

YOGA THREADS

Deepen your practice, inspire your life

Teaching

Yoga 2.0: Tech Tools for Teachers

Need a little help with headstand? You could swing by your local yoga studio. Or you could log onto YouTube and watch some 2,000 *shirshasana* demonstrations. Countless yoga teachers are using modern technologies to share ancient practices and wisdom. “Technology is wonderful for sharing heart, for sharing soul,” says spiritual teacher and author Ram Dass, who connects with far-flung students via live broadcasts over the Internet. His “interactive satsang” (ramdass.org) has replaced the whirlwind speaking tours of decades past. “I can stay in Maui and communicate with everybody in the world,” says the 78-year-old counterculture icon, who is confined to a wheelchair.

If you’re a yoga teacher looking to connect with students outside the studio, consider blogging, writing an e-mail newsletter, or networking through free services like Facebook and Twitter. If you have more of a techie side, give these tools a try:

Digital Voice Recording: Students sometimes have trouble remembering instructions. That’s why Larry Payne, founding president of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, records private sessions and sends students home with a CD. “On days when they’re not motivated, they just put it on. That’s worked out really well,” he says. You can record right onto your computer with free software such as Audacity, or invest in a portable recorder like the Olympus WS-210 (\$70).

Podcasting: If you’re comfortable sharing your recordings with strangers, podcasting lets you do it. A podcast is a series of audio or video files that are distributed over the Internet. In 2006, yoga teacher Elsie Escobar began recording her Los Angeles classes for students who wanted to practice while on vacation. *Elsie’s Yoga Class: Live and Unplugged*, available through iTunes and Escobar’s website (elsieyogakula.wordpress.com), found fans in Europe, Asia, Africa, and aboard a military ship. A listener in Korea called the podcast “nothing short of a lifeline” in an e-mail to Escobar. Podcasting requires recording software or equipment, plus an account with a hosting service such as Switchpod or Hipcast. The most basic plans cost a few dollars a month.

Voice and Video Chat: A long-distance teacher-student relationship can thrive with the help of free or low-cost voice and video chat services such as iChat or Skype. New York City yoga teacher Andrew Sugarman met Bianca Chumley, who teaches in Louisiana, at a Viniyoga workshop in Pennsylvania. Now he’s teaching her to chant Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* via iChat. “The technology is really up to it,” says Sugarman (artofbreathing.com). “When I learned the *Yoga Sutras*, I’d watch the teacher’s mouth. I’d watch how he was making the sounds. A lot of it has to do with the jaw and the tongue. Bianca and I can hear each other really clearly, and I can see what she’s doing. It’s almost as good as being there.”

—Anna Dubrovsky >>