

# **The Bumbling Yoga Guide for Big Boobs, Bums and Bellies**

## **10 Yoga Tips for Nervous Bigger People (That aren't patronising)**

I love yoga and attend classes regularly, but being a larger lady, I understand the anxieties of starting out. This list is just from my experience. I'm not a qualified yogi (yet)! Here I look at the mental and physical ways you can enjoy it at any size. These tips are aimed to help you overcome the practical and motivational barriers you might experience. Always consult with a doctor and yoga teacher if you have serious concerns; enjoy my list of fun personal tips!

### **What are your top tips for yoga newbies?**

#### **1. Try some videos at home**

There are loads of great free yoga videos on YouTube and it's a really effective way to familiarise yourself with some of the poses. Some nice beginner friendly creators are Yoga with Adriene, Yoga with Bird and Yoga with Cassandra. They offer accessible content and modifications. Or try and look up 'body-positive yoga' or 'plus-size yoga.' If you feel self-conscious, this is a great introduction to practice.

#### **2. Modify, and sometimes not in the ways you expect**

There will always be options to take an easier pose. Often these might be recommendations about putting your knees on the floor in planks or ways to ease pressure on your wrists. It took me time to realise that my physiology means I need my feet much wider in a lot of poses. I couldn't get into a low squat pose with my heels down (Malasana), but when I widened my stance, I could do it. My feet and knees mean often I have more balance when I turn my toes out slightly. Some of these modifications aren't standard advice, so it's worth playing around a bit. Everyone has a different body; I'm a real Picasso of knock knees, flat feet, fat belly and short legs. Sometimes I'm good at poses other people really struggle with because I can bend forward well and have short legs, but I can't do more basic poses. Focus on your own practice, use a mirror, experiment!

#### **3. Balancing big boobs and bellies**

Yoga was originally formulated by men and for men. Yoga for big boobs, and yoga for large bodies is accessible, but your ample bosom and larger stomach can be difficult to manoeuvre in certain poses. There are always options. A friend of mine adjusts her breasts before certain twists, I often open my arms instead of having my hands in prayer for twists. Squeezing my knees to my chest? There's a lot in the way, so I open my knees a bit. You can and should consult with your yoga teacher for suggestions because there will always be something you can do.

It's worth thinking about your clothing. A baggy t-shirt might balloon over your head, so I wear leggings and a fairly fitted vest. If you're more self-conscious consider a t-shirt with an elasticated bottom, and some level of support from a sports bra helps. I prefer a slightly lower impact version than I would run in, but work out what works. Never feel yoga isn't for you. Embrace your different and unique body.

#### **4. Experiment and don't feel intimidated**

There are a lot of distinctive styles of yoga, Power Yoga, Rocket, Ashtanga...the list is long, and so you can find something you enjoy. I love hot vinyasa flow, in a heated room, sweating and moving at pace. Other people prefer slower practices like Yin, Restorative and Hatha. I am drawn to more dynamic practice because that works well with my ADHD. A lot of people love the long holds and slow release of Yin. Don't judge all yoga by one class or one teacher. Try different styles until you find one that works for you.

**5. Remember yoga is about your mind as well as your body**

Yoga is a holistic practice and is therapeutic on many levels. Yes, I burn calories and my hyper ADHD energy in my classes because I sweat and flow. Focusing on breathing and my mental state also gives me myriad benefits, including a level of peace that is often elusive in my daily life. Yoga for anxiety, and yoga for ADHD help you with impulse control, sleep, and hyperactivity. You can choose how much of the philosophy you subscribe to, and different classes may have varying levels of this. I encourage you to be open and approach yoga not just as a physical exercise.

**6. Leave your competitive nature at the door**

Yoga is not a competition. When I was younger, I would be constantly looking around a class to see if I was 'the worst one,' or 'the fattest one.' The classes I go to now really feel like a community and honestly, no one else will care what you look like. I once got cocky and fell on my face (uninjured), sometimes I can't get onto one leg at all. Embrace the difficulties and don't worry if you fall over, go on the wrong leg, even if the person next to you looks like a professional dancer. It really is about your own journey in a safe and inclusive space. If a class doesn't work for you, it's okay to find another one.

**7. Extend grace and respect to your teacher**

If you don't like a class, don't go back. I have heard some horror stories from teachers about students complaining about yoga during a class. Just as a yoga class is not a place for you to be judged, neither should you judge. Be prepared for a class to be different from your expectations and accept that. Your yoga teacher is a person, too, and often people come to teaching yoga because it has helped them overcome a difficult past. It's fine to ask questions before or after class, and you should let your teacher know about any injuries so they can advise you, but bring respect, open-mindedness, and a positive attitude to class.

**8. Don't be scared to lie on the floor, or cry, or sleep**

The wonderful thing about yoga is it's always okay to take a break, get into a Child's Pose or just lie on the floor. Sometimes that might be what you need. Yoga can release a lot, and it is not uncommon to feel a tearful release at the end of a session. That's okay and some teachers have told me they are happy their students have felt such a powerful impact. It's also okay if you fall asleep and yes, sometimes snoring happens, especially at the end. I think my record for staying awake in a Yoga Nidra session is about one minute. It happens, embrace what you need.

### **9. Don't take yourself too seriously**

Every class has its own, unique energy. I know that sounds weird, it depends on lots of factors. Sometimes there is a lot of energy in a room, sometimes it feels super calm and quiet. Sometimes yoga is funny. When I talked about falling over? It is funny, accept your yoga fails! Don't worry, your teacher will guide the practice and respond to the room's energy. I try really hard not to kick people or hit them, but I don't always succeed, and we laugh about it after class. It is supposed to be enjoyable and make you feel good, you can let out your inner child in Happy Baby Pose! Sometimes it might feel tough, but you shouldn't feel in pain or miserable.

### **10. Tell yourself you can (but don't worry if you can't)**

I stole this quote from my teacher. She says it when we're trying something hard, usually transitioning in balances, but it is really motivational. Push yourself, not just physically, but also mentally. Your time doing yoga is just time for you, try to be present and leave outside problems outside. I always advocate for pushing yourself out of your comfort zone, and this week my 70-year-old mum is going to try a class with me!

Always acknowledge, as with all activities, you might not find yoga is for you. I think with any activity, especially fitness related, you have to find something you enjoy or you won't keep it up. Yoga works for me because I love all the benefits, I hope you feel the same, but if you don't, that's okay.

So, there you have it! Staying in my listicle lane, but more varied content is in the works, watch this space!

I strongly advise you give yoga a try, even if it is just in your own bedroom. Any form of 'exercise' can take time to get used to. I always find you have to keep at things for longer than you think to get your body and mind used to it. Enjoy the journey and accept where you are.

It doesn't matter if you're a hot mess on the mat, as long as you're on the mat! Get out of your comfort zone and enjoy yourself!