



# SPECTRUM

magazine

BWY

AT  
THE  
HEART  
OF YOGA

Warriors for peace

Take yoga off the mat with Nonviolent Communication

Nidra magic

When less is more and rest is best

15 ideas for easeful CPD

spring 2024  
£2.95 free to members

## Central Office enquiries:

If you have a question about your membership, we are here to help:  
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The British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) is the largest yoga membership organisation in the country and the Sport England recognised national governing body for yoga. Spectrum magazine is our quarterly publication made available to our members. At our core remains our guiding philosophy to promote a greater understanding of yoga and its safe practice through experience, education, discussion, study and training.

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## Letters for publication.

The Editor and Spectrum reserve the right to select or reject letters for publication and to edit for grammar, length and style. We will only publish items appropriate for a magazine that promotes the principles of yoga and harmony and reflects the values of BWY.

Advertising rates and specifications are now online at: [www.bwy.org.uk/explore/publications/](http://www.bwy.org.uk/explore/publications/)

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## Dear Members,

As I write this, I'm assembling flasks of tea, sandwiches and chocolate energy balls to keep tummies and spirits happy for tomorrow's tree planting. This is the second year BWY volunteers will be working with the charity Stump Up for Trees as part of our Yoga in Action work. Tomorrow, we're planting a wood pasture in the beautiful Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and the weather is forecast to be kind.

You can read more about our other Yoga in Action efforts that look at three community yoga case studies in Scotland on page 21. These efforts are really taking yoga off the mat in what Krishna describes in the Gita as for the benefit of the universe.

Many members practice karma yoga every day, that may appear to be through ordinary activities but make a huge difference, from caring for someone in need to being considerate while driving. We're really keen to hear about your acts of kindness and giving, however small. We'd also love to hear about instances when you've received the generosity and kindness of others. Indeed, sometimes receiving gifts can be harder than giving, but there is graciousness in both. Perhaps you'd like to say thank you to someone for their actions. Please get in touch with any stories you have. We'd love to share them.

Our article about teaching yoga studies in China with SOAS University is an amazing read. These courses are taught in Mandarin which is a first – such an important achievement for SOAS and yoga in general.

And as always, our regional pages list activities in your area and provide you with your CPD points, teachers' meetings and festivals. These activities are put on by volunteers who, along with those on the training committee, work hard to make them happen. We're excited to be announcing our second round of Heart of Yoga volunteer achievement awards at our AGM to say 'thank you' to these generous members.

If you're inspired by the work of a volunteer and think you can contribute to the BWY, please get in touch with your Regional Officer. The BWY is able to achieve what it does by their hard work. Any hand lent is appreciated.

**Diana O'Reilly**  
BWY Chair



Spring is finally (more or less) here. The days are getting longer, the birds are singing, daffodils are blooming and so our thoughts inevitably turn to... the BWY AGM! The long-running project of updating our Articles reached a climax at the end of January when members voted by an overwhelming majority (over 92% of votes cast were in favour) to adopt the revised Articles at an Extraordinary General Meeting. We are currently in a state of limbo while we wait for the Charity Commission to give its consent to the changes. This means the AGM will be a hybrid this year, in person and on Zoom. One change that we know for sure will happen is that, following feedback received from members, including through last year's survey, the process to elect members of Regional Committees, which was felt to be overly bureaucratic and a deterrent to potential new volunteers, will have been replaced by a more streamlined process taking place within each Region.

We are working hard to extend the BWY's reach and profile as the National Governing Body by developing new strategic partnerships. We have started to engage with the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Yoga in Society, which seeks to raise awareness of the many benefits of yoga among our legislators (MPs and Peers). The APPG needs to expand its membership and so we are asking our members to write to their MP to make them aware of the group's existence and how to support its work. Please support this campaign to ensure that yoga continues to be talked about, and practised, in the corridors of power.

Another exciting partnership is with AoC Sport, part of the Association of Colleges. This umbrella body for Further Education colleges is dedicated to championing wellbeing and physical activity among college students. We hope this will lead to opportunities for BWY teachers, which will be shared in the BWY Teachers Facebook Group as we become aware of them. This partnership nicely complements the relationships we are forging in the Higher Education sector with the likes of SOAS and the University of Wales Trinity St David at Lampeter.

We have started to look ahead to BWY's 60th Anniversary in 2025 and there are a number of exciting initiatives planned to celebrate our landmark birthday. Watch this space...

Enjoy the warmer weather and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

**Peter Tyldesley**  
BWY CEO



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## HELP GROW YOGA FOR ALL

How you can lobby your  
MP to be the change

Help make yoga more available across society, by asking your Member of Parliament to step up and be part of those working for change.

BWY has joined forces with the Yoga in Society All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to help support work aimed at making yoga more readily available in schools and the prison system.

The APPG want to expand their influence by growing their membership among MPs, ensuring stronger political support for yoga's cause.

Not sure what to say? We've a sample letter template

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## REMEMBERED

We report the passing of Sophy Hoare.

Sophy Hoare, one of the original exponents of Vanda Scaravelli's expression of yoga, passed away in January.

A highly respected and much loved teacher, Sophy wrote Notes on Yoga: the legacy of Vanda Scaravelli with Diane Long, the first of Vanda's regular students.

Anyone who would like to contribute to a tribute to Sophy for our summer issue of Spectrum can email us their memories and tributes at E: [spectrum@bwy.org.uk](mailto:spectrum@bwy.org.uk). If you could please mark your contribution Sophy Hoare Tribute in the subject bar, that would be helpful. Thank you.

Sophy Hoare  
22 July 1947 - 22 January 2024.



available for you to download, to use as a basis for your letter. It's on our website under BWY Membership in Membership Resources.

Please contact your local MP urging them to join.

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## LIFE MEMBER KAREL'S FINAL BOOK ON SALE

A new volume in the books exploring the life and times of Czech yogi and Indologist Karel Werner has now been published.

A lecturer in Indian philosophy and religion at Durham University, Karel Werner died in 2019 age 94. He was the author of dozens of books in English and Czech. *The Three Lives of a Czech Yogi... And Beyond* tells Karel's life story; how he emigrated to England in 1968, leaving behind communist repression in Czechoslovakia where he had been interrogated by the secret police. His heavily censored book on hatha yoga, the first in Czech, quickly sold 95,000 copies before the regime realised he was 'illegally abroad' and forbade a third edition.

The Indian High Commission are hosting an event at the Nehru Centre in Mayfair in April where experts will talk about Karel's book. It is available from Waterstones and published by Matador. ISBN 9781802136455.

Karel was made a life member of BWY by our founder Wilfred Clark, for his services to yoga.

## BWY TEAMS UP WITH AoC SPORT TO BRING YOGA TO COLLEGES

BWY has announced a partnership with AoC Sport, an organisation dedicated to advancing sport and physical activity in further education establishments. The collaboration aims to integrate yoga into the extra-curricular enrichment programmes offered in more than 200 colleges across England and Wales.

AoC Sport's student leadership initiative empowers college ambassadors to champion wellbeing and physical activity through the creation of tailored activity programmes. Through this partnership, BWY teachers will have the opportunity to share their expertise and passion for yoga with college students.

With stress continuing to be a prevalent concern among college students, particularly due to academic and financial pressures, BWY believes yoga can serve as a valuable tool for building resilience and improving overall health and wellbeing.



Di O'Reilly, Chair of BWY said: 'We recognise the challenges college students face, and we are committed to providing them with the tools they need to thrive. By integrating yoga into college life, we hope to empower students to manage stress, improve mental health, and unleash their full potential.'

Sam Strickson, Partnerships and Programmes Development Officer at AoC Sport said: 'We are thrilled to be partnering with the British Wheel of Yoga. Their dedication to promoting a greater understanding of yoga aligns perfectly with our mission to enhance physical activity and wellbeing

in education. We recognise the physical and mental benefits that yoga can have and we are excited to see how we can help provide colleges with the tools to put on more sessions for their students and develop the future yoga workforce.'

• Interested? Colleges who want to employ BWY teachers will email us. Keep an eye out in the BWY Teachers Facebook Group for college contacts. We will also email teaching members with details of colleges seeking their services in their Region.

## YOU SAID, WE DID: INSURANCE

In our Members Survey 2023 we asked teaching members what we could include in our student teachers and teaching members' insurance package, to better meet your needs.

As you may know, we recently negotiated a new insurance policy for our teaching members with new features including:

- cover for a wider range of activities even while you are training
- 100% cover for those age 70-79 and better cover for those teachers age 80-89
- full cover for online teaching with no restriction on registering students, activities, or whether it is recorded or live
- cover for more than 100 complementary therapies, including additional modalities you asked for, such as hypnotherapy.

An article about our insurance will appear in summer Spectrum and we welcome your input. If you have any questions about insurance for the article, please send to E: [communications@bwy.org.uk](mailto:communications@bwy.org.uk)

Discover full details of the approved activities and insurance details in your Resources on the website.

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## EGM AND AGM

Thank you to everyone who voted in the recent Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) in January.

More than 92% of the membership who voted were in favour of the change to our Articles.

We have updated our charity's Articles to reflect changes in the law and so that they continue to meet our future needs. The main changes include:

- The ability to hold AGMs via Zoom and for online voting, rather than in person or via proxy;
  - The Board's ability to co-opt up to three additional Trustees in order that BWY can access additional expertise at Board level;
  - Trustees' terms of office will be three years rather than two, providing greater stability to the Board.
- Two of the member-elected Trustees retire by rotation each year and can offer themselves for re-election.

These Article changes have now been sent to the Charity Commission and will come into effect as soon as we receive confirmation from them. Please note, this is not an immediate response process. We await



feedback as the Charity Commission works through its business. As we have not received verification from the Charity Commission before our March deadline, our 2024 Annual General Meeting will take place in-person and online, in a hybrid format on Thursday 9 May. The in-person venue is The Friends House, Euston Road, London.

Full details of the format and voting details will be sent to members in April.

Our AGM will include the Heart of Yoga Awards 2024 – thank you to everyone who nominated volunteers. Applications for the 2024 Heart of Yoga Awards and the Wilfred Clark Award are now closed.

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## MONICA RECEIVES BEM

BWY teacher and mentor Monica Burton has been honoured with the British Empire Medal for services to yoga at a prestigious ceremony held at the Tower of London.

Monica, a former nurse living in Harrow, has dedicated herself to helping older people and those with multiple disabilities reclaim a good quality of life through yoga. Her teaching and compassion have touched countless lives and her 'Yoga for the Third Age' course has been a source of inspiration for teachers across the world.

Monica's nomination came from one of her former students, Dr St John, who has been a steadfast supporter throughout her career as well as supporting statements from the hundreds of

teachers who have successfully built their yoga practices based on her teachings.

'I am delighted and humbled to receive this award,' said Monica after the ceremony in November. 'This recognition serves as a powerful testament to the benefits of yoga and its potential to create positive change in the world.'

King Charles said he was 'delighted' his first Birthday Honours list recognised some of Britain's unsung heroes with awards. Read the full story of Monica's award and her contribution to yoga and BWY on our website's news section.

W: [bwy.org.uk/monica-burton-honoured-for-transforming-lives/](http://bwy.org.uk/monica-burton-honoured-for-transforming-lives/)



## BE PART OF BRAND SHOOT NORTH



We're looking for BWY members to feature in our brand shoot 2024, scheduled for June.

We began celebrating the diversity of everyone who enjoys BWY yoga in our images last year, with our London brand shoot.

Taking part were yoga teachers, people attending their classes and BWY members, helping us show what yoga looks like with us.

This year we are heading north of London and looking for BWY people free over the 8-9 June weekend. As a thank you, you'll get copies of images you're in which you can use as you'd like, so if you're short of high-resolution images for your website, for instance, this could be a useful bonus.

But what we hope is important is you're inspired to help demonstrate that yoga is for everybody and every body.

We're also looking for a light, airy studio with great public transport links that we can book for a day, ideally with space we can use as a green room and nearby shops so we can put lunch together for our BWY models.

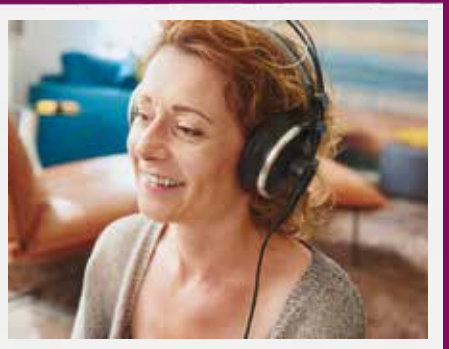
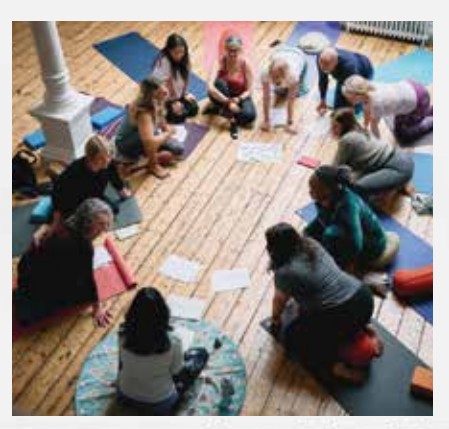
For details contact Alex at E: [digital@bwy.org.uk](mailto:digital@bwy.org.uk)

- Thank you to the 2023 brand ambassadors Bryony Cain, Lee-Anne and Francois Champagne, Liz Cooke, Tori Dunn, Yinka Fabusuyi, Fiona and Simon Graham, Anne Griffiths, Philippa Hallam-Parker, Chantèl Hayman, Dipika Jinabhai, Priya Karia, Wengyee Loke, Elaine McCaulsky, Jaz Mullings-Lambert, Becky Skelhon, Charlie Sumner and Sammy Woods

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR INSIGHTS

A big BWY welcome to thank all of you who contributed to the BWY Strategic Plan, your ideas and comments have contributed to the final paper, now reviewed by the Board.

