



Kathryn Thomas: How to Implement Trauma-Informed Practices During Studio Yoga Classes



Kathryn is the Executive Director of Yoga 4 Change for veterans, incarcerated youth, and people struggling with mental health conditions. Explore how you can increase your awareness of potential triggers during yoga practice, and how to implement tools to ensure your studio is a safe place for everyone.

TOP EMBODIMENT TIP: Get off devices, sit in your skin, take a breath, and figure out what you feel.

Trauma-Informed Yoga Classes:

- **Trauma** is a personal, overwhelming or violent experience that you witness, learn about, or experience (ie. car accident). Trauma **may present as acute, complex**.
- **Trauma sensitive yoga** is a way to make peace with your body right to learn through experiences that your body can be affected. Again, and to reclaim your body as your own.
- If **triggered**, you are not physically in your body, you may be hearing the sounds, tasting the taste, smelling the smells of the event, and unable to control your emotional, physical response. **Internal trigger, External trigger**.

How Does Trauma Affect the Body:

- **Everybody's trauma is different and everybody's trigger is different.**
- When something traumatic happens to you, you're not able to control your responses (**flight, fight, freeze**).
- Embodiment practices get rid of the adrenaline and the chemicals that are released during a trauma response.
- **Freeze Response** is a shutting down, and also seen as a 'submit response' (David Emerson).
- **Signs:** When someone is triggered, they often disengage in practice, hold physical tension, avoid making eye contact, and may experience an emotional release (e.g. crying).

Best Practices: Bring Them Back into Their Body.

- If you realize that you said something that is potentially triggering for someone, take it out of your language.
- If you do say something that clearly has triggered someone, immediately identify the fact, re-word what you said, and check in with that specific student after class to have a one on one conversation.
- If you took care of it in class, make it clear that you made a mistake, and that you're going to learn from your mistakes and move on.
- **Give attention to how you set up the studio, where the door is, lighting, sounds, permission to touch.**

Resources

- ❖ **Books:** *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body*, by David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, 2011
- ❖ **Website:** [Yoga 4 Change](http://Yoga4Change.com)
- ❖ **References:** Dr. Danielle Smith



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