

YOGA AND MULTIPLE **SCLEROSIS**

Structural Yoga Therapy Research Paper

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5/13/2005

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MOMENTS OF GRACE

Introduction

I am often asked how I arrived at working with yoga and Multiple Sclerosis, and why I expanded the approach to include working with other challenging conditions. Many

years ago, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I received a call in my office from the kindly physician. Not prepared for his words, I felt the air sucked from my body. I stood as if in a vacuum of soundlessness, staring foolishly at the copies I'd been making and realizing the worthlessness of my actions. My mother's ovaries had burst with a cancer that had now spread throughout her entire abdominal cavity, and it was only a matter of time before the organs would start shutting down, leaving me motherless, and not even mature enough to consider living without her.

Her nausea and pain from the chemotherapy broke my heart. She would send me away so as not to watch her suffer. She swore she'd rather die right then and there than go for another treatment. Yet, week after week, she continued. I quit my job to be with her and we spent our time shopping, going to movies, and buying wigs. We smoked marijuana together hoping to help the nausea and improve her appetite. She couldn't get the hang of inhaling and I grew distant and loopy trying to show her. After a year and a half of chemotherapy, my mother, frail, gaunt and ashamed of her beautiful, bald head, finally went into remission. We felt triumphant for a little more than a year before a period of stress reactivated the cancer.

The gynecologist who had diagnosed my mother with ovarian cancer had been caring and sensitive to my mother's fear of a hysterectomy. He referred her to the oncologist who would now prescribe the fearsome chemo and radiation therapy.

Yet the oncologist had less of the proverbial 'bedside manner' and was more a technician, seemingly delighted with the idea of trying out his different drug 'cures' on a sick body to see if any of them worked. When the cancer returned in a ferocious way, my mother, who had feared and dreaded each chemo visit, choking back her tears and almost embarrassed, asked if she could "please" have more chemotherapy. The doctor permitted himself something which resembled a guffaw and said "The chemotherapy isn't going to do you any good now. Go home and get ready."

Technology, having given up on us, we turned to alternative means. We prayed together. We consulted a shaman (a Native American healer), an Ayurvedic doctor (ancient Eastern medicine), an acupuncturist, the Runes and the tarot cards. I placed crystals and stones around her body and visualized different colored lights. I massaged her feet and her body where the alternative medicine doctors instructed me. I visualized my own strength flowing through her body destroying the cancer. Quite mercilessly, I forced her to try, and try again, to visualize herself being healed until in a quiet, tearful voice she said, "Honey, I'm trying as hard as I can. You have to let me rest."

If someone remotely reputable had instructed me to take the toenail trimmings from a lizard, make them into earrings, and wear them while hopping backwards through Kansas reciting ancient holy texts just to help my mother, I would have done so in a heartbeat.

My first glimpse of new age spirituality in the '70's, ten years prior, was of white-robed, patchouli-scented Indian gurus, chanting in yogi meditative poses. I recall how mysterious and exotic the burning of incense seemed to me, its smoke and scent

practically embracing me with the promise of something otherworldly. I felt intoxicated by what I imagined was the nearness of holiness, happiness, and the subsequent freedom from troubles, fears and insecurity.

I believed that if I could somehow soak my mother and myself in ‘spirituality’, (a nebulous term at best), that she could live to see my unborn children. It never occurred to me that her immortality was beyond my control. Yet since I lost her over 17 years ago, I have come to realize that no other person, entity, group, technique or lifestyle can create healing in the body if the person stricken does not embrace the commitment to heal with every cell in his body. Healing is, simply, a matter between each individual and his soul.

The sweet smell of incense can still transport me, and envelope me, in a cloud of peacefulness. However, as my experience has matured into understanding, I can now see that health, emotional balance, wholeness and spirituality have less to do with aromatic scents, adopting mystical cultures, or striking yogic postures. In my quest to save my mother, I may have saved myself. With the fearful anxiety of losing her came the unexpected discovery of my own spirit, and the understanding of the spirit’s capacity for transformation.

In our technologically advanced, goal-oriented, noisy society, we mistakenly look for security or wholeness in our relationships, our work, even in our material possessions. Take the breakdown of our communities, the family structure, and our cultural traditions, add to it the impersonal nature of our medical providers and the lack of adequate social services to support the weaker, the elderly, or poorer sections of our society, and we have a recipe for disaster: a fragmented, disenfranchised lost group of souls with few options to turn to for help. It is not surprising that so many fall to the wayside searching for salvation, or respite, in the forms of alcohol, drugs, cults, gangs and notoriety.

We can place a man up on the moon, and make babies in a dish. For those of us not fortunate to have had a loving childhood, where do we learn how to nourish ourselves, and the people around us? Where do we turn to in times of need, when disease, or misfortune, strike? Will there be a supportive friend or family member to comfort us in the middle of night when mortality stirs? Will our HMO hold our hand through the fear? Where do we find the courage to continue on when our world starts to unravel?

Humans tend to seek their identities outside of themselves. They tend to affix labels and to create attachments; for security of the fragile ego, I would reason. Yet, one must not say: I am this, that or the other. I am, not only, a mother, a scientist, a yogi, a cancer survivor, or a person living with MS. Though the body may be limited in strength or flexibility by illness, accident or birth, or the individual limited by experience and/or understanding, he should not resign himself to live within these confinements. Rather, he should seek to discover the unlimited possibilities of the mind, for there are no boundaries in the mind, save the boundaries the mind creates for itself.

Answers, happiness, do not lie outside of us. Though it may seem much easier to raise-up one’s hands in defeat in times of intense crisis and challenge, we must begin to look

inward, for there, inside the seed of the heart lies the secret. “*The Kingdom of God is within you*”, so said Jesus of Nazareth. “*We have to live our own inner life alone even as we have to die our own death*”. (The Upanishads, trans. J. Mascaro)

In times of difficulty, we must mobilize, regroup, bring all of the fragments of ourselves together for deep introspection of one’s life’s choices; for observation of the self, its habits, behavioural patterns; for an understanding of the constant movement of the mind, and an understanding that we are not our thoughts, our labels, our fears, or our egos. In silence, reflection, and awareness do we find the path toward liberation from the dictates of the mind and from these earthly restrictions. This path is deeply ingrained in all of the great religions of humanity. Most simply expressed, “*Know thyself*” (Socrates). Even with its many possible definitions, it would be accurate to state that Yoga is awareness.

It is an amusing curiosity that each generation believes it is inventing or creating a “new age”. And it would certainly have been true when yoga emerged in the written form of the classical text of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali dating back to approximately 200 AD., or B.C. Though Yoga is a discipline thousands of years old, it is renewed with each generation of practitioners, and is created instantaneously with every breath we take.

It has been my experience that yoga has tremendous physical benefits. But it must be remembered that yoga is not just about the physical body. When we identify our existence with only the body, the intellect, or the ego, again, we fragment the individual. Yoga develops an attention in the student of his physical, mental, and emotional bodies. All of these things are subtly and intricately connected to each other and to the spirit. Awareness of this symmetrization is the practitioner’s most powerful tool to understanding how to find emotional and intellectual balance, as well as how to fight disease and its symptoms.

Yoga is not the answer, nor cure, for all diseases and unhappiness in life. But a person confronted by a life-threatening disease, such as multiple sclerosis or cancer, as well as a person confronted by the mere complexity and stress of life, through the practice of yoga, can improve the quality of his physical being, the quality of his state of mind, and cultivate a deeper understanding and acceptance of the emotional, physical and psychic hand he is dealt in this life.

At first, learning through my teachers’ bodies, then through my own with the development of my own practice, and now through the students who attend my classes, I can feel, see, and experience the results of yoga. The students in my classes have Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, Cancer, Arthritis, brain damage and quite a few other health issues, including injuries. Some did yoga before they were diagnosed with their conditions, some have come desperate for help, willing to try a lizard toenail cure. What I see is that as their bodies begin to betray them, they have nowhere to turn but within. Though some “cures” may seem amusing, there is nothing amusing about waking up in pain every day of your life, or unable to perform even the simplest tasks, like using the bathroom, brushing your teeth, or holding your child.

My emphasis in the teaching is toward the breathing and meditation/visualization practices where the student is able to observe and take a moment of peace and reflection. Working gently, at the student's own pace, and with the guidance of a qualified yoga instructor, the task is to bring awareness to the scarred areas of the brain and the spinal cord, and to the weakened or disabled parts of the body. By so doing, we can also bring awareness to the subtle sheaths of the body. Learning to use the breath, training the mind to follow the breath; allowing the body to follow the breath; allowing the spirit to breathe in the body; this is the goal and the heart of the yoga practice I propose to teach the challenged student.

Although this paper may appear at first glance to be about the physical body, we will discover many tools to shift our planes of awareness. This work is dedicated to creating awareness and to understanding the integration of the body and the mind; of understanding through the practice of yoga, which is both physical and mental, that we can create a flow of energy within the body; that we ourselves are energy and that we are made up of the stuff of the universe.

In that instant of awareness that the energy of the earth and universe flow through us, there is a connection with the essence of our existence, when the tyrannical little self loosens its hold on the mind and the spirit; a moment when the diseased or disabled body, and the burdened mind, can release their limitations and move with joy into a place of boundless consciousness.

With awareness as the spark which ignites this alchemical moment, we learn that yoga can lead us towards discernment, acceptance, integration, transformation, and risking sounding like child of the 70's, yea, even love. In this love there is enough nourishment for oneself and for all the souls around us.

The Yoga born of awareness can give the practitioner the opportunity to help himself, and to take part in the evolution of his consciousness by bringing opening and movement deep within his being. It is this capacity for self-transformation which allows us to take a conscious participation in the evolution of our species, connecting us to the first breath ever taken, and makes our existence and time on this earth time well-spent. Through Yoga, we can connect the individual self to the Universal Self. In a moment of grace, when the union of body, mind, spirit and breath brings us to a union with something divine and Absolute, we discover that God is, indeed, within each one of us.

It is the only path I have glimpsed that can lead one to Consciousness, Freedom and Joy.

1. CASE STUDY – GINNA WOOLF

1.a Initial intake, review of symptoms, subjective pain level, their self-assessment

Mrs. Woolf was born in September, 1942, and raised in Michigan, by “cold, uncaring, religious and rigid” parents. They care very much for each other and Mrs. Woolf's

brother, but she does not have the feeling that they cared very much for her or her sister. They were intolerant of other religious faiths, ethnic groups, and sexual choices.

