



Introduction to Yoga Therapy & Somatics

What is Yoga Therapy?

Yoga Therapy aims to eliminate, reduce, and/or manage symptoms that cause suffering (physical, emotional, mental, etc). By attending to movement, alignment, breath, and aspects of the subtle body, its aim is to improve function to prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of the root causes of illness, and supports movement towards improved health and well-being. Ellen's approach to Yoga Therapy also includes a method of neuromuscular movement education called Somatics, developed by Thomas Hanna. She also incorporates TRE - Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises which uses neurogenic tremors for integration and release of tension in the body and nervous system.

What sorts of conditions or concerns can be addressed by yoga therapy?

Yoga therapy has a broad scope and can support people dealing with a wide range of concerns, such as postural issues, chronic pain, overuse injuries, movement dysfunction, and imbalances a result of injury or surgery. Beyond physical concerns, yoga therapy can help support emotional expression and balance as well as healthy regulation in the nervous system in order to address stress, anxiety, depression, sleep concerns and other symptoms of dysregulation.

How is it different from practicing yoga in class or one-on-one?

In a class or one-on-one yoga session the teacher directs a pre-planned sequence. In contrast to that model, Yoga Therapy begins with a detailed intake which includes assessment of a number of variables like posture, movement, state of mind, etc. Additionally, the clients goals and needs are important considerations for the direction of the work. Yoga Therapists work collaboratively with the client to develop and implement a self-empowering therapeutic plan. Clients will receive an individualized home program that will evolve with their development. Sessions also include education around technique and methodology with the goal of moving towards independence and self-direction.

How long is a session and how often will we meet?

Sessions are 60 minutes. Ellen typically sees clients ranging from every 1-3 weeks. The frequency will be determined by the amount of support needed, acuteness, a persons learning style, etc.

Developed by Ellen McKenzie, TRE Provider, E-RYT 500 Hour Yoga Teacher, Yoga Therapist

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What sorts of techniques or practices might I experience in a yoga therapy session?

- **Yoga:** Physical postures, breath practices, meditation techniques, and mind study that are aligned with yogic philosophy. These tools cultivate mastery over unproductive physical, mental, and energetic patterns.
- **Somatics:** At its foundation, Somatics is neuromuscular retraining which goes directly to the source of many musculoskeletal problems by reorganizing the way your nervous system controls and senses muscles and movement, and resolves sensory motor amnesia (see below). This work is informed by the teachings of Thomas Hanna and The International Soma Yoga Institute.
- **Dinacharya:** Daily Ayurvedic self-care practices to help create a routine that will support balance in your system and life. These will vary person to person based on imbalances.
- **TRE - Tension & Trauma Release Exercises:** Tension & Trauma Release Exercises (or TRE®) is a simple yet innovative series of exercises that assist the body in releasing deep muscular patterns of stress, tension and trauma. Created by Dr. David Berceli, PhD, TRE safely activates a natural reflex mechanism of shaking or vibrating that releases muscular tension, calming down the nervous system. When this muscular shaking/vibrating mechanism is activated in a safe and controlled environment, the body is encouraged to return back to a state of balance.

What is sensory motor amnesia (SMA)?

Physical patterns of contraction, stress, and tension become normalized over time through repetition, trauma, and/or prolonged periods in a position. While these patterns may have served an initial purpose, the normalization process becomes problematic when we can no longer access or release the muscles. Simply speaking, we forget how to functionally utilize these muscles, which is called sensory motor amnesia (SMA). While that term might sound intimidating, the good news is we can re-educate systems to move with ease and freedom in our bodies.

Will Yoga Therapy conflict with treatment I am receiving from other health-care providers (i.e. physical therapy, psychotherapy, acupuncture)?

The short answer is no. In fact, yoga therapy sessions can be a great compliment or support for lot's of other therapeutic models. With a release form, Ellen is open to connecting and collaborating with other health-care providers. This connection can bring about a useful symbiosis.

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