GUIDELINES TO PRESENT RA VINYASA

Time and time again people return to Radiantly Alive to experience RA Vinyasa. Though it has many similarities to other great Vinyasa classes and teachers out there, there are some things that make it special - uniquely Radiantly Alive, uniquely us. This is why we consistently offer it at 9am every morning, and it is also the focus in our Level 1 yoga teacher training. RA Vinyasa is a recognizable style of teaching.

The most important aspect of teaching RA Vinyasa is not what you know, but who you are. That you present your true, authentic self - being your true self is the spice of inspiration. And within that there are some guidelines and core components as to what RA Vinyasa is - that set it aside from other vinyasa flows.

Below are the pieces that describe RA Vinyasa

7 CORE COMPONENTS OF RA VINYASA

These components **must** be included in **every** class:

I. Intention
II. Theme
III. Pure Vinyasa
IV. Continuous Flow
V. Connection
VI. Authenticity
VII. Music

I. INTENTION

Direction influences destination

Ask students to set an intention for their practice

How we direct ourselves each time we step on the mat makes a difference in what we get out of it. Intention affects everything, the way we teach, the way we move, even the way we breath. The Intention behind a class is what often changes a purely physical practice into an emotional or spiritual one.

When we dedicate our efforts to something beyond ourselves (to Guru, friends, loved ones, world peace, etc), we both have more energy available for the alchemy of our practice, and more ability to reach our highest aims.

Radiantly Alive Yoga encourages practitioners to aim for the highest, to uplift themselves and our world. As each of us awakens to our potential for peace, joy and love, so too do we awaken others.

II. THEME

Themes help us narrow our information and inspiration.
Focus our teaching, both asana and non-asana, so that it's easier for the students to absorb.

Themes could be about emotions, spirituality, philosophy, anatomy, a peak pose, astrology or any fitting issue that resonates with you. Introduce a theme during the Dharma Talk and then relate the other elements of the class to that theme.

A Radiantly Alive Yoga asana class begins with a Dharma Talk, a short discussion relating yoga to modern life. Inspire students using the roots of yoga in a contemporary context to evolve and connect in life on and off the mat, honoring the ancient scriptural tradition of yoga, while also making the message applicable to what we experience in our contemporary lives. The efflcacy may equally have to do with how we introduce scripture, chanting, sutra, etc. Share in a way that works, that helps achieve our aim. The Dharma Talk works best when it's short – students have lots of energy to move at the beginning of a class – and it's best to keep the main message simple. It should aim to bring students within for a spiritual connection with Self

We chant AUM at the beginning and closing of a class to connect with the divine, to connect the physical with the spiritual.

III. PURE VINYASA

Breath and movement towards continual awareness
Take our students to a state of flow by teaching pure breathled vinyasa

The core of a Radiantly Alive Yoga class is asana in the style of Vinyasa. Simply stated, vinyasa can be understood as linking breath and movement, a practice in focusing attention, in presence. While some styles of asana hold postures statically and/or place most of the attention on details of alignment, vinyasa attends more to continual awareness by deliberately breathing during movement, between positions and while remaining in a position.

Radiantly Alive Vinyasa has the following characteristics:

- ***A breath cue followed by a movement cue***, throughout the class. Each command begins with "inhale," or "exhale," and is followed with a simple direct action.
- ***Cues are short and specific***, using minimum relevant words will help you achieve a continuous cuing of the breath. Do not try to add too much detail or you'll soon compromise the rhythm of the breath and movement, the very essence of RA Vinyasa.
- RA Vinyasa Asana ***is profound in its simplicity***. Although you can bring in complex asana - it must be cued within a half breath, and accessible to the majority of students in a room.
- ***We breathe together, we move together.*** Aim to keep the class moving as one, rather than freely, to enhance the feeling of flow and connection.
- The class is ***rhythmic*** by cuing and guiding the breath ***at a consistent pace***.
- ***Creative sequencing of postures***, which follow an overall arc of energy. More on sequencing below.
- It's ***dynamic and physically challenging*** and using the breath as the main focus to overcome the challenge.

SEQUENCING - CLASS FLOW

RA Vinyasa sequences follow ***an overall arc of energy***, which is composed of three phases**.** Start with a still beginning, then increase the pace, energy and difficulty to a peak and finally decrease toward stillness again finishing in savasana and maybe also a meditation. Within the overall energetic arc of the class, you can create smaller arcs.

Still Beginning

Once you've begun the asana and movement portion of the class, allow some gentle postures holding each for several breaths to gently help the students to enter their bodies and inhabit their breath. Build toward more vigorous movement without shocking. Choose initial postures that most students can easily perform. This helps them to stay longer, deepen breath and build confidence.

