

- Juli Rathke: I'm Juli Rathke and I'm the founder of YOGA + Life. And I have the privilege to speak with Joan Hyman today who's out in California. I'm sitting in my home office during what seems to feel like the end or nearing the end of COVID quarantine, but who really knows? How are you doing today Joan?
- Joan Hyman: I'm good. I'm noticing we're getting some construction in the house, you can see that. But I've been good. I have been adjusting and the word fluid comes to mind. I have definitely had to be fluid through this whole transition. I feel like I'm moving into a new chapter of my life as well too. This was a drastic change for me, but I think the last couple years have really prepared me for yet another shift. So I'm hanging in there. I'm hanging in there. Yeah.
- Juli Rathke: Good glad to hear. I know that things are very different for so many people. I just want to state the obvious first and foremost. As a teacher and as a practitioner, amidst what's happening in the world, so many people have shifted their teaching practice to this online situation like you and I are doing right now. How has that worked for you? And how has it worked for the people that you work with? I know you teach yoga teacher trainings and are an educator in the industry. How was that shit? Tell me about that.
- Joan Hyman: Well, I had just said that the past couple of years have prepared me for the shift. I've been in LA for 20 years and that's how long I've been teaching full time, totally dedicated to teaching. And then the past 10 years I've been a traveling yoga teacher. So when this happened back in March, I had to cut my tour short and come home. And I didn't really know what to do because traveling is probably the last thing that's going to open up. So I decided to open up these online Zoom classes. And I had been dabbling in putting my stuff online, but because I've been teaching so much on the road, I really never had a chance to dedicate myself to putting more of an online platform out there. And so what I decided to do, because I knew a lot of people were having financial troubles was offer one free yoga class a week on YouTube, plus a tutorial, and then open up these online Zoom classes.
- And I remember my first one, I emailed some teacher training students and I said, "Do you want to come? Just pay whatever you want." And sometimes when you start something, you just have that feeling like this is working, this is in alignment. So I kept doing it and they've been growing. And actually this past week, I set up a whole system. I have over a hundred students attending these Zoom classes and it's been a lifesaver for me, because I love to teach, I love community. And if I didn't have this outlet, I think I'd be very depressed. And it's really has kept me going. And not to mention I've been able to study with some amazing teachers online too. There was that window a lot of us had to jump onto this online platform. And I feel like when I said I'm making a whole new shift, I feel like this could be something that stays with my career path.
- Juli Rathke: I was just going to ask that. I myself have reconnected with people I've practiced with, or maybe that I have instructed or took education from over the years. Amidst this time, I reached out to some friends and I've been practicing with

some folks in New York and California, and it's really felt inclusive to me. I felt this community, this [inaudible 00:03:48] that we speak about. And pre COVID we were really fixated on who we specifically spend time with in our studio space. You had just alluded to the fact that this may have some staying power. How do you think it's going to affect the studio experience or don't you think it will change at all?

Joan Hyman:

No, it's definitely going to change and it's already changed. So I'm affiliated with Yoga Works and Wanderlust, they've been a big part of my career path. Unfortunately and sadly Wanderlust Hollywood just closed their doors, and Yoga Works in New York closed as well. And I do really think a lot of mom and pop studios are going to have a hard time. I remember when we went into quarantine, I was thinking, "Okay, two, three weeks, the economy will survive. Two months..." And I'm already seeing it. And people are going to be very apprehensive to going back to classes in a closed room, there's usually a lot of sweat and you're sharing props and the hands on adjustments. And just working with yoga studios over the years, it is so hard to make profit being a yoga studio owner.

And now that we have this two month lag and who knows how long it'll be. I mean, yoga studios aren't expected to open up until phase three till yoga studios are really in full swing. On my end, I do a lot of workshops for studios abroad. And part of the reason why I'm starting this online platform is, I'm actually planning for a lot of these studios to not be able to host me. And if they still open their doors, it's going to be really hard to have big events and host traveling teachers. So I think there's a big reality that setting in here.

Juli Rathke:

I Know. And I come from the mindset, like all good yogis, that there's got to be a silver lining in this all, and that it's connecting us in a very different way, and maybe we're influencing more people by creating more platforms. So the online community is a whole new platform. It was there, but the technology was inhibiting for a lot of people. Let me just shift a little bit away from the business side of things to an aspiring teacher, because you've been teaching for 20 plus years. You have an established following, so those people showed up and even if you didn't have four walls, you stuck a hundred people in your virtual space and it felt good.

What about the new teacher who just found their voice and is exploring their place? Because we all have something to contribute. I mean, I teach the business of yoga in a yoga teacher school here in Breckenridge. And I always say, "You don't have to know it all. You just have to share what you know because there's somebody who will benefit from what you have to offer today." But I can imagine the landscape of new teachers, it could be a little bit more intimidating. [inaudible 00:06:57] perspective.

