

Mirroring



In exercise classes mirroring is often used as a tool to lead students through an often fast paced class and we do need to consider whether this is a useful tool for our yoga teaching.

We will all find our own way regarding the possibility of mirroring and it can certainly be helpful particularly when practising alongside our students, especially in a series of flowing movements. Some yoga teachers use mirroring to very good effect and it can be helpful initially to perhaps place a R and L on the floor, on the walls, a bracelet on our right wrist or even written on our hands, where each time we refer to the right we move the left and vice versa. This is something that can become effortless with practise.

However, it can be useful to simply refer to different points of reference in the room rather than using the terms 'left and right', especially because some students are actually easily confused regarding what is their own left and right. So here we can state we are moving towards the clock end of the room or raising the window end arm. Indeed teaching in a familiar room we quickly find our reference points and our students quickly learn what we mean. Just as easily would be indicating which arm 'this side arm' we are starting with and point in the direction you want everyone to move towards. That way as the teacher we are not too concerned with 'lefts and rights' just direction.

It can also be helpful however to consider how in yoga we often demonstrate first, then to start practicing the pose we can momentarily turn our back to indicate which arm is lifting. Turning our back is acceptable for short periods although if it is used too much it will diminish our connection with our students. Alternatively we can simply rely upon demonstration followed by verbal instruction although this approach will depend upon the asana(s) being taught and the level of experience of the group.

Also, when practicing alongside our students we can sit or stand side-on so for instance rather than sitting facing a group for Janusirsasana we sit side-on with the right leg extended, asking everyone to find this position or similarly for Virabhadrasana II we stand side-on with the right leg leading. We can then swap direction when practicing alongside to the other side so we do not have our back to the same students. To help with this process we need to have a keen sense of the students' line of vision and so it may sometimes be beneficial to move position in the room.

It may also be useful to imagine you are in a student's body so what is their left and right side becomes very apparent and this is especially useful when using verbal instruction. We can also use this when for example we know we want to move towards our right side of the room in Palmyrasana where we can swing around our perception as to which arm they will need to lift as we simply get ready to move to that side as usual.

Finally, there may be times when we prefer to invite students to for instance take one foot forwards without giving a particular leg so for instance in Ashwa Sanchalasana (lunge) and if then twisting we ask students to turn towards the front leg, where we are using other parts of the body as a point of reference.

Much of our approach is commonsense and comes with experience as long as we are mindful of what will be most helpful for our students at any point in the class

Certainly mirroring will be especially useful for any flowing asana and with perseverance it is a skill we can learn.

Mirroring