

Proceedings of
the Yoga & Psyche
Conference (2014)

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Edited by

Mariana Caplan and Gabriel Axel

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ESTABLISHING YOGA STUDIES

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Abstract

The academic study of yoga has traditionally been found within departments of area studies, religious studies, philosophy, or philology. This paper describes a new approach to yoga studies as a stand-alone discipline. With the rise of interest in the practice of yoga in the 1990s, questions began to arise: Where did yoga originate? What is the relationship between yoga and spirituality? What texts and ideas are central to yoga? The Center for Religion and Spirituality at Loyola Marymount University initiated certificate programs in Yoga Philosophy, Yoga Therapy, and related fields in response to this need, starting in 2002. Due to the strong enrollments, LMU suggested establishing a graduate degree in Yoga Studies. The first class began in fall 2013, pursuing the following course of study: three semesters of Sanskrit language and literature (Bhagavad Gita and Yoga Sutra); three courses on the physical and physiological aspects of yoga; six courses on yoga and spirituality, including classes on Vedanta, Buddhism, Jainism (in India), and Comparative Mysticism; and a comprehensive exam and final research project. By raising the level of education for yoga teachers, the university system stands poised to be of service to a new generation of emerging healers and thought leaders.

In the fall of 2013, Loyola Marymount University initiated the first Master of Arts in Yoga Studies degree program in North America. Though many scientific studies have been conducted during the past several years on the effects of yoga, academic involvement with this emerging discipline had hitherto been confined to largely textual and historical studies within departments of religious studies and philosophy. In contradistinction, the LMU Master of Arts in Yoga Studies requires three parallel areas of study, offering a comprehensive immersion in this

YOGA PSYCHOTHERAPY: THE INTEGRATION OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND ANCIENT YOGIC WISDOM

MARIANA CAPLAN, PHD;
ADRIANA PORTILLO, MA
AND LYNSIE SEELY, MA

Abstract

This article offers a comprehensive perspective on how Western psychological theory and practice, specifically developments in somatic psychology, can be integrated with the scientific insights of yoga in order to produce a more thorough model that seeks to reduce the symptoms of psychological trauma and promote overall well-being. Toward this goal, the article offers a literature review that includes trauma studies, neuroscience, mindfulness, and yoga. By integrating these disciplines, we discover new possibilities for healing psychological trauma in the body through yogic techniques, including physical postures, meditation, and breathing exercises. The article also introduces an overview of the Yoga & Psyche Method, a process that allows practitioners to easily experience and teach this integration to clients and offers five key insights and possibilities that result from this integration. This synthesis of Eastern philosophy and modern scientific research offers a possibility for further developments in psychological theory, research, and effective therapeutic treatments.

Psychology is a field in the making. Whereas many of the wisdom traditions have been developing philosophies and methods to address the great questions facing humanity for thousands of years, Western psychology is just over a hundred years old. Globalization, the increasing interest in Eastern traditions such as yoga, and significant developments in

INTEGRATING YOGA AND PSYCHOTHERAPY TO TREAT DEPRESSION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Depression is one of the most prevalent and debilitating mental health conditions worldwide. Increasingly, yoga has become a complementary alternative treatment of choice for people with depression, particularly those for whom standard psychopharmacological interventions are less effective. While yogic elements such as breathing exercises and mindfulness have become mainstream inclusions in many modern psychotherapeutic theories and practices, there has been less emphasis on the integration of movement, or yoga asana, into traditional treatment plans. Through a review of the literature, this paper will explore the various ways in which the physical practice of yoga has been used to treat depression therapeutically. It will also summarize our current understanding of the mechanisms of depression and how its symptomatology might be addressed using yoga as a therapeutic and spiritual intervention. Limitations to current research methodologies and considerations for clinical practice will also be discussed.

