

## **Yoga Behind Bars**

### **2017 Student Questionnaire Summary**

*'Yoga is a spiritual revolution that changes lives.'*

## Introduction

### **Who we are**

Born in 2008 Yoga Behind Bars is a nationally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Seattle, Washington and currently in 15 facilities statewide serving populations of all ages and demographics. Yoga Behind Bars mission is rooted in sharing trauma-informed yoga and meditation with people involved in the criminal justice system to promote rehabilitation, personal transformation, and a more just society for all. With the values of love, integrity, community, social justice and excellence, Yoga Behind Bars strives to touch the lives of the men, women and youth in which we serve.

### **Data Collection Method**

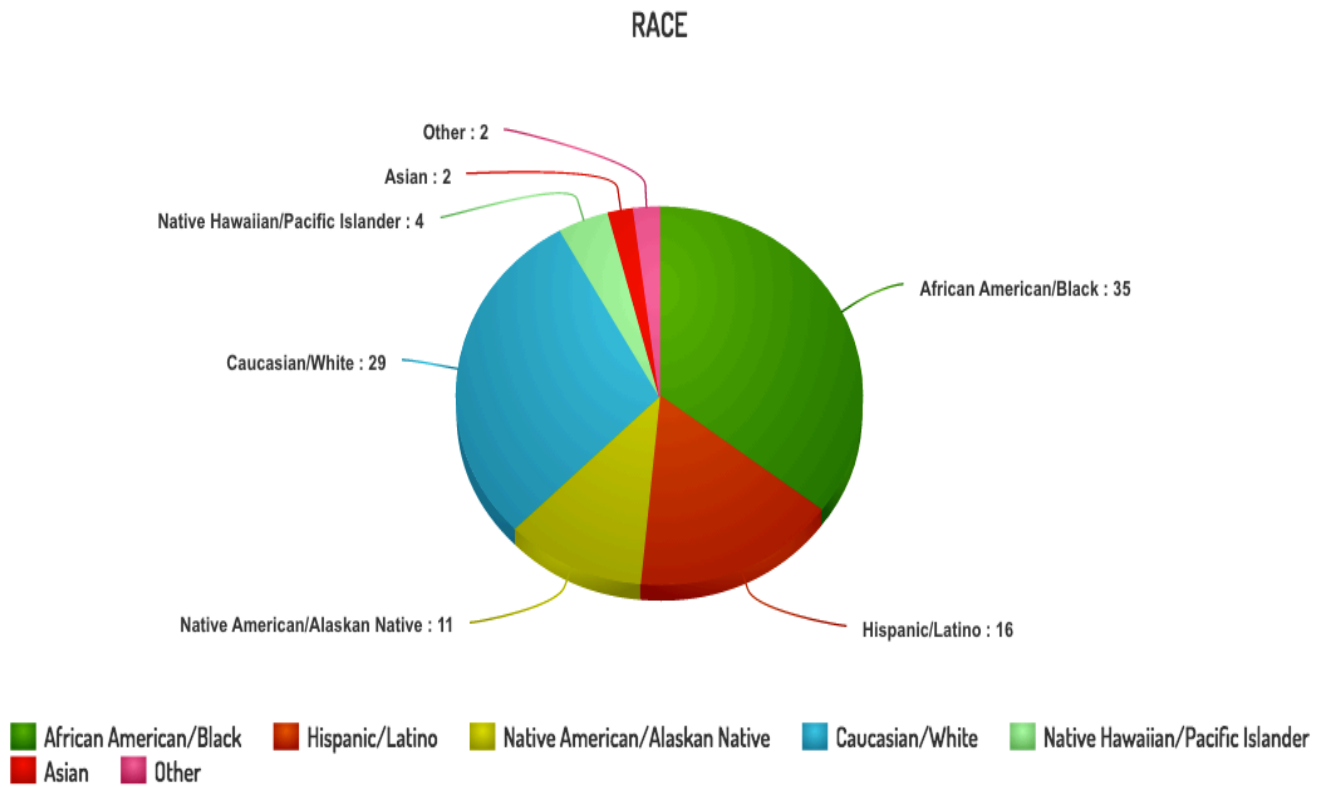
An estimated half of all 2016 YBB weekly yoga class attendees were asked to participate in completing an evaluation survey at the end of class, 188 students participated in the survey. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary and identify remained confidential with the intention to receive honest feedback and make improvements to the program. A mixed method of data collection was used to achieve trend analysis as well as to gather student testimonials. The survey consists of 15 questions relating to student demographics, personal experience in yoga class and the impact yoga has had inside and outside of class. Yoga Behind Bars recognizes the room for error in this summary due to misinterpretation, potential literacy barriers, format of survey, student participants not answering all questions and other factors.

