

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF YOGA THERAPISTS

YTT Yoga Therapy Today

10TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE • 2009–2019

Spring 2019 \$5



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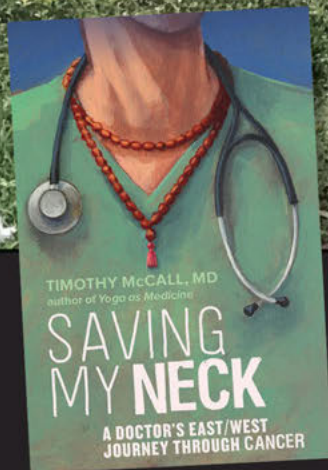
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Publisher

International Association of Yoga Therapists
Yoga Therapy Today is published in the winter, spring, and summer.

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Seated, l-r: Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, C-IAYT (India); Lisa Kaley-Isley, C-IAYT (U.K.); Keishin Kimura (Japan); John Kepner, C-IAYT (U.S.)
Standing, l-r: Vyasah Kalyanasunderam (Sri Lanka); Nouf Marwaai (Saudi Arabia); Dyanan Puvanandran (Malaysia)





This issue marks the 10th anniversary of *Yoga Therapy Today*, which continues earlier publications including *Yoga Therapy in Practice*. This year also marks IAYT's 30th anniversary, a fact we're eager to celebrate at June's Symposium on

Yoga Therapy and Research (SYTAR) by honoring the past—while looking toward yoga therapy's future. Keep reading to see how we're celebrating the present, too. And see page 8 for a note about our new Up-and-Coming Yoga Therapists meetup, which is one way we're inviting in the voices of the future.

With help from a number of talented friends, we're also documenting the history of the organization by producing IAYT's story. We'll debut this inspirational journey at SYTAR. I think the more people learn about the organization, the better equipped they'll be to help us grow and serve effectively in the years to come *and* right now.

My own present reality doesn't involve many private clients, although offering yoga therapy sessions is an incredibly fulfilling way to serve; instead, I spend a lot of time considering how I can best serve yoga therapists themselves. During a training years ago, a teacher introduced me to integrative physician Rachel Naomi Remen's profoundly useful thoughts on the difference between helping and serving. Helping, an unequal relationship, incurs debt, whereas in serving we are accomplishing our work through collaborations among inherently whole individuals. As Remen puts it,

we don't serve with our strength, we serve with ourselves. We draw from all of our experiences. Our limitations serve, our wounds serve, even our darkness can serve. . . . Service is a relationship between equals.



One of the exciting events happening in IAYT's present moment is around service, with our first-ever Seva Award, in partnership with Give Back Yoga. (Learn more below!) As part of SYTAR's celebrations of community, we'll be recognizing a service-oriented project bringing yoga therapy to an unserved population. I've been wanting to highlight the integral role of *seva*, or service, in yoga therapy practice since I began working with IAYT, so I'm thrilled that this is happen-

ing in a number of ways.

I've also been keen to continue *YTT*'s variety of engaging, timely content. When you have just a moment, dip into the shorter pieces we've been including, like this issue's debut of The Yoga Therapist's Toolkit (pg. 49). And don't miss Matthew Taylor and Loren Fishman's commentary on recent research that affects our field on page 24. You could find individual moments to read each of the brief but moving stories Allie Middleton has gathered (beginning on pg. 36), but together they also form a beautiful narrative about cultivating community and healing. (You may have seen an excerpt of this piece on the yogatherapy.health blog, as we felt it was important to highlight yoga's potential role in social change and let the public know about the practices' implications off the mat.)

Do savor the longer articles when you've got more time: Learn about the statin-associated muscle symptoms at least a few of your clients are likely experiencing right now (pg. 42). Also in this issue, Uma Dinsmore-Tuli shares her take on "post-lineage yoga" in an important look at how we might productively respond to structures that precipitate abuse and injustice, including within our own yoga communities. We're all sure to have different opinions about these topics, but I'm confident you'll find them to be of value now and moving forward. **YTT**

—Laurie

In Service: IAYT's Seva Award

At SYTAR 2019, we're honoring an up-and-coming yoga therapist who's using a budding service project to bring yoga therapy to an unserved population.

Got a great idea that needs seed money?

Or know someone who does and want to nominate them?

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Individuals or organizations may apply; the project's leader must be a C-IAYT or an IAYT member currently enrolled in an IAYT-accredited yoga therapy training program. The award will highlight a project benefiting a population that might not otherwise have access to yoga therapy; IAYT wants to recognize innovative projects that foster inclusivity and diversity in yoga therapy!

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Geetaji: Our Dear Beloved Gem (1944–2018)

By Lois Steinberg

“He was not ‘a drop in the ocean, but the ocean in a drop.’” Rumi’s words aptly describe Geeta S. Iyengar. She fulfilled many demanding roles with love, compassion, and generosity: yoga student, practitioner, Iyengar Yoga interpreter, teacher extraordinaire, promoter, mentor, foster-mother, daughter, sister, aunt, cook, hostess, comedian, writer, editor, lecturer, listener, director, and traveler. Her impact was immeasurable.

The eldest child and student of Yogacharya B. K. S. Iyengar (Guruji), Geetaji lived a life of phenomenal devotion to yoga. She put aside her own needs in the process. Like her father, she wrote, lectured, and taught tirelessly. Geetaji fostered and mentored thousands of yoga practitioners. She alleviated the suffering and improved the health of tens of thousands of men and women. All her actions were pure and spiritual; she followed the path of a karma yogini.

Geeta was serendipitously born into yoga. As a toddler, she imitated Guruji while he practiced. As a young girl, Geetaji mimicked pictures of her father’s poses without instruction. Her mother, Ramamani, observed her daughter’s dedication and began correcting her practice. Geetaji began to practice even more seriously when it improved her health and helped her live with a congenital kidney disease and a weak constitution. In Geetaji’s early teenage years, Guruji only occasionally taught her. But later in her adolescence, Guruji began to teach her in detail so she could demonstrate at lectures given by T. Krishnamacharya (Guruji’s guru). Ultimately, Geetaji joined Guruji’s classes and regularly demonstrated for him.

Geetaji taught yoga for nearly 6 decades. In addition to conducting mega-classes at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) in Pune each week, she conducted five weekly medical classes and trained countless teachers in the art of yoga therapy. She showed us how to interview students and guide them in improving their health and quality of life. Geetaji invariably would see things no one else could, deep beneath the surface of the suffering student, and she then taught us how to see others better ourselves.

Geetaji helped innumerable women with problems from menarche to menopause. She developed the practice of yoga for women into an art of its own. In addition to the countless women Geetaji helped personally, her book, *Yoga: A Gem for Women*, first published in 1983 and reprinted many times, was revolutionary. It enabled women the world over to practice yoga in harmony with their cycles and through the major transitions in their lives.

Geetaji had a keen memory for each student. Once a new student in class told Geetaji that she was currently menstruating every

23 days. Geetaji instructed her to practice a certain way from then on. When this woman again was menstruating, Geetaji commented to her that it was good her cycle had lengthened by 3 days—Geetaji had remembered how many days it had been without anyone telling her.

When Geetaji taught general classes, she simultaneously observed every student, corrected the teachers assisting her, and directed the individual practices of students with special conditions. Every class was a major event. Earthshaking. She was a strict disciplinarian who commanded and demanded attention. Her classes were grueling. But her insights made them invigorating. She taught with compassion, heart, and humor. She would parody us and give us a big laugh. For long-term students at RIMYI she did not neces-

sarily teach anything “new,” but the way she taught was novel and fresh. Students left class grounded, whole, and present. We felt grateful and blessed.

Beginning in 1996, Geetaji traveled worldwide to conduct Iyengar Yoga national conventions. Therapeutics was always a part of the teaching, and Geetaji later devoted an entire convention to Iyengar Yoga therapy in 2010 in Portland, Oregon. In addition to guiding teachers to practice on each other the modifications of poses for various ailments, we witnessed what struck us as miracles on the stage when Geetaji adjusted or modified asana or pranayama for students with health issues.

Geetaji also taught yoga practitioners how to share their knowledge with their students. She did that though books like *Yoga: A Preliminary Course* and *Basic Guidelines for Teachers*. She also taught special classes for teachers. The last year of her life coincided with the centenary of

Guruji’s birth. Throughout the year, special monthly classes were held for newer practitioners from various countries. Geetaji conducted many of these classes and often taught long after the scheduled end of the class, despite her deteriorating health. She taught a therapy intensive for the teachers at RIMYI a month before her death.

Geetaji had stated that she only wanted to make it to Guruji’s 100th birthday. She did. The subsequent evening, after she had taught 4 hours in the morning sessions for 5 days, she stated, “My work is over now.” Her passing was a shattering loss for us, her students, and for all the world’s yoga practitioners. **YTT**

Lois Steinberg, PhD, CIYT Advanced 2, C-IAYT, is director of Iyengar Yoga Champaign-Urbana, in Illinois and studies annually for 2 months at RIMYI. She served on the board, certification committee, and is an assessor for Iyengar Yoga: National Association of the United States. She has authored five Iyengar Yoga therapy books and numerous other publications.

(Member News continued on page 8)

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Persistent Pain

Notes on Yoga Therapy in France



The yoga therapy world will want to take note of a few themes that emerged from the annual conference of the Institut de YogaThérapie (IDYT), held November 17, 2018, in Paris. The conference discussed how we can best legitimize the profession of yoga therapy with honesty and integrity.

Until protocols are in place within the current healthcare system, we should be careful as to what we say and how we advertise ourselves and our profession. Providing yoga therapy is different from saying one is a yoga therapist, and in France, for example, I have taken my “Yoga Therapist” sign off my studio door and replaced it with one noting my training and certification in yoga therapy from IDYT along with my other qualifications. In this country, if we are working in a treatment facility, we can use vocabulary such as *patient*, *treatment*, *prescription*, and *yoga therapist*, but we should not yet use these terms in the context of a yoga studio.

Although yoga therapists in France are not worried about lawsuits or complaints, we recognize that our legitimacy is strengthened by complying with how things work here. IDYT’s founder, senior medical doctor Lionel Coudron, recommends that we avoid a cavalier approach—we cannot assume that the profession will be confirmed without scrutiny before being regulated.

During the conference, Coudron reinforced that what we offer should

- Have very limited or no side-effects.
- Be beneficial and effective.
- Be accessible for everyone.
- Integrate into the current system.

As we do the work of integrating into the current system, we should also be clear that yoga therapy

- Is not a replacement treatment or a substitution for another protocol.
- Completes, complements, and cooperates with patients’ other therapies.
- Is an exchange of information.

Once regulated, yoga therapy sessions in France will be individualized sessions, not to be confused with gentle general yoga one might take to manage pain and feel better. Coudron has been at work on legislation for the last 3 years, and a project was launched in February 2019 to introduce yoga therapy into a handful of private hospitals and clinics. The intention is to eventually widen the project’s scope to bring these bedside services into additional and more widely known public hospitals and clinics. **YTT**

—Michelle Jacobi

Editor’s note: Watch for an exploration of the “language of yoga therapy” in the Summer 2019 issue of Yoga Therapy Today.

Up-and-Coming Yoga Therapists Meetup at SYTAR!



Yoga therapy student? New to the profession? New to the Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research?? Join IAYT’s new special interest meeting Friday evening at 7:30 pm. Connect with your colleagues and help us set an intention for the future of yoga therapy!

—Michael Kuang

Yoga as Lifestyle Medicine at the Smithsonian



March 9, 2019, marked the third iteration of Linda Lang’s “Yoga as Lifestyle Medicine” offered through Smithsonian Associates in Washington, D.C., this time as a half-day program. Several C-IAYTs, including Lynne Valdes and Marsha Banks-Harold, discussed their therapeutic approaches

and offered a taste of how they practice in diverse populations. Lunchtime discussion groups gave attendees a chance to ask questions prompted by the morning’s experiences. Most of the folks at my own roundtable didn’t know that yoga therapy was a possibility for them, so I had a great chance to dispel misconceptions and offer resources. The need for—and excitement around—events like this one clearly won’t abate any time soon!

—Laurie Hyland Robertson

In Brief: Getting the Message Out

We’re excited about a few changes in the works for the way we deliver YTT’s sister publication, the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*. This PubMed-indexed journal is a high-quality source of research and scholarship about yoga and yoga therapy, so IAYT wants to ensure that it’s as accessible possible. Watch your email for more!

Also in the coming months, keep an eye out for new strategic partnerships intended to help us build the platform of yoga as a recognized and respected therapy, educate the public about the field, and spread the word about the work C-IAYTs can do.

We can’t reach the whole world alone, so we’re also developing a program to help provide member-ambassadors who are attending relevant healthcare conferences with materials like membership brochures. Stay tuned! **YTT**

(Member News continued on page 10)

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“Benchmarking Training Standards for Yoga in Healthcare” with the World Health Organization: Well-Intentioned but So Far Not Aligned with Contemporary Yoga Therapy Standards

By John Kepner, IAYT Executive Director

The World Health Organization (WHO) is developing Benchmarks for Training in Yoga as part of its “global strategy to strengthen the quality, safety, and effectiveness of traditional and complementary medicine.” WHO partnered with AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy), the Indian ministry that represents traditional medicine in that country, to develop these benchmarks during an intensive 3-day meeting in Delhi in February 2019.

IAYT was well-represented in the conversation (see pg. 3), as in addition to myself three members were among the 16 global experts who attended: Lisa Kaley-Isley, PhD, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500; Yogacharya Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, MBBS, MD (Alt.Med), C-IAYT; and Michael de Manincor, PhD.

Benchmark Objectives and Evolution

I learned the following in correspondence with the WHO coordinators:

As a WHO technical document on traditional, complementary and integrative medicine, the objective of the benchmarks document is to suggest the minimum training requirements internationally necessary for qualified and safe practice of Yoga, keeping in view patient safety. Yoga therapy is an important focus and well within the purview of this document. It is envisaged that this document would serve as a reference to national authorities to establish examination systems for the education and licensing to ensure qualified practice.

Initial Draft

While the goal was global standards for the practice of yoga in healthcare, the initial draft aligned most closely with the situation in India, recommending 3,500 hours of training for entry-level yoga professionals without a healthcare background. This is roughly equivalent to 3 years of full-time study and naturally shocked those of us from the West. We quickly recognized that the educational systems for yoga in India (and Sri Lanka) are totally different than those in the West. India has academic tracks for yoga at the level of bachelor of arts, master of arts, and doctoral degrees. Certain yoga teachers are also licensed as healthcare practitioners with a Bachelor of Naturopathy and Yoga Science (BNYS) certification. So a new objective began to evolve: How can we meet the needs of both India and the rest of the world?

Current Draft

The current document, still in development, proposes four levels of yoga training:

- Yoga Teacher in Health Care—600 hours
- Yoga Therapist—1,200 hours
- Yoga Professional—2,400 hours
- Advanced Yoga Professional—an additional 1,500 hours

Each of these levels includes three principal educational categories—theory, practice, and internship in a 40%/40%/20% ratio—divided among several subject areas. Currently we are *attempting* to insert rudimentary competencies into this framework.

At the time of this writing, we are waiting for various pieces to come together so that WHO can publish the draft for international comment.

Analysis

While WHO recognition of the role yoga can play in healthcare may be helpful, the process was quite rushed, and the current draft standards for yoga therapists may be regarded as irrelevant and even naive by those working with contemporary Western standards as developed by IAYT, the Australasian Association of Yoga Therapists (AAYT), the British Council for Yoga Therapy (BCYT), and Yoga Australia (YA). Each of these organizations has similar training standards at approximately 1,000 hours. More importantly, their competencies were carefully crafted by experienced yoga therapist trainers and are backed by corresponding accrediting bodies that recognize programs meeting the standards.

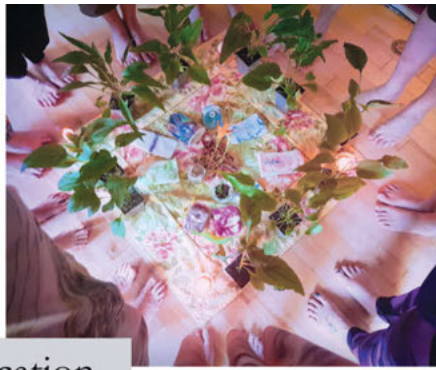
It is not enough to simply publish standards. A professional field needs a comprehensive infrastructure to support standards, and that includes accreditation, certification, scope of practice, code of ethics, continuing education, and a certification exam. None of this was addressed in the WHO meeting. IAYT has all of these except an exam, and that is under development. (We have recently signed a contract with a professional exam-development firm and expect the process to take at least 18 to 24 months.)

At least as important as these considerations, standards must be economically viable to enable the field to develop. The contemporary Western standards are at the limits of economic sustainability, especially as an unlicensed field unsupported by third-party health insurance.

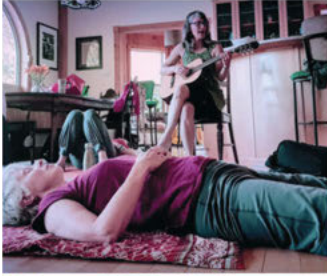
An Impossible Task? And a Way Forward

To be fair, the meeting had the impossible task of quickly developing integrated global standards for the practice of yoga in healthcare in three different environments: India and Sri Lanka; Western societies where yoga therapy has taken root and has responsible self-regulatory bodies; and the rest of the world, where yoga as therapy may be just developing. This complexity was not recognized going into the process. In hindsight, my recommendation should have been to support the 1,000-hour AAYT/BCYT/IAYT/YA standards for yoga therapists in the Western societies where they are already well-established; to focus the discussion on higher standards more aligned with academic programs in societies, such as India, that could support them; and to equally carefully propose less rigorous standards for areas of the world where yoga therapy is just developing. From that perspective, the four levels can be considered movement in this direction, although they are incomplete and as yet not aligned with the well-crafted and well-supported contemporary Western standards for yoga therapy. **YTT**

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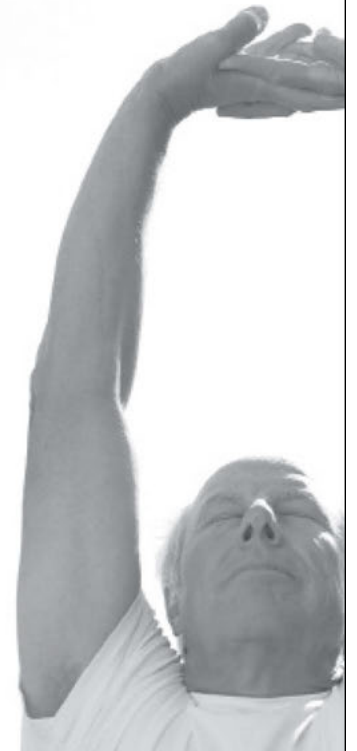
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Yoga as Therapy: The Global Spread of Training Standards for Yoga Therapists

By Lisa Kaley-Isley

I spent the final days of December 2018 attending the Yoga as Therapy conference at Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute in Lonavala, India. The conference sold out months in advance with 1,500 attendees, and it was livestreamed to further increase participation. The audience was predominantly Indian, but a number of C-IAYTs attended from North and South America, Australia, several European and Scandinavian countries, the Middle East, and other Asian countries. The conference speakers and presenters were from all of the regions listed, creating a truly international event in a quintessentially Indian yoga community setting. I felt that yoga had migrated across the world and returned home to tell what had been experienced in its wanderings. What we heard was a great deal of shared perspective:

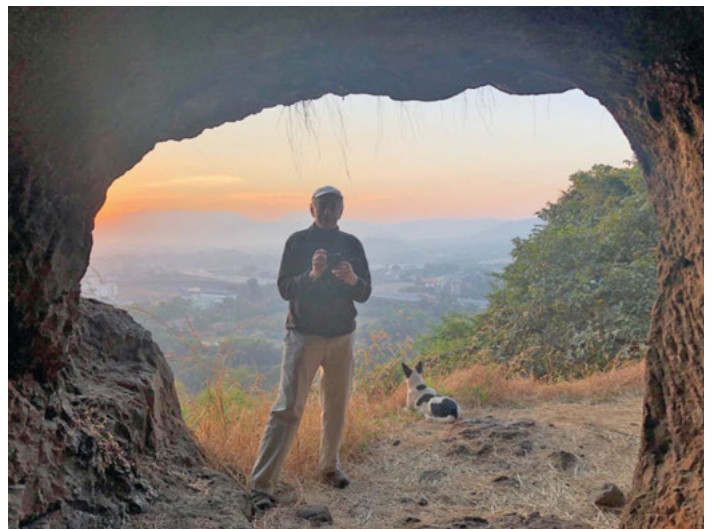
- Yoga is much more than asana.
- Yoga can promote growth, healing, and transformation at all levels of the self: physical, physiological, mental/emotional, intuitive, and spiritual. While there were varying assertions about the highest goals and truest aims, consensus remained that yoga can be practiced with different intentions and have positive effects in each domain. There was general recognition that all five domains are needed for wellness and wholeness.
- Speakers sourced their knowledge in the ancient texts, research trials, and clinical experience. There was general consensus that each is valid and contributes in an essential and complementary manner, although there were preferences stated for which ones were believed to be the most authentic or reliable resources.

