

# YOGA BULLETIN

Kripalu yoga teachers association

education inspiration community

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## Integrating Ayurveda into yoga teaching

### A Q&A with Larissa Hall Carlson

Larissa Hall Carlson teaches the workshop Ayurvedic Pranayama for the Doshas at ➤ [Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17](#).

As part of the Kripalu School of Yoga's new, enhanced 500-hour curriculum, Integrating Ayurveda into Yoga Teaching is now being offered as an elective module for anyone enrolled in 500-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training. So, how are the two disciplines connected, and how can Ayurveda enrich your teaching and your life? We asked ➤ [Larissa Hall Carlson](#), Dean of the Kripalu School of Ayurveda, to share the roots of these two ancient philosophies and explain how 21st-century yogis and yoga teachers can benefit from Ayurvedic practices.

▲ *Ayurveda is often defined as the sister science of yoga. What does that mean, exactly? Where do yoga and Ayurveda intersect?*

Both yoga and Ayurveda are interested in longevity, vitality, and self-awakening, and they offer complementary tools for that purpose. They are sister sciences for the lifelong path of self-investigation.

Ayurveda and yoga both have roots in the Vedas, the ancient wisdom texts of India. Though these sciences dovetail in many ways, one of the most important ways is through self-care techniques. Through diet, lifestyle, massage, and herbs, Ayurveda works to keep the body healthy and the mind peaceful, so that a dedicated yoga practitioner can more efficiently explore self-study and seek truth. Anyone who has tried to do yoga while bloated, constipated, worried, or sleep deprived knows that when the body is uncomfortable or the mind is unsettled, it's extremely difficult to concentrate on the mat. Mindful eating, living in harmony with the seasons, keeping good company, and choosing positive impressions for the sense organs are all helpful Ayurvedic techniques for purifying body and mind, allowing for smoother yoga practice and more concentrated meditation.

▲ *How can yoga teachers use Ayurveda to inform their teaching?*

Ayurvedic theory is used to adjust asana, pranayama, and meditation practices to best meet the needs of the seasons, times of day, seasons of life, and individual doshic imbalances. Practices for cooling excess pitta in the summer, settling high vata in the winter, or uplifting the heaviness of excess kapha in the spring can be used over a lifetime. It's important to recognize that *no* asana, pranayama, or meditation practice is perfect for any one dosha. Any dosha can practice any yoga technique, but ensuring that the technique enhances the practitioner's health, rather than aggravating imbalance, requires attention to how the technique is done. For example, Bhastrika pranayama can be done gently, for a short duration, with a downward dristi, and with a heavy blanket on the legs, in order to make it more grounded, soft, and warming in the vata season of winter, or for someone with a vata constitution. For someone practicing in the kapha season of spring, or someone with a kapha constitution, Bhastrika might be done with great vigor, faster speed, longer

### 500-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training

➤ [Find out more about our new offerings and electives for 2015.](#)

### Get the facts on 500

Questions about completing your 500-hour certification? ➤ [Check out our FAQs.](#)



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## Integrating Ayurveda into yoga teaching

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duration, and an upward dristi to make it more stimulating, warming, and light.

When a practitioner reaches a point of being more consistently healthy and harmonized, the dosha-balancing approach to yoga is not as needed. Eventually, the approach is chosen based on an intended outcome that's more subtle and powerful than the doshas—for instance, more intimately exploring nadis, chakras, marmas, and deeper koshas.

### ▲ *What is Kripalu's relationship with Ayurveda?*

Over the last decade, Kripalu has welcomed more and more Ayurveda into the retreat center, extending beyond the various depth trainings offered by the School of Ayurveda. Guests can experience Ayurvedic massages in Healing Arts, attend R&R Retreat workshops on Ayurveda, eat kitchari (an Ayurvedic recipe of rice and beans) at every meal in the Dining Hall, explore Ayurvedic beauty products in the Shop, and learn the Ayurvedic philosophy and daily practices in Healthy Living programs. We hope that this exposure empowers guests to explore these effective self-care practices.

