

Yoga for Your Mood

Amy Weintraub, MFA, ERYT-500

When I look inside and see that I am nothing, that is wisdom.

When I look outside and see that I am everything, that is love.

Between those two, my life turns.

~Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Workshop Goals

- Create the “sacred container”
- Bring balance to the emotional body
- Meet the Mood (Tamasic/depressed; Rajasic/anxious)
- Practices that energize, reducing feelings of depression
- Practices that calm feelings of anxiety
- To identify yoga practices that are appropriate and those that are contraindicated in a clinical setting.
- A Meditation technique effective with OCD and anxiety disorders.
- Yoga Nidra (an evidence-based yoga meditation protocol) for PTSD.

Yogic Breathing Practices (pranayamas and kriyas):

Seated

- Anoloma & Viloma Krama – Stair step Breath. Gently energizes but also meets anxiety
- Bhastrika - bellows breath. Energizing
- Dirga pranayama – 3 part diaphragmatic breath. Calms
- Kapalabhati – skull shining breath. Energizing
- Kumbhaka – internal breath retention (4-6 counts energize, >6 calm); external breath retention is calming.
- Nadi Shodhana – alternate nostril breathing. Brings balance. Right nostril breathing energizes, and left nostril breathing calms.
- Anoloma Viloma – alternate nostril with retention. Calms and energizes.
- Ujjayi pranayama – ocean sounding breath. Calms and energizes

Standing

- Breath of Joy – Energizing
- Victory Goddess – Energizes.
- Pulling Prana – Energizes.
- Breath to Stimulate the Nerves – Energizes
- Uddiyana Bandha & Agni Sura (Nauli) – Energizes
- Mountain Breath – Calms
- Hara Kumbhaka – Energizes

Asanas:

Warm up practice

- Cat/cow
- Table side stretch
- Thread the Needle
- Flying cow
- Sphinx with mantra (vam)
- Downward-facing Dog

Integrative practices

- Sun Salutation (with mantra, bhavana (visualization), and kapalabhati)
- Padahasthasana - Separate Leg hands to Feet Pose (with maha mudra and mantra)
- Virabhadrasana variation - Warrior (with mantra)
- Danurasana – Bow (with mantra)
- Seated Yoga Mudra (with mantra) or Headstand
- Pachimottanasana – Seated Posterior Stretch (with maha mudra and mantras)
- Pachimottanasana/Halasanana – Forward Bend/Plough
- Satu Bandhasana – Dynamic Bridge (with mantras)
- Reverse Plank (with Kapalabhati)
- Ardha Matsyendrasana – Supine Twist
- Double Wind-relieving (with Kapalabhati on release)
- Savasana (with mantra)

Physiological benefits of Yoga practice:

- Decrease in cortisol levels (stress hormone)
- Increase in GABA levels (primary inhibitory neurotransmitter)

Yoga for Your Mood

- Increase in HRV (heart rate variability)
 - Increase in BDNF (neuroplasticity, genetic expression)
 - Demonstrated improvement in memory, cognitive functioning, perceptual motor skills, visual perception
 - Relaxes chronic muscle tension
 - Restores natural diaphragmatic breathing
 - Improves oxygen absorption and carbon dioxide elimination
 - Increases alpha and theta waves
 - Regulates hypothalamus at an optimum level
 - Certain techniques stimulate vagal nerve activity
 - Bioavailability of oxygen and glucose, building blocks for the production of neurotransmitters
 - Calms sympathetic nervous system while activating parasympathetic system
- All of which leads to - Psychological effects of Yoga practice:**
- Elevation of mood
 - Balances left/right brain function
 - Cultivates equanimity in the face of life's challenges
 - Develops greater self-awareness
 - Symptoms of depression are lessened
 - Better management of bipolar disorder
 - Greater access to feelings, which is a complement to talk therapy
 - Release of repressed emotions stored in the body

NADA YOGA

Throughout a LifeForce Yoga session, students are invited to practice Sanskrit sounds called mantras with postures. These tones vibrate through the 70% of the body that is fluid, calming the central nervous system and energizing specific regions. The Sanskrit language is based on verbs, so each of the sounds has an activating quality, even as chanting the sound focuses and soothes the busy mind.