The greatest variety in opinion was in two specific areas of discussion:

1. How do we define and differentiate yoga and yoga therapy? Can we/should we differentiate between them?
2. What level and type of knowledge, skill, and experience represent the minimum and optimal standards for a person to function as a competent yoga teacher? As a yoga therapist?

During our preconference visit to The Yoga Institute in Mumbai (celebrating 100 years as a center of yoga study and teaching) and at Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute (94 years), it became apparent that the distinction between yoga and yoga therapy is less clearly demarcated in India than in the West. Many yoga programs offer 200-hour Yoga Alliance–registered teacher training courses, but the more therapeutic programs offer 300-hour yoga teacher training courses (and longer) that include exposure to therapeutic application.

Several Indian government officials updated us on the vision—and progress toward the realization of that vision—that the Indian government, through the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) and the



Yoga researcher Luciano Bernardi, MD, turns the lens on other attendees at Guru's Cave during our group's travels after the conference.

National Occupational Standards board, has for integrating yoga training into universities and yoga teachers into rural healthcare centres. While asserting the ultimate aim of yoga as a spiritual practice, there was also recognition that the growing prevalence of chronic diseases in the population exceeds the healthcare system's capacity to provide adequate care and treatment. Yogic practice, attitudes, and

Conference delegates unanimously adopted the following resolutions, which seems to indicate a growing acceptance of the term “yoga therapy.”

1. Efforts should be started to develop sustaining standards for yoga therapy courses.
2. Standards will ensure that yoga therapy will be administered by yoga therapists who are very good at treating patients without harm or complications, so new mechanisms should be established for the certification of yoga therapists.
3. Medical schools are already teaching yoga. The curriculum should include not only yoga practices but should also include courses on the philosophy, psychology, ethics, and rationale of yogic lifestyle.
4. Increased research on the efficacy of yoga practices and their effects is the need of the hour. The results should be disseminated so that more and more people, including yoga therapists and yoga teachers, get their benefits. Therefore, a research resource bank with adequate networking capacity should be created and made available.

—John Kepner

(continued on page 14)



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lifestyle behaviors can improve diet, sleep, and exercise, and these are being promoted as both prevention and treatment for a variety of disorders, such as diabetes, heart disease, and musculoskeletal conditions. Inclusion in the healthcare system demands that training standards be established, so the content and extent of knowledge and skill required to deliver yoga as a healthcare modality received serious attention and discussion.

In small-group invitation-only meetings and as a panel presenter, John Kepner, executive director of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, stated the following IAYT guiding principles:

- To “keep the yoga in yoga therapy,” yoga therapy must draw on the whole scope of yoga philosophy and practice.
- Yoga teaching as currently practiced in the West is different from yoga therapy. Yoga therapy training builds on the foundation of yoga teaching by adding depth of knowledge and specific therapeutic assessment and intervention skills.
- “Standards, not standardization” are needed to develop training program accreditation and individual practitioner certification minimum criteria. We need to keep the richness of the many lineages while ensuring that essential areas are covered in proper breadth and depth.

Kepner then offered one suggestion:

That India and other countries and associations seeking to develop local standards make good use of the great deal of work already done by beginning with the standards developed and refined over the last 10 years by IAYT. He reasoned that if we have a shared foundation, we retain unity while also making space for diversity. The existing standards could be adapted for regional differences, just as yoga therapy is adapted for the individual.

Throughout the conference I was reminded of the axiom: “Think globally, act locally.” As more and more individuals across the world turn to the broader potential of yoga to live happier, healthier, and more meaningful lives, we need to continue to build the relationships and social networks that provide time and space for the conversations that lead to shared pathways in the practice of yoga in our backyards and across the globe. **YTT**



Lisa Kaley-Isley, PhD, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, is a clinical psychologist and yoga therapist. She serves as a board member, tutor, supervisor, and mentor for the London-based Yogacampus Yoga Therapy Diploma course and directs the organization's student clinic. Lisa also trains yoga teachers and yoga therapists on adapting yoga to foster mental health.

Yoga in Healthcare Alliance Conference 2019: Collaboration, Compassion, and a Call to Action

By Nicole Schnackenberg



Photo by Florentina Buckingham

The inaugural Yoga in Healthcare Alliance (YiHA) Conference took place at the University of Westminster in London from February 15–17, 2019. It brought together leaders in yoga, healthcare,

yoga research, health policy, and government to address how we help transform the National Health Service (NHS) through the integration of yoga. It certainly did not disappoint in this mission.

The timing of this conference was associated with the recent release of funding for Social Prescribing across the NHS. Social Prescribing is a way of linking patients in primary care with sources of support in the community. Essentially, general practitioners (GPs) can refer patients to nonmedical options, like yoga, alongside existing treatments to improve health and well-being—exciting news for yoga teachers and yoga therapists!




Spearheaded by Heather Mason, YiHA’s founder and director of *Minded*, the conference opened with Mason’s keynote, which included a written address from His Royal Highness Prince Charles outlining his support for the conference and his belief that yoga has innumerable potential benefits for the healthcare system in the United Kingdom.

The conference later had keynotes presented by Duncan Selbie, chief executive of Public Health England, who spoke about the need and opportunity for the Social Prescribing of yoga to improve physical and mental health outcomes; Sat Bir Singh Khalsa, PhD, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard, who overviewed the research supporting yoga as a therapeutic intervention; Amit Bhargava, MD, member of the College of Medicine, who suggested how yoga can be used to address health inequalities; Lord Stone and Lord Brooke, members of Parliament (MPs), who shared their personal experiences of yoga and their commitment to YiHA’s cause; Michael Dixon, MD, National Clinical Lead for Social Prescription, who delighted participants with the news that funds for Social Prescribing have, indeed, just been released; and Jamie Bristow, director of the world’s first policy institute on mindfulness, who enthused participants with how yoga and mindfulness practices can radically change the very fabric of life, of society . . . and of the world.

A multitude of thought-provoking talks and workshops were available over the 3 days, including those on yoga for children and young people, prison-based yoga, yoga for lower-back pain, yoga

(continued on page 16)

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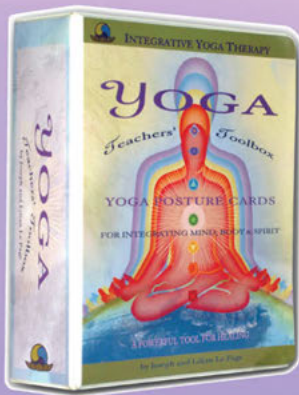
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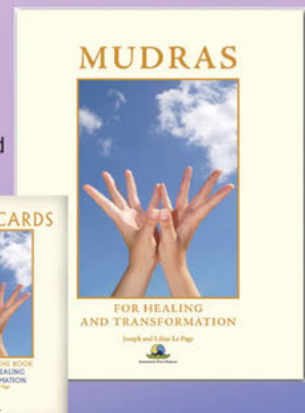
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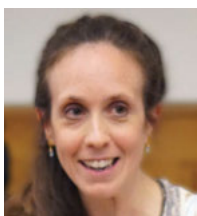
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and body image, pregnancy yoga, and yoga for posttraumatic stress disorder. Time was also provided for networking opportunities; it seems that when the leaders in yoga and healthcare come together, they have rather a lot to share with one another!

Many crucial messages emerged from this ground-breaking conference, not least that

- Yoga has a place not only in supporting physical and psychological healthcare but also, vitally, in bringing communities of people together and reducing social isolation and inequality.
- Yoga can, and should, be available to every person at every stage of life and in every condition of health.
- Social Prescribing looks set to provide a gateway for embedding yoga into the NHS and into wider healthcare practice in the United Kingdom.
- The invitation has been presented for yoga teachers and yoga therapists of all disciplines to come together and to be proactive in speaking with their own elected officials and physicians about releasing funding for yoga for healthcare populations.
- There appears to be a need for universal standards for sharing yoga and yoga therapy with healthcare populations to enable GPs to prescribe yoga within their ethical and professional guidelines and to ensure safe and efficacious practice for all.

YiHA is committed to promoting health and well-being by making yoga more accessible, initially by collaborating with the United Kingdom's NHS and supporting its unique position as a public health service. And you are personally invited to be part of this movement! Consider becoming a member of YiHA (you can communicate your interest at www.yogainhealthcarealliance.com/contact), or join the Facebook group (YogaInHealth) and pledge your support for the cause. Contemplate speaking with your own legislators and primary care providers about the prescription of yoga and yoga therapy, and don't shy away from offering talks and workshops in your nearest healthcare clinics and government offices. YiHA also lists training options for yoga professionals on its website. However you decide to take this forward, it is clear that the passion and action of each of us are required to make this commitment to interweave yoga into the healthcare system a reality. As Selbie and Dixon stressed, the time is NOW. **YTT**



Nicole Schnackenberg is a psychotherapist, trainee child and educational psychologist, yoga teacher, and author. She is a director of the Yoga in Healthcare Alliance and a facilitator of the Eat Breathe Thrive yoga program for food and body image struggles.

News from the 2018 Integrative Pain Care Policy Congress

By Matthew J. Taylor



On November 10, 2018, 90 of the key stakeholders in addressing pain care policy gathered to expand consensus and plan next steps in making comprehensive integrative pain management (CIPM: “sip ’em”) a reality. I was there representing IAYT, a sponsoring organization.

IAYT's participation and inclusion is the result of many years of building interprofessional bridges and dedicating resources strategically. Allow me to share just a bit about how important it is for our members and the profession to be at the table. I will start with the consensus definition of CIPM the first congress developed. Can you find the yoga in it?

*Comprehensive, integrative pain management includes **biomedical, psychosocial**, complementary health, and **spiritual care**. It is **person-centered** and **focuses on maximizing function and wellness**. Care plans are developed through a **shared** decision-making model that reflects the available evidence regarding optimal clinical practice and the person's goals and values. [emphasis mine]*

The congress includes U.S. federal agencies (Medicare, Medicaid, Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, etc.), commercial insurers, patient advocacy groups, and professional providers—which includes yoga therapists. Members agreed that the above definition is the future of pain care. Identification of what each component of the care plan might be and any barriers to access is our work in the year ahead. My job is to be sure people know yoga therapists exist and that they have easy access to evidence regarding optimal clinical practice. Toward this end I am leading or co-leading two key projects:

1. The Spiritual Care workgroup. That's right, who knew yoga therapy is a spiritual practice first? The congress does now, and by addressing access issues I will ensure that matters concerning evidence, funding, and yoga therapy's unique contributions are documented.
2. An effort by the sponsoring organizations (www.ihpc.org and www.integrativepain.org) to provide CIPM resources to primary care providers, as they are the gatekeepers to pain care. Take a look www.PainPG.info (Pain Pocket Guide) for what the provider can find if the patient wants yoga for their pain.

There's so much more to share, but space is limited. IAYT plans to soon make available additional resources for members' clinical practices, and yogatherapy.health offers information for clients that you can use now. Future IAYT work will include

- a fully cited white paper on yoga therapy and pain,
- a validated pain inventory you can—and should—begin using with clients,
- breakout sessions at SYTAR 2019 to help you implement this,
- and so much more.

What an exciting future lies ahead for all of us! **YTT**



Matthew J. Taylor, PT, PhD, C-IAYT, has for 20 years led training programs and fostered creative resources for yoga teachers, students, yoga therapists, and conventional medical professionals who want to incorporate yoga principles into their practices (www.drofyoga.com). Taylor is a past president of IAYT's board of directors.

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Building the Business of Yoga Therapy

I'm frequently impressed by the ways in which I see yoga therapists weaving their diverse skills into thriving practices. This issue's Building the Business of Yoga Therapy introduces a retired Air Force colonel and a professional dancer—although of course there's far more to them than these labels. Different though their backgrounds may be, both of these talented yoga therapists successfully draw upon their life experiences to support their communities and clients.

I hope you'll enjoy their inspiring stories and let me know how you're approaching professional yoga therapy practice! Email ytteditor@iayt.org and we will consider featuring your work in a future issue.

—Laurie Hyland Robertson

MARILYN PEPPERS-CITIZEN

Yoga Therapy for *Santosha* and Healthy Aging



Marilyn Peppers-Citizen, PhD, Colonel (Retired, U.S. Air Force), NBC-HWC, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, operates her yoga therapy program within the Art of Movement, Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, Virginia, and is currently a certification consultant for IAYT. Her passion is assisting those interested in healthy aging through yoga.

A friend and fellow fitness instructor encouraged me to try yoga in the late 1990s. I didn't have any preconceived notions of what to expect other than that it was just another form of exercise. I soon learned that prejudice was far from the truth, but the other thing I brought to the mat with me was the belief that my body was to be honored and that no one could know my body better than I did.

Yoga teacher training piqued my interest, and as I continued to train I discovered yoga therapy and a thirst to learn more about yoga and to experience myself on a different level. This perpetual desire to learn and being open to opportunities is applicable to personal life and to the business of yoga therapy. In my practice and study, I continue to ease toward *santosha* (complete acceptance/contentment) with an eye on aging well. Besides *santosha* being a personal desire, it is also the focus of my yoga therapy practice.

Aging doesn't mean giving up on living passionately or that the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) has already contacted you! We are all aging, and how we live today affects how we age and live tomorrow. It has been my experience that clients who have similar goals and I continue to find our way to each other. We all cherish life and want to live it the best way that we can, in the bodies that we inhabit each day.

I have what I consider to be a unique opportunity to practice within an arts center. The facility was originally opened in the 1920s as a prison. It was closed in 2001 and re-opened in 2004 as a cultural arts center for a broad spectrum of art disciplines that includes the art of movement.



Similar to how the facility was repurposed, I too discovered a new purpose, and the facility is now the home base for my yoga therapy work. I started there as a yoga teacher and often spent time with participants after class, listening intently to what was important to them and how their practices positively impacted their lives. Many of my first yoga therapy clients were former yoga students. My practice grew from personal interaction with former students and community outreach. Through social media, marketing (catalogs), and e-newsletters, I explained what yoga therapy is and the importance of working with clients as individuals, taking all aspects of who they are into consideration.

New clients have come to me through referrals from previous and long-term clients and, increasingly, as a result of the educational information I and others have provided to the community. Most clients are well-established and are focused on living a balanced life while addressing various health and family concerns that include caring for grandchildren and sometimes for parents. They are discovering new tools that they can use to promote enhanced well-being while managing the trials that life sometimes brings to us all.

Clients often place limitations on themselves but learn to reframe what they thought were obstacles. After successful professional lives, some clients often assume that they are no longer capable of doing what they desire. Through yoga therapy they learn to apply aspects of yoga such as movement, pranayama, mantras, and lifestyle changes to enhance, improve, and balance how they experience life. It is then not uncommon for clients to share what they learn with their families and friends.

Collaborating with other yoga therapists and building a network of other professionals for referrals is another important facet of practicing yoga therapy. My professional referral network grew from a holistic health and wellness network that includes massage therapy, chiropractic, functional medicine, holistic dentistry, physical therapy, and other health coaches and personal trainers with specialties. My network has expanded to include providers that I was introduced to through clients. Other connections have been pleasant surprises, such as an art therapist, chefs, and a maternal mental health coalition.

I used to have fleeting moments when I would ponder what life would have been like had I started this path earlier, but I remember that I am where I need to be—and at the time that I need to be here. It is my honor to participate for a moment in each and every client's path of discovery.

(continued on page 20)



Mary Richards, C-IAYT

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MICHELLE JACOBI**Holding the Heart of a City**

Michelle Jacobi, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, is the University of South Florida's first full-time instructor of Hatha and Raja Yoga and has been part of the university's faculty since 2007. Through the university's Dance in Paris Study Abroad Program she has developed a curriculum that integrates yoga and yoga philosophy and has been practiced by more than 200 students with an academic major in dance. Michelle's wish is to share her knowledge of yoga with young dancers to improve and prolong their careers. Michelle is also the events manager of the European Reunion of Hatha Integral Yoga Teachers, which this year is in Montpellier, France. Her studio is Centre de Yoga du Marais (www.yogamarais.com), a registered yoga school with Yoga Alliance.

My present life as a yoga therapist and teacher in Paris came from a long-time love of movement and rigorous dance training. As a professional dancer in New York City, my body experienced what could be seen as physical burnout, with multiple stress-related injuries. I turned to yoga because I felt deep down that the reason wasn't mechanical. Something was going on in my head, and I wanted to know why I was sabotaging a job and career I dearly loved. Answers started to appear soon after my first Hatha Yoga class at the Integral Yoga Center.

The holistic Integral Yoga (IY) system is known widely thanks to Dean Ornish, MD, who was a student and friend of founder Swami Satchidananda. The day after my first class, I knew this therapeutic system would help me gain access to what I needed to be healed on a psychospiritual level. Once I had embarked upon a dedicated practice, I no longer had dance injuries. I trained to be a teacher for IY in 2000 and to this day have taught this healing system to my students and have trained teachers from my yoga center in Paris, where I've lived since 2001. To feel more anchored in the community here, I enrolled in a 2-year yoga therapy program directed by senior medical doctor Lionel Coudron, founder of Institut de YogaThérapie (IDYT).

A favorite statement of Swami Satchidananda was, "Peace is your nature, do not disturb it." When I transmit the teachings either through Raja Yoga, the philosophy of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, in a traditional Hatha class, or in a yoga therapy session, this is my guiding principle. In our therapy sessions, as well as Hatha classes, we often chant, *Yogash citta vritti nirodha*. To my very international community here, I explain that this phrase is Sanskrit for "Through the practice of yoga, the agitations of the mind are stilled," and that if they continue to practice in all earnestness, they will see significant results.

