A black and white photograph of a woman lying on her back on a wooden floor. She is wearing a long-sleeved shirt with horizontal stripes and a dark top. Her arms are extended horizontally to the sides. Her head is resting on a dark pillow. The floor is made of light-colored wooden planks. A dark teal banner is overlaid at the top of the image, and a red banner is at the bottom.

WORKING WITH NORMAL PEOPLE:
a guide for yogis

Mark Walsh

Working with normal people: a guide for yogis

How to fit in enough and get paid more, without selling out

This e-book is a guide for yoga teachers who want to adapt their skills so they can work in corporate and other 'mainstream' environments. Examples of this include leadership training or working with sceptical, 'at risk' youth.

When I say 'normal people', don't take me too seriously. I'm not saying you're weird or anything, but let's face it, many yoga teachers are into things outside what's considered 'mainstream' (although times are changing, as we'll see). I'm not trying to create nasty boxes and divisions either; it's just a fun way of describing different client groups. And anyway, aren't we all a bit weird, really?

Note: this ebook has been adapted from a previous one, *Working with Normal People: A Guide for Hippies*. Thanks to Catherine O'Mahony (who is a yoga teacher, as well as course manager for Purpose Black Belt and the Embodied Facilitator Course) for helping me tailor it to yogis.

Why bother? 😊

I'm assuming you're like me: a values-driven, 'conscious' person, who's into some cool stuff that you want to share more widely with the world. If so, read on.

First, we might want to clarify why you'd like to work with 'normal' people, anyway. On the next page are some reasons I do it that may also apply to you.



@ **The love**

I really love what I do and want to get it to the world, especially to people who will suffer less as a result. I'm totally into what I do and want to share it with everyone!



@ **The money**

Let's be honest: part of my motivation for working with corporate businesses over the years has been the money. Getting paid £2,000+ for a day's work rocks! Not only can I keep a roof over my head and do work I love full time, I can work for free with charity groups and offer donation and charity places on my courses.



@ **The challenge**

I enjoy the difficulties involved in bringing alternative work to the 'hardest' groups. I've deliberately sought-out groups I thought would be the biggest pain-in-the-arse for the challenge and to prove a point.



@ **The world**

If the people with the money and therefore the power do not get their hearts, bodies and souls back, we're all really, really screwed. A more holistic way of being has become vital to social justice, peace and the survival of the human race.



@ **We're all human**

I like to work with people. Any people. And executives or soldiers or whatever are just as human as you and I. On this level, I don't mind who I work with.



Being really honest about your motivations to work with 'normies' is vital to authentically connect with these groups, and to keep going when things gets difficult. If you want to earn a decent living doing what you love and helping people, I'd love to support you with this book.

The challenge

If you're reading this, you may well have realised that it's not quite as easy as it seems. When teaching yoga in a corporate environment, for example, all kinds of stuff can go wrong – and all kinds of stuff can be fixed to go better. So what could some of the issues be?

- 🌀 Getting through the door (getting the job in the first place)
- 🌀 Confidence (over-confidence/under-confidence)
- 🌀 Overcoming people's cynicism and getting them to try things
- 🌀 Speaking in a way that connects
- 🌀 Working with different boundaries, triggers and tolerances
- 🌀 Making what you're doing useful and relevant to people
- 🌀 Dealing with your own frustration, isolation and despair
- 🌀 Keeping aligned with your own values doing all the above

These are all addressed in this book – from my own experience and that of colleagues.

Why listen to me?

I've been successfully bringing unusual 'embodied' practices into some of the most challenging mainstream environments for over ten years and in around thirty countries, working with everyone from large corporate groups (eg Unilever, Shell and L'Oreal), to the police and military units I've also worked with other potentially 'tricky' audiences, such as angry chefs, cheeky single mum groups, humanitarian aid workers in war zones (eg Oxfam, Save the Children and Warchild, and in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone), activists (eg Occupy and LGBTQ Moscow) and sceptical young people from inner cities in London and the slums of Brazil. I worked with the House of Lords and was the only guy without a tie in the room. 😊 While these groups are diverse, what they have in common is that they don't suffer fools, and demand a pragmatic approach. I sometimes joke that my job is 'doing weird stuff with normal people', as I use tools from yoga, Buddhism, martial arts, dance, body therapy and more (I'm a big fan of these things, I practice them daily and have done some of them for 20 years). However, I hold the normal/not normal thing very lightly and now, in many ways, I relate as much to the groups I teach as to the 'alternative' world that spawned me. The learning is coming full circle. For over four years, I've taught yoga teachers and other 'hippie' types how to bring embodiment to mainstream groups through the freakin' awesome Embodied Facilitator Course. More recently, I niched and created Embodied Yoga Principles, which is growing fast. I'm now also teaching yoga teachers (and similar) online through Purpose Black Belt, which is all about refining your purpose and putting it out there (including marketing).

www.embodiedfacilitator.com

www.embodiedyogaprinciples.com

www.purposeblackbelt.com

It's not the 60s!

