



Restorative Yoga

Trauma & Restorative Yoga

Restorative Yoga is perhaps the most appropriate Asana style for trauma recovery, mental health, and the therapeutic container, as it allows the body to recalibrate its original frequency. Trauma, and mental dis-orders, are often responsible for altering the balance between our cells, tissues, organs, and systems - we feel disconnected, and our Prana flow becomes deficient in places and excess in other areas. For example, in anxiety, we often feel so much energy in the head, but deficient energy in the heart and lower body. In depression, we feel heaviness in the hips and back, but no energy in the third eye. *Restoring* the flow of Prana through Asana-based stillness is an extremely effective way to open the flow of Prana, whilst not putting too much pressure on the body to heal.

When our body has experienced long term chronic stress, cortisol levels are elevated, meaning our body has essentially adapted on a physiological level to live in a highly reactive state. This is problematic for a variety of reasons, namely we will eventually notice low energy, low immunity, and low frequency mindset, but also we may eventually exhaust the cortisol production of our endocrine system resulting in 'burnout' or exhaustion. This is a debilitating condition which requires months, or even years, of serious work to recover from. If your client has been dealing with long term stress it is vital you assist them as quickly as possible to

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reduce their stress to avoid this. Whilst you may not be able to change their outside world, it is actually the perception of stress that triggers our hormonal changes. Restorative Yoga practiced in a quiet, safe space with the use of appropriate sounds (singing bowls or chants, for example), aromatherapy, healing touch, acupuncture and guided meditation, will help to recalibrate the body's nervous system so even if the outside world is still stressful, their body won't be as reactive.

When we think of yoga particularly in the West it is often misrepresented as a physically based form of exercise. With the ever-growing popularity of yang styles of yoga, the holistic traditions of the practice have been lost along the way. Recently, however, practices such as Restorative Yoga and Yin Yoga are rapidly becoming more popular in the West as the need for stress reduction and life balance has become so great. It is an incredible step for someone with terminal illness, stress or someone who is of an elderly age to even approach a yoga practice, so when they do, as a yoga therapist, you have the most powerful opportunity to share some of the deeper principles of yoga to people who often need it the most.

When someone approaches you with a specific condition or phase of life, we must drop our technical, logical mind and instead open the space for this person to just 'be'. Allow your client into a space without fear or judgement. There are many people already telling them what is good, bad, right and wrong so when it comes to healing, it is about acknowledging, owning and being. Be there to listen. Offer spiritual advice and then follow your intuitive self to help guide your client through this journey. Remember your client is the only one who can heal themselves and it's important that you bring them into a place of complete self-power and belief, knowing that for some healing means dying.

We, as yoga therapists, can assist someone to turn what may be a practice for one hour a day into a complete holistic way of life. The miracle of the yoga practice will not occur with you beside them - the true test will come when your client leaves your teachings and applies what they have learnt into their own self practice and daily life.

ILLNESS & AGEING

With the great support of many doctors we are seeing an increased amount of people approaching the practice of yoga to help manage many illnesses.

Within each illness comes specific conditions so great they can't be listed. It's important that when a client approaches you with a specific condition that you are honest about your experience and what you can offer them. Do research on your client's condition, yet be mindful that often these are the people who are often focused on external ways of healing (because that is all they know). One of your jobs as a yoga therapist and holistic healer is to offer your client the space to explore other parts of themselves such as their emotions/feelings and belief systems. Work from the inside out.

Offer restorative yoga poses that will help your client open what potentially are parts of themselves that have deeply stored emotion. Asana is a wonderful way to help people open up. Keep your client on the floor (grounded, supported, comfortable and safe) and whilst they are in these positions begin to help with emotional release through yoga nidra (guided systematic relaxation of each body part) and breath focus. You may even find that this is enough for your client to open up and this is where the talking/counselling can begin (refer back to your counselling guide from module 1). Again be intuitive, start off slowly and you will know how far you can comfortably take this dialogue. Getting people to relax and speak combined with the position of the body and flow of the breath is a great mixture for deep emotional release. Always remember that people living with a condition and ageing often feel like their body is failing them. It is our job as yoga therapists to get them to understand that they are more than just their physical bodies!

