

YOGA BULLETIN

Kripalu yoga teachers association education inspiration community summer 2014 volume 23 issue 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 ➔ Letter from Yoganand:
Tradition and
Transformation
- 2 ➔ Two Easy Practices to
Balance Mood
- 3 ➔ Healing Sciatica with
Ashaya Yoga
- 4 ➔ Yoga for Specific
Populations at KYTA
Conference 2014
- 6 ➔ Yoga for the Whole Child
- 7 ➔ What to Expect
(From Yoga) When You're
Expecting
- 8 ➔ KYTA Conference
2014: The Power of
Yoga Therapy



Dear KYTA community,

Kripalu has been consciously shifting resources to realign the organization with the teachings of Swami Kripalu and the eight-limbed path of yoga. This is a pivotal development in the history of our organization, as it represents a commitment to strengthen the tradition, practice, and lineage of Kripalu Yoga.

The Kripalu School of Yoga, in alignment with these principles, is taking a leadership role within our organization and our field. We're thrilled to announce some exciting curriculum developments in our 200- and 500-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Trainings:

200-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training

Posture-training sequence. Every morning of the training, students are led in a class consisting of a standardized flow of all the postures and pranayamas that they are learning to teach. This repetition gives the students a consistent experience of yoga sadhana and reinforces the posture and pranayama details.

Themed classes. Afternoon classes vary to reflect the breadth of Kripalu Yoga. Each class has a theme that is thoroughly developed by the facilitator, such as gentle, moderate, or vigorous Kripalu Yoga, or therapeutic yoga variations.

More practice-teaches (assessments). Practice-teaching sessions have increased from three to five, to provide more opportunities for students to be observed and receive feedback on the skills they are cultivating.

Cohesive philosophy. We're closely examining the yoga traditions that have most significantly influenced Kripalu Yoga (honoring those that came before Patanjali and those that are bridges from his teachings to Swami Kripalu's) and offering them as a reference point for new Kripalu Yoga teachers to carry the lineage into the future.

Modifications for beginner-level students. Learning outcomes are designed for every session, with students receiving the tools that will be most useful to them as yoga teachers leading classes for diverse populations.

500-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training

As changes to the 200-Hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training are implemented, the curriculum for the 500-hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training is undergoing a similar evolution. While the structure for future 500-Hour modules is similar to our current core curriculum, new changes will offer inspiring options for our students.

A complete list of offerings will be announced in the fall. Two new developments are

- An elective module that focuses on leading Kripalu Vinyasa.
- The Integrating Ayurveda into Yoga Teaching module no longer requires the 200-Hour Foundations of Ayurveda as a prerequisite. Consequently, all 500-hour students may choose to take this module as an elective.

As the place yoga occupies in Western culture changes, we are positioning our trainings and preparing our new teachers to not just ride the wave, but to boldly carry Kripalu Yoga into the future.

It's an inspiring time to be part of Kripalu. I am grateful for my role as Dean and am thrilled that you, as a Kripalu Yoga teacher, are part of a thriving tradition.





Two Easy Practices to Balance Mood

by Amy Weintraub

Amy Weintraub teaches Yoga for Mood Regulation and delivers the keynote “Yoga Therapeutics as Informed by the Koshas” at ➔ [KYTA Conference 2014, October 14–17](#).

practice one

Smiling Heart Pose

There are specific yoga poses that can help lift the mood and sustain a positive outlook. Here’s a simple restorative pose, recommended in my book *Yoga for Depression*, for calming the nervous system and building energy.

1. Place two folded blankets, a bolster, or a firm cushion under your back, just beneath your shoulder blades. Make sure the lift is comfortable; use more or less support as feels right for your body.
2. Place a rolled blanket underneath your neck so that the back of your head rests comfortably on the floor.
3. Place a bolster or cushion under your knees and allow your legs to be a comfortable distance apart (usually about hip-width).
4. Allow your arms to stretch out comfortably at shoulder level, with the palms facing up.
5. Stay in this position for at least five minutes. On each inhale, imagine breathing into the crown of your head and repeat silently “I am.” On each exhale, imagine the breath going to your feet and repeat silently, “here.”
6. To make this posture slightly more stimulating, stretch your arms over your head on the floor so they rest behind you.

practice two

Bee Breath (Brahmari)

Bee Breath has many applications for achieving and sustaining a balanced emotional and mental state. Try this practice if you or your students and clients suffer from anxiety, ADHD, or OCD. You will find it will cut through the tangle of distracting thoughts. You will feel calm and at ease and better able to focus. This practice slows down the exhalation and has a calming effect on the entire nervous system. In India, it is often recommended for women in labor.