This book is part of a wider cultural trend: that of **integrating** alternative movements like yoga, that involve the body, spirituality and emotions, into the mainstream. In the 60s and 70s, there was a cultural trend of **differentiating** – where hippie counter culture developed and rejected mainstream values. In the 80s, things swung back, but yoga was one of the few alternative arts that managed to retain some popularity off the back of the leotard-clad aerobics craze. From the 90s onwards, a younger generation of hippie types started taking the work back into daily life: into the arts, business, then to public sectors like education (adult education, has arguably been a key force in helping the Western yoga scene grow to what it is today). In addition, we had Jon Kabat-Zinn and the mindfulness revolution, and emotional intelligence work from Daniel Goleman. Just in the decade since I've started teaching embodiment, it's become MUCH easier to present in businesses. While this is partly because I've learnt what I'm now teaching in this book, it's also because the world has changed. Yoga has always been one of the more prominent alternative arts, mainly to the 'celebrity factor' (which dates back as far as Indra Devi opening yoga centres in Hollywood in the 50s). But it's now broader than that: Britain's most right wing newspaper had a 10-page article on meditation, the US military has used ideas from mindfulness and martial arts, and Google regularly sponsor spiritual events (see Wisdom 2.0). Times have really changed and in some ways, the hippie/normal distinction is now pretty outdated.

Of course, all this reintegration is not without risk. Let's face it, the yoga scene is now full of capitalist sell-outs and people presenting with a spiritual veneer whilst using yoga to propagate body shame. Sometimes it can seem like model-like, white, bendy Instagram yogis are taking over and that the really serious practitioners are getting left behind. These days, you can qualify to be a yoga teacher through an online two-week course. Recently, I was at a coaching conference where someone who'd meditated for less than three months was teaching a workshop on mindfulness. It's my hope that with things like this book and EFC (our trainer course), people with real depth of practice can continue the integration so we can avoid watering down. In general, though, the integration trend is positive and evolutionary.



So ... how to work with 'normies'

While your own background is unique, and every group you work with different, there are some general principles that help yogis work with normies. These principles will need to be adapted to your yoga style and angle, and many of the skills need to be practised. The exercises I've included will help you reflect more deeply on how the principles relate to you, specifically.

Clean up your frame

Let's start with your overall perspective, as it's more fundamental than any tricks and tips. Often, I see people from more alternative backgrounds bring a lot of baggage to working with mainstream groups which is quickly (consciously or unconsciously) picked up. This psychological baggage creates a disconnect and can also lead to self-sabotage. Here are my tips for unfucking yourself so you can really serve people:

@ Deal with your shadow

Often mainstream groups can represent disowned parts of ourselves. This is why they can seem so 'other'. For example, people project their disowned greed and power urges onto business folk. Even the urge for success can be made 'bad' and repressed in alternative communities. For yogis, the path of *karma yoga* is often interpreted as meaning we should only do things that benefit others. If we, as alternative practitioners don't do the necessary internal work (especially therapy – because hey, yoga on its own doesn't heal *everything*) to re-own the parts of mainstream culture we've moved away from, it can come out in all kinds of unhealthy ways. There is a lot of power shadow in yoga. Look at the 'guru culture' – at how many yoga leaders have abused their position and how many students still followed them. People defend Bikram Choudhury now, for example, despite the multiple counts of rape and sexual assault. The journey this book concerns can be form of shadow work itself; it was for me and many others I know.

@ See what you have in common

While it's easy to go into 'us and them' mode (this book's title is a parody of that), I try to notice what I have in common with the group I'm working with. Yes, they may be executives or whatever – but we're all human. Even *really* unlikely people share at least some of your values and life experiences, if you see past the 'packaging'. This is helpful for connecting with groups of all kinds, and also helps you relax as a facilitator.



🕒 **Let go of your arrogance**

Pity or contempt will kill any connection with people you'd like to serve. Sadly, many of us in alternative communities, myself included, are prone to preaching and sanctimony. There's often a kind of hubris that comes with the spiritual path, and hey, if we don't think it makes us better people why bother?! I find seeing things in terms of differing skillsets and types of intelligence more helpful than the spiritual/not spiritual frame. I will be explicit about this, for example, "You guys are much better than me with numbers and I would never tell you how to do your job. What I'm good at is managing stress and I'd like to teach you about that." It's also worth acknowledging that you'll never really know what it's like to be the people you're teaching, and that's OK. Often fake humility can become a habit in spiritual paths, so it's worth observing how this plays out for you.

