

Practice Interview

## **Practice Interview**

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[music]

**00:05 Speaker 1:** Hi everybody. It's Anna here with Curvy Yoga and I'm so excited to be talking with Vivienne McMaster today. Hi Viv!

**00:11 Vivienne McMaster:** Hi! [chuckle]

**00:12 S1:** How are you doing?

**00:14 VM:** Great! I'm so excited about what we have to share with you guys today.

**00:17 S1:** Yeah. Oh my gosh, it's been a couple of months in the making and now we get to spill the beans, which is super thrilling.

**00:23 VM:** It is.

**00:24 S1:** So real quick, we'll just kinda tell you a little about ourselves. So if you don't know me I'm Anna with Curvy Yoga which is body positive yoga for people of all shapes and sizes. And what I've been really interested in the past couple of years is thinking about how yoga can be used as a tool for body acceptance. Not only that that happens for some people, it has happened for me, but how do you facilitate that process. And so that's what brought me into a conversation with Vivienne. So tell us a little about what you do Viv.

**00:54 VM:** Sure. I'm Vivienne McMaster. And I run classes called, "Be Your Own Beloved," that are focused on helping people see themselves with kindness through their cameras, through self-portrait photography. And it's kind of a scary-beautiful idea for some people to dabble into, but I have seen so much transformative body acceptance and just growth that can happen when we step into these brave places.

**01:25 S1:** Yeah, and I participated in your class earlier this year, which is how we really connected. I have to say, when I signed up I was kind of like, "This seems fun," but I wasn't really expecting some huge growth 'cause I feel like I've done all this self acceptance and body acceptance work, what's new for me at this point? I was so wrong in the best way possible. [chuckle] So there was something so powerful about the space you created in the course and your beautiful teaching. And also being able to see other people's photos and to see my own and really to look in the camera with love, which for me, even though I had sort of had gotten more used to having my photo taken through Curvy Yoga, I hadn't been doing it with such a kindness towards myself. I'm taking the photo, I'm looking at it, this is for my benefit. So I feel like your work is so powerful. That's why I'm really excited to be combining the self portraiture with the yoga, that seems appealing to me.

**02:24 VM:** Oh, we have something so awesome planned.

**02:27 S1:** Yeah. Then tell me about your yoga practice. I know you're kind of reconnecting with it now. How's that going.

**02:35 VM:** It's going great. I started Yoga probably in my teens, just taking classes, but I never had a consistent practice until about a year ago, my mom actually was doing her yoga teacher training.

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**02:51 S1:** Nice.

**02:52 VM:** So as... To help her out, for her benefit...

**02:59 S1:** Right. [laughter]

**03:01 VM:** I thought that I'd like... We did Skype Yoga.

**03:04 VM:** Oh, cool.

**03:05 VM:** That's kind of what brought it back into my life on a regular basis, but then even in the last couple months, I've been doing a lot of exploring of different activities and athletics that I can find empowered supportive space in. And two of those I've found are running and boxing.

**03:30 S1:** Nice. I love it.

**03:30 VM:** Even if I'm not. But doing... So I've been doing a lot of those, and feeling really supported in them, but I was just in pain. [chuckle] So lately I have been returning to yoga and for the first time ever really creating Anna at home practice.

**03:50 S1:** Oh nice.

**03:51 VM:** For myself which is exciting to... I guess, other people might relate to this. I have had stories... I live in a really small apartment, rented, I don't have a lot of space, and I've kind of had this story that I don't have room to put down a yoga mat. There is enough room.

[laughter]

**04:15 VM:** No. And I also have a little backyard. So I've been going out into the backyard because it's summer here, and just bringing out my yoga mat and it's been beautiful, and I really wanted a full return, and I guess just like some of the other activities I've been doing, the hardest part is just rolling out that mat sometimes. The rest I just fall into it and I love it but, yeah.

**04:43 S1:** Sometimes I just leave my mat rolled out just as a reminder.

**04:47 VM:** Right yeah.

**04:48 S1:** 'Cause that is the hardest part for sure. [chuckle]

**04:53 VM:** Can I ask you a question?

**04:56 S1:** Yeah.

**04:56 VM:** So we are going to be... Oh, are we gonna spill the beans first or at the end?

**05:02 S1:** Yeah. Go ahead. [laughter]

**05:04 VM:** Well, in this class that we're bringing you guys, we're gonna be exploring self

compassion through the practice of both yoga and photography. And I wondered about your self-acceptance journey and it's relationship to yoga. Did you start yoga in hopes of finding self-acceptance in it, or did that happen along the way somewhere?

**05:29 S1:** Yeah, it more happened along the way. So I started yoga to deal with pain. That's interesting that you mentioned that. I had chronic migraines and I was just desperate to try anything. So I was sort of at the point in my migraine journey where people would say things like, "You should put a banana peel on your forehead. You should try yoga. You should do... And just sort of everything." I was like, "Sure, give me the banana peel, give me the yoga mat." I sort of saw them on the same level at that point, just whatever. And then as I started practicing, it was the first time I had really done any form of movement that I really enjoyed, because no one could've described me as a sporty kid. I was not into any of that stuff, I'd never really found a form of exercise I really liked.

**06:14 S1:** So, when I first started I was just like, "What is happening?" but I knew I wanted to keep going. And at the same time I had a history of chronic dieting and feeling really bad about my body, and so I think yoga sort of worked it's magic on me without me really noticing. And then, after a few years when I started to be able to feel what was going on in my body more, thanks to yoga, I was able to say, "Hey wait a minute, if I've been all these diets, they're not working," "Something has to change in sort of my paradigm of how I'm relating to my body." And that's when I really started working with self-acceptance, body acceptance, and yoga among other tools.

