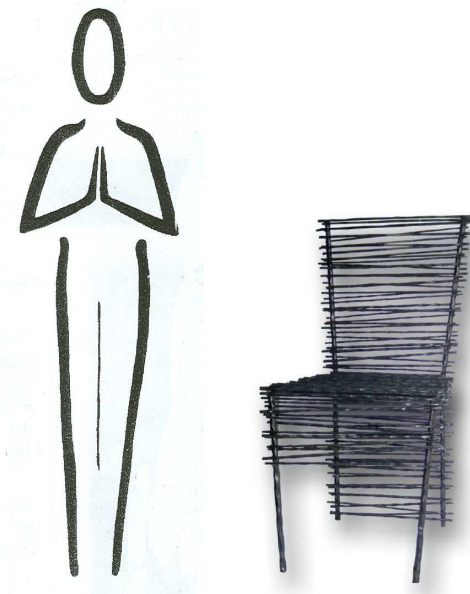


The Vira Foundation

Yoga and the Treatment of Trauma

Instructors Manual



Introduction:

According to Yogic philosophy all beings are already enlightened, they simply haven't experienced it. These classes often represent the first experience clients have had with that concept. Therefore, the first part of this manual explains the history of Yoga and the physical Asanas (poses) so as to provide you with the knowledge to answer specific questions clients may have and eventually guide them in possibly exploring its practice more deeply outside of this setting. Clients may eventually proceed to more advanced physical practices as well as other forms of Yoga and or meditation.

The second part of the manual describes the fundamental Trauma sensitive yoga practice we advocate. Its limited physical requirements make it safe for every client as it consists entirely of seated, chair based movements. The only physical requirement is the ability to follow verbal instruction and remain seated with basic arm and leg movements and controlled breathing.

Victims of physical and emotional trauma often find themselves trapped in both physical and mental feedback loops, repeating the original, traumatic event over and over. The use of Yoga in the treatment of these individuals relies on every human's inherent ability to change and reclaim the underlying connection they possess to their truer selves. Yoga is not simply an intellectual exercise; its practitioners experience real change in the sensations of their physical body by dissolving their connection to the trauma narrative they've inadvertently created. Their connection to the fundamental truth of their own freedom and liberation from these damaging mental abstractions strengthens and solidifies. In time and with continued practice, this new connection is capable of dissolving their identification with the traumatic experience both physically and mentally.

This manual introduces the subject of Yoga as well as simple practices designed to help clients who have experienced trauma begin to heal on a deep level. Attention is devoted to the pairing of breath with movement in very basic but mindful movements. The instructor or "Yoga Therapists" goal is to facilitate both self awareness and self regulation. Instruction is dedicated to learning to control the breath, movement, and focus their attention on these basic functions. By learning to be aware of their present experience and regulate their response, clients begin to reclaim their ability to **choose** how they will experience themselves rather than view themselves as victims of circumstance without the power to change. Without recognizing their ability to choose differently, they are inevitably victims of their own self destructive thinking patterns.

The use of yoga in the setting of Trauma offers more than a return to a functional state. It recognizes that all individuals are capable of living life in true bliss and happiness. The service you provide to your clients, their families and the communities they inhabit is immeasurable.

What is Yoga?

Definition:

The Sanskrit word “**Yoga**” has many meanings and is derived from the Sanskrit root "yuj," meaning "to control," "to yoke" or "to unite." Translations include "joining," "uniting," "union," "conjunction," and "means." Outside India, the term yoga is typically associated with Hatha Yoga and its **asanas** (postures) or as a form of exercise. Someone who practices yoga or follows the yoga philosophy is called a **yogi or yogini**.

History:

Several seals discovered at Indus Valley Civilization (c. 3300–1700 B.C.E.) sites in Pakistan depict figures in positions resembling a common yoga or meditation pose, showing "a form of ritual discipline, suggesting a precursor of yoga", according to archaeologist Gregory Posseh.



