

Amble Wellbeing Sangha Call – 2024/11/11 15:29 EST – Transcript

Attendees

Amberly Kelley-Dotson, Amberly Kelley-Dotson's Presentation, Meghan Charlson, Nora Vines

Transcript

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: All So, today we're going to be talking about inclusivity and accessibility in yoga spaces. And m, as you may know, a pretty snarky gal. So, I subtitled this practicing what we preach, right? Because I think that we hear a lot of this yoga is for everyone, but then that's not always what's happening in yoga spaces. So, we're going to talk about that today. I am going to start us with the Saha chant, which hopefully you are familiar with. This is just the little opening chant that we do in my lineage. So, I'm going to chant it for us. You are welcome to mute yourself and chant with me. But, if you do chant with me, make sure you're muted because when we chant together and we're all unmuted, it does some really weird things virtually.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So you are welcome to join me if you choose. Tamas Shant shanty shanty.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: All right. So, just a little reminder about what this chant means. Yeah. May we all be nourished. May we work together with great energy. May our intellect be sharpened. May there be no animosity among us. Peace. A beautiful concept, I think. All moving right along. So, I know that most of this, but I always just like to add these little reminders. A little bit about me, So, my background is in psychology and in recreation therapy. I have a background of working in addiction treatment, mental health treatment, and with a variety of folks with disabilities.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: I've worked for many years with folks with autism and with many folks who are deaf heart of hearing. my yoga training is primarily in the line of yoga therapy right particularly in the lineage of Vinnie yoga and I'm presently studying arurveda which is really informing the work that I do in yoga as well which is really cool and in my business I do a lot of work with folks one-on-one to help manage lots of different issues right whatever is coming up because we view of people as holistic beings, not just a body and a brain and a digestive system that are all separate from each other. So, let's briefly review. Last month, our topic was what is yoga and what is the role of the yoga teacher, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And I'm not going to spend a ton of time on this because you can always go back and watch the recording from last month, but just because I think this is important information for where we're going today, let's talk about what yoga is briefly, So the word yoga comes from the word yuge, which means yoke y o k e. And a yolk is like if you have ever seen those big wooden boards that were used for oxen, right? Where there would be two holes and two oxen would pull apart, Yoke is joining. Yeah. And so I think that's a really good metaphor for what yoga is. And in fact, that is the metaphor that is used in the upachads of Vic text in talking about yoga is that these two oxen are different energies, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And you are the driver of the cart using the yoga to direct the energy. And referencing another Vic text, the Yoga sutra 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 tell us a lot about what yoga is. And 1.2 to

yoga tells us that yoga is about the transformation of the mind so that it can operate at its highest as a faithful instrument of perception for consciousness. Yeah. So some people translate this as yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. But I like this is the way my teacher Gary translates it and I like that a lot too, right? Because it's not just about calming the mind.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: It's about establishing the mind so that it can help us perceive correctly. And then 1.3 and 1.4 go on to say that when you are in this state of being a able to have correct perception of yourself, those around you etc. that you are then established in your true nature, who you really are. Right? And outside of that right this using the practice of yoga if you are not established right if you are not able to see clearly you are not established in your true self you are going to be identified with the activity of your mind so you're not your true self you are following the stories that you have the narratives that you have important reminder about what yoga is so with that definition anyone can practice

