

THE PRACTICE OF YOGA CAN BRING **NUMEROUS HEALTH BENEFITS**, BUT YOGA THERAPY IS ABOUT USING A VARIETY OF YOGA PRACTICES TO IMPROVE A HEALTH CONDITION OR EASE A NATURAL PROCESS, LIKE MENOPAUSE OR PREGNANCY. VARIOUS YOGIC TOOLS ARE USED FOR THE SAME AND THESE INCORPORATE THE ASANAS, PRANAYAMA AND MEDITATION. EVEN DIET IS CONSIDERED AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS THERAPY. **SHAKTI PACHAURI** EXPLAINS.

WHAT IS YOGA THERAPY, EXACTLY?

For many yogis, simply practicing yoga regularly improves overall well-being and strength. However, fast-paced Yoga classes are not for everyone, especially those suffering from a health challenge or injury. Yoga therapy serves as a safe alternative. Led by yoga teachers who have received additional training to work with clients having various health conditions, the styles and formats differ widely, ranging from chair yoga in hospitals and elder-care facilities to small, focused therapeutic classes and one-on-one sessions.

“In yoga therapy, we work on individuals, not conditions,” says Shakti (Yoga Therapist), who has been giving sessions of yoga therapy since 2015 in Dubai, UAE. “That’s because patients often have multiple, overlapping conditions”, she says, “For instance, we may work on back pain, but the client also ends up sleeping better and becomes happier.” In yoga therapy we not only focus on physical mechanics, but pranic healing, relaxation techniques and factor in diet as per ayurveda, psychological health, and spirituality to create a holistic, customized plan.

WHY Yoga Therapy?



ISSUES TREATED BY YOGA THERAPY

Yoga therapy is a growing field and scientific evidence has begun to emphasize its efficacy. It is used to treat existing mental and physical health issues, but can also be used as a self-care strategy for prevention and maintenance.

Yoga therapy is well established as a treatment for depression and anxiety and also shows promise for the treatment of posttraumatic stress (PTSD) and schizophrenia. Additionally, yoga therapy is an excellent tool for special needs kids and children with autism.

It is also emerging as an effective treatment for substance abuse issues. Mental health professionals point out the way yoga positively impacts parts of the mind and body susceptible to addiction. Studies have shown that yoga boosts the neurotransmitter GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), which is important because GABA levels are statistically low in people who experience substance abuse, anxiety, and depression.

Because of its concentration on mind and body integration, yoga therapy is also used to address many physical health issues. It has been effectively used to treat back pain, heart conditions, asthma, chronic fatigue, hypertension, multiple sclerosis, and side effects of chemotherapy.

PRACTICE AND BENEFITS OF YOGA THERAPY

Yoga therapy is practiced in a wide range of formats. The practice can resemble

physical therapy, rehabilitative therapy, and/or psychotherapy. Unlike a standard yoga class, yoga therapy sessions are typically conducted in one-on-one sessions or small group settings. Yoga therapy can be provided as an adjunct therapy to complement other forms of treatment, or it can be used to directly treat a specific issue. Yoga techniques range from simple to advanced, and can be done by people of all ages.

Potential benefits from yoga therapy include stress reduction, psychological well-being, improved diet, and efficient functioning of bodily systems. A 2011 qualitative study from Inkanyiso: *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* examined the effects of yoga therapy on anxiety. The findings not only indicated that yoga therapy effectively reduced subjects' anxiety, but improvement across several dimensions of physical and mental health including physicality, relaxation, and mindfulness.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOGA THERAPY?

When a person decides to initiate yoga therapy, I will first conduct an initial assessment. This assessment is designed to do the following:

- Identify health problems
- Assess lifestyle and physical capability
- Discuss reasons for seeking therapy
- Create a course of treatment

Once the treatment plan is established in this first consultation, the frequency of sessions is agreed upon and sessions are scheduled. From this point on, therapy sessions will most likely include the following components:

- **Breathing Exercises (Pranayama):** I will guide the person in therapy through a series of breathing exercises ranging from energizing breaths to balancing breaths.
- **Physical Postures (Asana):** I will teach the person to do appropriate yoga poses that address problem areas. For example, the "Legs Up the Wall" pose is used to treat issues like anxiety and insomnia. In this pose, the person lays on his or her back with legs positioned up against the wall.
- **Meditation:** Relaxation and mindfulness are the focus of meditation when it is combined with yoga poses.
- **Guided Relaxation Techniques:** This way I attempt to calm the body and mind by providing a guided visualization intended to bring inner peace.
- **Homework:** An important element for any yoga practice is to find a way to incorporate it into daily life. I provide instructions on how to use what has been learnt during follow-up treatment at home.

In the end it is all about treating individuals based on their different strengths and weaknesses, different degrees of general health and fitness, and different levels of skill with yoga. Each of these factors have a major influence on the choice of recommended practices.



With a passion for health and life, **Shakti** has done her master's in science. She always wanted to help mankind to get rid of sufferings and this dream came true when she met a senior renowned yoga therapist in Muscat (Oman). After learning Yoga Therapy for 2 years from her Guru in Muscat, she relocated to Dubai and started practicing Yoga therapy. To enhance her knowledge further, she did Yoga teachers training course (US Alliance 200 hours) and 50 hours Yoga therapy course from Yogadarshanam Mysore, India. She has also done Prenatal & postnatal Pilates course. She is currently pursuing MSC in Yoga Therapy from SVYASA Bangalore, India. Shakti strongly believes in power of Yoga therapy in curing all the diseases e.g. HIGH BP, Diabetes, Cancer, Thyroid, PCOD, Hormonal imbalance issues in ladies, Anxiety, Depression etc. with correct breathing, meditation and guided relaxation techniques. **SHAKTI** is committed to spread health & wellbeing awareness through Yoga all over the world in coming years.