Less than a year after graduating from the IDYT program, when I was running weekly yoga therapy classes for two small groups, the heart of Paris fell under terrorist attack, twice. My studio is also in the heart of Paris. We all knew or knew someone who lost someone, and I knew our city's heart had to be looked after. As is a very cultural mode here in France, the feelings around what happened to us were not overtly vented or expressed in a way that asked for healing. It took time, but in the last year, many stories have wanted to be told, held, and protected, safely, in yoga therapy classes and among friends.

Constancy and dedicated transmission of the yogic teachings are what I feel I can offer to help look after the heart of my adopted city. Although many of my Hatha Yoga students aren't regulars, the yoga therapy students are extremely dedicated and attend class every week. I feel that what draws them to the courses now is community and connection. Even those who drop in and out tell me it's important to know that I am always there. The yoga therapy students look after and inquire into one another's health and well-being just as consciously as they tend to their own concerns. I recently gained insight into how I can help a student with a serious physical condition through the care shown by her classmates.

Although yoga therapy with me is largely dependent upon reservations and the availability in my space, it's always been important to me to keep the drop-in model available for others. A number of factors are behind my ability to stay afloat in such an expensive city—I am putting together a memoir!—but to begin at the end, my husband and I own the walls of my workspace, my overhead is extremely low, and the practice room is ecological. I worked really hard and paid off my debts. The neighborhood, despite its fantastic location, was a bit of a trash heap when we arrived. It's now one of the most sought-after areas in Paris, which gives me a measure of financial security.

We still have some ground to cover before we are working side-by-side with our licensed colleagues in conventional therapies, but with the leadership of Dr. Lionel Coudron, we are making headway here in France. As I read about the progress in other countries, I am hopeful we can all make a difference by working together. **YTT**

Editor's note: See Michelle's report on the current state of yoga therapy in France in Member News (p. 8).



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Top Tips for Creating an Effective Website for Your Yoga Therapy Practice

By *Connie Holen*

For yoga therapists, a polished and professional looking website is an indispensable tool. It's often where new clients will first find out about your business and learn about what you do, and it is where and how existing clients will book appointments and refer your services to others. If you're going to invest in just one marketing tool for your business, I suggest it be your website.

The good news is, your website doesn't have to be elaborate to start attracting new clients. By getting a few key elements right, you can create an engaging online presence for your yoga therapy practice. Read on for five simple tips.

1. Nail Your Navigation

Your website doesn't need to have 20 pages—in fact, it generally shouldn't! Visitors tend to become overwhelmed or frustrated by too many pages or options, so you need to ensure that each element of your website serves a well-defined purpose.

The core pages you should generally include—and feature prominently in your website navigation—are

- Home
- About
- Book Appointment (See Box)
- Rates/Pricing
- Contact

Once you have these core pages, providing a clear path from casual browser to first-time client should be goal #1. Put yourself in the shoes of your clients and soon-to-be-clients and think about what information they **need** to move forward.

Guide them through your site using clear buttons and encourage them at multiple points to schedule that all-important initial consultation by linking to your booking page wherever it makes sense to do so.

Button Tips

- Aim for no more than three buttons on each page (just one is usually best) to offer a clear next step for your clients.
- Use an accent color and keep it uniform across your site so people know at a glance where to click.
- Try using a verb to start your button text (e.g., “Schedule your appointment now”). It draws people in and makes it clear they are making progress!

2. Make Your Website Esthetically Pleasing

Research from Adobe shows that 38% of people will stop engaging with a website if the content or layout is unattractive. It's important to make sure the design of your website is clean, on brand, and makes a lasting impression. If you don't have a professional web designer, look for a user-friendly web platform that has templates you can easily customize with your own brand colors and fonts.

Real photos (not stock ones) are a powerful way to convey at a glance the feel of your business. They work with your brand's design elements, website layout, and written content to convey your business values and vibe. Not only that, but using high-quality photos of yourself help build trust and a sense of connection with your potential clients.



Photo of Connie Holen by Caroline White Photography

When it comes to the design of your website, avoid adding unnecessary decorations. Design elements, including photos and other graphics, should only be used when helpful to visitors. Keep your site simple, clutter-free, and focused on the visitor's needs, and you'll be in business!

3. Drive Traffic with Simple Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

For many business owners, the concept of SEO can seem overwhelming. After all, where do you even start? Thankfully, you don't need to be a tech wizard or have hours each day to dedicate to improving the SEO of your yoga therapy business. There are a few simple things you can incorporate into your website to improve your Google ranking and get your services found in local search results.

First, title your homepage. This simply involves adding your primary service and your location (for example, “yoga therapist, Houston”) to your homepage title. I find that the majority of businesses don’t do this—and if they do, they rarely include their location. So taking less than 5 minutes to do this means you’ll already be one step ahead of the competition! Check with your website platform to find where to edit the page title for your specific website.

When it comes to the design of your website, avoid adding unnecessary decorations. Design elements, including photos and other graphics, should only be used when helpful to visitors.

Another great way to drive local traffic to your website is by including your “NAP” in your footer on every page. This is your name, address, and phone number, and when linked together, this basic business information makes it clear who you are and where you do business. When repeated on every page of your website, this text helps search engines like Google connect the dots between your website and your Google business listing.

4. Make Your Website Mobile-Responsive

This is one mistake I see many business owners make: Their website looks fantastic on a desk- or laptop computer, but on smaller mobile devices it’s a big old mess. Mobile traffic has been growing year on year. A quick poll of my clients’ website analytics shows that, on average, 65% of their website traffic now comes from phones and tablets. So it’s crucial to ensure your website functions well on mobile screens as well as on desktops and laptops.

Are you set up to accept online appointments? Today’s always-on-the-go pace means that more than half of your website traffic will come from mobile devices. Your clients and soon-to-be clients are browsing your services while on the train, at work, or sitting on the couch late at night. Make it easy for them to schedule with you by accepting appointments with an online scheduler. Acuity Scheduling or Calendly are great options for easy online appointment scheduling tools that you can embed in your site.



Mobile-responsive means your site is clear, readable, and easy to navigate on mobile devices. These days, most templates on major website platforms are built to be mobile-responsive, but if you don’t have this basic down, you need to do this before you address anything else. Depending on your platform, you may be able to change the template your site is built on or you may need to change your website entirely. Check with your web host for options.

Have you actually tried to use your website on your phone? Do it. Then note if anything gets in your way. Can you easily click on all buttons? (Can you tell what areas *are* buttons?) Do pop-ups and forms appear in full view on the page? Is all text readable? Make notes of things you found challenging and get them fixed!

5. Ensure the Site Is Safe and Secure

Just as you want your clients to feel safe and secure during a session, the same should apply to your website. When you look at your website, does your address start with https:// or http://? If it has the “s”, you’re all set—your website already has a secure socket layer (SSL) certificate. If it does not have the “s”, get in contact with your web host to determine how to have an SSL certificate added. This is important for both your visitors’ peace of mind and for being found online with SEO. Some browsers display alert messages for websites without SSL certificates as potentially unsafe and block users from visiting them, so you will want to ensure yours is valid and working. Your yoga therapy business is unfortunately not a case of “if you build it, they will come.” You will still need to market yourself through means like social media, referral programs, and email outreach. However, by getting these foundational elements right, you can create a website that does much of the heavy marketing lifting for you. That way, you have more time to do what you do best: enriching clients’ lives. **YTT**

Connie Holen (<https://pixalitydesign.com>) is a digital strategist, designer, and certified MINDBODY business consultant. She specializes in helping fitness and wellness businesses make a name for themselves online by creating websites that are easily found, easy to update, and provide an amazing online experience.

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The Mayo Clinic Experience with Injuries in Yoga: Putting the Research in Context

By Matthew J. Taylor,
with Additional Commentary from Loren Fishman

A recent Mayo Clinic study on injuries in yoga¹ has generated considerable interest within our community. The article, which is very readable for nonresearchers, has a lot to offer the yoga therapy profession if we interpret it accurately. Following are techniques for learning more from both the study and from research in general.

Back in

First, try reading the study sections in reverse order, beginning with the conclusion. I have found this helpful because, whether the conclusions excite or alarm you, they'll provide context as you read.

Consider the article a map of how the authors reached their conclusions. To find my way, I like to ask:

- What did the authors conclude?
- How did they discuss the results leading to those conclusions?
- What methodology (study design) did they use, and what sample (study group) did they examine? What are the limitations of the design chosen?
- How well do lines of logic flow through the article? What assumptions were made?
- Finally, in the introduction, how did the authors situate their study within the larger body of knowledge?

Also consider the title, which is crafted not only to communicate to other researchers and clinicians, but also to improve the chances that the study will be found by the same parties plus the press, legal professionals, and savvy consumers. In this case, “Soft Tissue and Bony *Injuries Attributed* to the Practice of Yoga: A *Bio-mechanical Analysis* and Implications for *Management*” (emphasis mine). What do they mean by “injury”? What about “attributed”? Does it mean that yoga “caused” the problem? What lens did the authors use in asking their questions (analysis)? And based on all of that, what are they suggesting be done about the problem?

When you have finished reading, compare your experience to my perspectives below to perhaps discover additional ways to consider the study.

Additional Perspectives

Fired up, worried, or confused? These are all good responses and represent the *tapas* (here, enthusiastic discipline) of reading research. You might like to add my take, drawn from the same order of reading, to your own experience:

Conclusion: This well-reasoned summary includes statements that primary care providers need guidance regarding yoga safety and should counsel patients on a case-by-case basis; care must be taken, especially for people with osteopenia and osteoporosis, when performing positions with extreme spinal flexion and extension; and, as

more people with these conditions seek yoga, it is important to know that they may be at increased risk of compression fractures and deformities.

Discussion: “Given the observational nature of the study, causation cannot be definitely determined” (p. 430). This key explains “attributed” in the article’s title—the fact that more people have heart attacks on Monday doesn’t mean Mondays cause heart attacks. That portion is worth a re-read and goes both ways: The authors couldn’t say yoga *caused* the problems, and it’s equally difficult for someone to say yoga *caused* a benefit. (Note that in this study, it was the patients who reported that yoga was the primary cause of their injury; a complete explanation is beyond the scope of this article, but a well-designed randomized controlled trial would be the only way to confirm such cause-and-effect.)



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I see many arguments for a yoga therapist referral in this section:

- Patients could directly identify incident events while practicing yoga.
- The article acknowledges that if patients had been counseled on which poses to avoid, such injuries potentially could have been avoided.
- Most of the commonly seen injuries were soft tissue, mechanical, and musculoskeletal injuries related to poor posture. Posture causes pain? Did they mean “asana” by posture?
- As the authors note, “yoga can push the body to the limits of biomechanical competence,” and almost all of the severe injuries described were related to extremes of spinal flexion and extension.
- All patients who were able to successfully modify their activities reported improvement or resolution of their symptoms.
- They didn’t propose that patients quit doing yoga!

Here are a few additional points to ponder:

- Regarding spinal flexion exercises, avoiding such positions appeared to improve symptoms and relieve pain. What are the forces in flexion when monitored and corrected versus

(continued on page 26)

habitual and presumably less optimal? We don't know yet, but patients go into flexion at home, so is *avoidance* the best advice, or might instruction in an engaged, limited flexion offer benefit for building bone integrity?

- Women are more affected by osteoporosis and osteopenia than men. Who does more yoga?
- According to the authors, “yoga can improve balance, provide an environment for socializing, and help reduce stiffness.”

Patients and Methods: In addition to the Limitations section at the end, the Methods section is key for exploring strengths, limitations, and inherent biases. The authors acknowledge the sampling bias of subjects and the bias of having a single treating physician. We might ask additional questions about comorbidities, especially with a large cancer cohort, introducing additional confounding factors. There is no mention of any constraints related to this retrospective data collection from electronic medical records, and the study didn't capture styles of yoga. Prescans for compression fractures were available for comparison, which is valuable because this is rarely true in other studies. We might ask, though, whether Figure 3 represents the population or an extreme in the sample? Sixty-six patients (74.2%) had mechanical myofascial pain due to overuse. Doesn't the spinal pain literature suggest many other possible etiologies?

Introduction: This section contains many points to discuss:

- Injury is “musculoskeletal pain or discomfort severe enough for a patient to seek physician evaluation”?
- What are the limitations of correlative kinesiological effects in posture analysis?
- The authors cite a lack of literature with cautions or accommodations for yoga in patients with impaired bone integrity. With *ahimsa*—nonharming—as our standard, wouldn't we welcome such information?
- The study's primary aim was to identify patients who were injured while practicing yoga and to determine the specific poses that caused their injuries. Did any of these poses surprise you? Why?

Now how do you feel? Did anything change, and if so, why? I am confident the “good” dramatically outweighs the “bad” in the publication of this study. The authors' suggestions for what can be done to prevent such injuries represent precisely the work yoga therapists do! How can you use what you discovered to better serve this important population?

Utility in Professional Practice

This study is incredibly valuable for yoga therapists. The authors have described who we are, as distinct from yoga in general, and what primary care providers should look for when working with patients who want to try or are doing yoga—all under the Mayo Clinic's highly reputable brand. If I was still building a practice, here's what I would do:

- Consider specific training in bone-safe yoga to enhance your competence. Also see the Additional Resources Box.
- Create a simple cover sheet with your brand's colors, fonts, and so on. List short bullets describing how as a yoga therapist you do exactly what the article points to: Evaluate

and structure practices for the individual's unique history and ability; monitor closely their response to practice and adjust accordingly; avoid extremes in all postures; communicate with clients' healthcare team as the local yoga safety expert and seek collaboration when indicated; include safe training in daily living movements “off the mat” and in balance to prevent falls; and keep groups small for safety. Staple this cover sheet to a copy of the article you've highlighted with the above points, and take it to primary care providers' offices along with business cards offering staff a free introductory session.

- Create a 15-minute slide presentation of the above points for service organizations, support groups, senior centers, etc. Get yourself booked with these venues, as they all need fresh, new material for their members.
- Educate your network and clients through social media and newsletters that this is what you do!

We are the profession that promotes ahimsa. Lee et al.'s article offers an excellent conversation starter about how we as yoga therapists do that, why it's important, and who the public can rely on to enable safe yoga practice across an entire life span. **YTT**

Additional Resources

- Read Dr. Taylor's 2005 article from the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy* (available on iayt.org under Resources > Articles): “Osteoporosis: An Opportunity to Serve.” The journal *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation* contains additional articles on yoga and osteoporosis, including contributions from Dr. Fishman.
- Check out the Introduction, Primer, and Glossary of Terms in the IAYT member resource Research Summaries by Pam Jeter, PhD, and Timothy McCall, MD, C-IAYT (www.iayt.org/researchsummaries).
- Resources on safely teaching yoga in populations with osteopenia and osteoporosis are available, including smartsafeyoga.com (from Taylor); sciatica.org and Yoga for Osteoporosis workshops and courses (from Fishman); and several current Approved Professional Development courses (search “osteoporosis” in the Filter by Text field of the listings at www.iayt.org/APD_Course_Listing).

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1. Lee, M., Huntoon, E. A., & Sinaki, M. (2019). Soft tissue and bony injuries attributed to the practice of yoga: A biomechanical analysis and implications for management. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, 94(3), 424–431. Retrieved from [https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196\(18\)30940-6/pdf?fbclid=IwAR0cSBnH_aXlrBBuiW5MQ6Muw9-rZA_f5fAfWwkfpn5OIT9_VSfteVjsh8s](https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196(18)30940-6/pdf?fbclid=IwAR0cSBnH_aXlrBBuiW5MQ6Muw9-rZA_f5fAfWwkfpn5OIT9_VSfteVjsh8s)

Matthew J. Taylor, PT, PhD, C-IAYT, is a past IAYT board president and a frequent contributor to YTT. He co-chairs the Rehab Common Interest Community and has taught marketing for yoga therapists at numerous SYTARs.

(continued on page 28)

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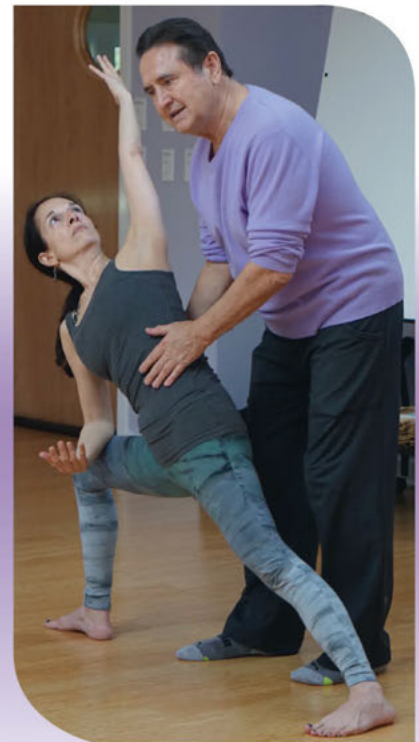
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More Points to Consider on the Mayo Clinic Research

From Loren Fishman

Although it's important to keep in mind that mine was an observational, descriptive study—we did not include controls or specifically set out to measure adverse responses—my experience with more than 100,000 hours of yoga in osteoporotic and osteopenic patients showed no fractures or other serious injuries.¹ A few more thoughts on the Mayo Clinic study come to mind.

- I wonder how familiar the authors are with yoga and with yoga asana. The pillow placement in Figure 1B (for bridge, or *setu bandhasana*) is indeed dangerous—have you ever seen a yoga therapist suggest that?
- The study lists 217 injuries. Sixty-six of these are muscle soreness/stiffness/inflammation, which generally wears off in a few days. Forty-six more injuries are attributed to degenerative joint disease, another 34 are from arthritis in the facet joints, and 15 are from kyphoscoliosis—we can't say for sure that yoga caused these "injuries," all of which represent chronic conditions that may overlap (the article reports that each person could have had more than one type of injury). This leaves 41 injuries in 89 people over the 12 years of the study. We might also ask how often *previous* injuries are first recognized when someone is mindfully aware of the physical body while doing yoga. Consider that the pose to which injury was attributed in more than one person is apparently *savasana* (Figure 1F).

These additional considerations of the study's potential shortcomings suggest to me a strong case for yoga therapists integrating into research teams and a key role for well-trained members of the profession as an educational bridge between the public and healthcare providers. I'd say that orthopedic surgeons, pain medicine and sports medicine physicians, physiatrists, nurses, physical therapists, and other body workers need the information Matt suggests, too. [YTT](#)

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1. Lu, Y.-H., Rosner, B., Chang, G., & Fishman, L. M. (2016). Twelve-minute daily yoga regimen reverses osteoporotic bone loss. *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation, 32*(2), 81–87.

Loren Fishman, MD, BPhil (Oxon), C-IAYT, is past president of the New York Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and is on the staff of Columbia University Medical School.