The Strategic Plan will be launched at the BWY Annual General Meeting in May. The annual Members' Survey will take place in June, please look out for your email detailing this.



# 15 EASY WAYS TO CPD

by Robyn Creighton

If you think professional development is a trial, you may be surprised by what's changed recently. Here our CPD Officer helps you catch up on the latest options for enjoying your yoga learning with us.

## 'You may be facing increasing demands on your incomes today, but it is possible to continue your yoga professional development without spending hundreds of pounds.'

There's a myth that continuing professional development (CPD) is hard and a bit of a chore. The reality is, we've more than 15 different ways for you to pick up CPD points as a BWY teacher – perhaps more than you knew about?

You may be facing increasing demands on your incomes today, but it is possible to continue your yoga professional development without spending hundreds of pounds on it. And I know that sometimes we feel we are having to do without, but just as often making different low-cost, or even no-cost choices, can open doors that enrich us in unexpected but welcome ways.

Yes, a BWY CPD event or module might be the first option that comes to mind, but there are many more. Your CPD is meant to develop and / or improve your teaching – that's the thought to keep in mind when considering whether what you are doing counts as CPD.

### Reading

This would come under 'private study' and a minimum of 7.5 hours accrues five points.

### BWY-approved CPD events

When you book these you'll see CPD in their title on the website and the fact it's a CPD event will be flagged close to that title too. The number of points depends on the length, but a six-hour CPD event equals 7.5 points.

### Festivals/sangha events

Found inspiration for your teaching? Then there's points to be gathered here. That's one point per hour. BWY's online Members Sessions are all free to BWY members and bring in one point per hour too.

### Mentoring/discussions with other teachers

Again, there's one point per hour to be gained here. Try out a teaching idea – reflect and evaluate. Again – this could be part of your private study allowance – up to 7.5 hours / five points annually.

### First aid

One point per hour here on the Emergency First Aid

at Work (EFAW) training course days that normally run for six hours.

### Research a topic and create a handout for your students

One point per hour spent creating useful resources for your students can also help you inspire a thirst for more yoga knowledge and perhaps an appetite for your coming workshops too.

### YouTube and podcasts

If reading isn't for you, you'll find a wealth of free private study information on these two media. Again, see 'private study' guidelines for your points.

### Face-to-face workshops

The energy of learning together in one room certainly has a quality we recognise more vividly in a post-Covid restrictions world. One point per hour.

### Online training

The world really is your oyster today, providing the time zones work and even then, there's often recorded options too. One point per hour.

### Foundation Course Tutors

There's a host of ways to collect additional CPD points which you'll find in your Teaching Resources on the website, under CPD.

### Diploma Course Tutors

You can collect 15 CPD points for attending DCT weekend which is now online, helping those of you who struggle to get away from home for a weekend.

### Journals

If the latest in research into yoga informs your teaching approach, there's a wealth of new findings published. Why not set up google alerts to ensure you get the latest thinking on your areas of interest?

### BWY teacher forums

Peer support and knowledge can inform your professional development on many levels. Again, one point per hour

*Continued on page 12*

# TRAINING

## BWY YTT, FOUNDATIONS, AND MODULES

### **BWYQ Yoga Teacher Training**

23 March

Progression to Diploma with  
Tarik Dervish  
Online

6 April

Diploma in Teaching Yoga with  
Jacqueline Gunnion  
County Durham, DH8 9RE

27 April

Certificate in Teaching Yoga with  
Hana Saotome  
London, N7 7PH

11 May

Certificate in Teaching Yoga with  
Sunnah Rose  
London, EN5 4BW

11 May

Diploma in Teaching Yoga with  
Donna Negus  
Romford, RM2 6EJ

9 July

Progression to Diploma with  
Roberta Jesson and Laura Le  
Feuvre  
Online and Hybrid Oxon, OX2 7BY

15 September

Progression to Diploma with  
Carolyn Clarke  
Nottinghamshire, DN22 8EW

21 September

Certificate in Teaching Yoga with  
Tiffany Thorne  
Cambridge, CB4 3DX

22 September

Diploma in Teaching Yoga with  
Audrey Blow and Diana O'Reilly  
Swansea, SA1 5PQ

28 September

Diploma in Teaching Yoga with  
Brenda Ward  
Lytham St Annes, FY8 5JY

29 September

Certificate in Teaching Yoga with  
Roberta Jesson  
Oxford, OX2 7BY

12 October

Diploma in Teaching Yoga with  
Emily Buckley, Zoe Knott and Deena  
Davis  
London, BR2 9AW

17 November

Certificate in Teaching Yoga with  
Clare Gibson  
Surrey, KT10 8LF

### **Foundation 1**

24 March

With Beverley Wheale  
Lancashire, LA3 2BJ

20 April

With Cristal Liddle  
Tyne and Wear, NE12 7NP

20 April

With Andrea Newman  
Online

## SUCCESS FOR LOCKDOWN STUDENT TEACHERS



Congratulations to these new yoga teachers who have now completed the BWY 500 hours Diploma in Teaching Yoga with Catherine Eastwood in West Yorkshire.

Catherine said these students showed great commitment to their yoga throughout this course, taking the plunge to begin their teacher training mid-lockdown, supporting each other in their explorations and learning, and now sharing Yoga with others in their community. She added that this course has created lifelong friendships in the group. Well done: Rebecca Harvey, Kim Fuller, Philippa Smith, Adrienne Lake, Eleni Papadatou, Barbara Sylwestrowicz, Lisa Hill, Julie Wong, Amy Pickering, Amanda McKenzie, Anita Ghafoor, Faye Richardson, Claire Ormesher, Sharon Bainbridge.

27 April  
With Sarah O'Connor  
Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2JQ

27 April  
With Bindie Edwards  
Bury St Edmunds, IP32 7AR

6 June  
With Nikki Tuke  
Brighton, BN2 9RH

7 September  
With Hayley Giles  
Wimborne, BH21 1EA / Online

15 September  
With Kate Plummer  
Online

21 September  
With Tori Lang  
Cardiff, CF641EU

12 October  
With Jane Cluley  
North Yorkshire, YO32 3JS

#### **BWYT Foundation Course 2**

23 March  
With Cora Kembell-Cook and Lina  
Newstead  
Canterbury, CT2 8NH

14 September  
With Kate Pummer  
Online

#### **Modules**

21 March  
Foundations in Yoga Therapy with  
Nikki Jackson  
Hybrid, West Oxfordshire, OX7 3NX

22 March  
Yoga Therapy Essentials with Judy  
Hirsh Sampath  
Online

23 March  
Ayurveda in Action with  
Tarik Dervish  
Online

8 April  
Yoga for Plus Size Bodies with  
Gillian Dodd  
Northumberland, NE66 3TF

22 June  
Pregnancy Yoga with  
Judy Cameron  
Edinburgh, EH7 5LH

12 July or 21 August  
Menopause Yoga Retreat with  
Petra Coveney  
Sussex, BN25 4JS

7 September  
Beginning your Ayurveda Journey  
with Brenda Ward  
Lytham, FY8 5JY

13 September  
Embodied Anatomy with Julie  
Pons Woods  
Online

14 September  
Yin Yoga with Gillian Cawte  
Online

20 September  
Teaching Yoga in Prison Intensive  
Selina Sasse, Victoria Green and  
Chris Holt  
Wantage, OX12 0EJ

21 September  
How Can Somatics Influence  
Our Yoga Practice? With Debby  
Wilkinson  
Devizes, SN10 2LT

28 September  
Restorative Yoga with Carol Trevor  
Online

10 November  
Cancer Module with Kari Knight  
Online

## Approved Training Organisations

Adamo School of Yoga  
adamoyoga.co.uk

Intelligent Yoga Teacher Training  
07747 196914  
IntelligentYogaTeacherTraining.co.uk

Mindflowyoga  
mindflowyoga.com  
contact@mindflowyoga.com

Shiatsu College  
info@meridianyoga.co.uk  
meridianyoga.co.uk

Teach Yoga  
020 8202 9188 teachyoga.com

The Yoga Academy  
07824 600619  
theyogaacademy.org.uk

Trueyoga  
info@trueyoga.co.uk

Yogacampus  
020 7042 9900  
teachertraining@yogacampus.com  
www.yogacampus.com

Yoga Satsanga Ashram  
01437 562200  
www.yogasatsanga.org

Yoga Wise  
emma@yoga-wise.co.uk  
www.yoga-wise.co.uk

For info on Accredited Training Organisations  
contact: AGLO@bwy.org.uk

## BWY Teacher Training

A full list of upcoming BWYQ courses can be found on the BWY website at W: [bwy.org.uk/training](http://bwy.org.uk/training)

## CPD listings

For CPD in your region, turn to our Regions' pages from page 36 Full listings are on the website.

## MYTH-BUSTING

*Continued from page 9*

**Fact:** It's our responsibility to continue to develop ourselves as teachers.

**Fiction:** CPD is expensive.

**Fact:** The cost of BWY-approved CPD events is kept to a minimum to keep them affordable.

**Fact:** Many options for achieving CPD points are free – reading online, YouTube, podcasts – all free!

**Fiction:** There's nothing new out there to learn.

**Fact:** With so much available online the world has opened up!

**Fiction:** You gain 7.5 CPD points at BWY approved CPD events, so everyone needs two a year to get their 15 points.

**Fact:** There's a table in your Teaching Resources CPD folder on the website to guide you on the points you need. The number varies for teachers/FCTs/DCTs etc.

### WHICH CPD ARE YOU?

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Foundation Course Tutor (FCT)</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Diploma Course Tutor (DCT)</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>FCT and DCT</b>	<b>30</b>

For full details of all BWY teaching and training roles and associated CPD points, look for the full listings on the website in your Resources.

## CPD TO YOUR HOME – ONLINE WITH BWY

These are not all official CPD days (7.5 points per full day) but are all great opportunities to learn, reflect and collect one CPD point per hour. Our online events fill up quickly, so book as far in advance as you can.

23 March  
A Safe, Accessible Approach to Ustrasana (camel) with Zoe Knott

26 April  
The Hypermobility Body: Yoga and Movement Practices with Gary Carter

23 May  
Free Members Session: Bringing Buddhist themes into your yoga practice with Emma Slade / Gelongma Pema Deki

9 June  
Western Relaxation Techniques in Relation to Eastern Yoga Philosophy with Sally Kennedy

22 June  
Yoga and the Brain with Lina Newstead

6 July  
Yorkshire Regional Sangha with Hannah Penn, Emma Conally-Barklem, Carolyn Clarke and Mookaite Jasper

9 July  
Free Members Session: Self-transformation, the heart of Mantra-sādhana with Anuradha Choudry

7 September  
Sound: A Journey Between our Internal and External Worlds with Sabine Dahn

8 September  
A Healing Journey from Trauma to Gentle Reintegration and Connection with Sabine Dahn

12 September  
Members Session: Maharishi P's Ultimate Handbook of Mind Control with Roopa Pai

22 September  
Working With Neurodiversity with Carol Trevor

12 October  
Yoga, Postural Stability and Falls Prevention with Anna Semlyen

13 October  
Hypermobility and Yoga with Carol Trevor

19 October  
Strength in Asana – 20 Years On with Zoe Knott

27 October  
Postural Stability and Falls Prevention with Anna Semlyen

# HOW CAN SOMATICS INFLUENCE OUR YOGA PRACTICE?

A new BWY Module  
with Debby and David Wilkinson



There's an increasing interest in the practice of somatics, quite simply because it is a beautiful practice that works! A deep mind-body system that supports the practice of 'mindful yoga', Somatics can bring about significant change to the functioning of the body and is utterly transformative. Through it we can develop a deep 'inner felt sense' that changes the way we move our body in all that we do, including our yoga practice.

## What is Somatics?

Somatics is a practice where we learn to re-programme our muscles (neuromuscular re-programming); where we discover what is tight and learn through guided movement how to release it. Our bodies react unconsciously to habitual movement and daily stresses, often becoming tight and painful. Following an injury or illness, or due to repetitive use, muscles can get 'stuck' in a certain pattern of holding. Somatics can help us learn how to release and recalibrate our muscles allowing the

body to re-find an ease in movement that may have been 'long gone'. In Somatics we use our brain to change our body and so the effects are faster and longer lasting. At the same time, we rebalance our muscular-skeletal system and we learn to perceive our body from within.

## Habits or samskāra

Many of us who practice yoga āsana regularly will have developed habitual ways of moving and sometimes these 'āsana habits' can create problems of their own. Every movement modality can become habitual, and we will often move within the same pattern or 'groove' time and time again. When we know āsana or a sequence of āsana well, we can perform it with very little attention or mindfulness, in a sense we can go into remote control. If, within our yoga practice, we have created unhelpful movement patterns then we are at risk of repeating those patterns over and over again, until tightness, injury and pain tell us that something is wrong. A somatic approach to āsana can be very revealing and help us map more helpful ways of moving.

