Certificate Program in Yoga for Mental Health
YogaX – A Special Initiative in the Department of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences

Background and Introduction

Research reveals that yoga, in its many manifestations, is helpful for a variety of challenges and with many types of individuals (McCall, 2013; Riley & Park, 2015). These salutary benefits arise because yoga affects and integrates bottom-up and top-down pathways in the human brain for coping with internal and external demands, while it recalibrates the nervous system and maintains homeostasis in body and mind (Table 1). In fact, the synergy of the multitude of practices within yoga has a profound impact on several human systems that greatly affect day-to-day functioning, wellness, and resilience in times of stress, busyness, challenge, and demand (Sullivan et al., 2018).

Yoga optimizes autonomic control, regulates endocrine (e.g., via a decrease in cortisol and an increase in gamma-aminobutyric acid) and immune function, shapes adaptive emotional and behavioral responses, and downregulates reactivity (as evidenced by less widespread arousal, enhanced vagal tone, improved relaxation response, and cardiac variability). It facilitates “optimal physiological conditions” (Taylor et al., 2010), enhances executive functioning and working memory, increases pain tolerance, and facilitates adaptive emotions and behaviors by helping practitioners hold a positive attitude, find new ways of dealing with old inputs, and make accurate discernments in times of stress and challenge (Schmalzl et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2010). As shown in Table 1, a solid evidence base exists that yoga increases resilience in body, emotion, and mind and brings about self-regulation that supports adaptive responsiveness to meet the needs of the environment, body, emotions, and mind.

Table 1: Evidence Base for Yoga’s Mental Health Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documented Mental Health Benefits – Clinical Symptoms and Disorders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attention Deficit</td>
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<td>Eating Disorders</td>
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<td>Trauma Spectrum</td>
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<td>Documented Mental Health Benefits – Wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Wellbeing</td>
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**Reasons for Obtaining a Certificate in Yoga for Mental Healthcare**

Given yoga’s research evidence (see Table 1) as a successful integrative treatment for many emotional and mental health conditions and for enhancing wellbeing and resilience, it is not surprising that many integrative, allied, mental, and general healthcare settings have begun to recruit yoga teachers and clinicians to support their mental health teams and interventions. Success of this recruitment depends on availability of individuals trained to apply yoga in mental healthcare or integrated healthcare settings. To date, recruitment remains challenging as conventionally-trained yoga teachers do not understand the complexities about how yoga affects emotional wellbeing and mental health.

This certificate program is designed to improve the hiring pool for mental health settings of professionals who are prepared to bring yoga strategies into mental health treatment. Two types of preparations are possible:

1. For yoga teachers who would like to bring yoga into mental health care settings to add supportive service to mental health treatment
2. For mental healthcare providers who would like to learn basic yoga techniques they can successfully integrate into their extant mental health scope of practice.

**Prerequisites for Entering the Certificate Program**

The certificate program is available only to individuals who meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Registered yoga teacher in good standing with Yoga Alliance
2. Licensed and/or currently practicing healthcare professional (including allied health, medicine, psychology, social work, counseling, and marriage and family therapy)
3. Healthcare professional student currently in good standing in a formal academic healthcare program (disciplines as defined in Item 2 above).
4. An individual who is currently enrolled in a YogaX teacher training program with completion of the 200-hour training as a requisite for the certificate.
5. An individual who can provide evidence of equivalent credentials to Item 1 above (to be reviewed and approved by a YogaX staff member).

Applicants complete a simple application form to apply and submit it to yogaxtem@stanford.edu.

**Cost of the Certificate Program**

Two payment options are offered for the certificate program.

1. Students may simply pay the regular fee for each workshop they attend. They will also be charged a $100 processing fee for certification-specific activities with YogaX staff (such as debriefing sessions and assignment grading) at the time of completion of all requirements.
2. Students pay a flat fee of $850 for access to 36 hours of YogaX workshops (in essence receiving one 6-hour workshop for free), with the processing fee included in the flat rate.

Please reach out to us if you have questions or concerns about the cost implications of the Certificate Program. We may be able to support some individuals in the form of scholarships, work trades, or similar arrangements (incases of financial hardship).
Requirements of the Certificate Program

Overview

The certificate program is administered by YogaX and housed in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in Stanford’s Medical School. The certificate is granted by the Department in conjunction with YogaX, a Yoga-Alliance registered Yoga School (RYS200). The certificate program accepts up to 20 students per year; requires 30 credits of continuing education provided by YogaX teachers with YACEP credentials (Yoga Alliance approved continuing education providers), a YogaX-supervised fieldwork component, and a specified sequence of home study assignments. The certificate requirements ideally are completed within 18 calendar months. Longer timeframes may be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Course Requirements

Certificate students choose 30 credits of instructions from among the following YogaX offerings (additional offerings to be added as they are developed):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Workshop</th>
<th>Credits and CE Eligibility</th>
<th>Recent or Next Offering</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundations of Yoga</td>
<td>6 credits – YA credits</td>
<td>September 15, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoga for Mental Health Professionals and Yoga Teachers in Mental Health Settings</td>
<td>6 credits – YA credits; APA credits*</td>
<td>June 1, 2019 Spring 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Holistic Yoga</td>
<td>7 credits – YA credits</td>
<td>September 14, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma-Informed Yoga for Health Professionals and Yoga Teachers</td>
<td>6 credits – YA credits; APA credits*</td>
<td>October 19, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga for Chronic Pain</td>
<td>6 credits – YA credits; APA credits*</td>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga for Veterans</td>
<td>6 credits – YA credits; APA credits*</td>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualizing Yoga Therapy Cases with a Mental Health Focus: Assessment, Etiology, and Treatment Planning</td>
<td>15 credits – YA credits; IAYT credits*; APA credits*</td>
<td>Spring 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant portions of a YogaX Yoga Teacher Training</td>
<td>Variable (up to 12 credits) – negotiated on an individual level</td>
<td>November 16-24, 2019</td>
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</table>

Notes: *CE application in progress; Abbreviations: APA=American Psychological Association; YA=Yoga Alliance; IAYT=International Association of Yoga Therapists

YogaX-Supervised Fieldwork Requirement

Each certificate student needs to complete a fieldwork requirement that demonstrates the application of the theory and principles taught in the eligible course offerings. Fieldwork is developed flexibly with each student to fit with their current work settings or aspirations. Halfway during and after conclusion of the fieldwork experience, the student schedules times with a YogaX staff member for one-on-one debriefing sessions. Suggested fieldwork options include, but are not limited to:

1. Observing – Certificate students will take 10 yoga classes (at a location of their choice) to observe the teacher with attention to any teachings that are relevant to mental health (either in their presence or absence). They will write a summary of each class, along with a critique of the teaching methods used by the teacher, an account of the effect of the class on the student, and comments about what the
student would do differently than the teacher. Commentary might also address how the teacher failed to take mental health issues into consideration during the class.

2. **Assisting** – Certificate students may choose a teacher in their community who will allow them to assist with 10 of their classes (YogaX staff approval is needed for teacher choice). Students will write a summary of each class, along with a critique of the teaching methods used by the teacher, an account of the student’s experience with assisting, and comments about what the student would do differently than the teacher. Commentary needs to address how the teacher and the student assistant took mental health issues into consideration during each class.

3. **Assisting with a YogaX Workshop** – Certificate students will assist with a mental health-oriented YogaX workshop. They will support small group discussions and experiential exercises; they will write a workshop review and engage in a debriefing session with a YogaX staff member.

4. **Personal Experience** – Certificate students engage in approximately 5 to 10 yoga therapy sessions for their personal benefit with a yoga therapist in their community. They will journal about their experience, especially as relevant to what they have learned that they will apply in their own mental health yoga work.

**Home Study Assignments**

Certificate students are required to read three sets of readings with commensurate writing assignments:

1. All students will read a version of the yoga sutras and will write a commentary about each pada, with attention to how the aphorisms apply to yoga in mental health settings. *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Many translations exist and each student will choose one. Several are available for free online ([http://www.swamij.com/yoga-sutras.htm](http://www.swamij.com/yoga-sutras.htm) and [http://www.arlingtoncenter.org/Sanskrit-English.pdf](http://www.arlingtoncenter.org/Sanskrit-English.pdf)).

2. All students will read all of the following required readings and provide a one-page summary of essential learnings.

   **Required Readings:**
3. All students will choose one of the following recommended readings (or an approved substitute) and prepare a brief essay (4-6 1.5-spaced pages; 1-inch margins; font size 11) about its direct applicability to their fieldwork or professional experience.

**Recommended Readings:**