Like all people living with illness, it's about bringing a sense peace to surround something they feel out of control with. Rather than a discipline of more and more, it can be the discipline of less and less, a non-obsessive daily practice.

Below are just some of the common illnesses you will come across with very brief descriptions of symptoms and experiences:

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)

People with CFS suffer from profound fatigue that no amount of sleep can relieve. They also have any number of other symptoms, including weakness, muscle pain, impaired memory or mental concentration, insomnia, and post-exertion fatigue that can last more than 24 hours.

In addition to being debilitating, CFS can be a frustrating disorder to diagnose. A decade or so ago, when doctors knew little about CFS, just getting a diagnosis could in itself be an exercise in aggravation. Some doctors would chalk up the symptoms as psychosomatic or a result of depression.

Research shows that mild exercise can help people with CFS recover their strength. Yoga's gentle, restorative poses increase circulation and oxygen flow - keys to healing - without irritating the body. (Raising heart rate and blood pressure and creating more lactic acid in more rigorous forms of exercise can trigger a worsening of symptoms.) The body responds to gentleness. What's important is to make space for energy to flow within the body and open the heart. You can do all the 'right' restorative poses, but if you see the poses as a way to 'fix' the body rather than a way to take you to a state of compassionate acceptance, it's difficult to receive the healing yoga can bring.

A person with CFS struggles with depleted energy, and yoga helps restore energy to the fatigued body, allowing the cells, senses, and nerves to quiet down.

Patanjali says if we can sit quietly with our bodies for a while, we grow in our capacity to be. For people who have CFS, it can be a gift to learn how to remain in a place for a longer period of time. Life is always flowing through us, even when we're not moving outwardly. Being still is an opportunity to listen to the many things the body has to say. From a personal perspective through many healing sessions and yoga privates, I feel CFS is a result of the Crown Chakra being closed down to the degree that the person has lost touch with their spirit. As yoga cultivates this reconnection to a person's Higher Self, healing can naturally occur. Those with CFS also seem to benefit from being reminded that they have full permission to live the life their heart and soul yearns for as often trying to fit into to the mainstream 'societal box' causes deep and lasting fatigue.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Some of the symptoms Yoga directly addresses for people with MS are: fatigue and heat intolerance; numbness in the limbs and loss of coordination; and loss of flexibility and balance. Fatigue and heat intolerance appear to be the most limiting factors to MS students. To counter

these limitations, students learn to master the breath and practice restorative postures. Both techniques cool the body and calm the nervous system. Simple breathing techniques will help calm and quiet the nervous system. It's been observed that heat, stress, and tension can cause temporary worsening of MS symptoms, so keep the pace of practice relaxed but focused.

MS can also result in a daily battle with numbness of the arms and legs, muscle spasms, and loss of coordination. The system of yoga emphasizes stretching and breathing, which can release tension and improve circulation and body awareness. It can also facilitate harmony between the muscular and nervous systems of the body. Lots of supine postures with assistance from the wall and chairs can be effective.

Cancer

Lots of healing techniques with cancer clients will be grounded in theories of stress management. As we know yoga postures, breathing exercises and meditation can reduce stress, promote healing and enhance quality of life for students living with cancer. As yoga therapists we can offer alternative possibilities for a client struggling to survive. Instead of being stuck with a few grim options, in the strange and frightening territory where people find themselves suddenly exiled at diagnosis, we can develop some self-empowering ways to meet and live with illness.

It is in this space that we offer the student time to learn and work with the other parts of themselves such as their senses and intuition to help overcome pain and sorrow. Restorative Yoga postures are also very effective in helping to increase the flow of energy into particular areas that maybe holding large blockages. Just as the yoga postures were traditionally intended when we release tension in the body, energy can flow freely allowing the student to feel a sense of wellbeing and balance not only through the body, but the mind and spirit.

Not only does healing require us to slow down it also, at times, requires us to be completely still. This, for many people living with cancer, can be the scariest and most confronting part. The mind's ability to dwell in the future and conjure up dark possibilities is incredible and often that is exactly where their mind will be taking them. Worrying, assuming, predicting..the list goes on and will

continue to go on to the point where they are not only living with cancer but also with chronic stress. Chronic stress depresses the function of the natural and protective 'healing cells' which can leaving the person more vulnerable to disease.