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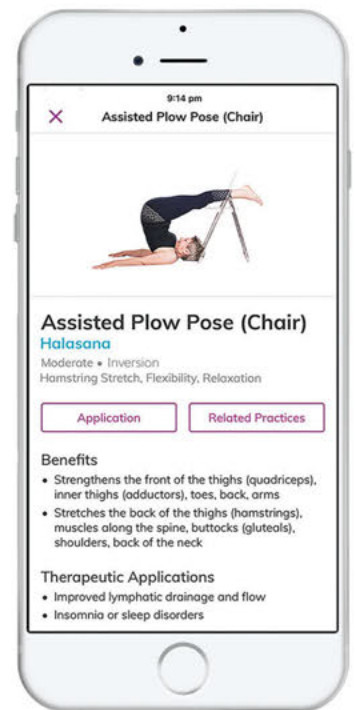
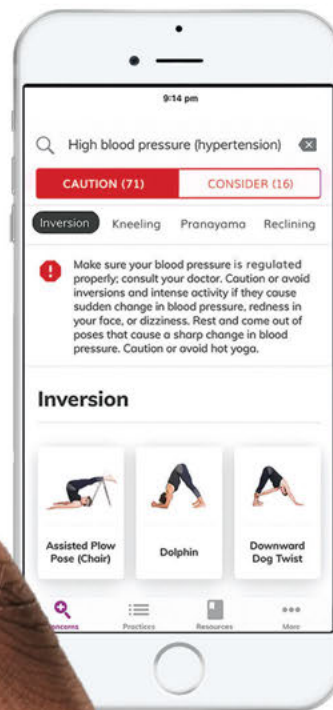
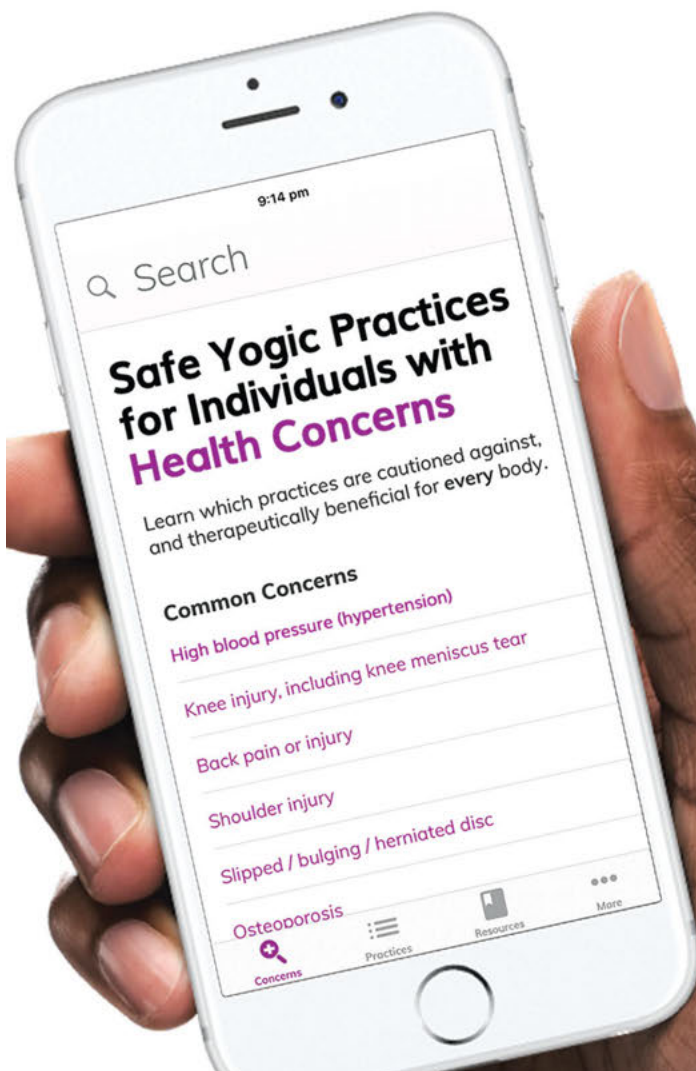
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Measurement in Clinical Practice: Part 2—The PROMIS Tool

By Kelli Bethel

In the Winter 2019 issue of *Yoga Therapy Today*, the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) was introduced from both a research and a clinical perspective. The PROMIS tool can be used clinically as a measure for client progress toward a goal and for program effectiveness. This follow-up article illustrates how the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Center for Integrative Medicine (CIM) has used this tool to measure client progress in yoga therapy and to demonstrate the success of the overall program.

Founded in 1991, CIM was the first integrative medicine center at an academic institution. CIM provides clinical care, education, and research on health and wellness for patients, providers, and the general population. CIM is also the Cochrane Review Center for Integrative Medicine, a program funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health to review and evaluate international studies on complementary and alternative therapies. The center has contracts with various departments across the university system to provide direct integrative medicine patient care that usually consists of counseling, yoga therapy, other mind-body practices, therapeutic arts, acupuncture, massage, nutrition, and self-care education classes.

Once the patient is evaluated for yoga therapy, patient-driven goals are developed. The PROMIS scores can be used as an objective measure to determine whether a goal was attained and if the results are clinically relevant.

CIM currently has a joint venture with Maryland Proton Treatment Center (MPTC), which is located on its campus, to provide integrative wellness as part of patients' care during their treatment at MPTC. Proton therapy is pencil-beam radiation that targets tumors. Unlike traditional photon radiation therapy, proton therapy limits the exposure of surrounding tissue to radiation. It is currently recommended for certain brain tumors, left-sided breast cancer, head and neck cancer, and lung, prostate, and pediatric cancers.

At the time of a patient's initial consult at MPTC, they meet with a member of the Integrative Wellness team and the PROMIS tool is administered as part of MPTC's metrics. As described in Part 1 of this article, PROMIS is a validated measure of health-related quality of life (HRQoL) and wellness that can help us assess clients' global, physical, mental, and/or social health. Such tools enable us to communicate the effect of yoga therapy through clients' own voices in a way that is understood by all healthcare providers and organizations. Programs that receive funding from hospitals or private entities are often required to use standardized QoL measures to support their need for funding. Current metrics being measured at MPTC using the PROMIS tool are the Global Health Scale, fatigue, sleep, meaning and purpose, depression, anxiety, and self-efficacy. Completed metrics are then scanned into the patient's elec-

tronic medical record. Post-intervention scores are obtained at the completion of the patient's program. All practitioners have access to these results, and the Integrative Wellness team uses them to help guide treatment recommendations and create patient-centered goals.

Yoga Therapy Effects

Patient care at MPTC includes up to five one-to-one visits with the certified yoga therapist at no charge. During their initial visit, patients are evaluated; this evaluation includes both the raw data and T-scores from the PROMIS tool.

The PROMIS T-score metric provides information on where the patient falls in relation to a relevant population. A score of 50 is the mean (T-score), and 10 is the standard deviation (the amount of variability above or below the mean that is considered to be the range of normal). Higher T-scores mean the patient has more of the item being measured—more wellness, more fatigue, etc. (Fig. 1). Scores that are 0.5 to 1.0 lower or higher (depending on what is being measured) than 40 to 60 (the standard deviation) indicate mild impairment or symptoms. 1.0 to 2.0 points worse than standard deviation indicates moderate symptoms or impairment, and scores 2.0 or more beyond standard deviation are interpreted as severe symptoms or impairment in comparison to relevant populations. The PROMIS tool provides a qualitative measure of a patient's self-reporting and provides a clinician with a baseline measure.

Once the patient is evaluated for yoga therapy, patient-driven goals are developed. The PROMIS scores can be used as an objective measure to determine whether a goal was attained and if the results are clinically relevant. Research for what is considered a "clinically important change" on PROMIS scores is ongoing, and in general any score that has changed by 5 points (or half a standard deviation) is considered a meaningful change and not due to a measurement error. So for example, for a patient with a high fatigue score, the clinician may want the patient's discharge score to decrease by at least 5 points to be clinically significant. The clinician may then write a therapeutic patient goal: "At discharge, patient's domain fatigue score on the PROMIS will have decreased by 5 points."

It is important to remember that what is a meaningful change for the patient may not be clinically significant. Yoga therapists should work with patients to determine what the patient would consider a meaningful change and document that goal. At MPTC, at the time of discharge, the yoga therapist reevaluates the patient's progress, notes achievements toward her or his goals, and makes appropriate discharge recommendations to the Integrative Wellness team and the patient.

Program Benchmark

At MPTC we also use the PROMIS scores to measure the effectiveness of our programs. The development of the program was based on a belief that providing optimal patient care during cancer treatment would benefit not only the patient but could also be a market differentiator in the proton-therapy community. The program

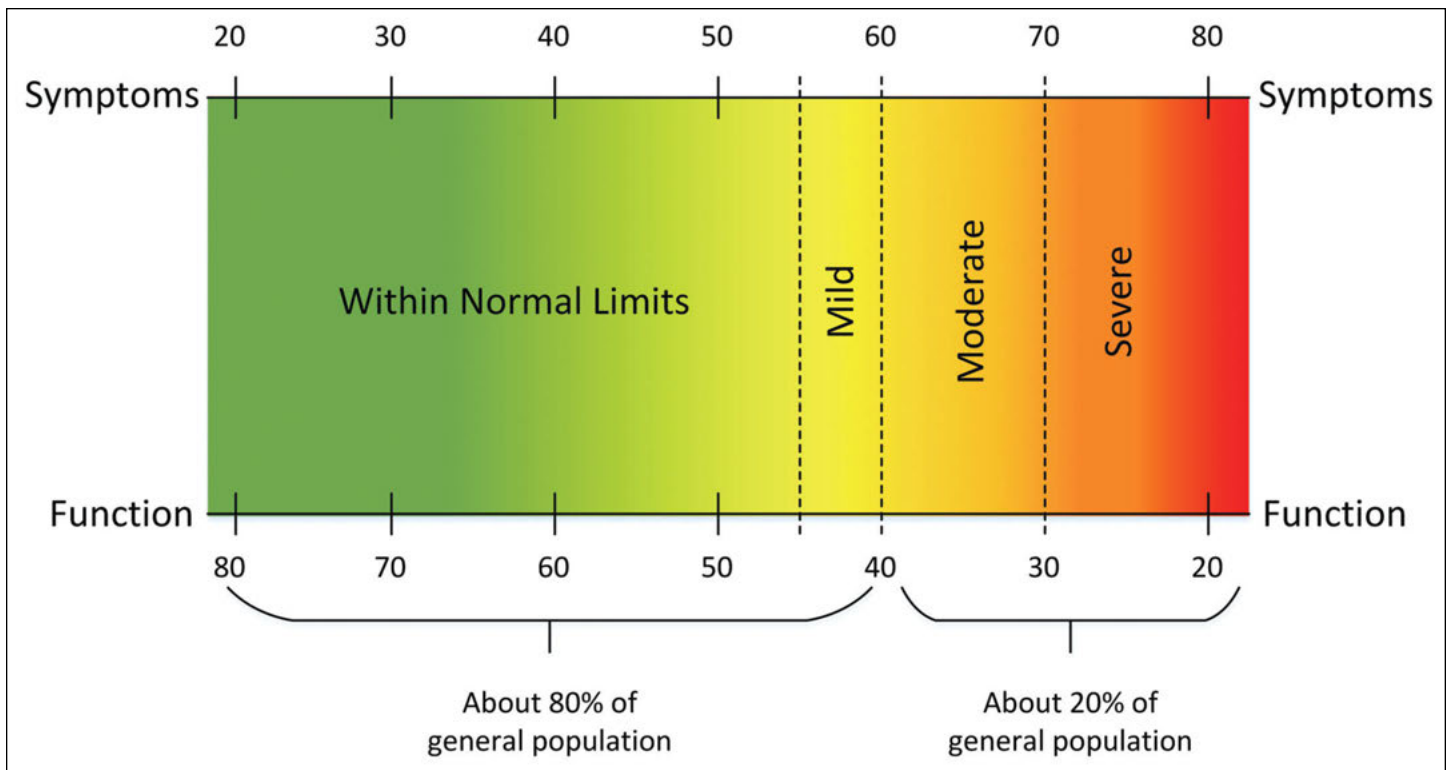


Figure 1. Interpretation of PROMIS T-Scores* for Ability to Participate in Social Roles & Activities, Anger, Anxiety, Cognitive Function, Depression, Dyspnea, Fatigue, Gastrointestinal Symptoms, Itch, Pain Behavior, Pain Interference, Physical Function, Sleep, and Social Isolation

*These are general guidelines that aid in interpreting PROMIS T-scores; thresholds may differ within a given condition or PROMIS domain. © 2008–2019. Reprinted with permission, PROMIS Health Organization. PROMIS is a registered trademark of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

began in 2018 and was internally reviewed at 10 months, showing that Integrative Wellness services improved anxiety and meaning and purpose in the patients treated. We also learned that pain was not a significant symptom and that fatigue was the most often reported symptom, which came as a surprise to the team. From these results, we then changed our measures to include the PROMIS fatigue scale and dropped our pain measures. We realized that the Global Health Scale adequately captured the pain information we needed. Results were compiled and used in part to justify the need for continued Integrative Wellness at MPTC.

For more information on PROMIS, including the tool and scoring, please refer to <http://www.healthmeasures.net/explore-measurement-systems/promis> **YTT**



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Design and Implementation of Electronic Medical Record (EMR) Templates for Yoga Therapy

By Veronica Zador, Lara Zador, and Maureen Anderson

This article describes how templates specifically adhering to the depth and breadth of yoga therapy were designed and implemented to enable yoga therapists to enter patient information into a hospital-wide EMR system. Having a way to report on a patient's condition and care based entirely on the perspective of yoga therapy can offer clear and professional communication between the yoga therapist and other healthcare professionals. In doing so, yoga therapy also can be increasingly included in patient-centered multimodal approaches to healing, adaptation, and recovery.

Yoga Therapy in Clinical Environments: Goals, Roles, and Responsibilities

The goal of integrating yoga therapy as a part of healing modalities within a clinical setting is to foster well-being through simple, effective, and adaptive meditation, breathing, and movement techniques. It is important to consider that yoga therapy is not an alternative to traditional treatments, but rather another tool to benefit patients' overall health.

Unique, perhaps, to yoga therapy in a clinical environment is that interactions with patients sometimes cannot focus on or involve movement. An additional consideration is that the yoga therapist often works alongside health professionals not likely to have first-hand knowledge or much depth of experience with yoga therapy. Meaningful communication among team members with diverse professional training and ideas about patient management, therefore, is vitally important to support and realize the potential for yoga therapy to help patients self-regulate stress and anxiety, two components of disease that can inhibit responses to medical interventions such as chemotherapy and surgery.

Communication among team members with diverse professional training and ideas about patient management is vital to realizing the potential for yoga therapy to help patients self-regulate stress and anxiety, two components of disease that can inhibit responses to medical therapies

Within these specialized settings, yoga therapists must be able to relay useful information about their assessments and interventions. Meaningful communication within a hospital setting involves electronically entering patient information. Paper-based patient forms, such as their intake questionnaires and take-home practice recommendations, can be scanned into their EMR files, as discussed below.

In hospital systems patients are typically referred to yoga therapy by their physicians for a specific purpose, usually related to a

disorder, diagnosis, or disease. Referrals may include yoga therapy for stress, anxiety, addictive behaviors, neurological issues such as traumatic brain injuries and MS, oncology, surgery, pain management, etc. When a patient is referred to a yoga therapist, an official record of the yoga therapy session must be entered into the EMR system. Generally, the yoga therapist needs to report the following information:

1. Subjective (S)—the patient's story, what the patient says about her or his problem or chief complaint;
2. Objective (O)—what the yoga therapist observes about the patient;
3. Assessment (A)—identified issues, what the therapist determines about the patient and
4. Plan (P)—what intervention the therapist has decided will be best for the patient.

“SOAP” notes are used in most clinical environments for each patient encounter.

Most hospital systems now use EMRs to organize all medical information about each patient, but as far as we know, prior to our project, the most commonly used SOAP-note templates for yoga therapy were modified from physical or occupational therapy. Meaningful reporting of patient progress using parameters common to PT or OT cannot truly reflect how a yoga therapist might assess a patient using, for example, the *panchamaya kosha* (five sheaths) model.

Our Experience with Outpatient EMR Forms

Outpatients in our hospital system are referred to yoga therapy for a variety of reasons, most commonly for symptoms related to pain and/or anxiety. A one-to-one yoga therapy session is 60 minutes in length, and our protocol ideally involves a total of four yoga therapy sessions per patient. The rationale for our suggested four patient encounters is based on a reasonable, sustainable amount of time and cost per session that allows for the development of individualized yoga therapy instruction including breathing, meditation, and movement techniques and concluding with the design of an exit strategy that allows the patient to self-evaluate whether the techniques introduced have been safely and effectively integrated for ongoing symptom management.

Integrating Yoga Philosophy and Assessment

Our large, university teaching hospital uses EMR software across all six campuses. However, in early 2014, we failed to identify through literature and internet searches forms suitable for computerized yoga therapy recording. We were unwilling to adapt the forms we found for PT, OT, massage, and similar fields. Traditionally, philosophically, and methodologically, yoga therapy has unique features that distinguish it from other fields, such as a focus on patterns of breathing, movement, and emotions. Our team therefore worked to

develop documentation that would better reflect the unique yoga therapy clinical encounter and help make the information meaningful to ever-widening areas of healthcare and research. Our initial experience with EMR charting supports how yoga therapy can be adapted within allopathic healing systems while adhering to the healing philosophies of yoga.

The designs of the forms were based on the extensive yoga therapy experiences of the primary author of this article (Veronica Zador). Allopathic physicians (Lara Zador and Maureen Anderson), as well as an EMR expert, were also consulted in the initial design and implementation stages. The yoga therapy outpatient EMR templates described below have been in place since 2014. Standardized templates were subsequently designed for inpatient clinical encounters as well.

Four Yoga Therapy EMR Templates

1. Patient Self-Recorded Intake History Form

Prior to the initial yoga therapy session, the patient receives an intake history form, which is filled out and returned to the yoga therapist at the first encounter. The form offers in-depth information not necessarily captured during the first session interview. Specifically, information relating to a yoga model of personal characteristics as well as questions relating to lifestyle, breathing patterns, and spiritual development or awareness are noted by the patient. These include questions that help the yoga therapist determine characteristics such as stability or instability in the chest, throat, lungs, head, lymph, fatty tissue, connective tissue, ligaments, and tendons (*kapha*); conditions influencing blood flow, elimination of wastes, breathing, and thought processes (*vata*); and properties that control digestion, metabolism, and energy production (*pitta*). Questions relate to the five-level panchamaya kosha assessment system. Prior to the yoga therapy encounter, the patient supplies the completed yoga therapy intake questionnaire on paper. This hard copy is scanned into the EMR system to provide additional yoga therapy encounter information to the physicians/healthcare management team and is then destroyed.



Intake Form

In addition to basic demographic information, the intake form lists the following questions with space for patient answers.