🕒 **Let go of your insecurity**

The opposite of arrogance is insecurity. If you're working with, say, a bank, you're there for a reason and your skills are valued. Why would they get you in if not?! Knowing 'what you bring to the party' and taking pride in this is very helpful. It will also stop you overcompensating with fake superiority. You teach stuff that's pretty cool and needed. Own that and share the love. If you're struggling with this, keep a folder with all the positive feedback you've received and look at it when needed. I'll come back to this topic at the end of the book. Being in a good place on the scale between arrogance and insecurity is called 'right-sized' in twelve-step addiction recovery work. And be aware that it's possible to have both a big ego and low self-esteem!

Exercise

Discuss with two friends (one yogi and one normie) which of these you may need to look at further. Remember we can be blind to our own shadow (and our brilliance).

Play this game too:

Who's the most spiritual?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AchiEHRgHA&t=19s

A special note on 'money shadow'

Once I had a really good massage at a yoga festival. After receiving it, the masseuse started panicking as she hadn't agreed a price with me first (schoolgirl error). She started 'bartering', suggesting lower and lower prices before I could say a word. It was an awkward end to a massage, and I was happy to pay her a much higher rate than what she asked. I've also had yoga teachers show up to workshops with no money, trying to trade or saying they'll pay me later; and people on by-donation trainings say they loved it, but not leave a penny (despite coming with the expensive smoothies, coffee and snacks for themselves). Again, this is often linked to ideas about *karma yoga*. Yogis can believe (either consciously or unconsciously) that charity work or skill exchanges are more spiritual than getting paid.

I've seen greed in meditation and anti-capitalist communities to match anything on Wall Street, and poverty mindsets keeping people poor despite having the skills to make serious money. After years of taking broke hippie friends for coffee and teaching them the basics of ethical marketing and money shadow work, I've invented an online course to help people with this. As mentioned previously, it's called Purpose Black Belt and includes free YouTube videos on money and marketing (see link at the end of this book).



Ethics

In order to be fully committed to working with people, it's important to know where you draw the line with clients. For example, many of us are concerned by the excesses and amorality of the corporate world – and we also recognise that people in businesses are not all evil. So what kinds of businesses do we want to work with? Are major energy companies or banks too far gone ... or is it a case of 'a sick man that requires a doctor'? Does it depend on the type of work you'll do with them? (I have a distinction between efficiency-raising and truly transformative work.) What are your guiding ethical principles? Do you have a spiritual or professional ethical code? I follow a Buddhist one. There are, of course, the yamas and niyamas from the Yoga Sutras. Ahimsa or 'non harming' is probably the most known one and a good one to keep in mind. But don't be afraid to make up your own. It may help you to consider key orientating questions. For example, 'Is it kind?' 'How will this effect five generations?' 'Who wins most?' Do you have a community of peers to guide you? Do you have any 'hard lines' about industries you won't work in? (I won't work with organisations like tobacco and arms manufacturers whose core business is unlikely to change.) Are any countries like Israel or Saudi Arabia off your client list?

How will you stay ethical when tempted? As you make more and more money in business, you might find yourself tempted to take work you wouldn't have considered at the outset. What are your checks, balances, communities of challenge, mentors? Get this clear before you go into a sales meeting with BP, Barclays or whoever. Being a good person alone is not good enough.

Exercise

What are your guiding ethical principles and hard lines? Get these clear, write them on a piece of paper and put it on a wall. Add what your procedure is when you hit an ethical dilemma. Mine is 'pause, breathe, call Francis Briers and Paul Linden' (a trusted colleague and my mentor, respectively).



So what? – Addressing your client's concerns

Let's cut to the chase. Nobody gives a shit about your favourite thing. Sorry. Your favourite backbend or whatever isn't in itself interesting to people (at least not yet). But what *is* interesting is what it can do for them. Find out people's concerns, and help them apply what you're doing to their actual lives. **Make it relevant and practical.**

To sell any kind of yoga class or course, you'll need to relate to the client's interests. They want real results for their real lives. What is the benefit of what you do? How will you improve their lives? What problem do you solve? Similarly, when leading a class, have a clear aim that matters to people for everything you teach. People will try all kinds of weird shit if they have a good reason that links to their values. I 'got away with' teaching police to meditate because I gave them compelling reasons linked to their work and families. You need to be ultra-clear about the point of what you do. If you're used to just being in the love and flow of it, it might be unfamiliar to frame it in terms of goal and outcome focus. It's worth being able to shift into this mode, though. For example, yoga classes can be different things to different people, so what are you trying to achieve with a 30 minute de-stress class after work? Most likely it's relaxation and letting go of work for a better family life, right? Ask yourself why someone is giving you their time and money. Note that for busy corporate types, their time may be the real investment, not the money. They won't easily forgive you for wasting it with self-indulgent waffle, superstition and irrelevant activities you happen to like.