She stated that her mother often expressed that she wished Ginna had been born a boy. I believe this contributed to Mrs. Woolf experiencing she was not adequate as she was, and a pattern of denying her existence, hurt, anger, resentment and avoiding confrontation began. Her parents are now in their 80's and they have never spoken directly of resolving any issues of the past.

In 1971, at 29, Mrs. Woolf married her husband, 54. He had three children from a previous marriage. Between them, they had no children. On occasion, her husband compared Ginna to his first wife. This fueled her anger, and in my opinion, also fed feelings of inadequacy. Both Mr. and Mrs. Woolf drank heavily at the time, though Mrs. Woolf hid her drinking, and stated that she only drank at the time of her MS diagnosis, as it 'numbed' her.

In 1988, Mrs. Woolf was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. She also started working with a psychotherapist whom she saw twice a week during 2004.

In the year 1996 several events coincided which brought Ginna to a transformational crisis. On December 10, Mrs. Woolf officially graduated from law school at the age of 54, when she was sworn in to the bar. On December 19, she and her husband celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. After an argument between them the night before, on December 21, Mr. Woolf suffered a stroke and died the following day, December 22. Losing her husband so unexpectedly, especially during the Christmas season, left her shaken, grief-stricken and fearful for her future.

Though she had some financial security, she still needed a job to supplement the income from her husband's estate. In 1998, she found a job as an attorney with the state of California, but was 'pushed aside politically' after five years. She believes her forced retirement was due to the cognitive issues and extreme fatigue she experiences, which worsened with the pressure of the pace of the job.

Symptoms: physical fatigue, lack of stamina, hot flashes, bladder control, emotionality, high blood pressure, cognitive issues – tends towards forgetfulness (paying bills, lunch dates, taking medications), and is slow to learn and assimilate new information. She stated that she was "physically, intellectually, and emotionally depleted". She takes seven medications to deal with the above symptoms, and is currently using Copaxone, which is an MS-specific treatment designed to slow the disease and the disability progression. At the beginning of our private sessions, she mentioned the only MS type of physical pain she has is when she begins walking and her legs are stiff. The pain moves straight up her shin. She tends towards muscle tension around her right shoulder blade. I would say that she experiences pain at an emotional and intellectual level, as well.

She first came to my Yoga for Challenging Conditions class in January 2004, and after a few classes asked for a private session with me.

Common Body reading:

5'6", 165 lbs, guitar shape

Externally rotated legs in standing

Right leg shorter by ¼ inch

Slight curve (4* on our scoliometer) to the left at T-8.

Left trapezius more developed, and left arm hangs slightly forward of torso, and 2 inches away from torso, as opposed to right arm (1 inch away from body).

Rounded back – indicates weak mid-trapezius and rhomboids

Slightly forward head

Ayurvedically –pitta pushing vata

1b. Physical assessment to include ROM and MT assessment findings

Examination Records – significant changes in bold G. WOOLF

Dates	6/05		5/11/05
Range of Motion	Left right		Left right
Supine position			

Ankle	Dorsiflexion (20 ⁰)	12/10		15/12
	Plantar flexion (50 ⁰)	65/65		70/70
	Eversion (20 ⁰)	10/10		10/10
	Inversion (45 ⁰)	45/45		45/45
Knee	Flexion (150 ⁰)	142/149		140/140
	Extension (0 ⁰)	0/0		0/0
Hip	Flexion, bent knee (135 ⁰ -150 ⁰)	120/130		120/120
	Straight knee (90 ⁰)	69/70		62/67
	External rotation (45 ⁰)	35/40		25/35
	Internal rotation (35 ⁰)	44/35		40/24
Side lying position				
Hip	Adduction (30 ⁰)	24/24		30/30
	Abduction (45 ⁰)	40/28		42/55
Prone position				
Knee	Flexion (135 ⁰ -150 ⁰)	115/126		123/122
Hip	External rotation (45 ⁰)	35/54		35/45
	Internal rotation (35 ⁰)	44/38		46/40
	Extension (15 ⁰)	15/15		23/20
Upper Body Supine Position				
Shoulder				
	Extension (50*)	45/46		50/50
	Flexion (180*)	170/170		174/173
	External Rotation (90*)	82/87		90/95
	Internal Rotation (80*)	65/68		80/96
Elbow – note for carrying angle				
	Extension (0*)	11/20		5/5
	Flexion (145*)	142/143		144/145
Wrist				
	Extension (80*)	62/52		65/58
	Flexion (90*)	62/74		90/60
	Ulnar Deviation (30*)	30/28		32/30
	Radial Deviation (20*)	28/30		30/32
Shoulder Seated Position				
	Horizontal Adduction (130*)	138/128		125/125
	Horizontal Abduction (40*)	31/32		45/49
Neck				
	Flexion (45*)	54		50
	Extension (55*)	23		65
	Lateral Flexion (45*)	25/30		32/36
	Rotation (70*)	64/71		70/72
Muscle tests				
Supine position				
Ankle				
	Dorsiflexion –Ant. Tibialis	4/4		4/4

	Plantar flexion – Gastroc/Soleus	4/4		4/4
	Eversion – Peroneus Long/Brev	2.5/2.5		4/4
	Inversion – Ant & Post Tibialis	2.5/2.5		4/4
Hip	Flexion Rectus Fem/psoas	2.5/3.5		4/4
	Psoas (isolation)	2.5/3		3.5/3.5
	Sartorius (isolation)	3.5/3		4/3.5
	Flexors with abdominis rectus	2.5		3
	Side lying position			
Hip	External rotators, deep six	3/3.5		4.5/4.5
	Internal rotators glut med/TFL	3.5/3		4.5/4.5
	Abductors	3/3		4.5/4.5
	Adductors	3/2.5		4.5/3.5
	Prone position			
Knee	Extension Quads	3/2.5		4.5/4.5
	Flexion Hamst/gastroc	3/2.5		4/3.5
Hip	Extension Glut Max/Hamstring	2.5/3		4/4.5
	Gluteus maximus isolation	1/1		1.5/2
	External rotators	2.5/2.5		3/3.5
	Internal rotators Glut Med/TFL	2.5/2	-	3/3.5
	Spinal Muscles			
	Lower Erector Spinae	2.5		3.5
	Upper Erector Spinae	3		4
	Neck Extension	3		4.5
	Shoulder			
	Mid Trapezius	4		4
	Extensors lats/Teres maj/tricep	2.5/2		3.5/3.5
	Abductors Post Delt/m trap	2.5/2.5		3/3
	Supine Position			
Shoulder	Adductors Ant Delt/pect/bicep	2.5/2.5		3/3
	Ext Rotators Pos Delt/m trap	2.5/3		3/3.5
	Int Rotators Lats/teres major	2.5/3		4/4.5
	Flexors Delt/pect/biceps	3/3		4/4
	Wrist			
	Flexors flex carp rad/ulnaris	3.5/3.5		4/4
	Extensors Ext carpi rad/ulnaris	3.5/3.5		4/4
	Ulnar Deviation	4/4		4/4
	Radial Deviation	4/4		4/4
	Elbow			
	Flexion Biceps Brachii	3.5/3.5		3.5/3.5
	Extension Triceps Brachii	3.5/3.5		4.5/4
	Neck			
	Flexion SCM	2.5		4
	Lateral Flexion SCM/U trap	3/3		3.5/4
	Rotation SCM/U Trap	2/2		3.5/3.5

Lumbar Spine			
Quadratus Lumborum	2.5/2.5		3/3
Latissimus	3/3.5		4/4

1.c Summary of Findings – What is tight? What is weak? What needs release?

TIGHT

Quadriceps
Gluteus Max

WEAK

hip flexors
Abdominals

NEEDS RELEASE

Left Hip flexors
Right & left hip ext rotators

Hamstrings
Hip adductors
Hip ext rotators

Gluteus Max
Hip ext rotators
Hip int rotators
Erector spinae
Quadratus lumborum

Right & left hamstrings

Shoulder extensors
Shoulder abductors
Shoulder adductors
SCM
Upper Trapezius

1.d Recommendations

A. Yoga Nidra: Exhalations through the back of the body, 3 breaths each at the sacrum, the kidneys, the shoulder blades, and the back of the head. Effect is to release tension and move awareness to the back of the body.

B. Abdominal breathing: 3 – 5 minutes. Effect is vata balancing.

C. “Heart” pranayama: Breathe in light through the heart, down to the belly, exhale out through heart the negative emotion. Useful in releasing negative emotion.

D. Diet: Drink more water. Eat more fresh food, vegetables, grains and fruit. Avoid frozen and processed foods.

E. Exercise/Asana:

1. Joint Freeing Series – breath and movement in sync, each movement 3-6 repetitions, done mindfully. Vata balancing.
2. Cat and bow poses for spinal extension (strength and flexibility to erector spinae), and spinal flexion (strength to rectus abdominus).
3. On hands and knees, hip extension for strength to gluteus maximus and hamstring.
4. Same position, knee flexion for strength to hamstrings, gastrocnemius, *sartorius*, *gracillis*, and knee extension for strength to quadriceps and *tensor fascia lata*.
5. Hip flexion for strength to iliopsoas, rectus femoris, *sartorius*, *TFL*, *5 adductors* – *pectineus*, *adductor longus*, *brevis* and *magnus*, and *gracillis*. Also works on slight abdominal strength.
6. Pelvic tilts holding yoga Styrofoam block between the thighs. Tones hip adductors, gluteus maximus, mulabandha. Held higher for a few breaths, also tones quadriceps.

3-6 repetitions done with breath on 1-6.

1.e Summarize the results of your recommendations

Because Ginna attends my Yoga for Challenging Conditions class once a week and saw me privately every two weeks for three months, I was able to give her more instruction and watch her progress on a weekly basis.

On page 7, **1.d Recommendations**, is a list of the practices I prescribed for her, in our private sessions, as well as in the general class she attended weekly. Over the period of approximately, six months, she was able to do all of the exercises and asanas, but did not practice outside of the class or private sessions, either because of cognitive reasons, or choice.