Ancient Yogic Seal discovered in the Indus Valley

The connection between the Indus Valley seals and later yoga and meditation practices is speculated upon by many scholars, though there is no conclusive evidence.



Indus Valley

In Hindu literature, the term "yoga" first occurs in the Katha **Upanishad**, where it refers to control of the senses and the cessation of mental activity leading to a supreme state. Important textual sources for the evolving concept of Yoga are the middle Upanishads, (ca. 400 BCE), the Mahabharata including the **Bhagavad-Gita** (ca. 200 BCE), and the **Yoga Sutras of Patanjali** (150 BCE).

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Patanjali is widely regarded as the founder of the formal Yoga philosophy. Patanjali's yoga is known as Raja yoga, which is a system for control of the mind. Patanjali defines the word "yoga" in his second sutra, which is the definitional sutra for his entire work:

Yogaś citta-vrtti-nirodha - Yoga Sutras 1.2

It translates as "**Yoga is the inhibition (nirodha) of the modifications (vrtti) of the mind (citta)**". The use of the word nirodhah in the opening definition of yoga is an example of the important role that Buddhist technical terminology and concepts play in the Yoga Sutra; this role suggests that Patanjali was aware of Buddhist ideas and wove

them into his system. Swami Vivekananda translates the sutra as "Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (Citta) from taking various forms (Vrittis)."

Bhagavad-Gita:

The Bhagavad-Gita (commonly referred to as The Gita). The content of the Gita is the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna taking place on the battlefield before the start of the Kurukshetra war. Responding to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince and elaborates on different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies, with examples and analogies. This has led to the Gita often being described as a concise guide to Hindu theology and also as a practical, self-contained guide to life. During the discourse, Krishna reveals his identity as the Supreme Being Himself (Svayam Bhagavan), blessing Arjuna with an awe-inspiring vision of His divine universal form.

Although the word yoga refers to several methods of achieving an overall integration of physical and mental exercises, various branches of yoga emphasize a particular approach to this integration. **Jnana** Yoga takes the path of knowledge or wisdom; **Bhakti** Yoga is the path of devotion; **Karma** Yoga is the path of action or service; **Tantra** Yoga is the path of ritual; **Raja** Yoga is the path of meditation; **Hatha Yoga is the path of physical postures (called asanas) and breathing (pranayama).**

Hatha Yoga in its many modern variations is the style that many people associate with the word "Yoga" today. This particular system of Yoga was first described by Yogi Swatmarama, compiler of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika in 15th century India. Hatha Yoga differs substantially from the Raja Yoga of Patanjali in that it focuses on shatkarma, the purification of the physical body as leading to the purification of the mind (ha), and prana, or vital energy (tha). It marks the development of asanas (plural) into the full body 'postures' now in popular usage.

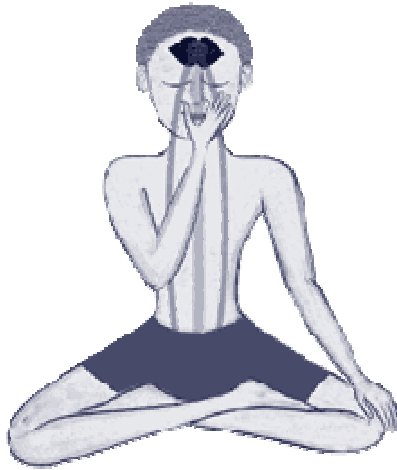
The Hatha Yoga Pradipika:

The Pradipika is a classic Sanskrit manual on Hatha Yoga, written by Svami Svatomarama, a disciple of Svami Gorakhnath. The text was written in 15th century CE. The work is derived from older Sanskrit texts and Svami Svatomarama's own yogic experiences. Many modern English translations of the text are available. The Pradipika is said to be the oldest surviving text on the Hatha Yoga and is one of the three classic texts of Hatha Yoga, the other two being the Gheranda Samhita and the Shiva Samhita.

