

## Trauma-Informed Yoga: A Toolbox for Therapists—47 Practices to Calm, Balance, and Restore the Nervous System

By Joanne Spence, MA, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT

PESI Publishing and Media, 2021

Reviewed by Savanna Scott

Joanne Spence's passion and expertise shine through *Trauma-Informed Yoga: A Toolbox for Therapists* as she brings a fresh perspective to a prevalent topic in our field. Seemingly increasingly, yoga therapists need to know how to navigate a world where so many people are living with remnants and shadows of past experiences but may not realize it or know how to ask for help. This book clearly illustrates and succinctly defines many critical elements of working with trauma survivors while outlining practical and realistic ways to use both foundational principles and specific yoga therapy tools.

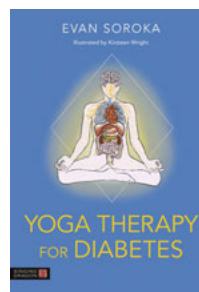
Spence is clear from the outset that *Trauma-Informed Yoga* is neither a replacement for formal yoga therapy or yoga training nor a deep dive into yogic philosophy; her goal is to share simple mind-body principles and practices. The first half of the book feels more didactic in nature, whereas the second half is filled with nearly 50 yoga tools that provide a framework for self-nourishment for yoga therapists and clinicians as well as practices to use with clients. I would even go so far as to say that Chapter 4: "Polyvagal Theory Essentials" may be the most easily digestible plunge into polyvagal theory that I have found; this alone would be enough for me to recommend the book to clients and practitioners alike!

Although I enjoyed the vast majority of the practices in the toolbox (including sighing breath, the "inner speedway" mindfulness practice, and various gentle movement practices), I was surprised to see a few iterations of breath retention in the toolbox. Box breathing and other styles of holds are taught frequently in both yoga and mental health settings, but my clinical and personal experiences have given me the strong stance that breathwork beyond simple techniques (e.g., equal breathing) should only be used with trauma survivors if the clinician has further training in breathwork; a solid understanding of the neurophysiology of trauma, particularly the physiological effect of a retained startle response; and, most importantly, the individual's trauma history. Spence does give a disclaimer that breath retention is a more advanced practice, but it still seemed to me perhaps a bit too advanced given the level of experience that she expects of her readers.

Spence intended this book to be a how-to for talk therapists to begin incorporating yoga into their practices, and she manages to remain easily accessible to those who may be newer to the field or newer to working with trauma survivors while still including pearls of wisdom that will resonate with even seasoned yoga therapists. Her career, which spans two decades in the yoga realm and three decades in the mental health field, undoubtedly provided a solid foundation, but the personal experiences Spence shares brought a more relatable air to *Trauma-Informed Yoga*. Because of my diverse training and clinical experience, I'm often asked for recommenda-

tions for basic yoga practices, simple trauma-sensitive practices, and accessible resources for clinicians who would like to add yoga skills to their repertoire. I'm thrilled to have such a well-written and multifaceted, yet practical and approachable work in my recommendation toolbox!

*Savanna Scott, MS, LPC, LAMFT, is a licensed psychotherapist, licensed bodyworker, and integrative yoga teacher and yoga therapist in private practice in Arkansas. She has more than 500 hours of specialized training in trauma resolution, including Somatic Experiencing and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and has a passion for helping people find freedom, joy, and authenticity in their lives. Savanna is also enrolled in an IAYT-accredited yoga therapy training program.*



## Yoga Therapy for Diabetes

By Evan Soroka

Singing Dragon, 2021

Reviewed by Cynthia Moore

In *Yoga Therapy for Diabetes*, Evan Soroka, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, skillfully shares how to practice effectively as a yoga therapist while staying within the profession's scope of practice. I expect that this book will become the textbook of choice for yoga therapy students who wish to understand or specialize in diabetes, prediabetes, or related conditions such as metabolic syndrome. The writing is solid, grounded, and without hyperbole. The author has drawn from the best available knowledge in diabetes and yogic literature to create a synthesis of excellent sources from so many fields: the psychology of diabetes, diabetes science, empowerment, and yogic science.

This is the guide I wish I'd had 20 years ago when I began to include yoga in the care of people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes. I am grateful that it has now arrived to empower the practice of yoga therapy for people with diabetes.

Yoga therapists will appreciate these valuable inclusions: guidance on diabetes-specific yoga therapy assessment; practical treatment sequences; thorough case reports; and diabetes-specific cues for pranayama, asana, Yoga Nidra, and meditation. The author includes safety guidelines and cautions where appropriate for diabetes complications such as neuropathy (nerve damage or lack of sensation), hyperglycemia, hypoglycemia, and depression. Soroka provides enough science to allow familiarity with type 1 and type 2 diabetes while also presenting the mental health challenges that often accompany this disease.