Create pace, energy and difficulty. Make it challenging

RA Vinyasa helps us to realize that we choose where we place our attention. We can focus on problems or on solutions. We can complain or be grateful. Each choice leads to different states of being, different feelings. RA Vinyasa is physically challenging, because during a difficult asana, it's tempting to believe the mind when it complains about pain, difficulty, our inabilities or even thoughts about life outside the yoga room. By focusing on the breath instead, we learn to overcome apparent difficulties by guiding the mind elsewhere, to something helpful, showing us the way towards **Chitta Vritti Nirodha** (calming the fluctuations of the mind) on and off the mat.

Challenge is created through a mix of strong standing sequences, blended with arm balances and inversions introduced mindfully so they don't interrupt the flow. Sequences build in intensity to challenge and expand the students' capacities, which can then be followed by an easier pose or a resting pose like tadasana or downward dog. Avoid going to the floor during the standing sequence, as it diminishes the challenge of the class and allows for the student to disconnect from the breath. Of course, there is always child pose as an option at any moment of the class.

Decrease towards stillness - let the nervous system settle

Take enough time during the wind-down to allow the nervous system to settle. Savasana is essential for at least 5 minutes.

IV. CONNECTION

Our connections with other people are at the heart of happiness - theirs and ours.
Create connections, create community.

Connect with students before and after class. There are many ways to create connection in the space of class. If suitable, use the beginning of the class to have students connect by using simple bonding exercises, ask questions, be there for the students, etc. Bring to practice the Radiantly Alive motto: come for yoga - stay for family.

V. AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity starts in the heart.

True connection comes from being vulnerable and showing your authentic self.

Who you're being, not what you know, is the most important part of teaching RA Vinyasa. Feel free to use yogic philosophy to enhance your class - but have it grounded in your experience. Not an act, or words that sound like what a yoga teacher should say, but insights that are real and applicable to you and the students in the room.

VI. MUSIC

Inspiration, rhythm.

Music helps to energize and uplift students.

Radiantly Alive Yoga inspires students in many ways, some more obvious than others. Though we may not bring direct attention to the music we use as teachers, the playing of inspiring music helps to energize and uplift students. Additionally it aids in creating receptivity in students as they allow the music to come to them (literally to enter the ears). The rhythm of music can also help with the rhythm of breathing.

4 ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF RA VINYASA

These elements are important pieces often used in RA Vinyasa - but not all of them need to be applied in every class.

1. Chanting
2. Meditation
3. Pranayama
4. Adjusting

BEST PRACTICES

We strive to make our RA Vinyasa an exceptional practice and complementary to a wonderful flow. There are some things to incorporate, as it has been described above, as well as some to avoid. As an RA teacher, we ask you to consider the following;

Language

Language is important, and how we use it makes a difference. It should be used in a way that supports the core elements of Radiantly Alive Yoga, so they should build connections, be authentic and compassionate, and make students feel at home.

a. The class is about the students, not about you. Avoid using “I”, as giving an order.
“I want you to lift your leg up” vs “lift your leg up".

b. Use positive language, avoid using negatives.
“Don’t bend your knee” vs “Press through your heel, keep your leg straight”

c. Avoid when possible the use of *gerunds:*
e.g. “Lifting, bending, stepping: adding ‘ing’ to a word is called a *gerund* - they can be useful, but when misused create passive and ineffective language i.e. “Lifting your leg up, stepping your foot through and feeling your heartbeat” vs “Lift your leg, step your foot through and feel your heartbeat”. There are times of course that gerunds are appropriate, when it’s connecting two sentences “Lifting your leg up, gaze under your right shoulder to see your left foot” but mostly they’re used to be indirect.

d. Yoga Teacher Voice: You know that one, right? It’s where the voice, tone and pattern of a person teaching sounds nothing like that person when they’re speaking normally. We’ve all experienced it. Let’s not recreate it. Let's be our authentic selves in front of the room!

e. Minimize demo’s: Demonstrations can be effective as a teaching tool. Use them wisely, vary the amount of time you use them, and be clear when you do. When you’re demonstrating you’re automatically less with the room, thus with your students.

f. Avoid ‘Question Intonation’ – Where you finish a command with an upward inflection like it’s a question rather than a statement.

g. Choose your words wisely when cuing. Each word has a subtle (or not so subtle!) energetic effect. The following examples should serve you more as an inspiration rather than a requirement: For example, the difference between saying:

‘Swing vs Lift’;
‘Drop vs Lower’;
‘Step vs Place’;
etc

This list, of course, can be infinite.

Except for the Core Components, these are all guidelines to help you hone your teaching and leadership skills over time. Most importantly, **authenticity,** one of RA Vinyasa’s Core Components, must be especially taken into account for **all of our classes.** Just simply be yourself when you are sharing your practice. Though WHAT you’re teaching is of course important, *WHO YOU ARE* while teaching is the true key to connect and inspire.