

IAYT's Definition of Yoga Therapy with Selected Additional Definitions

Yoga therapy is the process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and well-being through the application of the teachings and practices of Yoga. - IAYT Educational Standards for the Training of Yoga Therapists

Yoga therapy is a self-empowering process, where the care-seeker, with the help of the Yoga therapist, implements a personalized and evolving Yoga practice, that not only addresses the illness in a multi-dimensional manner, but also aims to alleviate his/her suffering in a progressive, non-invasive and complementary manner. Depending upon the nature of the illness, Yoga therapy can not only be preventative or curative, but also serve a means to manage the illness, or facilitate healing in the person at all levels. - TKV Desikachar & Kausthub Desikachar

Yoga therapy, derived from the Yoga tradition of Patanjali and the Ayurvedic system of health care refers to the adaptation and application of Yoga techniques and practices to help individuals facing health challenges at any level manage their condition, reduce symptoms, restore balance, increase vitality, and improve attitude. - Gary Kraftsow American Viniyoga Institute

Yoga Therapy is the application of yoga science and philosophy to specific human impediments. These impediments may occur in any aspect of the human condition, appearing as physical symptoms, enduring undesirable habits and behavioral patterns, feeling states such as anxiety, or simply as a vague sense of wanting more in life. Yoga's **all-encompassing nature** allows it to act holistically on each person. In addressing specific obstructions, yoga can act preventatively, restoratively, palliatively or curatively depending on the unique circumstances of the individual. - Jaime Stover Schmitt, Ed.D., Spanda® Yoga Movement Therapy (U.S.A.)

Yoga therapy adapts the practice of Yoga to the needs of people with specific or persistent health problems not usually addressed in a group class. - Larry Payne, Ph.D. Samata Yoga Center (U.S.A.)

Yoga therapy is the adaptation of yoga practices for people with health challenges. Yoga therapists prescribe specific regimens of postures, breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques to suit individual needs. Medical research shows that Yoga therapy is among the most effective complementary therapies for several common ailments. The challenges may be an illness, a temporary condition like pregnancy or childbirth, or a chronic condition associated with old age or infirmity. - Robin Monro, Ph.D. Yoga Biomedical Trust (England)

Yoga comprises a wide range of mind/body practices, from postural and breathing exercises to deep relaxation and meditation. Yoga therapy tailors these to the health needs of the individual. It helps to promote all-round positive health, as well as assisting particular medical conditions. The therapy is particularly appropriate for many chronic conditions that persist despite conventional medical treatment. - Marie Quail, Yoga Therapy and Training Center (Ireland)

Yoga therapy may be defined as the application of yogic principles to a particular person with the objective of achieving a particular spiritual, psychological, or physiological goal. The means employed are comprised of intelligently conceived steps that include but are not limited to the components of Ashtanga Yoga, which includes the educational teachings of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. Also included are the application of meditation, textual study, spiritual or psychological counseling, chanting, imagery, prayer, and ritual to meet the needs of the individual. Yoga therapy respects individual differences in age, culture, religion, philosophy, occupation, and mental and physical health. The knowledgeable and competent yogin or yogini applies Yoga Therapy according to the period, the place, and the practitioner's age, strength, and activities. - Richard Miller, Ph.D.

Yoga therapy is of modern coinage and represents a first effort to integrate traditional yogic concepts and techniques with Western medical and psychological knowledge. Whereas traditional Yoga is primarily concerned with personal transcendence on the part of a "normal" or healthy individual, Yoga therapy aims at the holistic treatment of various kinds of psychological or somatic dysfunctions ranging from back problems to emotional distress. Both approaches, however, share an understanding of the human being as an integrated body-mind system, which can function optimally only when there is a state of dynamic balance. - Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D.

Yoga therapy is the application of Yoga to individuals to empower them to progress toward greater health and freedom from disease. - Ganesh Mohan, Svastha Yoga and Ayurveda