## Demographics in Adult Students

Gender: 67% male, 33% female

Mean Age: 39 years

Race: The three largest identifying races of the student population were African American, White and Hispanic/Latino. All self-identified races are demonstrated in the graph below, students were asked to circle all that apply.



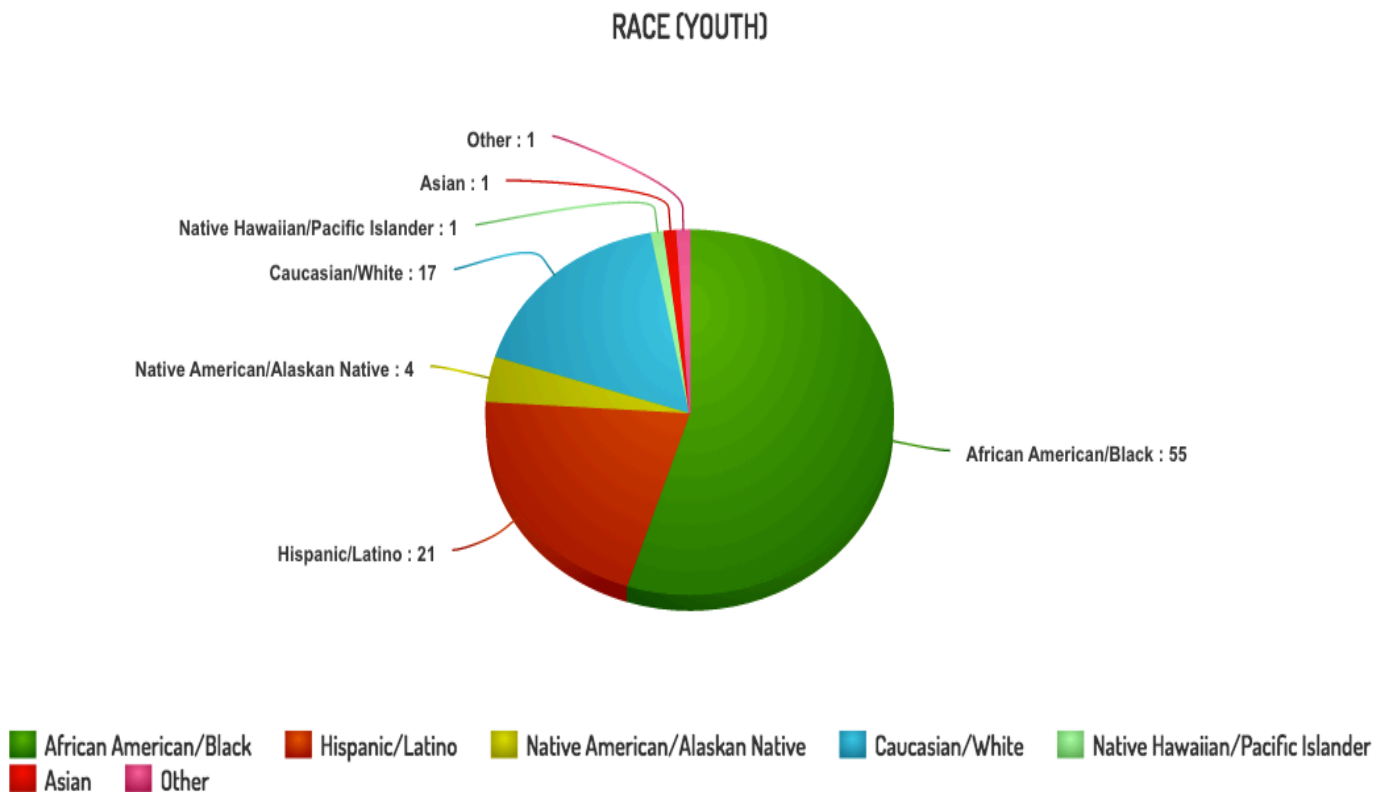
*Numbers in the graph are measured as percentages.*

## Demographics in Youth Students

Gender: 74% male, 26% female

Mean Age: 16 years

Race: Demographics for youth responding participants are shown in percentages in the graph below. As similar to the adult population of students, the largest racial demographic represented is African Americans, then following is Hispanic/Latino and White, students were asked to circle all that apply.



