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Yoga for Trauma/PTSD Relief

YOGA HAS BEEN PRACTICED in the East for thousands of years, and its practitioners have claimed numerous health-promoting benefits: physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Until recently, however, these effects have not been quantified scientifically. However evidence based neuroscience has changed perceptions of this ageless ancient science. The compelling research¹ of Bessel A. van der Kolk on the effectiveness and positive physiological effects of yoga for trauma recovery, is ground breaking and compelling.

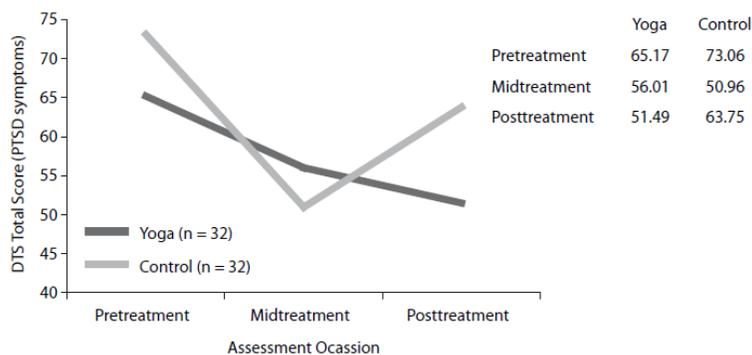
This recent study (2014) indicates that Yoga significantly reduced PTSD symptomatology. The study showed that a 10-week, *specifically structured yoga program can significantly reduce posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in women with chronic treatment-resistant PTSD*, compared with a therapy control group.

At the end of the study, depression scores of both the control group and the yoga group declined significantly and, in the control group, continued to improve, even as their PTSD scores relapsed. **While the control group may have significantly improved their mood, there was not a sustained reduction in PTSD symptomatology. Comparatively, 52% (16 of 31 participants) in the yoga group no longer met criteria for PTSD compared to 21%(6 of 29) in the control group. That’s a compelling difference. 31% more of the people suffering from PTSD no longer met the criteria for PTSD.**

While the study included only treatment-resistant adult women with chronic PTSD secondary to interpersonal assaults that started in childhood (They had major comorbid problems with depression, anxiety, and affect regulation), it demonstrates the effectiveness of a *specific approach to yoga* in the relief for anyone suffering from complex trauma or PTSD. The physical and interoceptive (the perception of bodily signals and body awareness) aspects of yoga, rather than the social dimensions of typical therapy groups, were the critical variables responsible for the change in PTSD symptomatology.

The study suggests that Yoga may improve the functioning of traumatized individuals by helping them to tolerate physical and sensory experiences associated with fear and helplessness and to increase emotional awareness and affect tolerance after 10 weeks of specifically designed yoga.

Figure 1. Change in Davidson Trauma Scale (DTS) as a Function of Group



Abbreviation: PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder.



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While many versions of Yoga exist and it is practiced by 20 million people according to a Yoga Journal Study (<https://bit.ly/2ybhWSG>), *very few standard yoga programs are appropriate for individuals dealing with Complex Trauma and PTSD according to a presenter at the recent 2018 Healing Trauma Summit.* These individuals should seek programs that are adapted to their specific needs and based on the evidence based science for relief of Complex Trauma and PTSD. *The NeuroYoga.Zone “Yoga for Trauma Relief”™ programs meet that criteria.* It's not about how athletic one can be, or following the prescribed techniques of a typical yoga program. i.e. breathe this way or do a posture this way that got the results demonstrated in the study.

It's about getting into the experience and body/sensation awareness of yoga, and each participant has specific individual needs. Just like each finger print is different, each person's brain is different and individuals have responded differently to trauma; therefore the prescription model of everyone following the lead of the instructor (typical for most yoga classes) can actually harm individuals dealing with trauma and/or accentuate their trauma according to Peter A. Levine PhD who has studied trauma and worked with trauma patients for several decades.

Yoga has three principal components: breathing exercises (pranayama), postures (asanas), and mindfulness meditation. Each one of these has been shown to affect neurobiological functioning. However, typical yoga class may have direction to hold ones breath or extend it as a way of stimulating ones vagal system and inducing relaxation. However, for someone with PTSD that was taught to hold the breath as a way or steadying ones aim while shooting in the battlefield and there is a Posttraumatic Stress Response associated with holding of the breath, may have their PTSD triggered. *So the yoga and approach needed for individuals dealing with Complex Trauma and PTSD is different from the majority of yoga programs.*

Changing breathing patterns can influence autonomic nervous system functions, including heart rate variability and cardiac vagal tone. There is extensive research on the effects of mindfulness meditation that has demonstrated to positively influence numerous psychiatric, psychosomatic, and stress-related symptoms, including anxiety, depression, chronic pain, immune function, blood pressure, cortisol levels, and telomerase activity. In addition, yoga poses are likely to help individuals to observe and tolerate physical sensations and to use this tolerance to disconnect their physical feelings from the emotional reactions to assaults or trauma in the past. But the approach and process of exploring mindfulness, meditation and yoga is uniquely different for NeuroYoga.Zone™ “Yoga for Trauma Relief”™ programs.

The defeatist attitude that nothing can be done for those that are impacted by Complex Trauma and PTSD as a result is Adverse Childhood Experiences (A.C.Es) is disconnected from what evidence based neuroscience, psychology, and psychiatry indicates. We should be going after addressing trauma and PTSD like a bear.

NeuroYoga.Zone™ “Trauma Reducing Yoga” (TRY)™ programs are not your average yoga class. Why not try them? Especially if you are one of the estimated 70% of American adults that have experienced a traumatic event or you have developed PTSD (more than 13 million people in the US).



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Facts about Trauma and PTSD

- An estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives and up to 20 percent of these people go on to develop posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.
- An estimated 5 percent of Americans—more than 13 million people—have PTSD at any given time.
- Approximately 8 percent of all adults—1 of 13 people in this country—will develop PTSD during their lifetime.
- An estimated 1 out of 10 women will get PTSD at some time in their lives. Women are about twice as likely as men to develop PTSD.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2vpNgqj>

Approximately 9.8 million adult American women (about 10% of the adult female population) have histories of violent physical assaults, and 12.1 million (12.7%) report having been a victim of completed rapes. More than a third of these traumatic experiences result in the development of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and are also associated with a range of other comorbid disorders, such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical health problems, including obesity, heart disease, and chronic pain syndromes.⁽¹⁻⁷⁾

Notes:

1. *Yoga as an Adjunctive Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial* Bessel A. van der Kolk, MD; Laura Stone, MA; Jennifer West, PhD; Alison Rhodes, MSW Med; David Emerson, MA; Michael Suvak, PhD; and Joseph Spinazzola, PhD
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