- Sit in a comfortable position with the spine erect.
- Inhale through the nostrils, drawing the root of the tongue to the back of the throat.
- Slightly tilt the chin and keep the lips sealed.
- On the exhale, you will be drawing the back of your tongue to the back of your throat, as though dislodging a popcorn kernel.
- Exhale slowly through the nostrils, making a deep buzzing sound in your throat like a bee. Because the lips are closed, you will not hear the “ZZZ” sound. Instead, you will hear a “swarm” of bees in your throat.
- Start with three rounds on the exhale only.
- Practice this breath no more than 10 times.

When instructing a client or student that is new to Bee Breath, you might want to draw from the following script:

- Sit in a comfortable position with the spine erect.
- Make the sound of the bee.
- Continue making the sound of a bee but close the lips.
- Tuck the chin lightly and begin to feel the vibration in the throat.
- Draw the back of the tongue to the back of the throat as though you were attempting to free a popcorn kernel husk from the throat. ■

Amy Weintraub, MFA, E-RYT 500, is director of the LifeForce Yoga® Healing Institute and author of Yoga for Depression and Yoga Skills for Therapists. She is involved in ongoing research on the effects of yoga on mood, and has produced an award-winning library of evidence-based yoga and meditation CDs and DVDs for mood management.



Healing Sciatica with Ashaya Yoga

by Todd Norian

Todd Norian offers Ashaya Yoga Therapeutics for the Psoas, Hips, and Lower Back at [KYTA Conference 2014, October 14–17](#).

I've helped many students heal their sciatica (inflammation of the sciatic nerve) using the Four Essentials of Ashaya Yoga: Remember the Absolute, Engage, Align, and Expand. Most sciatic pain arises from standing, sitting, or walking with poor alignment—the feet are turned out and the thigh bones are forward and externally rotated. When the femurs are forward of their optimal placement, the muscles of the lower back contract and can pull the lumbar spine into a flattened position. Tight hamstrings further exacerbate the flat back condition. When the natural curve of the lower back is lost, the spinal discs squeeze posteriorly and can press on nerve roots.

The First Essential, Remember the Absolute, is the act of softening and remembering your connection to the healing power of the universe. You open to a bigger energy and let go of self-limiting beliefs. In so doing, you recognize that, deep down in your heart, you are already whole and complete.

Another important component of the First Essential is preparing your foundation. As with a house or any architectural structure, the stability of the structure depends upon the integrity of the foundation. For healing sciatica, you must ensure that your feet are parallel and hip-width apart. Parallel feet can be achieved by aligning the imaginary lines connecting the front center of each ankle with the second toe, like railroad tracks running parallel to one another.

The Second Essential, Engage, is accessed by learning how to fully activate your muscles. This is done through isometrics and drawing the muscles from the foundation and periphery into the core of the pose. You draw your feet, legs, and arms toward the midline without moving your feet. This strengthens and tones the body. It also creates support and stability for the joints, which is necessary for prevention of further injury.

The Third Essential, Align, encompasses aligning every major joint and part of the body. Within this focus, there is a hierarchy of alignment, the most important of which is pelvic integration, which has the greatest impact on sciatica. Pelvic integration comes from the dynamic balance of two actions: internally rotating the thighs, moving them back (which creates an anterior tilt of the pelvis), and widening them apart without collapsing the knees inward; and scooping the tailbone down and forward; moving the thighs back creates a lumbar curve, while scooping the tailbone creates length in the lumbar spine. Both curve and length are needed for a healthy back.

The sciatic nerve comes from the low-back region of L4 to S3, and travels down the posterior pelvis and leg, under the piriformis muscle (for 17 percent of the population, the sciatic nerve runs through the middle of the piriformis), and down to the foot. About the width of your thumb, the sciatic nerve is the thickest and longest single nerve in the body, and it can become compressed, irritated, and inflamed as a result of lower-back dysfunctions such as herniated discs and piriformis syndrome.