All the breathing and self-scanning exercises were very calming to her nervous system, and once this was quieted, she was able to focus her mind. As she was able to focus, she gradually became more sensitive to her physical body and moved it with greater precision and attention to chronically held tension. She also became more aware of how her emotions took over and beat her up every so often.

She still has some difficulty remembering the meditation techniques, so I made her an audiotape of various meditations she could choose from. I am also making her a videotape of the exercises and asanas to help her practice at home.

The difficulty of remembering the various series and sequences of movements we addressed by her giving herself permission NOT to have to practice, and instead, taking a walk and being as mindful as possible. When she comes to class, I give specific practice that relates to her needs and she gradually remembers and moves fluidly and mindfully.

In summary, Ginna slowly and surely gained in strength, confidence, and awareness.

2.a Name and description of the condition **THE DISEASE OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

Multiple Sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system which interferes with the brain's ability to send and receive messages. The nervous system is composed of the brain and the spinal cord. A fatty tissue called myelin, which helps nerve fibers conduct

electrical impulses, surrounds and protects the nerve fibers of the central nervous system. In multiple sclerosis, myelin is lost in “multiple” areas, (more than one area of the brain or spinal cord is affected). The lost myelin leaves scars called sclerosis, also known as plaques or lesions. When myelin is destroyed or damaged, the ability of the nerves to conduct electrical impulses to and from the brain is disrupted. This produces the various symptoms of MS.

Most healthy nerves are insulated by myelin. This is a fatty substance that helps messages flow smoothly along the nerve pathways.

Diagram

In MS, the myelin breaks down. It is replaced by scar tissue. The scar tissue can distort or even block nerve messages. Body functions become uncontrolled because messages don't get through properly.

Diagram

It is unknown what causes MS, but it is believed that the damage to myelin results from an abnormal response by the body's immune system. Normally, the immune system defends the body against foreign “invader”, such as viruses or bacteria. In autoimmune diseases the body inadvertently attacks its own tissue. In the case of MS, the substance that is attacked is myelin.

Two basic types of MS.

The first type is Relapse - remitting. Symptoms flare up and then ease, or even disappear for months or years. These are acute attacks, also called relapses, during which new symptoms appear or existing symptoms become more severe. These exacerbations are usually followed by remissions which may bring the patient back to the pre-relapse level or may leave some remaining weakness.

The second type of MS is Progressive. Some people have few or no severe attacks but instead experience a steady worsening of symptoms and disability over time. This steady pattern can follow an earlier period of relapsing-remitting MS, in which case it is called secondary progressive MS. This pattern may exist from the outset, in which case it is called primary progressive MS. The MS may stabilize at any time, regardless of pattern.

2b. Gross body symptoms

Symptoms depend on which areas of the central nervous system have been attacked. They vary from person to person, and also vary in severity and duration. Usually a person with MS will experience more than one symptom, but not all people experience all of them.

Symptoms include weakness, tingling, numbness or impaired sensation, poor coordination, fatigue and problems with balance; visual disturbances, involuntary rapid eye movement, tremors, spasticity or muscle stiffness; slurred speech, bowel or bladder problems; unstable walking, problems with sexual function, and sensitivity to heat. In severe cases, MS can cause partial or complete paralysis.

Subtle body symptoms

In addition to the most visible symptoms, there are others which are not so apparent. The brain holds what is called the mind. It is the home of the personality, the emotions and the intellect. MS has the potential to affect these brain functions, directly or indirectly.

Physical symptoms are usually the result of damage to specific, easily identified areas in the brain and spinal cord. However, it is not always clear if emotional problems are a psychological reaction to the disease, or the result of physical damage to specific parts of the brain.

Also difficult to assess are problems in intellectual functioning, or cognitive dysfunction. There are many factors which may affect the intellect, such as aging, disease, injury, tension, emotional stress, depression, sleep disturbances, or fatigue. However, when intellectual problems stem from physical damage done by MS, the source is usually damage to brain tissue. Lesions, or scarring occur, with most significance, in the cerebral hemispheres. The most affected intellectual functions affected are memory/recall, reasoning, verbal fluency, or speed of information processing.

Having a cognitive problem can cause stress, confusion and depression. The MS patient needs to be able to separate the stress and depression responses from the MS symptoms and deal appropriately with them. Some of the those symptoms of stress and depression are chronic irritability, resentment, feeling demoralized, excessive nervousness, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, rage, and /or fatigue, just to name a few.

This disease of Multiple Sclerosis is a degenerative disease which appears to have no known cure. Western medicine has an armory of drugs which it uses to fight the debilitating symptoms. Invariably the disease makes its way around the drugs and then continues its onslaught on the MS patient. The choice for the patient is then to try new drugs, wait for more technology, give up or maybe, commit to yoga, as is my intention to present in the following chapters.

2c. Related challenges – lifestyle, diet, limitations on activities

Being diagnosed with MS can be a relief for many who have often spent years wondering if they were clumsy, forgetful, lazy, or undisciplined, among other things. From one perspective, knowing one's diagnosis allows for a 'plan of attack', in regard to medications, lifestyles, career and relationship choices.

On the other hand, a label, can, for some individuals, be a reason to place limitations on themselves and therefore limit the possibilities for a healthy attitude and life. One person faced with this diagnosis and unable to walk might give up and allow a wheelchair to swallow them. Another might end up in the same wheelchair, but work diligently to not let the disease define who they are by what they cannot do.

Depending on the degree of sclerosis on the brain and spinal cord, and the severity of the symptoms, all activities can be affected and limited. Even simple tasks can be a challenge, physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

From a physical standpoint, fatigue can create limitations on abilities to concentrate, pursue studies, a career, or maintain a job or relationships. Lack of balance and coordination, muscle stiffness or spasticity, contribute to an inability to walk unassisted, to move through the world, from one country to another, as well as from one room to another. Visual problems could affect something so simple as enjoying the sight of a field of flowers, to the incapacity to see well enough to read or drive. Bowel or bladder problems, sexual dysfunctions can lead to a myriad of difficult and embarrassing situations, and affect also personal relationships. Complete paralysis, of course, would be a limitation on the greatest scale, in my opinion.

Inability to access or process the brain's information is also a great limitation, affecting any areas where the brain is involved, which is practically everything, from wage earning to one's personal mental stability.

There are many drugs being used to treat MS. I have personally spoken with at least 15 people whose doctors prescribe different types of drugs, sometimes experimental, some successful at containing the symptoms, others not. Constantly 'battling' the disease with new treatments takes its toll physically and emotionally.

The degree of limitations definitely depends on the degree of severity of the symptoms. Being able to live a decent life, depending on the severity of the symptoms, and the relapses and remissions, takes a heavy toll. The uncertainty of life, surely, affects all of us. Yet, this appears to me a particularly cruel fate, not knowing if one will be able to provide for oneself financially, find a relationship, keep a relationship, have and care for a family, or if one is alone, take care of oneself financially, physically and emotionally.

3. AYURVEDIC ASSESSMENT AND AYURVEDIC BASED YOGA RECOMMENDATIONS

In Ayurvedic language, it could be said that Pitta has invaded Vata. Vata, imbalanced, can manifest as fear, anxiety, misconception or delusion, insomnia, and unstable rhythms of the bowels, sleeping or menstrual cycle. A Pitta imbalance can manifest as anger,

criticism, judgment, and poor digestion. A general recommendation would be to lower Vata and Pitta through the below methods, thereby increasing Kapha.

According to Ayurvedic theory, the prana sub-component of VATA controls the balance and activation of the nervous system. From this perspective, as MS is a slow progression of destruction of the nerve sheath called myelin in the brain and spinal cord, MS is a classic VATA imbalance.

A VATA imbalance is responsible for many of the conditions and symptoms which are found in MS such as pain, poor digestion, constipation, fatigue, dry skin, nervousness, muscle stiffness, tremors, numbness, insomnia, headaches, anxiety, worry, fear, confusion, and heightened sensitivity, to name a few.

It is said that VATA enters the fatty myelin sheath surrounding the nerves. This causes the sheath to “dry out”, resulting in too much air and space (VATA) around the nerve. There are some Ayurvedic treatments which suggest the use of Abhyanga, a warm oil massage, followed by a steam bath, so that as the pores open, they drink in the oil, which helps to tonify the sheath and nerves from the outside in.

However, my experience is limited in the use of Abhyanga for MS, and from what I know over the last 10 years of working with MS clients, heat is an aggravating factor which stresses the body further. Of all of the MS students whom I have surveyed, approximately 20, not one is in agreement regarding the use of heat, whether hot water, hot oils, or high temperatures, which increase the body’s temperature. Some have agreed, however, that heat applied locally for a short period of time for muscular tension is acceptable.

An accumulation of impurities and toxins in the body tissues, and the build-up of plaque around the affected nerves, also disrupt tissue biochemistry. Thus, we could say, the MS individual, Ayurvedically, experiences chemical toxicity, or, is full of AMA.

To relieve some of this toxicity, we can work on improving digestion, metabolism and elimination to assist in cleansing the tissues of Ama and preventing further build-up of impurities. Ayurvedic herbs and oils for digestion, metabolism and elimination would probably be useful. But again, this is not my field of expertise and I would refer the student to an Ayurvedic practitioner.

Breath awareness and abdominal breathing can further balance VATA. Better breathing habits develop the body’s relaxation response, creating more efficient inhalations to draw in more energy, and more efficient exhalations to remove impurities. In regard to asana or exercise, slow meditative movement as the Joint Freeing Series, or asana done mindfully can balance VATA as it connects the mind, body and the breath.

Most likely, one with MS also has low OJAS, vitality and immunity. This would need to be rebuilt via diet, lifestyle, and attitude. Many medical theories state a possible cause of MS is a latent virus. So using treatments and therapy that enhance the healing ability of

the body, and strengthening the body's natural immune response are necessary. Again Ayurvedic herbs and diet would be useful.

MS usually moves between remissions and relapses. Physical and mental stress may exacerbate the frequency and intensity of these relapses and symptoms. Therefore, stress reduction techniques, such as relaxation and meditation are definitely an important aspect of treating MS as they help to balance VATA, engage the mind and psyche in healing the body, assist in changing attitudes and unhealthy habits, and develop self-love, sensitivity to self and others.