The book consists of four Upadeshas (chapters) which include information about **asanas, pranayama, chakras, kundalini, bandhas, kriyas, shakti, nadis and mudras** among other topics (see diagrams below). It runs in the line of Hindu yoga (to distinguish from Buddhist and Jain yoga) and is dedicated to Lord Adinath, a name for **Lord Shiva (the Hindu god of destruction and renewal)**

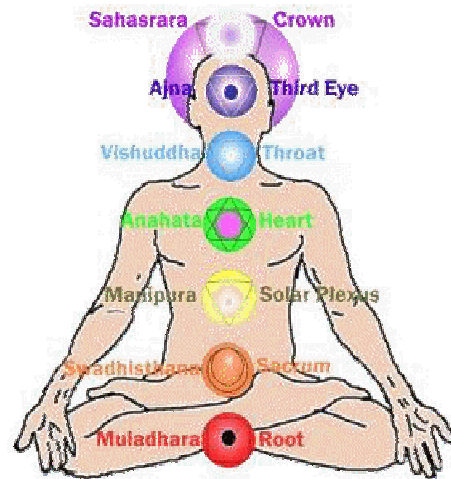
The below diagrams depict further examples of other Yogic Science systems:

Ida (L), Pingala (R), and Sushumna (C) Nadis



3 Main Bandhas: Mula Bandha (Root),
Uddiyana Bandha (Diaphragm) , Jhalandara (Throat)

The 7 Chakras



In Hatha Yoga, the asana practice consists of careful integration of the flow of breath with movement of the spine and thoughtful sequencing of asanas. Function is stressed over form. Any of the basic styles of Hatha Yoga can be physically challenging depending on what you do and how you approach it. Some styles focus on holding postures for a long time, which can be very challenging, while others link a series of postures into a single flow, which results in a physical workout. Ashtanga, Bikram, Iyengar, and Power Yoga are probably the most physically focused forms of yoga. Kripalu and Integral Yoga are gentler.

According to the original text of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika there are 84 classical Hatha Poses or Asanas. Of these 84 poses, there are but 4 poses noted to be essential to every practitioner. Interestingly, all 4 are seated poses, maintain stillness and it is said that they should be utilized to concentrate the mind and draw the attention to a single point of focus. One of these seated poses (Bhadrasana) is identical to the pose depicted in the ancient yogic seal first discovered in the Indus valley and depicted at the beginning of this manual. These 4 poses are as follows:

1. The Siddhâsana 2. The Padmasana



3. The Sinhasana



4. The Bhadrāsana



Styles of Hatha Yoga:

The postures and breathing techniques of Hatha Yoga yield many benefits to the practitioner's health and well-being. Hatha Yoga promotes flexibility, tones the body, enhances vitality, cultivates balance, and calms the mind. It improves strength and endurance and increases awareness and concentration. It alleviates stress and creates a welcome feeling of wholeness and deep relaxation.

Styles of Hatha Yoga:

There are many schools of Hatha Yoga, and many approaches to teaching. It is not unusual for teachers themselves to study in various schools and to blend techniques to create their own approaches.

Differences among the schools are usually about emphasis: One may focus on strict alignment of the body, another on coordination of breath and movement; one may focus on holding each posture for a period of time, another on the flow (vinyasa) from one posture to another. A new yoga student may want to try classes in different styles and with different teachers to find those that best match his or her needs. Many of the schools of Hatha Yoga popular today in the West can trace their roots to the Indian Sanskrit scholar and teacher **Krishnamacharya** (1888-1989), several of whose pupils have themselves become prominent teachers.



Krishnamacharya

Among the most popular and influential in the West are: **B.K.S. Iyengar**, who founded Iyengar yoga; **T.K.V. Desikachar** (Krishnamacharya's son), who carries on the tradition, known as Viniyoga, that he learned from his father; and **Sri K. Pattabhi Jois**, who developed Ashtanga Yoga.

There are, however, many popular schools of yoga that may be most suitable for the beginner student. We have provided a comprehensive list of yoga styles and approaches to help you find what you are looking for:

Ananda Yoga: Ananda Yoga is a classical style of gentle Hatha Yoga that uses breathing and postures accompanied by silent, positive affirmations to awaken, experience, and begin to control the subtle energies within us. Its object is to use those energies to harmonize body, mind, and emotions, and to expand self-awareness. Ananda yoga is a relatively gentle, inward experience, not an athletic or aerobic practice. It was developed by Swami Kriyananda, a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, author of the spiritual classic, *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Anusara Yoga: Anusara (a-nu-SAR-a) means "following your heart," or "to move with the current of divine will." It is a style of yoga developed by John Friend, whose main Hatha influence was B.K.S. Iyengar. Anusara Yoga is described as heart-oriented, spiritually inspiring, yet grounded in a deep knowledge of outer- and inner-body alignment. Each student's various abilities and limitations are deeply respected and honored.

Ashtanga Yoga: Ashtanga Yoga (often also called Power Yoga) was first developed by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and is an aerobic, muscle-shaping, mind-sculpting, physically demanding workout. Students move through a series of flows, moving from one posture to another to build strength, flexibility, and stamina. Room temperatures are often set high to promote detoxification through increased perspiration. Ashtanga often appeals to athletes and those who enjoy high-energy exercise.

Bikram Yoga: Bikram Choudhury's yoga is a form of hot yoga comprised of a series of 26 asanas (each held for at least 10 seconds) and two pranayamas, sometimes twice. The series is designed to warm and stretch muscles, ligaments, and tendons in a naturally progressive order. Founder Bikram Choudhury studied yoga with Bishnu Ghosh, brother of Paramahansa Yogananda, author of the spiritual classic, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Integral Yoga Integral classes put almost as much emphasis on breathing and meditation as they do on postures. Classes begin with 45 minutes of postures, followed by deep relaxation, a breathing sequence, and a meditation.

Integral Yoga: Swami Satchidananda, who led the crowds at the original Woodstock festival in an opening chant of "Om," developed Integral Yoga. It is the style used by Dr. Dean Ornish in his groundbreaking work on reversing heart disease.

Iyengar Yoga: Iyengar yoga emphasizes posture and the development of balance and alignment. To support students' explorations of postures, Iyengar yoga makes use of a wide variety of props: belts, blocks, pillows, and balls. Iyengar is one of the most widely practiced yoga techniques in the West. It was developed in India by B.K.S. Iyengar and responds to individuals with varying limitations and capacities for accomplishing postures. Iyengar Yoga is noted for great attention to detail and the precise alignment of postures.

Jivamukti Yoga: Jivamukti, a Sanskrit word that means "liberation while living," was developed by Sharon Gannon and David Life and combines a vigorous physical practice with an equally strong foundation in ancient spiritual traditions of yoga. Each class focuses on a theme, which is supported by Sanskrit chanting, readings, references to scriptural texts, music (from the Beatles to Moby), spoken word, asana sequencing, and yogic breathing practices.

Kundalini Yoga: In the tradition of Yogi Bhajan, who brought the style to the West in 1969, Kundalini Yoga focuses on the controlled release of kundalini energy, thought to reside at the base of the spine. This style of yoga pays particular attention to breathwork, which aims to get energy moving quickly, but it also involves classic poses, coordination of breath and movement, and meditation.

Partner Yoga: Partner Yoga is an interactive yoga practice in which the students may be long-term committed partners or newly met attendees at a partner yoga workshop. Asanas in partner yoga are generally familiar yoga postures performed, perhaps with adaptations, together by two people. Partners may differ in size, shape, strength, flexibility, and experience. Partner Yoga emphasizes building trust in and sensitivity to relationship while exploring the balance, centeredness, and healing qualities of yoga practice.

