

Natalie Asatryan: Bringing yoga to kids so she can change the world



ASHLEY TURNER

- **Age:** 15
- **Lives in Los Angeles, California**
- **My yoga role model is** 101-year-old Tao Porchon-Lynch, who proves yoga can be practiced at any age.
- **My biggest accomplishment so far** is raising money for charities by teaching donation-based yoga classes.
- **My favorite teaching moment** was when I led my high school's football team through a yoga class. -In the year 2030, I'll be a yoga teacher, student of yoga, and doing whatever I can to make the world a better place.
- **Yoga is** the unity of the mind, body, and soul. It's an internal and external experience at the same time.
- **Yoga isn't** about striving to be perfect.
- **I wish more people would realize** how important it is to share yoga with the younger generation, because it would make humanity better.
- **My favorite mantra is** Om, because the buzzing of the "m" is the eternal sound of God that lives within you in every breath. How cool is that?
- **Words of wisdom I live by** Be kind—but also courageous.
- **The promise I make to myself every day** I'm going to do my best with what I'm given today, and whatever else happens, happens.

Natalie Asatryan was five years old when she learned how to really breathe. She was in her first yoga class—at a local studio filled with other kindergarteners—and the teacher told them to imagine that they were hot-air balloons and had to light a fire in their hearts and breathe deeply in order to fly. “Then, when we'd lay in Savasana, the teacher would tell us to be as loose as noodles, and if our muscles weren't tense when she picked up our legs and gave them a wiggle, we'd get a sticker,” says Asatryan, now 15.

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“My Generation Is Going to Run the World Soon. The More of Us Who Do Yoga, the Better”

At age 12, Asatryan would go on to become the youngest girl to become a 200-hour certified yoga teacher. How did that happen? We asked her to give us the backstory.

Yoga Journal: OK, so when did you get the idea that you wanted to become a yoga teacher?

Natalie Asatryan: When I was seven, I started going to a new school and most of my friends didn't know what yoga was. The ones who did were like, “Isn't that for old people?” At that time, I was going to yoga classes with my mom— but I wanted my friends to love it and think it was cool. I thought, If I become a yoga teacher, I can teach them yoga and show them it's cool. I told my mom I wanted to be a teacher, and she was like, “You can be anything you want to be!” And I said, “No, you don't understand; I want to teach now.”

YJ: But you waited three years to go through a yoga teacher training?

NA: Not quite. My mom looked for yoga teacher trainings I could join, but most studios said I had to be 18. Every time she'd tell me another studio said no, I'd say, “You just haven't talked to the right person.” This went on for three years. When I was 12, my mom talked to Shana Meyerson at YOGAthletica, who was willing to meet. We met at a café, and right there, she decided I was ready.

YJ: What was your training like?

NA: It was so much harder than I ever imagined. It was very condensed—14 days, 12-hour days—and the second-youngest trainee was 26 years old. During training, I realized how much more there is to yoga beyond asana. Actually, the philosophy turned out to be my favorite part.

YJ: Have you ever gotten any attitude or side-eyes from students when they see how young you are?

NA: I've been teaching for over two years now, and most people have been so accepting. Sure, they may say, “Wow, you're only 15!” And I've definitely taught people who seemed skeptical of my abilities—at least at first. But overall, everyone's been really great. And I really love teaching other young people, too. Kids are instantly accepting when I'm teaching.

YJ: It seems like yoga is something more kids could really use. Being a kid these days is tough, isn't it?

NA: You know, I always say that grownups underestimate the power of kids. People say, “Oh, they're kids, they don't know.” But we're going to be running the world in just a few years—and if we're going to do that, we need some encouragement. We're human beings who experience stress! I'm not saying yoga gets rid of it, but it helps you learn to take a minute, breathe deeply, and remember that whatever you're stressed about probably happened in the past and that the best thing you can do is learn from it and move on.

YJ: It sounds like you have some personal experience with this.

NA: Yes! Take today, for example. I wasn't ready for a test and I was so frustrated. I could've sat there at my desk freaking that I didn't know all of the answers. But here's what I did: I took a deep breath and silently told myself that I'd try to do the best I could with what I could remember. If I hadn't been practicing yoga since I was five, I probably would've reacted differently, repeating something like “I'm gonna fail!” instead of “It's OK—this is what it is, and it's fine!”

I also rely on my yoga training before auditions. I'm a huge theater nerd and perform in a lot of plays. Right before almost every audition, I freak out. Then, I remind myself that whatever happens will happen—and if I don't get into a show, I must not have been meant to be in that show. It helps me breathe through my nerves.

YJ: Do you think your generation gets a bad rap?

NA: You know, we are the first generation born with the Internet and social media being ubiquitous, and many people throw that in our faces. Yes, too much social media is no good. But I think a lot of my peers are using social media for so much good. And we care about our world, which is on fire. At my school, if someone is caught using a plastic straw, everyone is like, “OMG what are you doing?!” I think my generation is working hard to save the world we live in. We all have our eyes wide open, and we are trying to do something about the injustices we see. When you realize what's happening in the world, you want to help.

It's easy to forget how stressful being a kid can be because, well, #adulting. Natalie Asatryan is here to remind you that kids go through stuff, too—which is why she's on a mission to share yoga with as many young people as possible. —MR