- What does optimal health mean to you?
- Have you practiced yoga before? What is your previous yoga experience?
- What are your reasons for seeking yoga therapy?
- What are your goals for yoga therapy?
- List your current and previous health conditions. Please include medical diagnoses, surgeries, accidents, injuries, etc., with approximate dates.
- What treatment have you had for these conditions?
- What do you consider to be your strengths in terms of current health and wellness?
- Please describe your typical eating patterns. What do you generally eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks?
- How much water do you drink per day?
- How is your digestion? Do you have daily, regular bowel movements?
- Do you have a regular physical exercise program?
- What are your favorite kinds of physical activities or movements?
- Please describe your professional training or career choice.
- How do you express yourself creatively?
- How do your creative outlets fit into your professional training or career?
- Please describe your sleep habits. Do you generally sleep through the night? Do you snore? Do you dream and/or remember your dreams?
- How do you wake in the morning? Internal clock? Alarm clock? Something else?
- Do you generally feel rested when you wake in the morning?
- Please describe your overall energy level. Does it fluctuate or stay consistent? When are you most energized? Least energized?
- Where do you hold tension in your body?
- Where do you experience physical stiffness, pain, or discomfort?
- What relieves the pain or discomfort? What makes it worse?
- What are your perceived stress levels?
- Do you experience anxiety, sadness, or depression? How do these feelings manifest in your physical body?
- What life challenges are you currently facing?
- What aspects of your life give you the most joy and pleasure?
- If you could change a habit, what would you choose to change?
- How would you define the word *spirituality*?
- Do you seek to generate spiritual fulfillment for yourself?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

SOAP Form

In addition to demographics, the SOAP form includes the following areas of information.

Patient is:

- a. right-handed
- b. left-handed

1) Patient describes the following as a chief complaint:

2) In relating to the patient's chief complaint please indicate (subjective)

- a. PRE-session, patient reports a pain level of:
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- b. PRE-session, patient reports an anxiety level of:
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- c. POST-session, patient reports a pain level of:
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- d. POST-session, patient reports an anxiety level of:
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- e. Relating to the chief complaint, patient reports the following about the quality of pain (burning, aching, incisional, bone pain, other):
- f. Patient reports the following factors that improve/mitigate pain:
- g. Patient reports the following factors that increase pain:
- h. Patient reports the following changes since previous yoga therapy session (include changes in skills, breathing, and stress management):

3) Please insert yoga therapist's objective notes relating to the patient's chief complaint (the type of problem).

- a. Breathing characteristics since previous encounter:
 - Shallow, i.e., upper chest, rapid
 - Deep, i.e., diaphragmatic, slow-paced
 - Retentive
 - Congested
 - This patient is on oxygen support
 - The patient presents with normal breathing characteristics relative to the chief complaint
 - The patient presents with abnormal breathing characteristics relative to the chief complaint
- b. Physical characteristics since previous encounter:
 - Can comfortably maintain or increase the range of motion relative to the chief complaint
 - Is alert and can respond to questions and understand simple requests relative to previous encounter
 - Shows a steady gait when walking
 - Shows normal eye contact
 - Shows normal speech patterns
 - Has maintained weight
 - Shows normal skin tone
 - Has maintained normal sleep patterns
 - Other
- c. Emotional characteristics since previous encounter:
 - Normally engaged and interested in yoga therapy
 - Is able to feel an increase in ability to recognize and self-regulate responses to stress
 - Is able to recognize and self-regulate breathing patterns relative to previous encounter
 - Is able to recognize and self-regulate behavioral responses to stress relative to previous encounter
 - Is able to identify and verbalize qualities of restfulness and relaxation
 - Is able to define, identify, and verbalize areas or sources of discomfort, including physical or emotional
 - Is able to normally communicate about self, personal goals, and challenges since previous encounter
- d. Compliance with yoga therapy plan relative to previous encounter:
 - Is able to understand and comply with home-based yoga therapy techniques and additional assignments
 - Is interested in continuing applications of yoga therapy "at home" in order to meet objectives relative to chief complaint
 - Is aware that this is the final yoga therapy encounter for this series of sessions

2. SOAP Form

This form borrows from traditional medical progress notes and was created to record breathing, movement, and emotional patterns based on the chief complaint as noted by the patient for each clinical encounter. Included on this form is the patient's own pre- and post-encounter assessment of her or his pain and anxiety levels on a scale of 1–10, with 1 being the lowest level. The yoga therapist uses this form during each encounter session to record the patient's chief complaint, subjective assessment, and quotations from the patient during treatment. Objective notes, including a chakra assessment, are correlated whenever applicable along the lines of a standard physical assessment: eyes, ears, nose, throat, mouth, neck, chest, heart, digestion, urological and reproductive health, upper extremities, lower extremities, and spine.

Examples of the visual or verbal (as reported by the patient) assessments the yoga therapist might record are irregular or remarkable quality of respiration: short, shallow, deep, and/or rapid; retentions on the inhale or exhale; strained, congested, oxygen-supported, and/or explosive, etc. The yoga therapist is also able to enter data on changes or qualities of gait, posture, eye contact, affect, thirst, skin tone, hygiene, coherence, cognition, etc. The yoga therapist can record notes on verbal statements offered by the patient in response to questions relative to their chief complaint: sleep, appetite, pain, stress, anxiety, etc. To remain within the scope of practice, the yoga therapist does not provide diagnoses, medical information, treatment of symptoms, or pharmacological recommendations (including diet and nutrition), instead directing instructions and modifications specifically to breathing, meditation, or movement techniques relative to applications of yoga therapy.

3. Patient Take-Home Form

Based on the above-described assessments, the yoga therapist generates a take-home record representing the treatment plan introduced during each yoga therapy encounter. Central to the formation of both the treatment plan and the take-home record are the four aspects of treatment. (Please see Zador and Zador's previous article "Redundant Breathing: A Yoga Therapy Technique for Pain Reduction and Management" in the Spring 2018 issue of *Yoga Therapy Today*, pp. 34–37, for an illustration that is included on both the patient take-home form and the exit strategy form.) These aspects address patterns of the patient's body, breath, and mind and include strength (*sthira*), stability (*sukha*), composure (*samadhana*), and restfulness (*shanti*). Recommendations from the yoga therapist are summarized

in the note. The completed take-home form is scanned into the EMR system to provide patient information about the yoga therapy encounter to members of the professional healthcare team.

Additionally, and most important to the patient, a copy of this documentation is given to the patient as a summary of the encounter session, thus avoiding the patient's need to memorize or record the sessions. It also offers a clear self-practice outline for home use, with a simple chart that includes space to list and/or sketch postures, meditation, and breath techniques. Contact information for further clarifications and a recommendation for the timing of the next visit, if any, are inserted onto this form.

4. Exit Strategy Form

At the conclusion of the last (fourth) yoga therapy session, the patient completes and receives a copy of the exit strategy. Following the above parameters of the treatment plan, the exit strategy includes statements made by the patient and recorded by the yoga therapist during the previous sessions and refers to observations made in relationship to breathing, movement, and mindfulness therapies introduced during the yoga therapy encounters.

Preparation of the exit strategy form requires that the yoga therapist insert the patient statements concomitant with these four aspects of yoga therapy. The patient is invited to agree or disagree with the statements and treatment goals. Agreement indicates that the patient has acquired the skills necessary to meet the objective. Disagreement indicates further instruction is warranted. An overall 80% agreement indicates the patient has met her or his objectives. This exit strategy enables patients to self-identify mastery of the techniques introduced during the yoga therapy encounter sessions and which practices can be continued at home as needed.

The implication is that although further instruction would not be withheld from the patient, it might no longer be necessary. A copy of the completed exit strategy form is retained and scanned into the medical recording system. An additional copy is given to the patient at the conclusion of their yoga therapy encounter session series.

The exit strategy consists of a compilation of patient comments shared during the three initial sessions. Comments are recorded on the exit-strategy form and inserted in the space corresponding to categories of body, breathing, and meditation (mindfulness) as applied to strength, stability, composure, or restfulness.

Inpatient EMR Forms

The inpatient EMR entry system does not require an intake, SOAP note, or treatment plan because the patient care is monitored bedside and under the immediate supervision of the healthcare team, so there is no compelling rationale for recording multiple yoga encounter visits. The yoga therapist simply charts each encounter using the EMR template designed for bedside yoga therapy recording. The form includes drop-down menus that capture the following information:

- minutes in session;
- type of breathing technique used (e.g., relaxing, invigorating);
- type of meditation technique used (e.g., body awareness, sensory awareness);

- patient position (e.g., supine, sitting);
- patient affect (e.g., relaxed, invigorated); and
- patient-described outcome (e.g., decreased or increased pain, decreased or increased anxiety/stress).

In Conclusion

Use of standardized yoga therapy forms compatible with a hospital's EMR system allows for the evaluation of long-term efficacy; recidivism among clinical yoga therapy patient populations; and follow-up investigations from the healthcare team, including additional complaints experienced by the same patient. Based on our experience, responsible, accountable, and credible yoga therapy will continue to increase in visibility and involvement in clinical settings. We hope that this will lead to expanding interest in embedding yoga therapy certification programs within hospitals so that the path to yoga therapy for patient-centered care may soon become a well-paved, well-recognized thoroughfare in the landscape of healthcare and well-being.¹

EMR documentation by yoga therapists effectively links yoga therapy with multiple healthcare disciplines and professionals. As well, it establishes a way for recording data to use for research in yoga therapy. With all this in mind, therefore, electronic patient information recording of a yoga therapy session is not only a professional responsibility, it is a professional necessity. **YTT**

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Acknowledgment

Special thanks to Jennifer Everland, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, for her help in formatting the information provided on the templates.



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Currents of Community Healing and Social Activism: The Transformative Path of Yoga as a Sacred Leadership Journey

Stories from the field by Nya Patrinos, Irene Hauzinger, Mona Flynn, Katie Allen, Jana Long, and Amina Naru

Curated by Allie Middleton

As individuals, the yogic path of transformation, burning off our ancient and abiding wounds, *samskaras*, is like meeting an edge in our own personal leadership journey. It can be scary as well as healing. With the increased awareness and sense of connection we obtain through the practice of yoga, we may sense an emerging desire to serve a wider community.

The stories and practices collected here are written by yogis who describe their particular path of union, alignment, and attunement through a cultivated yoga practice. They each describe how they responded to their calling or sacred duty with unique levels of interest, motivation, and capacity to inspire more people to act for the benefit of others.

You will encounter here intimate and creative testimonies of courage and compassion that nourish the collective wisdom now emerging in the growing yoga therapy profession.

It's been an amazing and humbling journey to travel with each of these yoga innovators as they revealed the healing passions behind their projects, which they shared as part of the Common Interest Community on Social Activism/Community Healing at the 2018 Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research.

These yoga innovators formulated inspiring practices to create the conditions for peace, healing, and harmony in diverse community settings. I asked each of the selected practitioners, "What is evolving as your true dharma or sacred gift? What did you try, and who helped you? What did you learn, and where is your potential leading you now?"

"Whenever I feel imbalanced, I ask myself: How can I use my yoga tools for healing and transformation?"

Nya Patrinos—People of Color Yoga for Resilience and Well-Being



As an African-American woman I have encountered racism throughout my entire life. At various times these experiences of racism have left me angry, scared, disoriented, hopeless, and/or depressed. Whenever I feel imbalanced, I ask myself: How can I use my yoga tools for healing and transformation? People of Color (POC) Yoga has developed out of my personal quest to find yogic solutions to the stress and trauma of being a person of color in America.

My inspiration to teach POC Yoga developed from my participation in a half day intensive for people of color in mindfulness meditation led by Larry Yang. Through this experience, I recognized

the healing power of being in a POC specialty group. I left the workshop feeling rejuvenated and optimistic and knew I had to somehow continue this work.

We people of color need yoga. We experience higher risks for physical, behavioral, and mental health issues. Studies cite racial discrimination as a major predictor of illness.

Many of us at the workshop were so inspired that we decided to form a bi-monthly POC sitting group. Because of my passion to make a difference in my life and the lives of others, I started teaching POC Yoga as gentle stretching between periods of meditation at the POC sit. Eventually, the class became its own offering.

I have held POC Yoga at a meditation center, college rec room, various yoga studios, the park, and on the beach. The venue has changed many times depending on what was available. Sometimes I have rented the space. Sometimes the space was donated. But my intention to continue with the class has remained steadfast, and the feedback has been wonderful.

We people of color need yoga. We experience higher risks for physical health issues (cardiovascular disease, diabetes), behavioral health issues (substance abuse, cigarette smoking), and mental health issues (depression, post-traumatic stress disorder). Numerous studies cite racial discrimination as a major predictor of illness. Communities of color can be very different ethnically and culturally, but what we share is a history of prejudice, violence, racism, colonization, and/or genocide. I believe these experiences of historical, race-based, vicarious, and transgenerational trauma can be addressed in a trauma-sensitive yoga program for self-identified people of color where they can feel acknowledged, validated, safe, and supported.

"Self-identified" is my key concept. In the early days of the POC sitting group there were differing opinions as to who should be allowed to participate. I made a few mistakes myself by questioning someone's race. Then I took on the model of self-identified. If someone was in the class, everyone was to assume they should be. No questions were ever to be asked.

I strive to create a safe container where people of color don't have to worry about being hypervigilant, perfect, threatened, shamed, or exoticized. The space must feel safe for healing to occur. Participants are welcome to stop, alter, or modify any yoga poses, and even leave if they wish. I teach with a sense of welcome and gratitude. I realize people are sharing their most precious commodity—their time. In addition, they are trusting me and themselves with their bodies. POC Yoga is taught with empathy, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and "wisdom-enhancing" techniques from all traditions.

Although the focus is people of color, I hope that the program is equally useful as a model for trauma-informed group yoga. POC Yoga offers an integrative therapeutic model to address collective trauma by applying yoga therapy techniques to increase resilience and well-being.

“The fact that we segregate large sectors of our society in a government-sanctioned ‘timeout’ has always fascinated me.”

Irene Hauzinger—Compromising Polarities: Unifying the Inside with the Outside, Prison Yoga Style



As the daughter of a police officer, I was raised in a household that emphasized dichotomies: black and white, good and bad, all or nothing, overachiever or loser. Carl Jung teaches us that polarities are the root of much human suffering, emotional distress, and anxiety. While it is human nature to label and organize, our collective consciousness can create completion where ambiguity lies. The fact that we segregate large sectors of our society in a government-sanctioned “timeout” has always fascinated me. This was a polarity that I had difficulty reconciling for years, until I discovered yoga.

Ironically, it was my father the police officer who introduced yoga to me when I was 13. We attended classes at the local college and YMCA until a studio opened in our town. At 17, I became a Hatha Yoga teacher and actively taught until a car accident derailed me at age 18. Being too young to have the kind of surgery I needed, my body and mind grew accustomed to chronic pain and limitation. When I was 21, 50 pounds heavier, and barely able to take care of myself, I was finally approved for surgery. I remember feeling imprisoned in my body and wondering if I would ever be able to practice again. That first yoga class, post-fusion, was agonizingly painful, but steadily, my body regained its flexibility and strength, and I was back to practicing and teaching. Through this experience, I discovered that there are many types of prisons: injuries, addictions, social constraints, and of course physical buildings, all of which segregate many of the most vulnerable people in our society who are most in need of compassion and wholeness.

Upon recovering from surgery, I began my career in social services, specializing in addiction. One cannot work with addicted clients without encountering the criminal justice system. Wanting to combine my passion for yoga and social justice with my path in social work, I decided that I would create an interdisciplinary PhD program where I could study the intersection of these three vocations; this led me to embarking on the PhD path of researching yoga for women inmates at the Washington Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor, Washington. I had been volunteering with Seattle-based Yoga Behind Bars since 2010, and when it was time to begin research in 2014, I found this organization to be an amazing collaborative partner in furthering our mutual mission of bringing hope to those on the inside.

Most prison yoga programming begins with individual volunteer yoga instructors providing weekly classes through the prison and jail volunteer coordinators. While navigating bureaucracy can seem daunting, it can be as simple as contacting your local jail or prison volunteer outreach coordinator and offering to start a class. A doctoral research project, on the other hand, is a different beast. After 2 years of negotiating with the Department of Corrections, and redesigning my study no fewer than three times, my prison

research study was approved. The biggest challenge to research is ensuring that the interests of all parties are fully acknowledged and accounted for. This can be quite time consuming; flexibility and patience must be practiced.

Research, like yoga, is a practice fueled by passion and curiosity. Collaborative research is a gift, as the researcher is able to bring the voices of the agencies, systems, and participants to life. In my study, the most encouraging finding of all was the incredible outpouring of student gratitude for the instructors, Yoga Behind Bars, and the gift of yoga practice. We have all experienced some form of restriction, whether it is an injury, limiting thoughts, mental illness, or incarceration. Through yoga, we may find liberation and community.

“In the past 5 years, my students have directed their compassion and care toward efforts to help Syrian refugee families arriving in our communities.”

Mona Flynn—Supporting Syrian Refugees in American Communities



As a first-generation Syrian-American woman, the immensity of the Syrian crisis that affects our world stays in the front of my mind and in my heart daily. In the first few years, the heaviness came from worry over how our extended family was surviving on a daily basis. As the millions of Syrian refugees became a global concern, I became the face of the Syrian crisis to those around me, especially to my students.

My family did not come to America as refugees, however. My father came as a college student. My grandfather, a self-made man, grew up in an orphanage. His mission was to provide his children with the best possible education, to encourage a strong work ethic, and to give them the example of being a philanthropist. When his family moved out of their traditional Moorish-style home in Damascus, it was donated to become the first public school.

As a yogi, I recognize the beauty and relevance of being connected, and deepening practices guide me to look from the microcosm to the macrocosm, noting the myriad ways in which yoga can lead us to diminish suffering and promote peace. The way I see it, our own healing is affected by our capacity to help others heal. Life Fit, Inc., my yoga and yoga therapy business, is run with the intention to build community and to help students connect with a sense of purpose as to why it might be that they invest the time and energy to learn and practice yoga. Life Fit is not a brick-and-mortar business, so I teach around town, in the local hospital system, for my city of Greensboro, in schools, in corporate groups, as well as in my own classes. Across all of these classes/groups, we have great discussions on the effects of our intertwined yogic and life journeys and on the importance of *seva* (service). Over the last 20 years, we collectively do an annual community project. In the past 5 years, my students have directed their compassion and care toward efforts to help Syrian refugee families arriving in our communities.

If we are to extend ourselves as best we can to the people who are suffering who cross our paths, we must do what we as yoga

therapists are taught to do. We react to the person in front of us, not to the diagnosis. Deep healing happens when we recognize and honor the individual as we attend to her or his needs. If “the care and keeping of me” in my yoga practice is effective, it allows me to live my dharma, which includes seva, the care and keeping of others. This is yoga therapy in action, a powerful and effective means for transformative community healing.

What have I learned? When you cannot help the people you want to help, you can focus on the people who arrive on the path alongside you and in front of you. We are here to be human together.

What happened along the way? We have collaborated with organizations like Church World Services, The Newcomers School, Every Campus a Refuge, the local mosque, and churches in the area. For over 5 years now, Life Fit Yoga students have helped to meet the needs of Syrian refugee families, from an initial fundraiser (please see the Soup for Syria Greensboro Facebook page) and using that as a platform to connect area yogis and friends to offering goods, financial support, time, and services to relocated families as they adjust to their new American lives. Steps toward creating a group yoga class for refugee women and children are in process as more organizations (e.g., the Center for New North Carolinians) come into the picture. We recognize together that our needs and rights are reflected in the world community that drives yoga into action. There is beauty in how we are all connected. There is also responsibility and humility. *Om shanti!*

“[I]t became my life’s work to bridge my public health background with yoga therapy to improve the health outcomes of all communities, regardless of their ability to afford such services.”

Katie Allen—Yoga Therapy as a Health Promotion Strategy for Under-served Communities



Many of us in the field of yoga share a genuine desire to bring these life-changing practices out of the studios and into the larger community. This is one of the core values of our studio, Be The Change Yoga, as well as our yoga therapist training program, AlcheMe Yoga Therapy, and this has

resulted in the development of numerous community partnerships for bringing yoga therapy initiatives into underserved communities.