4. Common Body Reading

As Multiple Sclerosis can affect any part of the brain or spinal cord, there is no general or common body reading for individuals with MS. It truly depends on the individual, the age and condition they are in when MS strikes, and how they maintain their health.

However, over the last 10 years of working with people with Multiple Sclerosis, if I were to make a generalization, I would say that what is most often affected is pelvic, leg and spinal strength and flexibility, and as a result of that, gait and the ability to walk. This would indicate a weakness of the erector spinae, middle trapezius, latissimus, psoas, quadratus lumborum, knee and hip flexors, hip adductors and abductors, the rectus abdominus, gluteus, and hamstring muscles. It could also indicate a tightness of the antagonist muscles: pectoralis, anterior serratus, coracobrachialis, iliopsoas, hip external rotators, hip internal rotators, ilio-tibial band, quadriceps, adductors (not always), abductors, and hamstrings,.

As a result of this, of course, all muscles can be affected, and depending on the general weakness or tightness of their bodies regardless of the MS, they could fit into any of the common body readings. I have seen the whole range of postural imbalances cited in SYT book, page 103.

5. CONTRAINDICATED YOGA PRACTICES and general activities to modify or eliminate:

Strenuous or fatiguing asana, or exercise

Lack of precision in movement, in asana, or daily life.

Kapalabhati, done improperly, can create too much heat in the body, and dizziness

Poor breathing habits, including holding the breath or chest breathing

Lack of awareness in all aspects of life

Not pacing self, trying to do too much

Excessive heat which may raise the body's temperature, i.e., high temperatures, hot baths

6. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS – progressive through 3 phases

PREFACE:

Once this paper was completed, I submitted it to my case study for her review. She proudly approved of the paper with the exception of a difference in our perception of the findings in 6.c, Phase III, regarding our work in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and

Time Line Therapy, which was about releasing the negative emotions of anger, hurt and fear.

In regard to this section, she disagreed that she was unable to release anger and hurt. She says she “tried the process and remained unconvinced of its value”, and as a result, at the time, did not feel eager to go into this subject. I did alter my writing to reflect her perception.

I believe she did not appreciate seeing the aspect of herself in my writing as a stubbornly angry woman who was being asked to accept responsibility for her choices. I felt she denied the validity of my findings as the words painted a painful experience, perhaps one she did not want to accept. In my estimation, the issues of anger, hurt and fear which I perceived in the diagnosis of her subtle body, were necessary to resolve in order to treat her physical body.

I stated earlier in this paper that healing does not lie outside of us. It is not my place to insist on my viewpoint with my clients, nor to enter into their psyches unless I am invited. In this case, I was invited, and once there, I mirrored her by expressing my experience to her, allowing her to see herself through my eyes, and presenting her the opportunity to observe possible destructive behaviours, for herself, and make the choice of changing those said destructive behaviours.

I hypothesize that she may need the emotions of anger and rage to protect herself, and that they may provide a sense of security and strength. As I write later, letting go of something which holds one back is almost a fear of success, or a limiting decision that one doesn't deserve success, that one is not good enough, or worthy of success, love and happiness. This is why I often insisted that she explore what could be the ‘secondary gain’ in not letting go of this anger. Releasing what I perceived as her unconscious defense mechanism, anger, could leave the ego feeling powerless, and would require leaping into the void to actually embrace transformation.

The work of releasing this sub-strata of the psychic layer is very much the work of creating change in the subtle and causal bodies, of releasing samskaras (impressions) and vasanas (tendencies) which rule us from within.

In closing, the lack of eagerness mentioned above, did not stop her from being affected to a good degree by the process, as can be heard in her own words on page 29. She is now in her second year of working with me, and though there are yet many obstacles, she continues her yogic journey.

6. a PHASE I– therapeutic/free of pain

Mrs. Woolf's original goals in yoga were ‘getting the movement patterns etched’ into her brain and muscle memory. This refers to the yoga movements and asanas we did in class. She wanted to practice yoga for better strength, tone, stamina, flexibility and balance, and, wanted to lose some excess weight. She also strove towards being focused mentally

and spiritually, in the present; being present in her relationships. An important goal was to healthily heal the grief of losing her mate.

Ginna was curious about the yoga and the way she felt after our sessions. I could see that she was searching for something. She held her breath often, was frustrated, concerned over her cognitive capacities and fearful of her future. She did not reveal too much at first, but I put myself in her place and felt I intuited that this confusion could be frustrating and frightening.

She was very keen on moving toward tolerance, love, optimism, and believing in herself. I felt that moving toward such excellent positive values may have behind it the opposite unhealed value. Hence, my recommendations were exercises and visualizations of opening herself to grace, to love, to light; visualizing herself as an adult holding herself as a child and loving that child.

We would start out with Yoga Nidra, exhaling through the back of the head, the shoulder blades, the lower back, the back of the legs, until her body felt heavy, to move her into the stillness of the back body. We then scanned the body for tension, seeking to determine the quality of her own energy, putting her in touch with the more subtle body. She responded well to any exercises which focused her mind.

The repetition of these techniques with every meeting and class was to teach her body and mind how to release tension and become sensitive to her own energy. As she became more sensitive to her physical body, she would notice negative emotions arising. Still working with the breath, I had her breathe directly into her heart, inhaling light and moving it down to her pelvis, and exhaling the negative emotions.

She began to be able to identify many negative emotions and judgments she held, allowing them surface, and then practiced releasing them with the exhalations. Many times, she was unable to relax or to stop the mental gymnastics, and would at first become agitated, frustrated, or emotional, that she wasn't doing something 'right'. I gave her 'permission' to allow this confusion to be. Over a short time, she did learn the techniques, and on the occasion when the techniques did not relax her, she was able to observe the frustration instead of identify with it.

In asana work, she was given the Joint Freeing Series and many supine pelvic opening movements, working with the erector spinal extensors and flexors, hip flexors, extensors, adductors and abductors, and internal/external hip rotators, all done with slow, meditative breath awareness. She would also do a gentle supported backbend lying over a rolled mat under her shoulder blades. Finally, I also introduced her to Brahmari, (translated as the humming of the bee), so she could feel the vibrations in different parts of her body.

At first, she was guarded about sharing or divulging too much information about herself. But as her trust in me developed, and her yoga practice became a regular part of her life, something she scheduled into her days, Vata balancing was evident by her willingness to

have more intimacy with me, talking, sharing, expressing, her successes, frustrations, and emotions.

In summary, the emphasis in Phase I was on developing a relationship between us, breath awareness to cultivate sensitivity of the subtle body; meditation to practice awareness, tolerance and connection to something greater than herself; and asana to bring her focus into the physical body. Meditation cultivates awareness, perception, discrimination, connection, self-acceptance, self-love, and wisdom. The methods used in this phase were very much about balancing Vata.

Although Mrs. Woolf still experienced stiffness, she now had some tools with which to work through it and was able to get herself out of pain more quickly.

6b. PHASE II – stabilize situation and lifestyle change recommendations

Mrs. Woolf lives very much in her mind, analyzing, judging, intellectualizing. One of the approaches I took was to get her more into her physical body, sensitizing her to her musculature and how emotions felt in her body.

As a child, growing up in a strict Christian home, she was not allowed to dance. She always becomes very joyful in our yoga sessions when we head towards free movement, pelvis shaking, arms waving, and approach a hint of dancing.

Mrs. Woolf expressed a deep anger about her childhood, the death of her husband; the 'unfair' loss of the position she had worked so hard to attain as an attorney; and the anger at the Multiple Sclerosis which has slowly deteriorated her body.

Psychotherapy has taught her to "own" the negative emotions of rage, anger and hurt. My work with her has been to acknowledge those negative emotions, accept them, learn from them, and release them.

Though we worked on releasing some hurt, pain and anger, I felt that she continued to cling to that grief, which led me to suspect there was a secondary gain in holding on to this grief.

We discussed blame and responsibility. I asked her to write in a journal and investigate, "For what purpose is this condition/situation (MS, grief, anger, etc) in your life?" "What are you contributing through your conscious and unconscious choices to the situation in your life?"

She was very adamant as can be read in this following quote from her: "I don't think we are "given" our conditions to "teach" us things. MS has taught me that it is a crock, and I was a hell of a lot better off without it. It has taken much from me, "lessons" in patience and the "joys" of a slower pace be damned." I did not pursue any karmic discussions, as I am not qualified to do so.

Every session we practiced yoga nidra, JFS, supine pelvic and shoulder flexibility, as well as more challenging strength movements. In this phase we worked on strengthening her hip external rotators, psoas, tensor fascia lata, hip adductors and abductors, abdominal muscles, and some upper body strength. I would also play mid-eastern music and we would go towards a bit of belly dancing to free up the pelvis and leg muscles, and stimulate the 1st and 2nd chakras. During the restorative postures, I introduced the Yoni mudra to allow her to open herself energetically. Yoni mudra also helped her with focusing her breath and intention. We included Brahmari at the beginning or end of our session. This sound therapy helped to quiet the nervous system and break up energy 'knots'. I continued to support her emotions, and guided her towards affirmation of her innate goodness.

Again, I had her breathe in through her heart, filling her body with light. With every exhalation, she released the unnecessary negative emotions.

As stated above, Ginna tends to live in her mind. She is less visual, auditory or kinesthetic. She uses her intellect in most situations, seemingly to "protect" herself. However, this appears to leave her insensitive to her physical body.

In guided meditation, I mixed up her visual, auditory, kinesthetic and self-talk senses. I asked her to visualize herself standing on a beach, warm sun, fresh breeze, sound of birds, wind in the palm trees, feet sinking into wet sand. She then was able to look down and see the color of the sand, feel the water lapping at her feet. This was a big step for her to get out of the analyzing mind and feel free enough to experience her other senses. The result was that she accessed a deep relaxation and the usual analyzing, criticism and judgment stopped for rest of the session.

On another occasion, I had her visualize herself as a child, little Ginna, smiling in her belly. I had the adult Ginna hold little Ginna in her arms, reassuring her she was loved, wanted and perfect as she was. This assisted in validating her emotions, acknowledge the deep hurt and fear she experienced as a child, and allowed her to reaffirm her self-worth.

