Lecture Series: A CAM Approach to Finding Balance

Laurie Peterson

Part 2: Mind-Body Exercise

**Introduction**

* Recap of personal introduction
* Recap of CAM
* In part one of this lecture series we outlined one of the core principles of natural health; Nutrition
* Part 2 of this series will outline what I believe is the second core principle: Exercise using CAM approaches
* We will discuss in this series
	1. Why the body needs exercise
	2. Mind-body exercise: Yoga Philosophy
	3. Different types of Yoga
	4. The benefits of Yoga
	5. Legal/ethical standards
	6. Yoga precautions
	7. Resources available

**Why The Body Needs Exercise**

* From the beginning of recorded history, philosophers and health professionals observed that regular activity is an essential part of a healthy life.
* Hippocrates wrote… “Eating alone will not keep a man well; he must also take exercise. For food and exercise, while possessing opposite qualities, yet work together to produce health…”
* Overwhelming evidence points to the importance of regular physical exercise for quality of life, health, and prevention and rehabilitation of many health problems
* Sedentary individuals could greatly reduce their risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and other health problems simply by engaging in 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most if not every day of the week. (refer to handout 7, (My Activity Pyramid for Adults (18-64), 2013)

(Franks, 2007)

**Goals for a Healthy life**

* Positive activities:
	1. Exercising regularly
	2. Maintaining healthy nutrition
	3. Getting adequate sleep
	4. Relaxing and coping with stressors
	5. Abstaining from using tobacco, excess alcohol, and non-essential drugs
* Recall the balance wheel handout for lecture 1 the piece of the pie labeled Energy, Health, Vitality would not be equal without exercise

(Franks, 2007)

**Mind-Body Exercise**

* Because our focus for this lecture series is on CAM, we will be focusing on mind-body exercise
* Mind-Body exercise comes from the field of mind-body medicine, which is based on the “inseparable connection between the mind and body—the complicated interactions that take place between thoughts, body and the outside world”
* Relaxation response describes how changes in states of mind could effect changes in the body.
* Research has shown that mind-body practices can benefit both the nervous system and the immune system by restoring balance after the stress response has been aroused
* People with borderline hypertension have experienced benefits from engaging in mindful techniques, some cases, have been able to discontinue drug therapy
* When these mindful techniques are combined with physical movement as with yoga and tai chi improvements in physical conditioning, such as cardiovascular conditioning, muscular strength, and endurance, flexibility and balance
* IDEA mind-body fitness committee defines mind-body exercise as “physical exercise executed with a profoundly inwardly directed focus”
* Five characteristics of mind-body exercise:
	1. Inner mental focus
	2. Concentration on muscular movements
	3. Synchronization of movements with breathing patterns
	4. Attention to form and alignment
	5. A belief in the “life energy”, such as prana or chi, that is part of ancient Eastern disciplines

(Archer, 2004)

**Yoga**

* The practice of yoga has spread from its original home land of India to all parts of the world
* Many different theories and practices of yoga have flourished
* Many of these practices do not focus on the original deep spiritual aspects of yoga
* True yogic knowledge is “revealed” wisdom and that it cannot be learned by reading books, listening to lectures, performing postural exercises, or using breathing techniques. Can only be experienced through sincere and dedicated practice.
* Definition of the word yoga: comes from a Sanskrit word that is derived from the root “yuj”, which means union or to join. What this means: a union of the Jivatma (human soul) with the Paramatma (Divine Soul), the merging of human consciousness with that of Divine Consciousness.
* This spiritual journey involves expanding the human consciousness until it is one with Divine Consciousness. To achieve this state of union is considered to be the highest goal of human life, and this is the true meaning of yoga
* As yoga has gained popularity, various different schools of practice have evolved with different techniques and methods; some focusing on the importance of true yoga, whereas others over-simplified the practice to focus on physical aspects of yogic techniques to improve balance and flexibility, induce relaxation.

(Franks, 2007)

**Fundamental Concepts**

* Yogic philosophy addresses the basic questions of human life:
	+ Who am I
	+ Why am I here
	+ What is the nature of suffering
	+ What is the method of escaping suffering

(Franks, 2007)

**Yoga philosophy**

* The philosophy behind Yoga is a very deep and complex one. To best explain this philosophy I have used the writings from Yoga Basics: a guide to the practice of yoga, It clearly outlines the true meaning of this mind body journey.

