerability and openheartedness. So once again, shame is definitely not going to be supportive, particularly not in a sustainable way.

[00:07:47] OK. So we have our why we're not taking this energy into the new decade out of the way. So now we're gonna get into some ideas for your practice. And we're going to talk about two things. So one is approaches. And one is nitty gritty details.

[00:08:13] [Music].

[00:08:14] So let's start with approaches, and what I really mean here is just how you could approach your practice in the New Year. So the first thing I'd like you to consider is choosing some qualities. So what qualities do you want to bring to your practice in the New Year? My go tos are usually curiosity and gentleness. I find that curiosity keeps me more engaged in the practice. And it really attunes me to what is going on, what's present with me right now, which is one of my big sustaining motivators in practicing yoga. And then gentleness is just, I can always use more of it. And I think of the yoga mat as a great place to practice the things that I need and want more of in my life. So there's tons of other ideas if those don't resonate with you, maybe some, I'll just throw out kindness, mindfulness. Maybe an open heart and mind, willingness, devotion. I mean, the possibilities are really endless. It's kind of like choosing a word of the year if you're familiar with that practice. It's choosing a word of the year for your yoga practice specifically. So what are those qualities that you want to bring to your practice?

[00:09:45] Another thing to consider here in your approach is figuring out how you will remember that this is something you want to be doing and how you're going to make space. So the remembering thing might sound silly. Kind of like, well, you know you want to do it. So how are you going to forget? Well, I don't know about you, but I always find it easy to forget things that I wish I was doing. Sometimes they're on my mind, but I'm just not doing it. And that's a little bit different. But sometimes whole days go by where I just forget things that I had an intention I wanted to do, if I haven't got a little bit of that structure, that fluid container, around it.

[00:10:25] So you could one hundred percent write on your calendar when you're going to do your yoga practice. I am not a person who benefits from that, but you totally might be. That might really work for you. I'll see it on my calendar and I still won't do it. That's just how I am. But some people, that is a total game changer for them. So maybe try it out. And then for me, that fluid container approach looks like a general time of day, a time to check in and remember what supports me. And then I also have the structure of one in-person class that I attend every week. So between doing a little check in each day, which I usually do in the evening before bed, and that kind of helps to do my framework for the next day. And then I generally, well, I was gonna say I generally practice in the morning, now that I have Hazel, it's a little bit different. I am more likely to do it when she's taking a nap or in the afternoon when Nic has his time with her. But I also sometimes incorporate it into when she and I are hanging out and playing. So that's part of the fluidity, too is kind of figuring out when during your day do you have time and sometimes finding time when you might not expect it. So if you, for example, work in an office, you might think, oh, I need to fit my yoga practice before or after work or maybe on my lunch break. But, you know, depending on where you work and how many people are right there, and if you care if they see what you're doing, you might just take a five or ten minute break and do some stretches at your desk or in the break room or wherever. So I think when you approach this with curiosity, there are a lot more options than we might think.

[00:12:23] So another thing I wanted to talk about here with approach is moving from should to could. So you might have heard me talk about this before. It's one of my favorite things to discuss, though I do not feel like I've talked about it lately. So, it's also a good one to refer back to, to remind yourself of if you have heard it before. So, we've talked a little bit about shame and we've talked a little bit about how shoulds can fit into that. I think that the yoga practice is a place to learn how to listen to your body and you know, the yoga practice, just like the rest of life, is an easy place to fall into a pile of shoulds. It just is. If you have ever thought to yourself that you should be practicing every day for a certain amount of time, with a specific type of physical intensity. Any? The same? Different? All of the above? You're definitely not alone. And ditto if you thought it didn't count, if you didn't touch your toes, balance on your hands, move through pose after a pose on barely half a breath. So, in good news, the yoga mat can be a place to actively practice putting down the hammer that you have been holding over your own head. And that does not mean that you're only going to lie on a pile of blankets. Though, let me give that a shout out, because I absolutely think that there are times in life when that is the perfect thing to do. But that's not really the point we're talking about. The point is that with a quick shift of thinking, you can move from should, that kind of confinement there, and into something that is responsive to your own inner guidance. And that is could.