So if your client wants to lie on the floor for your entire session, let them. Just allowing them to be in a healing space will have incredible effects on the body and mind.

As a yoga therapist the practice of empathy is incredibly important. Just imagine *if* cancer is detected in your body - instantly your past and future flashes before you. Then, in quick succession, you may prepare to undergo surgery and are given a debilitating course of chemotherapy and/or radiation or for some perhaps maybe a time limit on life! What could be more frightening?

In these cases it's easier for both the client and therapist to move into panic mode but remember for every heartbreaking story comes a miracle. The quality of your thoughts will determine the quality of your life. How we view the cancer, the treatments, and ourselves is very important to healing. Chemotherapy is typically considered a poison that kills cancer cells and taking a poison is a frightening concept. The more we talk about something as negative, the more our body sets itself up to reject it. Advise clients who elect to undergo chemotherapy to adopt an attitude of ahimsa and meditate on chemotherapy as "nectar that helps the body rid itself of what it doesn't want." This can help people heal and not be so adversely affected by side effects.

Breathing (pranayama) practice is perhaps the most vital part of what you can teach a client with cancer. Think about when you're stressed or frightened, the first thing to go is the breath – either your breath is short and shallow or you are holding your breath completely. When we breathe effectively we promote the flow of prana – life force. Even if clients can't do postures, breathing practice will bring immense benefit.

The best pranayama practices for cancer patients are the simplest ones; this is not the time for anything complicated or for breath retention (kumbhaka). Too many people have been holding their breath all their lives.

With cancer and chemotherapy, the body is quite polluted. You're putting in industrial-strength toxins. A very simple way to help the body's natural cleansing system is to put more oxygen in it,

because oxygen goes into the bloodstream and helps eliminate toxins. It will also help to alleviate anxiety and stress and help people connect with the spiritual self. Think of the breath as the magical pathway that links us from the external to the internal. A tool we have available to us at any given moment of our life.

You can also do a beautiful combination of breathing and visualisation - start at the base of the spine. Inhale and visualise a light moving up the back, vertebra by vertebra; and as you exhale, see the light coming down the front of the spine; and when it reaches the level of where the cancer is stored see it be surrounded by light and love to the point where it slowly starts to dissolve...

Meditation is also a crucial dimension of yoga for people living with cancer. For people dealing with life-threatening illness, with all the psychological and emotional havoc that bombards them, concentration (dharana) and meditation (dhyana) can offer a method to quiet the terrified voices and preoccupations.

Control of the mind in meditation can lead from wanting what we cannot have, from craving, grieving, and being unhappy, to just arriving in this moment, where we may experience feelings of peace, clarity, contentment and acceptance. Formal seated meditation can be incredibly confronting and intense for beginners or for people with illness so always remember to offer different forms of meditation to begin.

The physical benefits of yoga seem obvious to a cancer patient. Range of motion, flexibility, strength, relaxation, and a sense of bodily well-being are enhanced by practicing the postures. But there is an additional, more mystical, benefit of yoga – the essential nature of one's being - a stillness; a sense of unity with all things.

With a skilled and sensitive teacher in a safe environment, yoga can give us that gift. It can begin to create an inner environment that prepares the ground for healing. It is as if, when we clear away the mental debris through yoga and meditation, our being breathes a sigh of relief, and the residual energy alive in us is allowed to grow and flourish. We empower this most vital and elemental part of ourselves when we hold still, when we pay attention. Some would call this process spiritual. All of us, whatever our beliefs, can recognise this state of grace, this moment of freedom. Yoga Therapists can show us how to cultivate this healing condition, give us the

physical and mental tools, even when we are gravely ill, to access our deepest, most sustainable energy.

One of our primary Yamas is that of Ahimsa (non-violence). Ahimsa can teach people with illness to treat their bodies with love, which can be extremely therapeutic for patients who feel betrayed or repulsed by affected body parts. Yoga reminds people that regardless of whatever's been cut out or scarred, on a subtle level they are still whole.

Some clients with cancer will approach you to assist in healing their cancer through natural therapies only and may elect not to undergo chemotherapy. This can be both an exciting and challenging undertaking, but one that is certainly worth doing. You are not responsible for the outcome for your client and as such, any yoga and healing therapies you provide can only be regarded as healing and being a conduit for Higher Energy.

