

DOUG KELLER

YOGA AS THERAPY

Australia 2016

Modern Yoga is a practice of health in movement: in its therapeutic applications, asana and pranayama become the tools by which we address patterns of movement, breath and being that are at the root of chronic pain, limitation and even disease.

Because of the way we're built, and the lives we live (even as yoga practitioners), we all face challenges individual in our life and practice, often with chronic pain. Our own structure and patterns of movement often lead us directly into these problems, unless we recognize and change them. Even when we exercise regularly or have a regular practice, we allow some muscles to dominate, leaving others weak and unused. This can eventually lead to pain and injury, even for the experienced practitioner.

In this training, the central focus will be on such 'movement impairment syndromes' — patterns of movement closely connected to pain problems as well as joint and muscle injury and breathing pattern disorders. This approach is especially suited to yoga, and will provide teachers and practitioners with a vital toolbox for recognizing and assessing these patterns, and designing an approach through specifically targeted asana practice and remedial exercises aimed at changing them for the better.

The patterns or 'syndromes' will be clearly and simply defined, and provide the focus for therapeutic assessment. These are powerful and immediately useful tools for one-on-one work; but they are also surprisingly effective for use in 'real-time' while teaching group classes, helping you to offer modifications and adjustments on-the-spot to help students as you guide them through their practice at any level.

We will work progressively through the typical problem areas of the body, linking healthy and helpful actions — for the feet, knees, hips, low and upper back, neck, shoulders, wrists and elbows — to our recognition of fundamental movement impairment patterns. We'll do so in a way that emphasizes 'news you can use' and gives you memorable and directly experienced ways of working in these areas that can be easily communicated to students and clients.

Two topics of special interest to yoga practitioners — in light of recent discussions of the safety of yoga (particularly for the hypermobile) — will be sacral instability and hip joint instability and impingement!

Each day will also include a progressive treatment of the therapeutic role of 'Laya' Yoga from the hatha yoga tradition:

The advent of 'hatha yoga' in the 13th century — the source of what we practice today — introduced a startlingly new perspective on yoga, contrasting with the purely meditation-based yoga(s) that historically preceded it.

For more info contact:

Wai Ying THAM

m: 0412 023 688

e: reconnectyoga@bigpond.com

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A significant element of practice that was introduced with it was the element of 'Laya Yoga' — which we know in terms of yoga nidra, restorative poses, and related breathing and meditation practices. The original essence of this approach was to cultivate 'spaciousness,' which is an element of all practice, and which allows us to go beyond our struggles with the obstacles presented by the mind.

Along with an initial explanation of the meaning and inspiration of this kind of practice as well as its place in our understanding of yoga, we will explore pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation from this perspective. The 'onus' will be a deeper understanding and appreciation of the elements of the hatha yoga tradition that complement our asana practice — and an understanding and approach to meditation that is less daunting and more practically 'this-worldly' than the traditional understanding of 'classical' yoga.

An extensively illustrated and workbook, designed specifically for the training, will be provided as part of the training, as well as access to the slides used during the presentations. This reduces the burden of note-taking, and allows greater participation in this very experiential approach to Yoga as Therapy. Moreover, the workbook contains worksheets and practical exercises for improving your skills at assessment and sequencing, based on the topics of the workshop.

5 DAY TRAINING CONTENT

Day 1 — Assessing Movement Problems and Pain in the Shoulders and Neck — The Shoulder Blades and Shoulder 'Opening' in All Ranges of Motion, and Neck Pain

At the center of chronic pain and movement impairment in the shoulders lies the issue of movement impairments in the shoulder blades. Along with the positioning and orientation of the head and neck, problems of placement and movement of the shoulder blades are the key to understanding both shoulder injury and neck pain and problems.

This session will explore these types of misalignments, body types and movement impairments — and will include assessment techniques and remedial exercises for addressing the neck and shoulders/shoulder blade movement. This will broaden into applications in yoga practice: an examination of shoulder instructions and corrections given in yoga practice, as well as the topic of 'shoulder openers' and their therapeutic purpose.

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Day 2 Specific Joint Problems Connected with Shoulder Movement and Weight Bearing — the Wrists and Elbows, and their Connection with Shoulder Conditions — How to Work in Poses, and Helpful Variations

We'll continue on the theme of the shoulders, turning attention to the wrists and elbows: actions for healthier wrists, as well as the role of weight-bearing in the health of the wrists, elbows and shoulders.

This will include a look into inflammatory conditions and how to work with them — especially hand and elbow problems.

Day 3/4 — Movement and Pain Problems in the Low Back, Sacrum and Lower Body: Forward Bending, Backbending and Twisting — Patterns and Assessments

Our own individual style of movement is adapted to our own unique structure and proportions. Like snowflakes, no two are exactly alike, and we can recognize people we know from a distance or from behind, just based on the way in which they move. Our styles of movement show up most in our forward bending, and is often the key to understanding our limitations as well as injuries and pain problems. This very accessible session will bring awareness to our own style of movement, and how to adapt in our practice for greater freedom in movement as well as for overcoming pain syndromes.

Special focus will be on issues of the low back and sacrum, and approaches to yoga practice to address movement patterns leading to pain problems.

Day 4/5 — Specific Joint Problems Connected with Movement Patterns: Feet, Knees and Hips — Specific Ways of Working in Poses

Understanding the impact of the structure of the knees and hips, and the role of both structural and acquired problems — and how to adjust for them in the practice of poses, as well as overcome pain problems arising from muscular imbalances.

A variety of foot, knee and hip problems will be covered, with approaches to alignment instructions and insights in yoga practice to address the variations in structure in students — and the typical pain problems that arise from these types of variations.

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