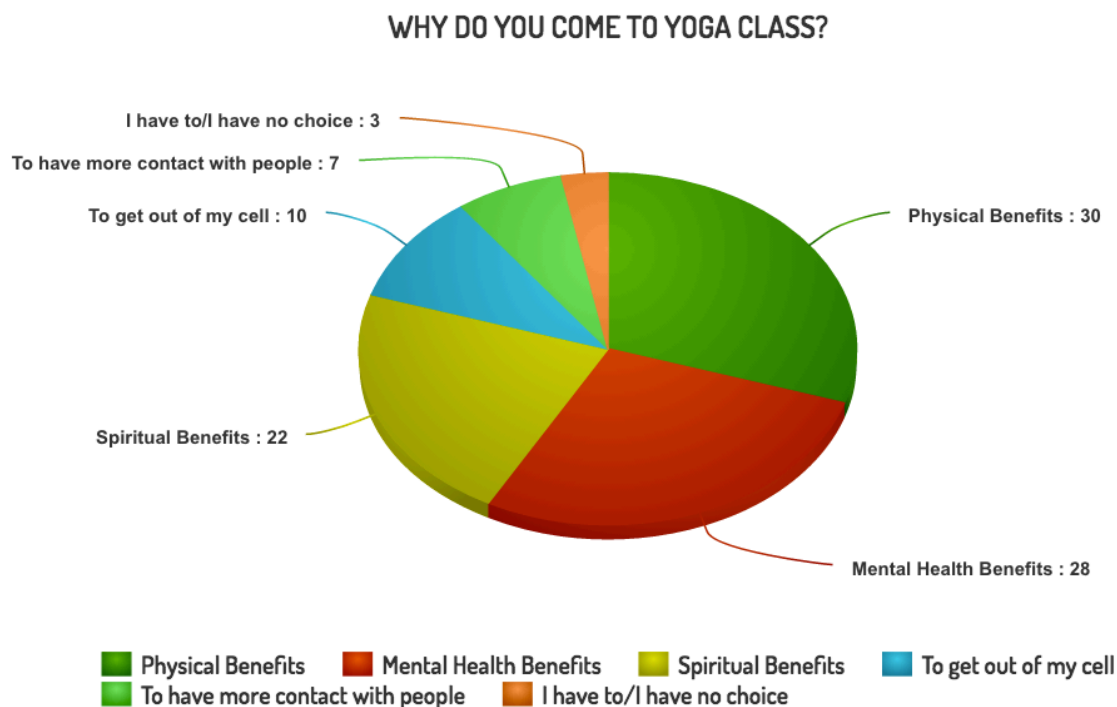
*Numbers in the graph are measured as percentages.*

## Impacts of Yoga

Prior to coming into yoga, students rated their feelings on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the best. 48% of all students identified feeling a 5 or less than. In comparison, when students left yoga class only 6% disclosed a rating of 5 or less than.

*'After every class I am in a better overall frame of mind with a calm and energized demeanor. I will continue yoga upon release tomorrow because of the class provided here.'*

Why students come to yoga class varied among the responding participants. The top three reasons included physical benefits (such as strength building, increasing flexibility and stretching), following was mental health benefits (decrease in anxiety, depression, better control of emotions), and lastly, spiritual benefits (students found a greater sense of connectedness, more centered and inner peace). Factors as to why students come to yoga class is shown in the graph below, students were asked to circle all that apply.