Always remember, your client knows their truth and it is your job to support this regardless of your personal beliefs about whether someone chooses the medical or alternative pathway to improve their health.

Diabetes

It's important to know if a client comes to a yoga therapy session with diabetes you understand the extent of the disease. Enquire whether they need to be monitored or perhaps have food near by or even when their blood sugar drops they move into an almost comatose state and you're not mistaking them to be in a relaxed state. It is incredibly important to communicate with your student and get to know their needs. Yoga can help manage Diabetes by:

- Rejuvenating pancreatic cells – Yoga postures that aid relaxation stretch the pancreas, which can stimulate the production of insulin-producing beta cells.
- Exercising the muscles – like other forms of exercise, yoga increases glucose uptake by muscular cells, which in turn, helps to lower blood sugar levels, improve circulation and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Promoting weight loss – exercising through yoga can reduce weight and improve weight control, both of which are essential for protecting against conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease, as well as diabetes management.

- Improving mental attitude – Regular yoga practice can help to focus the mind and create the right mental approach to dealing with diabetes.

Menopause

Here are descriptions of the most common symptoms and specific recommendations for helping manage them.

Hot Flush: In these instances incorporate more cooling and restorative poses. Any gripping or tension in the body can make hot flashes worse, so using props such as bolsters, blankets, and blocks to help support the whole body is a good idea. Placing the head on a bolster or chair during forward bends, for example, helps calm the brain and relax the nerves. Supported reclining poses can also help promote complete relaxation. Supta Baddha Konasana, for instance, allows the abdomen to soften and any tightness in the chest and belly to release.

Anxiety, Irritability, and Insomnia: When a person is under stress, the sympathetic nervous system responds by accelerating the heart rate, slowing down the muscles of the digestive tract, and increasing blood circulation to the brain to fight the stressor.

Once the stress dissipates, the parasympathetic nervous system responds by doing just the opposite—slowing the heart rate back to normal, stimulating the smooth muscles of the digestive tract, and bringing the body's systems back into balance.

When the body is under continual stress, the sympathetic nervous system and the adrenals—which manufacture stress—fighting hormones along with the male hormones that get converted into estrogen—can get stuck in overdrive.

If insomnia is a problem, inversions can sometimes help, because they ground the body's energy and burn off excess anxiety. When followed by restorative postures, they encourage a deep state of rest.

Fatigue: One of the most common symptoms. Gentle supported backbends encourage the chest and the heart to open and often bring renewed energy, determination, and joy. Another great pose is Supta Baddha Konasana – opens the chest, improves respiration and circulation, and helps lift the spirit while completely supporting the body.

Depression and Mood Swings: For many women menopause can signal the end of their youth. Long periods of fatigue, coupled with a melancholy attitude or a sense that the life they once knew is now over, can trigger bouts of depression. Too much progesterone (or a drastic drop in estrogen) can also contribute to everything from a bad case of the blues to severe clinical depression.

Supported backbends are great. They stimulate the adrenals and massage them into action. Also, the heart and lungs open and take in more oxygen. Chest-expanding poses energise the body by improving respiration and circulation, and thus counter feelings of depression. And many yogis have discovered that inversions, such as Sarvangasana, can help improve a depressed mood. By turning everything upside down, inversions influence your emotional being in a positive way – assisting you to look at things from a different perspective.

Cardiovascular disease/stroke recovery

Anything that works your muscles is good for your heart and blood vessels. Activity also helps muscles become more sensitive to insulin, which is important for controlling blood sugar and deep breathing is a great way to calm the nervous system. But be mindful yoga does not have to be fast, or intense in any way to get full benefits. Instead employ the mantra “slowly, slowly”.

Possible benefits

- reduces high blood pressure
- improves symptoms of heart failure
- eases palpitations
- enhances cardiac rehabilitation
- lowers cardiovascular risk factors such as cholesterol levels, blood sugar, and stress hormones
- improves balance, reduce falls, eases arthritis, and improves breathing for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

TERMINAL ILLNESS & DEATH

This is a journey not only for this person but also for the people closest to them as well as you as a teacher.

