

Yoga Therapy for Eating Disorders

Women Fitness

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A study published in the latest issue of Psychology of Women Quarterly reports that mind-body exercise, such as yoga, is associated with greater body satisfaction and fewer symptoms of eating disorders than traditional aerobic exercise like jogging or using cardio machines. Yoga practitioners reported less self-objectification, greater satisfaction with physical appearance, and fewer disordered eating attitudes compared to non-yoga practitioners. Through yoga, this study suggests that women may have intuitively discovered a way to buffer themselves against messages that tell them that only a thin and 'beautiful' body will lead to happiness and success.

Yoga offers an unparalleled opportunity to heal negative body image. The various poses challenge people to use balance, strength, stamina, stillness, mindfulness, and flexibility. The yogic system identifies eating disorders as a problem related to the first chakra. Different poses are used to balance it: crab, full wind, pigeon, locust, staff, and many more. Strengths and courage can be increased by using grounding postures such as mountain, goddess, standing squat, and prayer squat. The postures re-establish the strong mind-body connections and help overcome many physical obstacles. Most back bending poses help reduce depression and forward bends usually calm the spirit and minimize the effects of anorexia.

An active, specifically targeted meditation practice will prove to be highly effective in managing eating disorders. General meditation practice will be beneficial, but using an active and targeted meditation would be more effective. Practice any or all of the following based upon what calls you to be invoked within yourself: Inner Peace Meditation, Third Eye Meditation, Root Chakra Meditation or Prana Healing Meditation. If it becomes uncomfortable to practice with the eyes closed, have them slightly open with a soft downward gaze.

Yoga, highly therapeutic and relatively non-threatening, is the ideal therapy: a gentle reawakening of the mind and a soft embrace of the body, all helping to get patients back into the land of healthy living.

Crab posture (Catuspadapitham)

Crab posture opens the front side of the body and builds arm, leg and core body strength.

Instructions

- From staff posture/Dandasana, bend the knees bringing the feet flat on the floor hip width apart. Keep the arms behind your hips with the fingers pointed away from your body.
- Lean back into the arms and slowly inhale and lift the hips up towards the ceiling.
- Press into the feet, squeezing the thighs and buttocks and engaging mula bandha.
- Press down into the hands with the arms straight to lift the chest up towards the ceiling, slightly arching the back.
- If it feels safe, slowly let the head drop all the way back.
- Breathe and hold for 2-6 breaths, making sure you breathe into the belly and into the chest.
- To release: slowly exhale the hips back down to the floor.
- Inhale one leg up towards the ceiling, pressing out through the heel.