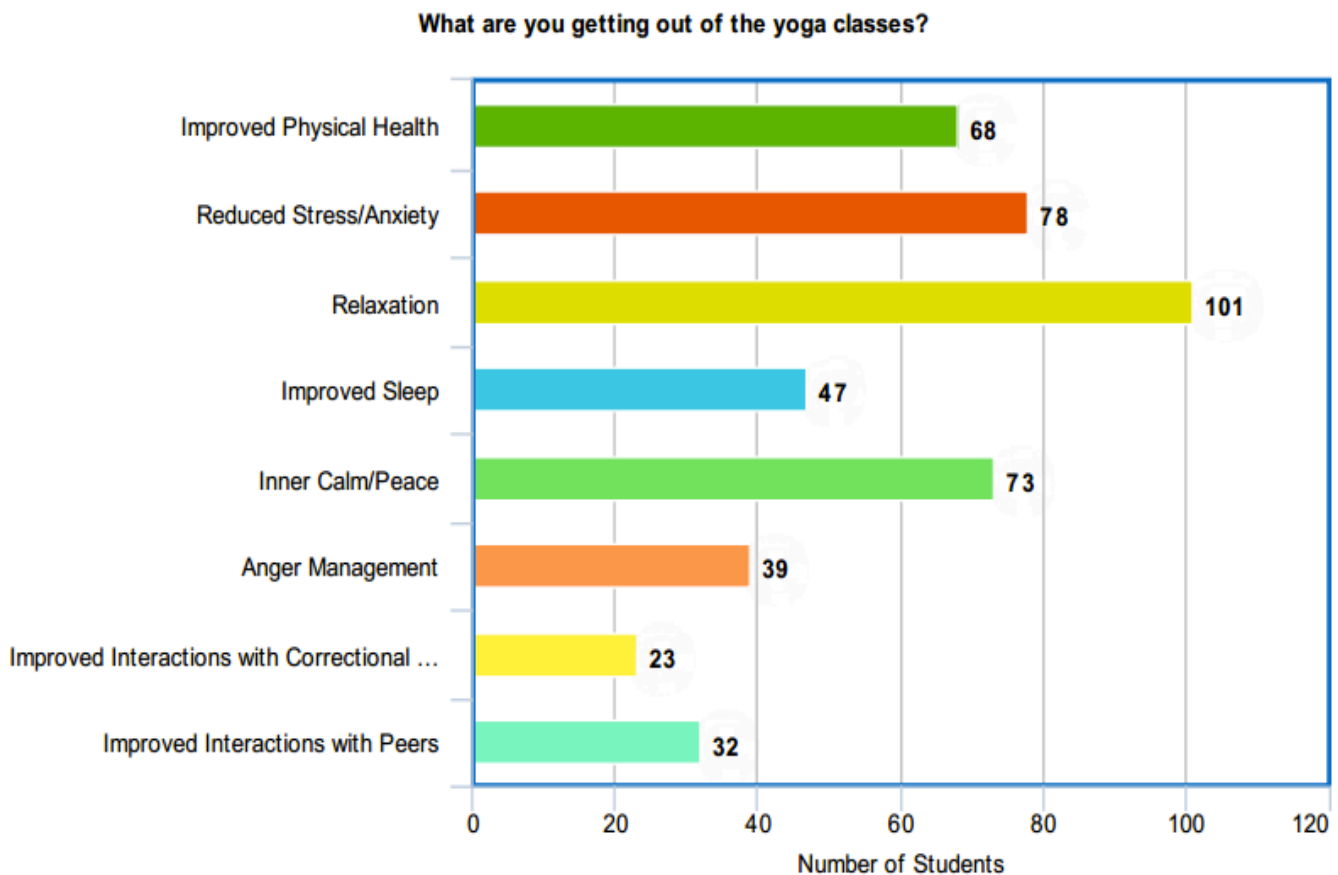


*Numbers in the graph are measured as percentages.*

*'I find relief from nerve pain, scoliosis, and dozens of injuries and arthritic challenges. My depression is lightened by the practice and it has also increased my respect and compassion for others just by sharing space and working to reduce negativity and feelings of bondage and programming.'*