## Developing internal awareness

The internal awareness or interoception discovered through Somatics can transform the way we practice yoga making postures more easeful and graceful and reducing the amount of effort required to do them. However, interoception can be elusive. I have practised yoga for over 30 years, taught for 20, and worked with many teachers of renown. And yet I never truly felt that 'real' internal awareness until I started practicing Somatics. Once I had that

awareness onboard, I could translate it into every yoga posture and prānāyāma practice I did. Then my yoga became the internal practice I had long sought. With the help of Somatics I developed an intelligent relationship with sensation and found a deep sense of space and ease in my body.

## A focused mind

The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali tells us that the ‘purpose’ of yoga is to contain the movements of the mind’ (YS 1:2 - yogaḥ-cittavṛttinirodhaḥ), that yoga can be viewed as ‘disciplined practice, self-awareness/enquiry and trust’ (YS 2:1 - tapaḥ-svādhyāya-iśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ), and that the act of concentrating the mind comes from binding or fixing the mind to ‘something’ (YS 3:1 – deśa-bandhaḥ-cittasya dhāraṇā). The practice of Somatics requires that we are ‘present’, fully engaged in the process and become aware of what is happening – we practice with self-awareness, and we trust that we’ll be better for it. That awareness must lead to a focussed mind, a quieter mind and therefore to what we might call a ‘state of yoga’. The slow deliberate movements used in Somatics anchor the mind in the sensations of the body. We move with conscious awareness – with a focussed mind. We must be fully present so that we can actually feel how we are and what is happening to us. And it is this ‘special attention’ that involves the brain that makes Somatics the effective practice that it is.

YS 2:47 offers us some thoughts on what differentiates āsana from exercise (YS2:47 prayatna-śaithilya-ananta-samāpattibhyām – through skilful action we can loosen the knots of being and let ourselves be supported by the infinite). Prayatna-śaithilya is a complex state in that we apply a ‘special effort’ to create ‘openness’. Without this we are just exercising. The practice of yoga āsana differs from exercise because of the application of the particular attention that is needed for the body to be spacious, easeful, and strong. Using Somatics as part of our practice can lead us towards a practice of āsana that achieves this state.

## Why this course?

As I mentioned earlier, the art of interoception or internal awareness can be elusive, as can ‘containing the movements of the mind.’ This 4-day course aims to address this and will explore the symbiotic relationship between Somatics and yoga and perhaps provide a gateway to unlocking the deeper dimensions of yoga. The course will equip yoga



teachers and practitioners with the skills and understanding to incorporate Somatics practices within a yoga class or practice in a meaningful and consciously crafted way.

## The course includes

- A review of relevant aspects of anatomy and physiology to allow for greater ‘embodiment’ of practices
- A look at the theory behind somatics
- Guided practices of a range of Somatics movements
- An exploration of the relationship between Somatics and yoga āsana, leading to guided practices where we will explore how the awareness gained through Somatics can fundamentally change the way we practice and feel in our yoga
- An exploration of how the awareness gained can go beyond the practice of āsana and can inform other yoga practices including prānāyāma
- An exploration of relevant yoga philosophical models to see how the practice of Somatics within yoga can reinforce some aspects of yoga that are so often excluded from modern practice.

This course has run successfully several times and is now offered as a BWY CPD module. It is suitable for yoga teachers from any background, student teachers and experienced yoga practitioners with at least one year’s experience who would like to take their yoga teaching/practice to a new level. It is an in-person course and is offered in Devizes, Wiltshire. The next intake is September 2024.

## About the tutors

Debby is an experienced yoga and Somatics teacher and has been a BWY Diploma Course Tutor and assessor for the past 12 years. The owner/director of White Horse Yoga Centre, Devizes, she will be assisted by David, an experienced yoga teacher and yoga therapist working in the classical viniyoga tradition of Prof J Krishnamacharya and TKV Desikachar. David is trained in Somatics and uses the practice extensively in his class teaching and yoga therapy work. For further information you can contact Debby  
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# HOW TO RESET AND REJUVENATE WITH NIDRA TIME

by Janet Long



Have you ever felt that the most enjoyable part of your yoga class was the relaxation at the end? If you're nodding your head, how would it feel to experience that state for more than just a few minutes?

This is where the practice of Yoga Nidra comes into its own. The term itself is literally translated as 'yoga sleep' but could also be interpreted as 'sleep of the Yogis' or 'sleep resulting from yoga'. However, the name seems something of a misnomer as it is not a sleeping state at all. It is a transitional phase, where you are neither fully awake nor fast asleep as it is often known as a hypnogogic state.

Yoga Nidra is beautifully described in the book entitled *Yoga Nidra Made Easy* by Una Dinsmore-Tuli and Nirlipta Tuli: 'Yoga nidra is a horizontal meditation upon the threshold of sleep'.

It is a completely natural state to be in. However, in the hustle and bustle of Western society, we've lost this inherent ability to daydream, zone out and embrace restful moments.

If I were to ask you how you rest, what would you reply? For many people it will be by doing something, may be going for a walk, or reading a book, watching the TV or having a glass of wine – really we need to “be” rather than “do” to truly rest.

When you enter the state of Yoga Nidra it can feel like you've come home, which in a sense you have as it is a natural, restful place to be. In this state of not doing anything, the true magic can often happen including insights and access to a more creative state of being.

I first came across Yoga Nidra on my British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) Teacher Training Course back in 2009 and have continued to explore the practice ever since. Initially, using the techniques of the Bihar School of Yoga and more recently those of the Yoga Nidra Network.

During Covid, I began to offer a monthly online Yoga Nidra session to my yoga students. The heartfelt responses showed the positive impact this practice had during the uncertainty of those times and I now continue to share these sessions every month.

## Decoding Yoga Nidra

Since the 1970s, extensive research has delved into the impact of Yoga Nidra on various aspects, such as stress, anxiety, and insomnia. This exploration has not only analysed its effects but has also involved the measurement of brainwaves, providing valuable insights into the diverse mental states induced during the practice. There are five brainwave states, all named after Greek letters of the alphabet, and

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their rates of vibration are measured in Hertz. These are:

Beta waves (14-40Hz) – which occur during the waking, alert state when we are focused on getting things done. We tend to spend most of our time in this state which makes us tired over extended periods. In fact, we may become so used to being in a state of permanent exhaustion that we don't even realize it until we stop.

Alpha waves (8-13Hz) – this is a slower brainwave state which occurs when we are in the present moment, gone are the deadlines and other pressures and we start to feel relaxed both mentally and physically.

Theta waves (4-8Hz) – an even slower brainwave state where we enter the daydream state when awake or REM (Rapid Eye Movement) dreaming state when light sleeping. In this state we often experience surreal imagery or feelings or thoughts. We can also experience insights, resulting in creative inspirations or solutions to ongoing issues.

Delta waves (1-3Hz) – at this point we have entered a deep meditative state where thoughts have slowed down and restorative healing can occur.

Gamma waves (40-100Hz) – a state often observed in frequent meditators, it is considered to be a highly intuitive state of being.

During a Yoga Nidra practice, while the alpha state tends to be dominant (even in people experiencing yoga nidra for the first time), various brainwave states occur in a cyclical, non-linear manner which means that you dip in and out of the different states.

## What do I need to do during Yoga Nidra?

One of the wonderful things about Yoga Nidra is its simplicity. In order to take part in a session, all you need is somewhere comfortable to rest. This can be on a yoga mat or it could be lying on your bed.

You would probably need a blanket as your body will soon start to cool down when you're lying still for any length of time. You might like a cushion or pillow under your head and maybe under your knees. It isn't necessary to lie on your back in full Savasana (corpse pose), you can rest semi-supine or on your side or tummy.



You don't need to be wearing yoga gear, any comfortable loose-fitting clothing will be fine (even your PJs if you're at home!).

All you need to do is lie back, get comfortable and follow the voice of the facilitator.

## What happens during Yoga Nidra?

It flows through a cyclical process which the Yoga Nidra Network likens to a recipe with nine ingredients:

- 1) Preparation – claiming this moment for the radical act of rest
- 2) Settling in – getting the body ready for rest
- 3) Inner listening and/or invitation for intuitive intention (setting a sankalpa)
- 4) Welcoming attention around the body – journeying through spaces & places (rotation of consciousness)
- 5) Playing with paradox – working with opposite sensations separately and together
- 6) Connecting to imaginative capacity – visualisation, sensory and extrasensory knowing
- 7) Inner listening and/or invitation for intuitive intention (re-visiting sankalpa)
- 8) Externalising awareness – preparing to complete the process
- 9) Completion – returning to everyday attention.

Whilst each element remains the same, subtle differences inevitably arise each time just as they do when we cook – the recipe may be the same but sometimes the flavours may vary.



## Top Five Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) What if I fall asleep?

I have had students ask me many times how to avoid falling asleep during their Yoga Nidra practice, wondering if somehow they're doing it wrong. The truth is that there is no wrong way to do Yoga Nidra, it is simply an opportunity to rest and to be. If you fall asleep at any point then that's what you needed in that moment.

### 2) Is it safe to practice Yoga Nidra if I'm pregnant?

Yes it is. During pregnancy, the physical and emotional changes as well as fatigue can certainly benefit from the practice. Often the issue is ensuring you feel comfortable during the practice but lying on your side with plenty of props to support you will certainly help.

### 3) I can't visualise, can I practice Yoga Nidra?

As someone who suffers from aphantasia (a condition that prevents the ability to create mental imagery), I can categorically say, 'yes you can'. Very little of the practice requires any form of visualisation, you will observe bodily sensations and feel the rest resulting from the practice and be able to respond in some way even if this isn't a vision in glorious technicolour.

### 4) Do I need to close my eyes during Yoga Nidra?

No you don't. If it's more comfortable to have the eyes open, I would suggest you soften the gaze by allowing the eyelids to become relaxed. The suggestion to close your eyes is purely to help draw the awareness within and help you relax so if this isn't the case, it would be counterproductive to keep them closed.

### 5) Am I in a trance during Yoga Nidra?

Yes you are. We all enter into trance states throughout every day though we are probably unaware of the process. When you practice Yoga Nidra, you learn to become more aware of this happening. Remember, the trance state is a natural phenomenon and nothing to be concerned about.

### Biography

Janet began her yoga journey 20 years ago and completed her teaching diploma with BWY in 2012. She has since studied with the Yoga Nidra Network, as well as qualifying as a Group Sound Therapist which allows her to work therapeutically with the sounds of Himalayan bowls, gongs and percussion instruments. Janet is a BWY Foundation and Diploma Course Tutor with her next course beginning in November. Janet teaches weekly hatha yoga classes in Timperley, Cheshire as well as delivering sound and gong baths, workshops and retreats and holds a weekly online yoga class and monthly online Yoga Nidra. Contact Janet at:  
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W: [rainbowhealingtherapies.co.uk](http://rainbowhealingtherapies.co.uk)

Discover a Yoga  
in Action project  
near you on the  
BWY website  
[bwy.org.uk](http://bwy.org.uk)

## FROM SEIZURES TO SERENITY

'YOGA HAS NOT ONLY CONTROLLED  
MY EPILEPSY BUT FUELLED  
MY PASSION TO SHARE  
ITS HEALING POWER'

by Jodie Freestone

I experienced my first seizure at the age of four. It wasn't severe as I simply felt jittery and only lost awareness for a minute, as if entering a trance state. Subsequent mild seizures like this plagued my early childhood and ECG and MRI scans didn't provide a conclusive diagnosis. I was given CBD oil and told I had a nervous tic. It wasn't until my teenage years when the seizures became more frequent and severe that I was formally diagnosed with focal epilepsy.

Affecting the frontal lobe of my brain – the area behind the forehead – my seizures would last between 30 seconds to a minute and as they became more severe with age, I would often lose consciousness with my head tilting to the left. I was given anti-seizure medication when I was 15 and began journaling so that I could manage the known emotional triggers such as stress.

It was scary and confusing and being a teenager, I didn't want the social stigma of my condition to affect my life. I subsequently lived in a state of denial, continuing to go out drinking with friends without realizing the damage I was doing to my health.

At university, I was hospitalised. This was the wake-



up call that forced me to confront the reality of my condition. Rather than battling against it, I realised that I needed to accept it and better understand how I could manage it.

### Yoga as a turning point

It was during my time at Falmouth University that I was introduced to yoga. While studying for a dance and choreography diploma, my dance tutor would make us practice yoga every morning before we danced. The yin yoga stretches helped to ground me and I found that I could release some of the stuck

tension in my body. It made me feel better about myself and more self-aware.

I started to explore breathing techniques as I found extending my exhalation to be particularly useful. Ujjayi breathing, where the subtle sound of the breath can be heard (like ocean waves)



due to the partial closure of the glottis, became a transformative tool. I quickly discovered that rhythmic breathing in this way helped reduce my anxiety and stress levels.

I also found that it complemented my dancing, giving me greater strength in physical posture work and greater proprioception or spatial awareness. The journaling also helped to better manage my emotions as stress was one of my major triggers. After graduating, I moved back to Newcastle, but still wanted to continue my yoga practice. My university tutor ran online yoga classes, so I stayed in touch with him and became a regular class attendee.

### Empowering others

Eager to delve deeper, I paused my dancing career to explore how yoga could not only benefit my health, but also help others suffering from similar neurological conditions.

My yoga teacher recommended me to the BWY. I was lucky to find a yoga teacher training course in a church hall close to where I live run by Alison Hogy with Wendy Teasdill as co-tutor.