This awareness of the value of what you do for customers is the essence of marketing. (If that made you gag, do more shadow work 😊.) Pay full attention to this part and talk it over with friends. Ask your students what they get from your work (it's sometimes surprising). Make a list of the key benefits. To get a booking with a major business you need to be clear about the benefits – and what these are for different people in the organisation (eg how will it serve the HR manager who books you? How will it benefit the Managing Director he reports too? What about the participants in the workshop who have different priorities?) Think about how you'll come into contact with your potential customers – online, at conferences, via introductions, etc. If you have a clear offer and are meeting the right people you will have a viable business – simple.

Have a look at Tad Hargrave's awesome and super useful videos and website 'Marketing for Hippies' (which partly inspired this book's title), Julia Chanteray's 'The Joy of Business' and Seth Godin's blog for more on ethical marketing. Remember: **make it relevant and practical.**

www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk

www.marketingforhippies.com

www.sethgodin.com

Exercise

How can your work benefit normal people? What is the aim of your work? Be clear and concise. What problem do you solve for people? Which people in particular? This is your target audience.

Non-attachment and the empathy shift

Most yoga teachers are very attached to what they do. However, the shift in working with anyone effectively is putting *their* needs at the centre of the work. Now, if you're a geek like me (I started as a very big aikido geek) that can be hard, but it really pays to do this. I think of this empathy shift as a spiritual practice in and of itself, as well as the essence of good business. There's a significant perspective shift here that I'll come back to later: taking your work to normies need not be a compromise of depth practices like empathy, but a way to enhance them.

Similarly, you'll need to be flexible. For example, a client might not take to you ending your class with a guided visualisation. Not being attached to your usual methods or props is important. Can you teach asanas without blocks, straps or even mats? Can you teach on chairs? Can you teach a class in 30 minutes instead of 90? Can you teach without your Krishna Das playlist? (Let's face it, that probably won't go down well either – and do you even have a licence to play it in public? Mainstream organisations care about that legal stuff.) On that note, do not use candles or incense, because that will go against their health and safety policies too. This flexibility to let go of our practice provincialism is a profound practice itself, and requires we know our art deeply to separate form from essence. Much of what follows, for example in regards to language, is about this practice of non-attachment. Hey, we're yogis. We're great at that, right? 😊
Again, the normie-adaptation becomes a depth path itself.

Exercise

What aspects of yoga are you a total geek about? What might you be a little too attached to? In what ways do you get uptight?

The '20% weirder' rule

I'm giving you some helpful ways to work in mainstream environments ... but most likely, you won't ever totally fit in. In fact, trying to fit in 100% will just make you seem inauthentic. You're there to be (a bit) different. As a rule of thumb, you can be 20% weirder than whoever you're working with (this actual figure is of course, made up, but you get the idea). You can be stranger in how you dress, speak, behave – that's fine. Just not *too* weird. Thanks to my wonderfully weird EFC colleague Francis Briers for this one; he's a real master at fitting in without selling out.

'Time' rant

NEVER SAY YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME. It's common in corporate environments for things to be more rushed than you're used to, and it's tempting to complain about this. Don't. It makes you, and the person who commissioned you, look bad. It's a pet hate of mine; sometimes trainers on courses I run do this and I then don't rebook them.

Similarly, if you are being asked to do something in a time frame you can't deliver on, SAY NO. There's dignity and integrity in this and you'll be respected for it.

Hippie ninjutsu

When I first started my embodied training business, I literally had no idea how people spoke in companies, what they were interested in, what their concerns were ... I knew nothing about the weird world I wanted to sell to! I'd just never really had a normal job or cared about that stuff. I lived in Brighton, FFS (it's a bit like Boulder, or Bryon Bay, or Ubudd). So I went undercover to study my clients. I got a desk in my mate's company and listened. I subscribed to HR Magazine and I learnt about such mysteries as 'KPIs', 'ROIs' and 'employee engagement'. I collared my conservative cousin at family get-togethers. And I learnt. This is the way of the hippie ninja. To teach the normal, you must become the normal ... OK, not fully – don't worry, but study them at least.

Making your chakras palatable

Here are a few more general tips for presenting what you do in a way that won't generate a normie 'immune response'

@ Use familiar formats

A lot of this book is about encouraging you to be as familiar as possible to clients in ways it doesn't matter, so you can be different in ways it does. An example is beginning a talk on, say, the three gunas with Powerpoint. A spoonful of bland helps the rainbow go down.

@ Champions

If you've got in the door, it's probably because someone in the organisation believes in you. Look after this champion; they're most likely taking a risk on you. Thank them. Learn from them about company culture and language. Get them to make your work accessible by giving examples, since they're expert on the group you're working with and the best bridge between you and 'them'. My champions are often visionary CEOs or beleaguered HR managers who secretly do yoga and are worn down by being more emotionally intelligent than people around them.