Power Yoga: Power Yoga combines the ancient "eight limbs" of yogic wisdom revealing a systematic set of proven age-old principles, physical practices, attitudes, and perspectives. Power Yoga uncovers the root causes of stress and provides the means to conquer it, demonstrates the value of exercise and attitude, and harnesses the power of discipline and inner balance. It is a muscle-shaping, mind-sculpting workout that crosses all borders and appeals to any person who has the desire for true and permanent change in his or her body and life.

Restorative Yoga: This is a gentle, calming, therapeutic kind of yoga that uses props to support the body to deepen the benefits of the poses. It is a soothing and nurturing practice that promotes the effects of conscious relaxation.

Sivananda Yoga: Sivananda, one of the world's largest schools of yoga, is very supportive to beginners. Developed by Swami Vishnu-Devananda and named for his teacher, Swami Sivananda, Sivananda Yoga follows a set structure that includes breathing, classic asanas, and relaxation, as well as principles of diet and positive thinking. The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga, written by Swami Vishnu-Devananda

and first published in 1960, was one of the first, and continues to be one of the best, introductions to yoga available.

Viniyoga Yoga: Viniyoga is not so much the name of a yoga style as it is a methodology for developing a personal practice using asanas, pranayama, meditation, ritual, and prayer. Viniyoga was developed by Krishnamacharya and is carried on by his son, T.K.V. Desikachar, and respects individual needs and capabilities.

Yin Yoga: Yin Yoga has the same goals and objectives as any other school of yoga; however, it directs the stimulation normally created in the asana portion of the practice deeper than the superficial or muscular tissues (referred to as the yang tissues). Yin Yoga targets the connective tissues, such as the ligaments, bones, and even the joints of the body that normally are not exercised very much in a more active style of asana practice. Suitable for almost all levels of students, Yin Yoga complements the dynamic and muscular (yang) styles of yoga that emphasize internal heat, and the lengthening and contracting of our muscles. Yin Yoga generally targets the connective tissues of the hips, pelvis, and lower spine.

The Trauma Sensitive Yoga Practice:

As described earlier in this manual, the most ancient text on the Practice of Hatha Yoga, (The Hatha Yoga Padipika) maintains that of all the physical Asanas, the most important are any of the four comfortable, seated positions. The essential element is that the yoga practitioner uses the comfortable seat to maintain a steady, conscious awareness of the space occupied by the physical body as it passes through time. This is achieved by focusing attention to experiencing the sensations of the body in each successive present moment as it leads to the next. We believe that the comfortable seated position utilized for the trauma sensitive program should be one that as many patients as possible are able to use. The most easily accessible, seated position is that of simply sitting upright in a comfortable chair. Thus, the Trauma sensitive protocol may also be referred to as a “Chair based Yoga Practice”. This practice is safe for any student able to sit safely and comfortably in a chair, including those who are pregnant. Patients that require restraints to remain seated must have their restraints secured before beginning.

In the setting of Trauma, clients (students) come from many different backgrounds and possess varying degrees of physical ability. We therefore recommend that it be stressed before beginning a class that “Yoga” is a non-denominational practice and is not affiliated with any religious practices. Try to be willing to discuss any questions or concerns participants may have before beginning. The historical background offered in this manual is there to help you with this.

The attention span of individuals recovering from Traumatic injuries is often difficult to maintain. **We recommend that classes be limited to 20-30 minutes** so as not to overwhelm beginner students and discourage their efforts to continue a consistent

practice. Students are more apt to practice regularly if they are both able to comfortably complete the session as well as enjoy the experience. Instruction should be delivered in a comfortable and lighthearted manner with a clear, confident vocal tone that is soothing to the listeners.

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika also contends that the setting for the practice be considered as critical as any other element. We suggest that the room be dimly lit to cultivate a relaxing environment and that soothing music be utilized to overcome background noise. It is important however that the music not be distracting to the students so we further suggest that it be devoid of lyrics that might be distracting.