The four-year course opened my eyes to the potential of yoga for epilepsy. I discovered physical postures that were particularly beneficial including balances like tree pose and the warrior series of postures which helped to ground me during times of stress. The range of breathing techniques including diaphragmatic breathing, using sound with breathing and alternate nostril breathing were all gratefully received and used daily to help calm me.

I also learned meditation and mindfulness, which have helped me to become more self-compassionate. One of my favourite go-to things to do when I am not feeling 100 per cent is to do a walking meditation. Bringing mindful awareness to my foot placement and tuning into the sensations of walking really helps to bring my mental awareness back into my body so that I can better control my emotions and prevent potential seizures from taking hold.

Since graduating from the course in 2019, I have explored different styles of yoga including Kundalini, Yin and Chair yoga which have really helped me to make further lifestyle changes. I have now cut out

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When a past event remains unresolved, it continues to live in our bodies and as such is still part of our present.

alcohol completely and I've eliminated certain foods including processed foods like battered fish and burgers as well as spicy foods that would cause IBS and trigger my epilepsy.

I have recently completed an online Chair Yoga for Brain Health course which had a whole section devoted to epilepsy which I now use as part of my yoga teaching. Alongside teaching my regular yoga classes, I have now set up a Chair Yoga for Brain Health class and I run an online 'Yoga for Health' six-week course.

It is only recently that scientists have brought to light the benefits of yoga for the treatment of epilepsy. In November 2023, a new study in the American medical journal 'Neurology' found that doing yoga not only reduced the frequency of seizures, but it improved patients' overall quality of life by reducing the stigma associated with the disease.

It is exciting to see the emerging research validating what I've experienced first-hand. Yoga has not only been my lifeline but has become a beacon of hope for fellow epilepsy sufferers.

As I teach, I witness the healing power of yoga and I hope that more people find strength and healing through it. I believe that if we let our breath be our guide and through optimal breathing, we have the power to reverse some of the symptoms of chronic illness.

#### For further information

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You can also explore more than 200 free yoga videos

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# INSPIRATIONAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Have you ever yearned to come together with others, to widen the impact of yoga near you?

Opening up yoga's impact for our communities' holistic health and wellbeing power is being practised across the UK and leading the development of yoga outreach programmes for the past decade has been Edinburgh Community Yoga.

If you're interested in learning more, or if you're already busy in community yoga and eager to learn more about how you could formalise your collective – as a Community Interest Company or charity, for instance – email [communications@bwy.org.uk](mailto:communications@bwy.org.uk) to discover more.

For inspiration, here are three case studies from Scotland to help whet your appetite.

## Edinburgh Community Yoga (ECY)

A not-for-profit social enterprise set up in 2014 by Lorraine Close and Laura Wilson, ECY has emerged as a catalyst for positive change and the development of community and relationships in Edinburgh. Employing the healing potential of trauma-informed yoga ECY aims to address the unique challenges faced by many in our communities who experience mental and physical health issues. Beyond the conventional confines of a yoga studio, ECY has established itself as a vital resource, actively engaging with the community through innovative outreach initiatives to address health inequality by offering access and opportunity for everyone to experience the benefits of yoga.

Seeking to challenge stereotypes around yoga, ECY

takes yoga to the most unlikely places in the city. You can find ECY teachers in prisons, psychiatric hospitals, GP practices and schools. Lorraine Close, their Outreach Director, said ECY partners with organisations who support some of the most marginalised populations in the area, to offer yoga that is free at the point of service. They depend on grant funding, fundraising and donations to do this work, and in a post-Covid world and amid economic crisis in the country, funding their work is a significant challenge.

ECY says the success of their outreach initiatives in deprived areas is a testament to the dedication of their yoga teachers and the organisation's vision of yoga as a tool for positive social change. As ECY continues to expand its reach they are looking to the future with excitement and hope for what lies ahead for yoga outreach in the UK.

## The Highland Collective

The Highland Yoga Collective is a social enterprise (CIC) based in Nairn, a small coastal town in the Scottish Highlands. They offer wellbeing with a social impact. At their studio they offer classes in yoga, mindfulness and qigong that aim to appeal to a wide range of ages and abilities, as well as providing free weekly and monthly wellbeing activities for targeted groups including unpaid carers, refugees and the LGBTQ+ community.

As a social enterprise, they also work with local community groups, charities, and services to

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provide them with free sessions, either at Highland Collective's studio or at their premises. For 2023-2024 the collective delivered 1800 hours of free yoga to over 500 participants. For 2024 they are also launching a social prescribing initiative to offer even more free access to services, aiming to deliver even greater social impact.

## YoGlasgow!

Where might you find a regular exercise class with up to 40 participants affected by chronic health conditions such as Parkinson's, fibromyalgia, cancer and stroke recovery, arthritis, joint pain, weight issues, anxiety and depression? At YoGlasgow!'s hugely popular network of community chair yoga classes delivered across the north-east of Glasgow. Whether arriving with a rollator or wheelchair, everyone is welcome. YoGlasgow! delivers classes in community centres

which are easy to reach on public transport.

From a pilot programme delivered with the local Health Centre and Community Links Practitioner just before the pandemic, YoGlasgow! has created a Community Chair Yoga Club. Many participants attend twice a week. The feedback has been amazing, both in terms of physical, mental and social benefits: friendships have been forged, bereavements have been supported and a Chair Yoga community has been born. YoGlasgow! is on course to take Community Chair Yoga to the next level, working towards securing statutory funding from the Scottish Government for inclusive yoga that promotes community self-care.

## Useful contacts

W: [edinburghcommunityyoga.co.uk](http://edinburghcommunityyoga.co.uk)

W: [yoglasgow.org.uk](http://yoglasgow.org.uk)

W: [highlandyogacollective.co.uk](http://highlandyogacollective.co.uk)

## JOYS OF MIXED ABILITY CHAIR YOGA – JOIN THE TEAM!

by Susan Jeffery and Sally Wilse

The question was how to create a genuinely mixed ability class of chair-based yoga, which includes those living with dementia. A successful class is a joy because it is more than the sum of its parts – everyone's life is enhanced by participation! The answer has evolved over seven years. Here we share our experience and offer a model/support system for elsewhere in the country.

My experience began in 2013 with teaching my mother, Christine, in a mixed-ability chair-based yoga group. She had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's/vascular dementia, yet she continued to enjoy yoga and meditation. However, as her dementia gradually developed, she became more distracted in class. Other group members willingly helped her to stay focused and were very supportive because they had already known her for several years. However, it is unreasonable to assume that members of an ordinary class would do this over a

long period of time.

In 2016, Sally Wilse, CEO of Seniors Helping Seniors (SHS), and I began to develop the current project at Canterbury Yoga Studio, with the support of the studio owner, Cora Kemball-Cook. The question was how to introduce people living with dementia into existing sessions without them taking too much attention away from others in the group.

Sally enlisted a couple of carers willing to be trained to support me in my existing class. The carers were all new to yoga and, as expected, they enjoy the classes very much and say they benefit themselves. The carer and client attend the class as a pair and sit together. Carers are duty-bound to stay focused and observant. Clients enjoy having the support of a companion in case they are 'caught out' or 'have a moment'. Because carers see the same clients, they are able to encourage them with yoga practice at





home too. During lockdowns, these relationships meant that classes could continue on Zoom!

The SHS carer/companion model has been essential for the success of the class. I am very impressed with the SHS carer/companions and the high quality of their relationship with their clients. The carers support their clients' learning in yoga and encourage their autonomy and independence. The SHS approach also allows the carers to participate as individuals so that everyone enjoys themselves. In order to keep the balance of the class right for all, the SHS pairs make up no more than one third of the class.

Clients, their families and carers have all seen benefits. GPs have corroborated the outcomes, citing improved blood pressure, stabilised symptoms and lowered blood pressure. Carers, clients and their families talk of improved core stability and improved confidence. Motor skills improve, bringing 'improved dexterity'.

Of one in the class, it is said: 'She started the class unable to walk unaided; now she does the tree pose'. There has been a definite improvement in her balance since she has been coming to yoga. 'She benefits from the co-ordination activities in particular. She enjoys it, both the exercise and social interaction'. For another, 'it's the only time in the week she sees other people'.

Seven years later, we feel that our team work has succeeded in creating a happy environment in which all members of the class feel valued and respected and are able to learn not only yoga skills for life, but also able to learn from each other how different

people manage a range of health issues with hope and support.

Facilities matter. Finding suitable places that are accessible, warm, safe, light, bright and friendly is the key. Sally knows that 'you have to get it right first time' and adds: 'Clients may not be the most patient, especially when they may be nervous and worried about spending money, so we take the time to set everything up for them.'

This chair-based yoga class meets at the beautiful, purpose-built Canterbury Yoga Studio on Summer Hill, Harbledown. The studio, built in 2005, features under-floor heating for comfort and is set in the secluded grounds of Highfield House, surrounded by lawns, gardens and trees. It has easy free parking and is accessible from Canterbury and the surrounding areas by bus.

Sally said: 'Admittedly, we often need to work together to keep clients on track. We respect choices but our experience with dementia in particular tells us how to present choice. The family is always consulted and on board. Trust is everything.' Sometimes the SHS group meet for lunch after the yoga class and their appetite is hearty. 'Mostly clients struggle with even very light meals. It could be the social setting, the great food in a local hotel or the yoga. Either way, clients enjoy a two-course lunch, and suddenly Mondays become a highlight of their week.'

SHS are keen to expand this project in other parts of the country, especially in Solihull and Warwick, where they have existing teams and clients who they think would benefit. They are looking for yoga teachers interested in collaborating. They are very happy to have preliminary discussions with anyone interested – please get in touch with Sally at SHS or Susan.

#### For further information, contact

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# LIVING YOGA OFF THE MAT WITH NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION

by Alex Hanly

Years of practice on the mat does not guarantee that off the mat your existence is harmonious, peaceful and benefits life on earth. Practising yoga increases the chances of living peaceful and meaningful lives, especially if your practice is well orientated to the values of love, truth and service.

And yet, I bet we all know many yogis whose personal and professional lives are far from peaceful, harmonious and awakened. Maybe we can even hold the mirror up to ourselves and see unresolved and ongoing conflicts we are embroiled in, despite years of dedicated practice on the mat.

While modern yoga has gained popularity as a means for physical and emotional well-being, it often neglects the integration of these practices into our everyday lives. This is especially true when it comes to relating and navigating difficult situations and conflicts. The ancient wisdom teachings of yoga provide little guidance on how to apply the principles of yoga off the mat and into our relationships.

The practices of yoga, whatever tradition you follow, aim to cultivate a state of enlightenment, to awaken to the true nature of being. Most traditions of yoga are ascetic traditions designed for monks living separately from mainstream society. But very



few modern-day yogis are monks living renunciate lives. Most modern practitioners have jobs, families, relationships, sex, ownerships, children – and more – and are using the practices and wisdom teachings of yoga as a way to enrich their everyday lives. And these are lives that are deeply relational.

After years of

teaching yoga and working predominantly as a yoga therapist, I discovered Non-Violent Communication (NVC) and was amazed by its potent simplicity and its natural application to yoga. NVC filled a gap in my offerings that I had yearned to fill – a practice that not only brought personal benefit but also went a step further into our relationships and communities.

Today I share NVC as a powerful tool for bringing yoga off the mat and into our relationships. The practice of NVC aligns with the philosophy and spiritual views of yoga. It emphasises the inherent value and interconnectedness of all beings, the importance of self-responsibility, and the power of empathy and compassion.

NVC, founded by Marshall B Rosenberg, emerged from his work with civil rights activists in the 1960s.

It offers practical ways to connect compassionately with others and transform divisive and violent communications. NVC aligns with many of the philosophical and spiritual views of traditional yoga, such as the belief that all beings are of value, all expressions of the divine, and all granted freedom and autonomy.

By integrating NVC into our yoga practice and teaching, we will more readily communicate from a place of empathy, understanding, and compassion. It teaches us to separate our evaluations from the facts, take responsibility for our own inner state, and align our concepts as closely as possible with the true nature of reality. But doesn't yoga already do this by itself? No, not nearly well enough.

The emphasis on asana in the yoga scene isn't necessarily missing the point, but it is just focusing one layer of the broader practice. The transformative power of yoga lies in the integration of all eight limbs, starting with the Yamas and Niyamas, moving on to asana (postures) pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), majoring on dharana (concentration), and dhyana (meditation), and resulting in samadhi (ultimate union).

Sutra 2.1 tapahsvadhyayesarpranidhanani kriyayogah states:

*'The practice of yoga must reduce both physical and mental impurities it must develop our capacity for self-examination and help us to understand that, in the final analysis, we are not the masters of everything we do.'*

(from The Heart of Yoga, PJYS 2.1, pg 165)

This sutra (at least going by the translation offered here) stresses something important and often not heeded enough – the importance of self-examination. A practice that increases the likelihood we will take responsibility for our inner state. Yes, asana definitely gets people more in touch with their body and the body-mind are one so there is a natural cross over. But self-development at that rate could take an incredibly long time. As a teacher of asana for over 15 years I know that particularly in a group class there just isn't air-time to focus on the stories, narratives and judgements that arise when practicing. And self-examination doesn't tend to happen in the yoga room beyond the level of physical alignment.

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But what about in the yoga meditation or philosophy lessons? We practice awareness cultivation and self-examination. We begin to reflect on wisdom teachings. But – and it is a big but – we don't have any yogic technique to show us how to bring the practice into the way we live our daily lives. Maybe this is because bringing the practice back into daily life wasn't a focus of traditional yoga, as it was a renunciate practice. But the yogis of today are hungry and in need of ways to bridge this gap between the meditation cushion time and the relational breakdown with their wife, or son, or brother or whoever.

Going back to the sutra, it points towards the spiritual view that 'we are not the masters of everything we do'. This challenges the contemporary views on 'free will' and requires exploration if it is to be transformative as it could be for removing vikalpas (illusions) of blame and all its accompanying concepts. Questions like: 'How can we take responsibility for our inner state and actions and simultaneously recognise the limited power of our individuality?' The answers to questions like

this come when we digest the traditions systemic and interconnected view on the nature of reality. The view that ALL is one divine consciousness. Yes, we can ponder and meditate on this teaching, but our awakening increases rapidly if we also live this in the way we listen, speak and communicate in each moment of our day. NVC and yoga share these philosophical and spiritual principles and values.

By incorporating NVC into our yoga practice and teaching, we bring more depth and meaning to these other limbs. Using the step-by-step approach offered by NVC quickly improves a student's ability to cultivate awareness of thoughts, emotions, and actions. It enables the practice of empathic communication in alignment with the ethical principles of yamas and niyamas. This accessible and down to earth approach to teaching the often boring and far from practical yamas and niyamas offers a wider audience access to their transformative potential. When we communicate with greater clarity, insight and empathy, it spreads, rapidly increasing the consciousness of those with whom we come into contact.

**‘Using the step-by-step approach offered by NVC quickly improves a student’s ability to cultivate awareness of thoughts, emotions, and actions. It enables the practice of empathic communication in alignment with the ethical principles of yamas and niyamas.’**

This is a practical spirituality as it comes off the mat and into our daily lives.

The niyamas and yamas set out by Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras and Marshall Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication (NVC) both offer guidelines for living a more compassionate and conscious life. While there are similarities between the two systems, they also have some differences in their approaches to conflict resolution and improving inner experiences. NVC offers further teaching and methods that go a step beyond the niyamas.

Take Sutra 2.33: ‘When we question our attitudes, self-reflection on the possible consequences of the alternative attitudes may help.’ This is explained further by Pantanjali as ‘sudden desire to act harshly or encourage or approve of harsh actions can be contained by reflecting on harmful consequences’. Basically, Pantanjali gives a teaching that we can stop ourselves acting in ways we might later regret

by focusing on the negative consequences of those actions.

To me this is a very moralistic and spiritually shallow structure to offer someone who is suffering as a result of their judgements. If you stop your impulse to act harshly by focusing on the further harm you may cause, won’t this just prompt feelings of guilt or shame, or maybe even duty?

That guilt shame or duty might stop you in the moment, from acting in a way you will later regret, but it doesn’t bring you into empathy with yourself or the other. It doesn’t reconnect you to what is alive in you or the other person or support you to better understand yourself. What it does is teach you a sort of right and wrong, reward and punish dance.

In this case you learn to stop yourself outwardly harming the other by inflicting feelings of guilt and remorse on yourself for wanting to punish



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them. In NVC we call this 'judging your judge'. And sadly, this leads to what? Yes, you got it, more judgements! Judgements are not the problem, in a way judgement are a bit like ushers that point us to our seat. The seat is a where we feel and see what is alive in us on the level of feeling and needs.

NVC proposes that you connect with your judgement and uncover the feelings and unmet needs that generated the story and judgements in the first place. In NVC, conflict resolution is approached through empathy and connection. Rather than focusing on moral rights and wrongs, NVC encourages us to dive deeper into our own feelings and needs, as well as those of the other person involved. It invites us to actively listen to the underlying needs and emotions behind someone's words or actions, and to respond with empathy and understanding. NVC also emphasises the importance of finding win-win solutions that address the needs of all parties involved. Everybody's needs matter because life is systemic and interconnected and the win-lose, right-wrong paradigms are painful misapprehensions or vikalpas.

NVC focuses on empathy and compassionate communication. It provides a framework for expressing ourselves honestly and authentically while also listening deeply to others' feelings

and needs. NVC teaches us to observe without judgment, identify our own feelings and needs, and make requests that are specific, doable, and compassionate. It invites us to connect with the shared humanity of both ourselves and others, and to find peaceful resolutions to conflicts.

Imagine a world where the estimated 300 million yoga practitioners worldwide practice NVC alongside their physical and spiritual yoga practices. Imagine a world where conflicts are resolved peacefully, where everyone's needs are acknowledged and met and where empathy and understanding prevail.

When it comes to the potential for exponential growth and speed (which seems really necessary at this time on earth), having NVC in our yoga tool belt can have a powerful impact. NVC offers practical tools and techniques for improving communication and resolving conflicts, which can lead to more effective and efficient interactions.

By integrating NVC into our yoga practice and teaching, we can accelerate the growth and transformation of our relationships and create positive change on a larger scale.

Alex Hanly is dedicating her work to assimilate the wisdom teachings and practices of both yoga and NVC and share this with as many people as she can,

## By integrating NVC into our yoga practice and teaching, we can accelerate the growth and transformation of our relationships and create positive change on a larger scale.

to bring peace, harmony, and connection into our relationships and the world.

If you are interested in learning tools to help you take responsibility for your own inner state and communicate empathically with others. If you want practical step by step ways to break the spell of believing in your judgements and stories and cultivate clear seeing not just on the zafus but in each moment of your relational day, then NVC is for you!

It allows us to move away from judgment, blame, and projection and towards love, truth and service. By practising NVC we can co-create a world where millions of awakened yogis live from a place of love, committed to truth, dedicated to benefiting all beings. Let us invite NVC into our yoga practice and teaching. Let us learn the skills of emotional

intelligence, empathy, and compassionate communication. Together, one empathic conversation at a time we can bring yoga off the mat and into our lives, creating a more harmonious and meaningful existence for ourselves and for the world.

**Alex Hanly** is a senior accredited yoga teacher, she has trained extensively in yoga therapy, NVC and movement medicine. Her offerings are a deep dive into self, allowing you to dismantle limiting habits, beliefs and barriers. Alex runs a 1-2-1 yoga therapy practice in Kent and online, she also teaches online with [www.kaylolife.com](http://www.kaylolife.com) and offers retreats and workshops.

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## IN PRAISE OF YOGA

I trained as a yoga teacher in my fifties, unsure whether I would ever teach or whether the training would be only to deepen my yoga knowledge. During our BWY training we had to set up our own class and I quickly realised I loved sharing as well as practising my own yoga. This year we celebrated the 20th anniversary of that Friday Yoga Class, still going strong in the village hall and with some of the original students! In appreciation of all that yoga has given me I spontaneously wrote the poem below.

### Thank You to Yoga

by Olga Levitt

*Thank you to yoga  
for teaching me not to judge myself and others  
by size and scale, age or accent,  
for releasing the critic in my head  
the clench in my neck*

*for helping me find my feet,  
my legs, my arms, belly and chest  
for deepening my breath,  
alternate nostrils and ujjayi  
for allowing me to be bendy or stiff*

*sad, cold or hot  
full of vigour, distraught or calm*

*Thank you to yoga  
for guiding me to stretch and flex, sit and stand  
balance and flow, posture and pose  
to be a teacher, a learner, a sharer,  
a cat, a cow, an eagle  
a dancer, a locust, a tree  
for allowing me to be however and whoever  
I am in this precious moment*

*Thank you to yoga  
for the space to play deeply  
with themes and poems  
rhythms and quotes  
to release our bindings  
and free our dreams*

*Thank you to yoga for the friends I've made  
on our mats and chairs  
the wobbles and giggles, grimaces and grins  
bravery, tears and smiles  
and deep rest.  
Thank You.*

# STUDYING YOGA IN CHINA

SOAS SHARE EURO-AMERICAN  
RESEARCH – IN MANDARIN

by Jacqueline Hargreaves

While globalisation has brought cultures together and opened opportunities for learning, we all have our dominant language. SOAS is the first university to launch a certificate programme for students in China, offered in translation to study in Chinese Mandarin.





In October 2022, SOAS University of London launched an online educational programme in China entitled the Yoga and Meditation Education Certificate.

This year-long intensive study programme was the first instance in which the Euro and American-centric academic research in the burgeoning field of yoga studies was to be offered in translation, specifically into Chinese Mandarin. At that time, the population of China was still living with lockdowns and travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our aim was to design an innovative educational course for yoga teachers and practitioners to access world-leading scholarship from home and in their spoken language.

Within China, the desire for higher education in yoga studies has grown in parallel with a modern postural yoga ‘boom’ that rivals that of Britain, Europe, and the Americas. A recently published paper on the Yoga Industry in China estimates that the number of practitioners was 12.5 million in 2018 with an expected year-on-year growth rate of approximately 19% (Ref 1). These enormous figures are comparable to the estimate of over 36 million yoga practitioners in the USA that was published in the 2016 Yoga in America Study conducted by Yoga Journal & Yoga Alliance (Ref 2).

Yoga in China is by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon. A workshop hosted by SOAS University of London in 2019, under the auspices of the Haṭha Yoga Project, resulted in an edited volume that includes two papers which look specifically at the premodern history of physical yoga in China. Dominic Steavu (2023) investigated the sixth–seventh century health and longevity techniques of daoyin (‘guiding and stretching’) and the postures labelled as the ‘Indian massage method’ and ‘Brahmanic callisthenics’ (Ref 3). Dolly Yang (2023) considered the similarity between neidan (‘inner alchemy’) of China and the haṭha yoga techniques of bodily inversion and breath control as well as the use of an alchemical language (Ref 4). Both of these papers tantalisingly hint at, but do not resolve, the cultural exchange and dialogue between India and China in the premodern period.

Nonetheless, the popularity of physically-focused yoga in China in recent decades is entangled with

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the global success of particular styles of yoga, such as Astanga Vinyasa and its celebrity advocates. In the main, there is an emphasis on complex postures (āsana) and the pursuit of health and wellbeing. Contemporary Chinese yogis appear to be motivated by ‘improving physical condition, improving psychological condition, gracing appearance, and establishing social connection’. (Ref 5).

In a similar way to Britain, the pandemic had the unexpected impact of accelerating the digitisation of the yoga teaching profession with more people in China willing to participate in online learning and yoga classes. This change in learning patterns did not impact the sector evenly. The pandemic resulted in the closure of a significant number of small, independent yoga studios and gyms whilst allowing larger, more financially robust companies to expand online and offer their services throughout the country.

A white paper by Deloitte and CHINAFIT (2020) has examined the fitness sector in China and determined that: ‘During its 20 years of history, China’s fitness industry has been constantly reshuffling and reshaping itself, forming a unique market landscape. It is now about to enter into another round of vigorous development. [...] The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the industry reshuffling. In the future, true nation-wide leading brands are expected to emerge.’ Ref 6).

To formulate a study programme that would suit this evolving landscape, SOAS partnered with Iyengar Yogashala China, YogaMālā, Yoga Journal China,

and Yogasala China. These established Chinese institutions combine to offer a nation-wide reach through the publication of yoga-oriented books, magazines, professional teacher training, and products.

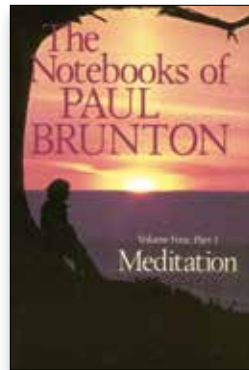
Although SOAS has offered its Masters degree in the

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PAUL BRUNTON PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATION

Traditions of Yoga and Meditation for more than ten years, our faculty and the course structure had to adapt to the cultural and language-specific needs of our students in China. Access to recent scholarship that is shaping our understanding of yoga's premodern roots and its use within multi-varied religious and secular historical contexts is restricted to those with good English language skills who have the ability to delve into academic publications. As such, to make this research accessible, all of the programme material needed to be professionally translated into Chinese Mandarin.

The programme explores the origins and historical development of yoga and meditation in India from ancient times to the modern world. In addition, several seminars cover perspectives, context, and methodologies designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the thematic components and cross-regional perspectives.

The outcome, we hope, is that our graduates in China who have invested considerably in their education, will feel confident to provide evidenced-based answers to the most common questions that arise:

- What is yoga?
- Where does yoga come from?
- Why are there so many types of yoga?
- How old are the methods?
- What is the relationship between Buddhism and yoga?
- Is yoga a religion?
- Is meditation part of yoga?
- Are women part of yoga's history?
- Does yoga share a history with Ayurveda (Indian medicine)?
- Were the techniques of yoga originally designed to alleviate stress and promote wellbeing?

The inaugural programme, convened by Prof Ulrich Pagel, began on 1 October 2022 with a cohort of 75 students who will graduate in March 2024. Over the past year, these students have formed life-long friendships and collegial bonds as they kept up with the learning objectives and tackled their final assessments.

### Learn more

SOAS MA Traditions of Yoga and Meditation  
 W: [soas.ac.uk/study/find-course/ma-traditions-yoga-and-meditation](https://soas.ac.uk/study/find-course/ma-traditions-yoga-and-meditation)

SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies

W: [soas.ac.uk/about/research-centres/centre-yoga-studies](https://soas.ac.uk/about/research-centres/centre-yoga-studies)

SOAS Yoga Studies Online W: [yso.soas.ac.uk](https://yso.soas.ac.uk)

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**Jacqueline Hargreaves** is SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies, Project Coordinator and SOAS YogaStudies Online, Programme Convenor.