The Fourth Essential is Expand. Once you have Remembered the Absolute, released stress, hugged into the midline to strengthen and tone your muscles, and aligned the bones in a complementary way, it's time to stretch. Expansion involves stretching away from the core of the pose in all directions—first rooting down into the earth and then rising up and away from the earth, much like a plant grows. ■

Todd Norian, E-RYT 500, is the founder of Ashaya Yoga, a style focused on precise biomechanical alignment. Todd has studied Iyengar Yoga and Kripalu Yoga, and taught Anusara Yoga for 15 years. He teaches workshops and trainings internationally, and is also a musician who has created several CDs of music for yoga. www.ashayayoga.com

Try this simple exercise to connect with this area:

In Tadasana, put a four-inch-wide yoga block between the upper inner thighs. Stand with the feet hip-width apart and parallel. Remember the Absolute, and then hug your feet and legs in toward the midline. Take your thighs back, keeping the knees slightly bent so as to avoid hyperextension. Keeping the thighs back, scoop the tailbone down and forward. Your lower belly should tone when you scoop your tailbone.



A common mistake is to scoop the tailbone and push the thighs forward such that the greater trochanter moves forward of the ankle. When you scoop, you must keep your thighs back. The key to healing is to find the balance between keeping the thighs back and the tailbone in, while maintaining the position of the greater trochanter over the ankle. Healing always takes place in the middle, where the polarities find their natural dynamic balance.

Yoga for Specific Populations at KYTA Conference 2014, October 14–17

Learn how to adapt yoga for a variety of specific populations at KYTA's 23rd annual 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](#).



Yoga for Eating Disorders

➔ **Laura Biron**

Who she is: A Kripalu Yoga teacher and developer of the nutrition program for eating disorders at the ➔ **Adams Center for Mind and Body**

What you'll experience: Current research on how yoga can support treatment of and recovery from eating disorders

What you'll take home: How to apply yoga tools, including a yogic approach to diet, in the treatment of eating disorders



Adapting Restorative Yoga for Chronic Illness

➔ **Sudha Carolyn Lundeen**

Who she is: A Kripalu faculty member and teacher trainer

What you'll experience: The key neurological and physiological benefits of restorative practice

What you'll take home: An understanding of how to assess client needs and offer modifications



Mindful Yoga Therapy for Military Veterans

➔ **Suzanne Manafort and Sheila Magalhaes**

Who they are: ➔ **Mindful Yoga Therapy for Veterans** founder (Suzanne) and teacher trainer (Sheila)

What you'll experience: The principles of Mindful Yoga Therapy, a clinically tested program designed to support military veterans

What you'll take home: A set of skills for working in trauma recovery programs



Whole Child Yoga Therapeutics: Wake Up, Relax, and Focus

➔ **Beth Gibbs**

Who she is: Director of the Professional Yoga Therapist Internship Program

What you'll experience: Therapeutic techniques and child-development principles presented using examples and illustrations

What you'll take home: Tools for working with children in school, home, and recreational and after-school settings

➔ *continued on page 5*

Yoga for Specific Populations at KYTA Conference 2014, October 14–17

continued from page 4



Yoga for Mood Regulation

➔ Amy Weintraub

Who she is: Director of the LifeForce Yoga® Healing Institute and author of *Yoga Skills for Therapists*

What you'll experience: Evidence-based pranayama, posture, mudra, mantra, and bhavana practices for managing mood

What you'll take home: Techniques for bringing balance to the emotional and physical body



An Introduction to Trauma-Sensitive Yoga

➔ Jenn Turner

Who she is: Coordinator of the yoga program at the ➔ **Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute**

What you'll experience: Trauma-Sensitive Yoga, an empirically researched approach for reducing symptoms of trauma

What you'll take home: An understanding of how to create safety for trauma survivors in your classes



Chair Yoga for the Rest of Us

➔ Lakshmi Voelker

Who she is: Creator of Lakshmi Voelker Chair Yoga, in 1982

What you'll experience: How to adapt yoga for those unable to practice on the mat

What you'll take home: More skills to serve sedentary populations, including the elderly and disabled



The Transformative Power of Kripalu Yoga for Teens

➔ Janna Delgado and
➔ Iona M. Smith

Who they are: Lead faculty for the ➔ **Kripalu Yoga in the Schools (KYIS)** program

What you'll experience: An evidence-based yoga curriculum designed and tested for adolescents

What you'll take home: Tips for giving teens yoga tools to cope with the challenges of daily life



Yoga for the Whole Child

by Beth Gibbs

Beth Gibbs delivers the opening keynote and teaches Whole Child Yoga Therapeutics: Wake Up, Relax, and Focus at [KYTA Conference 2014, October 14–17](#).

