

YOGA FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS

Professional Yoga Therapy Training

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Yoga Therapy offers a vision of health at each level of the individual, physical, energetic, emotional, psychological and spiritual.

1. DEFINE CONDITION

Breast cancer affects both men and women through the growth of abnormal cells in breast tissue without normal controls. The cellular mass (tumor) can be invasive, allowing cancer cells to travel outside of breast tissue, or non-invasive (in-situ) which remains within the breast tissue.

1. DESCRIPTION

Describe the person and / or conditions at the level of the five Koshas.

Examination of the conditions found and separation present in each of the Koshas.

I. Annamayakosha – the physical body

In relation to the physical body, separation is seen as a lack of body awareness. Separation occurs from potential "shut down" to all body sensations.

Conditions found in the physical systems of the body:

- **Circulatory system** –
Draws circulation to tumor creating its own blood source, reducing capacity to support other systems, stress response of increase blood pressure and heart rate, decrease in red and/or white blood cells, and the possibility of hemorrhage.
- **Respiratory system** –
Scar tissue from surgery, protective postures and low red blood cell counts will / can impair function of respiration.
- **Immune system** –
Treatments of breast cancer decrease and tax immune response. Depression and hopelessness will also decrease immunity.
- **Digestive and elimination systems** –
Treatments of breast cancer can result in side effects of nausea, vomiting, diminished appetite, diarrhea and decreased absorption of nutrients may/ can impairs all body systems.

- **Nervous system**
Anxiety and fear will affect nervous system. Continual physical, emotional, and spiritual stresses increase the release of stress hormone which are destructive to healing process.
Exhaustion, confusion, forgetfulness, and insomnia may also occur.
- **Endocrine system –**
Breast cancer is an estrogen related disease, creating an imbalance in the endocrine system, hormonal imbalances, menstrual disorders.
- **Reproductive system –**
Treatment of breast cancer can result in either permanent or temporary sterility.
- **Musculoskeletal system –**
This system is weakened due to treatments, protective postures, and/or lack of activity.

II. Pranamayakosha – the energy body

In relation to the energy body, separation manifests as a lack of awareness of the breath as well as the flow of energy in the body. It could also be a separation from nature. This separation from breath, the flow of energy in the body, and the natural world are key factors in the onset of illness.

Conditions present in the energy body:

Affecting breath and energy due to feelings of depression and protective posturing (body image in breast area is diminished), separation from all prana vayus, surgery and medications can diminish prana and effect patterns of energy.

- Lack of breath awareness
- Low level of energy
- Depression, anxiety, fear, (also affect physical energy)
- **The nadis**
Surgery and medications could impair the free circulation of energy in the subtle body affecting the nadis.
- **The Prana Vayus**
Surgery and medications could impaired the free circulation of energy in the subtle body affecting the PranaVayus as well.

III. Manamayakosha – the emotional body

In relation to the psycho-emotional body, separation manifests as a separation from society in a model of "me against them" attitude. Another form of separation is from parts of ourselves. These are all aspects of ourselves which are repressed or denied. These unconscious beliefs form the basis of daily living

patterns where we separate from other people, even those in our family who should be the foundation of our emotional support.

Conditions found in the emotional body:

- Feelings of fear in general and anger will create separation from positive emotions.
- Inertia, self pity.
- Fear of death.
 - Depression.
 - Emotional pain.
 - Anxiety about what could happen to them and their loved ones.
 - Despair and hopelessness.
 - Shame about appearance changes (loss of hair, surgery to the breast).
 - Loneliness, feeling of being alone in the world.
 - Guilt for having put one's loved ones through so much pain
 - Inability to nurture self at the heart or through loving relationships with others.
 - Not being able to take care of the self physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.
 - Living a transition in life, the children are leaving home, divorce.

IV. Vijnyamakosha – the witness body

In relation to the witness body, the part of ourselves that has the ability to see the separation at the various levels and allows us to change, the **Yoga Therapy** process is one of deconditioning and deprogramming our core beliefs.

Conditions found in the witness body:

- Disconnection from the feminine / sexual identity provides separation on this kosha.
- “Why me?”
- Is my biology, my biography?
- Am I being punished? What have I done wrong?

V. Anandamayakosha – the bliss body

In relation to the bliss body, separation manifests as a denial of our true nature and the disconnection from the Spirit, the most powerful source of healing.