SAVASANA is another pose that is lost in translation. 'Sava' means corpse and is can also called Mrtasana which 'mrta' means death. No matter what yoga class/practice we do we always finish with Savasana. But why? Says no one ever! Yoga means to unite with God/Divine essence and one path to ultimate union with God is death. So in reality when we practice Savasana at the end of class we are preparing our transition and ultimately the unity between ourselves and Universal Consciousness (God).

It is debated that we are the only creatures on earth who know we are going to die so why do we live as if we never will? Why do we avoid it within ourselves and with the people closest to us. Every moment and every day we are closer to death. Since you were born you began to die. This is nothing to be feared for the true yogi.

A true yogi will stare death in the face with an open heart. You feel a sense of aliveness as you begin the ultimate unity with the Divine. You release the layers of fear and desire that bind you to your ego.

When one really faces that death can take you at any moment, one is faced with the big questions in life. Did I live a life that I loved? Did I do everything I said I wanted to? Did I give all I could? Did I make the right choices? We often hear the stories of explorers of the infinite and people who had been determined clinically dead for a period or time or what seemed like a miracle been given a second chance. They looked death in the face and experienced the pain of not living the life they wanted and have come back living the life of their dreams forgetting their small fears and lustful desires. Mastery over death is the true lesson of Savasana.

The more we master and face death in this life, the more alive we become. Giving up our beliefs is the single most terrifying thing that a human can face. And if you think you are doing it and you are not afraid, you are fooling yourself. Fear is a necessary stage in self-discovery. The experience of yoga in a sense feels like physical death. The only way you can unite with the whole is to die to the separate self.

Working with a person who is terminally ill or passing of natural age can be the most incredible journey for both involved. Believe in your ability to help heal. You will go through all layers of fear and what death represents to them. This is a time of acceptance of 'what is' and letting go/releasing past regrets to allow the spirit an easy transition during this time.

Some of the most amazing recounts of our life come to us right at the end of our days. It is quite common for people to go into detailed stories of their life experiences both in what they did and wish they did. At coming to the end of the human journey all the suppressed emotion begins to rise - Taken from the book titled Top 5 regrets of the Dying by Bronnie Ware – you will find an interesting insight into those dearly departing -

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

"This was the most common regret of all. When people realise that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it."

2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard.

"This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship. Women also spoke of this regret, but as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. All of the men I nursed deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence."

3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.

"Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming. Many developed illnesses relating to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result."

4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.

"Often they would not truly realise the full benefits of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down. Many had become so caught up in their own lives that

they had let golden friendships slip by over the years. There were many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying."

5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

"This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realise until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called 'comfort' of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to their selves, that they were content, when deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again."

MODERN DAY STRESS, ANXIETY, DEPRESSION & ADDICTION

Modern day stress

In modern day our idea of bringing happiness into our life is to buy it! This has now created an epidemic of people experiencing what I call the "never having enough/I'm not enough Syndrome". Through the coming generations the pressures of the Western world are getting greater and greater. We have lost ourselves in external desires - the exact opposite of what will allow us to experience true sustainable joy in our lives. It is often perceived that the more we have the happier we are. We get ourselves into situations where we often say "I'll be happy when I have this" or "I'll be happy after I have done this". The truth is you won't because there will always be something else for you to acquire. It is in this space as a teacher that we not only assist in the management of stress, anxiety, depression & addiction but we plant the seeds of the true essence. Getting our client to acknowledge that they are more than just their physical bodies, minds and egos is no easy task but with slow sowing, love and care a transformation can begin to take place. I often ask, 'What is it that you are searching for in your life that brings you to this point of stress?' Quite often the words 'peace, happiness, balance, contentment, and love' will rise. We are so used to looking to the external with more and more, faster and faster, buy this and buy that and when we continue to accumulate "clutter" externally and it continues to take us further and further away from the exact thing we are seeking. People are screaming for help and it is generally those who

turn to addiction to take them away from this misery they feel in day to day life. Remember the more clutter you observe on the external the more it reflects the clutter within.

Anxiety & Depression

Often people with any sort of anxiety or depression, who goes to the doctor, will generally be prescribed anti-depressants. This implements the belief that only something external can assist them - the quickest method of draining self-power anyone can experience. This is an opportunity to bring people back into a place of self-empowerment and all aspects of the yoga path can assist.