[00:14:24] So the idea is, instead of saying, oh, I should be doing my yoga practice every day, you have this shift to what could my yoga practice be today. And what that does for me is really what I just did naturally is it gives me a pause for a deep breath. Because

there are many days where I don't have the space or time or energy for whatever I think I should be doing. So I think I should be doing a 60 minute practice. I don't have 60 minutes. I think I should be doing something physically intense. Today, I'm fighting off a cold. I think I should be doing, you know, the list goes on and on. I'm sure that you have your own. So when I shift it to could, it just opens up this world of possibility where I say, oh, I don't have 60 minutes, but I do have ten before bed and I'm not feeling good, so I don't want to do anything intense. I don't want to put my head upside down in down dog or anything because my nose is stuffy. So maybe I'm going to do some simple seated stretches and close with a short relaxation pose. OK. Done and done. And what I love about this is that has moved me from feeling like there's something I should be doing and then not doing it, which just builds more of what we were talking about earlier, that self judgment and shame, to, I did something that worked for me, which helps build listening to my body. It helps build trust. It helps build a relationship with the yoga practice. And that all helps me to remember that it is something that I want to be continuing to do. So you can see how these things really support each other and build a scaffolding in your life for your yoga practice.

[00:16:29] So the other thing I wanted to mention here before we move into the nitty gritty. This is kind of a bridge to the nitty gritty really, is how to deal with just different emotions and mental states that come up when you're practicing yoga. So one I really wanted to address is boredom. So some days your yoga practice will be boring. It just will. So you may already come to the mat feeling a little bit out of sorts or you might be trying to make yourself do 30 minutes when you know you really only have time for 15. Other times you will have practiced a particular video, for example, so many times that you're just kind of tired of it. And I have found it useful over the years to treat my boredom as an opportunity to get curious, harkening back to my favorite word, but also as a sign of growth. So I bet you can guess what I'm going to say next. Yes, even your boredom is not a sign of failure. Or that yoga isn't right for you. Oftentimes when I'm bored, it's because I've done a particular practice enough that it has taught me what I need to know for now. And so rather than being a sign that I should just throw in the towel, I now know that it's actually a sign that I have integrated some lessons into my being and I'm ready for more. I'm ready to do something different, which is really great. So when you're feeling bored, try some of the suggestions that we're about to get to in the nitty gritty. And, let it be OK, see what else is coming up. Try something different next time.

[00:18:12] Another thing to consider here is whatever feeling state you might be bringing to the mat -- so angry, joyous, sad, numb. For me, I find that yoga often reveals my emotional state to me more than I bring a specific one that I'm aware of. And that's just the way that I relate to my emotions. You might be the complete opposite or somewhere in between. And what I have found is that the yoga mat is a great place to let yourself practice feeling and practice seeing how the feelings shift when we allow them.

[00:18:50] So you might have heard this before. This person, Jill Bolte Taylor, a scientist, had a stroke and she wrote about her experience. And she said that when we let a feeling be, this is something that she noticed in her altered state before and after the stroke. The physiological life span of the feeling is 90 seconds. So whatever is happening in your body, maybe that you feel some heat rising, your heart racing. Maybe you have a pit in your stomach. Maybe some muscles tighten, that will move and shift in 90 seconds. I think it's everything else that makes it feel like it lasts forever, it's resisting. It's ruminating, pushing it away, wishing it wasn't there, criticizing ourselves about it. I mean, maybe that's all just me, but I don't think so. So, yoga is a great place to practice because you can tune into that physiological experience and begin to or continue to develop a relationship with

how those things land in your body so that when you feel something like your heart racing, you can say, oh, yeah, this is familiar. This is how I feel when I'm feeling fill in the blank, whatever feeling that comes up for you. And let me just breathe with that. Let it come and let it shift. OK. So we have got our qualities, we have got our approach, you know, not one, but with some different ways to think about that for you. And so now let's get into some nitty gritty.

[00:20:40] [Music]

[00:20:45] So some of this will be specific to Curvy Yoga Studio members, like I mentioned, but the general concepts are going to be relevant no matter what. So in the Studio, we have several different ways, really four ways, to choose a practice for the day. So let's just walk through the options. Number one is to go directly to the video of the day. So we recommend a video for every single day. So if you're on the studio website, I'm going to get a little specific, the third category is for whatever month it is. So this is coming out in December 2019. So right now, it's for December 2019. So you can just click on the calendar image and it will take you to a place where you can scroll to the video of the day and just click play -- easy breezy. So who this is good for is if you are flexible on what you do and how much time you have. But you just don't want to have to make any decisions. You want to just jump in and click play. Then this is a perfect option for you.

