

# YOGA

for individuals journeying through  
eating disorder recovery

written and developed for the  
[NORMAL In Schools](#) national nonprofit curriculum  
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# Yoga for ED Recovery

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOGA.

**“Every day, if you can enjoy one delicious moment, one beautiful moment, and one funny moment, you will soon recognize a meaningful life is no further away than a box of chocolates on your desk, the street musician on your walk to work, and a little heartwarming (if not sidesplitting) laughter.” ~David Romanelli, *Living the Moment – Getting to Ecstasy Through Wine Chocolate and Your Ipod Playlist***

Whether you are working on all 8 limbs of yoga, or just the physical practice of asana, yoga is a crucial stress management tool. It not only improves physical health, it enhances our emotional and spiritual health, as well. The breathing (pranayama) and meditation techniques have been medically proven to reduce stress, anxiety and improve cardiac health.

### **What Yoga Is Not.**

Yoga is NOT religion.

Yoga is NOT only a form of exercise.

Yoga is NOT only for vegans or vegetarians.

Yoga is NOT for people who are “limber” or “in shape”

Yoga is NOT a competitive sport

### **What Yoga Is.**

Yoga IS “to yoke” or “to unite”

Yoga unites breath to body to mind to spirit

Yoga IS the act of breathing

Yoga IS the practice of meditation

Yoga IS a physical, mental and spiritual practice

Yoga IS for everyone and anyone, no matter what their physical condition

Yoga IS a roadmap to your true self

Yoga Is a Way To Find Internal Stillness. Yoga can be the way you find true peace or stillness in your life. Imagine if you start each day from a place of being centered, still, calm and peaceful. Imagine the kinds of decisions you could make from this place. Imagine the way you might greet your neighbor or loved one. Imagine.

### **What Yoga Can Be**

Yoga Can Be Very Athletic. There are some forms of yoga that are highly athletic. Yoga classes like Ashtanga, Bikram, Power Yoga or Flow are more athletically challenging, but they are not the only kind of yoga. Make sure you know which type of yoga class you are taking before walking in the room. Always consult with your physician before taking a yoga class.

Yoga Can Be For Elderly, Patients in Recovery, Patients in Hospitals, Pregnant Women. We teach a more relaxing, therapeutic, still, mindful yoga to individuals who are elderly, physically injured, or who are pregnant or working through recovery. These yoga practices are more geared toward breathing techniques, relaxation and therapeutic styles of yoga but they are still “yoga” uniting body, mind and spirit.

Yoga Can Be the act of helping your neighbor. We call this “Kharma yoga.” You are “uniting” with other human beings through generosity and kindness.

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Yoga Can Be the balancing of sun and moon (or yin/yang) in our lives. This is called Hatha yoga which literally translates to mean “Ha” = Sun, “Tha = Moon” or balancing of sun and moon. Most yoga classes are called “Hatha.” There are literally hundreds of different kinds of Hatha classes. Some are: Ashtanga (very athletic yoga), Bikram (“hot room” which elevates your heart rate, so be sure to check with your doctor), Vinyasa or Flow (more athletic), Iyengar (using blocks and straps to help you learn the poses correctly and safely), and some classes are just called Hatha which usually means a more beginning or intermediate level yoga class.

**Be An Informed Yoga Student:** Today, anyone can be a yoga teacher. They are not always required to have credentials or licenses! Ideally teachers should be RYT and certified through the Yoga Alliance. Yoga can seriously injure you if you are not taught by a professional, registered yoga teacher. As with all things in life, know what you are getting into.

## NOTES FOR RYT AND OTHER INSTRUCTORS

The sample practices are designed for patients or individuals in recovery for eating disorders. Some of the shorter practices can also be administered by a non-yoga teacher (for example, a classroom teacher who is interested in trying yoga for the first time in her classroom).

