

# Yoga Informed Psychotherapy

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# Soft Landing...



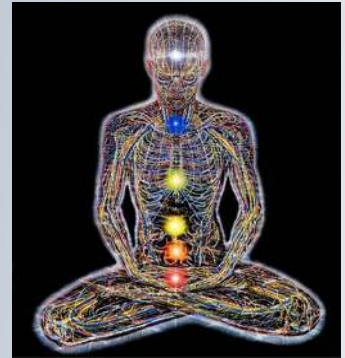
# Objectives

- Learn Yoga's Guiding Principles and Relevance to Practicing Experiential Dynamic Therapy
- Facilitating 'Yoga Zone' with Your Clients: Techniques that Promote Self Awareness, Self-Acceptance and Mood Regulation
- Understand When and How to Intervene with: Mindfulness, Simple Breathing Practices and Gentle Movement
- Try out Experiential Exercises
- Relax and Have Fun!

# Agenda

- Yoga Philosophy
- Key Concepts: Applications for Consulting Room
- Short Video Demonstration: Yoga in Therapy
- Guiding Principles + Interventions that Work
- Exercises: Mobilizing Observing and Attentive Ego
- Group Discussion
- Summary

# Yoga Philosophy 101, Kelly McGonigal, PhD



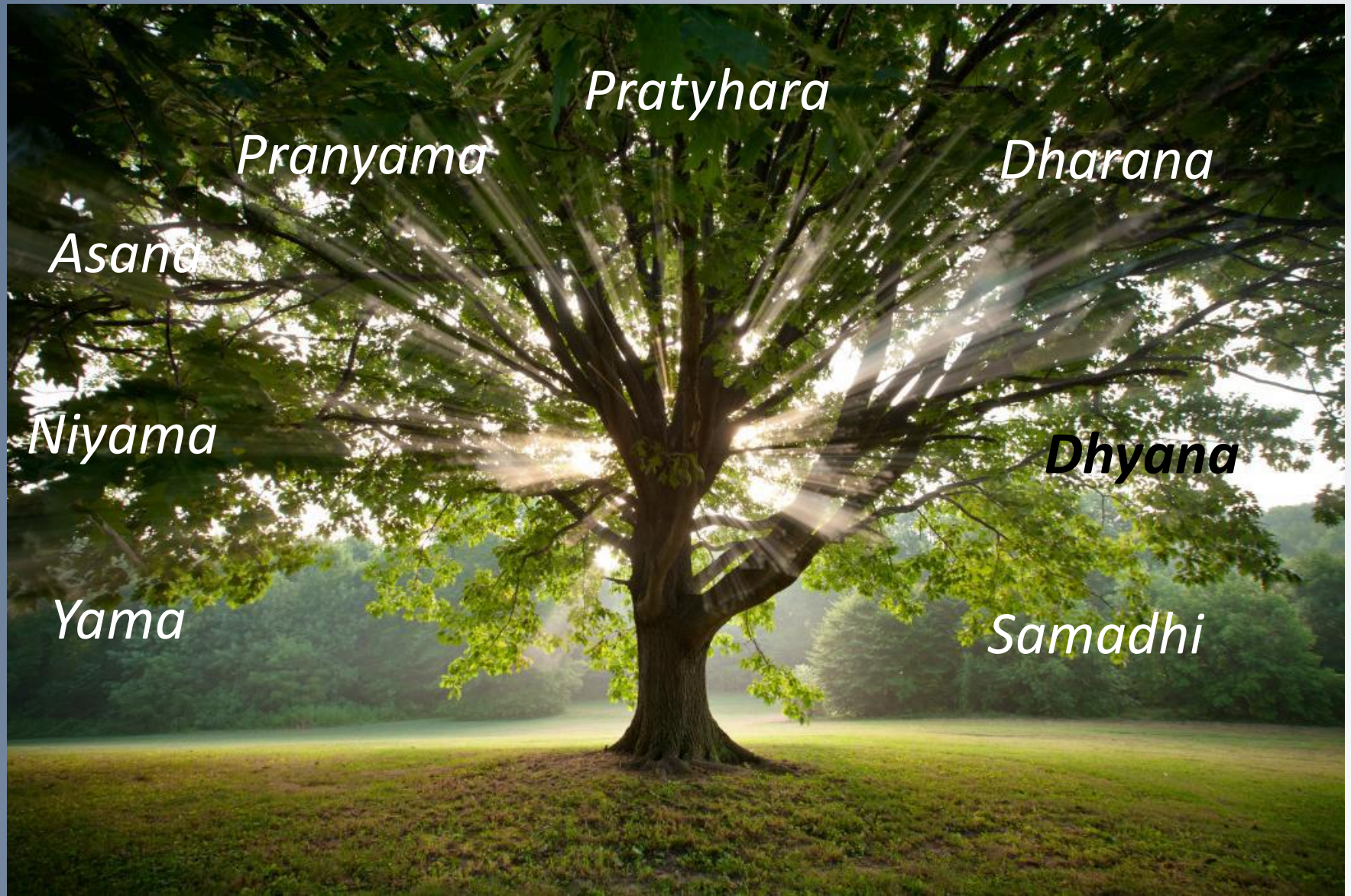
- **Yoga** = Union of Body, Mind and Spirit
- Purpose of Yoga: Restore Health of Body and Peace of Mind
- If you can breathe, and pay attention to breath, thoughts, feelings and sensations, you are doing yoga.