### ▲ *How does the 5,000-year-old science of Ayurveda fit into contemporary life?*

Ayurveda is showing up everywhere lately, not just at yoga conferences and high-end spas but also in popular magazines and goody bags at the Oscars! The word is spreading fast about Ayurveda's simple, effective, safe, and inexpensive healing techniques. Unfortunately, most people don't have much time to devote to self-care, but, luckily, just a few simple changes in diet or lifestyle can bring about great healing and ease. Even the smallest commitment to self-care—a weekly practice of soothing abhyanga (oil massage), mindful eating to improve digestion, or avoiding stimulation to the senses an hour before bed to improve sleep—can leave you feeling more refreshed, relaxed, and rejuvenated. ■

➔ Find out more about the Kripalu School of Ayurveda.



## Chair Yoga and acupressure for well-being

by Lakshmi Voelker

Lakshmi Voelker offers the workshop Chair Yoga for the Rest of Us at  
➔ [Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17.](#)

Combining Chair Yoga and acupressure can relieve irritability, anxiety, fatigue, indigestion, and depression, as well as tension in the neck, back, and shoulders. It can also alleviate many of the discomforts associated with menstruation and menopause.

Here are three simple, grounding practices to share with your students at all levels. You'll need two chairs for each person.

**1. To relieve neck, back, and shoulder tension:** Sit in a chair with your arms crossed and your hands resting on your shoulders. Drop your chest toward your knees, letting your neck, head, and crossed arms hang down over your knees. Make sure that your chin is lifted. Hold for one minute, breathing deeply. Then, exhale as you pull your abdominal muscles toward your spine, and slowly roll your spine back up to a sitting position, raising your head last.

**2. To relieve irritability and anxiety:** Sit on the front edge of one chair with the second chair in front of you. Place your feet on the second chair, feet flat and knees bent and drawn together and up toward your chest. Remember to honor your level of flexibility and comfort. Rest both hands on top of your feet and place your index finger at the base of the area between your first and second toes. Press that point firmly for one to two minutes. If pressing the point isn't physically possible or comfortable in this position, visualize that you are doing so while resting your hands on your shins or knees.

**3. To relieve fatigue, indigestion, depression, and cramps:** Sit on the front edge of one chair with the second chair in front of you. Place your feet on the second chair, flat and about shoulder-width apart, with your knees together. Turn your heels slightly out. Place your palms on your hipbones so that your hands are angled in toward your groin. Spread your fingers open and place your middle fingers in the crease where your pelvis and thigh meet. Press down gently with your middle fingers for one to two minutes.

*Lakshmi Voelker, E-RYT 500, YA, IAYT, created Lakshmi Voelker Chair Yoga in 1982. Creator of the DVD Get Fit Where You Sit and the CD Lakshmi Voelker Chair Yoga, she has certified more than 1,000 teachers nationally and internationally, including health-care professionals at the Mayo Clinic and the New York City Department of Education.*





# Compassionate warrior

*A combat veteran charts a new course as a yoga teacher*

by J. L. Pizarro

I never believed anything bad could happen to me. I was raised in a middle-class suburb near San Juan, Puerto Rico. I was going to be a doctor, just as my parents wanted me to. As a pre-med student, I had a part-time job working in an emergency room. I saw births; I helped deliver a baby. I saw death; I assisted in post-mortem.

When I was 19, I was drafted into the US Army during the Vietnam War, and assigned to serve as a combat medic. I provided first-response medical assistance to soldiers who suffered traumatic leg amputations caused by antipersonnel mines. In combat, a limb severed by a land mine explosion is never clean. I only remember the screams of “Medic!”—the soldiers calling for me as they fell. The trauma of trying to save someone in this situation while the enemy is trying to kill you is indescribable. As I tended to the wounded, I would enter a deep trance in order to block out the terror and take care of them. Their trust in me was implicit and unbreakable.