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: practice yoga, Because it's not this thing that we might always associate yoga with, This is a practice that should be available to everyone. So, how do we do that? Also, right, remember that yoga at its core is a practice of self inquiry, It is only a group of tools truly, We have the tool of asana or movement to understand our bodies. We have the tool of pranayama or breath to understand our breathing patterns and to tap into our nervous system. We have the tools of meditation of which there are several to tap into our stories, narratives and beliefs about ourselves and the world around us, right? And then we can use yoga to create change in those ways. But ultimately it's a group of tools used for self inquiry.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: the purpose being self-realization. And then I added this quote on there which I referenced last month as well from one of my mentors, her name is Kathy that I think is such a beautiful quote that yoga is really about getting to know yourself more deeply and then just being kinder to yourself with all the things that you've learned. And What a beautiful practice. our topic today, inclusivity, accessibility. Let's talk about inclusivity. So I want you all to take a moment to think about what inclusivity means for you.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So if you are in a space where you can sit and write, maybe just briefly take a moment and write down how you would define inclusivity, what the word inclusivity means to you. And I'm going to be quiet for just a moment and let you write that down. If you can't write down, just be thinking about it.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and when you finish that, I want you to list some examples of inclusive environments that come to mind. Perhaps it's environments where you have felt that it's an inclusive space. jot those down. And when you jot those down or think of those, write down why they felt inclusive to What was it about those spaces that felt inclusive? And maybe it was something that someone said or did.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Maybe it was just the people that were around you. Maybe it was something specifically about the environment itself. And then I want you to think about your perception of western yoga culture, And how it seems to be broadly. And take a few moments to write down if you feel like that creates inclusive environments generally in your experience.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And you might and likely do have experience of experiences of where it was inclusive and also where it wasn't inclusive. So let's do both, right? And again, jot that Maybe write down why it felt inclusive or ex exclusive.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And no pressure at all, but if anyone wants to share anything, I'd love to hear Okay. Yeah.

Nora Vines: I'll share. Can you hear me? I don't when I was thinking about what it means inclusivity,...

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Mhm.

Nora Vines: the words that pop into my mind are accessibility, but also representation. and then thinking about just some words also that popped into my mind about an inclusive environments are filled with options, opportunities for success, in supports. and then kind of those barriers I guess to inclusivity in Western yoga culture.

Nora Vines: And all of these words and associations kind of map onto the inclusivity,...

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Please.

Nora Vines: but also exclusivity of just postures, poses, movements, clothing, language and then also just the presentation of yoga, if that makes sense. what is presented when I walk into a shared practice. So, what do I hear? How I'm feeling energetically?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson:

Nora Vines: All of those things kind of come together to either put me at ease as a practitioner or make me feel like I don't belong in that space.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Yeah, thank you.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Yeah, I think that's great. and I'm going to probably say it a little differently than you did, so please correct me if I say this but the way that you said opportunities for success, There are opportunities for everyone being presented. There are options and I think that's such an important thing to consider and something that we'll talk about a little bit more as well. Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So inclusivity as defined by the Oxford dictionary is the practice or policy of providing equal access opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized such as those having physical or intellectual disabilities or belonging to other minorities. groups. Yeah. So, let's revisit this image that we looked at last month. Right. So, this is a collection of images that when I was just making I've used some of these images before in a PowerPoint.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: If I just type in yoga. This is what comes up, And so we can look at all of these images and we can notice The first thing that I see is, wow, some of these postures are really intense, There's someone doing a very challenging handstand, back bend. There's someone doing a very challenging forearm stand back bend. There's a couple people doing really really deep back this is not necessarily reflective of being inclusive or accessible in my opinion. Right? Yet when I just type in yoga, these are the images that come up.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And so of course these are the types of images that a lot of people associate with if I type in accessible yoga some of these come up but I to get some of these photos. Really specific. I think I had to write down or I had to put in multiple keywords like geriatric, chair, disabled, pregnant, large body. Some of these I had to search and search and search and take the word yoga out to find them. Yeah. And I think that's interesting.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Because this collection of photos looks like yoga to me, right? This is my idea of a yoga practice, right? These people look as though they are connected with themselves. Maybe they are connected with their breath in some of them. They look more at ease, we can see in their faces that there's no strain. That seems more like a yoga practice to me, And yet I had to search and search for these. So if that is happening just in image searching, right? Then what is happening in actual yoga spaces? So let's notice what those differences were between those images, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: that first collection. lots of balance happening. I will also point out some very apparent things that I noticed. Every single one of them was white appearing, very thin fit, wearing very similar clothing, right? Sports bra type top and leggings. there was a lot of similarities, right? And in the other selection that I had to work a little harder for, we had people of various body sizes, various body color or skin colors, various ages, right? Even I didn't even say that about the first one, a little bit more representation.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So let's talk about the effects of exclusion and effects of lack of accessibility. So I want you to take another moment to think if you are not able to write down if you are in a space to write this down. I want you to think back of a time that you experienced the feeling of not being included or you experienced the feeling of this is for I am not supposed to be here. I am different from the other people around me. I do not feel included in this Any experience. It does not have to be specific to yoga at all.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: any experience at all and I want you to write that down what it was where you were whatever again if you are writing and then write down jot down how you felt right what were the emotions that you felt what were the stories that came up for you what were the feelings the thoughts you name it maybe even you felt some stuff in your body happening in your body so take a moment with all of that. And again, I'm going to be quiet for a moment.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And when you think about your experience there, would you ever go back? And in some cases, would you apply that broadly, to places that you perceive as being similar places, spaces, or classes?

