

# Training Yoga Teachers As Compared to Training Yoga Therapists

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For over twenty years, the Integrative Yoga Therapy faculty has been actively involved in training Yoga teachers as well as Yoga therapists. Our experience has been that many of the Yoga tools and techniques overlap, but that the skills, learning processes and objectives are essentially distinct. The following table outlines and compares differences in a number of core skill areas.

<b>YOGA TEACHERS:</b>	<b>YOGA THERAPISTS:</b>
Gain an overview of the five koshas as one facet of yoga philosophy.	Live and breathe the five koshas as a way of viewing the whole human being in relation to health and healing.
Receive a general overview of Yoga history and Indian culture in order to understand the context of Yoga.	Gain an in-depth understanding of the history of Yoga including the origins of Yoga therapy in India and the primary schools that continue to be pioneers in the field.
Explore the Yoga Sutras as the philosophical foundation of yoga.	Integrate the Yoga Sutras as a path of understanding avidya as illness and vidya as health.
Apply yoga class “recipes” with a defined list of ingredients that are generally palatable for all tastes.	Learn to “cook from scratch” by understanding the principles that underlie Yoga techniques, allowing them to “cook” for each person or focus group individually.
Explore Ayurveda and the three-dosha system as a vehicle for balancing one’s own diet and lifestyle.	Understand Ayurveda and the three-dosha system as a comprehensive model of health and healing that serves as a framework for selecting appropriate yoga practices for each individual.
Cultivate the ability to listen and respond to students’ needs and concerns regarding their yoga study and practice.	Adopt a comprehensive methodology for assessing the needs of groups and individuals at all levels of being. They also have the ability to implement appropriate tools and techniques to meet these needs and to modify and adapt them as required.
Study basic anatomy and physiology with a focus on the benefits of yoga for each system of the body.	Gain an in-depth understanding of anatomy and physiology including common pathologies and disorders. They also understand the effects of all of the major yoga practices on each system of the body.
Gain a basic understanding of biomechanics and how they can be applied to create safe alignment in Yoga poses.	Embody a thorough understanding of biomechanics that allows them to recognize imbalances in care receivers, and utilize Yoga techniques to improve body awareness and restore healthy alignment and movement.
Understand the various categories of asana, including the general benefits and contraindications, and learn how to sequence poses to create a complete and balanced Yoga class.	Have an in-depth understanding of the multidimensional benefits and contraindications of asana categories and individual postures allowing for skillful application for specific health conditions and the needs of individuals.

<b>YOGA TEACHERS:</b>	<b>YOGA THERAPISTS:</b>
Experiment with basic pranayama techniques, with an understanding of their general benefits and contraindications, and understand their importance for balancing energy in the mind and body.	Understand the benefits and contraindications of the primary pranayama practices and their physiological effects, enabling them to modify breathing techniques for individual needs.
Understand Pratyahara as a withdrawal of the senses that deepens the practice of yoga to facilitate concentration, and later meditation.	Comprehend the practice of Pratyahara as a process of internalization and integration that reduces anxiety and stress in order to facilitate healing.
Are introduced to Dharana techniques that focus the mind and develop concentration in preparation for meditation.	Have an in-depth understanding of how to use Dharana techniques to progressively facilitate presence, concentration, and meditation, guiding the care receiver from distraction toward clarity.
Learn basic techniques of Dhyana, meditation, as a foundation of the spiritual journey, whose final goal is to unite with our true inner being.	Practice Dhyana, meditation techniques, regularly, gaining an understanding of their effects on the body, mind and nervous system. This understanding allows them to be applied for individual needs to promote health, healing and awakening.
Develop an understanding of the five Prana Vayus as the main pathways through which life force circulates.	Understand the function of each of the five Prana Vayus in detail and how to apply Yoga techniques to balance the flow of prana for healing.
Understand and practice the Yamas and Niyamas, ethics and observances, as a guide to a yogic lifestyle.	Embody the ethical values of the Yamas and Niyamas and communicate them to care receivers as a path for reducing inner conflict, thereby supporting optimal health and healing.
Recognize the Five Kleshas as sources of suffering, described in the Yoga Sutras.	Comprehend each of the Kleshas as a source of separation and conflict that may be factors in stress-related illness.
Have a general understanding of how Yoga practice may be helpful for stress, anxiety, and depression.	Understand common mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, and how yoga techniques can be applied specifically to support healing.
Understand how stress is a factor in dis-ease and how relaxation, integration and centering support health and well-being.	Have a comprehensive understanding of the physiology of stress and contemporary stress research. They also understand the causes of separation and stress as described in the traditional Yoga texts.
Learn basic relaxation techniques and understand their importance in integrating a Yoga class experience.	Learn a variety of relaxation and yoga Nidra techniques, with an understanding of how they affect the body, mind and nervous system in order to adapt and apply them to specific health conditions.

<b>YOGA TEACHERS:</b>	<b>YOGA THERAPISTS:</b>
Are introduced to the terms vasana and samskara as aspects of conditioning within the theory of karma.	Understand vasana and samskara as forces of conditioning related to perceived stress, which can affect health negatively or positively.
Are introduced to the three gunas, rajas, tamas and sattva, as basic characteristics of the mind within yoga philosophy.	Integrate an awareness of the three gunas into daily living and gain an ability to perceive mind states in care receivers and respond to them skillfully.
Are introduced to witness consciousness as a means of responding to their own thoughts and emotions without identifying with them so closely.	Integrate witness consciousness as a foundation of Yoga therapy, allowing them to develop objectivity toward care receivers and toward their own inner responses to all that arises in a Yoga therapy session.
Are not generally introduced to biomedical information.	Develop an understanding of common medical terminology, conditions and treatments along with how to reference health care information.
Develop a general understanding of how research validates the benefits of Yoga.	Understand the criteria for evaluating the quality of Yoga research, and how to reference and utilize research in preparing Yoga therapy programs.
Are oriented to the ethics of the student/teacher relationship, including boundaries, as well as conscious business practices.	Adhere to a strict code of ethics in relation to boundaries with care receivers, including an understanding of projection and transference. Therapists clearly distinguish between applying Yoga therapeutically as opposed to the diagnosis and treatment of disease, which is outside their scope of practice.
Develop constructive relationships with health care professionals who understand that Yoga classes taught by qualified teachers support health and healing in their patients.	Learn to work in mainstream healthcare settings as part of an interdisciplinary team with an understanding of the role of each member. The Yoga therapist also knows when it is advisable to refer to other health practitioners.
May participate in a mentored internship where their ability to implement Yoga techniques is assessed and supported.	Participate in a comprehensive internship program in which their ability to provide Yoga therapy is critiqued by an experienced mentor, allowing for optimal professional development.

Yoga therapy is a distinct profession, and cannot simply be reduced to an advanced yoga teacher training with a medical focus. Embracing Yoga therapy as a unique profession is essential for supporting its recognition and development.

The training of a Yoga therapist requires a special vision and a way of combining techniques that embraces all dimensions of being. This wider vision brings awareness to areas of separation and utilizes the tools and techniques of Yoga to gradually reestablish balance and harmony as reflections of the unity of our true inner being.