Several years ago, when I was teaching yoga in an after-school program in Hartford, Connecticut, one of my young students was consistently disruptive in class. I asked her why she came to class, since participation was voluntary and she didn't seem to be enjoying herself. Her answer: "When I feel bad, I go sit on my bed and say 'om,' and it makes me feel better."

That was a watershed moment for me. I realized that this child, in spite of her behavior, had made the connection between a challenge she faced and the effective use of a yoga technique as a solution. She had become a problem solver! I have never forgotten that exchange and have used it as the basis for designing programs that teach other children to make similar connections between an everyday concern or problem, a specific yoga technique, and a desired outcome—a mind/body/behavior connection. Such a connection leads to balance on the physical, energetic, mental, and emotional levels, and results in a relaxed state of awareness—in other words, yoga for the whole child.

Why Yoga?

Research has shown that a relaxed state of awareness is optimal for receptivity, learning, and problem solving. For more than 5,000 years, yoga postures, breathing practices, and mental exercises have been used to teach adults and children how to create and sustain this "relaxed yet aware" state of mind. Adults often ask children to "sit still," "calm down," and "pay attention," but children are rarely, if ever, taught the specific skills they need to do so. Simple strategies, designed to work within a two- to 10-minute time frame, can bring about a relaxed yet aware state of mind and give children concrete tools they can use to help them "sit still," "calm down" and "pay attention."

The Right Tools

Yoga resource materials for teachers, parents, health professionals, and adults who work with children introduce lag far behind the need. Many are designed for specialized class settings that require certified instructors, dedicated time of a half hour or more, props, and a room empty of chairs and tables. Meeting these requirements is difficult to impossible during a busy school day, at home, in a doctor's office, or when children need gentle yet effective re-direction within the confines of a structured situation.

What children and those who work with children need are tools that provide the following:

- A context, in child-friendly language, that explains how yoga works to create and sustain a relaxed state of awareness
- Clear instructions on how to do simple, effective exercises that require no special room set-ups, clothing, or props
- Situation-specific examples that allow children to make the direct connection between a real-life situation, a specific exercise, and its intended effect
- Information for adults that clearly describes how to teach and integrate these exercises within the confines of regularly scheduled classes and activities, in two- to 10-minute time frames.

At What Age Should Yoga Lessons Begin?

Formal yoga lessons for children can begin at age eight. Before then, yoga as play is recommended. This is because children between ages eight and 10 are more independent and physically active. They've made major gains in muscle strength, coordination, and basic motor skills. Thinking, reasoning, and decision-making skills mature more rapidly as they learn to think in more complex ways. At this age, they tend to concern themselves with things that can be experienced through the five senses, one sense at a time.

Gaining awareness and an understanding of the growth stages in child and youth development is important because the knowledge provides a firm foundation from which to select age-appropriate yoga techniques that can help children of all abilities gain self-awareness, optimal health, and a relaxed state of awareness—the key goals of any yoga practice.



According to the Yoga Research and Education Center, the benefits of yoga for children include

- Increased self-awareness and self-confidence
- Learning how to be gentle with themselves and others
- Increased ability to focus and concentrate
- Better balance and equilibrium
- Improved performance in all areas of life, including schoolwork
- Stress relief and a greater sense of general well-being
- Increased flexibility, coordination, and strength
- Enhanced sports performance.

[continued on page 7](#)



What to Expect (from Yoga) When You're Expecting

By Jacci Gruninger Reynolds

Pregnancy and motherhood are journeys we sign onto for a lifetime. Think of the last journey you planned. How did you prepare? Did you read a book about your destination? Did you contemplate what to pack? Maybe, if the journey was physical, you started training.

As a yoga teacher, you can provide a space in which women can prepare for the journey of motherhood surrounded by other women “training” for the same event. This is the greatest benefit of participating in a prenatal and/or “Baby and Me” yoga class. Within a safe environment, expectant mothers can build community and camaraderie as they share similar experiences.