@ Demos (experiential evidence)

I often start workshops by saying, "Don't believe a word I say." Clients like this as I'm not asking them to join a religion; I'm just asking them to be willing to try things with minimal trust. Similarly, I may say, "Be sceptical but not cynical. What's the difference?" The 'sale' doesn't stop once you're in the door; you need to keep it up throughout.

The foreign culture viewpoint

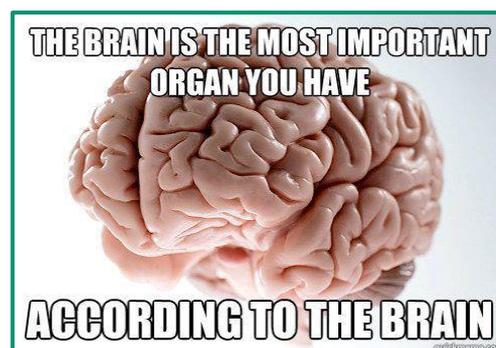
One way of looking at working in a mainstream context is to think of it as visiting another country. You're learning and adapting to a new culture, while keeping your own core beliefs and knowing that you're a visitor. I like this frame as I've travelled a lot, and it helps me be non-judgemental of the differences I see, and readily adaptable without too much ego. When in Rome ... and all that.

@ Make it safe

If a normie is trying your crazy hippie shit – I mean, your yoga class – they're being brave. It's actually a very vulnerable thing for someone to try something new, where there's a possibility they might make a fool of themselves. Acknowledge that yoga and more generally, the body, spirituality and emotions can be scary for those new to these areas. Remember that in the workplace, people's livelihoods are on the line and bosses and/or subordinates may be present. Make sure people have a choice whether to be there. Give permission for people to choose what asanas or practices they take part in and to rest whenever they wish. Welcome and adapt to different body shapes and abilities. Even small things like letting people keep their socks on can make a difference (going from shiny, hard work shoes to barefoot can be a big deal to some). Check everyone in the workshop agrees to confidentiality, if relevant. Also, think about whether you might need to cover any windows in the room, so people can't see in from outside. Make things as emotionally safe as possible for people.

@ Science

Normies love a bit of science. First up, stop talking new age bollocks: fact-check what your yoga training told you about twists detoxifying your body, or shoulderstand being beneficial for your thyroid. There are an increasing number of bullshit free, evidence-based resources out there now, plus an increasing number of high profile yogis who are asking questions, rather than just mindlessly regurgitating the same old stuff. Check out the book *Exposing Yoga Myths* or Matthew Remski's WAWADIA project, for example. But if you get sciencey, be humble and acknowledge where you're not an expert (if there's a real expert in the room you'll look like a muppet; blaggers are easy to spot). You can also simply 'lean into' this way of looking at the world – for example, by dropping in a relevant statistic.



Videos

The science of embodiment:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qx0mrAggh1s

Language

Unless you can speak to the normies in a way that makes sense to them, it doesn't matter how good you are at what you do. I've made a living for the last 10 years as a 'translator' of embodied work into a business setting. The current mindfulness movement is a successful translation of Buddhism (or 'Buddhism-lite') into workplaces and schools. It's often the best translator, not the best meditator or yogi, who is most successful (The 'Headspace' app is a great example). This is a touchy topic in yoga because many teachers are very attached to using Sanskrit. Many teachers also instruct in poetic, flowery language (ever seen that BuzzFeed list of 'ludicrous things said by yoga teachers?' If not, Google it). Plain English (at least at first) works best.

@ Relate to people's concerns; have a clear aim for what you do

I talked about this earlier, but keep it in mind throughout classes. Keep linking your work to what matters to your students. You can also get *them* to make the link, eg, "Where do you experience stress in your life? Here's a practice that could help." After teaching something, I ask people where they could apply it. Remind people these practices have real life value.

@ Kill your unicorns

'Unicorns' are hippie jargon words not used in mainstream culture. Alternative subcultures have developed their own jargon and ways of speaking, which can be unintelligible or even repulsive to people outside that subculture. On the other hand, jargon can be used to make alternative teachers seem more special, while creating a barrier to actual learning. My students hunt and kill phrases like: 'energy' and 'drop into'. We playfully call these 'unicorns'. Other yoga examples include 'namaste' and 'om' or 'love and light'. Would these really go down well in an office or in an email to an executive? If you're in doubt about any terms you use, ask yourself: would this phrase appear in a conservative newspaper? Would my right wing uncle use it? Sometimes these words can be a useful shorthand for real things; other times you get the added benefit of realising you're actually talking bollocks when you cut them out. 😊 I can be guilty of this too. I was coaching someone on the phone and I said, "What kind of space are you in today, man?" (Like a big hippie.) He replied, "In a room, Mark", obviously not knowing I was referring to his emotional state!