Ginna still experienced fatigue. However, she appeared to pace herself better and dipped her toe in the online dating game. Sometimes the summer heat kept her away from yoga class, and she expressed to me that she would have an occasional fit of anger. I felt in the description of the anger episode that though she did not avoid the anger, she was more able to observe what led up to her feelings and reactions instead of just remembering the aftermath of the explosion.

Also, during this time, she might have a sad emotional experience during our meetings, but more often was witty and very willing to try new things. Her sense of humor surfaced and she displayed sweetness, generosity and strength. A confidence about herself began to emerge. She also commented that she was able to experience tolerance: toward others, but especially, herself.

6. c PHASE III – maintenance of underlying issues at the root of the situation

In this phase, in conjunction with meditation, breath work, and asana, I used Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Time Line Therapy (see Appendix) to work on releasing the negative emotion of anger, and the limiting decision of “I am not good enough”. I hypothesized that the grief she experiences is from the loss of her own innocence, her trust in the people who were supposed to care for her, nurture her and love her as God made her.

As we went through her time line, sometimes instead of releasing the negative emotion, she would get absorbed in the memory as experience, beginning her judgment and analysis. After a third round, we made it to the end.

We ended our NLP work at a point where I felt she was not ready/prepared yet to release anger. I feel that there is a secondary gain in not letting go of this anger and hurt. To not want to let go of something which holds you back can be seen as almost a fear of success itself; or again, the limiting decision that one does not deserve success, or is not good enough, or worthy of, success, love and happiness. Anger can be used as a protective tool. Letting go of it, not having it available for use, would require that one become a totally different person, which can be daunting and frightening, as well.

I asked Ginna to consider what use the anger and hurt might be to her, but she did not share anything with me about this. Perhaps, she found no value to it, or perhaps, was unwilling, or unable, to consider why she would want to consciously hold on to the anger.

However, I believe the experience of this process did leave an imprint on her. I feel that she is at the doorway of transformation, so I continue to support and give her the space to experience and come to her own conclusions.

Next I taught Ginna Vipassana Meditation (see Appendix). I find it to be an excellent support to the above NLP and Time Line Therapy process. Vipassana Meditation's goals are MINDFULNESS and EQUANIMITY, awareness and relaxation. By labeling the physical sensations in her body and the mental process, she was able to keep track of her experience and observe herself. She was able to see the fluctuations of her emotions, and pain in her body, without attaching, judging or identifying with them.

This meditation develops a skillfulness in action which is the ability to greet life with mindfulness and equanimity. Mindfulness is keeping track of the different aspects of our experience. It is precision. Equanimity is a non-interference of the natural movements of the experience; a relaxation of the body, a dropping of judgments. It is an allowing, an openness, an acceptance, to the best of one's ability, to the feeling state. Mindfulness and equanimity both result in insight; understanding in a new way; the ability to let go, moment by moment.

In this phase, over the period of six months, I also introduced skin breathing, organ breathing, subtle Nadi Shodana (no hands), chakra bija sound meditation, and Metta meditation. (See Appendix)

All the asana and movement, as in the first and second phases, was about being sensitive, going inward, being mindful, increasing awareness and breath connection. We continued with the floor work, and now added longer held supported backbends to open the chest, bring more oxygen into the body, open the heart, increase circulation, release toxins and to cultivate heart qualities of self-love and self-healing. I added modified standing poses, using the wall and chair, to gain stability and strength. I used Dandasana, Janu Sirsanna,

and Marichyasana in modified forms, without folding forward, to strengthen the spinal muscles, lengthen the leg muscles and cultivate surrender. We even practiced the kinesiology of a handstand while sitting in a chair, with awareness of the upper body muscles, totally engaged, minus the weight bearing aspect.

I believe Ginna is much stronger now, mentally and physically. She has cut her twice-weekly visits to the therapist to one per week. This may be due to economic reasons, but she also felt it was co-incidental to her yoga sessions. Her diet is erratic. She doesn't like to cook. She eats few fresh vegetables, and mainly chooses frozen foods, eggs, yogurt, hamburger meat, fruit, or breads.

She gradually lost 25 pounds over the last year. As her weight came down, her feelings about herself became more positive. She dresses in much more feminine, figure-revealing clothing, accentuating her attractiveness. She is dating online again, and enjoys the prospect of meeting a good man. She works very well in class and in private session situations, but her formal practice is sparse outside of this. She has two dogs whom she cares for deeply and invests all her love in them. She still has the symptoms of MS, and there are good days and not so good days. But her attitude has shifted tremendously. In her own words:

"Positive changes: I don't think when we started that I had a strong feeling of being a needy person, but I must have had some sense of neediness, because now I'm aware of not feeling needy. At the beginning of my work with you, I questioned the emphasis on inwardness and it being a bit narcissistic. You said, "When one is able to get inside oneself, be more accepting and loving with oneself, then one is better able to be loving and giving with others". I think that has really been true for me, especially in one of my new friendships. I'm not sure I would have been capable of being a friend to this person before Yoga.

I have been feeling much better physically, with some temporary exceptions, over the past year or so. We could attribute this to the Yoga work, but we can't be sure. One thing I am sure about though, is that the Yoga has given me more positive feelings - just about being alive and involved with people, I guess. Sometimes I think I'm more "up" and relaxed than I've been in years, maybe ever.

(In contrast with a painful December, 2003), this year (2004) from around Thanksgiving through the beginning of the New Year, I became aware that my relationship with the past had changed. I wasn't grieving anymore. This past holiday season it was more like having reached the goal I set when we began: Letting the past go, while retaining all the value and joy it brought;

bringing the past into the present in a loving way, living in the present, happy to be going forward.

I'm more open to relationships/friendships and am more tolerant. You asked what I might have said differently about the question "Who Am I?" before starting Yoga. I think I could have said all the same things except I wouldn't have said that I am "learning to struggle less with life: That's a new experience for me that comes from my work with you".

When we see each other now, whether its been a challenging time or not, I only need say to her "Equanimity, Mrs. Woolf", and her whole heart shines through.

6.d SUMMARY OF YOGA PRACTICES USEFUL TO MS ongoing

1. PRANAYAMA

Deep focused exhalations through back of the body

Scanning and exhaling consciously

Vata balancing breath/abdominal breathing/diaphragmatic breath

Bastrika "ch" sound

Ujjayi

So Ham

Viloma I, II, III

Nadi Shodana

Organ breathing
Skin breathing
Prana mudras

2. SOUND THERAPY

Bhramari

Bija Chakra Sounds (See Appendix)

The 6 Healing Exhalations (see Appendix)

Prana Nadi Mudras with the sounds Aaaaaa Uuuuuu Mmmmm (See Appendix)

3. BANDHAS (See Appendix)

4. MUDRAS (See Appendix)

5. MEDITATION (See Appendix)

A. Self-scanning – for tension

B. Awareness - quality of own energy, intellectual, mental and emotional states

C. Vipassana Meditation – Awareness and observing self. Labeling physical sensation and mental process. Very useful in working with difficult emotions.

D. Guided Visualization

E. Metta Meditation

F. Planting a seed of gratitude in the heart

G. Smiling meditation – visualizing the organs smiling, and one smiling back at them.

6. ASANA

JFS, Modified asana. Basic movements. We can do the majority of the Pawanmuktasana /JFS in a chair. Then gradually, we to move to the floor. Some students learn to do the movements at home on a bed, as I am unable to take them from wheelchairs, or up and down from regular chairs, to the floor. I also teach a variety of chair positions which approximate yoga asana's muscle and joint movements. Thereafter, modified standing and sitting poses, with support of wall, chairs, or tables, are introduced as the student gains in strength, mobility and stability.

Also, very useful to the MS individual are aquatic exercise, pilates, and simple walking.

We all have stress coping mechanisms, some healthy, sometimes not. But what I stress to the student is to use their yoga tools to work out their stress, and include good sleep, a healthy diet, hydration, physical exercise, mind/body connection through meditation, prayer, seeking to know one self.

Most importantly, my work is to be a guide to the student, to look inward, to discover for himself, who he is, all the while, empowering him to realize that he is whole and perfect as he is.

This would also include Svadhyaya, which assists in balancing Vata; Tapas, which develops self-discipline and willpower; and Isvarapranidhana, a surrender, or devotion to

a higher power; also serving others selflessly. In my opinion, to be able to be of service is a blessing of the highest order.

The techniques described in this paper range from Classical Yoga to Tantric practices which I have been trained in, and experienced personally, over the last twelve years. They include several modern interpretations of ancient exercises, and also borrow from the Chinese healing system. They are, by no means, exhaustive.

7. Questions and Answers from yogaforums.com

Jan., 2002

Another client, almost 60ish, has MS, unstable walking, stiffness, balance issues, is a regular student in my MS yoga class, and does water exercise, shaking memory retention, lost her husband of 25 years ago about 2 years ago. In our first private session, she has stated she likes my integration of mental/spiritual/physical modes and wants to work toward mentally/spiritually to better focus on the present. She wants to start meeting men again, but is quite plagued with a severe grief. (She often cries in class with me).

My plan with her is to first use some NLP/Time Line Therapy to work on the negative emotions of anger, sadness, pain, guilt, fear, and grief. Then take her toward guided visualizations to scan for tensions, emotions, mental patterns which may create blockage. Bring this stuff to

the surface and work with the unconscious to consciously release the negative emotions. Next use basic pranayama, include the heart pranayama. Work with the hands on the ribcage for a more pitta type breathing for MS. Move toward a gratitude meditation. Ask her to start a journal. Finally the Gayatri Mantra to help her direct more energy inward and out. Am I anywhere near being on the right track????? Do you have changes, offerings, advice, etc???

Jan., 2002

I would not recommend pitta breathing for MS will tend to aggravate condition. it is a vata imbalance what is needed is ujjaye breath, yoga Nidra, JFS, restorative poses, etc. One client here has gotten a lot of mileage out of my yoga approach supplemented with bee venom therapy, having bees deliberately sting points of pain and acupuncture points. I can connect you to her if you wish.

Gayatri and other mantras can only be effective if you have done them consistently for over a year and also authorized by teacher to give them. If that is your background and practice then most definitely proceed. Emotions need support, validation and affirmation of her innate goodness all you can do to support that will be helpful. Do you do partner yoga in this group?. That can be helpful too with a sensitive partner.