**06:58 S1:** And so, I've really been kicking around like how can that process be facilitated a little more quickly. Like, of course everyone's gonna have their own process, but I wanted to think about, instead of just sort of randomly waiting seven years or however long for it to kind of catch up, how could I as a yoga teacher make space for people to explore that on a regular basis? And that was sort of what I was thinking about when I came to you with the idea for the course, which was I felt like self-portraiture would be such a cool part of that process, because I feel like visibility is something that many people don't feel they have in yoga, like they feel sort of excluded from the mainstream images. And so, being able to see yourself as a yoga practitioner, in a community of people of all different shapes and sizes, while thinking about how you feel in your body, and how you look, and how you perceive all of that, would be a really powerful package, so, that's where we are now. [chuckle] I'm excited about it. Yeah. So, I know that you do a lot of self-portraiture with people, and what is the biggest takeaway that people have from your courses?

**08:10 VM:** I think... We have so much fear around being in front of the camera, and a lot of us have kind of had photos that feel like proof of these stories that we have been in [08:24]        ourselves. And I think one of the things that happens when we explore self-portraiture is we realize how much we are in control of our... The way we see ourselves. And I feel like a lot of what people take away from it is a feeling of empowerment, of, "I get to create this image. I get to stand in it, and I get to tell my story of the world." That's what I'm seeing. I'm seeing people come into the class really like turtles in their shells, or coming into self-portraiture scared and fearful and just rising up into it.

**09:08 S1:** That's huge.

**09:10 VM:** And also it can be fun.

[laughter]

**09:13 S1:** What a concept, right?

**09:14 VM:** Yeah. It really can be fun, and I think that's a takeaway that we can bring into our own lives, like, "How can I just add a little bit of my story to the day in my camera?"

**09:27 S1:** Yeah, I love that. [chuckle]

**09:30 VM:** And so, for you, you kind of delved more into self-portraiture in this... When you took my class, and you carried on since. Can you share a little bit about your self portrait path so far?

**09:47 S1:** Yeah. It's been something that's been... It's kind of become a part of my practice in some ways, to use the word that we're using. [chuckle] Where each week, I like to take a photo, at least once a week if not more often, of my practice on the mat and off the mat, because that's such an important part of yoga to me, like it's not only something that shows up for you on the yoga mat. I feel like the yoga mat is a nice testing ground, but taking what you're learning off to me is even more powerful than on. And so, part of that for me has been looking at my yoga practice in a new way, and just capturing these pieces and really... I feel like it really helps me to presence myself, like, "Here I am. Here's a photograph that captured me in this moment, with what I was feeling, whatever was coming up for me," and as someone with a history of being really disconnected and not present, that feels like a really powerful grounding. Like, "Here is this photo, here I am in time, and I'm moving forward." So I'm really weaving it into my life in a beautiful way. I'm so grateful to you for bringing that in, because I never would've thought of it on my own without you making the space for it in that class.

**11:04 VM:** Well, and I'm so excited that we're coming together to... [chuckle]

**11:07 S1:** Me, too! Yeah. So, let's talk a little about the class. Does that sound good? Okay, so, the class is starting at the end of August, and it runs for four weeks. So you're gonna have prompts Monday through Friday, and then you have the weekend to play, to catch up, whatever, we didn't want it to be a super high-pressure, every single day there's something that you have to do. There's a lot of spaciousness in the content that we've created, so there's little invitations every day, and Viv and I sort of alternate back and forth, so there's yoga one day, and there's a self-portraiture prompt the next, and we just go along like that to really weave them together in a hopefully organic process for people. Just to see what unfolds. And, do you wanna talk a little bit about the Flickr group?

**11:56 VM:** Sure, yes. We are gonna have a Flickr group for the class. And it's a space, I tend to think of it as our community hub where we can kind of come all into the room together because we're gonna be spread out all over the world for this class and where we can come in and gather and what always happens is there's just this beautiful welcoming supportive energy in this group, and I'll be able to help you get a, Flickr, join them in the Flickr group if you're not there already, it's free and it's just, it's a beautiful space where we can cheer each other on and be cheered on, and we'll be in there too to cheer you on.

**12:42 S1:** Yeah we'll be sharing our photos, I'm excited about the group, I definitely will attest to the power of the Flickr group and be a... Both seeing and being seen by other people, I think that's a really cool part when you do have this very supportive community who's all kind of going through the same process.

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**13:04 VM:** So we're not alone.

**13:05 S1:** Yeah exactly and that's I think one of the things I'm most excited about is how we can... Each person will have their own journey, and it would be cool to witness a new part of that and see what our collective journey turns out to be.

**13:19 VM:** And I also wanted to mention you don't need to have a fancy camera at all for this class.

**13:24 S1:** Thanks yeah that's good. I use my iPhone, for your course, it was perfect.

[laughter]

**13:30 VM:** And I need I'm gonna be doing the prompts along with the class primarily using my iPhone too, so... iPhones rock.

**13:37 S1:** Yeah. [laughter] We're right there with you with a camera phone.

**13:39 VM:** Or other smartphones.

**13:42 S1:** Right. We won't be so Apple biased.

**13:45 VM:** Yeah.

**13:46 S1:** Is there anything else you think we should add about the course?

**13:51 VM:** I'm just so excited for folks to join us in creating practice and embodying their curvy beloved bodies.

**13:58 S1:** Yes.

[laughter]

**13:59 S1:** I can't wait. Alright well, thanks Viv, we'll talk to you soon.

**14:03 VM:** Thank you Anna.

[chuckle]

**14:04 S1:** Bye.

**14:05 VM:** Bye.

[music]