One day, we were caught in an ambush inside a minefield. I lost count after the first 10 men went down. I watched as our morphine supply was depleted. I was the only soldier moving, running from one wounded soldier to the next. And then I heard the click of a land mine and realized it was right beneath my foot. After gathering myself for what seemed like a very long time, I forced myself to lift my foot and braced for the explosion. Nothing happened—the mine was a dud.

I cried the deepest sobbing of my life. A few days later, still in shock, I was flown out by helicopter to see a mental-health counselor, but he was out on R&R. Later that day, I was flown back into combat because my company had suffered additional losses and needed me there.

I earned my first Combat Medic Badge, the highest symbol of honor for a medic, on the eve of my 20th birthday. But when we Vietnam veterans returned home, our service was considered anything but honorable. We hid our grief inside. I returned to college, this time to study cultural anthropology: Never again did I want someone’s life to depend on me. The weight of such responsibility is enormously grave, and the pain and guilt doesn’t go away.

As with many veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), my life was full of starts and stops. I earned two master’s degrees, graduating with highest honors, and worked with Fortune-100 companies, but I also cycled through debilitating depression, divorces, and even homelessness, precipitated by PTSD symptoms ranging from isolation and emotional numbness to intense anxiety and insomnia.

By the time I lost my last job in 2009, I was suicidal. I would have taken my life, were it not for my inclination to take care of everyone else first: My wife needed emergency surgery, which required a sustained recovery period. Because I needed to help her, I tried to help myself: I entered treatment for PTSD at a VA hospital and learned cognitive-behavior therapy tools, as well as guided-imagery meditation techniques that changed my life’s course.

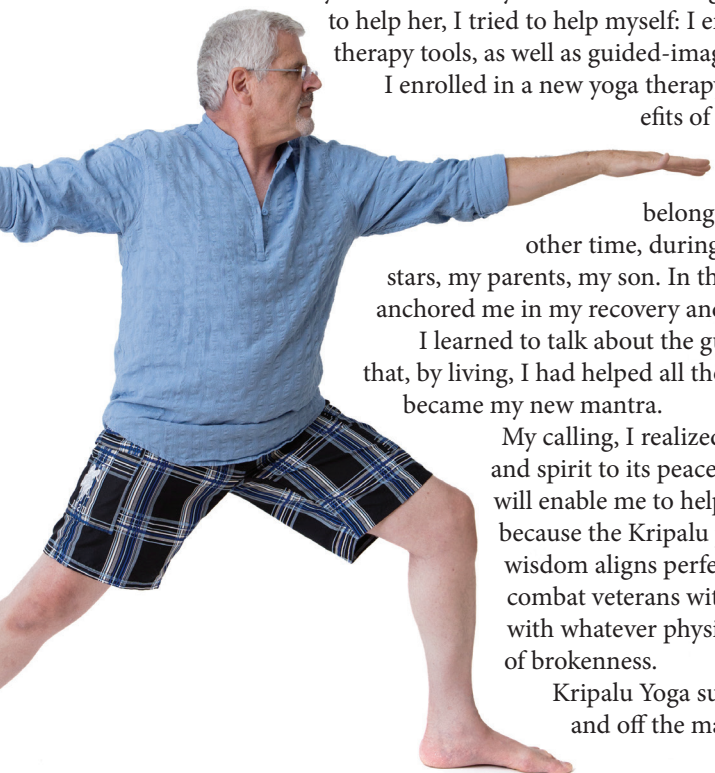
I enrolled in a new yoga therapy program for veterans at the VA hospital, and started experiencing the benefits of yoga almost immediately. After four years of chronic insomnia, yoga nidra allowed me to fall asleep without medication. As I lay with my body against the earth in Savasana at the end of my second or third class, I felt a sense of belonging and connection, the first time I had experienced this as an adult. Another time, during closing meditation, I was overwhelmed with gratitude: for the sun, moon, stars, my parents, my son. In this illumination, I understood that, in death, there is birth. These experiences anchored me in my recovery and healing.