*Yoga Therapy for Diabetes* should be a valuable resource for physicians, registered dietitians, certified diabetes educators, nurses, and mental health clinicians with an interest in patient self-regulation and yoga. The chapter on diabetes and mental health, for example, addresses some big questions related to motivation and

recovery from the stresses of living with chronic disease. The author notes, “Developing qualities like forgiveness, adaptiveness, rest, and relaxation—to let go of mistakes and depersonalize diabetes from their sense of self—is as important as willpower.”

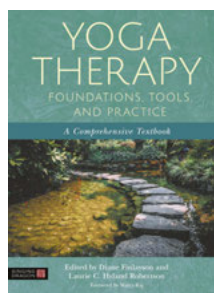
This book blazes a durable trail designed to lead individuals with diabetes into enhancing their vitality and becoming active participants in their own diabetes self-care. The author’s view of the healing value of Yoga Nidra, for example, matches my own clinical experience: “Through direct experience of surrendering effort, people grant access to the subconscious underpinnings of their conditioned beliefs, reactivity, or aversion.”

Because Soroka includes a little of her own experiences of having been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as a teen and the benefits she obtained from the practice of yoga, the book is also honest, highly relatable, and useful for a person living with diabetes. The author synthesizes truths from her life with her evident skills as a yoga therapist. She doesn’t just give the person dealing with diabetes “an oar” but starter paddles, put-in and pull-out spots, and the felt sense of ease in being joined in the boat by a skillful guide. My one upgrade recommendation for this book would be to include both the common English name and the Sanskrit term for each pose and practice, especially with the treatment sequences.

Soroka shares the perspective that diabetes can be an opportunity and teacher as well as a challenge. The book outlines a path of effective practices for well-being built on foundations of self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-efficacy—featuring yoga, of course, and the needs of the individual. It is clear she recognizes the fact that her words and her story can inspire, and that others with diabetes as well as yoga therapists will find and cherish this book.

I fully expect this personal, practical, and satisfyingly specific guide to join other classic yoga therapy manuals as an invaluable and trusted resource. I also imagine that some of the principles or treatment sequences will serve as a basis for individual case reports or other yoga research.

*Cynthia Moore, MS, C-IAYT, is a registered dietitian, certified diabetes educator, and integrative health/wellness coach who consults and shares her research regarding yoga interventions with many organizations. She started a diabetes empowerment group program at the University of Maryland and an 8-Weeks Towards Wellness program for prediabetes/diabetes at the University of Virginia.*



Yoga Therapy Foundations, Tools, and Practice:

A Comprehensive Textbook

Edited by Diane Finlayson and

Laurie C. Hyland Robertson

Singing Dragon, 2021

Reviewed by Felicia Tomasko

In *Yoga Therapy Foundations, Tools, and Practice*, editors Diane Finlayson, MA, MFA, C-IAYT, and Laurie C. Hyland Robertson, MS, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, offer an excellent addition to the growing canon of contemporary literature on yoga therapy. The title itself says this is “a comprehensive textbook,” and the content within the pages proves out. While this is not the first textbook on yoga therapy to be released over the past decade, it is a thorough and well-written survey fit for a multifaceted healthcare discipline.

Many who practice yoga therapy in our modern age have extrapolated from words written for people whose daily lives were far different from our own. The challenges that we as humanity face today and what we require from the healing practices of our *sadhana* (methodical discipline by which knowledge or a goal is attained) must be considered. This book accomplishes that task in a way that speaks to yoga therapy students and seasoned professionals.

In the introduction, Finlayson sets the tone for inclusivity and critical thinking. This tone is carried throughout all of the sections and chapters, which were written by more than 30 experts, researchers, educators, and practicing clinicians from around the world. They represent the era in which we yoga therapists now live and practice alongside our compatriots in Western biomedicine, mental health, and research.

The textbook is thoughtfully organized into four sections: Section I is Yoga Foundations: Traditions and Tools of Yoga, Ayurveda, and Tantra; Section II is Biomedical and Psychological Foundations; Section III: Yoga Therapy Practice and Tools; and Section IV: Professional Practices.

Section I provides a discussion of the historical and textual foundations that we draw upon in this profession. Christopher Key Chapple, PhD, contributed a distillation of early foundations—citing sources including the *Rig Veda* and Upanishads for a historical primer that allows us to respect and understand the tradition. This opening segues into philosophical understandings of key concepts from writers of various lineages (including Amy Wheeler, PhD, C-IAYT; Sarajeen Rudman, MS, MA; Leigh Blashki, C-IAYT; and Gina Macauley, C-IAYT). Through their perspectives, we are exposed to the vast array of the multifaceted and multidimensional teachings that makes yoga therapy such a unique discipline.