Mantra

Dhi-Ri-Ha
Evoking strength, sometimes brings up difficult emotions

Sha-Ma-Ya
"Sha" – Shanti, shalom, a soothing tone
"Ma" – Word for mother in many languages, feminine sound
"Ya" – Seed sound for the heart

Ma-ha-ra
"Ma" – Word for mother in many languages, feminine sound
"Ha" – force, Sun (as in Ha-tha Yoga)
"Maha" – Grand, royal, great
"Ra" – Seed sound for Sun (ram), Manipura Chakra, masculine sound

Ma-ha-ya
"Ma" – Word for mother in many languages, feminine sound
"Ha" – force, Sun (as in Ha-tha Yoga)
"Maha" – Grand, royal, great
"Ya" – Seed sound for the heart.

Bhavana

Image for Strength

Image for Peace

Image for Calm Strength

Image for strong love/compassion

Sanskrit Sounds

Calming Mantras for Chakras: Ō, Ū, Ah, Ā, Ē, Mm, Hing
Energizing Bija Mantras for Chakras: Lam, Vam, Ram, Yam, Ham, Om, Ng
I am That or Thou Art That (Tat tvam asi) (Ham So/So ham)

Yoga for Your Mood

LifeForce Yoga Bliss Meditation

- ⊕ Sit comfortably with the spine erect or lie down. Begin to notice the breath—first at your nostrils, as it flows in and out, and then notice how the belly is receiving the breath. Notice if the chest is responding to the breath.
- ⊕ Now imagine that you are inhaling to the crown of your head. Imagine that you are exhaling to your feet. As you inhale to your crown, say to yourself, “I am.” As you exhale to your feet, say to yourself, “here.” Repeat several times, varying it by exhaling to the seat with the word, “grounded.”
- ⊕ Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the root chakra muladhara with the word, “grounded.” Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the second chakra svadhisthana with the words, “in the flow.” Repeat several times.
Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the third chakra manipura with the words, “fully present.” Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the fourth chakra anahata with the word, “love.” Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the fifth chakra vishuddha with the word, “truth.” Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the sixth chakra ajna with the word, “clarity.” Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Continue to inhale to the crown with the mantra “I am.” Exhale to the seventh chakra sahasrara with the word, “bliss.” Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Inhale bliss to the crown. Exhale love to the heart. Inhale love to the heart. Exhale bliss to the crown. Alternate. Repeat several times.
- ⊕ Allow mindfulness to arise

Stair Step Breath (Analoma & Viloma Krama)

- In a sitting or supine position, take little steps of breath through the nostrils, as though you are climbing a mountain (Usually between 3 – 6).
 - Sustain for no more than 4 counts at the top of your mountain.
 - Slide down the mountain (exhale slowly through the nostrils). (2x)
- Next take an elevator ride up the mountain (through the nostrils).
 - Sustain for no more than 4 counts.
 - Then take little steps down the mountain through the nostrils. (Usually between 4 – 8) (2x)
- Next take little steps up as above.
 - Sustain (See something beautiful.)
 - Then take little steps down the mountain through the nostrils, as above. (2x)
- End by taking little steps up as above.
 - Sustain
 - Slowly slide down the mountain. (2x)

This practice is enhanced by incorporating visual imagery (bhavana) and/or mantra during the pause at the top of the mountain. Practice only on inhalation (the first instruction) if you are pregnant or are experiencing heightened anxiety. Otherwise, this mildly energizing breath is safe for most people.

Yoga for Your Mood

Prayer to the Heart

Ātma hr̥daye

Hr̥dayam mayi

Aham amṛte

Amṛtam anāndam brahmāni

My true nature is the heart. The heart is my true nature.

I am the unending bliss. The Oneness of the Heart. I am.

Resources

- ⊕ Broad, William S., The Science of Yoga. Simon & Schuster, 2012.
- ⊕ Brown, Richard; Gerbarg, Patricia; Muskin, Philip. How to Use Herbs, Nutrients & Yoga in Mental Health Care. W.W.W. Norton, 2008
- ⊕ Cope, Stephen, Yoga and the Quest for the True Self. New York: Bantam, 1999.
- ⊕ Emerson, David; Hopper, Elizabeth, Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body. North Atlantic Books, 2011
- ⊕ Gordon, James S., Unstuck: Your Guide to the Seven-Stage Journey Out of Depression. New York: Penguin Press, 2008
- ⊕ Khalsa, Dharma Singh, Meditation as Medicine. New York: Pocket Books, 2001.
- ⊕ LePage, Joseph & Lilian, Mudras for Transformation. 2013. <http://iytyogatherapy.com/store>
- ⊕ McGonigal, Kelly, Yoga for Pain Relief: Simple Practices to Calm your Mind and Heal Your Chronic Pain. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2009.
- ⊕ Miller, Richard, Yoga Nidra: The Meditative Heart of Yoga. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2006.
- ⊕ Saraswati, Satyananda, Yoga Nidra. Munger, Bihar, India: Swami Satyananda Saraswati, 1976, 2006.
- ⊕ Shannahoff-Khalsa, David, Kundalini Yoga Meditation: Techniques Specific for Psychiatric Disorders, Couples Therapy & Personal Growth. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- ⊕ Spence, Joanne, Trauma-Informed Yoga. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: PESI, 2021
- ⊕ Weintraub, Amy, Yoga for Depression. New York: Broadway Books, 2004.
- ⊕ Weintraub, Amy, Yoga Skills for Therapists. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012.
- ⊕ Weintraub, Amy, Yoga for Your Mood: 52 Practices to Shift Depression & Anxiety. Boulder: CO: Sounds True, 2021