## Benefits

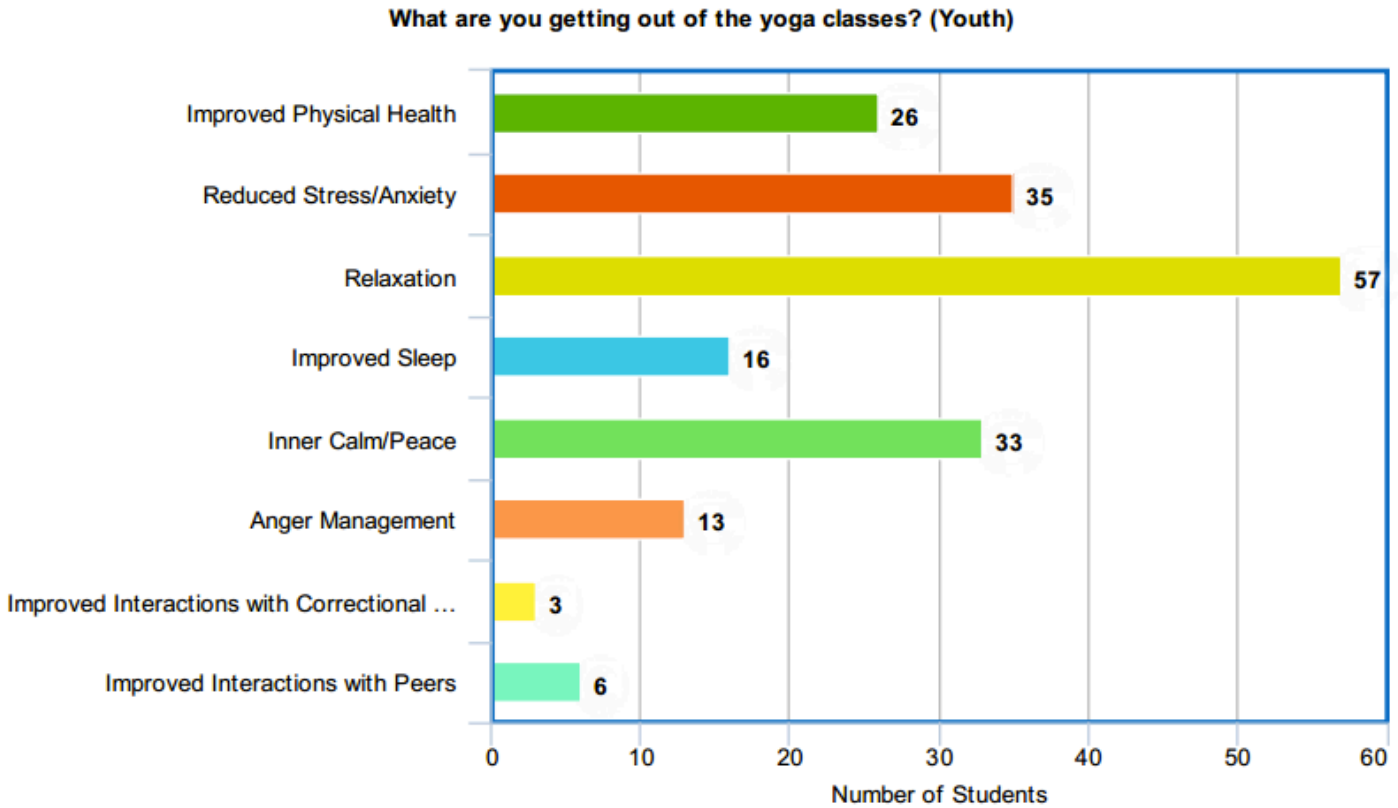
What adult students reported getting out of yoga classes are strongly related to why they attend yoga class. Outcomes of improved physical health and mental health related benefits showed to be a trend. Relaxation proved to be the number one reason as to why students come to class, then reduced stress/anxiety, and the third, improved physical health. The graph below shows the results as to what students receive out of yoga class, students were asked to circle all that apply.



*'The classes have offered me an inner calm and peace that is so difficult to find in prison. It lightens my anxiety and helps me to process guilt in a positive manner.'*

In a similar comparison, youth respondents reported trends comparable to adult respondents. As shown in the graph below, youth students disclosed the top three benefits they receive out of yoga to be relaxation, reduced stress/anxiety and inner calm/peace. Moving beyond the top three, youth and adults rated the benefits in identical comparisons.

The graph below represents youth students' results as to what they receive out of yoga classes.