For clients who are open to them, bhakti practices such as prayer, chanting, and devotional singing may be highly therapeutic for anxiety. In the longer term, meditation and self-study (*svadhyaya*) offer the hope of addressing the deeper causes of the problem. Through meditation perhaps more than any other yogic tool, you start to see how busy your mind is, and you gain insight into some of the tricks that it plays. Many people may not realise how repetitive thoughts, of which they are usually barely aware, may be fuelling their worries. Getting your clients to start to see this pattern clearly is often the first step to bringing it under greater control.

Meditation can be quite confronting for people with anxiety, however, it can be gently approached through asana – instead of getting people to ‘think’ about ‘doing’ the postures get the students to ‘feel’ and ‘be’ within the posture (moving meditation). This will also help reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure and create easing respiration.

Empower your client when the anxiety and fears reappear to feel it as energy and then choose what they wish to do with it? Do they want to shift it by breathing into it? Or would you prefer to hold onto it (by blocking the flow)? Their choice (free-will). It sounds like a paradox that choosing to shift anxiety means going deeper into the feeling of it, yet, this is precisely how healing works. Only by feeling and embracing our darkness, can we shine the light of awareness on what is blocked, thereby removing the darkness.

Keep breathing techniques simple. The simpler, the better, too much information can be overwhelming for people who are already feeling overwhelmed. Appropriate pranayama techniques include:

Maharaja Pranayama

Nadi Shodhan Pranayama (Alternate Nostril Breathing) – effective in releasing stress from the system and balancing the left and right hemispheres of the brain as well as balancing the feminine and masculine energy.

Bhramari Pranayama (Bee Breath) – this is a practice of closing off the ear with your index fingers and creating a high pitch hum (like a bee sound) – the effects are incredible in assisting the calming of an agitated mind (also great to use when you have a headache or migraine).

Another way to help is getting your client to understand and apply traditional yoga philosophy into their life;

Knowing and applying the Yamas and Niyamas in daily life, which speak of some simple yet profound principles of yoga, can be the secret to happy and healthy living. For instance, the Santosha principle (niyama) teaches the value of contentment. The Aprigraha principle can help us overcome greediness or the desire to keep possessing more, which can be a reason for stress and anxiety. Also, the Saucha principle talks about cleanliness of the mind and body. Ahimsa teaches us that of non-violence particularly toward one's self and Ishavara- pranidhana teaches us the strength of surrender.

The yamas and niyamas of yoga will also help us eat nutritious food and live a healthy lifestyle which greatly helps to overcome anxiety and stress.

Discuss the impermanence of the world and material possession. When this realization sets in that everything around us is temporary and would change, we become relaxed and settled from within. A feeling of 'this too shall pass' arises in us and frees us from anxiety.

Contributing factors to modern day stress & anxiety

Accountability

A lot of people have already reached almost breaking point when they open themselves up to perhaps what is considered an 'alternative' way of life. As we grow and continue through life so

do our responsibilities. You've gone from being a child to an adult in the blink of an eye and then all of a sudden you are accountable for the bills, mortgage/rent as well as possibly being a husband/wife/partner and father/mother/pet owner.

All of sudden it's not about you anymore and for some people it can put them in high levels of not only stress but grief particularly if they have ended of in a situation that is undesired.

Social Pressures

Comparing creates immense suffering! And don't we know it - no one is immune to their surroundings. When the spirit is weakened it's easy to get swept up in a 'following' or what we perceive to be a right or wrong way to live. We become our hardest judge and just because everyone else is doing this or that, we feel we have to as well. What is right for one person may not be right for another. The Universe never intended us to all live the same life, the same way at the same time. There is no room for growth or adventure or explorations which will then again continue to weaken the spirit and create a life filled with misery. Life is a loved filled adventure we are all unique expressions of life - our journey should reflect that. Row your own boat. Look inward for your motivation.