Trainings and Classes that Specifically address Depression

LifeForce Yoga Practitioner Trainings 520 349-2644 Yogafordepression.com

The Healing Breath Technique, (Sudarshan Kriya), The Art of Living Foundation, (800) 897-5913. www.artofliving.org.

IRest Yoga Nidra workshops, retreats, books and tapes, www.irest.us.

Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, (800)288-YOGA (9642). www.pryt.com

Breath~Body~Mind Workshop with Dr. Richard Brown & Dr. Patricia Gerbarg, www.haveahealthymind.com

LifeForce Yoga and IFS workshops with Amy www.amyweintraub.com

Good practice CDs and DVDs:

Weintraub, Amy, LifeForce Yoga® Audio Series: www.amyweintraub.com

Breathe to Beat the Blues

LifeForce Yoga Nidra for Mood

LifeForce Yoga Bhavana

LifeForce Yoga Chakra Clearing Meditation

Video series:

LifeForce Yoga to Beat the Blues, Level 1 & Level 2

Yoga for Your Mood

LifeForce Yoga Chakra Clearing Meditation

1. Practice 1 – 3 rounds of Bellows Breath (Bhastrika) to clear the space
2. Practice 3 rounds of Bee Breath (Brahmari) on exhale only to calm the sympathetic nervous system, using the Shanmukhi mudra or a modification to create sensory withdrawal.
3. In the energizing version, practice the mudras with the Bija mantras from the back of the throat, emphasizing the consonant. One long consonant on one long breath, closing the consonant with “mmm.”
4. Lift arms over head, creating an open channel. Practice 3x, using one long breath to chant through all the tones.
5. For the calming version, you can use arms extended, or for an even more calming version, place the hands in the lap in Dhyana Mudra. Practice 3x, using one long breath to chant through all of the tones.
6. In the energizing version, after rolling the tones together 3x as described in 4., inhale arms over head, interlacing fingers with index extended. Hold the breath. Exhale with “Ng” sound, float your arms down, palms open on your knees.
7. Upon completion, sit observing the effects. You may sit for as long as you wish in meditation, observing the breath or using your own meditation technique.

(Listen and practice with LifeForce Yoga Chakra Clearing Meditaton CD)

Bellows Breath (Bhastrika):



Exhale, fists in position in front of shoulders.



Inhale, arms reach up hands open wide.



Shanmuki mudra with Bee Breath (Brahmari)

Yoga for Your Mood

LifeForce Yoga Chakra Clearing Meditation ~ Energizing

Chakra	Mantra	Mudra	
Chakra One Muladhara (Base of spine)	Lam Red	Hasta Mudra 1 Link the two little fingers together close to the base of the spine and pull.	
Chakra Two Svadhithana (Low abdomen)	Vam Orange	Hasta Mudra 2 Link the two ring fingers in front of the low abdomen and pull.	
Chakra Three Manipura (Solar plexus)	Ram Yellow	Hasta Mudra 3 Link the two middle fingers in front of the solar plexus and pull.	
Chakra Four Anahata (Heart)	Yam Green	Dove (Kaputa) Mudra Palms together as in prayer. Keep the base of the palms and the tips of the fingers together but cup the palms.	
Chakra Five Vissudha (Throat)	Ham Blue	Lotus (Padma) Mudra Bring the hands together as in prayer, hovering in front of the throat. Keep the base of the palms, the little fingers and the thumbs together. Open all the other fingers wide like petals.	
Chakra Six Ajna (Third Eye)	Om Violet	Kali Mudra Clasp your hands together with hands cupped, hovering close to forehead without touching, and with your index finger extended forward horizontally. Elbows out to the sides.	
Chakra Seven Sahasrara (Crown of head)	Nnng White	Kali Mudra Clasp your hands together hovering above your crown with hands cupped, and extend your index finger vertically. Elbows out to the sides.	