Conditions in the bliss body:

- Inability of breast cancer patients to see wholeness and surrendering themselves to universal consciousness.
- Increased identity with ego and self contribute to this separation.
- Separation occurs as a result of not knowing the true essence of one's being.

3. Relevance at each of the 7 chakras to Breast Cancer

- **The Chakras**

- **Muladhara** – level of the perineum.
Ungrounded, separation from the earth, feelings of insecurity and fear, especially fear of death.
- **Swadisthana** –level of the organs of reproduction.
Separation from intimate relationships (spouse, family) and one's own sexuality.
- **Manipura** – level of digestive system, solar plexus.
Low self-esteem, separation from community, feelings of isolation.
- **Anahata** – level of the cardiopulmonary system. The breast area .
Inability to feel loving kindness toward self and others, separation from loving relationships.
- **Vishuddha** – level of the throat.
Diminished capacity for expression of creative and true self, separation from inner self wisdom and creative ways to communicate the true self.
- **Ajna** – level of the Third Eye.
Loss of faith, hope, separation from one's spirituality.
- **Sahasrara** – at the top of the head
Lack of sense of union with universal unity consciousness, separation from Divine Energy.

4. RELEVANCE OF AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

Tumor growth in cancer is related to an **excess of Kapha**. There is an accumulation of ama (toxins) and poor agni (digestive fire) indicating a **deficiency of Pitta**. **Vata** is imbalanced through fear and anxiety.

5. LIST BASIC OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR 8 WEEK COURSE

Establish a program using techniques and methods to achieve the wellness objective.

The intention for this eight week class is to develop tools and techniques for coping with breast cancer that focus on the whole person, the Five Kosha Model. The **Yoga Therapy** program allows the student to be a perceptive self-observer of the physical body, the flow of energy and breath through the body, of feelings and emotions, as well as to attune more deeply to witness consciousness, creating awareness of these experiences. The student will take back his/her responsibility towards wellness and health.

The needs of the student are assessed through both observation and intuition on the part of the teacher as well as the student. This program will embrace a nonjudgemental, supportive, and safe (nonviolent) environment.

6. DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Breast cancer patients and survivors in varying stages of wellness. The class will be offered at a cancer wellness center.

Tools and techniques

We will explore gentle stretching, restorative postures using props, breath awareness, relaxation, guided imagery and meditation, sankalpa or positive affirmations, mudras, mantras, poetry, and inspirational readings, chanting and sharing, using principles of acceptance and non-judgement in an environment that is supported and safe for the participant to heal and grow.

General Plan

The practice that we develop is of course not static and will change along with the changing needs of the group or individual.

Week 1 - "Listening to the Body"

Focus: Increase the mobility of the arms, and grounding.

Week 2 - "Breath of Life"

Focus: Move with the breath in a smooth and easy rhythm.

Week 3 - "Emotions ~ Energy in Motion"

Focus: Observe the emotions as they arise throughout the practice.

Week 4 - "I love me" ~ Cultivating Compassion

Focus: Forgiveness to myself, nothing is wrong.

Week 5 - "Seeing yourself Inside Out" ~ Yoga Nidra

Focus: The meaning of illness is to point us back toward greater awareness and balance.

Week 6 - "Moving towards Stillness"

Focus: Find the inner healing sanctuary within oneself. Meditation.

Week 7 - "Cultivating Joy"

Focus: Reunite with oneself.

Week 8 - "Bringing it Home" ~ Integration

Focus: integration of all techniques explored.

7. WELLNESS FACTORS

Pranayama

- **Adhama svasa** (abdominal breathing)
It is a calming breath, which brings awareness to the abdomen and thus stimulates Vata that is lacking in most cancer.

- **Nadi Sodhana** (alternate nostril breathing)
Balances breath and recommended immune systems disorders such as cancer
Cleansing, relaxing, balances ANS.

Mudra

- **Ushas mudra** (46)
Facilitates endorphin release, a sense of well being.
Increases immunity, especially in cancer.
Helpful for immune system imbalance.
Balances Kapha, Pitta, Vata.
- **Garuda mudra** (60)
Respiratory and endocrine function enhancement.
Balances both sides of body.
Good for paired organs / tissues

Asana

- **Archer Pose (Seated or Standing)**
Increases ROM in upper body.
Heart opening.
Stimulates lymph area in armpits.
- **Ardha Matsyendrasana**
Activates First, Second and Third Chakras.
Opens rib cage and the breath.
Massages the digestive organs and helps elimination.
Stimulates lymph flow and the immune system.
Sedates the nervous system.
- **Tadasana**
Connecting and grounding toward earth, Muladhara chakra.
Balances all 5 elements with focus on earth.
Balances all doshas.

Yoga Nidra / Visualization / Guided imagery

- **Healing heart meditation**
Opening Anahata chakra
Cultivating self acceptance, awareness
- **Healing waters visualization**
To access and become aware of our own healing nature.

Other:

- **Journaling, Poetry, Blessings**
- **Mantra (Gayatri)**
- **Lovingkindness Meditation**

8. Marketing plan

- Presentations to support groups existing in Wellness Centers.
- Flyers and posters to other health care (oncology specific) centers (hospitals, clinics, associations).
- Articles in local newspapers about what **Yoga Therapy** could be useful to reduce stress in breast cancer patients.

Resources

Northrup, C. Women's Body, Women's Wisdom.

LePage, Joseph. IYT, Professional Yoga Therapist Manual. Integrative Yoga Therapy. 2004.

LePage, Joseph and Lilian LePage. Yoga, Teachers's Toolbox. Integrative Yoga Therapy. 2003.

LePage, Joseph. Home Study Course. Integrative Yoga Therapy. 2003.

Geffen, J. The Journey Through Cancer.

www.simontoncenter.com, consulted on March 26, 2004.

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Vivekananda Kendra Yoga. Yoga and Cancer.

Blossom, Scott, LAC. Private Consultation.

10. Basic format for one class in series

Week 2 - "Breath of Life" Pranamayakosha

Therapeutic rationale

Calm, balance Vata, increase Pitta, awareness of energy in the body.

Pranayama Focus

Whole body breathing (PranaVidya)

Intake

- Opening of the class by chanting the "Gayatri Mantra"
- Bring the intention of the class into your heart and bring it into your practice
- Welcome
- Inquire as to any new discoveries since the last week class
- Introduction of breath focus

Body awareness

- Body scan

- Observing areas of tension, relaxation
- Attention to the flow of breath in the body

Breath awareness

- Natural respiration qualities (fast / slow, choppy /smooth, long /short, etc)
- Whole body Nadi Sodhana, right and left side

Sharing

- What did you notice about your breathing in both exercises?

Warm ups

- **Seated Vinyasa Warm-ups**

- Anjali mudra
Open arms out on inhale
Bring back arms at the heart on exhale

Let the arms up to the ceiling on inhale
Bring back arms at the heart on exhale

~ open the heart and increase gently the mobility of the arms, movements and breath in synchronicity to increase awareness of breath

- Gentle twist
- Seated cat stretches
- Shoulder shrugs with sigh breath
- Neck warm-ups
Up and down with breath
Right and left shoulder
Figure 8 with the chin

~ increase gently the mobility of the upper body, movements and breath in synchronicity to increase awareness of breath

- **Garbhasasana** Child Pose

Asanas

All performed to cue breath focus

- **Tadasana**
- **Tadasana** with variations of the arms and toes
- **Archer**
- **Nataraj 1**
- **Uttanasana**

- **Garbhasasana** kneeling to the floor, child pose
- **Makarasana** Crocodile
- **Ardha Bhujangasana** Sphinx
- **Savasana** Over to back
- **Apanasana** Head to knee, knee to chest
- **Supta Padangusthasana** Legs lifts / straight leg, one on the floor
- **Setubandhasana** Bridge pose
- Full body stretch on the floor

Yoga Nidra

- **Progressive relaxation**
(50%, 25%,...)
- **Point to point breath**
Inhale toes to head 3 times
Exhale to level of ankles
Exhale to level of knees
To top of head and return to toes progressively
- **Healing waters guided imagery**
- **Mukula mudra** (no 51)
Beak shape to draw healing energy into particular parts of the body

Meditation

- "Only Breath"
Poem by Rumi

Sharing / Closing

- Anjali mudra
- Chanting Gayatri Mantra
- Bring the intention of the class into your heart and bring it home.

Namaste