



COLLABORATION VS CONFRONTATION

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF ANOTHER YOGA STUDIO OPENED UP IN YOUR STREET?

CHARLEY:

When I set up my first yoga classes around 10 years ago, I researched what other yoga was in the area. This was tricky, yoga teachers weren't really online back then - these days ignorance isn't really an excuse!

What I quickly realised was that there was an established yoga teacher (Morag) at the end of the street where I'd set up. Had I realised initially, I would have contacted her but since I was already underway, I guess I just ignored the situation.

I did make an effort to ensure my classes weren't clashing with hers as I felt that was the right thing to do. I am so grateful that about five years later, Morag reached out and we caught up over a coffee.

Nowadays we are good friends and regularly catch up and talk about yoga therapy, a field we now both also practice in. I feel our ability to collaborate instead of compete has brought benefit to both of our yoga schools. If we'd continued to ignore each other we'd never have benefited from the collective experience we hold between us and share with one another. I class Morag as one of my mentors, although she'd probably

laugh at that, being such a humble teacher and she sometimes asks my advice too.

Occasionally students will inadvertently wander into the wrong building but we send them back down the road.

People are often surprised that we are friends but I think this has created goodwill throughout the yoga student community around here. We've held a workshop

teachers. Yes, you may be in 'competition', but if you let that competitive vibe get too out of hand, it can create disharmony within the local yoga community and end up being bad for everyone's business. In our dealings with each other as teachers, we really can boil it down to practicing the yamas.

- > Ahimsa – not competing aggressively
- > Satya – stating our intentions

“ I strongly encourage other yoga teachers to communicate and even collaborate with other local teachers... if you let that competitive vibe get too out of hand, it can create disharmony within the local yoga community and end up being bad for everyone's business.

together and refer students back and forth depending on their needs and class availability and this benefits everybody.

I strongly encourage other yoga teachers to communicate and even collaborate with other local

truthfully

- > Asteya – not purposefully luring (stealing) students away
- > Brahmacharya – having excess students – refer them on!
- > Aparigraha – believing we “own” students somehow (we never do!)

MORAG:

‘Heyam duhkham anagatam’ Yoga sutra 2.16 ‘suffering which has not yet occurred must be avoided’.

When I started teaching yoga 18 years ago, there were very few yoga teachers in the Applecross area, in fact there were comparatively few yoga teachers in Perth.

I knew or knew of most of them.

Today we are a huge yoga community, with many established

Find Yoga and decided to contact her, not only to inform her about the seminar, but I also thought it would be a good thing for us to get to know one another. So we met for coffee and there began a mutually beneficial friendship and professional relationship. Knowing her to be an experienced teacher of great integrity, when I stopped teaching evening classes I confidently referred my students to Charley’s classes.

teachers in your area.

Surely this is a much healthier professional relationship and one true to our yoga ethics, the Yamas and Niyamas, than the other possibility of conflict and competition.

If we are unable to apply the Yamas and Niyamas in our professional relationships with our teaching colleagues, we are not practicing yoga and we are failing as an example to our students.

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and newly graduated yoga teachers looking for opportunities to teach their passion.

So how do we avoid the potential competition and conflict between teachers that could arise from this situation?

Charley of Charleyoga and I teach not only in the same suburb but also in the same street and on one day a week at the same time! Yet between us there is friendship and cooperation. So how did this come about?

I was aware that another yoga teacher had started teaching on a Monday evening in the nearby tennis club, and eventually added a Thursday morning class, but as I was teaching classes on different days, I did not consider it to have any impact on my already established classes.

Some years later when I was co-hosting and advertising an international teacher’s seminar I came across Charley’s page on

So the answer to my question how to avoid conflict and competition? Communication, I urge you all to try it! If you know of other yoga schools and teachers near to you, make contact – enjoy the possibility of having new friends and colleagues.

And my advice to newly graduating teachers and any teacher wanting to start classes in an area where other yoga teachers are established:

- > Find out who’s teaching in the area and contact those teachers and share your intentions. This would be courteous, honest and open up communication.
- > They may be able to help and give advice, they may be looking for a teacher to off load a class to (as I was two years ago), they may need some relief teaching, or they may advise on what areas of need there are e.g. specialised classes.
- > They could become mentors or friends; you could create a cooperative local sangha of

Charley Hickey is the Yoga Australia National Management Committee representative for WA. She runs a small yoga school in Applecross WA. She has been teaching yoga for 12 years and is also a qualified yoga therapist who works with a range of clients in a private setting. She also runs specialised workshops for groups including professional development for yoga teachers.

Morag Local owns and runs Applecross Yoga in WA. She began her yoga journey 38 years ago and has been teaching for 18 years. Morag teaches and studies yoga in the tradition of Krishnamacharaya as taught by his son Desikachar. She is a qualified Yoga Therapist, a registered senior member of Yoga Australia and member of AAYT and IAYT.