I learned to talk about the guilt I was holding for so many who had died, while I had lived. I accepted that, by living, I had helped all those people along the way. Santosha, the Sanskrit word for contentment, became my new mantra.

My calling, I realized, is to teach yoga to combat veterans, to help them restore their body, mind, and spirit to its peaceful, natural state. The trust they gave to me in combat is the same trust that will enable me to help them today. I researched Kripalu and chose Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training because the Kripalu philosophy of self-empowerment, witness consciousness, and use of intuitive wisdom aligns perfectly with my own intuitive wisdom. In order to empower other wounded combat veterans with yoga, I want to offer them only postures that they can do just as they are, with whatever physical limitations or combat injuries they have, so as not to perpetuate a sense of brokenness.

Kripalu Yoga supports my intention. It offers personal empowerment to practice yoga on and off the mat, and it has empowered me to follow my own path. ■

As I tended to the wounded, I would enter a deep trance in order to block out the terror and take care of them.



# Workshops on yoga therapy for specific conditions at Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17

Learn how to use yoga to address a wide range of conditions at the 23rd Annual Kripalu Yoga Teachers Conference: The Power of Yoga Therapy. Here's a look at eight workshops designed especially for this conference and led by some of our most popular presenters. Check them out and then ➔ [register for the conference](#).



**Ashaya Yoga Therapeutics for the Psoas, Hips, and Lower Back**

➔ **Todd Norian**

*Who he is:* Founder of ➔ **Ashaya Yoga**, a style focused on precise biomechanical alignment

*What you'll experience:* An exploration of the biomechanics of pain-causing dysfunction and how Ashaya Yoga alignment techniques can help

*What you'll take home:* Tools and practices to transform pain and limitation into ease and well-being



**Heal Your Spine, Heal Your Life**

➔ **Raven Sadhaka Seltzer**

*Who she is:* An integrative yoga therapist and creator of the *Back to Balance: Heal Your Spine, Heal Your Life* book and program

*What you'll experience:* How the spine protects and supports the body, mind, and spirit

*What you'll take home:* Ways to bring the spine back into balance



**Ayurvedic Pranayama for the Doshas**

➔ **Larissa Hall Carlson**

*Who she is:* Dean of the ➔ **Kripalu School of Ayurveda**, teacher trainer for the Kripalu School of Yoga, and creator of the CD *Ayurvedic Pranayama*

*What you'll experience:* How pranayama can soothe common imbalances of the vata, pitta, and kapha doshas

*What you'll take home:* Techniques for getting the most healing power out of your pranayama practice and teaching



**Tantra Hatha Yoga and Healing**

➔ **Yoganand Michael Carroll**

*Who he is:* Dean of the ➔ **Kripalu School of Yoga** and creator of Pranakriya Yoga

*What you'll experience:* Asana, pranayama, meditation, and mudra practices for healing

*What you'll take home:* A prana-informed approach to health and transformation

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# Workshops on yoga therapy for specific conditions at Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17

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## Understanding the Hip: A Therapeutic Look

➔ **Marlysa Sullivan**

*Who she is:* A yoga therapist and physical therapist who directs the Pranakriya Yoga Therapy program with Yoganand Michael Carroll

*What you'll experience:* An examination of yoga therapy, proper positioning for asana, and musculoskeletal imbalances of the hip

*What you'll take home:* An understanding of how engagement and alignment can prevent and even heal injury



## Envisioning the Shoulder: Yoga Meets Franklin Method Imagery

➔ **Christa Rypins**

*Who she is:* A former professional ice skater who teaches Kripalu Yoga, Resistance Stretching, Pilates, Somatics, and the Franklin Method of Imagery

*What you'll experience:* How to use imagery, touch, and movement to enhance strength and reduce shoulder tension

*What you'll take home:* Ways to help students release tension and improve posture and movement quality