Exercise

What are some of your unicorns? It's possible to be really blind to them, so get someone normal look through your website or flyer, or hear your 'elevator pitch', to spot them.



📍 **Get operational**

When instructing a class, always state the method, not a metaphor or a potential result. Tell people exactly **how** to do what you're asking. For example, say, "Bring your attention to the physical sensation of breath entering the nose", rather than, "Empty your mind". Do not tell people to, "Extend their energy to the corners of the universe" or whatever – even if this makes sense to you. If in doubt, check your instructions with a 10 year-old who isn't afraid to tell you when you make no sense. This sounds simple – but is surprisingly hard to do. Just taking this tip fully on board will make your work massively more accessible.

Exercise

Record yourself teach a class, give a consultation, or whatever, then go through it with a friend and spot all the non-operational language. Do it a second time a month later after practicing and pay your friend £10 for every time you slip up on the second time around.

📍 **Use familiar metaphors and examples**

Connect the weird thing you're doing to familiar examples people can relate to. For example, "As you inhale, imagine there's a balloon expanding in your belly." Or 'relax your whole body, so it's like a rag doll.' Or "It's like driving: you have to practice, not just talk about it". Before running a course, try doing your homework to find examples that immediately make sense to them (or get your 'champions' inside the organisation to help).

'Just' rant

This one is a plague. I've seen multiple EFC exams where students used this word literally dozens of times in 30 minutes. It's a hippie verbal tic, and I regularly go nuts in yoga classes because of this. "Just breath." "Just extend your energy." "Just do a one-armed handstand." It's annoying because it suggests something is easy, when (for your normies, especially) things might not be. It can also sound passive aggressive because it comes across as "I'm only asking a small thing and you'd be unreasonable not to do it". So JUST stop it, please, for the love of your non-existent yoga gods.

Pricing

Given that mainstream environments have loads of money ... OK, careful with that shadow, some companies do, some don't ... how much do you charge? The basic answer is AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, this is capitalism, baby! You can, of course, then decide to make things more accessible.

The key here is to establish perceived value – making sure people know the awesome benefits your work brings, and linking this to things such as their key organisational results and 'return on investment' (ROI – this means what financial benefit they get further down the line as a result of the initial outlay). For example, to build the perceived ROI of a stress workshop I'll discuss employee engagement and discretionary effort (extra shit happy people do free), reduced error rate (happy people screw up less) and increased staff retention (fewer people quit). Check out my business jargon, I had to learn all that!

Note that whoever wants to book you may just love your stuff and want to help people, but they still need to 'sell' the idea internally, and if they have shareholders, they can't legally do something just because it's nice. Another answer to the pricing question is to look at competitors and similar services for comparison. Other tips:

- 🕒 Get them to suggest a price first (basic rule of bartering).
- 🕒 Say what sounds like quite a lot. If they say yes immediately without wincing, ask for more with the next client.
- 🕒 Price depends on who you're working with (with very senior people it can be crazy high) and who is holding the purse strings. Make sure you know who this is, plus any other factors like if they have a budget they have to spend this quarter.
- 🕒 See this video on pricing coaching as there's often internal work around this.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R6OcmWcolU



Your embodiment

Stop floating and flowing, hippie! It's not just what you do and say, but how you do it that matters. Any facilitator's embodiment (bodily way of being and moving) can undermine their message. Let's use the 'four elements' model to illustrate (earth, water, air, fire): it's a simple model people can usually get their head around quickly. To generalise, I often see people from 'alternative' contexts demonstrating too much water and air (soft, flowy, floaty) – and not enough earth and fire (not being firm, organised or direct enough). This can prevent them connecting with mainstream groups. You don't need to know much about embodiment to get the idea; just think of the biggest new age flake you know – that's what *not* to do! Actually, many yoga people have an advantage of over freeform dancers and improv folks in this regard, as their embodiments may well be closer to mainstream ones (especially if you're from an earthy Iyengar background, for example, or a fiery Ashtanga one). Being relaxed yet firm is good, and not as expressive as you would on a Burning Man dance floor.

Your word really matters

Be reliable, FFS. Do what you say. Simple eh? Really, 100%, **do what you say you will**. Particularly, be on time (and that means a few minutes early) and be impeccable with your promises. This is a big deal in many mainstream subcultures. Personal responsibility, taken to what may seem like uptight extremes, will go a long way. Make no excuses, ever: they don't care about the traffic and certainly not Mercury being in bloody retrograde. Did I mention be on time? Be on time. Be on time. One more thing ... be the fuck on time. 😊

Exercise

Get a friend to copy your walk and stance. Pick someone you trust – and explain it's about self awareness, not mocking. Take a good look at 'yourself'. Would you buy from this person? Would you trust this person, if you were a normie? What do you think of them more generally?

