

Brooklyn Heights Behavioral Associates presents:

*Live Yoga with a Licensed Therapist: Utilizing Trauma-Informed, Evidence-Based Treatment with Eastern Practice*

A workshop by licensed clinicians

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# Agenda

- Research on the effectiveness of yoga in assisting trauma treatment
- Live demo: trauma-informed yoga practice

# Research: Yoga and PTSD

- Current treatments for PTSD: high rates of incompleteness
- 2014 Study:
  - Participants that practiced yoga in combination with trauma treatment showed significant decreases in PTSD symptom severity, and in participation in maladaptive “tension reduction” activities such as self-injury.
  - Participants in the yoga intervention also reported greater decreases in dissociative and depressive symptoms in comparison with the control group.

Danylchuk, 2019; Emerson, Rhodes, Spinazzola, Stone, Suvak, van der Kolk, & West, 2014; Telles, Singh, & Balkrishna, 2012

# Research: Trauma & the Body

- Trauma's effect on the central nervous system: the activation of our flight/fight response sends the brain signals that the body is not safe.
- Research shows that when bodywork - like yoga - helps to release tension in the hip flexor, parasympathetic nervous system function improves.
- Yoga postures can help the body to gradually open areas that have contracted due to the body's freeze response and protective postures that have developed after trauma.
- A recent study indicates that participants in upright postures report experiencing more excitement, enthusiasm, and feeling strong, in addition to higher self-esteem and fewer reports of negative emotions and social fear.

Danylchuk, 2019; Cottingham et al., 1988; Nair et al., 2015

# Research: Postures of Safety

- When the body feels safe, muscles relax and the parasympathetic nervous system can “rest and digest,” and assist with growth, restoration, and healing.
- Postures of safety allow the body’s heart and central organs to remain open and at ease.
- Savasana, which asks practitioners to rest in a supine position with all major organs exposed, requires full presence and full relaxation.
  - It is common for those new to the practice and/or experiencing hyperarousal to have difficulty with this final resting posture.

Danylchuk, 2019; Iyengar & Menuhin, 2003

# Research: Benefits of trauma-informed practice cont.

- Studies show that mindfulness practices (such as meditation and nonjudgmental attention to experiences in the present moment) may increase emotion regulation abilities.
- Yoga practice with a skilled instructor can help people with PTSD symptoms confront the physical symptoms of trauma (including dissociation) in a way that traditional psychotherapy may not.
- Trauma-informed yoga instructors are trained to connect and observe their students' affect in an effort to bring balance to the nervous system and assist with self-regulation.

Scotland-Coogan & Davis, 2016; Emerson et. al 2014; Danylchuk, 2019

# Research: Yoga in the U.S.

**2003:** 15 million people practicing yoga

**2016:** 36 million people practicing yoga

# Live Demo

“This being human is a guest house. Every morning is a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor...Welcome and entertain them all. Treat each guest honorably. The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.”

-Rumi

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