Section II offers an essential survey of some of the information from which yoga therapists benefit, including insights from the Western biomedical understanding of physiology and psychology. Authors including Robyn Tiger, MD, RYT-500, C-IAYT; Rachel Krentzman, PT, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT; Marlysa Sullivan, DPT, C-IAYT; Dorica J. Tucker, PsyD, C-IAYT; and Michael J. de Manincor, PhD, cover a range of pertinent topics that include physiology for yoga therapists, yoga therapy and pharmaceuticals,

considerations for people in the midst of cancer treatment, and childhood development and sensory systems as they relate to yoga therapy. Crystal L. Park, PhD, provided a thoughtful chapter, “Research Literacy: A Critical Skill for Yoga Therapists,” which stands as a primer for the yoga therapist who may not have research training but would like to interpret or contribute to the growing body of yoga therapy-related research.

Section III is composed of two subsections: Therapeutic Skills and Yoga Therapy Tools. While each of these subsections is an area of study in its own right, the chapters present a survey of the depth and breadth of perspectives as well as some of the techniques essential to the field. Tracey L. Meyers, PsyD, C-IAYT, discusses the importance of the therapeutic relationship, an essential part of the training and ongoing practice of yoga therapy. In “Cultivating Resilience and Safety in Yoga Therapy Practice,” Nya Patrinos, C-IAYT, draws upon the canon of yogic texts while also discussing informed consent and the foundations of creating safety. In “Bridging Cultural Gaps in Yoga Therapy,” Robert H. Stucky, MDiv, emphasizes the importance of crossing comfortably from one frame of reference or worldview to another.

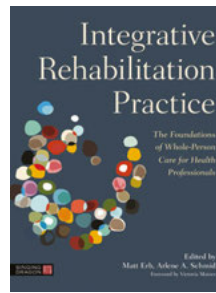
While yoga therapy tools are infinite, essential techniques are synthesized in a way that both informs best practices and sets a foundation for further study. These include: accessible asana, pranayama, ayurvedic asana and pranayama interventions, *mudra* (gestures), *bandha* (locks), Yoga Nidra, meditation, and *yamas* and *niyamas* (lifestyle practices).

Section IV speaks to the 21st-century embodiment of a modern yoga therapist. Gail Parker, PhD, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, reminds us in her chapter “Ethics in Yoga Therapy Practice” of the ethical foundation in the texts and how to apply them today. “The Business of Yoga Therapy” explains the entrepreneurial mindset and the essential foundations of successful yoga therapy practice. “Systems Health: Yoga Therapy Beyond the Studio” and “Career Development: Yoga Therapy Delivery Settings” round out the conversation for those hanging their shingle for the first time.

While this book includes topics that cover the essential competencies for yoga therapy training and practice, it is not a substitute for reading some of the source texts or for deeper dives into pediatrics, mental health, or ayurveda. Educators would do well to add this to yoga therapy curricula in survey courses and to recognize the diverse perspectives and challenges of modern practice. Those who are interested in becoming yoga therapy students will find essential context for their field of interest. And those of us who have been practicing can benefit from a broader understanding of our chosen profession, our calling of the heart and of service. This book provides essential insight into the current cultural context of yoga therapy.

*Felicia Tomasko, RN, C-IAYT, is a yoga therapist, mental health professional, and the editor of LA Yoga Magazine. A former board member of the National Ayurvedic Medical Association, she is a longtime educator and mentor in the field of yoga therapy.*

*Editor’s note: YTT editor Laurie Hyland Robertson is an editor of this book and did not participate in the review process.*



## Integrative Rehabilitation Practice: The Foundations of Whole-Person Care for Health Professionals

*Edited by Matt Erb and Arlene A. Schmid*

Singing Dragon, 2021

*Reviewed by Kim Mollo*

*I*ntegrative Rehabilitation Practice is a gem of a text for those interested in deepening their understanding of the various theories, frameworks, and holistic therapeutic practices currently categorized under the client-centered model of whole-person rehabilitation care. Edited by Matt Erb, PT, and Arlene Schmid, PhD, OTR, and containing the collected contributions of many well-versed integrative healthcare professionals, this book manages to capture the wide range of integrative models and treatment approaches in one comprehensive volume.