**The Five Yamas of Yoga**

* The moral, ethical and societal guidelines for the practicing yogi. The Yamas are valued guides to lead a conscious, honest and ethical life. Are considered the great, mighty and universal vows that should be practiced on all levels (actions, words, and thoughts)
	+ 1. Ahimsa: The practice of non-violence, which includes physical, mental, and emotional violence towards others, and the self.
		2. Satya (truthfulness): urges us to live and speak truth at all times.
		3. Asteya (non-stealing): not taking what is not freely given.
		4. Brahmacharya (continence): to have control over physical impulses or excess, knowledge, vigor, and increased energy are attained. Overcoming impulses of excess one becomes stronger, healthier and wiser.
			1. Goal of yoga is to create and maintain balance, this balance can be achieved by practicing brahmacharya, creating moderation in all activities
			2. Practicing moderation is a way of conserving our energy, which can then be applied for higher spiritual purposes.
		5. Aparigraha (non-coveting): urges us to let go of everything that is not needed, possessing only as much as necessary. When one becomes greedy and covetous the ability to see our one eternal possession, the Atman, our true self is lost. When we cling to what we have we lose the ability to be open to receive what we need.
* Practicing the Yamas eliminates or reduces the accumulation of bad karma, strives towards living a healthier, holier and more peaceful life, strengthens power of awareness, will and discernment
* Practicing the Yamas fortifies character, improves relationships with others, and further the progression along the path of yoga.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Five Niyamas of Yoga**

* These are the 5 internal practices (observance)
* Internal environment of body, mind and spirit
* Helps to provide a positive environment to grow, gives self-discipline and inner-strength to progress along the path of yoga

**Shaucha (purification)**

* Impurities in our external environment and internal body adversely affect our state of mind
* The practices of asana, pranayama and meditation cleanse and purify the body and mind
* A pure environment is needed (including food, drink, friends, entertainment, home furnishings and transportation

**Samtosha (contentment)**

* Is not wanting what we do not have as well as not wanting what other have
* Being content with what we have brings true joy and happiness
* Happiness gained through materialism is only temporary
* Eliminates suffering for things to be different and allows one to be grateful for life’s blessings

**Tapas (asceticism)**

* Doing something you may not want to do will have a positive effect on your life
* Tapas purifies and enables conscious awareness and gives control over unconscious impulses and poor behavior
* Builds will power and personal strength to become more dedicated to yoga practice

**Svadhyaya (self-study)**

* The ability to see true divine nature
* Life gives us endless opportunities to learn, our mistakes allow us to grow
* Involves the study of sacred and spiritual texts that guide
* Requires seeing who we are as well as seeing beyond our current state to realize our connection with the divine

**Ishvara Pranidhana (devotion)**

* Dedication and devotion to a higher power
* Must dissolve our egocentric nature
* Yoga practice is an offering to something greater than one’s self

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**Law of Karma**

* Future consequences of one’s current intentions, thoughts and actions
* Karma is not your fate, you have the ability to consciously choose how you respond to karmic events
* A psychological and physical practice, the mental attitude more powerful than the physical deed
* The law of Karma is connected to the constant changing physical world called Samsara, the spinning wheel of life and death. This wheel is said to have six spokes
	1. Virtue and vice
	2. Pleasure and pain
	3. Attachment and aversion
* The goal is to break the spokes of karma to become liberated from the suffering world of Samsara
* The goal through the practice of yoga is to stop the cycle of Karma, the only way is to act selflessly, without ego, without desire
* Stopping the cycle of Karma is called Nirvana, this is not a necessary goal, any reduction in Karma will improve one’s life, well-being and happiness.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Cause of Suffering: The Kleshas**

* Kleshas are considered the causes of our suffering
* Kleshas distort our perceptions effecting how we think, act and feel
* Kleshas prevent us from achieving enlightenment
* False representation of reality is the root of Kleshas and produces:
	1. Asmita (I-am-ness) is the identification of ourselves with our ego, a self-image of what we believe ourselves to be. It can be both external and internal false projections
	2. Raga (attachment) an attraction for things that bring satisfaction to oneself. Suffering is caused when we cannot obtain what we desire. When we have obtained what we desire, the feelings of pleasure soon fade and the search for pleasure begins again, creating an endless cycle
	3. Dvesha (repulsion) is the opposite of raga, avoidance towards things that bring unpleasant experiences. If we cannot avoid the things that we dislike we suffer
	4. Abhinivesha (will to live) is the deepest and most universal klesha, remains with us until death. Understanding that one day we will die, the fear of death is buried in our unconsciousness.
* The first stage of working with the kleshas is to acknowledge them.
* Yoga techniques are said to burn away the impurities of the kleshas to purify the mind. My ridding ourselves of our kleshas, we are able to clearly see the reality of the world and our own true nature.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Inward Journey Through the Koshas**

* A map per say to explore the deepest levels of our being and to facilitate the inward journey of yoga
* The Koshas are thought to be the five sheaths or coverings that veil the light of our true self (Atman)
* Koshas are imagined as layers of an onion and form a barrier from realizing our true nature and oneness with the universe
* Yoga is a tool to peel back these layers to bring awareness deeper into our bodies, eventually reaching the innermost core, our True Self
* The outermost layer is the physical body (Annamaya kosha). Anna means “food” which feeds our awareness into the other layers and provides the ability to sustain the other 4 koshas
* The next three layers are considered to be part of the subtle body or suksma-sarira
* The next layer within the physical sheath is the energy body (Pranamaya kosha) Prana means “life force energy”. This sheath contains and regulates the movement of the physical and mental energies through the energy channels (nadis) and energy centers (chakras)
* The next layer is the mental body (Manamaya kosha) Mana means “mind”. This sheath contains thoughts and emotional feelings
* The last layer of the subtle body is the wisdom body (Vijnanamaya kosha) Vijnana means “knowledge”. This sheath contains intuition, wisdom and witness consciousness
* The last kosha covering the True Self is the bliss body (Anandamaya kosha) Anada means “bliss”. This sheath contains pure happiness, joy, love, peace and ecstasy. These are not feeling but a state of being that has been buried by the other koshas. Behind this lies the pure consciousness of our True Self
* The path of yoga is one of progression, moving inward through each of the koshas
* True enlightenment happens when all the koshas dissolve and we become absorbed in our True Self.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**Moksha and Maya**

* Moksha (liberation, freedom) is the state of non-ego, where the “me” vanishes and one stands free from all desires, actions and consequences in a total state of oneness
* Maya (illusion) is bothe the psychological separation between ego and the universe and the psychological filter that colors all our expeience.
* Maya is memories, conceptions, judgments, and biases that distort the sense of reality, which create a false reality.
* Maya reinforces the ego, strengthens attachment, and defines our individual story, which difines who we are and our relationship to the external world
* To achieve Moksha or freedom, maya must be eliminated, anava (ego) must be dissolved
* Moksha arises when we become completely absorbed in the sensation of an experience without thought.
* Through the practice of yoga, we create the tools to consciously “pierce the veil” of maya and see the true nature of reality. These tools include
	1. Selfless work (Karma yoga)
	2. Self-dissolving love (bhakti yoga)
	3. Absolute discernment (jnana yoga)
	4. Meditative immersion (raja yoga)
* When we become liberated from the illusionary world of maya we are able to be in yoga: the union of the inner self (Atman) with the oneness of all life (Brahman)

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The 3 Gunas of Nature**

* In the philosophy of Yoga, all matter in the universe arises from Prakriti.
* Three primary guans emerge from Prakriti
* All three gunas are always present in all beings and objects surrounding us but vary in their relative amounts.
* As humans we have the ability to alter the levels of the gunas in our bodies and minds.
* The guna cannot be removed but can be increased or decreased through the interaction and influence of external objects, lifestyle practices and thoughts
	1. Tamas: is the state of darkness, inactivity and materiality. To reduce Tamas avoid tamasic foods (heavy meats, and foods that are spoiled, chemically treated, processed or refined), over sleeping, over eating inactivity, passivity and fearful situations
	2. Rajas: is a state of energy, action, change and movement. To reduce rajas avoid rajasic foods (fried foods, spicy foods, and stimulants), over exercising, over work, loud music, excessive thinking and consuming excessive material goods
	3. Sattva: is a state of harmony, balance, joy and intelligence. To increase sattva reduce both rajas and tamas, eat sttvic foods (whole grains and legumes and fresh fruits and vegetables that grow above the ground), enjoy activities and environments that produce joy and positive thoughts. Practicing yoga and leading a yogic lifestyle strongly cultivates sattva.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**Sankhya’s Map of the Universe**

* One of the oldest and most influential of the six systems of Indian thought, which has a profound impact on the beliefs, values and concepts used in the practice of yoga.
* Sankhya philosophy divides the universe into 25 distinct yet related principles called tattvas.
* Tattvas are guideposts to orient ourselves within the map and to see what we experience as separate concepts are truly part of a lager whole.
* Acknowledging and understanding these tattvas brings us towards self-realization
* Many of the practical methods and techniques of yoga rest on Sankhya’s philosophical foundations.
* Sankhya’s philosophy is the separation of Brahman (oneness of all elements in the universe) into two distinct parts: Purusha (pure consciousness) and Prakriti (nature, primeval matter)
* Sankhya’s core concept of seeing all aspects of the created world as having the same essence remains an important realization to remove fear, separation and suffering and to lead us towards a state of experienced oneness.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Vedas**

* Are considered the most sacred and treasured texts of India
* The Vedas are a collection of hymns and mantras, that are recited out load to praise and invoke the powers of the spiritual realms
* There are four texts that compose the Vedas:
	1. Rig-Veda: is the oldest and thought to be the most important of the four. The Rig-Veda are used to invoke courage, happiness, health, peace, prosperity, success, and wisdom. The verses of the Rig-veda are the foundation for the remaining Vedas.
	2. Sama-Veda: a devotional collection of melodies used to elevate one’s consciousness. The hymns are combined with musical notes, the use of music combined with mantras formed the foundation for the Bhakti yoga practice, devotional chanting
	3. Yajur-Veda: is devoted entirely to worship of the deities and technical aspects of ceremonies.
	4. Atharva-Veda: consists of spells and charms to dispel evil, disease and misfortune.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Upanishads**

* The Upanishads transferred the wisdom of the Vedas into practical and personal teachings
* The word Upanishads means “sitting down beside”
* The Upanishads reflect a strong need to express and communicate the deep mystical states and spiritual contemplations that the ancient yogis experienced.
* According to tradition there were over two hundred Upanishads, now there are only eleven “principal” Upanishads.
* The texts are written in a poetic verse describing mystical states and spiritual concepts, or short stories and dialogues between historical figures.
* It is the state of Self realization that the majority of the Upanishads attempt to describe and encourage us to achieve through the yoga practices of meditation, mental discrimination and mantra recitation

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Bhagavad Gita**

* The most treasured and famous of India’s spiritual texts
* Composed of 700 verses, a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Sri Krishna, Arjuna’s charioteer, friend and council. “the story opens to the scene of a battlefield just prior to the start of a colossal war with Arjuna asking Krishna for guidance. Knowing that by engaging in this war family members and friends will be lost on both sides of the battle line, Arjuna is faced with a personal and ethical crisis. The resulting conversation between Arjuna and Krishna develops into a discourse on the nature of the soul, the purpose of one’s life, and the threefold path of yoga.” (Yoga Philosophy, 2006)
* “The Bhagavad Gita also incorporates the yogic philosophies of karma, dharma, reincarnation, atman, brahman, maya and moksha within Krishna’s responses to Arjuna’s dilemma. Krishna patiently teaches Arjuna how to apply these core philosophies to his life to relieve him from his suffering and to attain liberation and eternal happiness and through hearing Krishna’s examples and allegories we too learn how to further understand and apply these teachings within our daily lives. ” (Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

**The Hatha Yoga Pradipika**

* What is considered Yoga in the West is actually just one of the many paths of Yoga, and it is technically called Hatha Yoga.
* The oldest and most widely used ancient text on the physical practices of Hatha Yoga is the Hatha Yoga Pradipika
* The principle goal of this text is to illuminate the physical disciplines and practices of Hatha Yoga and integrate these with the higher spiritual goals of Raja Yoga (meditation).
* Most of the text details the techniques of the main practices of Hatha Yoga:
	1. Asana (postures)
	2. Pranayama (breathing exercises)
	3. Shatkarma (internal cleansings)
	4. Mudra (energy seal)
	5. Bandha (energy locks)
* Hatha Yoga is uniquely focused on transforming the physical body through purification and the cultivation of the life force energy of prana.