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And then take a moment to think of another time separate from this experience where you notice that something somewhere, some class was exclusive or inaccessible to a specific group of people, maybe that did not include you. And then jot down what group of people were being included and what group of people were being excluded.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And if that was explicit or implicit and what I mean when I say that is right is explicit is like we are coming out and saying this is a space specifically for this group of people whereas implicit is implied essentially. And then again, no pressure, but if anyone would like to share any from the

above from the last two slides, please feel free to unmute yourself of times that you have felt excluded and what that was like or just times and experiences

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: This is where you've noticed that a certain group was excluded.

Nora Vines: I mean, I'll just say for my own personal slash professional reflection, I've definitely been the teacher of a class, realizing that folks taking my class were being excluded by my teaching and...

Amberly Kelley-Dotson:

Nora Vines: my lack of knowledge for how to make what we were doing accessible to them. So, just kind of, Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Yeah. Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So there's so much of that that gets missed I think. Right. and a lot of learning and I'm going to keep this specific to yoga world, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: In a lot of learning in yoga world, we aren't necessarily always taught how to make things accessible for people because it's a group of people who come together who have all been practicing yoga for a long time and gone to classes and love it and therefore want to learn how to teach it, It's not necessarily the same as the group of people that are going to come into your class. And so I think that often times gets missed. Okay, so we're going to talk in broad strokes for this next little bit. And truly, I could spend an entire hour talking about a lot of these individual bullet points, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and how to make spaces inclusive and accessible to each individual bullet points. However, we do not have time for that. So, just remember that these are really broad strokes that I will be speaking in for this next little bit. So, let's talk about who gets excluded in yoga spaces, right? So, brown indigenous folks, black folks, people of color, right? If we think back to those images, every single one of those folks was white presenting in that first little collage, right? So, it is very common for people of color to be excluded in yoga spaces because it has become so synonymous with wealthy white lady culture, right, for a lack of a better way to say it.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And I think that it is really important for us to remember that yoga as a practice comes from brown folks. Yeah, this is a practice that comes from India. And I want to acknowledge that myself and that I am a white lady whose entire career is based off of a practice that comes from India from which none of my ancestors came. Right? And so it's really important I think for us to acknowledge that and remember that India has been dealing with colonialism for quite some time and the effects of that and that is still ringing true to this day. Right. Another marginalized group who gets excluded a lot is the LGBTQIA plus community.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And there are a lot of letters there. So, lesbians, gay folks, bisexual folks, trans folks, queer folks, and so on and so forth, right? Gender fluid folks, non-binary tons of folks under this umbrella. And they do generally get excluded. And there's a few ways that can happen, but what I see happen a lot is in the language that is used by teachers, So, the people in the class, making gendered assumptions about the partners of people in class, making just broad gendered statements. Yeah. Is one of the biggest ways that I see this happening, Amongst many other ways, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So folks also who are excluded in yoga spaces are the ones who do not fit the images of the thin fit, flexible folks we saw in that first collection of photos, right? And so that can look a lot of different ways. One of them is pregnancy. Yeah, I know that there are a lot of teacher trainings that are starting to teach more about how to be inclusive to pregnant folks in classes, but there's still a lot of lack of information around that.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So there are few different ways that we can change that and we'll talk more about tools later but pregnant folks get excluded a lot right people with larger bodies right and that affects the way that they relate to the floor that they relate to the rest of their body also get excluded a lot they don't fit the image of that thin fit lady. All right. People with What do I mean when I say bendy bodies? I am referring to people with hyper mobile disorders. And if you've been to a yoga class, you have been around a hyper mobile person. Period. They flock to yoga.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: They do for a variety of reasons, but one being that they get told that they have a beautiful practice a lot, right? Teachers say, " my gosh, it's so beautiful when you do this. You're so good at yoga." Right? That language, which first of all, that's gross. No one is good or bad at yoga unless they're assholes, then they're arguably bad at it. because yoga is about being a decent person, but right, they get this positive reinforcement of you look so beautiful when you do this. And so they come back because their joints are hyper mobile, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: The ligaments and the tendons that pull their joints together are lax and therefore their range of motion is beyond what is normal and they can get into very very bendy pretzel shapes. However, they are likely in lots of pain All the time. Having hyper mobile disorders comes with a slew of other issues. And so while they are very present in yoga spaces, I mean when I say that they get excluded is their practice gets excluded, Because teachers push them to a certain place that this practice is no longer serving them.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So broadly, Bendy folks pretty well included in yoga spaces because they look pretty in the pretty shapes. Their practice is excluded though, A practice that is supportive to them is not what's happening generally. Yeah. And then people with injuries and restricted range of motion either from injuries or chronic tension or you name it, Similarly to when I was speaking about pregnancy in larger bodies, it's because folks don't know how to make accommodations and adaptations for including these folks. Moving right along, who else gets excluded? People with invisible disabilities. And what do I mean when I say invisible?

