LESS is MORE:

YOGA TEACHING FOR
M.E AND C.F.S.

Dedicated to my friends Sarah + Abi, my yoga campus classmates + all others with lived experience of M.E/C.F.S.

This is what it feels like to be one of the 0.25m people in the UK with ME or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS).

Imagine having flu...

and being forced to run a marathon...

1 mile

The physical exhaustion is total, but the mind is fast and busy. Tired but wired. An agitated mind locked into a lethargic body.

and when you finish...

11 miles

Those with M.E/C.F.S. will have a dominant sympathetic nervous system, so will be maintaining one of these responses:

Fight

Freeze

The sympathetic dominant breath

inhalre dominant fast

The sympathetic dominant mind

busy

agitated

yoga can be beneficial in many ways.

THE YOGA BREATHE

1. Focus on the EXHALE

2. Sound can be a great way to lengthen the exhale

3. Encourage diaphragmatic breathing through letting the hands rest on the lower ribs and feel for movement

4. Introduce small movements linked to the breath to calm, soothe, relieve and undo patterns.

GROUNDING

Trauma may be a reason why people are in their sympathetic nervous systems, so classes need to be as gentle, safe and GROUNDED as possible.

you are safe

you are held

MIND CALMING

Unlike the crazy, competitive outside world with its emphasis on doing, achieving and striving, yoga provides an

Invitation to BE

A place to get away from the busyness of the mind & drop into the body.

For those with the energy to stand, there is potential to work with the fast to ground, growing roots, feeling connected to the floor.

SPACE and SLOWNESS

As teachers, we create this invitation with...
Be conscious of our language
- Yield
- Soften
- Drop in
- Challenge
- Push yourself
- Stretch

and leave lots of space between instructions

LESS IS MORE
Sometimes, a little energy comes back and when it does there is a tendency to want to do everything.

Yay! I can party!

Except, the energy battery is in deficit.

So, three days later, true to the '3-day rule'.

CRASH!

To keep students' energy batteries nicely topped up, remind them that if they feel like doing 20 mins practice, to do 10 mins, instead!

Give permission for everything in class to be optional.

Being busy is a way not to be with the body or symptoms. Slowing down allows us to hear the body deeply when it says "no".

I'm so tired. I need to stop.

OK, let's cancel plans and nap.

REFRAMING
It's easy to get caught up in the identity of an illness.

I have ME. Life sucks. I can't do what my friends can. It's not fair.

Identify with the ever-present and unchanging inside ourselves as health states come and go.

A true centre.

Detach from symptoms and observe them with witness consciousness.

Insomnia, exhaustion, pain.

There are my symptoms. They are not me.

A nice quote: "Peace is this moment without judgment." Z. Hsu

Emphasise to students that just through being they are ENOUGH.

A silent mantra with hand-placing to conclude with:

In this moment, I love myself unconditionally (exhale — ohh!)