

Therapeutic Yoga Example Case Studies



Teacher Training

Yoga Club's Holistic Yoga Teacher Training

Therapeutic Yoga ~ Case Study Examples

Here are two examples of Case Studies. As you can see, they are a little different. Some clients will need a focus more on the structural assessment and applications. Others will need more focus on lifestyle and meditation. It really depends on your client's presenting status, what they want out of their yoga program and your mutual goals. We need to see that you have come up with a comprehensive treatment plan, addressing their needs and goals.

Case Study #1

History: XXX is a 54 year old male who came to yoga therapy to try and improve his lifestyle, decrease stress, increase flexibility, improve balance and lose weight. He had just returned from a retreat at Canyon Ranch where he had access to multiple therapies including yoga therapy, an exercise program, nutrition etc. which motivated him to come home and continue his path to wellness. He has a history of pain in the neck, low back and knees. When he was 26 years old, he .blew out. a disc, had two surgeries to address this issue. He states his back hurts when it gets tight. He recently had surgery to help repair his right meniscus and completed a physical therapy program. He also stated that he is interested in learning proper breathing techniques. He does mention that he wears orthotics which need replacing. He is very heavy. He is 6.5 inches tall.

Medication: BP medicine

Health Issues: high blood pressure, allergies and major surgeries (back and knee)

Overall Energy Level: 5-6 on a 1-10 scale.

Stress Level: high to off the chart

Stress Triggers: work, co-parent issues

Treatment plan incorporating all 8 steps:

8 Limb Wellness Plan:

- 1) **Mind step:** positive thinking patterns and affirmations: I would ask him to focus on only seeing the good things in his day- and to find 5 per day. I would go through examples with him initially so we could see how good comes from bad and then give him a string to wear around his wrist to remind him to only look for positive things in his day.
- 2) **Breathing/Pranayama:** Have him lay in supported open chest pose or supine with knees on a bolster to free the abdomen. Have him practice for 5 minutes belly breathing. Hand s on belly, feel breath expand into belly on inhalation and then relax away from hands on exhale. Then slowly increase breathing on a 1:1 ratio. Breathe in for 3 and breathe out for 3 - no holding. Work on lengthening that to maybe 5:5. Then slowly increase ratio to 1:2. So inhale for 3 and exhale for 6 - no holding. The longer your exhalation the more relaxed one becomes. Teach him

to be aware of his breath during the day, "You are how you breathe." Abdominal breath is most calming.

- 3) **Rest and Relaxation:** Yoga nidra. Have him lie on his side with bolsters or pillows so as not to hurt his back or knees. I would give him the Yoga Nidra Cd by Richard Miller to listen to. He would fill out the worksheet from Richard Miller's book. (as taken from structural assessment manual)
 - a) **Setting your Affirmation**
 - i) Write down a positive affirmation about yourself, another, or the world around you. Write it as a statement of fact.
 - b) **Manomaya Kosha**
 - i) Feelings: Choose two feelings and their opposites, for ex, light/heavy warm/cool
 - ii) Emotions: Choose two emotions and their opposites, for example, sad and happy, angry/calm
 - c) **Vijnamaya Kosha**
 - i) Imagery: Choose two images that engender ease and relaxation. Then choose their opposites. Ex beautiful mountain/erupting volcano
 - ii) Symbol: Choose two symbols that hold meaning for you, then choose their opposites, Ex: sun/moon/ friends/enemies
 - iii) Essential Qualities: Choose two essential qualities of Being and their opposites, for ex. Truth/untruth, Love/Hate
 - d) **Anadamaya Kosha**
 - i) Choose a memory that brings an embodiment of great joy or equanimity.
 - e) **Asmitamaya Kosha**
 - i) Choose an exploration of the ego-I identity Coming home to the self: ex: I have a body, but am not my body. I have emotions, but am not my emotions.
 - ii) Who is Aware: ex: Observe who is the observer?
 - iii) Self Identification: ex: Become the observer, be aware of thoughts or feelings etc... who is aware of these things..
 - iv) Just be
- 4) **Biomechanical Re-Education:** I would give him a therapy ball and have him use them to release knots in scapula area, pecs, (this will free up breathing muscles so he can breathe more deeply). I would also have him to some massage around his right knee to get rid of scar tissue. And have him use ball to release QL and also IT band release. Lastly have the balls under the occipital bones to relieve neck tension.
- 5) **Yoga Asana Routine:** As this client is new to yoga I would put him mainly thru a joint freeing series (by Mukunda) stiles to prepare his body – with variations as he is larger and has knee problems and as such may need to modify Hero pose with a blanket at back of knees. He needs to develop a good core as he is heavy and it is putting strain on his back, his quads and hips need to be strengthened to better support his knees and back needs to be strengthened and stretched from his surgeries. He would also need a blanket to give him more height in easy pose. **Note:** his tummy may be in the way for him to pull knees to chest to come into child pose.
 - a) I would also want him to have some cardio. So I would offer the following as well:
 - i) My Asanas would begin with a somatic breathing exercise which releases the diaphragm, to help him breathe more easily. This exercise also teaches a tubular core- this is a great somatic exercise as it releases neck tension as well. This is done in supine.