Videos

Introduction to embodiment:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3yuDEihmE0

Four elements model:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UN5Fnwucso

Personal responsibility:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyfe2SViihA

Boundaries

Depending on where you stand, yogis and other hippies tend to have overly loose boundaries, or normies tend to have overly tight boundaries. Whatever, the boundaries are different, so be aware of them.

@ Hierarchy

Many businesses and government organisations are far more hierarchical than you may be used to. This can be subtle (and even denied), but do watch how you relate to the CEO or someone in a similar role. She's not your mate even if she's friendly! Norms such as who speaks first, where people sit etc can be related to hierarchy and you must respect these if you want to get invited back.

@ Feelings

In mainstream contexts, people tend to be less comfortable talking about their emotions. They may even fear emotional expression as dangerous. If you tend to cry a lot or want to talk about your feelings, know this may not be welcome. Saying this, a good manager or sales person is often an excellent 'people person'.

Exercise

Hang out with some normies who aren't your clients. See if you can make them mildly uncomfortable. Notice when you accidentally do this. Have fun.

@ Politics

All depth work is political, but you don't have to be explicit about this or try to make everyone subscribe to your views.

@ Over-sharing

Your clients may have more 'work / life' boundaries than you're used to and not want to hear about your health issues, kids (though this can be a nice point of connection), spiritual dilemmas, sex life, etc. Follow your client's lead.

@ Sex

Talking about sex is still very taboo in many businesses. If it's important to bring up the topic of sex in your workshop, do so with great care.

@ Equality & diversity

Especially in the USA, Scandinavia and some others places, know that gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc can be hyper sensitive areas in organisations.

Touch

This comes under boundaries, really, but when it comes to modern postural yoga, it deserves a section of its own. Many yoga teachers these days do hands-on adjustments or assists. In fact, it seems to be expected. I've lost count of the number of times yoga teachers have put their hands on me without asking my permission. I was once even thrown out of a class for refusing an adjustment! This culture of non-consensual touching is not acceptable anywhere, for reasons beyond the scope of this e-book. However, if you do it (even if you ask first) in the wrong mainstream setting, you could also find yourself with a legal case to deal with. Many mainstream environments are FAR less touchy than alternative ones. Some businesses literally have zero-touch rules. If you're working with teenagers in schools, for example, touching is definitely out. After spending some time studying aikido and meditation in California, I once got in trouble with a British company for hugging people. Handshakes are usually fine in a corporate setting; make sure yours isn't too floppy or prolonged, and stop making so much eye contact, you weirdo! As with all these areas, do what people there do.

Dress the part

When in Rome, chuck on a toga. OK, if you're teaching asana, then you won't want to wear a suit, but don't wear your tie-dye leggings with dolphins printed on them either. Stick to conservative yoga wear (neutral colours/patterns, and maybe don't have all your chakra tattoos on show either). When you're really well known, you can get away with non-conformity as a sign of status, but don't push this unless you're a really big deal or being billed as exotic. Personally, I enjoy wearing my suit these days, and I like taking it off after work to shift modes.

Remember what you bring to the party

With all this 'trying to blend in', sometimes people forget that they've been brought into such places precisely because they're different or have different skills. Yes, adapt and accommodate, but not when it comes to key values. Own the 'awesome' you have that they need. If you didn't have unusual skills you wouldn't be invited in. If mainstream society has it all figured out, why are so many alternative things catching on?



Ok, maybe not quite like that...

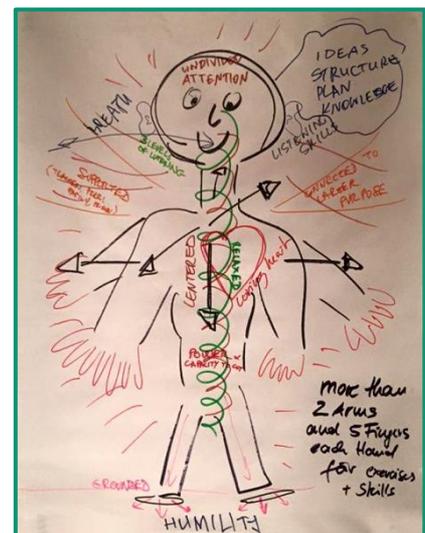
Dealing with frustration, isolation and despair

If you're successful in getting a lot of work in mainstream environments you're going to get some new problems ... yeah! One of the main ones I've experienced is a sense of loneliness and isolation. Being the only freak in the room can be draining, no matter how much you can see shared humanity. It's really important that as well as doing this work you make time for being in communities where you don't have to 'manage appearances', to hang out with your tribe and people that just get you without translation. If you don't do this you will become drained and may suffer cynicism, burnout and despair. When I find myself thinking, "I just told you this, dumb arse, what's wrong with these people!" It's time for a retreat, festival, dinner with old friends, or other community recharge.