## Nurturing the Sacred Time of Pregnancy

➔ **Amy Wright Glenn**

*Who she is:* A Kripalu Yoga teacher, prenatal yoga teacher, and CD(DONA) birth doula

*What you'll experience:* An informative hands-on workshop on teaching prenatal yoga

*What you'll take home:* An understanding of how to safely support pregnant students in specialized classes or in your regular classes



## Evaluating Musculoskeletal Imbalances

➔ **Priti Robyn Ross**

*Who she is:* A faculty member for the Kripalu School of Yoga and codirector of Prana Yoga teacher training

*What you'll experience:* An evaluation of how to read, adapt, and assess common misalignments

*What you'll take home:* Effective techniques to reduce your students' skeletal stress and discomfort



# Getting to know the shoulder joint (or How to do push-ups)

by Christa Rypins

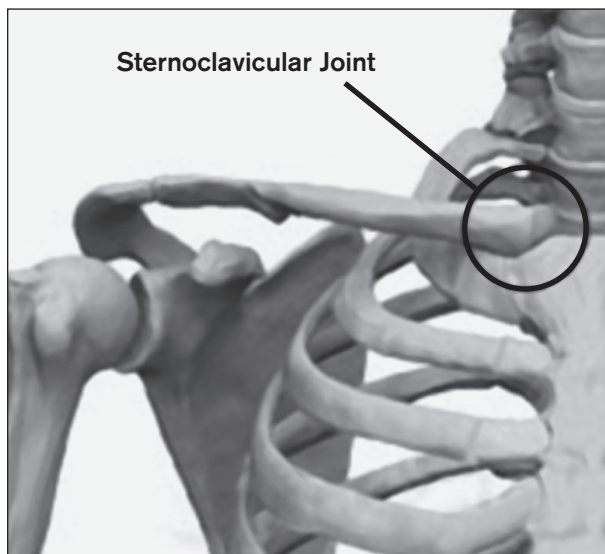
Christa Rypins offers the workshop *Envisioning the Shoulder: Yoga Meets Franklin Method Imagery* at [Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17](#).

The Franklin Method of Imagery teaches us to picture the bones, muscles, and organs of the body in movement. Understanding this movement increases function and relieves tension. By the end of this article, you will have a picture of weight transfer through the shoulder bones, thus making push-ups more functional, as well as easier. It will also be clear why, as yoga teachers, we must teach our students to traction the elbows away from, rather than into, the ribcage during a push-up.

To start, stand up and get a sense of where your shoulders attach to your torso. There is one joint where the shoulders attach to the torso: the sternoclavicular joint. Everything else is muscle. Touch the right joint with your left hand as you move your right arm, and you'll feel the movement between those bones.

Still standing, soften your knees and jaw, lift your right collarbone, and pinch around it with your left fingers. Lean slightly to the right, and gently swing your right arm. The collarbone is meant to glide on the ribs, but life can tighten that up, so you'll likely find some tender spots. Breathe, relax your jaw, and feel how the collarbone moves as your arm moves. Swing your arm overhead, and bend to the other side, letting your arm rest into your sternoclavicular joint. Look up at your hand and picture it as a flower, with your arm as the stalk and the sternoclavicular joint as the root. To assist the embodiment, drag your left hand from your flowering right hand, down your stalk/arm to the root, the sternal notch. Then lean back to the right, swing the arm, and pinch the collarbone, feeling how the collarbone moves as your arm moves. Repeat this flow at least three times, so you get the sense of your arm both hanging from and supported by the sternoclavicular joint. Now let both arms hang and shake them out.

Next, swing your right arm and walk your left fingers along the top of the collarbone, pinching and pressing where you can. Hang out along the way, massaging and swinging the arm to release any hidden tension you discover. Make your way to where the collarbone attaches to the shoulder blade (acromioclavicular joint, AC for short), then walk your fingers onto the scapula (shoulder blade), and see if you can find the "spine of the scapula," a horizontal ledge that sticks out. Feel above the scapular spine into the trough that holds the upper trapezius and the supra spinatus, muscles that can get so tight they feel like bones. Notice them soften with your touch. Now feel below the spine onto the body of the scapula. While massaging, you'll sense the muscles and bones moving as you swing your arm.



