



Teaching Mind-Body Wellness to Large Groups

Adam Brady

Teaching Ayurveda, meditation, or yoga to large groups of people is not without its challenges. Making sure that a large event or group class goes as planned can involve multiple steps, a team of like-minded individuals, the right location, and a host of additional concerns to ensure success. In my experience teaching several medium-to-large meditation and yoga classes, I've identified a few key aspects that I believe help to make any wellness event of this kind go off without a hitch.

- Build relationships and partnerships. While it's possible, organizing, setting up, and facilitating a large event on your own without any outside help or support is not realistic. In large events there are lots of moving parts and different individuals and/or teams who are working in concert to make sure everything is successful.
- Build relationships with the key players in each area:
 - Will you be in a hotel convention space? Get to know the convention services manager.
 - Will you have AV needs, such as music or a microphone and speakers? Work with the audio technician.
 - Will this event be marketed online, in print, or through social media? Partner with the marketing manager to guarantee the event is properly described and represented. Reach out to everyone who can help make sure the event goes as planned.
- Come from a space of being aligned with your dharma and intention. When preparing to offer or teach any class, I believe it's crucial to start by feeling in sync with your purpose as an instructor and why you choose to do this. In addition, this is the perfect time to formulate the intention that blossoms into a successful class or event. Intention leads the way, every time.
- Take ownership of the class or event. Regardless of whether you're launching a self-made program or if you've been hired or contracted to facilitate on behalf of a business or company, you must take complete ownership of the event. This means really knowing every detail that will contribute to your event's success. This includes, but is not limited to: venue selection, podium/stage riser/screen positions, music, lighting, room temperature, marketing plans, etc. This may seem like a lot to be aware of, but remember, you'll be the one on that stage, not someone else. In large groups, a third party might be organizing the logistics, but in the end, you'll be doing the teaching and will be the face of the event. Know as much as you can about each aspect of the event as it relates to you, and provide your input as necessary.
- Create a thorough lesson plan. Prepare your content in advance and take your specific audience into account. Most large groups won't have much experience with the concepts taught at the Chopra

Center, so you'll probably want to tailor the content to be more general and less specific, if applicable. Go over your lesson plan several times and consider consulting with your fellow instructors or Chopra Center Certification staff for feedback on the best approach for teaching the meditation material, Ayurveda, and other concepts.

- Rehearse and practice. Once you have your lesson plan laid out, run through it until you have the major points committed to memory. This doesn't mean that you have to be rigidly restricted to your plan every single second, but remember that you want to stick to your plan as best as you can. When you're in front of a large group you may become nervous, and your plan will serve as your lifeline and help keep you on track. Will your presentation include visual aids such as slides? Practice how you will present, while staying detached and allowing for creativity to flow.
- Overdeliver and be professional. In my company, we are always striving to exceed our guests' expectations. Get to the venue early and walk the space before anyone arrives. Be on top of your game and be flexible in the event that something changes at the last minute. When it comes time to take the stage, be highly professional and give them more than was asked for in both knowledge and presence.

I always like to begin by asking myself, How can I help? How can I serve? before I begin to teach to help me reconnect with my inner teacher. I also try to remember to be a channel through which these teachings flow. I like to embody the principle of karma yoga by striving to be impeccable and do my very best, as if I was serving the divine in each of my students. Meditate and practice some pranayama techniques to get yourself centered before teaching.

- Be courageous. Speaking in front of large groups can be intimidating. But if you've followed the steps above and you are familiar with your material, you should be confident in your ability to present it. Remember that you don't serve your students by being timid or by playing small. You have studied, passed all the tests, and been certified through the Chopra Center as an instructor. Let the knowledge and timeless traditions of yoga and Vedanta speak through you. Or as Krishna reminds Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, "Established in yoga, perform action."
- Watch the time. Start and end your presentation on time. This may mean having a clock in sight to be sure you stay on target and hit all your points in the given time. When large groups come together for an event, they want to know that it is well organized and will start and end promptly and will fit into their schedules. Be prompt and respectful of the time they have given you.
- Walk the talk and be humble and grateful. Sharing these teachings with a large group is both an honor and a privilege. Treat it as such. Tapping into our dharma through helping and teaching others is one of the best feelings in the world. Your students have given you the opportunity to do something you love in your own unique way. Honor the Law of Giving and Receiving by taking time to appreciate the opportunity and recognize all those who helped you with the event.

These are some of the key lessons I've learned from teaching to large groups. I hope that they will help you in planning and delivering your own courses and programs.

About the Author

Yoga teacher, author, and martial artist Adam Brady has been associated with the Chopra Center for more than twenty years. He is a Vedic Educator certified in Primordial Sound Meditation, Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga, and Perfect Health: Ayurvedic Lifestyle, and regularly teaches in the Orlando, Florida, area. Over the last several years, Adam has worked to introduce corporate mind-body wellness programs into the workplace within a large, Fortune 100 company. Adam is dedicated to helping people transform their lives through a consciousness-based approach to living. He is the author of *Warrior of Light*, a story that explores the path to higher awareness through the martial arts.