Interest in the use of yoga as a complementary therapy for physical and mental illness has increased steadily over the past 50 years (Forflylow, 2011; Mehta, 2010; Pilkington, 2005; Saeed, 2010; Woodyard, 2011). In the area of mental health and wellness, elements of this complex, holistic system have made their way into individual and group-based treatment approaches; primarily as an adjunctive treatment to more traditional psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions. In mental health circles, yoga is understood as helping to reduce the stress that

YOGA AND ACCEPTANCE
AND COMMITMENT THERAPY
FOR ANXIETY:
A CONCEPTUAL AND APPLIED
INTEGRATION

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Abstract

Yoga can offer great value to psychotherapeutic work. To consider the effectiveness of yoga supplemented with established psychotherapeutic practices, two pilot groups were conducted to explore a combination of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and yoga in a group setting to address the needs of clients who self-identified as having struggled with anxiety. A rationale for the combination of these two approaches and a detailed description of a group combining yoga and ACT are offered here. The results are discussed and offered critical appraisal.

Yoga has a range of positive effects for people experiencing difficulty with their emotions, from depression to anxiety to other issues. However, the research on how yoga is applied and how it could be integrated with more evidence-based forms of care is limited. This initial exploration considers how yoga could be combined with a strongly evidence-based approach to therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, pronounced “act”) (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012), to create a therapy that might capitalize on the substantial overlap between the well-

CONCEPTUALIZING THE UNION OF THE TWELVE-STEP PHILOSOPHY WITH YOGA

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Abstract

Previous research has found positive physiological and psychological benefits for utilizing yoga in the treatment of depression and anxiety. These benefits open the door to an important area of study that examines the use of yoga on other disorders. The important social problem of chemical dependency is commonly related to depression and anxiety. Chemical dependency is therefore an appropriate disorder to investigate using yoga as a value-added addition to treatment. A common tool utilized in the Western world to assist those struggling with chemical dependency is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and its Twelve Steps for Recovery. This paper proposes creating a set of guidelines for embodying the treatment of addiction by utilizing and integrating the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga.

The cultural and societal stresses of daily life are at an all-time high (Fisher & Harrison, 2012). As a result, Americans are suffering economically, spiritually, and socially from the associated pressures, resulting in depression and anxiety (Roberts, Friedman, Brady, Pouget, Tempalski, & Galea, 2010). Since the beginning of recorded history, people who have utilized alcohol and drugs to sedate some of these pressures have struggled with the effects of alcohol and drug abuse (Inaba & Cohen, 2004). It is now understood that alcohol does not reduce tension; rather, it causes distress and has a negative effect on health over time (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIH], 2010). Given the rise of these pressures, substance abuse is likely to increase

CLASSICAL YOGA POSTURES AS A PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION FOR AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATION

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Abstract

Recent neuroscience research supports approaches to psychotherapy that use somatic interventions such as yoga to regulate the autonomic nervous system. This paper describes the importance of a regulated autonomic nervous system for psychological health; presents relevant research results; elucidates key principles of both classic yoga and a somatic approach to psychotherapy; and describes the elements of a “nervous system–informed yoga,” developed as a response to current research and theories.

This paper explores the use of yoga as a somatic intervention in psychotherapy through examining its philosophy and practice and elucidating its value for nervous system regulation. The client’s experience of his or her body, an essential ingredient for healing, has been neglected in the practice of psychotherapy (Ogden, Minton, & Pain, 2006). Pat Ogden, a pioneer in the field and one of the authors of *Trauma and the Body*, cogently states, “Cognitive processing is inextricably linked with our bodies.” Body feelings, or “somatic markers,” influence cognitive decision-making, logic, speed, and context of thought (Damasio, 1994, 1999, p. 41). Ogden et al. (2006) found that the background body sensations that arise during cognitive processing form a biasing substratum that influences the functioning of the individual in all decision-making processes and self-experiences. Studies showing that talk therapies alone have limited success in treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) add further evidence to support this approach (Stoller, Greuel, Cimini, Fowler, & Koomar, 2012).