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: I mean, you can't necessarily just look at someone and know these things are going on for them. So, that could be anxiety or panic disorders and depression, And that can present a lot of different ways. People with post-traumatic stress disorder complex post-traumatic stress disorder, people with addiction and substance use, folks who have disordered eating and are recovering from diet culture, people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder,

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and on the autism spectrum as All right? Because generally speaking, yoga spaces are geared to neurotypical folks from, much like most of the world, unfortunately, and so all of these things play a role. And some of the ways that I see these groups of people getting excluded is from lack of awareness of how to manage anxiety and panic using yoga practices that might induce them. Yeah, see that a lot unfortunately. same applies to trauma, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: We don't know. I'm going to say this multiple times today. We don't know what our students are coming to us with unless we know, And generally, they're not going to tell you. And you sure as hell are not going to get information in advance, particularly in a yoga class. You will be lucky to just have a list of the names of the folks that are signed up for your class. addiction. So, I see a lot of language about drinking and there's I mean, how many yoga classes are like you get a beer with your yoga class if you come to the brewery, And so, I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about that, but as you can assume, I have some feelings about it.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Speaking about, getting could be right. Using yoga as getting fit or getting a yoga butt or getting in shape or whatever could be really problematic for someone who has a history of body image issues disordered eating, of eating food after a class. Yeah, I've unfortunately heard that in yoga classes many times, too, And then of course with ADHD and autism that can look a lot of different ways, But generally just being able to accommodate the attention needs of folks who are on these spectrums. Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and not singling them out when they're not able to stay with you, And then we can talk about visible disabilities, And what I mean when I say that is when you look at someone, you can see that they have a disability, And that could look like being deaf or hard of hearing. But I also want to include age related hearing loss because I have a slew of those students that come to me, I could also include blindness or having low vision and a variety of physical disabilities, needing assisted movement devices.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So that could apply to someone who, has had an amputation for whatever reason or someone who uses a wheelchair or a scooter or literally anything else that assists with their movement. Generally speaking, the average drop in yoga class is not accessible for those folks in any way, shape, or And I also want to say we do the best that we can as young teachers and that is your job to do the best that you can. So let's talk a little bit more about how these folks get excluded and what we can do as yoga teachers.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So I briefly talked about this earlier, the idea of explicit versus implicit, And so explicit would be something like this class is only for women aged 25 to 28, right? that is intentionally and explicitly excluding a large population of people. And hear me say That's not always a bad thing. For a long time, I taught a queer yoga class that explicitly was only for people of the LGBTQ plus community. And that's not a bad thing, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: I think that it's important to have opportunity specifically for marginalized folks to gather in community with others. So it's not inherently a bad thing. Implicit would be right just the language that is used in the space maybe by the teacher maybe by other people in the classroom. It could be implied by the design of the classroom and if people can actually get into it. It might be implied by the lack of use of props to make things accessible for folks. So that's not someone saying this is not for you person with large body. But it is implied this is not for you person with large body because I'm not telling you how to do it in a way that works for you. So are those differences clear? Both are important.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And then there's the idea of appreciation versus appropriation, and just coming back to this concept that Yoga comes from a culture that is not of the western white culture. And so appreciation is acknowledging that it is acknowledging the culture.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: It is acknowledging and utilizing all of the aspects of the practice versus appropriation which is just cherrypicking the ones you like which is what broadly happens right we just do as a right we're picking just this one limb that we like appropriation could look like having hindu deities all over the studio space without knowing anything about them Which how often does that happen? that happens all the time. There's a huge M symbol somewhere and no one knows what that means. There's a huge gapati Ganesha somewhere and no one knows anything about who he is. And that is appropriation, We are appropriating these images that are trendy right now. I mean, they are trendy now, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: that are associated with yoga culture without actually utilizing or knowing anything about them. And so in that specific instance, let's say someone of Indian descent comes to the class, they're probably not going to feel super included even though this is a practice of their people, because the person teaching the person in charge and we can talk about power dynamic too is not honoring the culture from where it came is not honoring what the actual practice is.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Some other ways that folks get excluded is by assumption. Right? I've mentioned this a few times, but making any assumptions about their bodies, about their gender identity, about their sexual orientation, about the gender of their partner, you name it, Making assumptions just not great in general. Don't advise it. Also, we might consider the setting and the supports that are So, Offering visual cues for your students. Now, I harp on and I know y'all have heard me say this. I harp on Do not teach while you practice. It is you get It is how your students get hurt. However, you can use visual cues, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So something that I do a lot with people in my classes, let's say I'm guiding them through verbadrasa, warrior, what some people call warrior one, right? And I'm doing a different arm variation. I might stand at the front of the class and as I'm guiding them through that, I'm saying inhale, lift through your chest, bend your knee, reach your chest forward and up. And we're going to take our arms out to the sides. And I might just take my arms out to the side so that there's this visual cue of what we're doing. Right?

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: This is particularly effective for my sweet older students who have some age-related hearing loss. They are very dependent on my visual cues and being able to see my face. And so I keep that in mind when I have them in class. Yeah. So that is really helpful. Visual cues. I might point to we're going to use this arm, we're going to use this leg. And I try to mirror my students, but I always tell them that too. that because sometimes if you do this they'll do the same arm right generally we also want to consider our lighting right so if there it's sure it's lovely to have a really calm relaxing class that is dimly lit.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: However, if you have students or a student who is relying on being able to see you or their classmates to know what's happening, the lighting needs to be enough that they can see that. yeah. We also want to consider music and sound, right? This can be really important when we're thinking about hearing loss, but it's also really important when we're thinking about people who are blind or have low vision because they're going to be more dependent on the auditory cues, But if we have really loud music, it's going to interfere with the ability for people to hear over your voice.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: If we're using music with lots of words, it's going to be very challenging for some people to differentiate your words from the words that are happening in the music. We also want to

