

Hi James,

Hope you and Nicky are both well!

I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions...
I'll start with the easier of the two:

I have a student with extremely low blood pressure and she finds she gets very light headed when we practise Sitali pranayama. I get her to do her Surya Namaskar with the opposite breathing to us as she finds that helps. Does reversing the breath sequencing give the same benefits for Sitali or should she not practise this?

My second question is a little more tricky:

I teach a few classes for one of the Universities here in Wellington and have found over the years my classes are quite popular. Often during the busy semester, I can have between 45-55 people regularly which is great!

Last week I taught my biggest class ever which was 78 people! I think the numbers are supposed to be capped at 60 but people just kept coming in the door.

My question is, do you think there is a maximum teacher to student ratio to maintain the quality of a yoga class? I manage to take classes of this size as I think both you and Nicky have taught me well. The way I prefer to teach is not by demonstrating as much but by verbal cues. I find this method my favourite way to teach and works best with such big numbers, but as there is only one of me, I find I don't get to give adjustments to as many people as I just can't physically get around everyone. I try to help those who look as though they are struggling the most and try to keep the more capable participants challenged. I always try to give a good balanced class.

Also, what are your thoughts regarding fees for maintaining high attendance in the classes? I get a fee paid per class, regardless if I have 5 people or 55. Is there a standard fee out there in the health and fitness industry and does your qualifications/experience reflect that??

I'd be interested to hear your thoughts.

Thanks James for your ongoing support with weekly emails. It's nice to hear about what is going on over there and to feel part of a community.

Look forward to hearing from you!

NAMASTE

Teacher

Dear Teacher,

As you know Sitali is called the cooling breath. This is because it works on the same principle as an evaporative cooler. These are used in hot dry climates instead of air conditioners, as air conditioners dry the air out and evaporative coolers moisten it. In hot dry climates, you don't want the air any drier! An evaporative cooler uses a large metal box filled with fiber and water. Then air is blown with a fan over this and into the house. The flowing air has the wind chill factor and they are quite effective, but also noisy.

With Sitali we are flowing air over a wet tongue, pulling the wet and cooled air into the body. I like to emphasize the slurpy sound to make sure there is enough moisture.

Looking at your questions "Does reversing the breath sequencing give the same benefits for Sitali" with the above info, my understanding is that no, it does not provide the cooling effect as you are not drawing the cooled, moistened air into the lungs.

I wonder if your student is controlling her breath sufficiently during Surya Namaskar? Applying Ujjayi Pranayama slows the breath down and allows for both a longer inhalation and exhalation - moving more air in and out. I wonder if she is running out of air? Imaging pulling a very long silk scarf through a slightly clenched fist. The first is clenched just enough to allow the scarf to move, but with resistance. When done correctly, the student should have plenty of air. A good exercise to do with your students, is to have two students share a mat. Each sitting in Virasana facing each other, with their toes touching the back edge of the mat, so there is at least a meter between them. Taking turns of 1 minute each, one will do Ujjayi and the other listens and observes the breath. Then the observing student gives feed-back for 1 minute. Then change turns. Usually the breath will be too soft - not enough energy. You should be able to hear Ujjayi in a 1 meter radius in a quiet room. Note is should not be too loud either!

Yes, there is a maximum teacher/student ratio, but as you are finding out, what is theoretically best is not always realistically possible. At our yoga school, we have extra teaches to come and assist. 1 extra teacher for each 20 students, i.e. 1 - 19 students one teacher. 20 - 39 students two teachers, 40 plus, three teachers. The main teacher does the talking and the others do the adjusting. Works well for our known bigger classes.

With your super larger classes, you could not effectively demo as the students in the back of the room could not see you, unless you are on a stage? So verbal cues are the way to go.

I don't know what you are charging the University. It would be interesting to divide the average number of students against your fee and see what the per student payment is. If it is too low, I think you would have a good reason to discuss a higher fee with management.

Hope the above was helpful and am very happy to continue the conversation.

Namaste

James E. Bryan

E.R.Y.T. 500

Program Director & Master Teacher

KNOFF YOGA

Energize, Elevate & Evolve

Phone: + 61 7 4053 5857

Fax: + 61 7 4053 5004

Mobile: + 61 (0)41 536 2534

Email: james@knoffyoga.com

Website: www.knoffyoga.com

Postal address:

P.O. Box 975, Edge Hill 4870, Queensland,

Australia

Location:

Suite 14, 159 - 161 Pease, Manoora, Cairns 4870,
Queensland, Australia