CLINICAL SYNERGISM
IN THE TREATMENT OF TRAUMA:
YOGA THERAPY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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AND KAUSTHUB DESIKACHAR, PHD

Abstract

Trauma is an event or series of events that overwhelms an individual's resources and often results in an inability to cope with life's challenges. While the seemingly irrational behaviors or reactivity of a traumatized individual is perplexing and is often minimized by the external world, the interior life of a chronically traumatized person is, simply put, maddening chaos. Yoga therapy and psychotherapy are two modalities used to heal trauma. This paper examines the clinical implications of the close collaboration between yoga therapist and psychotherapist to create a novel therapeutic model for each patient that draws upon theory, research, and their respective therapeutic techniques to treat trauma and support treatment plan goals.

When a traumatic event occurs, its energy gets trapped in the physical body and is stored in energy centers near the organs long after the experience is over. Trauma is also mentally stored in the form of emotions and memories that are often buried deep within the unconscious mind. Yoga therapy and psychotherapy are two methods used to heal trauma. Both aim to bring these traumatic experiences out of their hiding places and into the light where they can be recognized, understood, and integrated. Yoga uses movement, breath practices, visualization, sound, and meditations, while psychotherapy uses talk and may include somatic awareness. In both professions the end goal is the same—freedom from suffering.

INTEGRATIVE YOGA THERAPY TO RELIEVE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

APARNA RAMASWAMY, PHD, LCPC

Abstract

The International Association of Yoga Therapy (IAYT) describes yoga therapy as the process of empowering individuals to progress towards health and well being through the application of the philosophy and practice of yoga (Taylor, 2007). This paper draws from Patanjali's seminal text, the *Yoga Sutras*, that describes eight (*ashta anga*, or *ashtanga*) concepts of yoga that interact to generate an immersive experience of meditative calm and oneness (Shastri, 1975). Yoga is approached both as an integrated state of oneness and as practices that cultivate oneness. This paper situates yoga as both a process and its outcome. The article situates the eight core concepts of ashtanga yoga as underpinnings for an integrative healing approach (*Natya* yoga therapy) that is dedicated to creating an integrated and empowered self. *Natya* yoga therapy (NYT) combines traditional practices of Indian dance (*natya*) with practices of yoga and cognitive behavioral psychotherapies to create a meditative inner calm and emotional strength.

The International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT) describes yoga therapy as the process of empowering individuals to progress towards health and well-being through the application of the philosophy and practice of yoga (Taylor, 2007). To clarify and clearly situate yoga as an experience of meditative calm, this paper draws from Patanjali's seminal text of *Yoga Sutras*, which first described eight concepts (*ashtanga*) of yoga that interact to generate an immersive experience of meditative calm and oneness (Shastri, 1975). Yoga refers to a state of integrated oneness and also to practices that create such oneness. Yoga is both a process and its outcome. In the context of psychotherapy, this paper

SOUND AND THE SUBTLE:
TRANSFORMING CONSCIOUSNESS
AND EMOTIONS THROUGH MANTRA
AND RAGA YOGA

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Abstract

The author attempts to bring new light to the affective quality of sound in the human psyche, and examine the ways that sound production, transmission, and transformation can determine emotional, psychological, and physiological states by drawing connections between ancient Vedic sciences and the wisdom of the Yoga of Sound (nada yoga) with the aims of modern models of counseling and psychotherapy. In order to understand the value of the most current yogic practices based on sound, the focus will be on mantra and raga singing, and defining and describing how these vocal arts transform consciousness and emotional states by enhancing the sensibility of the subtle in the mind and the body of the practitioner. The paper yields integrative insights and valuable possibilities when the roles of the yoga practitioner and the therapist inform each other through the intentional use of sound to assist a person heal and grow: to enrich inner work; to enhance trust and inner serenity, flexibility, and balance; to build awareness and emotional stability; and to cultivate devotion, discipline, and compassion. The value of sound and the experience of deep listening in human healing is an arena that has long been overlooked by many therapeutic theories and by many practicing therapists. The integration of the subtle qualities of sound can be

especially appreciated in mainstream Western cultures that often have noticeable difficulties handling silence. It is on the horizon of the human potential models that the evolving collaboration—between the yogis of sound and the therapists of the psyche—will lead to the refinement of the quality of life and the competence of life-service. In time, this collaboration includes the aim that yogis and therapists become better listeners.