My inspiration for this type of work stems from a social justice lens acquired during college and graduate school. With regard to health disparities, the research clearly demonstrates how lower-income communities lack access to health education and vital resources compared with more affluent communities; this, in turn, results in disproportionately higher rates of chronic diseases and less means for effectively managing them.

While in graduate school, I experienced another powerful realization, one in which I saw that the underlying behavioral risk factors associated with the chronic-disease epidemic can largely be prevented and treated with correct adaptations of yoga practices. From this point on, it became my life’s work to bridge my public health

background with yoga therapy to improve the health outcomes of all communities, regardless of their ability to afford such services.

While establishing Be The Change Yoga and AlcheMe Yoga Therapy as Orange County’s center for yoga therapy and higher education, we’ve gained a high level of visibility that has enabled us to develop collaborative community-based relationships and to implement yoga therapy programs throughout various hospitals and health systems. These strategic initiatives also serve as practicum sites for our yoga therapy interns, with the intention of developing future employment opportunities for our program graduates.

As yoga therapy is an emerging field, it is challenging to get one’s foot in the door of health clinics and create buy-in among system administrators. To do this, we utilize a public health lens to explain how yoga therapy is a low-cost intervention that empowers the individual to create and sustain healthier behaviors. We utilize public health tools, such as logic models, coupled with evidence-based research to educate clinicians on how yoga therapy practices increase physical activity in a safe way, decrease stress, and support better choices that can change the trajectory of disease.

All of this leads to improved health outcomes.

Along the way, we experienced much prejudice and many misperceptions about yoga. Some communities view yoga as culturally foreign, making people apprehensive to try it. In looking for the best way to translate the methodology of our work to community members, we focus on health-related goals and assist individuals in identifying their personal health goals. The intention is to support their specific wellness aims by offering the correct practices, developing heart-to-heart relationships, and infusing our clients with *sraddha* (faith/confidence) and *virya* (strength) to increase self-efficacy and follow-through.

In this way, we developed an effective yoga therapy internship model that offers a low-cost program to clinics while translating our methodology into a program that empowers the individual to create and sustain healthier behaviors while making yoga therapy accessible to all members of the community and advancing the frontiers of the field of yoga therapy.

“Many people suffer from generational and historical trauma that is ongoing. There are daily reminders of the tenuous nature of life for people classified as Black in America.”

Jana Long—Yoga as a Peace Practice: Creating Resilience in Our Communities



Yoga as a Peace Practice (YPP) was conceived as the first national initiative of the Black Yoga Teachers Alliance in response to an epidemic of race-based violence in U.S. communities.

YPP is a curriculum designed to train yoga teachers, community members, and civic and social workers to facilitate, create, and introduce contemplative practices rooted in the philosophical tenets of the *niyamas* (duties to ourselves), Restorative and Kriya Yoga, and culturally relevant themes and then offer them in ways that are accessible to individu-

als and communities where trauma from violence exists. YPP elevates contemplative practice to equal importance with asana.

The deleterious effects of race-based violence impact *all* people; however, YPP acknowledges the acute impact it has on African-Americans and other people of color.

I discovered my own deep-seated trauma—the fear of being shot while Black in America—on my way to facilitate the YPP training at Yogaville in 2018. Here’s how this particular incident transpired:

My partner and I headed for Buckingham, Virginia, from Baltimore. Once off the main interstates heading southwest, we were awestruck by the pastoral landscape of rolling hills, endless fields of summer crops, and grazing farm animals. Coming into Charlottesville, the ominous appearance of confederate flags became more frequent. “Let’s find a place to stop to eat our lunch,” I suggested around noon. We searched for a spot, but so much was private property. And there were those scattered reminders that we were in the Confederacy! We joked, “Don’t stop here, we could get shot. . . . Keep going, we might get shot.” So it went on for miles, until it hit me like a thunderbolt: This is a deep trauma I live with as an African-American. We had lunch on a strip-mall parking lot where we felt relatively safe.



I shared this insight with participants at the beginning of the YPP training. It unleashed a powerful dialogue and sharing of individual experiences. The release of trauma was made evident by the symphony of snores and snorts that followed in response to the rest and relaxation of our nervous systems.

Many people suffer from generational and historical trauma that is ongoing. There are daily reminders of the tenuous nature of life for people classified as Black in America. Although we repress this trauma, it dwells just beneath the surface. It is the way we cope from day to day. YPP offers us strategies for thriving and creating resilience.

Our 2018 YPP ended in a circle of prayer, dance, and drumming. A sacred ritual was created organically and in the moment that felt guided by the presence of our ancestral spirits. We rejoiced in a space of peace and safety.

The 2019 YPP trainings are May 17–19 at Yogaville and August 2–4 at Innovation Hall in St. Louis.

“I never imagined that the experiences of abuse I endured throughout my childhood would provide the opportunity to be a part of something so big and so impactful.”

Amina Naru—Universally Inclusive Yoga: Best Practices for Yoga with Survivors of Sexual Trauma



Being a survivor of sexual trauma has deeply affected my world and how I perceive life. After pages and pages of self-help books, metaphysics, prayer, and introspection, I thought I was healed. Along the way, I was introduced to yoga and realized there was more work to be done. Emotional pain and the debris from my traumas were being released. My organs, cells, and tissues were being purged and detoxified through the asana practices, and the vessel that houses my soul began to feel clean, free, and open. It felt good to feel my true essence again without guilt or shame, although in yoga teacher trainings and in studio classes, I would be triggered again and again.

I was changing. I was healing. I became determined to bring this ancient art form to others like me: those who were survivors of the traumas of life; those who had exhausted all their tools, medications, detours, and distractions; those who had seen their darkest hours and lived to tell about it. The survivors.

During my third year with the Yoga Service Council (YSC), I was asked to take over the project management for our fourth edition in the *Best Practices* book series—*Best Practices for Yoga with Survivors of Sexual Trauma*, in partnership with the Omega Institute and lululemon’s Here to Be program. I never imagined that the experiences of abuse I endured throughout my childhood would provide the opportunity to be a part of something so big and so impactful.

The project grew from 18 contributors to 36. We held a second symposium at Omega in Rhinebeck, N.Y., to collect more voices from the groups that we lacked in the first symposium. We extended the project beyond the normal 12 months of the other manuals in the series. We had our own internal wounds opened in the most loving, supported space possible as we told our truth, became vulnerable, and wept. We all experienced an intense and profound connectivity at this unique event. We were fueled by the #MeToo movement and the increasing number of reports and allegations around the world of people who have abused positions of power by causing sexual harm to others. We knew that what we were writing was needed and extremely timely. We felt the weight of the world and every tear that had been shed by the people who had been harmed, taken advantage of, and deprived of their dignity. The project was bigger than us, and the sheer magnitude of it would be overwhelming at times, but it had to be done.

The project has gained the attention of *Yoga Journal*, Yoga Alliance, IAYT, Yoga International, and many other organizations and yoga studios. We have launched #ThePledge, a pilot program for studios around the country that are committed to providing universally inclusive yoga. Through this pilot, YSC works directly with studio staff to provide tools, support, and assistance in education and awareness about how to hold a space for yoga and mindfulness practices with the skills and intention of not harming people (ahimsa), regardless of whether or not they have been traumatized.

I see universally inclusive yoga and #ThePledge being adopted by spaces and yoga schools around the world as we all move forward in brilliance and healing.

Trusting the Wisdom of Your Heart

We see in these powerful stories of personal healing how yoga therapy continues to grow as a profession. Moving from a *me* focus to a *we* focus is demonstrated by shifting the benefits of personal transformation toward engaged social action with others in community. It's important to capture the collective narrative while this transformation emerges, as this will seed further inspiration and mark a path for positive change. Collaborating with others from a shared experience can set the stage for social and systems transformation. As we listen to the expanding wisdom of our hearts, the question now is this: How might *you* find ways to collaborate with others and engage in something new together, responding to a sacred call to commit to a practical larger project, however challenging the process might feel? **YTT**

*You are what your deep, driving desire is.
As your desire is, so is your will.
As your will is, so is your deed.
As your deed is, so is your destiny.*
—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad IV, 4.5

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Statin-Associated Muscle Symptoms and Yoga Therapy

By Helgrid Randolph and Hansa Knox Johnson

Muscle and body aches are a common complaint from clients seeking help from a yoga therapist. In taking such cases, we often inquire about medications. If a statin is in the medication list, a yoga therapist may need a different approach to therapy. The goal of this article is to bring awareness to the muscle-related side-effects of these drugs, known as statin-associated muscle symptoms (SAMS).

Cholesterol

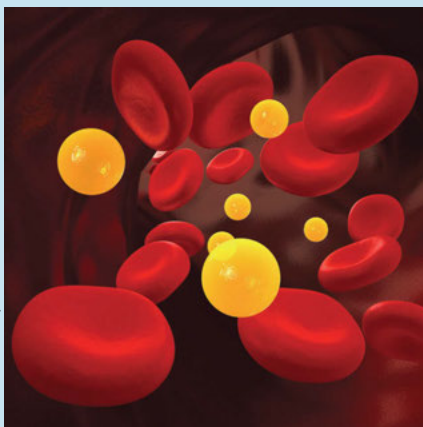
Cholesterol, generally speaking, is a lipid molecule biosynthesized by all animal cells, as it is essential to the creation of the cell membranes. This lipid is also important as a precursor for the biosynthesis of vitamin D and essential hormones such as progesterone, glucocorticoids, mineralocorticoids, androgens, and estrogen. Cholesterol is primarily broken down in the liver, and its catabolism produces bile salts.

Normally, the liver makes approximately 75% of the cholesterol the body needs. Cholesterol also enters the body through eating animal-based foods like meat, eggs, and milk. Cholesterol commonly increases with age; weight; some hereditary factors; and lifestyle decisions such as unhealthy eating habits, activity and exercise level, smoking, and alcohol consumption.

What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a lipid necessary for building and repairing our cells, among other functions; its molecules form a large part of our cell membranes. (Fats are another type of lipid known as triglycerides.) Hypercholesterolemia, a form of hyperlipidemia, has been associated with cardiovascular disease. Hypercholesterolemia is an overabundance of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and very low density lipoprotein (VLDL), usually combined with low levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL). Most simply, “total cholesterol” is LDL +

VLDL + HDL. Triglycerides and the ratio of LDL to HDL are often considered in determining cardiovascular risk.



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Medical Cholesterol Management: Statins

The most commonly prescribed medication for what we know as “high cholesterol” is the family of statin drugs. Statin drugs work by inhibiting the action of an enzyme (HMG-CoA reductase) involved in producing cholesterol. Statins also affect several enzymes in muscle cells responsible for muscle growth. For some people this may be the trigger for SAMS.^{1,2}



The most commonly prescribed statins include Zocor (Simvastatin), Lipitor, Crestor, and others. One in five Americans between the ages of 40 and 75 are currently taking a statin drug to reduce their cholesterol level or to prevent the serious complications that can arise from atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), including myocardial infarction and ischemic stroke. This translates to 28% of people over 40 taking a statin—approximately 20 million Americans—and to statin sales of over \$20 billion a year.³

In the United States, the labels of selected statins (Simvastatin, Lipitor, and Crestor) must now include warnings about the rare but serious risk of liver damage, memory loss and confusion, and type 2 diabetes.^{3,4}

Contraindications for beginning statins include pregnancy and liver disease. Certain medications, herbal supplements, and foods like grapefruit can interact with statin medications.

Contraindications for beginning statins include pregnancy and liver disease. Certain medications, herbal supplements, and foods like grapefruit can interact with statin medications.

Muscle-Related Symptoms of Statin Use

Muscle symptoms are among the best-known side-effects of statins. SAMS may show as soreness, tiredness, or weakness of the muscles, and may be a mild discomfort or become serious enough to hinder daily activities. Clients may report that a blood test showed mild elevation of creatine kinase (CK), an enzyme important for muscle function that rises after certain kinds of damage like a heart attack. This finding might be present with mild symptoms of muscle pain or even without symptoms, but it is not a sign of serious complications.



Although not the same, frequently the words myalgia (muscular pain), myositis (inflammation of the muscle tissue), and myopathy (muscle disease) are used interchangeably when describing SAMS. The different symptoms can be categorized according to their severity:

- Myalgia and/or mild hyperCKemia are the most common side-effects of statins. Myalgia mostly presents as localized pain, usually in the lower extremities, calves and thighs, frequently as muscle cramps and tendonitis-related pain. It can affect all muscles. Myalgia may stop or be reduced upon discontinuation of the statin, although the symptoms can sometimes persist.⁵
- Myositis is indicated by elevated muscle enzymes together with muscle pain, cramps, and soreness or weakness of muscles. Myositis has been related to subsequent renal disease, diabetes, and thyroid disease. It can be caused by infection, injury, medication, and/or disease, including autoimmune disease. Myositis may stop or be reduced upon discontinuing the statin.⁵
- Self-limited toxic statin myopathy is a side-effect that comes with a highly elevated CK level and possibly myalgia, especially in the proximal muscle groups. This condition can interfere with daily living.⁶
- Rhabdomyolysis, the most severe acute complication of statin use, is marked by high levels of CK and results in a massive destruction of muscle fibers and release of their contents into the bloodstream. Muscle weakness may be a main symptom, but it is usually transitory and disappears a few days after stopping the drug. Kidney damage is a potential complication, but rarely leads to kidney failure or even death. Less than 1 patient per 100,000 treated per year with statins is affected by this disease.⁴
- Statin-associated autoimmune myopathy (immune-mediated necrotizing myopathy, IMNM) is rare, occurring in approximately 2 or 3 of every 100,000 patients treated with statins. It is more common in male patients and can develop after months of using statins.⁶ Symptoms include

highly elevated muscle enzymes, muscle edema, progressive symmetric proximal arm and leg weakness, distal weakness, arthralgia (joint pain), myalgia, and Raynaud's phenomenon. Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) and dyspnea (difficulty breathing) are symptoms of a more aggressive type of this myopathy. Discontinuation of the statin rarely resolves the symptoms. Yoga therapy has excellent tools to support maintenance of well-being for people with IMNM.

Current research has found that patients with genetic predisposition, previous neuromuscular disease, and/or history of elevated CK or hypothyroidism are more likely to develop SAMS.⁴

Perspectives from Ayurveda and Yoga

Ayurveda Considerations

In brief from an ayurvedic perspective, elevated cholesterol is connected to low *agni* (digestive fire) of the liver (*bhuta agni*) and increased *kapha dosha* (water and earth elements). These two imbalances cause *rakta* (the blood) to become heavy, thick, and cloudy and *rasa vaha srotas* (channels for blood or the juice of life) to become obstructed. Excess kapha shows up as an accumulation of *ama* (toxins, undigested food, or unaddressed emotions), which can also show as a white coating on the tongue. According to the six stages of *samprapti* (disease development), the accumulation of cholesterol and its effects on the body can be reversed, especially at the earlier stages of *samprapti*.

General recommendations for elevated cholesterol include following a kapha-soothing diet, walking 3 miles per day at a brisk pace, drinking copper water, using garlic and onions in cooking (which balance the kapha qualities of cholesterol), and drinking a cup of hot water with a teaspoon of honey before breakfast. An ayurvedic practitioner may recommend more specific measures according to the client's constitution to balance liver and the kapha dosha, thereby potentially lowering cholesterol.⁷

Why isn't everyone who takes statins affected by muscle symptoms? As most diseases originate in the digestive tract, from an ayurvedic perspective, the determining factors might very well be gut-health and then beyond that the specific constitution of an individual.

Yoga Considerations

Yoga therapy is the application of yoga tools based on the messages of the body. We look beyond the symptoms to the connection of who we are in relationship to self, our spirit (essential self), and others in the world. Using the body as the silent communicator of the spirit, we ask, "What is the dis-ease or response to medications telling us? What are the messages my client is here to learn about, emotionally and spiritually?"

Potential insights are based on the statistical population of people taking statins. This population includes people going through life changes such as empty nest, career loss, retirement, loss of a partner, and compromised health. They are moving from the producing years of life to being wisdom-holders in a culture that does not necessarily respect elders.

Potential Psychospiritual Messages in Client Evaluation

Cholesterol in its best forms and levels is a naturally occurring substance in our body that builds our structure and supports the immune system. It becomes *ojas* (vitality) and the stability of the cells. If cholesterol builds up *ama*, clients may feel they need to stabilize their lives. They may not be digesting life (in all its aspects: physical, emotional, social, and spiritual), resulting in the excess being retained in the body. If plaque is clogging the circulation of blood (representing the spirit), does the client have a perceived sense of loss of place and value in the world? How do we support such clients in finding value from within and a place where their talents can be shared in the world?

Once a person takes a statin and the body experiences the side-effects of muscle compromise, then we can consider issues related to the function of muscles—in yogic terms—as the compromised ability to move in the world. We can hold the awareness and access through self-study in *yoga nidra svadhyayam* answers to questions such as who, what, or what belief is limiting movement in the world. Are the clients digesting life fully so that they can freely move in the world? Are they receiving life's sweetness as they flow from householder stage to wisdom-sharer to beneficial presence?

In advanced muscular conditions, the kidneys (in ayurveda and other traditions the home of ancestral fears)^{8,9} may be involved in the response to statin medications. What beliefs may be limiting forward movement and life transitions? In the most chronic stages, the autoimmune system is activated and self-sabotage begins. What might clients learn about these self-attacks?

Yoga Therapy for SAMS

The choice of yoga tools can offer subtle messages for life and well-being.

Asanas will offer the client mobility. They must be done according to the level of pain. Focus on the language of the asanas. Are they warriors holding their truth in *virabhadrasana*, or standing their ground in *tadasana* for their essence and gifts to be offered? Twists may open the door for a 360-degree view of their lives. Lateral movements open the door for new perspectives. They may need

to build a “bridge” from their past to their future. Be creative in allowing them to experience their inner journeys.

If there are bad muscle days, clients can still use the following tools.

Breathing practices and pranayama can help clients consciously affirm the desire to breathe in their life force.

Mudra. *Vayu* (wind) mudra opens the flow of prana in our bodies. It can support moving forward in life. *Ushas* (dawn) mudra balances the hormones, creating inner harmony. *Agni* mudra builds the digestive fire.

Mantra.

Durga mantra, *Om dum Durgaye swaha* (invoking Durga/Kali for protection from negative influences), may protect us from those taking our power.

Om aim hrim klim caumundaiye vicche swaha is a mantra of deep purification that invites Durga/Kali to clear away all the unfavorable influences in our lives.

Om gum Ganapatye swaha opens the door for new, refreshing beginnings by asking Ganesh to awaken the root chakra.

Om Sri Gurave namah is a mantra for bringing in the light to clear away darkness.

Om Ram namah or *Om hrum namah* are mantras to focus concentration on strength and healing in body, mind, and spirit.

When a client who is taking a statin, whether it is prescribed as a precautionary medication or due to the results of a cholesterol test, comes to see a yoga therapist, together the two could explore inner messages. Taking the statin is

supposed to clear out the buildup—but what happens if one has the person start looking at (1) accepting the maturing process, (2) what the client is doing to integrate any life transitions, and (3) how the person may be using food to fill gaps? If the person has experienced muscle aches and pains since taking a statin drug, she or he can talk with the prescribing doctor about switching medications.