You can reach the lower section of the shoulder blade from under the arm. Feel how the shoulder blade moves as your arm moves. The scapula is shaped like Africa; find the bottom tip (Cape Hope) and sense how it moves forward and back with your swinging arm.

When you're ready, make your way back to the top of the shoulder blade and onto the top of the arm bone (humerus), feeling around the top (humeral head) as you swing. Notice that when the hand goes back, the humeral head goes forward; when the hand goes forward, the humeral head goes back; when you bring your arm out to the side, the humeral head moves in; and when you bring your arm across your body, the humeral head angles out.

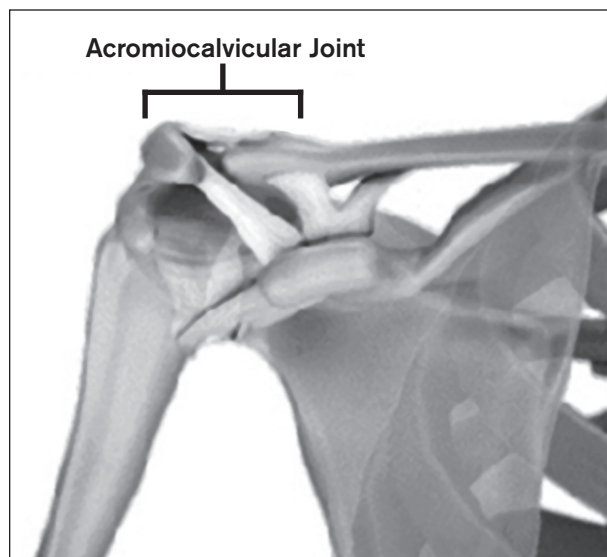
Shake your arms out again and let them hang for a moment. Reach both arms forward and see if the right arm is now longer than the left. Did the embodiment affect your breath, or your neck? Did the benefits make it to your hamstring on that side? Has your balance improved? Location is the first step toward embodying function and relieving tension. Now try it on the left side.

Now that you've woken up to the bones on both sides, stroll around

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## Getting to know the shoulder joint (or How to do push-ups)

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and picture your shoulders hanging and pivoting from your sternoclavicular joint. Now walk and hold your shoulders the way you might habitually hold them. Is there a difference? In my own body, I like the practice of letting the shoulders hang from the sternum. This relaxes my neck and allows my pelvis to move more freely.

Now let's apply our embodiment to push-ups. Start against the wall so that you can experiment with the images without getting stuck in the muscular effort. Spread your fingers out wide, with the heel of your

hand in line with the top of your arm bone, just as you would for Plank on the floor. Press through your hands and imagine the connection to the joint where your arms and shoulders meet your torso. Maintain pressure under the ball of the thumb and index finger. Bend and straighten your arms numerous times with the image of the weight supported by the sternoclavicular joint through the whole movement.

With any push-up, it's important to traction the shoulder blades toward the elbows, and traction the head out of the spine. Thus, the serratus anterior engages and the muscles above the shoulders, the upper trapezius, lengthen. Play with different elbow positions, noticing which positions make it easier to keep the weight going through the sternal notch.

The bones and joints of the body strengthen through compression. Where the arm connects into the shoulder—the glenohumeral joint—is a relatively shallow socket the size of a quarter. We want to use arm-weighted movements to support joint compression and bone strength. When the elbows are even slightly away from the torso, the glenohumeral joint gets direct compression. Notice that pulling the elbows into the ribs causes the head of the humerus to traction to the outside of the shoulder socket instead of compressing into the socket. Notice also that, when the elbows are pulled into the ribs, the weight moves away from the sternoclavicular joint into the shoulder blades, requiring more muscular effort.

