Yoga for Mental Health Care Applications: Assessment, Etiology, and Intervention Planning

Syllabus

Christiane Brems, PhD, ABPP, ERYT500, C-IAYT
Dates TBA; 30 hours across a one-weekend retreat: F, S, S 8a – 9:30

Target Audience and Instructional Level

This is an intermediate-level course geared to students in the YogaX YTT300 and the following audiences:

- Psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental healthcare providers interested in bringing yoga principles and strategies into their clinical practice.
- Psychology, psychiatry, and other mental health-program students in graduate or medical programs interested in bringing yoga principles and strategies into their supervised clinical practice.
- Yoga teachers interested in offering yoga classes with sensitivity to mental health concerns, especially but not only in mental health care settings.
- Yoga therapists providing yoga interventions with concern for mental health, especially but not only in mental healthcare settings.

Training Pragmatics

- Cost: $800 tuition for this 30-hour workshop or YogaX YTT300 prepaid enrollment
- This training is delivered via online synchronous instruction and with fulltime contact with the lead teacher, Chris Brems
- (see Training Format below for specific details of training delivery)
- Yoga Alliance Continuing Education credits (30 hours) are included in the tuition cost; a CE certificate is issued upon request
- Participation (by entering the zoom link and/or making payment) implies that you have read and agreed to the Stanford Assumptions of Risk, Release of Claims, and Hold Harmless Agreement at https://www.yogaxteam.com/healthandsafetyinformation
- YogaX Refund and Payment Policy is available at https://3de0fc17-ea21-4854-87c7-777a583c02cf.filesusr.com/ugd/37469f_73d3c9e8ebb14214a60e11d8b08baba1.pdf
- YogaX has no commercial support for this event and there are no disclosable conflicts of interest.
- The zoom link for this event is: https://stanford.zoom.us/TBA

Instructor

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Clinical Professor and Director of YogaX
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Stanford School of Medicine
More information at https://profiles.stanford.edu/christiane-brems
Training Content Summary

This advanced training is grounded in a holistic and integrated model of teaching yoga with deep intention and a collaborative, student-centered approach. It emphasizes empowerment, self-agency, and self-efficacy of students to embrace a yoga practice that creates resilience, hope, and healing. It focuses on helping teachers consider the whole of each student, deeply understanding students’ and clients’ bigger context and building the practice around student needs. This integrated holistic vision of yoga is one of inclusiveness, access, diversity, health, wellbeing, and resilience for all. It is a practice of and for community; it honors our interdependence and co-regulation. It is a yoga of wholism that honors the mind as much as the body, the breath as much as the calming of the nervous system, the individual as much as the collective, stillness as much as movement, and effort as much as ease.

The integrated holistic model looks at and addresses the needs and resources of whole people in all their layers: body, breath, mind, heart, and spirit – grounded in community and a complex interpersonal setting of biological, psychological, social, and cultural influences. It explores intra- and interpersonal contexts for a biopsychosociocultural understanding of how humans develop, cultivate resilience, and maintain mental wellbeing. The model is applied to a variety of emotional and mental manifestations present in yoga students and their teachers. It is particularly suited to applications in healthcare settings – for providers and clients.

The holistic integrated model is applied toward:

- gaining a deeper understanding of the koshas as levels of human development
- exploring human ways of being in the world (the gunas as polyvagal manifestations of expecting safety, danger, or threat)
- analyzing affective predilections (the kleshas of attachment, aversion, ego, fear, confusion) and their effects on how we perceive the world
- investigating all types of mental preoccupations (the vrittis of misperception, remembrance, planning, relationships, circumstances) and their effects on mental and emotional reactivity and wellbeing
- using the biopsychosociocultural model to build holistic and integrated yoga prevention, self-care, and healing plans for teachers and their students

The information from the biopsychosociocultural context of the student/client guides the yoga teacher or clinician toward a deeper understanding of the client or student with regard to developmental level (koshas) and factors that have contributed to developmental presentation and trajectory. With this information, clients or students can be understood in the context of habitual neurological platforms (based on polyvagal theory: perceptions of life as safe, dangerous, or threatening), affective predilections (inclined toward attachment, aversion, fear, or confusion), and mental preoccupations (e.g., with the past, the future, relationships, circumstances, and more). Once individuals are understood holistically, a healing or self-care plan can be made that includes not just planning for the yoga interventions to be implemented with the yoga teacher or therapist, but also appropriate referrals to remain within professional Scope of Practice and Codes of Ethics.