She researches the contemporary meeting place between historical practices and their application in a modern (mainly therapeutic) environment.

## Core values well-worth pursuing

### Cultivating a Sustainable Core :

**a Framework Integrating Body, Mind and Breath into Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation**, by *Liz Gillem Duncanson*

The author provides an insightful text which combines sports medicine with yoga for musculoskeletal rehabilitation. Although it sounds very specialist I found the text engaging as it looks at how to strengthen and sustain health and wellbeing and there is useful information to inform those who offer more specialist yoga or sports therapy as well as mainstream classes. This makes this book helpful for the majority of yoga teachers as we frequently see students appearing with some form of current or past injury. The author takes a whole person and holistic approach to the treatment of multiple injuries and this is informed by Ayurvedic principles. For example she categorises the different parts of our core into kapha, vata and pitta. Breathwork and mindfulness is covered too.

The book explains a biopsychosocial - spiritual model which recognizes that symptoms often are interrelated even though they are felt in different parts of the body. There are great drawings and very clear explanations to show the mechanics of the body and exercises for recovery. A good and useful read!

**Kate Lemon**

## With a rebel yell, dive into mindfulness

**SPIRITUAL REBELLION: Mindfulness with ATTITUDE** by *Ondy Willson*, by Wellseeing books

It is a great pleasure to recommend this unique, delightful and profound book on mindfulness. In a field that is quite crowded, now that the ancient Buddhist practice of mindfulness has hit the zeitgeist, this is a stand-out work. It is full of warmth, wit, honesty, deep insights and bracing irreverence. The title itself is an exciting one, piquing the imagination, as is the stunning cover image of someone practising mindfulness in dark glasses, braids and possibly headphones.

Ondy Willson is an internationally-celebrated teacher of mindfulness and a long-term practitioner and teacher within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, in which she has been immersed for nearly half a century. She writes with a total lack of pretension or artifice to share with us her insights and wisdom accumulated over decades of practice, meditation, study – and simply ‘living’ as fully as possible. This book offers practical, insightful guidance in a down-to-earth way on what ‘spiritual’ means and on how to build an ‘inner scaffolding of healing’ within oneself. ‘Spiritual rebellion’ in this context means rebelling against the societal norms of hedonism and materialistic acquisitiveness which surround us. The book provides, and is accompanied by, exercises and eminently do-able practice suggestions to take us forward. Ondy’s accessible and honest insights can transform lives, and she illustrates them throughout with stories of her own rather astonishing, and often zig-zagging, life-journey as a Buddhist, mother and modern feminist woman. Bringing feminism, mindfulness and Buddhism together seems to me to be an important contribution, illustrated here by Ondy’s real-life experiences.

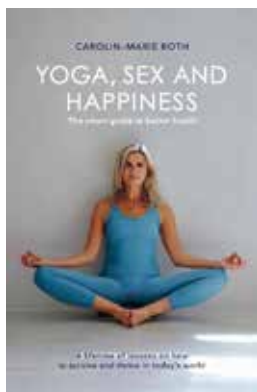


The book is a pioneering and engaging one, written with admirable frankness and honesty, as we are taken by the hand and guided in accessible ways towards making huge changes in our inner lives in these difficult times. For yoga practitioners, she assists us to move beyond the ‘physical’, to take our yoga ‘beyond the mat’ towards spiritual and human fulfilment, which we know, from our training and in our hearts, is our aim, but all-too-often forget. Ondy inspires us towards spiritual rebellion in terms, not of trying to be something we are not, but by in-depth self-exploration which is profound but practical. And she makes us laugh, but also glow, as we learn from her own personal stories to delve into our own. This book is fun, big-time – but also practical and inspiring.

If you only buy one book on mindfulness, let it be this one.

**Gill Hague**

## A yoga read for pleasure and wellness



**Yoga, Sex and Happiness: the smart guide to better health** by *Carolin Marie Roth*

This is excellent pleasure reading.

This is a very good self help book featuring yoga postures to treat common ailments of today.

Each ailment is supported by well-documented complementary therapies and signposts to helplines for each ailment. A must have for teenagers and parents. I love it!

**L Monica Burton BEM**

## Succinct and accessible exploration of breath

**Breath for health: A mindful way to explore our natural breathing cycle** by *Michael Hutchinson*,  
John Hunt Publishing

As a former scientist, Michael offers a surprisingly simple and clear step-by-step guide for the novice or seasoned yogi looking to attain optimal breathing. Unlike other books such as *Restoring Prana* by Robin Rothenberg or *Breathe* by James Nestor, which delve into intricate scientific explanations or revelation, Michael provides an authentic and sensitive narrative on harnessing the breath for optimum health, making it less intimidating for beginners.

Michael's expertise as a yoga therapist is evident as it is written as if you are receiving personal guidance. His gentle tone, sensitive descriptions of how to do the breathing exercises and the seamless progression of exercises as you move up the chapters, create a sense that he is a mentor leading you on a journey. Far from being prescriptive, he offers gentle encouragement to explore and tailor your breathing practice to suit your own needs.

There are only eight chapters in the book which makes it easy to navigate and each chapter highlights a few different breathing techniques to try accompanied by suggestions on how to progress them through sound or movement. The early chapters explore what Michael calls 'breathfulness' – mindfulness of the breath – starting from basic and diaphragmatic breathing and advancing to pausing the breath. The later chapters deal with more structured and subtle ways to work with the breath to cleanse, create heat, or cool down.

The clear summaries at the end of the chapters are a great way to review and reflect on what you have learned. It also means that it is easy to pick up where you left off so you can practice a particular technique and come back to it later. All the breathing exercises highlighted within the book are all based on traditional techniques taught to Michael by Desikachar or his student, Paul Harvey. This lineage is frequently alluded to in the book and Michael highlights the validity of these ancient practices today through his own extensive experience, via anecdotal evidence and new scientific research. Designed with beginners in mind, the inclusion of new research makes it interesting for advanced practitioners too. Michael hints at a potential second volume featuring more complex techniques and he offers valuable suggestions in the final chapter on how to take your practice further.

Whether you are a novice, anxious about breathing, or a seasoned practitioner looking for deeper insights, this book is a great companion on your journey toward breathfulness.

**Natalie Lyndon**

# REGIONS

## HIGHLIGHTS OF YOGA LIFE AROUND OUR REGIONS

Ready to get out and celebrate the energy of being with our yoga communities? BWY regions share what's happening near you, and their latest news. For the full picture of BWY regions' CPD, workshops, festivals and Sangha celebrations, check your region's events listing on the website

W: [bwy.org.uk](http://bwy.org.uk)

## North

events, cpd and workshops

### Stability 2, Stabilisation of the Spine and Shoulders

with Andrea Newman

6 April, 10am-4pm

Online

In this training day we will discuss how to find teaching cues that enhance stability and ease of movement in the shoulders and lower back. We will explore ways to keep your students safe in a range of asana which impinge on these areas, and to support students who have injuries.

You will also have the opportunity to enhance your teaching skills by increasing your knowledge of structural and functional anatomy of the



lumbar spine and shoulders through discussion and practical work during the day. This is a complementary workshop to Andrea's Stability 1 CPD day, however, it is not necessary to have done Stability 1 in order to benefit from Stability 2.

### Yoga with a Smile with Colin Harding-Smith

5 May, 1-4pm

Newton, NE43 7UL

*'Be firmly established in a Happy place'* (Gerard Blitz)

Find your happy place, bringing to your practice *'Attention without tension, loosening up without slackness'* (Desikachar). Maybe there'll even be a bit of face yoga, to strengthen your smile muscles!

### Introducing Neuro Linguistic Programming Techniques into Yoga Teaching with Jacqui Gunnion

23 June, 10am-4pm

Winlaton, NE21 6PL

This day introduces concepts and techniques from

Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and explores how they can help with effective communication, improve teaching skills and aid class management.

### North Sangha Festival with multiple teachers

14 July, day event

Linkskill Centre, North Shields, NE30 2AY

A day of celebrating yoga from the Linkskill Centre.

There are aearly bird offers availalbe – book now to secure your place for this popular event.

Headlining will be Brenda Ward, who specialises in Ayurveda and yoga. Brenda's approach will be interesting, bringing in aspects that many people may not have experienced before.

## Midlands

events, cpd and workshops

### An Exploration of Mudra with Swami

Krishnapremananda

20 April, 10am-4pm

Calow Community Centre, Derbyshire, S44 5AT

An opportunity to learn and experience different classical mudras, that can subsequently enhance your own personal practice, including prana mudra, ashwini mudra, akarma mudra and shanmukhi mudra leading to spaciousness. Other practices will include: brahmari pranayama and yoga nidra.

### The Bandhas – Core Practices of Hatha Yoga with

Swami Krishnapremananda

21 April, 10am-4pm

Papplewick Village Hall, Nottinghamshire, NG15 8FB

The three bandhas can add so much to our yoga practice, stimulating energy and spaciousness, and are excellent preparation for meditation.

Participants will feel a renewed inspiration for their yogic practice and lifestyle.

### Pranayama: The Healing Dimension with

Philip Xerri

23 June, 10am-4pm

Papplewick Village Hall, Nottinghamshire, NG15 8FB

Prana is seen to be the core energy of our being: it is the 'juice' of life. Pranayama is the quintessential practice in yoga whereby this energy is manipulated. Thus, pranayama can be utilised as a powerful tool

# REGIONS

in self-healing. In this workshop, we will explore this vast subject from four general directions:

1. Directional Healing – the Pranava AUM
2. Classical – various pranayamas from the main texts of yoga will be introduced and their therapeutic applications explored
3. Rhythmical Breathing – manipulating prana with the introduction of particular rhythms
4. Pranayama Kriyas and Mudras.

## London

events, workshops and cpd

### First Aid for Yoga Teachers

12 May, 9.30am-4.30pm

22 September, 9.30am-4.30pm

The Light Centre, Belgravia, SW1W 9LX

Join Kerri Hartwright on this first aid course tailored for yoga teachers. Kerri is an experienced first aid tutor and A&E nurse and has a wealth of knowledge to share with you, giving you the confidence to deal with first aid injuries /illness or situations in both the yoga room and everyday life.

The cost of the day includes certification – valid for three years.

### Strength in Asana – 20 years on with Zoe Knott

19 October, 10am-3pm

Online

This CPD day is all about looking at how views have changed on the importance of strength in asana over the past twenty years. We will look at key areas that require strength and how that is relevant to our everyday yoga teaching. By understanding current research and practicing strengthening sequences, you will learn ways to incorporate strengthening techniques through specific sequences into your general class teaching.

### Yoga and the Pelvic Floor Muscles with

Roberta Jesson

20 October, 10am-3.30pm

The Light Centre, Belgravia, SW1W 9LX

This workshop is designed to teach you how to connect with the pelvic floor, through breath, theory, practice and visualisation. It is suitable for yoga teachers, students or those interested in

increasing their A&P knowledge of this critical group of muscles.

The group of muscles we call the pelvic floor are integral to the health of women and men. They can improve back, hip and knee stability, are a key element of the core muscles of the body, assist in bladder control and are even involved in regulating the breath. But do you really know how to activate them? Should you try and stretch them? Or is it all about strength? How often should you be doing your pelvic floor exercises and how?



## Wales

fostering community in mantra

Our most recent volunteer committee meeting in Wales opened with a Peace/Shanti mantra that was intended to focus our minds and calm our environment.

Mantra can encourage a sense of being held and has a healing quality when directed towards places of suffering; with all the current turbulence in the world, the cultivation of inner peace rippling outwards seemed a timely and wise focus.

The particular Shanti mantra we chanted as a committee was intended to grow empathy and respect between each other and is often used to protect and develop the teacher/student relationship.



The concept of seva or selfless-service runs throughout our volunteer work as a committee which may be described as Karma Yoga (skill in action or becoming a channel through which we act). Karma Yoga suggests that through our actions there is potential to expand our awareness when acting to the best of our abilities without being attached to the results.

As part of the BWY Yoga in Action karma initiative here in Wales, we joined with the charity Stump Up for Trees for another day of planting in February in the beautiful Bannau Brycheiniog, Breacon Beacons to give back to the earth. Last year, 1500 trees were planted, we were brought together and many members were introduced to something they had never thought of doing before but which brought lots of joy.



As we move into 2024 we look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming Wales based BWY events. Our Welsh members have supported planning of the 2024 events programme by providing us with their feedback through both online questionnaires and at recent local events. We have listened and responded with a varied programme for 2024, we hope that there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

Looking forward to seeing you soon, with my best wishes as always,

**Jo Bogacz, Welsh Regional Officer**  
on behalf of the Welsh Committee

## events

20 April 10am-4pm

**Asana with an Ayurvedic approach** with Tarik Dervish

Llanishen Baptist Church, Fidas Road, Cardiff CF14 5LZ

23 June 9am-5.30pm

**Festival, Summer Day of Yoga**, various tutors  
Morganstown Village Hall, Heol Syr Lewis, Cardiff, CF15 8LE

11 August 8.30am-6pm

**Festival, Day of Yoga**, various tutors  
Lampeter University, Lampeter, SA48 7ED

14 September 10am-4pm

**The Sacred Feminine** with Reva/Liz Adie  
Wild Sisters Yoga & Wellness Studio, Old Furnace House, St Peter's Street, Carmarthen, SA31 1IN

6 October 10am-4pm

**The Bandhas: the core practices of Hatha Yoga** with Swami Krishnapremananda  
Llanishen Baptist Church, Fidas Road, Cardiff CF14 5LZ

12 October 10am-1pm

**Morning of Yoga Practice to Cultivate the Dynamics of Awareness** with Sama Fabian  
Swansea Wellbeing Centre, Walter Rd, Burman Street, Swansea SA1 5PQ

12 November 10am-4pm

**Meditation – an exploration of practice and teaching** with Lyn Jones  
Llanfoist Village Hall (The Gallery) Church Lane, Llanfoist, NP7 9LP

# REGIONS

## Eastern

### building a community

We were delighted to host our first Regional Sangha in December. This was a chance to catch up with old friends, make new ones and practice yoga! Nickie Gordon, our new representative for West Essex has shared her thoughts here...