- ii) On back: Riding bicycle- for ab strength and hip flexors and passive hamstring stretch.
- iii) Moving Bridge: strengthen glutes, hamstrings, middle and lower traps and stretches hip flexors and pecs
- b) Restorative - Viparita Karini/Legs Up the Wall
- 6) **Daily Journal:** Client does daily journal to talk about how he feels before yoga and after or anything that comes up.
- 7) **Food Intake:** keep a general journal of what foods he eats – see if yoga practice is affecting nutrition and how much he eats.- nutrition advice is bets given to a nutritionist.
- 8) **Water Intake:** Keep in the general journal how much water / drinks he drinks. Has it changed?

Case Study #2

History: XXX has practiced yoga for seven years, practicing Bikram. Flow, detox and yin yoga 2-3 times per week. She also is a runner and has run for 30 years, just participating in a marathon. She states that she has knee problems possibly secondary to her tight hips. She also stated that sometimes her feet bother her when running, especially under the big toe mound. She has seen a chiropractor for the last year for tension and pain in her neck, upper back and shoulders. Recently she has had problems with tightness in her left shoulder and an ache in her right low back. She states that she works at a computer a good deal of the time and has noticed that she leans to the left at the desk and uses her right hand on the mouse.

Postural Assessment Findings

Alignment Dysfunction	Muscle Imbalances	Active Poses	Restorative Poses
Right Side Scoliosis	Perhaps functional due to computer work. Rotated posture Spine moves to right and rotates vertebrae Upper trap and mid scap muscles lengthened and weak pecs and obliques shortened. Forward hip lateral rotators long and weak QL short on opposite side normally and lengthened on right side Psoas, erectors, latissimus dorsi, abdominus obliques	Down dog to stretch backline- at wall Pyramid with table triangle head to knee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side bend over bolster to stretch tight side • Supported back bend • Legs up wall

Slight increased Lumbar lordosis	Lumbar paraspinals short because of tightness on that side from right side scoliosis. Short iliopsoas External obliques long	Cat pose with focus on lower back Spinal twist Spinal balance to strengthen obliques and create length in paraspinals Low boat to strengthen lower psoas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active single knee to chest Easy pose arms on chair
Abducted Scapula on Right		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forward triangle- lengthen left side tighten right side- focus on retracting scapula on right, Triangle with focus retracting scapula on right and activating serratus on left Eagle arms 	Half child pose with chair Floppy standing pose
Winging Scapula	Scapular humeral muscles short and weak Weak mid trap and rhomboids Tight pec, Anterior deltoid and SA	Cat, down dog Forearm side plank Bridge Cobra Cow face arms in hero-with strap	Supported shoulder stand Supported twist
Forward Shoulders	Upper trap ad mid scap lon/g weak tight pecs and obliques	Cobra Down dog camel	Supported twist Legs up the wall
Anterior Pelvic Tilt	Tight psoas	Lunge Boat pose	Supine legs on chair Supported child- focus on rounding low back
Supinated Feet	Stiff gastroc Stiff posterior tibialis	Balls sunder feet- to stretch fascia under feet- Hero pose – come onto balls of toes to stretch arch	Kneeling mountain

<u>Movement Assessment Findings</u>		<u>Movement Assessment Findings</u>	
Alignment Dysfunction	Muscle Imbalances	Active Poses	Restorative Poses
Shoulder Flexion <180	Tight scapulo humeral Tight lats Tight pecs	Small Ball rolling to release tight pecs Seated twist cobra	Supported camel Down dog to stretch lats with hands on chair
Excessive Scapular Abduction	Sa short, weak lower trap and long and weak, rhomboid long- Scapulo-humeral muscles short and stiff-	Balls under scapula to un stiffen Cobra, half locust, pose to shorten trap sit in hero pose-warrior2 arms, retract and depress scapula to align scapula on back and to lengthen. Triangle- emphasize length on left do left side 2 x- focus on rotating right side Half moon with block or chair- focus to lengthening tight side	Floppy standing forward bend Viparita karani, legs on chair
Semi Squat: Knees track Outward	Hip lateral rotators long and weak	Chair pose with block between thighs- don't go to low as knee is tender Bridge pose with block Goddess squat Pyramid pose with hands on wall	Supine twist, legs in eagle Legs up wall
Side Bending Limited to Left	Paraspinals opposite side stiff- Oblique tight	Massage QL with rubber balls to release QL and paraspinals Down dog to stretch back line- and even sides Triangle cobra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banansana- a laying down version of half moon. Works the spine in a lateral flexion (side bend) from the iliotibial (IT) band to the tops of the side rib cage- do this po Restorative side bend- on bolster- left side up se to the right