Four steps are outlined in the process of understanding the mental health and self-care needs of students or clients. These four steps are deeply grounded in ancient Ayurvedic processes, modern psychological understandings of human beings, and Buddhist philosophy. They are as follows:

- **First Noble Truth** – Conditioned states bring suffering: Diagnosis or Recognizing Challenge
- **Second Noble Truth** – Suffering has a cause: Etiology or Recognizing the Sources of Challenge
- **Third Noble Truth** – Suffering can be ended: Prognosis and Planning for Change
- **Fourth Noble Truth** – There is a path to freedom from suffering: Committing to a Journey of Transformation via an eight-limbed yogic path that is individualized and tailored to each student’s unique way of having grown up and being in the world.
Learning Objectives

Learning Objective #1:

1. Understand the four steps of assessment and conceptualization, originating in Ayurveda and Buddhist psychology
   a. 1st noble truth: conditioned states create suffering – diagnosis
   b. 2nd noble truth: understand the causes of suffering – etiology
   c. 3rd noble truth: suffering can be ended – prognosis and treatment planning
   d. 4th noble truth: pathways to ending suffering – treatment

Evaluation Method for Learning Objective #1

- Define and provide examples of diagnosis, etiology, prognosis, and treatment
- Define and explain the difference between diagnosis and etiology
- Define prognosis and develop goals and objectives
- Develop a sample treatment plan

Learning Objective #2:

2. Become versed in the biopsychosociocultural perspective to understanding the context of human development
   a. biological variables
   b. psychological variables
   c. social variables
   d. cultural and familial variables
   e. intersectional contexts

Evaluation Method for Learning Objective #2

- Define and provide examples of biological, psychological, social, and cultural/familial factors of influence
- Take information about self or other and categorize it into biological, psychological, social, and cultural/familial factors of influence
- Explain how this information can be used to understand presenting concerns
- Explain how to use BPSC data to track change across time

Learning Objective #3:

3. Learn how to develop a deep etiological understanding of the student/client, by being able to
   a. understand the neurodevelopmental theory of the koshas, being able to trace it across all levels or layers
   b. understand the client or student’s developmental level (kosha model) and its implications
   c. contextualize presenting concerns within the student/client or student’s biopsychosociocultural life experiences
   d. define and understand the role of precipitating, predisposing, perpetuating, and protective factors
Evaluation Method for Learning Objective #3

- Develop an etiological model – addressing kosmic level of development – for a case study presented in class
- Explain precipitating, predisposing, perpetuating, and protective factors in a roleplay
- Apply the etiological model to their own life in a personal case study

Learning Objective #4:

4. Based on the etiological understanding of client or students, learn how to tailor prevention, healing or wellness plans by knowing how to:
   a. address biospsychosociocultural factors that contribute to the presenting concerns
   b. choose interventions appropriate to level of kosmic development
   c. define interventions that address default polyvagal states (or gunas)
   d. tailor interventions to address affective predilections (or kleshas)
   e. tailor interventions to address predominant vrittis and mind states

Evaluation Method for Learning Objective #4

- Develop a tailored prevention, healing, or wellness plan – address level of development, gunas, kleshas, and vrittis – for a case study presented in class
- Explain why to choose particular yoga strategies over others
- Explain how specific yoga strategies address the etiological foundation of the presenting concerns

If our sense of self is unhealthy, our spiritual work of self is initially a work of reclamation and healing. This means understanding and releasing a deficient or wounded sense of self and reawakening the lost energy and authentic connection to ourselves. When we have reclaimed some measure of ourselves, the next task becomes the further development of character, of our wisdom, strength, skill, and compassion. This development is described in the teachings of the Buddha as the cultivation of skillful qualities such as generosity, patience, mindfulness, and kindness.

Jack Kornfield, 1993, A Path with Heart, p. 207
### Schedule and Continuing Education Hours by YA Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>TTP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>8:00a-10a</td>
<td>The Koshas and Four Noble Truths – Understanding mental health in the context of yoga psychology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:30a-12:30p</td>
<td>Understanding the Presenting Concern: Defining student needs and cultivating mindfulness</td>
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<td>2:00p-5:00p</td>
<td>Defining the Sources of Challenge: The biopsychosociocultural context</td>
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<td>5p – 6:30p</td>
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<td>6:30p-9:30p</td>
<td>Understanding the koshas from a neurodevelopmental perspective</td>
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<td>Day 2</td>
<td>8:00a-10a</td>
<td>Planning for Change and Recovery: Exploring each kosa in detail</td>
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<td>10:30a-12:30p</td>
<td>Gunas and polyvagal theory</td>
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<td>2:00p-5:00p</td>
<td>Kleshas and vrittis</td>
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<td>6:30p-9:30p</td>
<td>Samskaras, karma, and brahma viharas</td>
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<td>Day 3</td>
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<td>Embarking on a Healing Path: Tailoring classes – safety and intention (L1 and L2)</td>
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<td>10:30a-12:30p</td>
<td>Healing through form and movement (L3)</td>
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<td>2:00p-5:00p</td>
<td>Healing through breath (L4)</td>
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<td>6:30p-9:30p</td>
<td>Healing through the interior practices (L5-7)</td>
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30 hours of YA CE or YTT 300 in the following categories: 13 0 2 15 0 30

Notes: YA=Yoga Alliance; CE=Continuing Education
TTP=Techniques, Training, and Practice; TM=Teaching Methodology; AP=Anatomy and Physiology; YH=Yoga Humanities; Prac=Practicum; Spc=area of program specialization

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**Between stimulus and response there is a space.**
**In that space is our power to choose our response.**
**In our response lies our growth and our freedom.**

*(attributed to) Victor Frankl*
**Handouts Provided**

Several handouts and the slide set for the workshop will be provided to registered and paid trainees on the day of the workshop. These materials are provided with the understanding that students will not duplicate, distribute, or otherwise publicly use the materials without express permission and proper attribution and referencing.

Handouts to be provided include:

- **Illustration of the Integrated Holistic (Koshas) Model**
- **Illustration of the Biopsychosociocultural Context Model**
- **Illustrations of the Expanded BPSC**
- **Eight Limbs of Yoga Briefly Defined**
- **Gunas as Fundamental Human Ways of Embodying Nature**
- **Interactions of the Kleshas and Vrittis**
- **Pathways of Sensory Processing Engaged in Integrated Yoga**
- **Principles of Trauma-Informed Yoga**
- **Guide to Observing and Assessing Yoga Professionals**
- **Slide Set for the Training**
- **Content Manual for the Training**

**Suggested Readings**

It is recommended that in preparation for the workshop you read all YogaX blogs, peruse YogaX webpage resources, and try out some of the offered free practices (asana, pranayama, meditation, and more) at yogaXteam.com and on the YogaX Team YouTube channel.

It will be helpful to have familiarity with the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* prior to attendance (but it is not required). Many translations exist and you can choose any 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)).

The following readings will be helpful as you deepen your journey once you have completed the workshop.


Wilber, K. (2016). *Integral meditation: Mindfulness as a path to grow up, wake up, and show up in your life*. Boston: Shambhala.
Training Format

The workshop uses mixed pedagogical methods, ranging from didactics/lectures to discussion to experiential work, including small group activities. Lecture/didactic time invites discussion throughout and is accented by experiential exercises and activities. The experiential work is yoga-based and includes asana, pranayama, meditation, and guided imagery. To make sure that everyone can enjoy the yoga-based activities safely and with maximum comfort, please note the following (more personal) thoughts and requests.

- Stanford University requires that you sign the release form (link above) to be able to participate in the activities that are part of this workshop. It assumed that you have agreed to this document when you pay or use the provided zoom link for the workshop.

- Required training activities start promptly. To make sure that we can start on time and that you have ample opportunity to get settled or ask questions, it would be lovely if you could arrive as much as 10 minutes early.
- Participants have to provide their own props for the virtual training sessions. Minimum prop equipment includes 2 yoga blocks, 1 yoga strap (10 feet is preferred), 1 yoga bolster, 1-2 blankets, and a yoga mat. Access to a clear wall space is extremely helpful (a closed door works). Prop substitutes are fine (e.g., a stack of books instead of blocks; a scarf instead of a strap, sofa cushions instead of a bolster, etc.). Please have all props at the ready for each training session.
- Yoga is best practiced on a relatively empty stomach but not starving. A sustaining but light meal prior to class will help you maintain your energy without having a full belly that makes bending and twisting difficult.
- Please ask questions – before class, after class, and during class. If you are wondering about something – whether it’s the reason for a particular shape or movement, an alignment question, or a more healthful way of doing something – someone else is likely to ponder the same thing.
- Always honor your own intuition and body wisdom – if something feels wrong, do NOT do it. We are all anatomically unique and we all express the same yoga shape, breath, or practice in different ways. What works for us, your teachers, or the person next to you, may not be optimal for you. Allow yourself the joy of using props and variations based on the feedback from your own body, breath, and mind. We offer both freely and demonstrate their use throughout.
- Yoga practiced in a group is inspirational. It is never competitive. Work within your own body limits and preferences; give yourself permission not to strive to do what others are doing. Delight in the pleasure of expressing each pose or breath in uniquely your way. If something comes easily, celebrate this state of pure joy; if something is a struggle, embrace the moment of learning.
- Thank you in advance for making me aware of any medical conditions that may affect your yoga practice. It is helpful for me to know if you are modifying practices for a particular reason or if you would like to have help in working with a particular concern.
- Thank for turning off all cell phones, beepers, or other noise-making or distracting devices before you settle in for any given training session.
- Thank you for keeping your cameras on during virtual sessions to the degree possible and appropriate.
The four quadrants in the background are the biopsychosociocultural (BPS) interpersonal context or matrix for the neurodevelopmental trajectory of the koshas, or layers of self.

The BPS context is associated with limbs 1 and 2.