(Yoga Philosophy, 2006)

* As we can now clearly see Yoga has a much deeper rooted philosophy which consists of more than just poses and breathing. Although I have used most of the key points from the writings of Yoga Philosophy, I encourage anyone that wants to review and possible get a deeper understanding of what yoga truly is, to visit the website it has a wealth of information on the practice of yoga. (Please refer to the resource handout for website address)

**Different Types of Yoga**

* Just as there are many different philosophies to the practice of yoga, so are there different types of yoga exercise all having different breathing/movement techniques and are practice to achieve different benefits.
* Although there are many types we will only briefly discuss several outlining their basic techniques

**Hatha Yoga**

* A relatively slow paced gentle type of yoga. This yoga is a good place to begin for those who have never practiced before.

**Ashtanga Yoga**

* This is a fast moving, intense style of yoga and is based on a progressive set sequence of asanas (poses), synchronized with the breath
* This form of yoga can be physically demanding as you move from one asana to other in the sequence
* Improves strength, stamina and flexibility

**Vinyasa Yoga**

* Vinyasa means breath synchronized movement.
* It is fast paced with an emphasis of breathing
* Throughout the practice each pose is balanced with a counter pose

**Bikram Yoga**

* Also known as “Hot Yoga”
* Is practiced in a room heated to 105 degrees, with humidity around 40%.
* Generally a sequence of 26 different poses is practiced during a session
* The temperature of the room stimulates the body to sweat, which helps to cleanse the body of toxins.

(Morrison, 2013)

* Please refer to handout 8 for a manual of explanations and step by step instructions on basic yoga poses

**Benefits of Yoga**

* Because of yoga’s mind-body principles, it is a practice that can help you relax and manage stress and anxiety
* Most people can benefit from any style of yoga, it is technically a personal preference
* Helps to reduce stress: studies have shown that yoga can enhance your mood and overall sense of well being
* Improved fitness: yoga can improve balance, flexibility, range of motion and strength, which can help reduce the risk of injury during other physical and daily activities
* Management of chronic conditions: can help reduce risk factors for chronic diseases such as heart disease and high blood pressure
* Yoga may also help reduce symptoms of chronic conditions such as depression, pain, anxiety and insomnia

(Yoga: Fight stress and find serenity, 2013)

**Yoga precautions:**

* Although yoga is generally considered safe for most healthy people, when practiced under the guidance of a trained instructor, there are times when yoga could be contraindicate. Always speak with your healthcare provider prior to beginning an exercise program to ensure you are healthy enough to participate

**Conditions that may be contraindicated for yoga exercise:**

1. A herniated disk
2. A risk of blood clots
3. Deconditioned state
4. Eye conditions, including glaucoma
5. Hyperthyroidism
6. Pregnancy
7. Severe balance problems
8. Severe osteoporosis
9. Uncontrolled blood pressure

You may be able to practice yoga with these conditions if the proper precautions are taken, such as avoiding certain poses or stretches.

**Legal/Ethical Standards**

* There is currently no regulation that one must be certified or licensed in Pennsylvania to teach yoga
* Although credentialing as a certified yoga instructor is encouraged and gives the instructor credibility.
* As we have learned throughout this presentation there is more to yoga then posing and breathing. I believe that ethically a yoga instructor should possess the understanding and beliefs of the yoga philosophy. Without this understanding I do not believe one is truly teaching yoga practice.
* To receive the full benefit of yoga it is suggested to seek an instructor that is knowledgeable in the principles of the yoga practice, has been trained by a reputable organization, and personally follows a yogic lifestyle.

**Resources:**

* Please refer to handout 9 for additional website resources, books, and local resources for yoga practices.

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