High Pressure Jobs

One of the most common things we hear people say is that they hate their jobs. It is also very common for us to spend more time working than we do living. This creates stress and depression on every layer of one's being. Not only are people suppressed creatively they also live a life and work to constantly please others. Constantly trying to prove themselves in fear of losing their jobs or getting a promotion. But why do we do this? The Dalai Lama once said when asked what surprised him most about humanity, he responded –

“Man, because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; being the result he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die and then dies never having really lived”

Regret

'I wish I did this, I wish I did that'! A life filled with regret is not a life lived. There is no such thing as a mistake and this is where a high level of trust comes in. We come to a point where we trust that whatever happened to us throughout our life – the experiences, the situations, the highs and the lows all happened to us for a reason – to contribute to the evolution of the True Self, the spirit. Without challenges or so called 'regrets' we would never grow and just remain stagnant. You would not be the person you are today without going through all that you have and when you reflect on the past it's usually in a different state of awareness. See the light in the darkness. The blessings in disguise. We trust that at any given moment we are exactly where we are meant to be. And when we let go of the need to control situations that are completely out of our control we can let the love in. There is room for forgiveness, peace and clarity. Look back with gratitude.

Balancing factors

Choice – Embrace your choices

As a yoga therapist, it's not about us getting our client to undo what they feel they have 'done' - instead bring them into a place of self-power and acceptance of the journey that they are on. It's also about acknowledging that at any given moment we do have a choice. The way we perceive our situations will determine the quality of them. It is the same with our thoughts - what we choose to attach to will determine the quality of our life. No one else has that power over you. One of the greatest gifts we have been given as a human in this life is that of choice. Change your perspective you can change your life.

Purpose & meaning – doing something beyond yourself

Give your life purpose and meaning by taking time to see the bigger picture. What is your purpose in this life? For some it will be to care for a child in this life, for some it will be to help feed the poor, for some it may be going to the local shelter and washing the dogs - it doesn't matter! All that matters is what's true for you and what gives you purpose! Prioritise because these are the things that will create not only a lasting effect and love within yourself but also for those you are connected with.

Self-love & Compassion

We help no one when our light is diminished and this could be the single most important factor to bringing balance into one's life. Take care of yourself. Love yourself. Without you, your life would not exist and yet we always are the first ones to put ourselves last. It is not coming from a place of ego to need to take time out, to spend time alone, doing something adventurous or just meditating. Because when we are filled with love we fill others with love. It's all a reflection. Everything around you becomes love. When we are nourished our life is nourished. We can continue everyday living a life not only that we love but living a life filled with truth.

Restorative Yoga Poses

Restorative Yoga poses are held for up to 20 minutes and if possible utilise many different yoga props such as bolsters, cushions, eye pillows, blankets, and the wall. For home practice, towels can be rolled up to replace a bolster and a scarf can be draped over the eyes in place of an eye pillow. The poses are extremely gentle and only a handful of poses needs to be done in a full restorative yoga session. Restorative poses are to be done on the floor only, however, a few rounds of Surya Namaskar or another form or warm up will benefit practitioners. Adapt classical asanas such as Balasana (Child's Pose), Pascimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend), Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclining Butterfly Pose), Supta Matsyendrasana (Reclining Spinal Twist), Viparita Karani (Legs up the Wall Pose). Deep full Maharaja Pranayama is performed and when necessary, cleansing exhalations out of the mouth.

GUIDED MEDITATION

The power of suggestion is the key to successful guided meditation and can completely heal and transform. Even if your client falls asleep, their subconscious will still receive the mental suggestions and imagery. Of course we as teachers only speak of the highest and most divine qualities in a guided meditation.

Examples: Peaceful place, Chakras, Journeys, Inner child

Guided meditation is phenomenal in gaining awareness and moving into high states of consciousness. This is highly recommended for people new to meditation.

CREATIVE VISUALIZATION

Will assist in manifesting good experiences in this life, and will enable you to release the old. Employ the saying where your attention goes your energy flows! Thoughts create reality.

PRAYER

In prayer we ask for what we need and also give gratitude for our life. Through prayer we connect to the higher self or God consciousness (different names are often chosen) which naturally induces a meditative state. This is also known as Bhakti Yoga.

REFLECTION/CONTEMPLATION

It is wonderful to have the ability to reflect without attachment and knowing the difference between reflection and dwelling. Always sit in the witness space. We learn and grow through the experiences we have had and reflection gives us the space to observe growth and understand the soul's journey.

YOGA NIDRA

Pure relaxation through the physical body (often done for at least an hour).

MEDITATION THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Doing something you love. When we immerse in something we love we can become engrossed in joy and spontaneously slip into a spiritual high. Present moment awareness and peace and calm accompany this creative expression.