

PRACTICAL EXERCISES • NUTRITION • MINDFULNESS • LIFESTYLE & WELLNESS

# YOGA

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MOVEMENT & MEDITATION

## HOW YTT HAS EVOLVED

## RESTORATIVE YOGA

## FREQUENCY MEDICINE

# योग

*Marcia Kimpton  
Lonna Reid &*  
**YOGA**



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# Sharing Ancient Wisdom *through* Modern Practice

## How Yoga Teacher Training Has Evolved

Words: Pauline Fleming & Michele Misgalla, Chair & Vice Chair of BWY Training (BWYT)



As the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) celebrates 60 years of championing yoga, it's the perfect time to reflect on how yoga teacher training has evolved. Yoga is widely believed to have originated in India over 5000 years ago and has since become a global practice, embraced for both its physical benefits and its deeper spiritual teachings. Today, being a yoga teacher can be a professional career, with instructors leading classes in diverse settings – from schools and workplaces to hospitals and care homes. Yoga teachers aren't just guiding postures, they're creating inclusive spaces where everyone can experience the wellbeing benefits of yoga.

## How it All Began

Yoga was traditionally passed down through the *guru-shishya* system in India, a close teacher-student relationship essential for sharing knowledge across generations. This system, which dates back thousands of years, involved the *guru* (teacher) guiding the *shishya* (student) in both physical practice and spiritual teachings, with lessons tailored to the individual to support self-discovery and transformation.

When the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) was founded in 1965, it aimed to preserve not just the physical practice of yoga but also its deeper spiritual and philosophical aspects. Although yoga is often taught in groups today, BWY ensures that personalised learning remains central. Teachers are trained to adapt postures to suit individual needs and encourage self-reflection, helping students connect more deeply with their unique experiences.

BWY was one of the first organisations in the UK to offer yoga teacher training, equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach safely and effectively. Today, BWY continues to honour yoga's cultural heritage in its training, while also embracing modern

methods, such as a focus on anatomy and physiology, to help people develop a deeper awareness and confidence in their practice.

## Preserving Yoga's Rich Heritage

Yoga's popularity has soared in recent decades, with more than 300 million people practising globally according to recent research. This growth has led to an increase in yoga schools and 200-hour teacher training programmes, making it easier to become a teacher.

While this increased accessibility is valuable, it has also led to a wide variation in teaching standards. The quality of teacher training programmes can differ greatly, as many are unregulated. Some shorter courses may not provide the depth needed for students to confidently adapt postures for individual needs or fully understand yoga's physical and philosophical aspects, which often require time and practice to master.

At BWYT, we believe yoga training should balance modern science with ancient wisdom. A solid understanding of anatomy and the science behind postures is essential for safe practice, but equally important is a deep appreciation of the ancient texts and the spiritual teachings passed down through generations.

Our teacher training programmes integrate both these elements, ensuring teachers are equipped to guide physical practice while honouring yoga's traditions.

## Evolving Teaching Standards

As yoga continues to grow and evolve, there is an increasing demand for more advanced teacher training. While 200-hour qualifications have served as a starting point for many aspiring teachers, feedback received by BWY at a recent yoga event indicates that some teachers feel underprepared for the responsibilities of leading a class.



To address this gap, BWYT has introduced an Advanced Integration Course for 200-hour teachers from other schools. This course builds on the foundation of initial training, offering a deeper dive into yoga philosophy, advanced anatomy and teaching techniques. By refining their skills and broadening their understanding, teachers can boost their confidence, better support their students' diverse needs, and enhance their career prospects as the course acts as a gateway to a Level 4 Diploma – today's highest qualification in yoga teaching.

Additionally, with the UK Government planning to introduce professional recognition for movement and exercise teachers in the coming year, BWYT is developing scopes of practice to establish clear guidelines for yoga teaching. This move towards formal recognition is a crucial step in ensuring yoga remains a safe and inclusive practice for all, while enhancing the credibility and professionalism of yoga teachers.