The beautiful thing about anatomical imagery is that you can apply it to any push-up technique, and picture the weight of the body going through the arms to the sternal notch, thus relieving tension rather than building it. ■

➔ *Christa Rypins* was a professional ice skating juggler and rhythmic gymnast. While on tour with the *Ice Capades* at age 21, she injured her shoulder, and she tracks her passion for understanding human function back to this early injury. A Kripalu Yoga teacher trained in *Resistance Stretching*, *Pilates*, *Somatics*, and the *Franklin Method of Imagery*, Christa leads online trainings for yoga instructors. ➔ [www.intelligentbody.net](http://www.intelligentbody.net)

Visit ➔ [www.intelligentbody.net/pushups](http://www.intelligentbody.net/pushups) for more illustrations and a video on getting to know the shoulder. Christa is offering a free online class for everyone who signs in to watch the video before November 30.

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# The yoga therapy perspective: Uncovering the deeper causes of pain

by Marlysa Sullivan

Marlysa Sullivan teaches the workshop Understanding the Hip: A Therapeutic Look at [Kripalu's 23rd Annual Yoga Teachers Conference, October 14–17](#).

*“Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured.”* —B. K. S. Iyengar

Yoga therapy is a vast field with many facets. To understand the viewpoint of the yoga therapist, we must understand the world-view and perspective of yoga. To work with a physical issue from a yogic perspective is not simply about the physical body. The physical body is a small part of the full picture of the causes and roots of suffering and pain.

However, starting with the physical body allows us to have a tangible picture of what's going on—something that both therapist and the client can see, feel, and relate back to. Hip pain, for example, can be linked to many physical factors. Misalignment through the low back, knee, and even ankle can have immediate repercussions on the hip. In any painful hip condition, there tends to be common musculo-skeletal imbalances present. Often the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, pelvic floor, and transverse abdominals become inhibited. The psoas, hamstrings, pelvic floor, piriformis, and external rotators become facilitated and often either tighten or shorten, or both. The physical aspect of yoga therapy lies in finding the postures that can “turn on” the inhibited muscles and “turn off” the facilitated muscles.

The yoga therapist looks at and works with these physical causes and then searches for the other root or roots of the problem. Why are these imbalances present? Are they connected to the state of the nervous system, or the vitality and energy levels of the person? What is the client's state of mind? What's happening in their thoughts and emotions? Are they connected to Self, connected to their own being?

As yoga therapists, we can use the physical as a lens through which to look into and help heal clients on the energetic, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels. Through pranayama, meditation, study, and self-exploration, we can begin to help them uncover these other causes that might be keeping them in a perpetual cycle of injury and pain.

Let's look at how we might use yoga therapy techniques in a session with a client experiencing hip pain.

Begin by bringing your client into a relaxed state. Activating the parasympathetic nervous system, in order to release the held tension that they come in with, is an important first step in helping to build awareness, create deeper connection, and access engagement of chronically inhibited muscles. Next, strengthen the inhibited muscles with postures such as Half Locust, Boat, Bridge, and Tree. It's especially important here to make sure the gluteals are engaging and the transverse abdominals and pelvic floor are working.

You could also work with stretching commonly tight muscles such as the hip flexors/psoas, hamstrings, and piriformis with postures such as Knee-Down Lunge, Supported Bridge, Seated Forward Fold, a supine hamstring stretch, Pigeon, and Seated Spinal Twist.

Working with pranayama and meditation is equally essential in order to unearth the roots of held tension and the capacity to be with sensation, vitality, and energy. When you understand how to work with these practices on their own, as well as integrated with asana, you can help clients to uncover the underlying causes of continual tension and pain. This work can also help them find healing and transformation through a deeper connection to and compassion for self. ■

*Marlysa Sullivan is a yoga therapist, yoga teacher, and physical therapist who codirects the Pranakriya Yoga Therapy program. A member of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, Marlysa helped create the standards for yoga therapy.*



Marlysa assisting

The physical body  
is a small part of the full  
picture of the causes and roots  
of suffering and pain.