



Anusara's Optimist

On a sunny Saturday in February, 70 people crowded into a Denver studio for something out of the ordinary: a public class with senior Anusara teacher Amy Ippoliti. For several years, Ippoliti had been living the yoga superstar life, traveling the world to lead hours-long workshops and days-long Anusara immersions, teacher trainings, and retreats. She couldn't remember the last time she'd taught a 90-minute class open to anyone who walked in the door.

Cameras rolled as she explained the theme of the class and her 2011 tour, Turn Up Your Volume, chanted the Anusara invocation, and guided students through pose after pose, leading to a pinnacle: *urdhva dhanurasana*, the heart-opening backbend better known as wheel or upward bow pose.

"Any problems?" she asked, as 70 spines lowered to the floor.

An "I can't" came from a woman up front.

"If you say, 'I can't get up,' you will not," Ippoliti responded. It might have sounded like an admonishment except that Ippoliti oozes conviviality, an *I've been there, sister* relatability. "'Up until now, I have not been able to get up.' How about that? Say that to yourself." >>



Amy Ippoliti at the 2010 Anusara Yoga Grand Gathering.

“Up until now, I have not been able to get up,” the student said.

“However, now I’m going to *so* get up,” Ippoliti added, and the room erupted in laughter—not for the first or last time. “Now close your eyes. If you had trouble getting up and you told yourself, ‘I can’t get up,’ tell yourself a different story. That’s a way of leaning into the experience with more positivity and more hope. If you never push to the boundary, you never learn to be a superstar, a superhero.”

Talk like this is part of the reason for Ippoliti’s superstardom. The long-time student of tantric philosophy

and Sanskrit puts ancient teachings in delightfully modern terms. Her youthful vernacular (“the bomb,” “super-stoked”) is a frequent source of humor and, along with her playfulness, belies her 41 years. Students also love that she doesn’t put on airs. “What you get in the street is exactly what you get in the classroom,” says Denver yoga teacher Michelle

Marchildon, who has studied with Ippoliti since 2007. “She is so authentic.”

Ippoliti was only 16 when she took her first yoga class at a New York City gym. Ten years later, she enrolled in OM yoga founder Cyndi Lee’s first teacher training—with no intention of teaching. “I just want you to know, I’m only here to deepen my practice,” Ippoliti remembers telling Lee on the first day. “And she was like, ‘Shut up! You’re going to teach yoga.’ From then on, I knew that I was going to teach. I needed somebody to believe in me.”

The following year, at a yoga conference in Albuquerque, she overheard peo-

ple raving about John Friend, founder of the then-nascent Anusara system. She wasn’t registered for his workshops, but she strode past a door monitor and sat in the front row like she belonged. When he began talking, a tear rolled down her cheek. “I knew: that’s my teacher.”

For the next several years, she left New York almost every weekend to study with and eventually apprentice under Friend. Today she chairs the Anusara Yoga Curriculum Committee, overseeing a famously rigorous teacher-training program. The Anusara Immersion, a 100-hour prerequisite to teacher training, was her brainchild. She designed the first immersion in 2002 because she wanted people to learn the intricacies of yoga before learning the intricacies of teaching it.

Her recent public classes were part of a new brainchild: 90 Minutes to Change the World, a course designed to address what she sees as a decline in the morale of local yoga teachers and the quality and popularity of public classes. “I noticed that teachers were under the impression that success as a yoga teacher is becoming an international traveling rock star,” she says; 90 Minutes shows them how to be wildly successful in their own communities. More than 200 teachers from across the United States, Europe, Australia, Thailand, and elsewhere participated in the online version of the course in February.

Ippoliti enjoyed being able to connect with yogis around the world without leaving the comfort of her home near Boulder, Colorado. But don’t expect this yoga superstar to quit traveling. She lives for that “super-high” look in people’s eyes when they come down from their fifth *urdhva dhanurasana* or sit up from *shavasana*. “That euphoric feeling is you at your best. It’s you at your most authentic,” she told her hometown crowd. “That’s like full volume, man.”

—Anna Dubrovsky >>

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

IF YOU KEEP A JOURNAL, chances are it’s filled with tales of sadness and woe. There’s nothing wrong with that; expressing those feelings in writing can be cathartic. But Ippoliti suggests starting a second journal. “One of the things that has really helped me turn up my own volume is to keep a journal where I write the things that are going well. What happens, I’ve found, is that because your mindset is on what you’ve been doing well and what’s been going well for you, more stuff goes well for you.” Ippoliti advises writing in your “success journal” immediately before meditation practice. “It sets the tone really nicely.” Jot down victories large and small, whether it’s kicking up into handstand for the first time, resolving a conflict with a coworker, or spending quality time with your honey.