I was delighted to participate in the event Sangha in the East -Embracing Life – charity event that took place on Saturday 2 December at Boreham Village Hall, organised by the Eastern Region committee. This was my first Sangha and a truly a memorable experience. The warm welcome and the sense of oneness within the team made this a truly special event. The four yoga sessions along with the reiki and head massage, were thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by all participants.

Session 1, Rosie Wright – Hatha Yoga, Session 2, Donna Negus – Pranayama and Meditation, Session 3, Elaine Fletcher – Headline Speaker: Philosophy and the final session, Judy Hirsh Sampath – Yoga Nidra. These titles, of course, cannot represent fully the experience of the day and we were delighted to be able to broadcast online to those who could not join us in person (apologies for the technical issue just before lunch).

When it was time for a welcomed lunch, we were all treated to a most delicious healthy selection of gorgeous, warming carrot and coriander soup along with sourdough and Turkish breads and a marvellous selection of salads. The variety of mixed bean and rice salad, cabbage slaw and a Kisir, Turkish Bulgar wheat salad

I am pleased to report we were able to donate £165 to Guide Dogs for the Blind through the sales of yoga book, jewellery and Neal's Yard accessories from our stalls. The invaluable contributions from eastern region committee were instrumental in making this event a success. Without their support, such achievements would not be possible.

If you are inspired to be part of this wonderful community and contribute as a volunteer, we would be thrilled to welcome you on board. Your participation can make a meaningful difference. We have vacancies for Suffolk and Cambridge areas and would love for you to get in touch and join this great group of volunteers!  
**Nickie Gordon** (West Essex Area Representative)

We are looking forward to some more great yoga days this year and hope you can join us; bookings can be taken on the BWY website now at [W: bwy.org.uk](http://W: bwy.org.uk) – and remember to book your First Aid day with us too.



### **Mudras, Purpose and Value with Swami Krishnaprem**

6 April

Boreham Village Hall, Boreham, Chelmsford, CM3 3JD

This quiet, enjoyable and re-energising day will be led by Krishnapremananda, a full time resident of Mandala Yoga Ashram in Wales. The for the day will be to introduce us to the value, purpose and appropriate place of mudra in their personal practice and in teaching.

We will have the opportunity to practice selected hand, body and attitudinal mudras, and gain a greater appreciation of the effect of mudra on mind, body and lifestyle. We hope that this calm and inspiring day will give participants a renewed inspiration for their yoga and in their ongoing yogic sadhana and understanding.

### **Chakras and the Principles of Energy with Lina Mookerjee**

27 April, Online

Join Lina Mookerjee for this day on the Chakras and get to know and understand the principles of energy and the Chakra system so that you feel confident to apply your knowledge in your classes and teach in a safe and effective way. Bookings taken now on our website.

### **Chair yoga with Richard Kravetz**

1 June, Online



Join Richard for an inspirational day centred around the versatility of chair based yoga. Richard has a wealth of experience to offer and this is a day that can give you lots of ideas and knowledge about the need for chair yoga in our growing population of people who are not able to easily get up and down from the the floor.

**Yoga for Digestive Health** with Zoe Smith

15 June

Boreham Village Hall, Boreham, Chelmsford, CM3 3JD

A transformative workshop that focuses on the important connection between yoga and digestive health. We will explore how the practice of yoga can help to support and improve digestion, helping you to feel more vibrant, energised, and balanced. Through a series of dynamic yoga postures, breathing exercises, and meditation techniques, we will work to stimulate the Manipura chakra, also known as the solar plexus chakra, which is associated with the digestive system. We will also learn how to activate the element of fire in the body, which is linked to the digestive fire, or agni, helping to improve digestion and absorption of nutrients.

**Yoga class for athletes. The Science of Sequencing**

with Anthea Sweet

5 October

Hemingford Abbots Village Hall, High Street, Hemingford Abbots, Cambridgeshire, PE28 9AH

This amazing day with Anthea is suitable for yoga teachers who wish to develop athletes through yoga.

The day will develop teachers understanding of the science of yoga in sport and will explore key principles of sports-specific breathing. It will also explore key principles of sport-specific movement and sequencing and how teachers can develop their skills in managing athletes in a yoga class.

**The Pancha Vayus** with Sarah O'Connor

26 October

Online and in person; 4 Gaping Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2JQ

We will be guided through Tibetan and Indian practices to cleanse the mind and body of negative stored energies, using asana, Tsa Lung, kriya, pranayama, mantra, and meditation, leaving us in the stillness, silence and spaciousness of pure awareness.

Sarah's expertise comes from over 25 years of teaching experience in the fields of yoga and energy body practices. Influences have come from Ancient Tibetan and yoga lineages, interwoven with an interest in a modern understanding of physical and mental energy through neuroscience.

**First Aid Days:**

23 March, Boreham Village Hall, Boreham, Chelmsford, CM3 3JD

6 July, YMCA Community Hub, Herts, WD25 7QU

7 September, Wilstead Village Hall, Beds, MK45 3BX

19 October The Costessey Centre, Longwater Lane, Norfolk, NR8 5AH

More yoga days are on the BWY website and we hope you can join us. Thank you for your continued support. Wishing you health and Happiness,

**Donna Negus, Regional Editor and the Eastern committee**

## North West

### events

#### **Yoga for Healthy Backs** with Anna Semlyen

20 April, 10am-4pm

Lytham, Lancashire, FY8 5LY

Aimed at teachers and general practitioners this workshop will include practical teaching of pain relief postures used for acute pain and to improve function, plus breathing and relaxation; based on the results of the University of Yorks Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs trial. We will look at spinal anatomy and the basic diagnostic and yoga solutions for different types of back pain and how to explain to students experiencing low back pain how to safely practice pain relieving postures.

#### **Yoga Therapy for Grief and Loss: Sacred Recovery Resources for Yoga Teachers, Therapists and Circle Facilitators** with Judy Hirsh Sampath

18 May, 10am-4.30pm

West Kirby, Merseyside, CH48 3JT

This day is designed to offer a resource kit for teachers and a safe space to explore responses to loss and shock. Working with guided sequences – from dark sorry to heart recovery – we will explore coping strategies and living with ongoing grief. There will be embodied mindful sequences to help find a way back to life, ending with a yoga nidra blessing.

#### **Introduction to the Kundalini System** with

Jane Catherine Aldiss

15 June, 10am-5.30pm

Lytham, Lancashire, FY8 5LU

Aimed at teachers and practitioners, this is a reflective workshop to introduce you to the Kundalini System, as taught by Swami Sivananda Radha, author of Kundalini Yoga for The West. During the day you will have the chance to experience the Kundalini System in a creative and accessible way, and be facilitated in having a unique and personally relevant experience. You will have a clearer and deeper understanding of the Kundalini System and how it can be accessed and applied on a personal and practical level to access the powers of the mind.

#### **Integrating a Pregnant Student into a General Class** with Wendy Teasdill

6 July, 10am-4pm

Lytham, Lancashire, FY8 5LU

Aimed at teachers who would like to confidently teach pregnant students in their general classes. We will discuss prohibitions and precautions for teaching/practising pregnancy yoga, explore simple ways of integrating pregnant students in a manner to benefit the whole class, prepare and safely teach a range of postures, from simple to advanced, to a general class including students who are pregnant.



#### **Solstice Celebration**

22 June, 10am-4pm

Holy Cross Church Hall, Timperley,  
Cheshire, WA15 6QG

As a way of celebrating the summer solstice, the North West Committee have invited three guest tutors to come along and share their special interests and knowledge. Callie Glover will start the day with a somatic-inspired practice. In the afternoon Helen Conway will be doing a MELT-inspired session with extra awareness on the hands and feet. Each session will be approximately one and a half hours. To finish, Janet Long will be delivering a gong bath session to allow a sense of deep relaxation and rest.

Enjoying events  
in your region?  
Volunteer support  
is very welcome.  
Why not check your  
region's webpage for  
volunteering  
opportunities?



## Yorkshire

### summer sangha date and cpd

Your Yorkshire committee has been busy working on the programme of CPD and other events for 2024.

We have completed the plans for the Yorkshire Regional Sangha 2024 which will take place on 06 July. As in previous years it will be a hybrid event with Sheffield Yoga School and Well House Yoga Space, Harrogate linked via Zoom with the opportunity to attend in person at one of the venues or via Zoom from the comfort of your own home. The tutors will be local BWY teachers Hannah Penn, Emma Conally-Barklem, Carolyn Clarke and Mookaite Jasper.

Upcoming CPD events include:

**Developing Strength with Single Leg Poses** with Zoe Knott

Saturday 27 April

Location: Sutton upon Derwent Village Hall, The Old Orchard YO41 4DJ

The workshop will explore single leg poses, looking at areas that need to be strong and areas which need to be flexible. Consideration will be given as to how to incorporate relevant preparatory techniques into general class teaching.

**Western Relaxation Techniques as related to Eastern Philosophy** with Sally Kennedy

Sunday 9 June

The event will explore the physiological and psychological effects of deep and brief relaxation techniques, consider how to practically apply relaxation to yoga practice and daily life, explore

psychological and behavioural approaches to relaxation in relation to Western and Eastern philosophies of both and consider the use of multi-sensory imagery and metaphor as relaxation tools.

**Asana with an Ayurvedic Approach** with Tarik Dervish

Saturday 31 August

There are a bewildering number of Yoga styles these days but which style is the best? Every style offers a particular approach to Asana and to a great extent, we make our decisions based on practical considerations like time of the week or location. But there are other factors that make us keep going to a class. We notice the benefits. We are of course, all different and understanding something about our uniqueness can be enormously helpful in deciding what kind of Yoga class is best suited for us. Often, we will come out of a Yoga class feeling worse afterwards or the next day and we are not sure why. This workshop will explore the principles behind why certain systems suit us better than others and how we can adapt our own practice and potentially the classes we run for our students to take Ayurvedic principles into account. The following considerations might include: The season, the time of day, the time of life and some basic common ailments.

Please ensure you book at least six weeks before the event; if there is an insufficient number of bookings we may have to cancel the event. Looking forward to seeing you on the mat soon either in person or via Zoom.

**Lucy Croucher / DharmaKirti**

Regional Officer/Newsletter Editor, Yorkshire Region

## South East

events

### **Enhance Your Yoga Practice with the Power of Aromatherapy** with Katherine Snow

6 April, 10am-3.45pm

Keymer, Sussex, BN6 9QH

This day retreat provides an introduction to nature's very own pharmacy harnessing the power of essential oils for everyday health and well-being. You will be taken on a journey to explore essential oils that uplift, those that calm and some that heal. You will get to sample and play with a wide range of oils (base and essential), to create your own bespoke blend of bath/shower oil and pulse point oil to take home. There will be a group yoga class and yoga nidra incorporating essential oils, allowing you to switch off, unwind and experience the true power and joy of aromatherapy.

### **Yoga Therapy for Grief and Loss: Sacred Recovery Resources for Yoga Teachers, Therapists and Circle Facilitators** with Judy Hirsh Sampath

21 April, 10am-3.45pm

Thanington, Kent, CT1 3XR

This day is designed to offer a resource kit for teachers and a safe space to explore responses to loss and shock. Working with guided sequences – from dark sorry to heart recovery - we will explore coping strategies and living with ongoing grief. There will be embodied mindful sequences to help find a way back to life, ending with a yoga nidra blessing.

### **Hypermobility and Yoga - Risks, Skills**

#### **Development and Longevity** with Carol Trevor

27 April, 10-3.45pm

Nutley, Sussex, TN22 3NE

Join us to discover how we can recognise and best work with hypermobility, refining our skills to ensure that yoga remains safe, enjoyable and sustainable, often for the benefit of the whole class. With care and patience, yoga is supportive for hypermobility, on and off the mat.

### **Strength in Asana – 20 years On** with Zoe Knott

11 May, 10am-3.45pm

Halling, Kent, ME2 1BS

This CPD day is all about looking at how views have changed on the importance of strength in asana over the past 20 years. We will look at key areas that require strength and how that is relevant to our everyday yoga teaching. By understanding current research and practicing strengthening sequences, you will learn ways to incorporate strengthening techniques through specific sequences into your general class teaching.