Knowing and recognizing the categories of SAMS, yoga therapists can work with their clients to help maintain mobility while accepting the residual pain due to the medication. Utilizing—and fully digesting—information about SAMS is important for any yoga therapist who may be serving the growing population of clients over 40. **YTT**



Asana will offer the client mobility. They must be done according to the level of pain.

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On Post-Lineage Yoga

By Uma Dinsmore-Tuli, as told to Laurie Hyland Robertson

Uma Dinsmore-Tuli, C-IAYT, holds a PhD in communications and a diploma in yoga therapy from the Yoga Biomedical Trust. She draws on years of experience in journalism and education, and as a wife and mother, to create positive learning experiences and high standards in yoga teaching. Since 1999, she has shared yoga nidra with thousands of people in environments ranging from nursery schools, hospitals, and airports to yoga festivals and IAYT's own Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research. Dinsmore-Tuli is the author of several books, including *Yoni Shakti*, which examines the evolution of feminine spiritual authority through yoga and tantra, and is currently at work on a new book, *Nidra Shakti*.

The yoga world continues to grapple with the long-term damages—to both individuals and to institutions—caused by abuses of power, and to consider organizational structures that will enable us to offer transformative teachings with sensitivity and integrity. Here, Dinsmore-Tuli shares her thoughts about moving beyond the constraints of the past that in part enabled exploitative behavior and kept us separate rather than building a strong community of diverse practitioners.

Intuiting the Way

One of the problems with signing up to a particular guru, lineage, or tradition is that they will tell you what to do with the rhythms of your practice and the rhythms of your day. That might suit you for a bit, like when you're 22 and living in India or something—when you've got to get up at 4:00 in the morning—but if you continue to adhere solely to what you're told to do, you can actually cut off your intuitive guidance.

It's subtle, because some people say they will be intuitively drawn to a certain guru or teacher or tradition, but then what I observe is that when people totally sign away all personal responsibility for choosing their practice or they're being told what to do, at that point you can abdicate any responsibility for personal growth, you sign away your intuitive power. That's the deal, isn't it? The guru says, "I know best. I'm the truth, the way, and the light. You sign up with me, and you'll get good stuff." And you *do* get good stuff—you get access to amazing traditions and lineages, but when you sign up like that and you say, "Now I'm your disciple," the role of the disciple is to follow, not to ask what our own intuitive guidance is. In the end, I think a sign of a really positive *guru-shishya* (teacher-disciple) relationship would be that the disciple is encouraged to find the truth within. How often does that happen?

Giving explicit permission to explore and intuit and experiment can be incredibly threatening, though, for two reasons. One is that it's out of most people's comfort zone. Our whole education system and our whole way of work depend upon people not doing what they feel, but doing what they're told. We train children from a very young age about that—"Have a wee now before you get in the car." "I don't need a wee." "Do it now!"—even down to people's defecation and urination rhythms. We're actually taught that we can't trust ourselves. Everything about how we live is teaching us not to trust and that other people know best.

If you turn this around, that's pretty much like turning everything everybody's ever been told upside down. It's quite unsettling,

which makes people a bit fearful—they don't know where to look, because they're always told to look to the teacher or the boss or to ask what's next, to be told what to do. Sometimes when I ask a client how something feels, they say, "I don't know what feels good anymore. I'm so disconnected, I don't know. I can't sleep. I can't eat. I can't defecate."

The second reason I think people can find this idea of permission to travel a more intuitive path to be scary is that they might feel very alone and isolated. It's unfamiliar, because following your intuition is not what you've been taught, and it might make you feel like you're going to be very alone. In fact, I found the opposite. You discover there's lots of people out there who are following their own light.

Empower the Student

I feel fortunate that I've had teachers who have taught that. *Satguru maharaja ki jai* was the chant I learned when I did a structural therapy training with Mukunda Stiles, and we would always chant that. "Satguru" means "like the true teacher." "Maharaja ki jai"—you'd honor that. The idea was that the true teacher was the wisdom in the heart. He'd teach you *OM namah shivaya* and translate that to mean, "With great respect and love, I honor my heart, my inner teacher." It was the best yoga therapy. I'd say, "I don't know about that, Mukunda." He'd say, "You relate the dose to the uncertainty. If you experience uncertainty or confusion, then you repeat, 'With great respect and love, I honor my heart, my inner teacher.' And the less you believe it, the more you have to say it."

I thought it was very powerful. He and other teachers are in the business of empowering people, but it does make people quite uncomfortable. He certainly wasn't the most popular teacher or the most famous celebrity, because he was doing something fairly unusual by empowering people to listen to that teacher in the heart.



I think people sometimes worry that it will isolate them, because if you've been part of a lineage, it's very comforting. It's like family. You all wear the same color clothes, you all sign up to the same guru, you chant the same mantras, and you sing together. All that stuff boosts oxytocin, and everybody feels great. If you're out of it, and everybody ridicules you or tells students not to go to you, then you might feel a bit alone for a while.

New Paradigms

I've been running a yoga camp in Avalon, in Glastonbury, for 13 years. This year the theme of the yoga camp is "New Paradigms for Sharing Ancient Wisdoms." I think that there's an intimate relationship between new paradigms and ancient wisdom. It's not like we even have to create anything new. Rediscovery of the nature—the true nature—of the ancient wisdoms is an agency. It just got confused and packaged. There's a whole "new age" movement with "new this" and "new that" and neotantra and neovedanta and new, new, new. We don't really need anything new at all.

"With great respect and love, I honor my heart, my inner teacher." The less you believe it, the more you have to say it. —Mukunda Stiles

Everybody who practices yoga knows it's old. What I think is important is that in this reclaiming of agency, we've got a new perspective on perhaps the essential origins. Yoga was never invented by anyone. The wisdoms of the practices that we do, they're all about rediscovery. They're all about coming home to yourself. That's always an instruction I give with yoga nidra: "Welcome. Welcome home. Welcome home to yourself." In reclaiming your agency to listen to your own rhythms, you're using maybe slightly different ways than we've done before, just different perspectives, to return to these ancient wisdoms.

I feel I'm sharing fairly old things: breathing practices and asana and pranayama and yoga nidra. We're looking at them in a different way and just asking questions. I don't think it is new; it's just a rediscovery of what was already there. Sometimes, it takes a certain kind of research or a new finding to show that.

I think the new paradigms are actually ways of sharing ancient wisdoms in perhaps the way that they were originally said. I can't imagine the yogis out in the forests with some certification process that depended upon a large institutional hierarchy. No, they were individuals who just said goodbye to all the structures of society, didn't they? They went to live in their caves and in the woods. Then all these hierarchies developed, and the traditions and lineages. That's good—the traditions preserve things. But they're a bit like the packaging, like something that you get something in. Are you going to keep it in the box? No. You're going to take the box apart, recycle the box, and deal with the thing that's in the box. That's what I think about the power of yoga nidra. The active ingredient of all the yoga nidra is in the box. The box just happens to have Such-and-Such's Method™ on the outside. Boxes are very nice to deliver the practice to you, but once you get it, you don't put the box on your altar, do you? No, you do the thing with the practice that's inside the box.

Post-Lineage Is Not Anti-Lineage

I come out and say I'm proudly post-lineage, but I'm able to do that because the term is actually in the title of a recent PhD thesis by Dr. Theodora Wildcroft (wildyoga.co.uk). For the last 3 or 4 years, she's been working on research into post-lineage yoga. She really coined this term.

Theo's research was rooted in grassroots yoga camps. The camp that I run was one of her topics for study. What she was looking at was a dichotomy: There was "commercial" yoga on one side, and then there was "traditional" yoga on the other side, and the two things were separate.

What she did was explore how what she saw in these yoga camps didn't fit into either of those. What we're doing is not for profit. When I talk about yoga festivals, a lot of people in North America go, "I know what you mean. We've got Wanderlust." It's not like any of that. This is grassroots. This is 250 people, some of them living in vans, in a field. If you want hot water, you light a fire. We have saunas, a big bhakti temple, and all that kind of stuff, but what we're doing and have been doing for a long time is sharing every kind of yoga under the sun. We invite everybody. We would have classes with the Ashtangis, Iyengar classes, Restorative classes, Kashmir Yoga, things people have never heard of, Yin Yoga, Feminine Unfolding from Angela Farmer, Scaravelli work, then there'd be traditional people coming from Sivananda.

This particular camp—and she explored others—was a place where it wasn't commercial, and it wasn't really traditional either, because in the morning, you'd have the Ammaji people doing their *aarti* (worship ceremony) that they'd learned in Kerala with the hugging saint, with Ammaji. Then after that would be the people from the Babaji lineage doing some *shiva lingam puja* (ritual for honoring the light of consciousness). In the evening, it would be a community thing and everybody would be singing *kirtan* in all kinds of ways. There would be Celtic yoga, contemplative Druidry. It was the whole thing, and therapeutic yoga fits right into that. It's not commercial and it's not traditional, because to be a yoga therapist, you need to respond to what's there.

Wildcroft did a lot of research about this. She investigated people's practices. She investigated the structures, networks, and communities. She came to the conclusion that all these people—that includes me and a lot of other people—were *post-lineage*. It's not anti-lineage, and it's not no lineage. It's post-lineage. It's characterized quite often by people like me who spent a long time signed up with a particular lineage and learned things, and have come through out the other side. It's often about collaboration. There's a community of knowledge rather than a hierarchy.

Where Does Yoga Therapy Fit?

I really rate Wildcroft's work. It's very intelligent and helpful. In the original formulation, she had yoga therapy on the "commodified" side. I disagreed with that, because I feel that yoga therapy is in its essence post-lineage; most really good yoga therapists have done multiple trainings.

My question to clients is always, "How may I be of service to you today?" I don't care what label is on the box. If I know something from some lineage I learned 20 years ago that's useful, I'll

bring that in. If it looks like what they need is something from some other lineage and those two lineages would actually fight with each other, it doesn't matter. In that moment, you need both of those things present in service of the client. When I got the chance to speak at SYTAR last year, I felt a lot of people would understand this term because it's where many people are with yoga therapy.

I find it fascinating, although not surprising, that when IAYT did its grandparenting of yoga therapists, about 30% of them identified their lineage as either general hatha or "other." There's a real argument for valuing all those different experiences from different places. Although it can be hard to evaluate, and resource-intensive to do so.

Moving Forward...

Avoiding the mistakes of the past involves some hard work. It involves scrutiny. My perspective on it might not be something that everyone shares, but I honestly believe that the structures that held those traditions together are inherently disempowering. Any time you create a top-down structure, pretty much everybody will be enslaved by it. It's the structures that allowed the abuses and scandals and disempowering to continue for so long, because they were endemic to the structure. It's not that the people in it are necessarily bad. They sometimes don't have any choice. That's the structure they've been schooled in, and so if you're schooled in that structure, you're going to disempower people. It's what you've been trained to do.

If we want to change, we have to change the structure from a triangle to a circle. If we work in circle and move toward council leadership and integrity and openness and sharing, then *everybody* is responsible. No one person has all the power, and that is good. I remember when there was a scandal around the tradition that I was involved in, Richard Miller had one of the wisest things to say about it: "To the extent that we give our power away, that is the extent to which we will be disempowered, and it's the extent to which that power will be abused."

Going forward, I see that the way not to make the same mistakes is to hold onto all the precious teachings that we have, but change the nature of the structures that perpetuate them. It involves a lot of people. It's resource- and time-expensive.

You can make change in your own teaching structures. I'm endeavoring with the organization that we run, which is the Nidra Network and a "humble web of empowerment," to establish meth-

ods in the structure of the organization that are all about integrity, accountability. We have trainings allowing people to see the need for this.

That's how we don't make the same mistakes. We just don't work in the same structure any more. Otherwise, if we carry on replicating those hierarchies, we carry on making the same mistakes. It doesn't matter who you put in charge. It'll go bad. Presidents, bishops, heads of yoga organizations, gurus—it doesn't matter who you put up there on that top pinnacle. Even if that person was a saint at the beginning, the structure that's formed underneath them will disempower everybody else.

That's my vision, but it's not easy, because you have to see, *mess* up, deal with how we're completely imbricated in those structures. You don't get PhDs, and master's degrees, and all those kinds of things by not working in the system of the hierarchy. We all trained

to do that. To step out of that and say, "This is about council leadership"—it rocks the boat. We're all in it. It's about respecting not just the traditions, but the individuals who are supposed to be becoming empowered by what they're learning. It's about systems, systems of government. The yoga world has replicated all of the abuses and scandals that are everywhere else, but if we yogis can't sort that out, who can? The process of trying to address the problems is every bit as important as getting a solution.

I think the circle is an important feature for IAYT. It slows things down a bit, because if you get a leader who tells everyone what to do, everyone just follows in lines. It's very easy. I see this opposite system as feminine leader-

ship, honestly, because it's often about being with uncertainty. We don't really know how to prevent making some same mistakes again, but we've got a feeling of the things that weren't good, so let's eradicate them and try something new. We don't know how it's going to work.

It *feels* better, so that's another thing. If you're working with yoga practitioners and people who practice awareness, they're going to say, "I'm sorry. That just doesn't feel good."

We need humble webs of empowerment. **YTT**

An upcoming issue of Yoga Therapy Today will feature more on yoga nidra from Dr. Dinsmore-Tuli (umadinsmoretuli.com). Her post-lineage, seasonally attuned practices may be accessed at www.patreon.com/umadinsmoretuli



The Yoga Therapist's Toolkit

Resources We Love



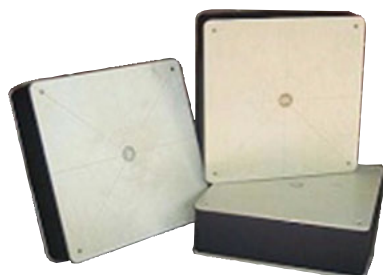
Sandy Eimers, RPh, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500 Hoberman Sphere + Sandbag

A Hoberman sphere, which is jointed to allow its interlocking circles to easily expand and contract, helps to pace the breath and refine the mind's image of the lungs expanding with the inhale and contracting with the exhale. And a 10-pound sandbag placed below the rib cage while resting supine creates tactile resistance during respiration and strengthens the diaphragm.



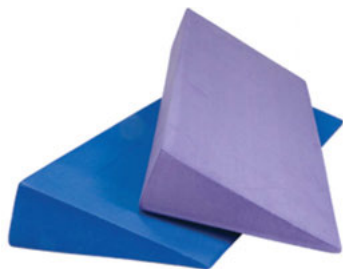
Tina Paul, MS, C-IAYT Evernote

This easy-to-use app organizes your notes and thoughts like a digital filing cabinet. As yoga therapists engaged in continuous learning, we may attend workshops and conferences and often peruse the internet for interesting articles, videos, and courses related to refining our craft. Evernote (evernote.com) helps me save the resulting lists, files, images, reminders, and more and makes them accessible across all of my devices.



Cindy Andison Tuning Board

This balance device improves proprioception and interoception and helps clients develop resilience. The Tuning Board teaches us how to be present to life's chaos without bracing, holding, or creating more tension. We humans are always in motion, and this helps create a balance that does not require standing still but instead enables us to gently go with the flow.



Kanjana Hartshorne, LCSW, C-IAYT Yoga Wedge

I am loving this wedge-shaped foam or cork block. I have compartment syndrome, and after undergoing surgery many of the warrior poses were out for me. Putting the wedge under my back foot makes them possible again. It's also great for my clients with wrist concerns.



Alex Bauermeister, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500 Peanut Ball

This prop is usually used in labor, but it's unexpected and delightful in a yoga therapy session. Its wide shape creates more steadiness than a typical physio ball, and clients love draping their legs over the peanut in *savasana*—in fact, it creates buoyant yet steady support in a lot of poses, offering a platform for exploration of the mental, emotional, and higher-self layers of being.

What are you loving in your clinical practice right now? Send your favorite tool(s)—a prop, a particular meditation, an app, or something else—to ytteeditor@iayt.org for possible inclusion in a future issue! Submissions will be edited for style and clarity. YTT



IAYT congratulates its Member Schools whose yoga therapy training programs have been awarded IAYT accreditation!

To date, 43 Member Schools have programs that have earned this distinction by demonstrating compliance with the rigorous IAYT Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists.

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Breathing Deeply Yoga Therapy Program (USA)

Circle Yoga Shala Yoga Therapy Program (USA)

Comprehensive Yoga Therapy at YogaLife Institute (USA)

East Coast Yoga Therapy Yoga Therapist Training Program (USA)

Essential Yoga Therapy: Therapist Training (USA)

Functional Synergy Therapeutic Yoga Training (CAN)

Houston Yoga & Ayurveda Yoga Therapy (USA)

Integral Yoga Therapy (USA)

International Kundalini Yoga Therapy Professional Training of Guru Ram Das Center for Medicine and Humanology (USA)

Inner Peace Yoga Therapy Certification Program (USA)

Kripalu Professional Yoga Therapist Certification Program (USA)

Kula Kamala Professional Yoga Therapist Certification (USA)

Maryland University of Integrative Health Master of Science in Yoga Therapy (USA)

Niroga Institute Yoga Therapy Specialist Training (USA)

Optimal State of Living Yoga Therapy Program (USA)

Paramanand Institute of Yoga Sciences & Research Yoga Therapy (IND)

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Pranayoga School Yoga and Holistic Health Yoga Therapy and Ayurveda Teacher Training (USA)

Rasa Yoga Cikitsa (USA)

School of Embodied Yoga Therapy Program (CAN)

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Stress Management Center of Marin Yoga Therapist Training (USA)

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Wisdom Body Yoga Therapy Program (ISR)

Wisdom Yoga Institute (AUS)

Yoga Bharati Diploma in Yoga Therapy (USA)

Yoga Nanda Yoga Therapy (USA)

Yoga North Yoga Therapy Certification Program (USA)

Yoga Therapy International Certified Yoga Training Program (CAN)

Yoga Therapy RX LMU (USA)

Yoga Therapy Toronto Yoga Therapist Training (CAN)

Yoga Vaidya in the Yoga Vahini School (IND)

Yoga Well Institute Therapist Training (USA)

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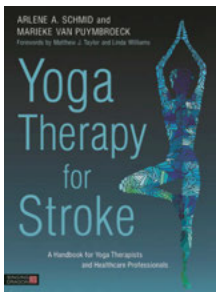
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Yoga Therapy for Stroke: A Handbook for Yoga Therapists and Healthcare Professionals

By Arlene A. Schmid and Marieke
Van Puymbroeck

Singing Dragon, 2018

Review by Helene Couvrette

Having just finished reading *Yoga Therapy for Stroke*, I am left very impressed with how much it covers—and on so many levels—while remaining accessible. The first chapters describe the gamut of residual stroke effects in a digestible format while cogently presenting how yoga therapy can indeed be an asset for stroke survivors.

This book brings forth the complexities of post-stroke life concisely and clearly, making it easy for a range of professionals to integrate yogic practices into their work. It also includes insight into research and the practical applications of yoga therapy that have been used clinically. *Yoga Therapy for Stroke* serves as a resource for my professional practice, offering perspective on the healthcare likely to have been offered to these yoga therapy clients before they arrive at my door. The book also offers yoga educators much to share with students in training programs and workshops. For healthcare workers, a down-to-earth overview of yoga philosophy basics is relevant and inspires hope for better integration of this age-old practice in the healthcare setting.

