

FIBROMYALGIA

Fibromyalgia is considered to be in the rheumatology family. It is characterized by chronic, generalized aching muscles. The common characteristics of all fibromyalgia patients are the “tender points” located in specific areas of the body. An individual is considered to have fibromyalgia when eleven of the total eighteen points are tender. Other symptoms that may accompany the condition are fatigue, sleep-disturbance, headaches and irritable bowel syndrome.

ANNAMAYA KOSHA:

Chemicals are secreted by adrenals to mediate fight or flight response to stress. Adrenaline and other chemicals stimulate the sympathetic nervous system. Continued stress creates a neuro-endocrine imbalance in the body. Adrenals go into overdrive which has a number of effects:

- continued muscular contraction causing muscle spasms and pain
- limits ability of liver to breakdown tissue proteins which decreases energy availability to muscles.

- takes energy away from the digestive system leading to digestive imbalances.

- suppresses normal function of the immune system.

- adrenals become exhausted; patient experiences muscular pain, fatigue and often digestive problems.

The person is out of touch with their body. Those with a Kapha imbalance need to ground, stabilize and revitalize system, especially adrenals. Must revitalize and calm the adrenals to normalize function.

PRANAMAYA KOSHA:

Sympathetic nervous system is over stimulated creating shallow, rapid breathing. Fatigue or lack of energy in whole body—listless, ungrounded or numb. Imbalance in the muladhara chakra associated with basic survival issues like safety and security. Separation is from the flow of life energy.

MANOMAYA KOSHA:

The person is separated from and afraid of their emotions. They are “crushed by life”. They can be achievers, doers and driven people. They are isolated from Self, family and society. Symbols and imbalances: perfectionism, denial of self-care, needs recognition, resentful, self-righteous, unfocused, passive, not good enough, self-doubt. Looking at ayurveda, they need the fire to be brought down to earth. They need cooling, calming and balancing.

WITNESS:

The witness speaks,

“As she is separated from her true self, she cannot hear my voice as she continues to strive in constant motion driven by the force of her will. Perhaps the pain will become great enough to release her from the mask she wears, and she will hear my voice. As she listens, I will coach her to respond to outside stimuli in a way that is not violating herself. Instead of reacting immediately, she will learn to pause, use her breath, to actually feel her emotions without fear, without judgment. She will learn to let go of resentments that have blocked her energy, to let go of unrealistic expectations, and to realize she is loved just as she is. Once she reaches self-acceptance, she can open up her wounded heart as the real woman emerges. The mantra becomes, “Breath. Relax. Feel. Witness, Let Go.”

The therapist speaks,

“Create awareness of the connection between her emotions and the effect on her body. Expand yoga practice to include yoga nidra, allowing repressed feelings to bubble to the surface. Choose

cooling asanas. As feelings are accessed, make a recommendation to a professional specializing in emotional healing to reinforce the witness consciousness. Provide on-going revision, reinforcement and support during plateaus and setbacks. Support and encouragement during each step of the journey.”

ANANDAMAYA KOSHA:

This kosha represents our connection to a divine source. Separation from this source creates disharmony. Draw attention to where we have come from and the joy and peace that is always present. i.e. our breath is always present with or without our effort. Facilitate the realization of the innate unity of all things which may resolve internal and external conflict. Create harmony on a cellular level. i.e. prism metaphor. Utilize nature, its example of unity and our interconnectedness. Use affirmations.

TECHNIQUES:

Relax the muscular system by alternating contraction and the release of the muscles. Gentle, flowing movements, heart-felt relaxation, cooling restorative poses, asanas, somatic and Tai Chi are all helpful.

Asanas: half moon series, gentle sun salutations, bridge, frog, butterfly, knee to chest, warrior I, tree, spinal twists, seated boat, sphinx, cobra, forward bend, mountain.

Restoratives: supported bridge, bound angle, child, and corpse (all supported).

Pranayama: 3 part breath (focus on exhale), ujjayi, mouth breathing, sitkari, chandra bhedana, Nadi Shodhana (focus on inhale).

Mudra: yoga mudra, pashimotanasana, maha mudra, shanthy mudra, shambavi mudra, pushan mudra, pran, prithivi,

Sounds: O

Imagery: water to cool the pain and emotions. Earth to ground and connect.

Affirmation: I thankfully accept everything that is good for me, let it have its effect within me, and release everything that is spent.

EIGHT WEEK COURSE:

1. Introduction: What we know from the literature available—“Listening to and honoring our body”. Learn to observe sensations in the body, importance of exercise for fibromyalgia, how to manage limitations, time and how to set priorities.
2. “Breathing”—how breathing brings nourishment, strength and energy to the body. The way it is used to assist relaxation. The awareness of focusing on its movement through the body.
3. “Mindful movement”—the integration of breath and movement.
4. “Core strength”—finding the balance, realizing needs, moving from the center
5. “Quieting the mind”—accessing the witness and learning how to be your own coach.
6. “Whole heart”—exploring boundaries between self and others.
7. “The peaceful warrior”—recognizing the balance between will and surrender.
8. “Integration and celebrating the Self”

CLASS 7 OF EIGHT-WEEK COURSE:

“The Way of the Peaceful Warrior”

1. Welcome and check-in
 - a. have each student describe their present state of being.
 - b. Centering
 - c. warm-ups, joint opening series
2. Education – sharing and talking

3. Warm-ups, joint opening series
4. Asanas – tadasana, half sun salutations, modified ardha chadrasana, fire star forward bend, warrior II, modified side angle, modified tree, table, cat and dog, pigeon, belly down, half-locust, sphinx, to back, pelvic tilts to bridge, wind relieving pose, prone hamstring extensions, prone wide-angle, leg lowering, spinal twist, seated stick pose, forward bend, supine knees to chest (circles with sacrum).
5. Restorative yoga using visualization
6. Yoga Nidra
7. Seated quiet time with affirmation
8. Om

Now feel the rain, the cool rain across your shoulders, chest, belly, knees, feet and toes. Washing away the aches, the pain, cooling the fire. Releasing, letting go. Being present right here and right now. Now feel the gentle wash of the cool water across your back, the back of your head, shoulders, back, lower back, buttocks, legs, feet and toes. Washing away, releasing, cooling, letting go. Now feel the coolness on the front of the body and the back of the body, the entire body. Thank the water for taking our stuff and healing it. Come back to the breath. Feeling the rise and fall of the belly. Feeling the cool air against the nostrils. Feeling your back against the soft mat. Becoming aware of fingers and toes. Wiggling fingers and toes, gently rousing. Be still a moment. Enjoy the sensations.

–Bev Austin

Imager during supported mountain. Exhale, relax into the softness, fully supported. Focus on the belly feeling the rise and fall of the breath. No effort. Rise. Fall. Imagine you're floating in a wonderful pond of water. See the sky. The trees, the grasses gently waving in the breeze. Look at the pond. The water. A beautiful color. Shades of blue and green. See the light sparkling off the water. The blue green water. The gentle waves. Floating gently. Gently rocking. Exhale, relax into the sensation. Sinking deeper. Imagine reaching out and touching the water with your hands. Your feet. Not too hot, not too cold. Just feeling the perfect coolness. Swirl the water with your hands and feet. Connecting, relishing. Now feel a gently rain. So cool, so refreshing. The rain on your head, across the face, chest, arms, legs, feet and toes. Notice the rain washing away the stress. Washing away all the things that no longer serve you.

–Bev Austin