Joan Hyman:

Yeah. And as a teacher trainer, that's my main platform. I'm even thinking I have to adjust my trainings into more of learning how to practice, because the path for a new teacher is going to be much more difficult. It was already difficult. I

mean, those of us that started teaching 20 years ago, I mean, it was so easy to go get a class at a studio and build community. And then over the years it's just been so competitive. And just being very involved in the yoga community. Those of us that have already had this network, and I think what's really saved me is being a traveling teacher. So I have this worldwide network and they're able to plug into my classes, and new teachers that don't quite have that network, it's really hard for them to launch this online platform. And yeah, I think it's just going to be a little bit more challenging as well to try to make some profit being a yoga teacher, especially if the yoga studios close or if they're not making profit as well too.

Juli Rathke: Right. If you had to give advice to that individual, and I know that you're thinking about it, what advice would you give them at this juncture?

Joan Hyman: Well, I mean, this is something I've always said to new teachers, as you know, my main teacher was [Maty Ezraty 00:08:13]. And when I graduated my 200 hour, she looked at all of us and she was like, this is just the beginning. She was very blatant in what she would say and she was like, "You're not ready to teach, practice for 10 years and then you're ready to teach." And I think what's happening right now is actually beginning to separate the teachers that have been teaching for a long time. This is really in us, it's in our nervous system, versus the teachers that are really good with the social media, but they haven't been practicing for such a long time.

So I think it's just going to slow the path of a yoga teacher down. Establishing a network, it takes time as you know, so I think it's going to really weed out the teachers that are very dedicated and that "chop wood, carry water" saying, that step by step, they're going to have to keep doing it. Versus someone that just really needs an income and thinks that teaching yoga is a cool job. I think it's going to start to really weed out the authentic teachers or from students that might get a little discouraged as well.

Juli Rathke: Right. Right. Well, thanks for that. It's to be determined. We're lucky to have so many amazing leaders. I look back, even when I started teaching, there were so few extraordinary teachers in the world at that time. I always talk about the pyramid. These are our new teachers down here and the top of the pyramid isn't based necessarily on knowledge, it's just your experience and kind of trickling down, and everyone has something to contribute in the different levels of the pyramid. But I think we're fortunate to have so many amazing educators like yourself.

Joan Hyman: Yeah. And that's what I saw when everybody made that jump into the online platform. I mean, those teachers that were at the top of the pyramid and have had experience, for them this was actually a smoother transition. And it's been great to watch everybody. And being a traveling yoga teacher is challenging. I love it. But you're away from your loved ones, you're on the road, you're dealing with airplanes. So I think for a lot of traveling teachers that might be ready to be home for a little bit, this is actually a turn in the right direction for them.

Juli Rathke: Let's move to a little bit more of an ethereal space. I've had this question I've been pondering. I've put it out there in social circles, friends, just people who follow me in my network. How has this idea of quarantine... And I don't even want to have it be associated to this medical situation, but how has the idea of moving inward and not being physically present with people changed your relationship with yourself?

Joan Hyman: It's a good time to do shadow work and really look in. And I think whether you're quarantined by yourself, for me, I've been quarantined with my partner and my puppy. And my partner, he's a tour manager and I was a traveling yoga teacher, so we had this very exciting relationship that was just an endless honeymoon. And now we forget what day it is and it's definitely brought us closer. But for us to get to this level, we had to really do some work. And it's the same with myself. I've really have used this time as a retreat and a way to break my attachments, which are painful. My attachments to identifying with a traveling yoga teacher, all the trips that I'm taking and really just go under all these layers and start to look at all aspects of myself.

This is the time for the shadow work. And a teacher had said to me, "We can't heal if we're in the fight or flight." And when I look at my life before COVID-19, I was in fight or flight, I was constantly catching a plane and everything was new all the time. And I'm taking a lot longer time to practice and I'm actually doing a lot more quieter practices. So I feel like I'm just going with the flow and letting myself slow down and doing some healing, that if we can embrace this time and look at it as a time to get still and heal, I really think the world is going to be a much better place after this experience.

Juli Rathke: Yeah. The messaging that I've been getting from individuals is that this has been a very healing time for some, and it's been on the other side of the coin, a very stressful, scary time. Maybe the individual who's not as comfortable with the conversation that they're having with themselves has forced them to have that. I mean, change is inevitable, growth is optional. It's a book from probably in the... to date myself, in the early 90s I remember reading that one myself. And for me, I have found that some of the people I work with, those who need to be physically present have struggled with the dialogue of, "I am not as influential because I'm not there." Have you experienced that at all?