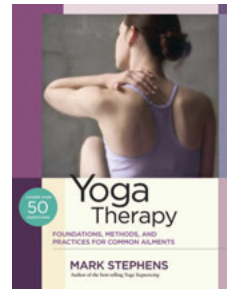
The physical practices are clearly described and well laid out with images, modifications, and options suggested for the range of specific issues with which stroke survivors may be living. The inclusion of Restorative Yoga, meditation practices, and breathing techniques, rounded out with mudras, mantras, and chakras does justice to yogic practice beyond the mat. The downloadable handouts and links for further reading are helpful bonuses.

This accessible read lends itself well to recommendation to clients and their caregivers, including survivors' family members. All of these audiences will gain in knowledge and awareness of the available options that can be brought to treatment planning. Not all clients or their caregivers may feel compelled to know more or practice at home, but those so inclined will find this book a valuable resource.

Case studies from a range of therapist types and experience levels, plus stories and client feedback, demonstrate to the reader how yoga therapy for stroke survivors can make a meaningful difference in their lives. Here, though, is also where the book could have offered more details, including accounts of the assessments of the clients; specific issues they experienced on all levels of the koshas; and what particular plans were applied and why, including how the plans addressed clients' needs across the koshas.

Yoga Therapy for Stroke is a testament to the distance we have come in understanding the potential of the human mind, body, and spirit, even post-stroke, and provides a bridge between yoga and healthcare. Life after a stroke was previously fraught with grim predictions. As I finished the book, I could see brighter outlooks for these patients. Having a stroke is no longer the end of a life as we know it. We now know that there can be quality of life, and more importantly, hope for the future.

Helene Couvrette, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, is certified in Pain Care Yoga and Trauma Sensitive Yoga. She leads 200- and 300-hour yoga teacher training programs focusing on the sciences of the human system and is president of the Montreal International Symposium on Therapeutic Yoga (MISTY).



Yoga Therapy: Foundations, Methods, and Practices for Common Ailments

By Mark Stephens

North Atlantic Books, 2017

Review by Crystal Frazee

This book is a comprehensive manual that brilliantly layers the ancient wisdom of yoga with modern culture to elevate any yoga teacher's or therapist's understanding of current best practice. Stephens guides readers through the evolution of yoga to demonstrate how much of what we do today in classes and private sessions has deviated from yoga's earliest origins and outlines a solid foundation for what is most essential to promote health and healing for ourselves and our students or clients.

The book is organized into six parts. Within those parts, each of the 25 chapters asks many thought-provoking questions, challenging the reader's assumptions and understanding of various concepts.

In Parts 1 and 2, the author examines the origins of modern Western yoga therapy and goes into great depth for each of the 11 "Human Bodymind's Major Systems." Stephens provides anatomic and physiologic overviews and common related ailments, as well as how a balanced yoga lifestyle supports the health of each system. As a physical therapist, I appreciated the way he presents anatomy as far from static and instead guides readers to understand anatomy in motion and to learn about their own musculoskeletal and nervous systems. Each chapter in these sections is well-organized and concludes with a summary to ensure the reader can translate the didactic information to yoga therapy application.

Parts 3 and 4 explore the meaning of yoga therapy and attempt to clarify the scope of practice, how it differs from other healing modalities, and what he sees as the core yoga therapy practices. In Part 3, Stephens presents the various arguments from many sides of this discussion, including the heated topic of licensure and credentialing. Where this book really shines, though, is when it comes to assessment: You'll find a surprising depth of detail regarding tools in various categories like physical asana, doshic balance, breathing and pranayama, and meditation. This section concludes with a guide for creating therapeutic yoga practice treatment plans and implementing them.

Part 5 takes over 250 pages to cover Stephens's yoga therapy approach to healing common conditions, including musculoskeletal, mental health, and reproductive system issues. The asanas suggested for the various ailments are presented with photos, modifications, and detailed instructions.

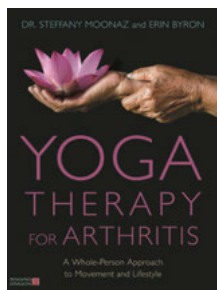
Stephens concludes the book with Part 6, "Epilogue: The Promising Future of Yoga Therapy," where he notes the benefits of

differentiating the overlapping roles of yoga teacher from yoga therapist and speaks to the value of producing high-quality resources to support yoga therapy as a healing modality, such as peer-reviewed articles, studies, and specialty books. He closes with a reminder of yoga's purpose "to reduce suffering, to live more awakened lives, to make life better."

Two sections could have used more detail. The respiratory section went deep into anatomy and common conditions, but did not present respiratory physiology, which is essential for any yoga professional. Although many yoga teachers give instructions for breathing techniques in practice, few truly understand the chemistry involved and how taking "deep" breaths can cause, prolong, or exacerbate many symptoms. Hypocapnia, for example, is a very common condition, and breathing behaviors learned in yoga can contribute to it. The second topic I feel needed to be covered is pelvic-floor anatomy and function, especially as it relates to breathing and as a contributor to many of the common musculoskeletal complaints the yoga professional will encounter. The postpartum recovery section is minimal, and considering that women may be recovering for years following pregnancy and birth, the subject deserves more attention. Basic screening in the subjective and objective sections for pelvic-floor and pressure-regulation deficits would be valuable.

Overall, this well-structured book addresses the current questions and concerns of the modern-day yoga professional. It can be used as a quick reference or read from cover to cover to help yoga therapists deepen their mastery.

Crystal Frazee, DPT, CHWC, C-IAYT, is the creator of the Mindful Pain Relief Method (www.mindfulpainrelief.org), which offers holistic pain management for women facing chronic health challenges. She owns a boutique women's health virtual consultancy and teaches workshops and online programs.



Yoga Therapy for Arthritis: A Whole-Person Approach to Movement and Lifestyle

By Dr. Steffany Moonaz and
Erin Byron

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018

Review by Deborah Norris

Steffany Moonaz, PhD, CMA, MFA, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, and Erin Byron, MA, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, have written a much-needed book on working with arthritis through yoga therapy, intertwining a conventional medical perspective on the treatment of arthritis with the ever-developing role of yoga therapy. The authors are rare gems in their qualifications to shine light on this subject. As a yoga researcher, Moonaz is versed in both the history and application of research in yoga as well as in the growing field of yoga therapy. As a psychotherapist and founder of one of the first internationally accredited yoga therapy training programs, Byron offers an important perspective on the role of yoga as a therapy for arthritis.

The book is organized in three parts, presenting first a conventional medical perspective on arthritis and then continuing in the second section to weave this medical perspective in with an introduction to and overview of yoga philosophy, pragmatic advice gleaned from yogic principles, and testimonials of those with arthritis who have experienced yoga therapy. Practices ranging from simple breathing exercises to mental and energetic techniques and asana are provided throughout the book and in greater detail in the final section. An appendix offers information on how to adapt and modify postures for specific needs.

An important point that the authors make is that "the distinction between yoga classes for high level fitness and yoga therapy for help with managing chronic conditions remain[s] unclear to the general population and even among many health care providers. . . . One woman was even told by her provider . . . that yoga was not safe." The counterarguments given, which explain how yoga can be presented and practiced safely by those with arthritis and give suggestions for doing so, will prove useful for both healthcare providers and those who have been diagnosed with arthritis.

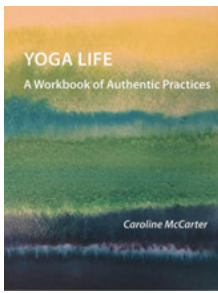
With recent changes in the medical standard of care for the treatment of chronic pain and organizations such as the Mayo Clinic and the Department of Veterans Affairs issuing new medical guidelines recommending the use of nonpharmacologic treatments as first recourse, a thorough book on the use of yoga therapy for arthritis is timely. Moonaz and Byron also provide a brief overview of the research that has led to this evolution in care and made yoga a core medical therapy for chronic pain.

While the authors do not provide hope for a complete cure through either a conventional medical approach or through yoga therapy, they do suggest that quality of life can be greatly enhanced through an appropriately prescribed yoga practice. As someone who recovered 20 years ago from a diagnosis of arthritis by implementing yoga and other self-care practices, I do believe in the power of the many dimensions (limbs) of yoga to help in healing from pain, inflammation, and ultimately the diagnosis of arthritis.

Yoga Therapy for Arthritis is an excellent first step for those beginning along that path and for those who provide whole-body, integrative care for arthritis patients. As described in one of the testimonials: "Yoga has been a success story for me. I hope others will read this and pursue this lifestyle change that has worked so well for me."

Deborah Norris, PhD, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, is a neurobehavioral scientist by training, founder of The Mindfulness Center, and author of In the Flow: Bridging the Science and Practice of Mindfulness. She produces an online meditation teacher training: SOMA—The Science of Mindful Awareness and is editor in chief of Mind-Body Journal.

(Media Reviews continued on next page)



Yoga Life: A Workbook of Authentic Practices

By Caroline McCarter

Yoga RX Publications, 2018

Review by Juko Holiday

In *Yoga Life: A Workbook of Authentic Practices*, Caroline McCarter, a certified yoga therapist in private practice since 1997, provides a valuable tool to help yoga students, teachers, and therapists to deepen their understanding of classical yogic concepts relating to the mind. Informed by a decade of training with A. G., Indra, and Ganesh Mohan, McCarter aims to present yogic philosophy and practice in an accessible way.

The author begins by asking readers to reflect about their state of mind during and after practice. This first reflection grounds the central intention of the book, which is a series of invitations to embody—not just study—concepts that get to the heart of why we practice in the first place. Although the book is dense with information, the focus stays on the reader's experience, and the author beautifully balances defining yogic philosophy with personal and transformational reflections.

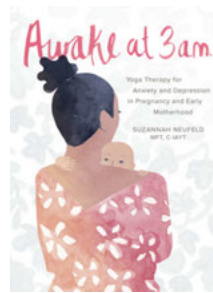
The workbook is divided into four thorough sections. The author first places the mind and how it functions in context, then follows with an exploration of the *vrittis* (five activities of the mind) and the *kleshas* (causes of suffering). The fourth section positions the *yamas* and *niyamas* (ethical principles) as foundational practices for influencing the mind. This atypical positioning of the first two limbs of yoga toward the end was a delightful and refreshing surprise and made this section my favorite part of the book. I found all the exercises useful to return to more than once, and I appreciated the craft the author put into designing questions that could remain fresh and interesting over time.

McCarter concludes her focus on the mind by bringing the reader back to the heart with an invitation at the end of the workbook to practice self-compassion. She also includes illustrations of simple asana and pranayama practices and a Sanskrit glossary with a phonetic pronunciation guide for English speakers.

Missing from this work is attention to placing the Indian roots of these practices in full cultural context. I would have appreciated guidance and reflection on how to maintain and honor the authenticity of these tools as a practitioner in the West.

All in all, this is a great resource for yoga students and teachers looking to deepen their own understanding of yogic concepts of the mind, for designers of yoga teacher and therapy training programs, and for yoga therapists in search of exercises to use with clients.

Juko Holiday PhD, C-IAYT, is a yoga therapist in private practice and owner of Ease Mountain Yoga. She graduated from Brown University and holds an MA in clinical psychology and a doctorate in transpersonal psychology. Read more about her work at jukoholiday.com.



Awake at 3 a.m.: Yoga Therapy for Anxiety and Depression in Early Motherhood

By Suzannah Neufeld, MFT, C-IAYT

Parallax Press, 2018

Review by Rebecca Hackett

Awake at 3 a.m. is the first book that I've seen addressing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) using yoga therapy. It provides tools that are easily and financially accessible to new moms without them having to worry about getting out of the house. It's a wonderful book that all mothers and families can benefit from, as it provides reality-based techniques parents can easily accomplish and add to their day.

Author Suzannah Neufeld provides more than just physical practices, she provides breathing practices, meditation, and techniques to reframe thinking throughout the day. Her book guides the reader to the idea that there is no right and wrong to how one approaches things: There are always options, and a person can choose something else if one thing is not working. The author also goes into what PMADs are, what thoughts and feelings come with them, and what treatment options are available, which can be very helpful to parents who have never learned about PMADs.

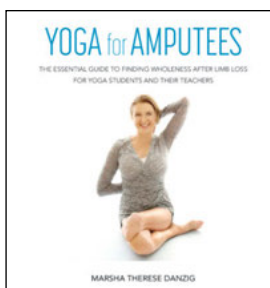
The practices in the book are divided into four sections. The first section focuses on making a plan both for birth and postpartum support. The remaining three are organized almost by where the mothers or parents are in the postpartum journey in regard to thoughts and feelings. I absolutely love that the book offers a section for working with emotions, another for cultivation the self-compassion that is so important for mothers, and then a section for helping them to be more responsive and flexible—thus making it much easier to find what they need based on their current mood. Also, seeing some of those thoughts and feelings written down helps validate what a new mother may be thinking. Pregnancy and early parenthood can be a challenging time, and to have some quick and easy ways to bring yoga into your day is very much needed.

As the mom of a 5-month-old and a 4-year-old, *Awake at 3 a.m.* is a very appropriate book for me to have read, and it has given me helpful tools during these tough postpartum times, guiding me toward what to do when I didn't have the energy to think about it myself.

In a practice where we may feel pressured to have the ability to shift all thinking into positive thinking, Neufeld's book allows mothers to feel the natural intrusive thoughts and to refocus those thoughts in a more positive, less destructive way by offering a tool she calls "mindful rephrasing." For example, Neufeld takes the thought "I'll never feel better" and rephrases it to "I feel pretty awful right now, and it's been a few weeks of this. I am having a really hard time. I need lots of patience, perseverance and support." As a yoga therapist and a parent, this book provided wonderful insight and ways to connect to my yoga and myself throughout the day, such as recognizing "shoulds" and changing them to "coulds," practicing self-compassion statements, doing quick physical practices to move with anxiety or rage, practicing honesty, and even practicing when holding the baby.

Awake at 3 a.m. can be read from front to back or just picked up and turned to a certain section based on the reader's needs. If you are a yoga therapist who has not yet entered parenthood, this book will be incredibly helpful in working with that population. The techniques Suzannah Neufeld shares are easy to use, either for one mother and her family or in a group setting. My copy will certainly be with me as I journey through these postpartum times, and I will also be sharing the wisdom contained within it in my teachings.

Rebecca Hackett, C-IAYT, RPYT, specializes in teaching pre/postnatal yoga and mom and baby yoga. Rebecca also created Therapeutic Postnatal Yoga Services for individuals and small groups.



Yoga for Amputees: The Essential Guide to Finding Wholeness After Limb Loss for Yoga Students and Their Teachers

By Marsha Therese Danzig
Sacred Oak Publishing, 2018
Review by Ann Richardson

Yoga for Amputees provides a useful and descriptive way for amputees to add yoga to their overall health and wellness routines or for yoga therapists to gain more knowledge with this population. Danzig, MEd, C-IAYT, RYT-500, not only uses her own personal experience, which is beautifully illustrated throughout the book, but also that of other amputees who are working through a yoga practice, sharing their own stories, and making yoga more accessible to others.

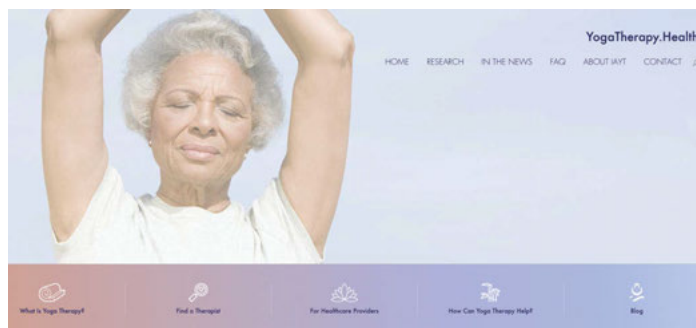
I am sure some who will pick up this book out of curiosity will not know really what yoga is or how it could help amputees. Danzig answers those questions right up front. *Yoga for Amputees* lists a wide variety of key benefits from yoga practice, including many specifically for amputees—like less grappling with prosthetics, better body image, pain management, and more freedom of movement. I love how Danzig brought the royal eight-limbed path to the forefront saying, “Modern yoga has its benefits, but the ancient roots of the Royal Path provide the wings for an amputee to live to full potential.”

There are many practices throughout the book, and midway Danzig starts getting in deeper with more thorough sections that would benefit both amputees and yoga therapists. Included are easy and detailed instructions for many asanas and their variations for each type of amputee. She dives into healing and how yoga can help amputees overcome both physical and emotional pain.

Upon finishing the book, I felt that perhaps it could have been split into two books. One could be specifically for therapists wanting to add this kind of work to their skill sets, and the other for amputees, giving them an even more detailed explanation of how yoga can benefit them. This is also where there could be more stories from yogi-amputees about the ways in which yoga made their lives better. At over 400 pages, it is possible that the book could be a bit overwhelming for an amputee completely unfamiliar to yoga and wanting to try another modality to see if it “works.”

Yoga for Amputees goes above and beyond its subject matter. I am sure that many yoga therapists working with mobility issues and limb loss will find this book a valuable resource that they will turn to again and again in their practices. Truly, Danzig makes a persuasive case for the myriad healing aspects that a bespoke yoga program for amputees can offer.

Ann Richardson, C-IAYT (www.studiobambooyoga.com), has been working with people with mobility issues for over 10 years, including at the U.S. Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Battalion in Portsmouth, Virginia, where she sees those who have suffered visible and non-visible wounds, illness, and injury. **YTT**



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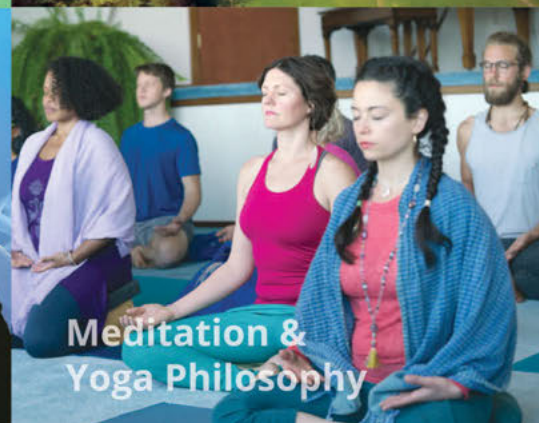
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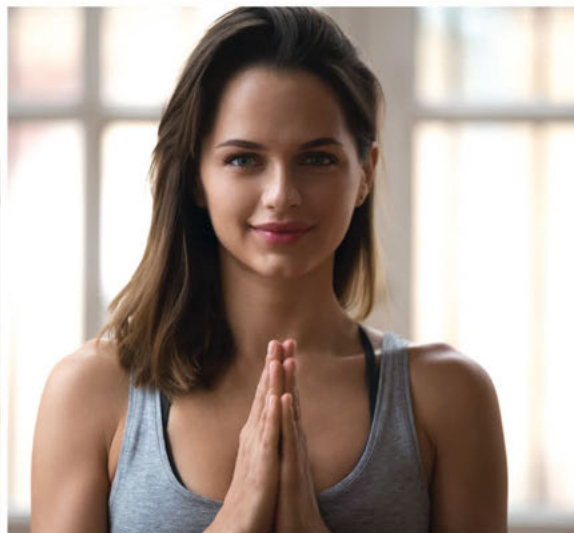
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