### THINGS YOGA INSTRUCTORS SHOULD KNOW PRIOR TO TEACHING PARTICIPANTS SUFFERING FROM AN EATING DISORDER:

1. Please read the MYTH BUSTERS handout at the end of this packet to learn important facts about eating disorders. In general, eating disorders are serious and complicated medical, biological AND mental illnesses. Please do not try to provide counseling or clinical support to the patient and remember to focus only on meditation, yoga and mindfulness.
2. Participants who are currently in treatment for an eating disorder need medical clearance from their medical treatment team prior to participating in a yoga practice. They could be seriously at risk for cardiovascular or other serious biological complications.
3. Do not engage eating disordered patients in a yoga practice that is physically challenging. Instead, encourage a relaxed, meditation-based practice which enhances mindfulness. These are all things that the eating disorder participant will not likely WANT to do.
4. Patients suffering from an eating disorder are often faced with severe cardiovascular problems; therefore, please limit the forward folding in the class and avoid inversions (Legs-Up-The-Wall is okay).
5. “ED” is a commonly used term to refer to the eating disorder. The ED participant will WANT to be pushed, they will WANT to act out by over exercising and (for example) do push ups while they are supposed to be in a calming, relaxing pose. When you see a participant “pushing”

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themselves during the practice, gently remind them to follow your direction, listen to your voice, and stay with you at all times.

6. It is best to set up “rules” in advance of the ED yoga practice. I have found it helpful to hand the rules out to participants prior to class and ask them all to physically sign the “contract.” These rules might include:
  - a. Work in slow motion and try not to rush. Take your time! Relax!
  - b. Follow the instructor
  - c. Work only on the poses that are given by the instructor
  - d. If you feel faint, dizzy or short of breath, you will enter Child's Pose or notify the instructor immediately
  - e. Practice in silence, without speaking to your neighbor
  - f. Keep your focus within the four corners of your own yoga mat or space. In other words, this is a non-competitive, non-judgmental safe space. Any time you feel yourself trying to be competitive or perfect, simply acknowledge that feeling and let it pass.
  - g. Do your best to “go internal” and begin to experience the gift of inner peace.
  - h. Practice self-care throughout today's practice. If you can practice it on the yoga mat, you can practice it in your life!
7. Gently indicate and firmly re-iterate that anyone who does not follow the rules will be asked to leave. Please do not veer on this standard.
8. It will be helpful to offer verbal “reminders” throughout the practice, such as:
  - a. Acknowledge to students that external thoughts will enter their minds throughout the practice, but that they should simply acknowledge those external/critical thoughts and notice them from a place of mindfulness. Simply observe the thoughts. Don't try to push them away.
  - b. This is their sacred space and time. This is a safe space.
  - c. They are not alone. There are millions of individuals sharing this journey with them – especially today.
  - d. Send healing energy to another friend who is in need today.  
Dedicate this practice to NEDAwareness Week and the millions of others who are suffering, etc.
9. I have provided quotes at the end of this handout because it is particularly helpful to incorporate quotes or themes into the practice that are relevant to a patient with an eating disorder. I strongly encourage you to print out the quotes and actually hand one to each participant after class. If you choose to use your own quotes or readings, please avoid anything that highlights eating disorders, dieting, running, over-

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exercising, food, addiction or any other negative theme. The more helpful themes include:

- a. Those that reinforce the fact that we are perfect just as we are. We must love ourselves now. There is no need for perfectionism, etc.
  - b. Assertiveness is the goal, versus passive and aggressive interactions in life
  - c. Slowing down and being still are to be encouraged
  - d. It is okay to ask for what you need
  - e. It is okay to take time for yourself each day
10. It works beautifully to incorporate a writing or journaling component to practices with individuals who are in recovery. When you advertise your eating disorder practice, please indicate that (aside from a sticky-mat), individuals should bring a yoga journal and pen with them to the session. Encourage them to bring in a journal that speaks to their inner artist.

### SAMPLE ED YOGA PRACTICE FOR RYT YOGA INSTRUCTORS

I offer these practices along with a “script” that might be helpful when working with patients or individuals in recovery. Suggested dialogue is in quotations. Certainly feel free to modify as needed.

1. Please begin by handing out the **Rules of Class** (see #6 above) and asking each participant to sign and return them. After they have returned their “contract” please ...

2. Ask participants to take out their journal and **free write** for 5 minutes, continuously. “Please write without stopping, editing or revising your words. The words coming through your pen are a meditation we use to help remove the clutter of life. There are no right or wrong answers. Just write. Listen. Breathe. