



## Vanessa Birnbaum Rosler's Yoga Philosophy Ignited a Booming Business

The founder of All You Can Yoga reveals how she harnessed her love of the practice, marketing, and entrepreneurship to simplify the *business* of yoga, and bring it within everyone's reach.

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Alicia Menendez:

Many times I have gone to a yoga studio and rolled out my mat, had a good sweat and never once have I thought about the business of yoga. You probably haven't either. It's almost antithetical to the practice of going inward. But there is a business that is why you pay money to do it. And that business doesn't work for a lot of teachers. It's part of the challenge that Vanessa Birnbaum Rosler is trying to solve for with All You Can Yoga, a business and philosophy that is trying to give more people access to the life changing benefits of yoga.

Vanessa, thank you for doing this.

Vanessa Birnbaum Rosler:

Thank you for inviting me. I feel so honored.

Menendez: Vanessa, did you find yoga or did yoga find you?

Birnbaum Rosler:

Yoga found me 100%. I didn't just went to a yoga class and fall in love with a practice that was not my journey whatsoever. My first encounter with yoga was because of my youngest sister. She's eight years younger than me and she was diagnosed with severe scoliosis. So very surprisingly because my family are all doctors, mom, dad, grandpa, grandma, all of them are doctors, different kinds, but they gave this yoga thing a chance instead of going to surgery and just putting her through that trauma. And I was the one in charge of taking her to yoga classes and it took me about two years to finally give in. It is a funny story because the teacher was always telling me how badly I was behaving in her yoga classes and making fun and just disrupting the energy of the class just by being there.

And she told me, "Either you practice with us or you need to be outside." And I gave it a try and I loved it. And now I can reflect back and understand that everything that your soul magnetizes is always something that your ego resists. So your ego has resistance of the things that your soul longs for the most. That is one of the first yoga teachings that the

Yoga Sutras of Patañjali, which is the first yoga book that was ever written says about yoga. That you need to put yourself out there, come face to face with your own resistance, transcend that resistance and to the other side of that, there's breakthrough.

Menendez: You fall in love with yoga, but it is not as though immediately you become a yoga teacher, though you have always been an entrepreneur. 2008, you start vanillashake, a branding studio based in Miami. You're specializing in startup businesses. I've heard you say your dream was always location, independence and freedom. How did you get clear on that dream?

Birnbaum Rosler:

Oh my God, because I was the girl who was working nonstop and then taking all of the savings and go on a long trip for like two months, to Europe, to Southeast Asia. And this is part of who I am. It's a need for seeing new cultures and immersing myself and always with purpose and that's how All You Can Yoga was started. All You Can Yoga was also a summer trip, but a trip with intention. So in order to add purpose to that specific trip, we started to give yoga classes and that's how I became a yoga teacher out of my desire to travel the world and immerse myself in new cultures.

Menendez: But what I find interesting about what it is that you've built though, is that you are really looking at the business of yoga and the way that the business of yoga has become broken. And the way that the business of yoga does not serve yogis, does not serve yoga teachers. For those of us who like me have taken classes online, have gone to a studio in pre-pandemic days, explain to us how the business of yoga works and what about it currently doesn't work.

Birnbaum Rosler:

Well, the business of yoga works only if you are a very known teacher. And it's so sad because right now there are new teachers that know the algorithm, know how to become Insta famous instantly, but don't necessarily have the experience. Nobody becomes a yoga teacher in a teacher training. You become, or you develop the art of being a teacher through experience, through your students, through the path itself and through your own practice for a long time without interruptions. The main way of making money in yoga is through teachers trainings. So there has been an explosion of teachers training that there are more teachers than students right now, 2021. If you see me, I'm all sweaty. Being a yoga teacher is not glamorous at all. I'm always sweaty. My hair is always messy and it is so freaking worth it. It is so fulfilling.

There's a misconception that yogis cannot speak money, that you feel so fulfilled by giving this practice because it's like a way of giving back to the practice itself and all the ways that the practice transforms you from the inside out, that it's almost frowned upon to charge for the value that you provide. So the way that yogis gave the turn to that is by yoga education, yoga teachers training, where they can charge for a title. What we did in All You

Can Yoga was to create this content so that more yoga teachers that had the experience but didn't have necessarily the marketing knowledge or the organizational skills to create a curriculum, to create a what to do on each session, to create a syllabus, they could grab the All You Can Yoga philosophy, the All You Can Yoga content, the All You Can Yoga manuals, and offer it becoming leaders in their own communities. And circling back to what I said at the beginning, like if you are not Insta famous, how do you attract your tribe?

Menendez: Vanessa, you taught me the term yoga liberties, which I had not known.