# Yogash-Chitta-Vritti-Nirodhah

Yoga: Mastery over the Fluctuations of the Mind



# Yoga Foundation: 8 Limbs of Yoga



# Principles Relevant to Psychotherapy,

Swami Ajaya, PhD

- Pain is a teacher that redirects us from complacency to active learning, the purpose of life.
- Yoga psychotherapy, not only reduces distress by redirecting the mind; also increases positive states: forgiveness, gratitude, peacefulness.
- Serves to restore personal choice, supports client to be *active, engaged* towards personal goals and values.
- Holistic Treatment Approach: considers entire person.



# Goals of Yoga Therapy



- Empower clients with tools to self-regulate and stabilize mood.
- Improve capacity for self-observation and awareness.
- Increase tolerance to face uncomfortable feelings.
- Boosts CTA and UTA
- Self-Acceptance.

# Short Video Clip

# Applying Practice with Clients

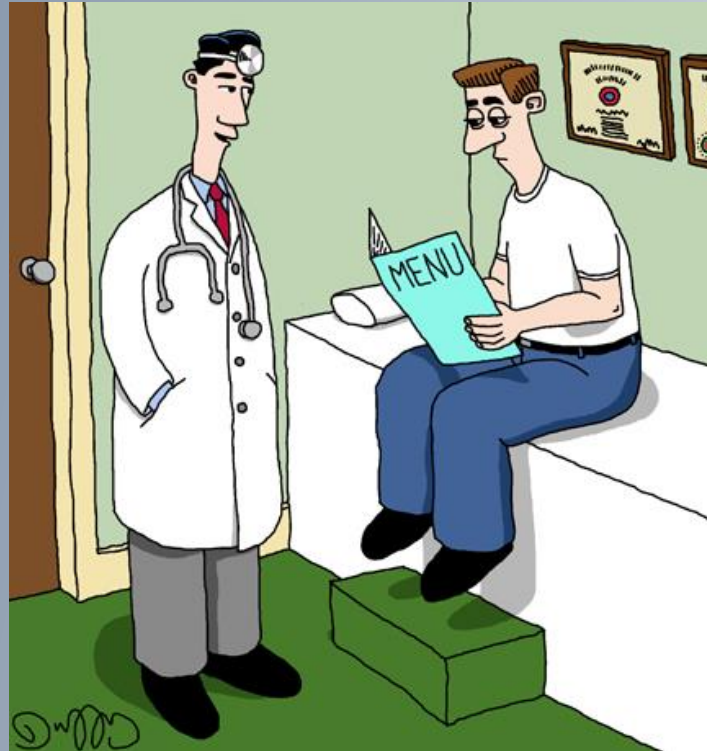
Procedure...



# Procedure/Implementation

- Assess the pathway of anxiety discharge
- If anxiety discharged into Smooth or CPD, ask client's permission to practice breath awareness or breath plus gentle movement
- Try a method you feel comfortable with
- Do it together, with your client X3
- After method ask; “Anxiety same, better, worse?”
- If not ‘better,’ move onto next method, until you hear client say, ‘better.’
- Wait for the sigh and muscle tension
- Once back in striated, recap triangle of conflict, press for feelings