[00:21:57] Okay, our second way to do this is to practice with one of your favorite videos. So we actually have the functionality for you to favorite videos. You can just click a little heart button and that will add it to your favorites. So definitely when you practice with one that you like, even if you're like, I don't know, is this really a favorite? Just go ahead and click the favorite button because trust me, trying to find out later is much harder than having it in your favorites and later deciding, Yeah, you know, I don't really think so, and taking it out. I think one thing to remember is you're not committing to these Favorite videos for life. So it doesn't have to be perfect. You don't have to adore every second of it. But if it's something that's worked for you in a particular moment, you thought like, oh, I could see myself doing it again. Then go ahead and do that favoriting. Because like I said, you don't have to do it forever. You can take it out of your favorites in the future. And I think that that naturally does happen because after you've tried it a few times, sometimes there just comes a point where you sense like, OK, I'm done with this one and I'm going to move on to a different one. And that is all good and part of the process. It doesn't even mean that that particular practice stopped working for you. I think it usually just means that it's taught you what it has to teach you for now. And new experiences and practices are awaiting you. And then later, you might circle back to that video again and you'll have a different experience because you'll be a different person in a different body because that's how it works. Not that you have a whole different body, of course, but things are constantly shifting in our bodies and it doesn't even have to be anything dramatic. But these things are always happening at minimum in subtle ways. So I think that these ways that we're changing are often beyond the scope of our everyday comprehension because we're just we're living life. We're in it. It's hard to notice. So when you come back to a yoga video that you haven't done in a while, it can be an interesting way to observe those shifts, because then you notice, oh, here's how I was feeling. This is what I was thinking. This is what was going on with my body last time I was practicing this video regularly. And now here's what's going on. Here are the things that are similar. Here are the things that are different. So this approach with the favorites is good for people who know that you like what you like, and it kind of combines with the first one where you don't have to put a lot of time or thought into what you're gonna do on a particular day. You can just go to your favorites. It's kind of like your curated library, and press play.

[00:24:55] So this one has a kind of a part B, which is to repeat your favorite video multiple times, and we've already touched on this a little bit. But I just wanted to go into it a little bit more and talk about how repetition can be really helpful and powerful. I think this is especially true if you're a beginner and you're getting used to the movements and language of a yoga practice. So rather than constantly trying to give yourself new things to do and learn, give yourself time to become familiar with a practice, to develop some fluency in your body with it, and it doesn't matter if that means you do it three times or 30 times or three hundred times, the number of times is not really the point. It's more that when you practice with something over time, you become less reliant on needing to see every single thing that's happening in the video and you create more space to see what's going on inside yourself. I think a lot of times with something like yoga, we think that it requires constant innovation and change. And that is not the case. Life itself brings a lot of innovation and change to you naturally. So it's okay if the yoga practice itself is fairly consistent. It's kind of like we're talking about earlier that consistency can be a mirror to your thoughts and feelings because as you become more comfortable with the movements, your presence can deepen and you can become more embodied, more in your body. And from there, that's how it becomes more easeful to notice how you're feeling and how, for example, maybe yesterday you felt peaceful during your practice. Today you're all over the place. And those shifts are not signs that you're a bad yogi or that you don't know what you're doing. They are signs of life and we all need those. Sometimes those signs will be pointing you to the fact that it's time to try a different video. But other times they will be pointing you to something to pay attention to in your internal life, something that's been wanting you to notice it. But couldn't quite your attention until the quiet time on the mat.

[00:27:25] OK, so this brings me to the third option here, which is to find something within a category. So all of our studio videos now are on one page sorted by categories, which are basically just collections of video that we have chosen for you grouped around a theme. So here are some examples. We have a new here start here category, which is great for beginners, neck and shoulder love, start or end your day right, weekly yoga, hips don't lie, and many, many more. So you might say to yourself, OK, I really want to focus on neck and shoulder today. So then you go to the neck and shoulder love category and you choose a video from there. So this option is good for people who, you want to have a little bit of picking out a video, but you don't want to have to choose from the entire category at once. You'd like your options kind of pre-narrowed to a general category that you're wanting to focus on.

[00:28:29] And then that brings us to our last option, which is to filter for what you're looking for. So we have tons of filters for everything from the length of the video to the teacher to the focus area to the pose type. And many more. So the filters are great for when you want to choose a video, a video that fits with exactly how you're feeling. So you want to come and say, OK. Today, I have 15 minutes, I'm feeling like I want to move my body and kind of like a gentle to moderate way, and I want to focus on hips. So you then you can choose those three filters: 15, moderate, hips and see what comes up. So the main thing to remember when you're choosing a video or doing your practice in any other way is this: To let your yoga practice be a place to learn about you, to be with yourself. And there is nothing simpler or more profound than that.

[00:29:36] So I am wishing you your best practice year yet. Definitely without discipline, self-judgment or shame. Let's take one breath together here to close. We'll inhale. And exhale.

[00:29:54] The light in me honors the light in you. Namaste.

[00:29:54] [Music.]

[00:30:02] Thank you for listening to this Curvy Yoga Studio Bonus podcast. I look forward to being back with you at the end of next month.