consider music and sound when we're thinking about trauma and anxiety, We don't know what our students are coming to us with. Therefore, we do not know what their association with popular music is.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And so I encourage teachers all the time to not use popular music on their playlists for classes because you don't know what that song means. You don't know if that song has attachment for that person, We have no idea. And then So the idea of physical touch can be really helpful, but we also need to be really aware, We Always want to get consent. And we'll talk a little bit more about physical touch in a moment. But then Props and adaptations are your They are your friend so that you can ensure that your students all feel included and what to give them to use to help. And then the language that you use matters.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So, let's talk a little bit more about language. Are you making gendered statements? For example, are you addressing your classroom as ladies when you don't know that they are all ladies or identify as ladies, right? Are you talking to students and assuming that they have husbands, whatever, right? that is implicitly exclusive to a group of people. Are you spiritually bypassing when people are talking about their experience or feeling anxious or whatever? Spiritual bypassing. An example I wrote on here was, I believe everything happens for a reason." And you can believe that all day and that's great and I don't think that there is inherently anything wrong about that belief.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: However, it can be really invalidating to say to someone, "Yeah, are you silver lining people?" Right? And when I say silver lining, what I mean is someone is sharing something and your response is, at least it's not fill in the blank." And the response to that is, " I have no right to feel the way I feel because it could be worse." Wow, what an invalidating experience. Not and this next one is something that I see that happens so much in yoga spaces. Are you spreading toxic positivity, right? Let's just be positive. Let's just keep smiling. Let's just this that is toxic. There is a time and a place for many other emotions, right?

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Other emotions are information and they are not negative. Yeah. So, please don't do any of those three things in your yoga class. Are you referencing alcohol drugs that could be triggering to someone in recovery? This is something I am acutely aware of, But I see it a lot in some in teachers just talking about, "Yeah, I need a glass of wine after this week or using cannabis is happening a lot, right?" And we don't need to get into the nitty-gritty of how we feel about cannabis as a whole, but if someone is in recovery for addiction, that could be triggering for them, and it's just not your space as a yoga teacher to talk about.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Are you using language from diet culture, right? Are you saying things about earning food or deserving a treat or whatever? Are you talking about we're burning calories in here, we're getting fit, we're going to get a yoga butt, we're working on those abs, right? Are you using language that could be triggering for someone who has struggled with disordered eating, who has struggled with their body image, Maybe you have a classroom full of those people. And I would argue generally you have multiple people in your classes that have some relation in one of those areas if not triggering at least it could be reinforcing an idea they're trying to get away from. Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And then are you offering adaptations as the full expression of the pose or the advanced expression of the pose and this is the easier or less beginner right because when we do that

when that is the language that we use where's everyone going to go I have to do it that way or I am less than and that's that is pretty exclusive to do as well and that's just of course people are going to

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: go there. So, what are some tools? One of the big things that I encourage people to do is to share their pronouns. Upon introduction. And if not necessarily saying you have to do that every single class if you have the exact same group of class or students every single time, right? You don't necessarily need to do that every time, but every so often, what would it be like to share your pronouns, Also, integrate non-gendered language. This is one thing I love about growing up in the South is that I use Y'all doesn't have a gender at all. It's great. Hey y' Love it. Fantastic. Big fan of the word y'all. I also love folks, which I don't know if that's where that comes from, if we're thinking about dialects, but I use folks all the time. Again, not gendered.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: friends, I don't know, whatever you want to call people that's not gendered. I love Be creative. But don't just assume that when you look around and everyone looks a certain way that you get that to just use a gendered word. Yeah. Be sure that you provide options for adaptations without hierarchy. One adaptation or one way of doing a posture is not inherently better than So staying away from that example I had before of full expression or the more advanced or whatever. Instead saying you might try it like this or see what it's like like If you do it this way and you notice this sensation happening here that doesn't feel comfortable. What happens if you do this? Right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: really changing the way we are using language around offering adaptations. which I just had an example of in that just now using exploratory language rather than hard and fast cues. Right? what does it feel like What do you notice if you do this? I invite you to be curious about the sensations when you take your arms this way. instead of put your arm right here right now. Because coming back to what we talked about last month, the role of the yoga teacher is what? it is to help students awaken the teacher that's in them, right? It is to help students create some connections for themselves to learn about themselves.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And so when you are using really hard and fast skewing, it provides less of an opportunity for that curiosity that we are trying to curate within our students. Some other things that you might do is at the beginning of your class, orient your students to the space and how you teach. Yeah. So I'll This is where the lights are. This is where the music comes from. This is where the restrooms are. you have the freedom to get up and go to them at any point in time. When I teach, I tend to walk around. So, you're going to hear my voice from these places, So, that's something that I always start my classes with. Hey, I'll be up here but you'll notice me walking around through the class because I like to watch my students from a variety of angles and make sure that everyone is moving safely. And so, you're going to hear my voice in various places so that they know what to expect rather than being like, " my god, where is she?" Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and also giving students the total freedom to not do things that don't feel safe and comfortable comfortable for them right your students need to feel as though they have autonomy over their bodies when they are in your space and so from the jump when I am orienting students to the space and the way that I teach I also always say hey and you're the expert on your body not me I have no idea of the sensations that are happening in your body unless you share them with me. And so because of that, you get to decide if something does not feel safe and comfortable in your body for any reason. And