# Treatment Approaches



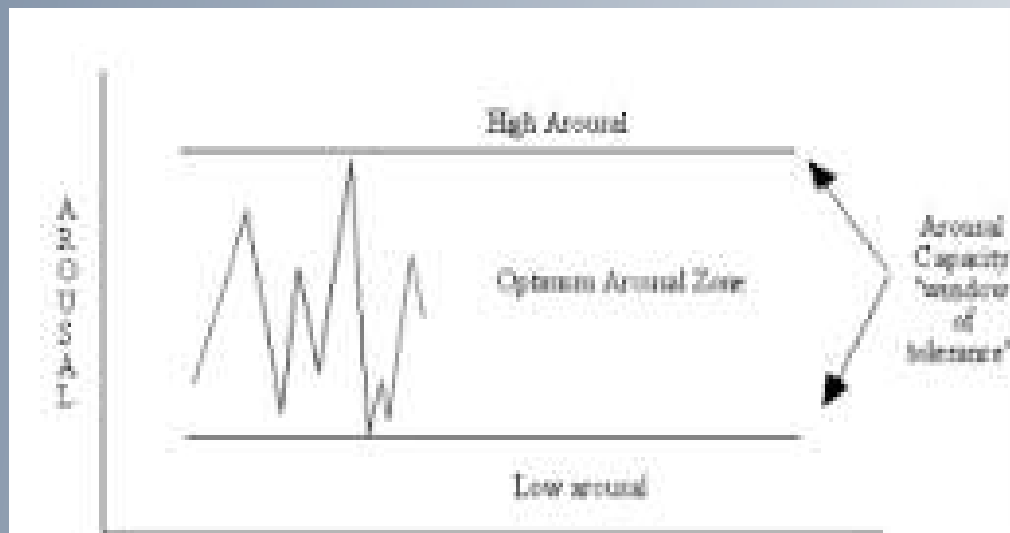
# Interventions that Work

- Pressure!
- Breathing practices
- Breathing plus gentle movement practice
- Face Feelings: keep anxiety in striated muscle



# Guiding Principle #1

Help Your Clients Stay within Window of Anxiety Tolerance



# Entering the Yoga Zone

Activating the Innate Healing Force





# Key Tool – Pressure:

- Stay present, longer
- Collaborate
- Will
- Positive goals
- Task
- Observe: FAD and reactions to therapist
- Face feelings
- Tolerate discomfort
- Care for self/self-soothe
- Picture





# Breathing

Life Force Designed to Calm the Mind

# Pair Pressures with Conscious Breathing

- Inhale to do something...  
expand, lift, stretch, get big
- Hold...sip more air, count
- Exhale to release...  
contract, fold, let go



# 2 Types of Breathing Max Strom, ERYT

- **Autonomic Breathing:** reflexive breathing, limited or no awareness.
- **Conscious Breathing:** when we control our breathing, we can affect our internal states.



# Breathing Practices to Lower Anxiety

- **Diaphragmatic Breathing**
- **Ocean Breathing**
- Shorten Inhalation, Lengthen Exhalation
- **Pair Breathing with Visualization**
- Pair Breathing with Sound
- Nhadī Shodna: Alternate Nostril Breathing



# Guiding Principle #2

Remember that anxiety regulation is not a one size fits all clients approach. Every intervention is tailored to each specific therapist/client dyad.



# *Movement*



# Case for Movement in Psychotherapy,

Anat Baniel

- Movement is language of brain and essential for its growth and formation.
- **Einstein:** “Nothing happens until something moves.”
- Move with attention: new neuronal connections form as we pay attention to what we feel as we move.
- Slow down.



# Combining Breathing with Movement,

Kelly McGonigal, PhD; Max Strom, ERYT



- **Spine Wave**
- **Prayer Position: Press Palms Together**
- **Forward Fold**
- Gentle Spinal Twist
- **‘Calming the Storm’**
- Arm Wide, Up, Prayer
- Side body bends

# Procedure: Press for Feelings

- **Get Accurate Cognitive Label:** What is the feeling...?
- **Ask About Physiology:** How do you feel 'X' in your body right now?
- **Explore the Impulse:** How does feeling want to come out of you?



# Guiding Principle #3

Assess Response to Intervention

# Group Discussion

Why might incorporating yoga into psychotherapy improve treatment outcomes?

# The Whole Enchilada: Practice in Dyads



# Large Group Discussion

- Personal responses to practices
- What techniques might you use when?
- What stands out as most important?



# Mobilizing Attentive Ego

Activating the Innate Healing Force

# Some Thoughts on Self-Compassion

- “You can look the whole world over and never find anyone more deserving of love than yourself.” Buddha
- “The wish all sentient beings may be free from suffering.” Dalai Lama
- “Treating yourself with the same kindness and care that you would a good friend.” Kristen Neff, PhD



# Practice: Accessing Self-Care System,

Christopher Germer, M.D., Kristin Neff, PhD

- **Soothing Touch:**

- one hand on cheek
- two hands cradle face
- stroke forearm
- hands on the heart



- **Give the body what it needs:**

- soften the body
- release areas of tension
- long smooth exhale

# Conclusion: Main Points

- Yoga treats the entire person
- Healing force resides within the client
- We tailor our practice to meet the specific needs of each client
- Purpose of yoga is to heal the body and quiet the mind
- Experiment: find the practices that you feel comfortable with



Some Helpful Information...

# Research on Yoga Therapy, Joann Lutz, MSW, E-RYT

- Effects of the “Relaxation Response,” 1975, Herbert Benson, M.D. Harvard Medical School
- “Mindfulness – Based Stress Reduction,” Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Trauma Center, Brookline, MA. Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. 2006.
- Yoga Nidra for Veterans with PTSD, Richard Miller.
- Boston University Study: “Effects of Yoga Versus Walking on Mood, Anxiety and Brain GABA Levels.”

# Why Your Brain Craves Yoga, Timothy McCall, M.D.

- **Neuroplasticity:** Brain's ability to reshape itself.
- More we say, do or think something, more likely we are to say, do or think it, again.
- Patanjali's recipe for success in yoga: steady and enthusiastic practice, w/out interruption over long period of time.
- “The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits.”