

# A Yogi, a Therapist & the Art of Mindful Meditation

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**CREATING  
CONNECTIONS**  
THE PATH TO WELLNESS

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A scenic landscape photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a calm lake reflects the surrounding scenery. The middle ground features a dense forest of evergreen trees, with patches of bright yellow wildflowers scattered throughout. In the background, majestic mountains with snow-dusted peaks rise against a clear blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

# Who Are We?

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# Why yoga and meditation?

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Grew out of personal desire to see these practices in drug and alcohol treatment setting.

- Yoga and meditation practice was often seen at private inpatient setting several years ago.
- Research done 5-6 years ago noticed a few outpatient programs had yoga and some form of meditation available.
- Why weren't these practices offered to a larger population and often a population that has never been exposed or cannot afford it.
- Began looking at research to support my wish/intention to utilize yoga and meditation in a addiction treatment setting as a complimentary therapy and not treatment.



# The evidence

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- Yoga has been suggested as a complimentary therapy in addiction treatment to enhance recovery and prevent relapse (Harris, 2015; Khanna & Greeson, 2013; Posadzki, Choi, Soo Lee, & Ernst, 2014; Sarkar & Mohit, 2016)
- Brain GABA levels increase after a session of yoga (Streeter, et al., 2007); Some researchers believe that one of the purposes that GABA serves is to control the fear or anxiety experienced when neurons are overexcited.
- Yoga helps with depression by lowering plasma-cortisol levels, and adrenocorticotrophic ACTH hormones (Cramer, Lauche, Langhorst, & Dobos, 2013)
- Yoga reduces stress hormone levels (Vedamurthachar, et al., 2006)
- There seems to be a correlation between yoga and the 12 Steps of recovery

# Yoga and the 12 Steps of Recovery and As Adjunct to Addiction Treatment

## 12 Steps

- Bill Wilson, the co founder of AA was a student of Eastern religions.
- He was also a follower of Carl Jung, another student of ancient philosophies.
- Yoga offers an end to suffering as does the 12 Steps of Recovery, if practiced.
- The practice of yoga is mostly connected to the 11<sup>th</sup> step: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

## Addiction Treatment

- Yoga and mindfulness teachings share belief in "mindful" awareness of experiences and emotions as they arise.
- Addictions are born as a result of "mindless" states such as escapist attitudes, automatic thinking, emotional reactivity and social isolation. (Surbhi et al., 2013)
- The practice of yoga and mindfulness can help steady attention, strengthen concentration, enhance emotional regulation, and facilitate physical and spiritual growth through self observation. (Surbhi, et al., 2013)

# Mindfulness Meditation

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From Refuge Recovery (Levine, 77, 78):

- Present-time awareness- the experience of knowing what is happening as it happens.
- Recovery depends on being present in mind and body.
- Mindfulness: non judgmental, investigative, kind and responsive awareness.
- Takes intentional training of the mind: mind is naturally scattered, swinging from present, past and future and fantasy.
- The Buddha called it “the monkey mind”- people in recovery are trying to train the monkey.
- Present time awareness is the key to recovery-it allows one to pay attention to and know when suffering is present, when craving has risen and when peace and contentment are being experienced.

# Mindfulness Meditation Cont...

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- In randomized controlled trial of mindfulness meditation (Hoge, 2013), findings suggest that mindfulness meditation training...can reduce anxiety symptoms in patients with generalized anxiety disorder.
- Another study concluded in its findings that mindfulness meditation training is relatively inexpensive and a low stigma treatment approach may decrease biological stress reactivity and improve resilience so stressors in patients with generalized anxiety disorder.
- Mindfulness Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE). (Garland, 2012).
- 10 session, group-based psychoeducational intervention aimed at disrupting cognitive, affective and physiological mechanisms implicated in alcohol dependence. (Garland et al, 2010)
- Includes mindful breathing, body scan, mindfulness of perception and sensations, mindful walking (Refuge Recovery Concept) and compassion meditation.
- Loving Kindness Meditation.....



# THANK YOU!

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