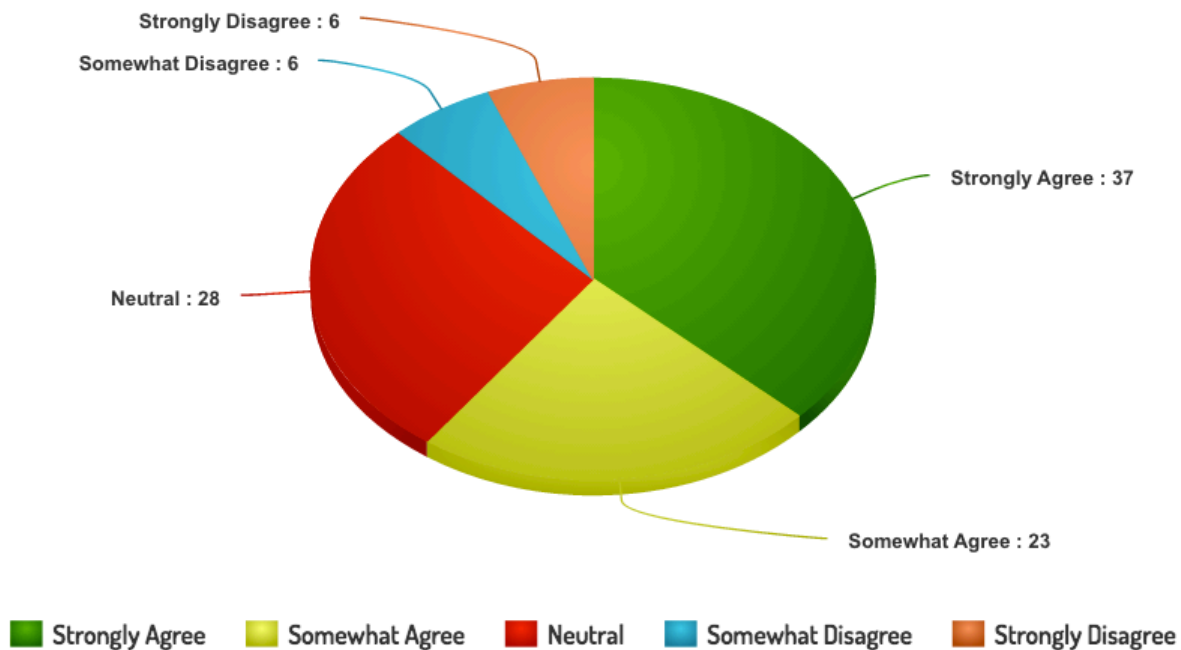
*'Yoga made me feel so relaxed and made me feel inner peace that I never knew before.'*  
YBB youth student

Looking at other improvements in the student's lives, almost half of all the responding students (46%), disclosed that yoga helps them handle conflict in a healthy way.

With students reporting high levels of benefits outside of class, an array of responses were given when asked where students would prefer to practice upon release. The top three selected categories included: a yoga studio, YMCA and a gym. Other less popular options included a community center and a place of worship. One student expressed interest in practicing at a halfway house.

60% of responding adult students somewhat or strongly agreed that yoga has a positive impact on how they interact outside of class. 28% were neutral and 12% somewhat or strongly disagreed. The results are shown in the graph below.

## YOGA HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON HOW I INTERACT OUTSIDE OF CLASS



Numbers in the graph are measured as percentages.

### Other

Outside of the classroom, responding student participants disclosed that 7% practice yoga outside of class on a daily basis. 13% claim to practice 3-5 times a week, 28% practice 1-2 times a week and the majority of respondents 52%, report never practicing outside of class.

When asked for input about potential changes to be made to the yoga classes, four common themes arose in student's response. First, an increase in number of offered yoga classes was highly suggested. Second, students requested a tweak in poses, whether it be increasing levels of difficulty, less straining poses or poses targeting specific parts of the body. Third, changes around the music played and fourth, students suggested the yoga classes be moved out of the gym.

Referrals from an officer or counselor proved to be the largest role in how students found out about Yoga Behind Bars (45%). Following behind was word of mouth from a friend followed (26%), information on a poster (23%) and lastly, reported other (6%). Students were asked to circle all that apply.

### Additional Testimonials:

*'Being that it was my first time ever doing yoga, I was surprised to find out how much I enjoyed it. It was also humbling because my entire mind, body, and soul got a workout.'*



*'I started for the physical benefits but I've been surprised by how relaxed I regularly feel now.  
The breath work has been very beneficial.'*

*'In the last four years, I have made tremendous changes in my walk in life because I am more balanced mentally, physically, and spiritually because of the help and teachings from so many teachers. I've been sad to see some move on, yet every time one moves forward, another yoga teacher steps in to volunteer their time and good energy.'*

Positive statements students said about their Yoga Behind Bars Instructor:

*'Excellent teachers and beautiful spirits.'*

*'It's an honor to share their energy.'*