Sound as Nada Brahma: The Creator

Real music is not for wealth, not for honors. It is one kind of yoga, a path for realization and salvation to purify your mind and heart and give you longevity. (Ali Akbar Khan, cited in Ali Akbar College of Music, 2013)

Sound as vibration has the ability to permeate all things. Sound originates when molecules vibrate within space. We live in space, breathe air, receive energy from the sun and the earth at every moment, and yet, the awareness of the essential relationship with these primal elements only happens during heightened states of consciousness, when we become sensitive to the gross and subtle dimensions of these essentials. Sound travels through us, activating our bodies and our imagination and modulating our mood in the process. Our brain connects and processes sound as information. Everything we do, think, sense, and feel carries a vibrational frequency that creates and can change our circumstance at every moment. The condition of the person, the setting, and the nature of the sound delivered are variables to consider.

The most ancient cultures on the planet believed that material reality is the manifestation of primordial vibration. The Bible (John 1:1) teaches, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Early and contemporary spiritual traditions, the mystical experiences of sages and shamans, and scientists alike propose that vibration (spandam, the first sound) is the beginning of all creation. Both the material and the absolute realities are nothing but pulsations and at every level there is the sound component of the universe. Through the finesse of their yogic practices and meditation, the sages as well as the scientists distilled the microscopic and molecular stratus of sound in detailed scales. The ancient Bön and Dzogchen teachings, which predate Buddhism in Tibet, also state that sound is in the basis of all manifestation. In a newsletter of the International Dzogchen Community, Costantino Albini (1996) writes:

EURO-HINDUISM IN AMERICA

STUART SOVATSKY

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ON *EASTERN RELIGION* (2004)

In Puri, India, each summer for thousands of years, an idol of *Jagannatha* (*Krishna* as Lord of the Universe) that purportedly bears the tooth-relic of Buddha is installed onto a wooden cart three stories tall and weighing some sixty-five tons, and is then drawn through the streets for three days as millions ecstatically cheer it by. Known as the *Ratha-yatra* (Chariot Festival), this event is second only to the *Kumbha-mela* (Great Gathering of Yogis, sixteen million strong in 2001) among the largest ritual gatherings in the world.

The unpredictable stops and out-of-control lurches (created by intentionally uneven wheels) of this mammoth, rumbling cart are meant to engender delights of surprise and breathless awe, all understood as moods of worship befitting the (ever-present) moment in which the Lord Krishna manifests as the entire (vibration, living) Universe. The incompletely-carved idol of a dramatically wide-eyed God portrays Being and Consciousness as constantly evolving and embracing of all human strivings, differences, and imperfections. Thus, mixed into their prayers, devotees hurl jibes as the cart passes by, deepening their intimacy with *Jagannatha*. At the conclusion, this and two other ritual carts and their passenger Deities are disassembled and the tons of wood sold as sacred relics or used to fuel cooking stoves that will feed the devotees over the next nine months.

We derive the English term *juggernaut* from the whole affair, meaning a wonderful, world-shaking enterprise that gets wildly beyond human conventionalities and control as, reordering everything in its wake, it heads unstoppably toward its (hopefully beneficent) goal. In the Hindu context of reincarnation and over the evolutionary course of hundreds of centuries or *yugas*, *Jagannatha*'s goal is nothing less than the moment-to-moment vibrational quickening of every being in the Universe to progressively, yet