

Hosting a yoga book club for your students



ABOUT THE AUTHOR -

Katie Garnett is the Vice President of Yoga Australia and owner of KatieYoga, a yoga studio and teacher training school in Busselton WA. Katie's vision is of building a community around the practice of yoga, and empowering individuals to take charge of their health and wellbeing. Her mission is yoga for everybody, and she realises this through offering accessible yoga to all ages and abilities. Katie is a yoga teacher, yoga therapist, qualified school teacher and workplace trainer with over a decade of experience in training and education. Katie also holds a Masters degree in Communications.

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I was casually chatting to some students after class about good yoga books when they had the bright idea of a yoga book club. I loved the idea and quickly agreed to host one at the studio.

Connecting with others and building a community around the practice of yoga is part of the ethos we nurture at KatieYoga. Over the year we've found the Book Club to be a great success in fostering a sense of community and we hope other studios, teachers and students might also benefit from the concept.

Given I had never been to, let alone hosted a book club before, I initially found the concept a bit daunting. However, I've found everyone is so enthusiastic and keen to share and I've quickly let go of any apprehension.

Planning the event:

- Our Book Club is a free, one-hour event. Other ideas could be to have it as a gold coin donation to go toward the space or a charity.
- We meet once at the end of each school term, four times a year. Often book clubs meet more regularly but I felt to keep it sustainable four times a year would work for us.
- I let everyone know the book at the start of the school term through email, on Facebook and at the studio.
- We choose the book through a voting system. I send out a list of books that is based on recommendations from the group and we vote on our preferred book.
- Students are responsible for obtaining a copy of their own book. Some prefer books electronically.

At the event:

- We welcome people to bring nibbles and we provide tea.
- We start with everyone introducing themselves to the group.
- I have a list of questions that include general questions suitable for any book and I write up questions specific to the book we are reading. This serves as a guide to get things started and the conversation flows from there. We don't cover all the questions, they are simply there as a guide.
- I feel my role is that of a facilitator where it's important to find a balance between having the discussion naturally progress and ensuring everyone gets the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas.

Books we've include:

- Yoga and the Quest for the True Self by Stephen Cope
- The Journey Home: Autobiography of an American Swami by Radhanath Swami
- Living Your Yoga by Judith Hanson Lasater
- Yoga Bitch by Suzanne Morrison

Examples of questions:

- What was your initial reaction to the book?
- Were there any particular quotes, stories, concepts or chapters that resonated with you and why?

- Has the book changed your outlook on your yoga, how you practice or any other part of your life/practice?

- What did you like best about the book? What did you like least about this book?

- What did you already know about this book's subject before you read this book? What new things did you learn?

The Book Club has been really well received and it's been a great way to connect students not only at the book club meetings but also at our regular yoga classes. To do this, I introduce students who I know are reading the book, to each other. It's a great way to break the ice before classes, and foster conversation and social connection. Apart from the social connectivity benefits, it's been a fantastic motivator to get us all reading more and practicing Svādhyāya.

I hope you're inspired to start a book club, I'd love to hear how it goes. If you're already hosting one I'd love to hear about it. It would be great to swap book ideas and questions!

Book Clubs and CPD  

Reading yoga related books and hosting book clubs can also be used for CPD points for members.

Reading the book can be the same as conducting research. This means;
 For books that are core to Yoga, participants will get 1 point for every 2 hours of reading
 For books that are related to Yoga, participants will get 1 point for every 4 hours of reading

Attending and participating in the book club will attract points as follows:
 For books that are core to Yoga, participants will get 1 point for every hour of the session
 For books that are related to Yoga, participants will get 1 point every 2 hours of the session