Yoga for Mental Health
Cultivating Emotional Resilience and Fortitude

Syllabus
Christiane Brems, PhD, ABPP, ERYT500, C-IAYT
July 30/31, 2022 and August 27/28, 2022; 8am to 5pm (7.5 hours) each day

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 and emotional and mental self-care.
- 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 and emotional and mental self-care.
- Yoga teachers interested in enhancing their emotional self-care and in offering yoga classes with sensitivity to mental health concerns, especially but not only in mental health care settings.
- Yoga therapists interested in enhancing their emotional self-care and 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 (early bird fee is $500 if paid by July 10, 2022) 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/73d3e9e8ebb14214a60e11d8b08baba1.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

Instructor

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More information at https://profiles.stanford.edu/christiane-brems
Training Content Summary

Current times have created high levels of physical, emotional, and mental stress for many, especially individuals in healthcare – whether as patients or providers. The Yoga for Mental Health training is dedicated to sharing yoga-based strategies for emotional health and mental resilience with healthcare providers and/or yoga teachers working with individuals who have health or mental health challenges. Yoga for Mental Health explores how to tailor yoga strategies to optimize the capacity to deal with a variety of life challenges by exploring contextual and personal contributors to emotional unease and mental suffering. Based on the understanding of how difficulties arise, strategies for self-care and healthcare are developed based on the many aspects of yoga. Movement, breath, mindfulness, meditation, and guided imagery are applied in ways that can be adapted to the specific emotional needs of individuals, creating highly personalized self-care or wellness plans for emotional resilience and cognitive flexibility.

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 or clients to embrace a yoga practice that creates resilience, hope, and healing. It focuses on helping teachers or clinicians consider the whole of each student or client, 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.

Integrated holistic yoga 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. In all contexts, and especially in the context of self-care and healthcare to support emotional and mental wellbeing, resilience, and fortitude, an integrated holistic yoga practice applies and tailors a wide range of yoga strategies, from movement, to breath, to meditation, mindfulness, and more.

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 emotional, mental, relational, and physical resilience; and maintain mental and emotional wellbeing. The model is used for emotional and psychical self-care and healthcare for yoga teachers and healthcare providers. It is particularly suited to yoga applications in healthcare settings – for providers and clients.

The holistic integrated model in the context of supporting emotional wellbeing and mental flexibility is applied toward gaining a deeper understanding of the layers of self (koshas) as levels of human development and wellbeing by

- exploring human ways of being and coping 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 and respond to the world
- investigating all types of mental preoccupations (the vrittis of misperception, remembrance, planning, relationships, circumstances), their flavorings by the affective biases (kleshas) and predominant coping styles (gunas), and their effects on mental and emotional reactivity, wellbeing, and resilience
- using the biopsychosociocultural model to build holistic and integrated yoga prevention, self-care, and healing plans for teachers and their students
- tailor movement, breathing, mindfulness, meditation, and guided imagery practices to the specific circumstances and needs of each student or client
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 needs and 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 resiliency or self-care plan can be made that includes not just planning for the yoga strategies to be implemented with the yoga teacher or therapist, but also appropriate referrals to remain within a professional Scope of Practice and Codes of Ethics.

Four steps are outlined in the process of understanding 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: Recognizing Challenge
- **Second Noble Truth** – Suffering has a cause: Recognizing the Sources of Challenge
- **Third Noble Truth** – Suffering can be healed: 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 or client’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. 1\textsuperscript{st} noble truth: conditioned states create suffering – recognizing challenge
   b. 2\textsuperscript{nd} noble truth: understand the causes of suffering – understanding the sources of challenge
   c. 3\textsuperscript{rd} noble truth: suffering can be ended – planning for change
   d. 4\textsuperscript{th} noble truth: pathways to ending suffering – committing to a journey of transformation

**Evaluation Method for Learning Objective #1**

- Define and provide examples of recognizing challenge and understanding sources of challenge
- Define and explain the difference between recognizing challenge versus sources of challenge
- Define and develop self-care plans, with goals and objectives
- Develop a sample plan for personal or students’ (clients’) journeys into wellness

**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 layers of self or consciousness (koshas), being able to trace it across all levels or layers
   b. understand clients’ or student’s developmental level and resilience and its implications
   c. contextualize presenting concerns within students’ or clients’ biopsychosociocultural life experiences
   d. define and understand the role of precipitating, predisposing, perpetuating, and protective factors

Evaluation Method for Learning Objective #3

• Develop an understanding of how to recognize sources of suffering – addressing kosha development – using case samples
• Explain precipitating, predisposing, perpetuating, and protective factors in a roleplay
• Explain the role of human nervous system adaptations (polyvagal theory; gunas), affective predilections (attachment, aversion, ego identity, fears, and confusion; kleshas), and mental preoccupations or biases (benign caught in past or present; misperception and bias; vrittis)
• Understanding pattern locks and their consequences in body, energy, affect, thoughts, and emotions

Learning Objective #4:

4. Based on the tailored understanding of client or students, learn how to tailor prevention, healing or wellness plans by knowing how to:
   a. select strategies that address the biospsychosociocultural factors that contribute to presenting concerns, attending to creating environmental and psychological safety and intention
   b. choose yoga practices and strategies appropriate to level of development
   c. select and individualize yoga practices and strategies that address default polyvagal states (gunas)
   d. choose and develop yoga practices and strategies to address affective needs and predilections (kleshas)
   e. tailor strategies and practices to address predominant mental patterns (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 your own use in self-care or for use with a student or client (within your scope of practice as a healthcare provider)
• Explain why to choose particular yoga strategies over others
• Explain how specific yoga strategies address the understanding of the presenting concerns and identified sources of suffering
# Schedule and Continuing Education Hours by YA Category

*July 30/31, 2022 and August 27/28, 2022; 8am to 5pm (7.5 hours) each day*

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>8:00a-10a</td>
<td>Four Noble Truths – Understanding mental health in the context of yoga psychology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:00a-12:00p</td>
<td>Understanding Presenting Challenges: Defining student needs and developmental trajectories</td>
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<td>12:00p – 1:30p</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
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<td>1:30p-5:00p</td>
<td>Understanding the layers of self (or consciousness) from a neurodevelopmental perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>8:00a-10a</td>
<td>Understanding the sources of challenge: 4 Ps and 2 Ms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:00a-12:00p</td>
<td>Gunas and polyvagal theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1:30p-5:00p</td>
<td>Kleshas, vrittis, and samskaras; karma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>8:00a-9:00a</td>
<td>Planning for Change and Recovery: Addressing each kosha</td>
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<td>9:00a-12:00p</td>
<td>Embarking on a Healing Path: Tailoring classes – environment, intention (L1 and L2)</td>
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<td>1:30p-5:00p</td>
<td>Healing through form and movement (L3)</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
<td>8:00a-10a</td>
<td>Healing through breath and energy (L4)</td>
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<td>10:00a-12:00p</td>
<td>Healing through the interior practices (L5+6)</td>
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<td>1:30p-5:00p</td>
<td>Healing through the interior practices (L6+ 7) and integration (brahma viharas)</td>
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30 hours of YA CE or YTT 300 in the following categories: 13 0 2 15 0

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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 (total hours in this category = 30)

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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 sets 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 Sets 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 preferrable), 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.
YogaX YTT300 or Mental Health Certificate Program Assessment Assignment
Yoga for Mental Health: Cultivating Emotional Resilience and Fortitude

There will be ONE homework assignment for students taking the training as a YTT300 module or for the purposes of completing the Mental Health Certificate Program. Details to come.

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