

Spanda® Yoga Movement Therapy (SYMT) Toolbox: 25 Do No Harm Practices (aka Good for Practically Everyone)

“First, do no harm,” (*primum no nocere*) is a common phrase the gist of which has been adhered to by healthcare practitioners since antiquity. The promise of it, when taken as a healer’s oath such as in the Hippocratic Oath, is to consider the possible harm any action of intervention may inadvertently cause. In medical settings, it can be used as a guide for assessing the risks factors of a beneficial treatment. In the context of yoga therapy, in which we neither diagnose nor treat illness, but rather support the wellness of the whole person encountering illness or difficulty, this maxim underlies our decision-making process when it comes to what practices and lifestyle suggestions we may advise.

Even the ancients Greek’s father of medicine, Asclepius, with his serpent ascending a rod, worked astride the physical and metaphysical realms. He is reported to have elicited the dreams of his patients as an essential part of their healing transformation. He is pictured with his daughter, Hygieia, whose name valued today in her important healing domains of cleanliness and order. These elements we see reflected in Ayurveda’s *dinacharya*, various purgatives, and health promoting hygienic practices. And another daughter of Asclepius, one more figure from the Greek healing pantheon, is Panacea, the goddess of universal remedy. Her mention reminds me of Swami Satchidananda’s quote, “Yoga is the key to open any lock.” I include these various personae to indicate the many ways healing is supported. Through our holistic and client-centered approach we can embody many different rolls in the time-honored healing scenario, not the least of which is supporting licensed healthcare providers in the process.

What follows is a partial list of what I’ve grown to call the “Do No Harm” Section of the Spanda® Yoga Movement Therapy (SYMT) Tool Box. Most of this vocabulary of practice consists of classical yoga practice, other items are functional variations dissected from more complete classical practices. Still others depart from yoga practice in the formal sense in service to a particular goal for the practice while retaining the spirit of yoga: fun, freeing, non-harming, and guided by love.

1. Breath Awareness
2. Optimal Diaphragmatic Breathing
3. Guided Systematic Relaxation
4. Thirty-One or Sixty-One Points
5. Safe Space/Favorite Place Visualization
6. Autogenic Training
7. Healing *Pranayama*
8. Ascending and Descending Breath
9. *Bija* Mantra Chanting
10. *Bhajan*: Singing, Listening, Clapping Along, Playing Along
11. Pleasant Singing, Clapping Along, Listening to Music
12. Simple Repetitive Rhythmic Movement
13. Simple Breath Coordinated Repetitive Movement or Learned Sequence
14. “Godly Play”: Joke Telling, Funny Stories, Movies, Shows, Sight Gags, Clowning, Horse Play
15. Laughing Practice
16. Prayer, Private Ritual Dance, Ritual Movement, Chi Gong
17. Walking Meditation
18. Communal Movement: Group Prayer/Ritual, Tai Chi, Sacred Dance, Line/Circle Dances
19. Laying on of Hands (Therapeutic Touch)
20. *Seva* (Service, Volunteer Work)
21. Quiet Time in (Relatively Safe) Nature
22. Spanda *Pavanmuktanasana*
23. Joints & Glands
24. A & P (*Akunchana & Prasarana*)
25. So Hum Meditation