

Professional Yoga Therapy Method

What is the PYT METHOD₁?

It is a unique series of individualized, therapeutic yoga sequences designed to educate and engage patients in the treatment, management and prevention of acute and chronic injuries. It is only taught by licensed healthcare professionals. A step-by-step algorithm is used to evaluate patient improvement as they progress through a series of scaffolded, subjective and objective measures.

Statistics – Yoga in America₁

- 16.5 million practitioners of yoga aged 35-54 – an increase of 87% from 2004-2008
- In 2008 – 49.4% reported they started practicing yoga to improve their overall health
- In 2003 – Only 5.6%
- Just under \$6 billion spent annually on Yoga and yoga products – reported by National Center for CAM
- Almost 50% reported yoga would be beneficial if they were undergoing treatment for a medical condition.
- Statistics of healthcare – only 6.5% reported their doctor or therapist recommended yoga to them
- Yoga and yoga therapy are not regulated in the United States by any licensing body or agency

“Yoga as medicine represents the next great yoga wave.” Reported by the Editor and Chief of Yoga Journal several years ago.

Consumer Product Safety Commission report on yoga injuries: “As Healthcare professionals, we need to be a part of creating safer yoga for the yoga population and especially for those that have complex medical history.”

- Injuries are increasing – greater than 5,500 yoga-related injuries in 2007
- Incurring a total cost of approximately \$108 million on our healthcare system
- The most common injury being seen is disc injury with extrusion₂

According to Ginger Garner, “Yoga must evolve from its ancient practice to incorporate what we know about the practice of medicine and rehabilitation today. The PYT method has taken the evidence based medicine and put it up against the ancient practice of yoga and it evolved it into a very safe and effective form of yoga to be utilized by healthcare professionals”₁.

Hierarchy of Focus with the PYT Method and in my classes:

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1. Yogic Breath – Links to the Autonomic Nervous system
 - a. Abdomino-diaphragmatic breath
 - b. TATD breath – improved spinal stabilization, large carryover for functional training with ADLs
2. Stability must precede mobility
 - a. Subtle body recognition - science is based on person to slow down their practice enough to notice subtle body movements
 - b. Subtle body comprehension and application
 - c. Creating stability first, followed by mobility
 - i. Yoga should not about flexibility or mobility, it's about stability and controlling the mobility in a stable manner.
 - ii. Lumbopelvic stabilization takes precedence, then scapulohumeral stabilization.

How can PYT benefit your company?

1. First, and foremost, your clients, even those with complex medical diagnoses, will be able to perform yoga within safe parameters by a licensed Physical Therapist to achieve the proven benefits yoga has to offer. With consistent performance, each student will gain control over their breath which will allow him/her to manage symptoms of anxiety, stress and depression, as well as aid in improved mental alertness, concentration, and sleep patterns. Physically, he/she will notice improved muscle and bone strength, endurance, flexibility, postural alignment, and body awareness. He/she will also experience improved circulation, digestion, hormonal balance, immune function and possible weight loss. Most importantly, he/she will experience an improved sense of overall wellbeing.
2. Second, it will allow you to continue care and an established relationship with your clients following discharge from your rehabilitative services when perhaps insurance has limited more visits. This program would allow these patients to continue working toward their personal goals in a safe and effective manner and still paying less than most co-payments required for rehabilitation.
3. Third, it is a great way to introduce a cash-based, revenue-generating program to counterbalance the decline of insurance reimbursement rates for rehabilitative purposes.

Ideas for Implementing the PYT Method for Wellness –

1. Yoga, when practiced twice per week, has been found to be an effective treatment for the management of LBP. Yoga was shown to help people suffering from LBP cope with pain and depression more effectively than “standard medical care”³.

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2. Following discharge from rehab services, clients could enter a PYT I Beginner Yoga class which would teach the foundation of PYT (see the algorithm). The series would begin in supine with students learning various breathing methods and the medical intention for each. They would master the TATD breath utilized for lumbopelvic stabilization and protection of the spinal with all poses. They would be transitioned from poses beginning in supine, then prone, then seated, then quadraped, and lastly, standing, increasing degrees of freedom as core stabilization improves. The use of external supports (straps/blocks) are used until the client has the intrinsic strength to maintain appropriate stabilization. This could be set up in a weekly or biweekly, 6 class series.
3. Then, upon graduating from the PYT I, they could enter PYT II session of more intermediate poses (weekly or biweekly, 10 class series) before transitioning them back to a regular yoga class. These classes would need to be taken in a specific order as each class would build on the previous.
4. Lastly, they could begin an advanced PYT III class (10 class series) with more advanced dynamic poses before recommendation for re-entry into a “standard” yoga class.

The 15 Precepts of PYT₄ –

1. PYT uses multi-faceted Pentagon of Wellness Model – a holistic biopsychosocial model of diagnostic assessment and management.
2. PYT is founded around Transversus-Abdominus Assisted Thoraco-Diaphragmatic Breath (TATD)
3. PYT teaches mastery of breath before teaching postures (asana)
4. PYT believes biomechanical analysis in poses (asana) is paramount and should always focus on protection via stabilization of the spinal column first, with mobilization as a secondary focus.
5. PYT certifies licensed medical/health care professionals and their assistants.
6. PYT is developed upon seven evidence based physiological principles
 - a. Kinesthetic awareness and the senses – neurofeedback/Modulation of nociceptive input via Gate theory mechanism, Reflexes, Tactile sense, Vestibular sense, Visual sense
 - b. Respiration
 - c. Stabilization and Motor Control (neuromuscular and musculoskeletal) – general joint, lumbopelvic, scapulohumeral
 - d. Mobilization – general joint, neural, myofascial restriction and release
 - e. Balance

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- f. Support – Intrinsic and Extrinsic
 - g. Relaxation and Meditation
7. PYT prioritizes homeostasis and stabilization (of the individual, including joints, from a proximal to distal direction)
 8. PYT combines western and Ayurvedic evaluation methods in order to prescribe yoga as medicine.
 9. PYT integrates structural alignment, four principles of evidence-based biomechanics, seven physiological foundations, functional outcomes, research, complementary and alternative medicine methods, western rehabilitation and psychology with yoga and Ayurveda.
 10. PYT utilizes sound therapy, use of music and voice development as therapy.
 11. PYT teaches dynamic rehabilitation via internally supported poses (asana) and passive rehabilitation methods via externally supported poses (asana).
 12. PYT teaches non weight bearing headstands and non-cervical weight bearing shoulder stands.
 13. PYT emphasizes protection of joint integrity during all postures.
 14. PYT is non-dogmatic and welcoming to all disciplines and types of yoga; and is inclusive of all religions and spiritual belief systems.
 15. PYT guides its students to seek the self-pursuant to one's duty/vision in life (dharma).

References:

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3. Williams K, Abildso C, Steinberg L, Doyle E, Epstein B, Smith D, Hobbs G, Gross R, Kelley G, Cooper L. Evaluation of the effectiveness and efficacy of Iyengar yoga therapy on chronic low back pain. *Spine.* 2009 September 1:34(19) 2066-76.
4. Garner, G. The Fit & Fearless Pocket Guide: Guide to Best Practices for Low Back Pain. E-book. Living Well, Inc., NC. 2010-2012.

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