

WHY YOGA FOR EATING DISORDERS? Retrieved from www.yogadigest.com

Yoga can help maintain a strong and healthy body and can also aid in the treatment of mental illnesses, such as eating disorders like anorexia nervosa. Eating disorders are a genetic predisposition triggered by environmental factors or changing events (maybe a new job or a move). It is important to recognize that eating disorders go beyond a simple issue with food – they are a serious mental illness. In fact, anorexia has the highest death rate of any psychiatric disorder.

Anorexia is characterized by an obsessive fear of weight gain and a refusal to maintain a healthy body weight. While it's not possible to diagnosis an eating disorder by sight, here are some red flags to look out for:

BODY

- Even with a good warm up, hands and feet feel cold: circulation is compromised by the eating disorder.
- Repeated fractures: Anorexia can cause osteoporosis.
- Feeling dizzy or faintness: low blood pressure can be an impacted
- Fatigue: metabolism is effected by the restriction of nutritious calories
- Decreased strength and endurance: starvation breaks down the body's fat and other tissues, particularly muscle.

MIND

- Negative body image – comments about own body or others
- Rigid or black and white thinking
- High degree of perfectionism
- Fixation on comparisons
- Difficulty with trying something new

SPIRIT

- Difficulty or avoidance with inner practices like meditation and relaxation
- Increased commitment to austerity practices
- Lack of life balance
- Social or community isolation
- Overly focused on the body

Seeking help is the most important, but often times, the most difficult step in the recovery process. Only once someone reaches out can they seek the treatment they need. And early intervention is key to help increase the chances of a full recovery.

The treatment process can combine more traditional medical treatments as well as alternate therapies, such as yoga. Medically-supervised weight restoration is necessary before psychotherapy, and/or medication can have a therapeutic effect. Once weight is restored, therapeutic methods can be aimed at discovering both the trigger for the person's eating disorder, as well as the factors continuing to fuel the disorder. These strategies include "mind-stretching," as anorexic patients take longer to learn new behaviors and to unlearn old ones. These therapies help them build flexibility of the mind, which I needed for long-lasting recovery.

In my work at Eating Recovery Center's Insight Behavioral Health Center, yoga is an essential tool in the healing process. It facilitates a re-connection with mind to body, which allows space for developing self-compassion. Through adapted yoga techniques, a sense of strength emerges which can repair the

relationship to oneself. Restorative yoga helps with improving the ability to receive support. The relaxation facilitated by yoga provides the necessary regulation to process chronic stress. But yoga can take us even deeper into the healing journey.

A patient recently shared: “When I step onto my mat, it’s like greeting myself. On days that I’ve been quietly battling with self-judgment or body image, the volume turns up when my practice begins. But it’s my choice what to do next and yoga has always shown me the way.”

Our yoga practice mirrors our internal world. Yoga has a way of revealing what sometimes is hidden from view, but also what needs to be seen. Transformation happens when we connect to ourselves through compassion. Each pose, breath and transition is an opportunity and a deep practice of cherishing ourselves. Change can be painful, but after yoga practice we may feel more whole, and wholeness is the pathway to recovery.

If you or someone you know needs help, please go to www.eatingrecoverycenter.com for resources and information. We also offer a confidential chat option through the website where concerned individuals can chat with a Master’s level therapist, get their questions answered and learn what they can do next to help themselves or a loved one.

- See more at: <http://yogadigest.com/yoga-can-help-people-eating-disorders/#sthash.iRcg2aKi.dpuf>