Joan Hyman: No. I think what I've experienced is fear. A lot of fear coming up. I remember when I had to cancel... I was about to go to Nepal and do a Nepal trip and then in a blink of an eye that got canceled and I was home. And I've had to really readjust all my online platforms, the way I collect money, it's just been one thing after the other. I have a lot of tools from my yoga practice, years of therapy. And that's what I mean, I feel like if you've been doing the work the past couple years, you can really use your tools right now. Because dealing with fear, I think is one of the most challenging things to do. And also the fear of money. I mean, we're dealing with the fear of health and the fear of money, and this is all [inaudible 00:14:14] stuff. So it's part of the reason why I've just really

have grounded down into a practice and have learned to witness my fear and really choose to work through it, because we can't run.

Juli Rathke: Right.

Joan Hyman: We can't run. And we're right here, just sitting with everything that comes up and it's intense. Talking to my students, I think so many students are so appreciative to have an online platform to do yoga and actually really connect like the way we're connecting now. To be able to talk about this, release, and realize we can't feel bad for ourselves because everybody's going through it.

Juli Rathke: And I quote this from Elisabeth Elliot. "Sometimes fear does not subside and one must choose to do it afraid."

Joan Hyman: Yeah.

Juli Rathke: And I found that to be inspiring the other day, so I put it on my little inspiration board.

Joan Hyman: yeah.

Juli Rathke: I want to ask you as well. I mean, I live in a place where beauty is abundant in the outdoors. Do you feel that mother nature and our connection with the earth itself has changed through all of this?

Joan Hyman: Yeah. I mean, I do follow the whole spirituality, I'm in the yoga world. I do feel like we're shifting into a whole new paradigm. And at the speed we were going and all the energy that we were wasting, and also that was being depleted with all the traveling. I'm from LA, and part of the reason why I became a traveling teacher was I couldn't stand the stress of driving around Los Angeles. And now that we're all at home, I mean, there's no traffic on the road. And I mean, the air pollution has really cleared up. I mean, LA has never been beautiful and we've all heard what's going on in the rest of the world. So I do think this is a reset for the earth. I mean, there is no other force that could stop the planet like this. And so I think mother earth said, "You know what? Enough. Human beings stay home and figure it out." And she's healing.

Juli Rathke: I mean, I agree wholeheartedly. And for me, it's forced me outside to find my groundedness in moments where I feel like I'm way up here and all over the place and the busyness that had to subside to reroot and ground. I just feel like the conversation shouldn't end, and so that's my next question is, how do you prolong the half-life in what we've learned from this? What do we do as a society / humanity?

Joan Hyman: Well, I think what's going to happen is, and I can even see this in America. We're going to get out and just go right back into our old ways and then there's going to be another resurgence or another something until we really learn how to

calm down and really use our energy in a much more productive way. I think this is actually going to be the toughest part of getting out of quarantine. And that's the transition, not being judgmental of people, the fear that's still coming up for people. And also people that... For lack of a better word, that are kind of ignorant to this. I think there was a big block party in one of the states with 3,000 people gathering. We're going to go back and forth, back and forth until we learn our lesson. And then I think this is when a big shift is going to happen.

Juli Rathke: Thank goodness for the practice. And I feel that the community that has a practice are the ones who will find that homeostatic place as we transition. And hopefully they can influence using their energy and bringing their loved ones along with them through that process.

Joan Hyman: Yeah. And as teacher, and I'm sure a lot of us who have been teaching or the spiritual talkers and I mean, everybody has a place in this right now. And even when I started my online platform, there was just an energy in me that said, "Do this. You have to help." And I do think that more people are going to embrace yoga, spirituality, meditation. The benefit of these online classes is that going to class takes three, four hours out of your day. Whereas when you're doing it at home, it's just an hour, you can reset yourself and you're coming from a more conscious place. So I do think, yeah, we're going to need these tools more than ever.

Juli Rathke: Right. Well Joan, this has been phenomenal chatting with you. We probably can talk all day once we really got into it. But I do want people to have the ability to connect with you more based on this conversation. So what's next for you? And how can people connect?

Joan Hyman: Well, you can check out my Zoom classes. If you go to my Instagram page, Joan Hyman, my Facebook is Joan Hyman Yoga and my website's joanhyman.com. All the links are there with the class descriptions to join. I'm also actually doing a virtual yoga retreat on summer solstice weekend. And it is about coming out of this darker time that we spent in quarantine and emerging back into this new world. So the details are on my site, and it's four hours a day in the morning, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

Juli Rathke: Well, everyone from YOGA + Life appreciates your time and what you're doing for the community and the industry. And I look forward to practicing with you online because I'm not going to LA tomorrow, but I will be there at some point. Joan, thanks so much.

Joan Hyman: Thank you Juli. Thank you.