Alignment Dysfunction	Muscle Imbalances	Active Poses	Restorative Poses
Spinal Rotation Limited to Right	Abdominal and back extensors long	<p>Low lunge- with twist- stretches the pull of quads, and hip flexors and stretches QL- do right side 2 x for every one time on the left side</p> <p>Revolved triangle- modified with use of table. Stretch the left side – left foot forward</p> <p>Forward triangle with hands on wall- lengthen concave side and avoid stretching right side.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reclining twist-(away from rotated side) to left side- prop with bolsters under knees – lengthen obliques, QL, and disassociation of pelvic girdle from shoulder girdle. Supported child pose
TFL Test Positive bilaterally	TFL and glute med tight IT band tight	<p>Ball at greater trochanter and roll up and down to release IT band</p> <p>Abductor Lifts- stand one foot on block- let opposite hip shift to floor and lift back up.</p> <p>It band stretch at wall</p> <p>Bridge Lifts</p> <p>Cow face</p>	<p>* Supported Twist</p> <p>* Supported Pigeon</p>
Decreased hip Medial Rotation (internal rotation)	Lateral rotators short- glute med tight	<p>Windwhsield washer move- dynamic Lie on your back Separate your feet wider than hip width. Keep your left knee pointing up to the ceiling. Drop your right knee inward and toward the floor. Switch –</p> <p>Easy pose twist: do 2 x on tight side , so on left side for 1 time on right to increase stretch on concave side</p> <p>tree</p>	<p>-supported seated forward bend</p> <p>Supine supported revolved triangle</p>
Decreased Hip Lateral Rotation	<p>Medial rotators short- need to stretch these</p> <p>Tfl it band short- need to stretch to allow medial rotators to contract to allow for lateral rotation.</p>	<p>If medial hip rotators are tight, then they will impede lateral hip rotation because lateral hip rotation requires the medial hip rotators to stretch to allow the lateral hip rotators to contract and rotate the hip laterally. need to stretch adductors too – so can open up.</p> <p>Butterfly, - focus on symmetry as both</p>	<p>Wall hang</p> <p>Legs up wal</p>

	Long weak lateral rotators-strengthen	sides different straddle split Warrior 2 –press front knee toward wall, contract hip rotators. intense leg stretch- use wall for support-lengthen it band move from warrior 3 to half moon- blocks under her hands to support upper torso.	
Cow Pose: Lack of enough Thoracic extension	Stiff anterior muscles Weak rhomboids and Weak mid traps	Chest expansion- Bridge pose- elbows on floor palms facing each other-to stabilize shoulder blades since one wings and other abducted- strengthens mid traps and rhomboids Cobra Bow, Supported camel- no- knees?	Supine supported fish on bolster Supported chid
Cow Pose: Excessive Lumbar Extension	Lack of abdominal control Weak upper psoas Tight lower psoas	Focus in cat pose- rounding lower back not upper Do cow pose with ab control- don't let belly drop Stick pose Strengthen upper psoas- half boat flow Ab strengthen- forearm plank with bock Lower Psoas release - in supine, draw right leg to chest and feel at hip crease for psoas. left knee slightly bent. Slowly exhaling, let left flexed foot glide slowly to away without activating psoas. .	Floppy wide angle seated Viparita karini, legs on chair
Less than 180 Shoulder Flexion	Lats , pecs major and minor are short	In hero pose, With strap practice rotating arms overhead for external rotation of humerus- hands overhead Stretch chest: camel pose Stretch lats: spinal twist Warrior1	Supported shoulder stand On back , legs on bolster

Daily practice incorporating your findings and pose recommendations. Also include 1-2 breathing practices.

As her functional scoliosis is causing a rotation of her spine and a lateral curve. The focus is to “straighten her out” by strengthening the stretched side and stretching the tight side. Her scapula and Para spinals need stretching and strengthening as do her hips. Her abs need strengthening to support her spine and prevent further lumbar curve. Her 10 to 15 minute practice should incorporate breathing practices to stretch her intercostals as well.

Breath: Ujayi breath- she probably knows this breath as she has yoga experience- so review- good for her intercostals

Warm Up

- Moving bridge- arms along side ears with inhale and curl down one vertebra at a time on exhale, feeling contact points of floor. Simplified pelvic breath practice: Focus on pelvic floor on inhale –relax pelvic floor down. ON exhale, very gently draw pelvic floor toward head.
- Energy freeing

Active

- Half locust-left arm right leg lift and switch
- Low boat
- Lunge twist
- Pyramid at wall
- Supported Triangle to half moon. –use chair
- Seated twist-on chair- do concave side 2 x careful alignment

Restorative

- Supported forward bend
- Legs up the wall (on bolster)- breathing- arms in cactus pose to open and stretch pecs- and intercostals
- Breathing incorporated here: Breath into belly button –pause- then ribs-pause-then hold into- throat and release.

Savasana

- Shavasana- legs on bolster

Meditation: This client was not interested in doing a seated meditation practice. We discussed ways she could incorporate some stillness into her day with perhaps quiet time while driving to and from work instead of listening to the radio, taking some time in the am to do some journaling (mind dump) where she wrote down everything in her head before she started her day. She was open to these techniques and said she would like to try them.