At first glance, I was fully expecting this text to be written in a more formal scientific format; I was surprised (and somewhat unsure) about the first-person narrative. However, as I delved into the content, I quickly recognized that the first-person stylistic choice greatly increased the accessibility of the information. With that, I took the editors’ advice, employed a “beginner’s mind,” and reconnected with my holistic yoga and occupational therapy roots. In the end, I found the personalized touch supportive and reaffirming, as it gently invited me to appropriately challenge my own prior understandings of the topics being presented.

Section One: Foundations of Integrative Rehabilitation Practice grounds the reader foundationally and historically, clearly defining and operationalizing the theories, models, and frameworks that have led to the current understanding of integrative rehabilitation practices (IRP) and the ongoing challenges faced by clients traversing a fragmented and reductionist healthcare system. Chapter 4, “Upstream Influences,” is timely, as it specifically and clearly explains what is meant by “social determinants of health.” Given our increased awareness of the ongoing and often seemingly endless challenges of health inequality and systemic racism during the COVID-19 pandemic and the #BlackLivesMatter movement, this chapter succinctly provides evidence for the societal factors that further affect already-disconnected treatment approaches and pull us away from a holistic treatment model, limiting clients’ health, well-being, and healing experiences. The end of Section One thoughtfully requires the practitioner to integrate whole-person clinical reasoning methodology while considering the available physiological, sociological, and psychological models of evidence-based care. Clear prompts nudge readers to consider how they may incite change and support future equity in the delivery of services.

Section Two: Applications of Integrative Rehabilitation Practice develops (and for those more experienced, enhances) the reader’s knowledge base, as it explains and supports overarching practical methodologies for enacting IRP with clients through a variety of modalities. Chosen chapter topics are comprehensive and include deepening narratives, as well as exploring biofeedback, breathing, meditation, sensation, imagery, movement, cognitive behavioral integration, spirituality, music as medicine, nutrition, and reframing manual therapy.



The final section, Additional Delivery Models for a Changing Practice, effectively closes the loop on this impressive volume, addressing yoga therapy, the power of group treatment, and IRP and mental health. Furthermore, the Appendices provide a brief but important instruction on what is meant by the term “evidence,” a primer for trauma-informed care, and an explanation of relational frame theory interventions for transforming pain into purpose.

The book continually interjects experiential pauses that encourage the reader to embark on their own journey of self-study as they digest the multitude of key narratives presented under the IRP model.

The editors humbly acknowledge at the outset of this volume the unmet and growing need for this type of compilation; the

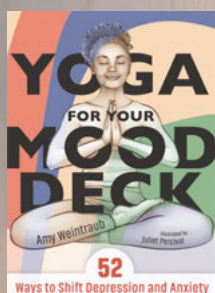
diverse backgrounds of the co-authors and the team-based writing approach effectively bridge current knowledge gaps for IRP practitioners. The breadth and depth of the topics captured within these highly recommended pages will continue to nurture and educate practitioners of all levels for years to come.

*Kim Mollo, OTD, OTR/L, is an associate professor in the Occupational Therapy Department at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia and a Kripalu/Pranakriya Yoga instructor. She owns a private pediatric occupational therapy practice where she helps clients develop the skills necessary to reach beyond current limitations to achieve independence and transform their lives.*

## Also on the Shelves

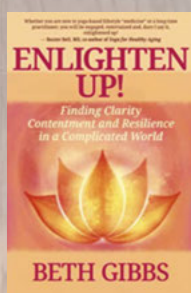
### More Media for Yoga Therapists

**We aren't always able to print full reviews, but here are a few more titles of interest by our members and friends. (Note that we may feature some media later or on other platforms.)**



Yoga for Your Mood Deck:  
52 Ways to Shift Depression  
and Anxiety

By *Amy Weintraub*  
Sounds True, 2021



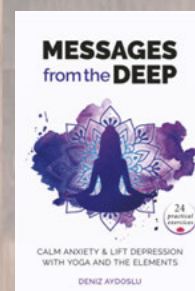
Enlighten Up!: Finding Clarity,  
Contentment, and Resilience in  
a Complicated World

By *Beth Gibbs*  
Emerald Lake Books, 2021



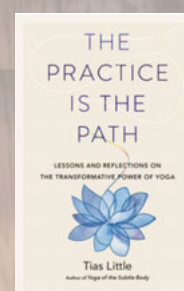
MetaAnatomy: A Modern  
Yogi's Practical Guide to the  
Physical and Energetic Anatomy  
of Your Amazing Body

By *Kristin Leal*  
Sounds True, 2021



Messages from the Deep: Calm  
Anxiety and Lift Depression with  
Yoga and the Elements

By *Deniz Aydoslu*  
Golden River Books, 2021



The Practice is the Path: Les-  
sons and Reflections on the  
Transformative Power of Yoga

By *Tias Little*  
Shambhala Publications, 2020