

IAYT Definition. 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.

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## Contemporary Definitions of Yoga Therapy

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Introduction

Yoga therapy is difficult to define, in part because of the breadth and depth of the tradition itself, and because, like Yoga, the discipline can be approached in so many different ways. Nonetheless, for Yoga therapy to be better understood and accepted, it is necessary to have a reasonable and pragmatic definition understandable to those without experience with Yoga, yet still acceptable to those steeped in the practice and philosophy.

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Selected Additional Definitions

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 that facet of the ancient science of Yoga that focuses on health and wellness at all levels of the person: physical, psychological, and spiritual. Yoga therapy focuses on the path of Yoga as a healing journey that brings balance to the body and mind through an experiential understanding of the primary intention of Yoga: awakening of Spirit, our essential nature.

[Joseph LePage, M.A., Integrative Yoga 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 Monroe, 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 \(Ireland\)](#)

The use of the techniques of Yoga to create, stimulate, and maintain an optimum state of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

[Judith Hanson Lasater, Ph.D.](#)

Yoga therapy consists of the application of yogic principles, methods, and techniques to specific human ailments. In its ideal application, Yoga therapy is preventive in nature, as is Yoga itself, but it is also restorative in many instances, palliative in others, and curative in many others.

[Art Brownstein, M.D.](#)

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 a holistic healing art. Rather than prescribe treatments, it invites presence and awareness. Using age-old yogic approaches to deeper presence and awareness, we are able to know ourselves more fully. Out of that knowing, we are more easily moved to embrace the opportunity for change, growth, and enhanced well-being in body, feelings, thought, and spirit.

[Michael Lee, Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy](#)

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](#)

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#### CARDINAL PRINCIPLES OF YOGA THERAPY

- Relax the body
- Slow down the breath
- Calm the mind

HOW CAN YOGA HELP CONTROL AND PREVENT INFECTIVE AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES?

Yoga can help control and prevent infective and communicable diseases through improving the individual immunity and resistance, improved hygiene through the practice of Yamas and Niyamas as well as the cleansing practices and the disciplined cultivation

## What are the yamas and niyamas?

The yamas and niyamas are yoga's ethical guidelines laid out in the first two limbs of Patanjali's eightfold path. They're like a map written to guide you on your life's journey. Simply put, **the yamas are things not to do, or restraints, while the niyamas are things to do, or observances.**

The five yamas ask practitioners to avoid violence, lying, stealing, wasting energy, and possessiveness. The five niyamas ask us to embrace cleanliness and contentment, to purify ourselves through heat, to continually study and observe our habits, and to surrender to something greater than ourselves.

### SOME PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF YOGA AND YOGA THERAPY

- Stable autonomic nervous system equilibrium, with a tendency toward parasympathetic nervous system dominance rather than the usual stress-induced sympathetic nervous system dominance
- Pulse rate decreases
- Respiratory rate decreases
- Blood pressure decreases
- Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) increases

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