you get to decide not to do it if you don't want to, You have that full freedom throughout this entire class. And that's really important and really empowering, which is so important for folks who are coming to you with a history of trauma, right?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and a variety of other but okay I briefly mentioned touch earlier I'm going to come back to it again briefly this is not a again I could take hours talking about just touch right but I won't do that today so always always get consent for touch and then be aware of their body language right if they say yes but their body is saying do not freaking touch them, And generally my general rule, I do not touch students until I have built a rapport with them. I don't touch brand new students ever. I don't even ask. Doesn't happen because they don't know Yeah. And that being said, when you are touching a student, you better know why you are touching them, what your intention is, what is the reason. Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And To come back to what is the job of the yoga teacher. Moving your students bodies for them does not teach them how to connect with their bodies. It does not help them understand their bodies. you're just doing something for them. It is not teaching their mind body connection in any way, shape, or form. And for that matter, as a yoga teacher, you're not licensed to do it. I know that it's taught in yoga teacher trainings. You are not licensed and you could be sued. And that is just that. Period. Okay. Be aware of your lighting and music that you're using. I talked about this a while on the last slide, but something that is helpful, this is one little example that I love to use with folks who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have some age related hearing loss.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: You can use the lights for shiobasana, right? Turn the lights low for shabbasa and when you start bringing people out, start to bring the lights up so that if they miss that auditory cue for any reason, they have the visual one as Using both. I talked a lot about the music before. I'm not going to get back into that. But also be aware of your position in space. And if you know that you have students in your space that have some hearing loss or are deaf, it would be helpful for them to be able to see you more often than And make sure that they can see your face. Try not to cover your face because that makes it really hard to know what you're saying. Yeah. Not that deaf people can all read lips because a lot of them can't because it's really really hard. Don't make that assumption. Okay.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So let's talk about making some ASA accessible and I'm going to just talk about this briefly. So f folks with large bodies can benefit from having wider knee placement right so that there is more space for them to move. So if we think about positions like tabletop having a wider knee placement can be really helpful. If we think about standing forward bends, right? probably everyone who has taken ASA classes with me has heard me say hip socket distance apart. People with larger bodies and people who are pregnant could benefit from a wider space so they just have more space to move. we can use support from props like blocks and straps to help bring the floor a little bit closer.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So if we're doing something like chakravakasana, right, or a child's pose, we can bring a block or a bolster under the head to help it be a little bit more accessible. If we're doing something like aanasa where we're pulling the knee into the chest, putting a strap behind the knee and then a strap in the hand could be really helpful if reaching the knee is not accessible. pregnant folks can also benefit from a lot of those same adaptations. But I also really love using the wall because at some point when people are pregnant, they are not going to feel comfortable in their stomachs any longer. And so as you can see in this picture here, we're doing bjangasana cobra at the wall. And so you use it the exact same

way you would on the floor, Pulling through your hands, lifting your chest. And we are doing a one- arm adaptation in this image that you see. Beautiful adaptation for folks who are pregnant.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: I use it all the time. I also use it with some of my older folks who can't comfortably do this on the floor. Great. Don't forget about the wall. It is a wonderful, wonderful prop. So, coming back to bendy bodies, hyper mobile folks, one of the biggest ways that you can support them is by helping them become aware of their curiosity and trying to find sensation in their bodies before end range. So you might let them go to end range and then back off a little bit and then can you identify sensation there? Yeah. Because hanging out in end range is them. It's not helping anybody really, but it's certainly not helping someone with a hyper mobile disorder. And so I talked about this briefly too.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Folks who are deaf or hard of hearing or have some age relating hearing loss really can benefit from visual cues, lighting cues along with being able to see your face. Yeah, it is much information gets communicated just by the faces that we make, They're so important. So remember, you do not know everything that a student is bringing with them. You do not know their history. And so I encourage you to air on the side of caution, And remember that the role of the yoga teacher is to awaken the teacher within the student and awaken them to their own understanding of themselves and their own yoga practice.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: And We do that by helping them connect. More deeply with themselves. So, that was a ton of information. Very broad strokes crammed into one hour. So, any questions?