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Neuro Linguistic Programming, Advanced NLP Practitioner Certification

Los Angeles Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society,
www.NationalMSSociety.org/cal

9. Appendix

PRANAYAMA – The Nature of Energy

The word pranayama is composed of the Sanskrit words “Prana”, variously translated as breath, life-force, energy, spirit, vitality, or electromagnetism. “Ayama” can be translated as stretch, extension, expansion, prolongation, restraint, or control. Pranayama can then be said to be the practice of controlling the breath, of regulating the inhalation, exhalation and retention of the breath.

Prana, however, is more than breath. It is the energy which courses through our bodies, allowing a human cell to grow into a foetus, as well the movement of a shooting star in the galaxy. It is what makes the heart beat, a plant flower, a child laugh, or a cancer cell

grow. Pranayama can also signify *directing* prana to a specific place in the body, and can also be likened to expanding or contracting one's electromagnetic energy field. Therefore, one could also say that pranayama means 'increasing energy in the body'.

Energy can be seen as a vibrational force which concentrates at different intensities. Thus an animate object, such as a person, and an inanimate object, such as a tree, are essentially the same. It is energy which binds the protons, electrons and neutrons within each individual atom. The difference is that inanimate matter is energy at a different rate of vibration than animate forms of life.

Through the practice of pranayama we are connecting our inner life-energy, or life-force, to the energy, or life-force, in our surroundings; the same energy in essence. We are stimulating the body's natural ability to replenish the energy depleted in daily life. By the use of specific techniques, we are creating and distributing energy throughout the body.

The life-energy, or prana, is that force which flows inside the eyes, the ears, the nose, the organs of excretion and reproduction, of digestion and absorption. It is that which energizes the heart and moves through the thousands of nerve branches in the body. And finally it is that energy which flows through the center of the spinal cord. Energy is neither good, nor bad. It simply is. Too much, too little can create imbalance.

This movement of the life-force in the body is also reflective of the state of the mind. As the quality of the state of mind affects the breath, so does the quality of the breath affect the mind.

A fairly regular body, exposed to the anxiety, tension and over-thinking of a distracted and cluttered mind, will also, with time, begin to distort the body's posture and/or functioning. If the mind is under strain, tension, or stress, this is reflected in the functioning and/or posture of the body, through poor circulation, blocked blood vessels, poorly functioning organs, or misalignment in the spine. Weakness, or susceptibility to disease, arises when any part of the system, mind or body, is deprived of energy.

A debilitating disease and its symptoms can create obvious physical difficulties, but also, less obvious mental difficulties, which can impair the body's ability to breathe, or oxygenate itself. For instance, a body which has molded itself to its wheelchair over time, has allowed the muscles of the abdomen and back to become slack and ineffective.

Thus, the spine, without the support of these crucial muscles, begins to round and collapse forward, closing the shoulders forward, compressing the chest, rib-cage and lungs, creating shallow and incorrect breathing, bringing less oxygen, less circulation, contributing to poorly functioning organs and glands, which in all can contribute to, or exacerbate, a poor or depressed state of mind. A poor state of mind then continues the cycle of surrender and despair, driving the physical body deeper into an unhealthy mode.

Poor breathing feeds physical and mental difficulties, and vice-versa.

Pranayama, quite practically, deepens and steadies the breathing, calms the brain, and soothes the nervous system by bringing more energy to the brain and spinal cord. We also use pranayama to remove blockages in the body, such as muscular tension created by weakness or even repression of emotions, as well as remove blockages in the mind and in the consciousness, such as fears and negative emotions, i.e. anger, grief.

By learning the art of breathing, the challenged student will have in his possession one of the most powerful tools for self-healing and realization. It is also my contention, that if the student can master the practice of observing and controlling the breath, he will have somewhat of a say in the direction his symptoms take. Correct breathing can also help with managing stress and the possible depression which can accompany a debilitating disease.

Awareness of the Breath

The first step in controlling the breath is to become aware of it, sensitive to its movements and blockages. The rhythms of breath and our awareness of them, expose the physical, emotional and spiritual state of the individual. As this practice of observing deepens, we gain the capacity to scan the body, to self-sense, and to access the “creative power” of nature to heal. We are able to open and create new pathways between the brain, the nervous system and the organism.

Becoming aware of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual state of one’s own organism allows us to move away from the fragmentation of the self. Free of fragmentation, the mind experiences the still, quiet silence of peace. It is in this peace that we find power, to control, to cope, to accept, to live day by day. By finding the silence within, the student is able to reconnect to the source of all energy, of which his own vital living force is a part.

In this integrated individual, perception is clear of what is NOW in the present moment. As we perceive clearly “what is”, we can move towards acceptance and understanding. This understanding then, has a healing effect on the physiology and psychology of the individual. With an active and vital inner life, a diseased, disabled, or physically challenged body can find freedom and joy within, and even move towards self-healing.

As the breath is quieted through slow, easy respiration, the fluctuations of the mind also quiet, sharpening the focus and concentration. Quietness of the mind allows a distance between the individual and the symptoms of the disease or problem he is facing, creating a perspective from which to reassess the situation. With a calm and centered mind, the student can deal better with the loss of confidence, self-esteem, fear, confusion, or grief at the diagnosis of the disease, or worsening of the symptoms.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the yoga student **MUST** learn to use the breath effectively. It is even more important than learning the physical position of any

particular posture, or asana, as once the breath is under control, the posture itself, will unfold from the body.

If yoga is awareness, then yoga, most importantly, is also awareness of the breath. Intimacy between the body and mind is developed through the breath

PRANAYAMA EXERCISES

I have placed the exercises in this specific order as once the body is able to ‘empty’ itself of tension, there is the possibility of more space, openness, and acceptance of positive and energizing qualities. I begin each session, in general, with steps 1,2 and 4. Thereafter, I include other exercises, according to what is needed.

1. Tension release – Three, deep focused exhalations out through the back of the body, at a) the sacrum, b) the kidneys, c) the shoulder blades and d) the back of the head.
2. Self-scanning the body for tension. Locate area of tension, place attention there and focus exhalation in that area. The effect is that tension is able to release in that area.
3. Breath Awareness – using the hands on abdomen, lower ribs, and upper ribs. At times, I will also have the student use the hands on the sacrum and lower back, on the back ribs and the back of the shoulders. One can also use one hand at the lower body to experience how far down the prana can be felt, while the other hand is used on the upper body to experience how high up the prana can be felt. It is as if one could feel the prana under the hands as ‘two shores’ breathing away from each other. (M. Stiles)
4. Abdominal breath – This is the type of breathing which activates the body’s natural relaxation response. The abdomen expands on the inhalation, while on the exhalation, it gently contracts. This breath balances VATA, the vayu whose ‘home’ is in the pelvis.
5. Bastrika – Forcing the exhale through the mouth in a “ch – ch – ch” sound. A full inhale and exhale is taken between each of three cycles to avoid dizziness. This exercise engages the abdomen, diaphragm, and intercostal muscles, and assists in clearing the lungs, while releasing excess tension.
6. Viloma I – We visualize the breath filling the torso, both front and back, in three parts: from the pubic bone to the navel, the navel to the nipple, and the nipple to the collarbones. This has the effect of deepening the inhalation, and revealing to the student the many places that prana can be felt.
7. So – ham/Ham’sa, and also Ujjayi breath – The attention is placed on the sound ‘ham’ (meaning ‘I’) on the inhalation, and ‘sa’ (meaning that’), on the exhalation. The sound of the breath creates a natural mantra “I am That” and is a reminder that our identity is the Infinite. Ujjayi breath is created by constricting the glottis at the back of the throat. Both can create one-pointedness, and soothe and quiet the nervous system.

8. Sitting Subtle Nadi Shodhana or using hands in Nadi Shodhana – This assists the student to become even more sensitive and aware of the energy in the body, and of course, in the yogic system, works on the subtle energy channels of the ida, pingala and susumna nadis.
9. Sitali pranayama – (Pronounced Shitali) - In sitting position, with head level, through open mouth, the lips form into the shape of an “O”. The tongue is pushed out and made to resemble the shape and function of a straw. The breath is drawn in through this opening, moistening it as it passes through the wet tongue. The mouth is closed and the exhale is released through the nose. Sitali can be done for 5-10 minutes. This pranayama cools the system.
9. Organ breathing – Attention and prana are directed to each of the major organs in the body. This has the effect of releasing negativity or toxins from these areas, and of enhancing the functioning of the organs.
10. Skin breathing – This is a sensitivity exercise which also allows the student to experience the natural expansion/contraction of the pranamayakosa.

MEDITATION

Meditation cultivates awareness, perception, discrimination, connection, self-acceptance, self-love, and wisdom.

It is my perception that the basis of all practice is a meditative state; a state of awareness. It is a state of connection, of internal and external states. It is a state of integration of all our parts, all the kosas, or sheaths, of the gross and subtle bodies. It is a state of connection/awareness to the breath and body moving as one. It happens when the conscious mind slows down and the unconscious mind becomes accessible. Finally, it is a state of connection to something greater than ourselves.

We can postulate that there are two wave forms in the universe, two molding forces, at the deep structure of the ordinary senses. 'I', the Seer, consists of subtle sensations and waves which are formed by the same fundamental waves of the universe. When we meditate upon and experience those universal wave forces, for a time, the "I" disappears, and one becomes those wave forces and un-becomes, or ceases to identify with, the products of those waves, which are time, self, space, and object.

We know our world through the five, and some say, six, senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, and the thinking mind. The senses feed the brain information. The filters in the individual consciousness formulate each individual's perception of his experience. Within this limited perception, the individual identifies with the products of the waves, i.e., time self, space, and thus forgets that he is actually the Infinite. The individual reacts towards or away, depending on desire or aversion, though all have their basis in ignorance. Suffering follows ignorance.

With microscopic attention, awareness and concentration, and meditation on the universal life force, we perceive the internal subjective world of the senses, thoughts and feelings. What is common in ordinary experience at every level, is that all is CHANGE AND MOTION. Even what appears as solid to the eye, is, at magnification, made of moving particles.

The common thread which runs through all of our senses is a vibratory quality which unifies mind and body. With attention, we can train ourselves to see, and experience, the expanding and contracting vibrations. We can move beyond our limited perception and become one with the source. As we experience fully, each moment, each wave, no residue of aversion or desire is left in the body; detachment, not indulgence, nor clinging, but choosing the middle path as we live in the world. Meeting each moment with equanimity, without judgment, relaxed and mindful, we can experience even the most challenging experiences without suffering. We perceive that all the universe is God consciousness.