Birnbaum Rosler:

Yoga liberties, yes. There are so many and they're good. Everybody's good. That's the beauty about yoga, that every teacher can prioritize and teach according to their priorities, their desires, their fears, their sentiment, whatever they know is what they teach. And this is what we do. We allow the space, the flexibility for each teacher to personalize, customize, and bring their own flavor, bring their own philosophy, bring their own style and teach from their hearts.

Menendez: So walk me through how it actually works. If you are a yoga teacher in Oakland, or Brooklyn, or in your case, because what you're building is a global yoga brand, that teacher could also be in Bogotá, she could be anywhere. What is that teacher getting from you? And then how are they using it?

Birnbaum Rosler:

I want to stop you right there because All You Can Yoga is not a brand. We've been in the yoga industry since 2014 and we've been so many things. We've been a global yoga community. We've been a brand. We've been a yoga educational facilitation company. And right now in this moment in my life, I realized that All You Can Yoga is a philosophy and the name really says it all. It's a practice that changes with you, it's breath, it's movement, is meditation, is relaxation, is facilitation, is content creation. It's really the tools so that anyone, not only yoga teachers, but anyone can benefit from the All You Can Yoga philosophy.

And All You Can Yoga philosophy is all inclusive, is the amplification of the impact of the practice combining every single style and every single lineage and philosophy out there because all of the yogas, they were all created by the same desire to self-discovery, self regulation and freedom. I also coach people into a program that I call Build Your Brand and then I decided that I hated the name. And now I call it, Leave Your Mark because it's not about creating a personal brand. Now it's about leaving your mark in the world and understanding your whys and your what and your how. I recently gave birth to my second son. So I also created All You Can Yoga prenatal. So again, it's a combination of everything that I practiced through both of my pregnancies with a vision of having a happy vaginal delivery.

Menendez: At home, no less. I was reading your birth story. I was like, tip my hat to you. Do you feel like it has presented a challenge the fact that you have been, as you say, a brand, a facilitating company, now a philosophy, that the product itself has gone through all those evolutions?

Birnbaum Rosler:

Yes and no. I feel that we have built a family of yogipreneurs. So every time that All You Can Yoga changes and evolves, the family changes and evolves with it. And sometimes it's me personally changing and evolving, sometimes it's the family members changing and evolving and challenging me to change and evolve as well.

Menendez: Can you give me an example? Can you tell me about a time when that has happened?

Birnbaum Rosler:

I was trying to build a brand in an All You Can Yoga community and that failed and I felt stuck in the brand and in the product creation because I created this curriculum with my partners and we were giving this curriculum to leaders around the world, and they were teaching the All You Can Yoga teacher training. But after 1, 2, 3, 4 times running the curriculum, they didn't want to be All You Can Yoga anymore. They have grown and evolved and they have taken ownership of the curriculum in a way that they felt like that was theirs.

Menendez: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Birnbaum Rosler:

It was almost like they forgotten that the curriculum was originally from All You Can Yoga, and they wanted to become their own brands independently. So that's where I realized that the sense of community is not by building a brand where we have soldiers of the brand everywhere. That was my idea in the beginning, but it wasn't real or sustainable through time.

The first reaction is always resistance and coming back to the resistance, the first reaction is always resistance. And then I started really to go in and dig deeper to understand the real need of these teachers. And it was real. So by evolving and changing, that was a specific situation, the organization itself made me change. And if I go back to the main why I created what I created, and if I go back to the amplifying the impact of the practice and having collaborations and co-creations that are both solid and flexible, it is just natural for them to have their own brands and shine by themselves. So right now I just give the curriculum without expecting to be an All You Can Yoga teacher training, but a teacher training from Alicia Menendez with the All You Can Yoga philosophy.

Menendez: Okay. Now my yoga question, which is that I have... I think this is a lot of people's experience, I've practiced yoga for years, I've gotten very good at all of the poses. I have never allowed to sink in any of the more core spiritual elements of the practice. So I hear you say that what we resist is what we magnetize. And I think to myself, well, one, I just need more of that in my life. Yes, tell me about that. What am I missing in my practice? I feel like it is like a video game where I have not accessed that next level. I've not gone down through the right tube that brings me inside rather than focusing on the very physical aspect of the practice.

Birnbaum Rosler:

It is as simple as inconsistency. There are-

Menendez: Stop looking into my soul, Vanessa. Look away.

Birnbaum Rosler:

Inconsistency. So for everyone that is listening, yoga is for everyone. Right? If you can breathe, you can do yoga. And what happens is that there are four different paths to liberation, which is what yoga seeks. We're seeking to feel happy, to feel liberated, to feel enlightened. And we almost all of the times, 99% of the time we enter through the yoga world through moving the body. So you go to a yoga studio and you move your body and you feel so, so, so good, but you do it intermittently, and then you take a break and then you go and you take a break.

What happens with the practice? This has nothing to do with a teacher, with a teacher's skills, with, I don't know, yourself or your inability or your ability. This is the path of yoga itself. If you are consistent, yoga will reveal to you and you will encounter inevitably the other paths of yoga. And the other paths of yoga include everything about the philosophy, everything about the study of the scriptures, everything about the altruism and the karma, the putting yourself out there for the service, for the greater good, the devotion for the practice itself.

If you are consistent with the practice, it doesn't matter if it takes one year or 20, it will happen.

Menendez: Thank you so much. I feel like that was exactly sort of loving kick in the pants that I needed about my life, not just about my yoga.

It just is very special what you have built for the world, but also for yourself in the sense that you have always known you're an entrepreneur, you have been practicing yoga for 20 plus years, and you also had built a reputation as a marketer. I think if I said to someone, tell me how those three things become a profession and a life. A lot of people would be like, "how about you just focus on the marketing and the entrepreneurship and keep doing the yoga on the side," or, "Do the yoga and abandon the rest." Those may not be every listener's three passions. But I think many of us have multiple passions that feel disparate and as though there is never going to be the possibility that they could unite under one

umbrella. What is your best piece of advice or guidance for someone who's trying to braid those threads of their life together?

Birnbaum Rosler:

There's an exercise that I always do with my clients that I love and it's to create a lifeline. You draw, literally you draw your life and it's your time-life and then you start going deep to yourself and ask what are the low-lows and the high-highs of your life? And then you start just drawing a little dot below the lifeline or above the life line with your experiences because we learn of our experiences. Putting it in a visual representation of our life can give you so much insight. So for me, for example, school was very low for me. I couldn't really concentrate in a school setting like sitting in a chair, listening to the teacher. All of my life I was a very bad student until I came here and I went through the Art Institute in Fort Lauderdale and it was very practical.

I was using my hands. I was using my whole body. I was standing up, I was presenting and I became a straight A student. How does that happen? So I understood that I need to do, in order for me to be there fully it needs to be interesting to me. I need to feel passion. I need to do, to feel, to see, to hear. And I started doing that with yoga. My first job, I was offered a really, really good offer. Straight out of the Art Institute I was offered a great job in a branding studio and I was fired two weeks later and I was devastated, but I started to freelance. And in freelance, I realized that I do better if I work for myself. I understood that about me. I do better if my own client is myself, instead of working for somebody else.

So from that low-low, I understood that I am an entrepreneur. And then I started vanillashake media. And I got really, really bored after six years. And I was miserable in my desk and I needed to move my body. And it was a very low-low again, but I graduated from my yoga teacher training and I went on my trip and that was a high-high. And I combined my passions by just giving it a try. So this wasn't some something intentional, like, "I'm going to combine my passions and do something." No. Doesn't work that way. I wish that I had a magic pill or something that you swallow and that's it. But it's not like that. It's just knowing yourself. And I feel like this exercise of from as early as you can remember putting every low of your life, when you have felt beaten and defeated and every high where you have felt alive and thriving, what can you learn from that experience about yourself and how can you put that into practice?

Menendez: Your Instagram bio says, "The true teacher lives within". What does that mean to you?

Birnbaum Rosler:

Nobody knows yourself more than you. And sometimes we need all of the tools in order to take away the dust and the peels of the onion of what it is your most true self. We use all of the yogas, all of the practices to reveal, to cultivate that sense of self, to get in contact with that teacher that is there, that lives there, but sometimes is hidden. It's hidden by fears, by your deepest guilt, by shame, it's hidden by trauma, pain. It's hidden by life itself. Right? So my teaching is always to go back to that, to connect with the body, to feel all what is there

to be felt and put a name on it. Really define and understand what's going on inside of you because that's the teacher. That's really, really the teacher.

Menendez: Vanessa, thank you so much for this.

Birnbaum Rosler:

No, thank you.

Menendez: I think there are a lot of us who have multiple interests that can feel like they tug us in opposite directions. I certainly would not have naturally put marketing and yoga together in my mind's eye, but I think Vanessa's career forces us to confront that assumption, about the professional compatibility of our own interests, both in a direction of using our existing skills to explore a new industry or to combine our skills and interests in an entrepreneurial pursuit.

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**CITATION:**

Menendez, Alicia, host. "Vanessa Birnbaum Rosler's Yoga Philosophy Ignited a Booming Business" *Latina to Latina*, LWC Studios. November, 11 2021. [LatinatoLatina.com](http://LatinatoLatina.com).

Produced by:

