

Structural yoga therapy

Structural yoga therapy is a yoga lesson tailored to individual needs. Its goal is to alleviate pain, stress and dis-ease. Yoga therapy uses yoga postures, breathing and relaxation techniques. Prior experience with yoga is helpful but not required.

Yoga therapy is a form of complementary health care and can relieve many chronic, psychosomatic and stress-related ailments. It can promote health of body, mind, and soul. Yoga therapy is usually given on an individual basis. Clients who practice regularly will benefit most.



Yoga therapy is effective

Yoga therapy is very effective for treating back pain. A USA study demonstrated that yoga therapy provides the most effective, long lasting improvement for back aches^{1,2}. Asthma, hyperventilation, high blood pressure and stress are other examples of ailments which may be alleviated by yoga therapy. Yoga therapy is not suited for acute conditions like accidents and infections.

Mukunda Stiles

Mukunda Stiles is the author of the books *Structural Yoga Therapy*³ and *Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy*⁴. He taught and certified me as a yoga therapist in 2007. The strength of Mukunda's method is its assessment. The assessment is based on a combination of ayurveda and physiotherapy tests (range of motion and muscle strength). Recommendations are made with two sound principles in mind: Adapt to the individual and teach only what you practice yourself. Look at body posture and investigate which muscles need toning, stretching or release. Then prescribe an individual yoga program selected from 21 joint freeing exercises, 24 basic asanas, 10 vinyasas, and 7 pranayamas.

Teach what is within you,
not as it applies to you, to yourself,
but as it applies to the other.

It is not that the personal must accommodate himself to yoga,
But rather that yoga must be tailored to suit each person⁵

¹ Sherman KJ, Cherkin DC, Erro J, Miglioretti DL, Deyo RA. *Comparing yoga, exercise, and a self-care book for chronic low back pain: a randomized, controlled trial*, Ann Intern Med. 2005 Dec 20;143(12):849-56

² Arthur Klein en David Sobel, *Backache Relief*, Times Books/Random House, New York, 1985, pp 79-81

³ Mukunda Stiles, *Structural Yoga Therapy: Adapting to the individual*, Samuel Weiser, Maine, 2000

⁴ Mukunda Stiles, *Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy*, Lotus Press, Twin Lakes, 2007

⁵ T. Krishnamacharya, quoted in *Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy*

Structural yoga therapy starts off with a one and a half hour interview and examination. The exam looks at posture, joint flexibility and muscle strength. This leads to an individual yoga program to be carried out at home. Advice on diet or lifestyle may be part of the program. The yoga program consists of hatha yoga components, such as the joint freeing exercises (pavanmuktasana), poses (asana), series (vinyasas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and relaxation (yoga nidra or meditation). The program is adapted to the needs of the individual. Prior experience of yoga is not required. The individual program will be monitored and adapted as time goes on. Generally, a significant improvement should be seen within two or three sessions.

Biography

Willem was born in The Netherlands but has lived in many other countries as well. He was trained as a chemical engineer and as a hatha yoga teacher (4 years, 600 contact hours). Willem finds his inspiration in Zen meditation and in classical yoga. He loves helping others to resolve their health issues with yoga