## Yoga Teaching as a Career

In today's fast-paced world, many people seek moments of stillness and balance. Yoga provides an opportunity to slow down, reconnect and nurture the body and mind. Research increasingly supports the health benefits of yoga. Studies have shown that regular yoga practice can significantly reduce stress.

Yoga teachers are at the heart of this transformation. By sharing the practice in schools, workplaces, hospitals, and more, they play a pivotal role in making yoga accessible to all.

In recognition of this, BWYT is creating more opportunities for teachers to specialise in certain areas of practice. These specialisms include pregnancy yoga, yoga therapy, children's yoga and Gentle Years



Yoga – a course designed to support older adults maintain mobility and independence throughout their lives.

By offering specialised courses and ongoing professional development, BWYT ensures that yoga teachers are respected well-trained professionals.

## Taking the Next Step

If you've ever thought about becoming a yoga teacher, the beginning of the New Year is a good time to take on new challenges. And if you're already a teacher, there's always room to grow.

Teacher training can open opportunities, help you deepen your practice and reach even more students.

**“Yoga teachers aren't just guiding postures; they're creating inclusive spaces where everyone can experience the wellbeing benefits of yoga.”**



## Here are five key considerations when choosing your teacher training:

### *1. How the Training is Delivered*

Consider your personal learning preferences as well as any financial or accessibility barriers you may face. While online or hybrid options may be convenient and more affordable, in-person training can provide great hands-on experience, allowing you to benefit from direct feedback in a classroom setting. However, the cost of travel, the time it takes to get there and course fees can be significant, so its worth exploring local training opportunities to make it more accessible.

### *2. Be Wary of Short, Intensive Courses*

Short-term intensive training courses are often too condensed to provide a comprehensive understanding of yoga. Choose a course that allows time for reflection and application of your learning. Quality training is an investment in your career, and rushing through the process may leave gaps in your knowledge. Many courses require prior experience – make sure you're ready for the intensity of the training before committing.

### *3. The Quality of the Teacher Training Course*

Look for training that has been running for a while and has a solid reputation. The longer a course has been running, the more refined and established it likely is. Also, think about the qualifications you will receive and what support you get post-graduation. Will they help you promote your classes? Is there an online directory to help you connect with students? This support can be invaluable as you begin your teaching career.

#### 4. *The Experience of the Teacher*

Your teacher's experience is key to your development as a yoga instructor. How long have they been teaching, and what training courses have they completed themselves? How many courses have they led? Check for testimonials from past graduates. You can also ask to attend one of the classes that they are teaching so that you can meet your teacher and see what style they offer.

#### 5. *Main Focus and Strength*

Think about what you're most passionate about within yoga. Are you drawn to anatomy and postural alignment, or are you more interested in the philosophical and spiritual aspects of yoga? Review the course syllabus to see which aspects of yoga are emphasised and how deeply each area will be explored. Don't hesitate to ask the instructor about the depth and focus of the course content to ensure it aligns with your interests.

Yoga is a journey of self-discovery and with the right training, you can take your passion to the next level.



#### **Pauline Fleming**

Pauline, Chair of BWYT and a Diploma Course Tutor, is a highly respected figure in the yoga community. She began her yoga journey in 1982, inspired by Swami Indrajī, and completed her BWY teacher training in the 1990s. Pauline's eclectic teaching style honours the uniqueness of each individual, guided by the wisdom of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

#### **Michele Misgalla**

Michele, Vice Chair of BWYT, is a BWY Foundation Course and Diploma Course Tutor, as well as a qualified Pregnancy and Postnatal Yoga Teacher. Originally from the US, her background in teaching dance led her to discover yoga after moving to London. For over 30 years, yoga has been an integral part of her life, offering a profound connection between mindfulness and movement.

Pauline and Michele are co-hosting a **300-hour Level 4 Certificate** in teaching yoga starting Sunday 6 July. Ready to begin your teaching journey? Find out more here: <https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/trainings/422>

They are also co-hosting an **Advanced Integration Course** for yoga teachers looking to advance to a Level 4 Diploma here: <https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/trainings/452>