The physical portion of the class (10-15minutes)

Chairs should be positioned so that students can extend the arms laterally, vertically and in front of themselves. They should also be able to lift and extend their feet freely. To begin, ask the students to sit upright in their chair, becoming conscious of space they occupy by shifting their shoulders back, opening their chest and lifting their spine upright. As best as possible, they should position their shoulders above their hips, their knees over their ankles and their hands upon their legs.

Proceed to ask the students to begin scanning their bodies for areas of tension. Perhaps shifting themselves if necessary to relieve the tension. Instruct them to inhale deeply, expanding the chest, hold the breath momentarily and then control their exhale so that it is extended longer than usual. The extension of the exhale recruits the parasympathetic system and cultivates a greater sense of stillness and relaxation.

A technique for further connecting the student to the sensations of the body and breath is to ask them to place their right hand on their chest and their left hand on their stomach. Instruct the students to monitor their breathing by sensing the subtle differences between the way the two hands move. The right hand on the chest should rise and fall vertically while the left hand on the belly should lift away and fall towards the spine.

Proceed to a short combination of the following physical movements depending on the level of physical ability of the students involved. Particular attention should be devoted to the pairing of the breath with the movement:

1. Raising the hands in prayer position over the head. Inhale while lifting, exhale while returning hands to the chest.



Variation: Begin with arms outstretched to the sides (T position). Inhale and sweep the arms above the head. Exhale the hands back to the heart.

Second Variation: Interlace the fingers in front of the chest and press the palms forward, Inhale while lifting the outstretched arms above the head, exhale while stretching them out in front of the chest.

2. While resting the hands on the legs, lower the chin to the chest. Inhale and roll the right ear towards the right shoulder, then exhale the chin back to the chest. (Repeat to the opposite side)



3. With arms either resting at the sides of the body or gripping arms of the chair (or seat), inhale and sit tall, exhale and side bend to the right. Repeat to the opposite side.



4. Press one foot against the floor and inhale. Either lift or extend the opposite foot with the exhale. (Repeat to the opposite side). After two rounds ask them to lift both feet together with the Exhale and return them to the floor with the inhale.



8. Place the right hand on the left knee, inhale and lengthen the spine, exhale and twist to the left. (Repeat to the opposite side)



Variation: While holding opposite elbows in front of the chest, sit up tall with the inhale- then twist with the exhale- (repeat to the opposite side).

***Depending on the physical abilities of your students please feel free to add variations of your own to any of these suggested poses.**

Proceed to the guided relaxation portion of the class: (10-15 minutes)

Begin by reconnecting the student to their breath. This can be done in any number of ways, including the placement of the hands on the chest and belly as described previously.

Guided relaxation narratives should be devoid of religious imagery. Suggested themes include relaxing nature scenes and sequential body scanning, tensing and relaxing.

End the class by reconnecting to the breath- a final deep inhale (coupled or not to a final position such as hands to the heart) followed by a long, extended exhale.

Feel free to add additional mindful breathing exercises but limit any such additions so as not to exceed the maximum length of time allotted for the class.

Many class participants enjoy discussing the effects the class has had on them and discussions about personal life stressors they are experiencing may evolve. If these discussions pose difficulties, remind the student that the purpose of the classes is to help them reconnect with their body and breath. Encourage them to remember that simply noticing the way such stressors affect their body and breath and encourages new patterns to develop. Reassure them that with continued practice and time, eventually the stressors themselves begin to diminish. Regaining control over the way these life stressors are felt in their bodies returns them to a position of internal control. The nature of the Traumatic mindset is one of external control and thus identification with a victim like status. The return of an internal locus of control over their own thoughts and feelings grows in subtle ways when nurtured by time and continued practice.

(Available with this manual is a sample class on audio CD)

For additional information about the Vira Foundation and useful links about the use of Yoga in the treatment of Traumatic injury please visit our website:

www.thevirafoundation.org

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Namaste,

Dr Andrew Annand

The Vira Foundation: Founder, Medical Director