

# All that Jaz

We meet in a café on St Paul's Road in Islington, which is co-incidentally close to where we both live. Jaz is wearing colourful yoga pants and greets me warmly. She opts for an aptly named 'Jaz hot chocolate'.

What is immediately apparent, from a few minutes of speaking with Jaz, is that she is one very busy lady. Teaching 11 scheduled classes a week, plus cover if she can fit it in, on top of a full time job in the property business (Jaz also works as a consultant for landlords). She deliberately holidays in early and later summer as she likes the vibe of classes over the summer period. When asked how she manages to juggle so much, Jaz replies that she is so busy doing everything that she wants to do and that "there is nothing that I have to do". The property business also gives her flexibility to work when she chooses.

In addition to teaching yoga, Jaz teaches Pilates (which she feels works very well with yoga), attends many workshops and teacher trainings, and is also the BWY Regional Representative for City & North London. Despite this demanding schedule, Jaz states: "It's where I want to be" and that the current balance works. She feels the yoga teaching and property business are like her Yin and Yang.



"The BWY should invite diversity through its teaching, appearance, editorial, board members and an active approach to change the status quo" JAZ MULLINGS-LAMBERT

Jaz started teaching in 2003 and qualified in 2005, having been drawn to yoga by a foundation course, which she found fascinating (particularly the history and philosophy elements). Initially attracted by Ashtanga for many years, because of the structure and community it provided at a particular point in her life, she came to rethink the style she was drawn to when she embarked on her teacher training with Mara Musso, coming back to hatha yoga and eventually phasing out Ashtanga in her personal practice completely.

Her own teaching style is drawn from different influences. Always carrying a notebook, Jaz is an assiduous taker of notes at classes and workshops. In fact, it is clear that Jaz is very organised. At one point during the interview, she pops out to the car to get a folder of this week's class lesson plan, which runs to 4-5 pages of research, meditation and asana and must have involved several hours of work at least. Jaz works with one theme each week weaving in the philosophy of yoga and quotes from texts in all of her lesson plans and although the actual practice for each class will be different the theme will remain the same. Next week's theme, for example, is 'Seeking Compassion'.

Jaz firmly believes in teaching yoga with everything it encompasses, rather than just postures: "I want to teach yoga; I don't want to teach purely asana". She wants to include things in class that empower people, noting how a yoga teacher will never know what issues students will be bringing to class. She believes that yoga teaching is also about life and the choices we make and brings elements of her own life into class, as she believes students need to see you as a teacher and a 'normal person'; so that there is a connection. Yoga for Jaz is about connection and community and she regularly, for example, brings partner work into class.

One of several modules that Jaz has completed is the BWY Module with Julie Friedeberger on yoga for people living with cancer. Jaz lost her father to cancer and realised that she struggled to even say the word 'cancer'. As a result, she signed up for the module, which she found emotionally challenging but is very glad she completed with Julie. Jaz has taught people with cancer and in fact sadly lost one student to cancer. She was naturally upset but also drew succour from the knowledge that the yoga sessions meant so much to the student in question.

Given her challenging schedule, I ask how Jaz looks after herself. She makes sure she attends at least a class of yoga and Pilates every week and attends regular workshops. She also visits spas around every six weeks, and receives a monthly massage from her friend, who is also a yoga teacher and masseuse. She practises and teaches Yin yoga (having completed the Yoga Alliance Yin Yoga and Advanced Yin Yoga teacher training courses with Norman Blair).

I introduce the subject of diversity – the theme of this issue – which Jaz believes does not need to be so controversial. With her role in the BWY, she is looking to bring more teachers of different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities into workshops. She mentions the BWY committee has been supportive. When asked why she feels black and Asian people are under-represented within the BWY, she comments that people of different backgrounds haven't been welcomed enough and that not enough has been done to draw people in. She comments on a lack of diversity in workshops, in advertising or the front cover of newsletters and Spectrum, for example. She also believes that this is something that needs to be tackled with an ongoing programme, rather than just one initiative.

Jaz's learning continues with a mindfulness course that she has just started with the London Meditation Centre and she also plans to do the BWY module thereafter – and start yoga therapy training at the Life Centre later next year. I ask Jaz if she has a five- or ten-year plan. She replies that she did her share of business plans during her former career in the NHS (before she went into the property business). She mentions that all she wants in five or ten years is to be where she is meant to be. One thing that she is keen to do is to continue to teach teachers and especially more newly-qualified teachers (she has teachers attending her classes currently and has supervised many over the years). She enjoys the supervisory role and is keen to ensure newer teachers 'keep yoga real'; a recurring theme in our conversation.

Two hours pass and when we come to say goodbye, I leave confident that Jaz will achieve whatever she wants – she is a truly motivated teacher, who is forever learning.

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