More mundanely perhaps, a lack of good vegetarian food, being worn down by soulless corporate hotels, ugly strip-lighting in offices etc are all factors that – to some extent – can be mitigated by good planning and creativity (for example, a rolled-up hotel towel makes a good meditation cushion). And these things can also take their toll. Knowing what you give up to, say, stay in a five star hotel on a business trip may not be immediately obvious, but believe me, it can be a lot and you'll have to ask yourself if the price is worth it. Personally, I really like a certain amount of corporate work and have cut down on international business travel because of these factors.

What you can learn from the normies

Any good cultural exchange goes both ways. One thing I dramatically underestimated was how much I'd learn from my work in business. Many of the things discussed, such as firming up a sense of personal responsibility and the empathic basis of good marketing, have fed back into my practices and changed me positively as a person. What started off as a translation has become a deeply satisfying conversation, and a profound practice itself. What was initially a way to help more people and make more money, has become a core spiritual practice, and I invite you to look for this possibility.



Taking your learning further

As mentioned earlier, for a much fuller training in working with the body in business, take a look at the Embodied Facilitator Course. We've been successfully teaching yogis and other alternative people to work in mainstream settings for some years in London and Moscow. There are lots of free videos and other resources on the website if you'd like a taste – see the link opposite. We also have an online course aimed at yogis and similar that's all about refining, marketing and making a living from your purpose: Purpose Black Belt. Finally, check out Embodied Yoga Principles: my own take on yoga that's about your life, not your hamstrings. We've got a growing number of yoga teachers training in this approach.

Further learning

Making a living from your purpose:
www.purposeblackbelt.com

Embodied Yoga Principles:
www.embodiedyogaprinciples.com

Embodied Facilitator Course:
www.embodiedfacilitator.com

My business website:
www.integrationtraining.co.uk

Video resources

Our YouTube channel (Integration Training & Embodied Facilitator Course) has about 10 million hits and many videos on themes related to this book: do subscribe if you find the videos helpful.

Mistakes to avoid: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqyWtNnXRyo

Are you a spiritual wanker? www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbF6k9iQj2c

Why money is spiritual: www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuWU6n1Tdlw

Money mindfulness: www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFQtUuokYCO

Top marketing tips: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhluHmxH9KY

Actual business presentation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FocbzSag7qg

Embodied work with organisations: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeP7Bo9R5q4

Business jargon piss take: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MFUE0KgoEQ

Business meditation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz-Lfpcefu4

Critical look at 'spiritual' culture: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgiUa5bVHKA

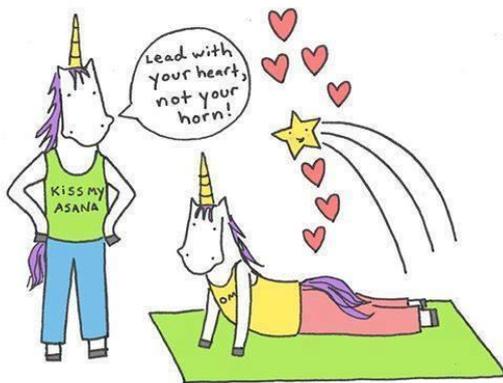
Slideshow for HR managers: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ2B46PGsGc

Conclusion

The world really needs to get its heart, body and soul back, and yoga and other alternative arts can really help. So let's not let our attachments get in the way of that message – it's too late in the day. Let's also not get in the way of earning a decent living doing this.

I hope this introduction saves you some time and tears, so you don't need to work it out the hard way as I did. If I've been overly harsh at times forgive me – I really care about this work. It's also an ongoing conversation, so track me down on social media to dialogue. Much of the areas spoken about involve practice and can take some time, like learning a new language, so don't worry if you don't get it spot on straight away. Make mistakes, be human, learn, repeat, grow, play, serve, enjoy.

All the best from hippie Brighton,
Mark



Note of thanks

So I didn't just pull all this out of my butt. Business mentors Tom Hume, Julia Chanteray and Lynne Sedgmore have been critical to my professional learning. The whole EFC community, especially Francis Briers and Alexandra Vilvovskaya, have been vital. Paul Linden taught me to be lovingly rational; Richard Strozzi-Heckler and Wendy Palmer, who lead the way with embodied business, inspired me to be successful. My thanks to Lance Giroux for sitting me in front of Joseph Campbell when I was lost, to Facebook and YouTube for helping me reach out, and to Don Levine and my mother for believing in me when common sense was counter indicatory many times. Thank you all.

Real organisation chart