Each time one moves into this state, the sense of self changes at a deep level. We are able to have a complete experience. By staying present in each moment, by 'tracking' (our physical and mental sensations), by experiencing each moment completely, we diminish suffering. This is skillful action.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras present the guidelines to attain the state of meditation. Patanjali explains in chapter I.2, Yogas Citta Vritti Nirodha, that yoga is the cessation or restriction of the fluctuations of the mind. Another rendering is "Yoga is experienced in that mind which has ceased to identify itself with its vacillating waves of perception" (M. Stiles). So, as we restrict these fluctuations, through the practice of yoga, we could say that the goal of meditation is to deconstruct the processes, or fluctuations, of the mind; to INVOLUTE back to the source.

Later in chapter II, in referring to the Eight Limbs of Yoga, it can be said that one starts with Dharana –focusing; moves on to Dhyana – concentration or one-pointedness; and

may arrive at Samadhi – absorption/when the Seer abides in himself. Patanjali states that Yoga is Samadhi and Samadhi is Yoga. The following sutras present some methods to arrive at the state of Samadhi, oneness:

I.13, 14, 15 Abhyasa and Vairagya (of the Eight Limbs)

I.23 Contemplation on Ishvara, purusha

I.28 Sound of AUM - the sound signifies Ishvara

I.29 One-pointedness – gaining stability in the citta – when meeting the world, prakriti, refine our attitudes – I.33 cultivate friendliness, kindness, happiness, equanimity

(Most methods are a variation of contemplating purusha and detaching from prakriti, which is very much a deconstruction of that which is ‘Seen’ to arrive at the one who sees.)

I.34 Or by the exhalation and retention of prana.

I.35 Or an activity arises towards an object which binds the mind to stability.

I.36 Or by sorrowless and illuminating (activity) – as I.35 binding to heart lotus, or as in I.37 Or citta has objects free of attachment (an enlightened one, saint, sage, etc.), I.39 Or by meditation as desired. Anything that helps you to be stable.

I.41 When the vrittis have decreased, the citta is transparent like a jewel, and is colored by the ‘grasper, the grasping and the grasped’. This is Samapatti/Samadhi. Lucidity, clarity, calmness, prajna (transcendental knowledge).

I.4 The Seer then abides in his own form.

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

I have combined many techniques to take the students into a deeper meditative state where they are able to connect with the energy of which their bodies, breath and minds are made. I have found the following techniques and exercises particularly successful in relaxing my students and allowing them to enter into a ‘witness’ state. Quite often there are insights, experiences and revelations which assist the students in making great advancement in their yoga practices as well as their relationship to themselves and others.

1. Self-scanning – With mindful attention, one scans the body for tension. The effect is that one can become aware of habitual patterns in ways of holding the body.

2. Awareness – Similar to scanning, the student now practices sensitivity to the quality of his own energy, intellectually, mentally and emotionally. This too, has the effect of being able to observe habitual patterns in the above, thus empowering one with the choice of changing, or remaining, in what may be a non-optimal condition or state.

3. Vipassana Meditation – This is the practice of awareness and observing the self. The specific technique involves labeling physical sensations and the mental process, using the labels local and global for physical sensations; talking or image for the mental process; finally, expanding or contracting to sense the body and mind as a field of energy. It is very useful in working with difficult emotions.

4. Guided Visualization:

A. Relaxation visualizations, being on a mountain, flowing with a river, floating on the ocean, lying on a beach.

B. Visualization of doorways in the heart and following them into the depth of your life force pulsation, the heart beat.

C. Visualization through the five kosas

D. Heart breathing – Inhale light, or a quality which is needed, exhale negative emotion.

E. Asking the heart what is needed and inhaling that quality.

F. Placing a seed of gratitude in the heart and nurturing it with attention.

5. Cultivating equanimity in Buddhism is non-interference with the natural flow of the senses. The body is ‘globally’ relaxed. There arises an equanimity of the mind – when there is no judging and an equanimity of the body – when the body is relaxed despite negative fluctuations.

6. Metta meditation – Loving Kindness Meditation

Start with yourself and repeat several times for about 3 to 5 minutes:

May I be safe

May I be healthy

May I be happy

May I live in peace

Then you start with someone you love, someone that gives you a warm feeling in your heart (for lack of humans, you could start with your dog). But let’s say I start with you:

May Mukunda be safe

May Mukunda be healthy

May Mukunda be happy
May Mukunda live in peace.

Then you proceed through people you like; then to people who are neutral to you; then to people who bother you the most, or with whom you have a difficult relationship (including dislike or 'hate'). (Hate is such a strong word and creates aversion, one of the five klesas from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, whose source is ignorance.)

**BANDHAS - Lock, stimulate, pressurize and reverse two main vayus,
Prana and Apana**

JALANDRA BANDHA

Locks Prana vayu (generally an upward impulse) and coaxes it to travel downward, attracted by the thermal force of Samana Vayu. Creates artificial pressure on vessels and nerves of the neck, downward onto carotids, both right and left. Jalandrabandha tunes these chemo-receptors and the medulla (brain stem) so blood pressure and respiration are kept in proper balance. (from Pranayama book, Kuvalayananda)

3x: Done on inhalation. Releases the throat chakra. Physically breaks tension in neck and shoulders so prana can flow towards 6th and 7th chakras.

UDDIYANA BANDHA

Anterior abdominal concavity raises intra-abdominal pressure, decreasing pulmonary/thoracic pressure. Massages internal organs, plus play of pressures helps suck up Apana Vayu, pulling downward Prana Vayu through now stimulated Samana Vayu.

3 x: For the beginning MS student, we practice Uddiyana Bandha lying down with bent knees. Lift the buttocks so that pubis and navel are on same level. On the exhale, take the navel to the lower back, then draw it, abdominal organs and diaphragm up towards heart. Hold for a few seconds. This prepares them for the full Uddiyana Bandha practice and also strengthens the deep multifidus muscles.

At later state, the student can perform the more traditional Uddiyana Bandha: Upper abdomen and organs up and back to spine with the exhale. Stimulates whole sympathetic nervous system which controls physical body. There is no emotional release without the physical body, as emotions express through physical body.

MULA BANDHA

Sphincter contracts, pelvic floor lifts, depresses downward moving Apana and forces it to travel upward to umbilical region. Mulabandha brings control over the Vayus, creating a pressurized receptacle for meeting of Prana and Apana Vayus, helps to 'kinetize serpent power'

3 x: On exhale, contract sphincter muscle, pull rectum and sexual organs up and toward the back. Works on the 1st and 2nd chakras. Also stimulates sexual and creative energy and release of energy at the base of the spine.

MUDRAS

Mudras are precise ways of holding the hands, fingers, tongue, eyes and/or body. The exact origin of mudras is unknown, however they are first mentioned in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, ca. 1350. But they are evident throughout the world. Religions use specific gestures, and hand positions are used extensively in Indian dance.

In the Eastern traditions the mudra is used to signify a gesture, a mystic position of the hands, a seal, or even a symbol. The different mudras are used for bringing deeper awareness and for channeling prana/energy to different parts of the torso. In some schools they are also used as healing tools, working in cases of heart troubles, diabetes,

urinary, sinus problems, etc.

Mudras are also meant to bring us toward a deeper meditative inquiry. They focus on the body's energetic forces, taking the breath and the mind to specific areas in a precise way. They act on the nervous system, and the psycho-physiological process in the body and mind. They act on the consciousness and the physical body.

Prana Nadi Mudras (chin, chin maya, adhi mudras) Energetic mudras channel energy and breath to lungs and torso Create the sound of A – U – M in the different positions.

(Chin mudra) - energy/prana to lower abdomen and back lower lobes of lungs.
Tip of thumb and forefinger to form circle, other fingers extended, palms down, place in groin. Aaaaaaaa

(Chin maya mudra) - middle chest and back.
Tip of thumb to tips of other four fingers, palms down, into the groin. Uuuuuu

(Adhi mudra) Upper chest and back, upper lobes of lungs Mmmm
Thumb in middle of palm, close fist around it. Fist down, into the groin.

(Adhi mudra) Entire torso, front, back, upper, middle and lower lobes of lungs.
Thumb in palm, fist closed around it, knuckles together, place on either side of navel and create the sound of Aaaaaa Uuuuu Mmmm.

Prana Mudra – Energy flows throughout and ‘charges’ the body's cellular batteries. Activates the root chakra, stimulates energy in pelvic floor, improves overall health and increases vitality, reduces fatigue, weakness, loss of energy and nervousness, improves vision (eye diseases). Good for life-threatening illnesses

On mental and emotional level, increase staying power and assertiveness, self-confidence, courage to start new things, strength to see things through. Clear eyes, clarity, clear mind.

Ring finger and little finger touch the thumb.

Vajroli Mudra – Tones vajra nadi that supplies the sexual organs with energy. Controls and transforms the sexual energy.

Any sitting pose, spine erect, hands on knees, eyes closed, body relaxed. Draw in the sexual organs (as if stopping flow of urine). Inner gaze in svadhithana (2nd chakra)

Viparita Karani - Increases the digestive fire. Promotes digestion and intestinal flow. Stimulates manipura (solar plexus) and vissudhi (throat) chakras.

Namaskar/Anjali Mudra – Opens heart chakra, relaxes respiratory center and promotes mediation and serenity, balance, harmony, silence, peace. “I bow to the divinity within you from the divinity within me”, seeing the divine within all creation. In India, a greeting of respect. A sign of reverence, gratitude. Literally, the coordination, harmonization and connecting of the right and left hemispheres of brain; a yogic process of unification.

Palms lightly together. Ball of energy radiating between hands.

Jnana mudras channel life force for meditative awareness. Have effect on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level. Blood to brain, memory retention, relieves insomnia, depression, high blood pressure, for concentration, meditation, strengthens nervous system.

It symbolizes the connected nature of human consciousness. The three extended fingers symbolize the three gunas which keep the micro/macrocosm in motion, Tamas (lethargy), Ragas (activity) and Sattwa (balance, harmony).

The thumb and the forefinger create the circle, depicting the goal of yoga, the individual self united with the Universal Self.