Nora Vines: I don't think I have any questions right now, Amberly, but I was just gonna say I just appreciate all of it. it's good affirmation of some of the things I feel like I'm already doing well and then challenge for I move around in my space but I have not told people I'm going to move around. I tell them that I'll stop us so I can demonstrate, but I don't tell them I'm gonna move around. So, just some things of it would be helpful to be really clear about some of this. and I was thinking about I've been reflecting on some unlearning I've been doing not in my initial yoga teacher training, but in a followup kind of quick and dirty one.

Nora Vines:

Nora Vines: We were explicitly taught to be I'm going to use the word forceful. I don't think that's how they would have described it, but forceful in our language of just do that. Not leaving space for cultivating intrasection. of just be very clear with your cues and you tell them exactly what you want them to do. so I appreciate that of thinking about cultivating curiosity and encouraging folks to explore what is going to feel best in their bodies.

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Amberly Kelley-Dotson:

Nora Vines: No, I do have a question. Okay. ...

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Yes. Yes.

Nora Vines: so thinking about that so the balance of inviting people to explore what feels best in their bodies but not inviting them to do whatever they want during the class. How do I find that balance?

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Yeah. Yeah. It's funny that you asked that because I was already thinking to say something about that hearing you just speak a moment ago. So it's such a delicate balance, And I think it's next month. I'll have to check back on the schedule. We're going to talk about managing your classroom. And so we're going to dive into kind of this a little bit more.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: But just to briefly answer it, it is such a delicate dance because we want to invite inquiry. However, that doesn't mean you get to just fling yourself into a headstand because you want to when we have done no appropriate preparation to keep you safe and I'm watching you do it and you're going to fall. I have had someone go totally rogue, do a headstand, and fall on another student in my class before.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: and what a nightmare, So, it's such a delicate balance. And the way that I set it up at the beginning is when I'm orienting students and I say, I move around. You have the full freedom to not do the things that we are doing if they don't feel safe. However, I ask that we all stay together. Yeah.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson:

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So because if I'm don't want a student getting hurt on my watch, And if they are doing some wild stuff, but I know they haven't done because I've been guiding them thus far the things that they need to do in advance of those postures. Yeah. So I try to set it up that way. And then in acute cases of that happening, there's other ways to try to manage which is is very tricky. but that's how I set it up from the beginning. Is that helpful?

Nora Vines: super helpful. Yes, thank you.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: Okay, just so everyone knows some upcoming topics we're going to have over the next few months.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: So, we're going to talk about informed teaching more in depth, right? And I know I briefly mentioned it today, but we're going to really dive into informed teaching and what that looks like in your space. We're going to talk about, like I just said, how to manage your classroom. We're going to dive deeply into understanding the intention of ASA. And we just might spend more than one of these doing that. Yeah, we are also going to talk about the principles of sequencing once we have an understanding of the intention of asa because I think that that is really really important. We're also going to get into the intention of pranayama and breath practices which I'm really excited about. I think that that gets missed a lot in a lot of training and I love to teach teachers about breathing.

Amberly Kelley-Dotson: we are going to talk about human energetics from a vadic perspective and how we can use asa prairiyama and other tools of yoga to affect the energy in our system. And we're also going to have a few sessions that are putting it into practice where we are rather than being in this lecture setting I'm going to guide everyone through a practice of some of the things we've been talking about that demonstrate some of the things we've been talking about. But I would love to know from anyone if there's any other specific topic that you want to get into. Please feel free to shoot me a message or throw it on the Miwee. And I'll add it to the list. So, yay. I'm going to

Meeting ended after 01:04:32 🖐️

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