Ask any pregnant woman how she's feeling and, depending on how well you know her, you might get a long list of concerns—including backaches, swollen feet, digestive issues, and fear and anxiety surrounding the impending birth. Prenatal yoga class is a place for women to share information, ask questions, and connect with themselves and their growing babies.

Labor can be one of the most difficult and most exhilarating rites of passage. Prenatal yoga can help expectant moms stay fit and flexible, reduce stress, and prepare physically, mentally, and spiritually for the day-to-day changes in their body, as well as for the “marathon” of labor.

Yoga poses build the strength, flexibility, and stamina needed for labor and delivery. Meditation, visualizations, and sounding help women relax and let go of control. Breathing techniques can aid in pain management, enhance sleep, and decrease moodiness. Yoga also eases common pregnancy discomforts such as heartburn, shortness of breath, nausea, and back pain.

Many pregnant women also find that the inner focus required to maintain a yoga pose allows them to quiet the chatter in their minds and creates a sense of mindful tranquility. Every mother can benefit, even those with scheduled Cesarean-section deliveries. Regardless of the type of birth a mother is planning, the focus and serenity she learns in her yoga practice will help her through pregnancy, labor, birth, and on into motherhood. ■

Jacci Gruninger Reynolds is a Kripalu Yoga and senior Pranakriya Yoga instructor with certifications in yoga therapy and Thai Yoga Therapy. She leads yoga teacher trainings around the country in Pranakriya, prenatal, and restorative yoga.



Yoga for the Whole Child

continued from page 6

How a Yoga Program for Children Can Work

Many schools and youth programs now successfully offer yoga to children as educators and program providers discover that yoga helps children deal with stress, improve test scores, and reduce disruptive behavior. Camp Courant, the summer day camp in Hartford, Connecticut, that I direct, is one example. It's the largest—and one of the oldest—free day camps in the country, serving hundreds of inner-city children between the ages of five and 12. Since 2002, we have offered the Wake Up and Relax yoga program, and more than 400 campers participate in it each summer.

The program is designed to teach children the skills to help them “sit still,” “calm down,” and “pay attention,” and introduces them to simple ways to take those skills off their mats and into their daily lives for well-being and problem solving. We teach them how to energize and relax the physical body, use the breath effectively, and calm and focus the mind, enhancing their ability to listen and cooperate. The yoga exercises are organized into four categories: active physical movement and breathing; passive physical movement and breathing; balancing both sides of the brain; and listening and cooperating. The program—which is supported by foundation grants, contributions from local yoga studios, and individual donors—is designed to be integrated into any program or classroom setting.

The best evidence for the need to encourage the teaching of yoga in schools, homes, and youth programs often comes from the children themselves. Kids at Camp Courant say yoga helps with asthma, keeps them calm, and relaxes them. As one student shared, “My experience was, I thought I would always do this for the rest of my life.” ■

Elizabeth Gibbs, MA, E-RYT, is executive director of Camp Courant and director of the Professional Yoga Therapist Internship Program. She is the author of Ogi Bogi, the Elephant Yogi, a yoga book for children and a companion manual for adults who work with children. ➔ www.campcourant.org

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author of *The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling*

Amy Weintraub
author of *Yoga Skills for Therapists*

Beth Gibbs
director of the Integrative Yoga Therapy Professional Yoga Therapist Internship Program

Priti Robyn Ross
creator of Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center's cardiac yoga program

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Contact Information

Kripalu Yoga Teachers Association (KYTA)
tel: 413.448.3202
website: ➔ www.kyta.org
e-mail: ➔ kyta@kripalu.org

Kripalu Schools of Yoga and Ayurveda
tel: 800.848.8702
website: ➔ www.kripalu.org/yogaandayurveda
e-mail: ➔ ksya@kripalu.org

Teaching for Diversity
Wayne Nato
tel: 413.448.3239
e-mail: ➔ tfd@kripalu.org

Outreach and Membership Coordinator
Amber Wlodyka
tel: 413.448.3461
e-mail: ➔ kpa@kripalu.org

KSYA Marketing Coordinator
Julie Balter
tel: 413.448.3257
e-mail: ➔ julieb@kripalu.org

Yoga Bulletin Editor
Tresca Weinstein,
tel: 413.448.3332
e-mail: ➔ trescaw@kripalu.org

Registration
800.741.7353

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