Yoni Mudra – The two index fingers are placed together, and the two thumbs are placed together. A downward facing triangle shape is created thus. This triangle shape is placed on the body and energy/breath/light are consciously drawn into that space by the practitioner.

SOUND THERAPY TECHNIQUES

1. BRAHMARI – creating the “mmmmm” sound, focusing alternately at the abdomen, heart and third eye. This is helpful in deepening the breath, opening the heart, and in breaking up knots in the energy centers.

2. BIJA CHAKRA SOUNDS

Focuses the attention inwards towards energy centers. Helps the student locate and use the breathing muscles to create stronger exhalations and sounds. Allows them to contemplate the psychology of the chakra centers.

We use the Bija Chakra sounds as breathing therapy and concentration exercises, as in trataka (internal gazing). We can channel the mind by auditory concentration (on a sound), directed towards a specific energy center. This is a form of meditational therapy for the purpose of changing patterns of mental habits which form the fabric of personality. The purpose is to integrate the various parts of us and eliminate fragmentation. We can then come to a realization that we are creatures of the earth breathed by a divine force.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| LAM | Meditation here results in solidity, earthiness, groundedness. Self-preservation, survival instincts, pathologically: fear of annihilation. |
| VAM | Reproductive glands. Integration of male/female energies. Biological creativity. Psychological sexual impulses. In yoga, this energy to be rechanneled towards higher centers for self-realization. |
| RAM | Solar Plexus, pancreas, adrenals (kidneys). Psychologically, to create a healthy ego, cooperative without authority issues, submission, competition or domination. |
| YAM | Thymus, heart, lungs. Immune system. Meditation here is for development of compassion, the first step towards higher consciousness; then assists in eliminating contaminants from lower charkas' energies and emotions. Integrates right and left, and top and bottom. Less fragmentation. |
| HAM | Thyroid, throat. Area of nurturing and being nurtured. Metabolism of food and oxygen. Through vibration/sound we create our world. Meditation here integrates the personality and expands the consciousness. With throat open, have the ability to receive grace from inner, unlimited source. |
| OM | 3 rd eye. Pituitary. Intuitive knowledge. Intuition and emotion flow together to become integrated. Meditation here allows separating out contaminants from pure experience. Integrates right side: Intuitive world and left side: judgment and discrimination. To meditate here, means moving beyond limitations of everyday material reality, time, space, causality. |
| Sahasrara | Distinction between self and the other. Integration is one of cosmic consciousness, feeling of connectedness. |

3. PRANA NADI MUDRAS with Sound of Aaaaaa Uuuuu Mmmm
(Described on page 38, Mudras)

4. THE SIX HEALING EXHALATIONS

This is an ancient Taoist breathing practice that uses the power of sound to help heal the organs of the body and transform the negative emotions associated with these organs.

Practiced daily, in order, at least three times. If you have a particular problem with a specific organ or emotion, repeat as much as you like. Any posture is fine. Whichever organ you are working on, sense you are inhaling energy directly into that organ. As you exhale with the sound, sense toxins or excess heat in the organ leaving your body with the exhale. Also can be practiced inaudibly, concentrating on the vibration of the sound inside the organ.

The six sounds are related to the major organ systems of the body and their associated energy channels.

1. “Sssssss” Acts on the *lungs and colon*, is related to the nose. Useful for physical problems such as *colds, coughs and congestion*; for emotional problems such as *grief and sadness*.
2. “Whooo” The sound you make when you blow out a candle, acts on the kidneys and bladder, is associated with the ears. Useful for increasing your overall vital energy, for problems such as *cold feet, dizziness, lack of sexual energy*; for emotional problems such as *fear*.
3. “Shhhh” Acts on the *liver and gall bladder*, is associated with the eyes. Useful for *eye problems, anorexia, and vertigo*; and for transforming the emotions of *anger and jealousy*.
4. “Haaa” Acts on the *heart and small intestine*, is associated with the tongue. Useful for *heart disease, insomnia, ulcerations of the tongue, and night sweats*; and for transforming emotions such as *hatred, arrogance and impatience*.
5. “Whoo”, guttural, back of the throat, acts on the *spleen and stomach*, is associated with the mouth. Useful for *digestive problems, mouth ulcerations, muscle atrophy, and menstrual disorders*; also useful for transforming *worry and anxiety*.
6. “Heee” hissed through the teeth, acts on the triple warmer, (the three breathing spaces). It is used to harmonize overall energy flow of the body, and is effect for sore throats, abdominal distention and insomnia.

CONCLUSION

Structural Yoga Therapy, muscle movement, joint movement, and yoga asana, in general, can make the body stronger, toned and more flexible. It can relax tension in the musculature, correct alignment, *allow* alignment, release tension and toxins, increase oxygen intake, and enhance function of the skeletal, muscular, circulatory, respiratory, digestive, eliminatory, endocrine, nervous, pranic and mental systems.

However, once MS has created the scars/lesions/sclerosis in certain parts of the spinal cord or brain, can yoga asana rehabilitate those parts of the body? (i.e., muscles, organ function, etc.). Can the body continue to serve as an electromagnetic conduit? Can the nerves which have been damaged, actually be repaired? Can the nerve continue, or

regain, sending impulses through the autonomic, sympathetic, and parasympathetic systems after the scars are formed?

Or does Structural Yoga Therapy affect the surrounding muscles to support the MS affected areas? Can Structural Yoga Therapy really reverse nerve damage? And how does working with the breath, or prana, enter into the therapy? Does breath work simply allow the nervous system to quiet and develop a better attitude in the mind? How can we use prana, the breath, and the mind to work on a deeper level with the sheaths which make up our organism?

These are the questions I asked as I progressed through my SYT training.

The conclusion of most medical specialists is that MS nerve damage cannot be reversed, as it is progressive and intermittent. Muscles atrophy when a nerve is damaged. Yet, a nerve can 'sprout out' new attachments and gain back some strength. The recruiting muscles will then all 'fire' from the same new attachments. Notwithstanding, fine motor movement is lost.

I have worked with people with Multiple Sclerosis for approximately 10 years, first observing, then assisting, then in my own classes. These are not vigorous yoga students. They come to yoga class once a week. They lead 'regular' lives, (as opposed to someone like me who is obsessed with yoga!). But something about doing what we do in our yoga class has led at least 80% of them to return. Perhaps, they want to take control, or assertive action, over their lives. Perhaps they have come to some point in their lives where they do not want a disease, or symptom of it, to dictate how they should live.

I believe it is the practice of experiencing the present that keeps them coming back. MS is such an unkind and unpredictable disease. Yoga is a support for them, a tool, and at least with those I've worked with over the years, it is very much about being in a safe and loving place; about being given permission and support to experience parts of oneself; about observing and discovering who one is. It's about learning to like oneself, and realizing one is responsible for one's actions. It's about making different choices. It's about discovering that one is more than just a body with MS, or a spinal curve, or an ego, an intellect, a personality, or emotions. It is my position that all of this can be accomplished by learning HOW TO BREATHE.

I have also heard that MS is a 'karmic' disease. There are some who work furiously at trying to 'change' their karma, and others who cannot fathom that their choices in life, and spiritual development, are connected. As stated earlier, I have no experience in this area, but I am very intrigued by the possibilities and intend to study this further.

I feel that illness, or injury, is the body's way of drawing the attention inward. I fancy myself a guide who assists the student to move inward and experience his own senses, 'sense-tizing' him to the texture and quality of the energy that makes up his organism. I guide him through the five sheaths, or kosas, inviting him to experience himself and dive deeper, coming to a place where there are no limitations.

I start with a great deal of breath awareness and then very small movements, guiding the student towards the subtle movement of his prana. I guide him towards visualizing himself standing on his hands by understanding what muscles are engaged. I invite the student to visualize himself as a mountain, and a river and the ocean.

The student leaves the class empowered. And this is the most important aspect of the teacher as guide, **THE STUDENT MUST LEAVE FEELING EMPOWERED**. Not feeling that something is wrong with him, that he is lacking something; that he needs YOU (the teacher) to be in balance, to feel whole, to be 'fixed'. The instructor must empower the student with the desire to know himself. For once this self-motivation is engaged, there are no limits.

The work I aspire to do is about creating a modern Western yoga practice based on the traditions of Yoga and Ayurveda: the practice of awareness, breath control, understanding the dynamics of movement, and the integration of body, mind, breath and spirit. They share similar goals: treating illness, dealing with mental and psychological disorders, lifestyle management, and cultivating sattwa, the higher quality which allows spiritual growth and understanding.

The practice helps students deal with stress, poor coping mechanisms being one of the main causes of many of the ills in our society. It helps deal with the lack of strength, mobility, flexibility and balance which result from many of these conditions. It assists in dealing with cognitive issues such as depression and disorientation, and also with the control, and even, the elimination of pain.

We begin the work by facing the limitations of the physical body, yet most of our challenges start in the mind. The practice of yoga generates an energy which allows us to open, to transform, while building a physical and psychological strength to assimilate and integrate this change into our lives. The expansion of consciousness which yoga affords leaves us stronger and more balanced to deal with whatever challenges life places before us.

By quieting the mind and relaxing the physical body, we are learning the tools of transformation, and are able to experience a moment of grace. We create an awareness that allows us to access our inner witness, the organic energy which is the soul, and are able to observe the movements of not only the self, but of the world around us.

By being conscious of the self, we can observe the causes and effects of our behaviour, and become aware of the emotional and mental patterns which bind us to behaviour, both positive and negative. Through discrimination and detachment, the work of Yoga is to eliminate the illusions of incorrect perception and bring clarity to the mind, strength to the body and freedom to the spirit, no matter what condition that mind, body or spirit are in.

We are able to effect change in ourselves, to create transformation, and finally, we are able to create a place of healing.

Kaivalya – aloneness, also translated as liberation, emancipation and freedom – is a state of pure awareness, ever-present, no longer obscured by the movements of the mind, intellect and ego. The transcendence of knowledge into this pure realm is attained through the lifting of ignorance and through the de-conditioning of consciousness as the mind moves away from matter, thus unveiling the power of awareness in its own form. This, finally, is the aim of Yoga.

Patanjali Yoga Sutras, IV.34

(Yoga Sutra interpreted by T. Urquiza)