Virtual Class Zoom Best Practices

Please enjoy these best practices surrounding hosting virtual class / sessions based on my personal experience as a group fitness and yoga instructor and also the experience of several contributors from the greater wellness world during the Covid crisis of 2020.   I'm hopeful that this will be something we do regularly after this crisis, connecting with each other in a somewhat simpler, more accessible way. I've been able to practice with friends all over the world, with my stay at home momma friends, who normally can't come to the studio with me. I've been inspired and hope you have been too.

Enjoy and add comments / suggestions where you see fit. I'll come in and update periodically as I learn more.

-Roxy

1. Day Of / Planning
    a. Ensure the participants get the connectivity info. Who is sending an email or text message with the links and when? How are students registering?
    b. Get camera ready. Do you have any studio branded attire you can wear? Be clean, fresh, smiling, and ready. Wear clothes that aren't distracting and that you won't have to adjust the entire session.
    c. Surrounding. Plan out where you will teach from. Some studios are offering that instructors teach and/or record from empty studios. Bright natural light and smaller, uncluttered spaces work best. A room with lots of windows facing you or even outside is an option. Katy from Studio South says "Live & Lit" - including a plant and a lit candle can really help set the stage for a space. Have your weights, mats, whatever you will need for the session.

d. Do Not Disturb. If you are teaching at home or in a shared space, be sure to ask that people not disturb you. Maybe a little sign. Maybe it's movie time for the little ones.

e. Public speaking rules apply. Keep it simple with your language and with sequences and moves. Keep in mind your words will be followed much more than your specific posture and moves as the video quality will be variable based on participants setup.

2. Start Zoom / Virtual class 15 min before official class start time.

    a. Welcome everyone by name as they join. Engage in small talk / ice breakers. Introduce people to each other. Remind them of any equipment needs. Get them talking and smiling. Instructors must bring the energy here!

    b. Setup computer laptop or device to host from, usually setup on stool or with a tripod, with a decent view of where session will be taught from. You want to make sure you can turn 90 degrees standing, see ok with planks, pushups, core work, bridge position, and side lying legs. A favorite setup method is using visual and voice from and iPhone's main camera. They have great quality that cannot be denied.

    c. Ensure audio setup.

        i. Best Option: Several studios like calling in for audio with wireless headphones like AirPods. Use another source for music, either from computer or another phone.

        ii. Option 2: Use computer audio for the Zoom meeting and setting up a little separate speaker near the microphone. Normal studio speakers just sound spaced out. Realize that as the teacher turns away from the microphone, sound quality is compromised.

        iii. If using Zoom, here is the way to share computer audio. Must be done from a laptop (not phone or tablet)

            1. Audio settings:

                a. (Button ^ next to mute)

                b. - microphone volume up

                c. - un-check auto adjust volume

            2. Adv Settings:

                a. - box checked to allow enable original sound

                b. - disable

                c. - disable

                d. - aggressive:)

        iv. Some people like setting up the Zoom meetings with the "waiting room" feature because then you can "admit" everyone and easily check them in that way and keep up with

billing / accounting. (This works well for Lisa's small Pilates community; You could see how you might NOT want to do this for a larger audience.)

    d. It's great to have one model / student practicing in addition to the instructor, if possible.

3. Class start time.

    a. Ensure the teacher is the highlighted screen using spotlight setting. Users can also pin teacher themselves as needed.

    b. Mute all participants.

    c. Hit record.

    d. Go! Always suggest starting with a few deep breaths, for teacher sanity.

4. Check in within the first 5 min after class start time. See if everyone can hear and see ok, ask for thumbs up or fist bumps as positive confirmation things are ok.

5. During class. Usual class best practices can be translated in this format.

    a. Use names for those who are live working out with you.

    b. Give participants more specific form suggestions, where possible. Like, "Great form, Leslie!" or "I think you can get lower, Meghan!"

    c. Scroll through all participants and check in periodically.

    d. Get closer to screen with detailed feedback, as needed.

    e. Be human! If a dog barks, toddler interrupts, or you stumble over your words, own it, laugh, and keep moving.

    f. Smile!

6. After class.

    a. End on time! Always.

    b. Take a moment of gratitude and deep breath together. We can be grateful that we have the ability to move together, that we are able to use technology to connect during this challenging time.

    c. Stop recording.

    d. Unmute all.

    e. Stop pin / spotlight setting so we can better see everyone.

    f. Let everyone know of the next virtual class taught by the studio and the same instructor.

    g. Leave Zoom up for 5 minutes of socializing, if everyone wants.

    h. Download recording.

        i. Upload it to your On Demand library, wherever you are hosting it, perhaps Vimeo Pro or Youtube (with a private list).

Thank you to all who are out there trying to help people become healthier, happier versions of themselves, during this challenging time. We are likely the brightest spot in our participants' day. Practicing movement, being active, and the connection it brings is powerful, especially during this time where many are experiencing more stress and seclusion than ever before. Xoxox -Roxy & Crew

Big thank you to all my contributors!

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