### **Goddess Yoga** with Khadine Morcom

8 June, 10am-3.45pm

Herstmonceux, Sussex, BN27 4UX

This workshop will be an exploration of the divine feminine. It is open to all genders! The divine feminine will be explored through the framework of the 10 tantric wisdom goddesses, the Dasa Mahavidya Tantra represents practical philosophical systems that aid the practitioner towards liberation (this is not the Western neo-tantra system of sexuality!). The 10 goddesses represent all aspects of consciousness or reality through iconography, mythology and archetypal characteristics. Meditation, mantra, movement and

reflection practices will be utilised through each of the goddesses as a framework for understanding the nature of consciousness and being as described in tantric traditions.

## South West

rediscovering our beginner's mind



Our programme this year starts with an interesting mix of days dealing with the fundamentals and those for the more advanced practitioner who wants knowledge and practise in something more specific, which brought to mind the way we perceive and learn when we are new to something.

Even when we attend our normal yoga class with a beginner's mind, a mind seeking opportunities to learn, a mind that has no preconceptions, expecting nothing and full of awe, a mind seeing everything from a fresh angle, even when we know the teacher very well, a beginner's mind reveals more of their experience and insights, and we get more from the class.

So this year why not start by attending these events with fresh eyes and ears, and any other sense that proves useful on the day?

You can't get much more fundamental than First Aid certification but it's not just a rubber stamp that confirms what we already know because there's always more to learn. Best practice changes, it's a new teacher with a different slant... so why not

certify or re-certify at either Holt in Wiltshire (April) or in Shepton Mallet in Somerset (June)?

In April Hayley Giles travels to Wiltshire to cover the Stress System and Altered States Through Breathwork and Asana, which might sound like a specialism but it's also pretty fundamental to why we do what we do so don't discount it without looking at the details.

Also in April, Nikki Jackson tackles Yoga for Mental Health Conditions in Gloucestershire, which is fundamental to all our wellbeing and is a specialism for some teachers.

And we have two online events coming up – Zoe Knott is showcasing a Safe, Accessible Ustrasana in March, which is a fundamental pose for many but definitely a specialism for others, and Carol Trevor's topic is Hypermobility in October, which is an essential specialism because for many students it is a fundamental part of their being, affecting everything in their life but especially yoga practice. I know it seems a long way away but if you don't book now it might be full when you look again, so get the diary out!

Further information and booking details are on our website page at  
W: [bwy.org.uk/community/south-west/](http://bwy.org.uk/community/south-west/).

If you cannot see these events listed then click on Yoga Search on the top line of the Home Page, select South West in the Region table, click Filter and they will magically appear

**Keith Hart,**  
**Regional Officer, BWY in the South West**

South West Sangha Online  
**22 June – Dhama Delights** with  
Bram Williams  
**23 June – Yoga and the Brain**  
with Lina Newstead

## South

### journeys and mandalas

Unable to travel to his region's Sangha in the autumn after testing positive for Covid-19, Acting South RO David Russell used that time to recount the tale of another journey.

I had an ambition to walk in the Himalayas and yoga provided an opportunity. I had stayed on for an extra week at the excellent Sadhana ashram at Pokhara in Nepal, overlooking the lake – a beautiful spot with great tutors. The others had already returned home but I flew back to Kathmandu and had a couple of days there. This city is very busy and polluted so I did not want to travel far, but I did want to visit a temple if I could. The hotel reception told me I could walk to the Monkey Temple. After lunch I set off with their map, making careful note of what route I was taking as the narrow streets were not marked.

I came to a small square and was approached by a local, who told me about the mandalas that he was involved in making at a nearby co-operative. We left the square and climbed up some stairs to the office where I was introduced to the Brahman, who ran the co-op. He explained that a signed mandala had to be drawn by someone who had completed their five-year apprenticeship and that they were all hand drawn. He showed me a selection which, as it was the end of the season, attracted a 20% discount! I had purchased a singing bowl and didn't have anything else on my to-buy list so I said I would think about it and left. The young lad followed me out, asking what I was doing – I told him I was going to the Monkey Temple. He offered to take me there, so I was accompanied by him with his excellent English. He took me first to a Hindu and Buddhist temple, evidently it was quite common for the two religions to share the same temple. This one had been damaged during the 2016 earthquakes and so I left a donation in the box.

We left and he asked if I was sure I wanted to go to the Monkey Temple as it had 365 steps, I assured him I did. We crossed the river, which was full of rubbish and then passed a row of roadside shops selling prayer beads and other products. As we approached the steps, I noted the monkeys and dogs. We climbed the steps and I paid my entry fee. He showed me the museum, explained about the rebuilding and then

we did three circuits (auspicious) of the top; spinning the many prayer wheels as we went.

We set off back to the hotel and I told my guide I was impressed by him and asked why he did not guide visitors to earn money. He replied that he did not have the necessary qualifications – no doubt these were expensive to obtain. As we returned, we had to pass the co-op again and he asked we revisit. We looked at the mandalas again and one caught my attention. When we left he had told me a purchase would help his family who lived in a single roomed dwelling. I told him I needed to think about it and see what money I had. The hotel had told me there were no nearby cashpoint machines so I only had two notes of the same denomination, worth I thought about £8 each. I gave him one of my two notes, asking him to promise to purchase food with it. He ran off but not before getting me to promise to revisit the co-op again tomorrow.

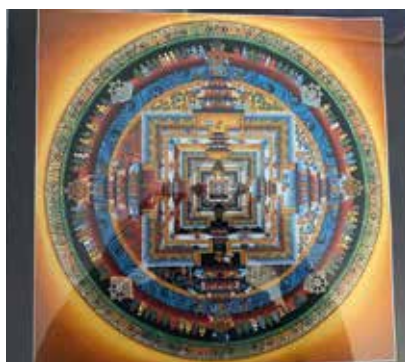


Next day I packed my bags and had time to spare so decided to do a walk around the block, turning left each time which should ensure I made it back to the hotel. This I did, passing a bank with a cashpoint and then a row of shops many selling mandalas. I called in at a couple and had a look at their offerings and the price. I noticed some were unsigned and some had errors on them and so thought they should not be for sale, or at least discounted.

I made it back to the hotel, had a coffee and then set off for the co-op wondering, what was a fair price for the mandala. My young friend was just round the corner waiting for me. 'Why are you not working,' I asked? He replied that you can only work four hours a day because the work is so fine, to work longer would risk damaging your eyes.



We entered the shop; the Brahman was not there and his assistant was busy with another customer. I sat in the office and my new friend brought out the mandalas. He brought me two more he had drawn; simpler than the one I was buying, but beautiful, nonetheless. I asked how he drew the complex designs, whether he pencilled them in first. Oh no, he said, we use a single yak hair and start at the centre. 'What if you make a mistake?' I asked. 'We start again,' he replied in a very matter of fact way. He asked if I would buy his work too, but I said one was enough.



I made an offer and it was accepted. My wife said it was obviously too much, but I had seen others and had a feel for the price and what I thought it was worth to me. It now sits in my office, a thing of beauty and a work of art. Hopefully it also helped the local economy.

What was it that brought us together and did yoga help? Yoga practice helps control the ego and for me I believe it has made me more insightful in terms of judging people and situations. This lad was genuine and I believed that from the start; but I was wary. This insight was certainly of benefit in my last job, dealing with a lot of difficult tenants who often had not had good experiences with their county council landlord. It was quite common for the tenants to lose it, but I managed to control my emotions which helped keep the dialogue going and resolving the issues in most cases – and boy were there some issues!

**David Russell, South Acting Regional Officer**

events

#### **Yoga and the Pelvic Floor Muscles** with

Roberta Jesson

6 April, 10am-4pm

Old Stratford Community Hall, Buckinghamshire, MK19 6NL

This workshop is designed to teach you how to connect with the pelvic floor, through breath, theory,

practice and visualisation. It is suitable for yoga teachers, students or those interested in increasing their A&P knowledge of this critical group of muscles.

The group of muscles we call the pelvic floor are integral to the health of women and men. They can improve back, hip and knee stability, are a key element of the core muscles of the body, assist in bladder control and are even involved in regulating the breath. But do you really know how to activate them? Should you try and stretch them? Or is it all about strength? How often should you be doing your pelvic floor exercises and how?

#### **Introduction to Talking Circles** with

Tessa Sanderson

12 May, 10am-4pm

Cumnor, Oxfordshire, OX2 9QF

Using simple circle skills in a class environment can enhance a trauma-informed approach and build community. This workshop will guide you through the stages in setting up and running a talking circle. It will explore the practical steps (opening and closing circle, guidelines, topic setting) and concepts such as 'holding space'. Afterwards, you will be able to use circle facilitation skills in your classes, workshops or retreats from inviting a simple "check-in" to running a standalone talking circle.

#### **Introduction to Yoga Therapy** with Nikki Jackson

19 October, 10am-4pm

Headington, Oxfordshire, OX3 7SS

This day is offered to experienced yoga practitioners, student teachers and teachers. It would not be suitable for beginners. The workshop will introduce the basic principles of safe yoga practices for people suffering from chronic health conditions and explore, through experience and case studies, YT methods for common chronic health conditions.

We will also discuss why some yoga practices are contraindicated for specific health conditions whilst others can be of particular benefit. In addition to familiar yoga practices we will consider the healing powers of Nature as a compliment to yoga therapy and develop the confidence as teachers to consider introducing mudras, mantras, samyam, svadhyaya, to help further support those suffering from chronic health conditions or those undergoing prehabilitation and rehabilitation.

## 'MAY SHE BE THE LIGHT'



SWAMI PRAGYAMURTI SARASWATI  
1941-2023

Swami Pragyamurti's interest in the spiritual path began in the Sixties when she came into contact with the teachings of the Bihar School of Yoga and its founder, Swami Satyananda Saraswati. On Swami Satyananda's instructions she started teaching yoga in 1971 at her house in south London which we now know as the Satyananda Yoga Centre.

Over this time she established yoga teacher training courses, worked with people living with HIV/AIDS and taught yoga in prisons where she felt strongly about the importance and relevance of yoga and meditation for the rehabilitation of inmates.

For many years she spent time in South Africa, teaching yoga (particularly yoga nidra) to groups of women, people in prisons and those with AIDS/HIV. In the book *Yoga Manual for Prisoners and Other Castaways*, which she wrote and produced to give out to prisoners, she said: 'A small group of dedicated young Satyananda yogis from Cape Town invited me to come and teach there for a month and it turned out to be my idea of teaching heaven! As well as prisons, they took me to HIV clinics in townships, to women's groups, health workers, working with variously abled people, young and old.'

Her warmth and wisdom demonstrated how yoga can be successfully integrated with busy, modern city life. Her teachings were simple yet deep and the approach was holistic and lifestyle-oriented, with an emphasis on meditation, pranayama, mantra and deep relaxation.

Much of this was revolutionary at the time in the UK. She was known for her teaching of yoga nidra and many of us will have been introduced to this deep relaxation practice by her recordings.

She was a well-known teacher at BWY conventions and easily spotted dressed in flowing orange robes. She also taught regularly in Europe.

Swami Pragyamurti came from an aristocratic background and was originally from Yorkshire. In the 60s she set up a modelling agency and never lost her aristocratic demeanour and poise.

A few years ago she developed dementia and eventually lost her power of speech, which was ironic, as she was known for her clarity of teaching and concise use of language.

She died on 11 August last year, in her home, surrounded by family and friends and with live chanting of the Maha Mritunjaya Mantra, as she had wished.

Her funeral was held 6 September in South London and was followed by a party and kirtan at her home in Balham.

She will be sorely missed by the thousands of people whose life she touched with her teachings, both personally and remotely.

Her whole life was dedicated to Yoga and the quality of her teaching possibly won't be surpassed. She is loved and missed by her children, grandchildren, friends, colleagues and the wider yoga community.

Thank you for your life and teachings Swami Pragyamurti.

## Personal reflections of Swami Pragyamurti

I first saw Swami Pragyamurti in the Mandala Yoga Ashram when she was assessing a Teachers Training Course (TTC) for Swami Satyaprakash. I was staying in the ashram and thought her very supercilious and distant; I must admit I was more than a little scared of her. Sometime later I saw her at a Dalai Lama gig in London, sitting and talking to several young men. I introduced myself and she was very gracious and kind.

I think my next meeting was at the Yoga Centre in Birmingham where I had been invited to join in a weekend of teaching by Swami P for Satyaprakash's newly qualified yoga teachers. I was a yoga teacher, but from a different tradition and had no idea what the Sanskrit terms meant. I spent the weekend being in awe of Swami P's teaching. The fact she didn't demonstrate, she never moved from her spot (except to correct me here and there). The total clarity and depth of her teaching and I thought – 'I want to be able to do that'. And that was the start of my own journey into the deeper aspects of yoga and teaching.

On the way to Ireland to do my TTC, I stayed with her for a few days after my six months stint in the ashram in Monger, India. She asked me what I had missed food-wise and I said coffee and croissants. She then nipped out to get the croissants from the bakery/deli. Such a little kindness, but it meant a lot.

When I was teaching on her TTC in Galway we had great craic with me driving her about on our days off. I was driving through Connemara saying: 'Look at the sea, look at the sky, look at the mountains.' And she responded: 'Look at the bloody road, Amarajyoti.'

There are so many memories of her power as a teacher, her autocratic manner, and her kindnesses big and small. She had a total dedication to her guru and to sharing these wonderful teachings to us teachers, in prisons and for people with HIV/AIDS as well as the wider population. I have much, much to thank her for as have many, many people. May she be the light!

**Amarajyoti**

A woman with her eyes closed in a yoga studio, with a purple diagonal overlay on the right side of the image.

BWY

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HEART  
OF YOGA

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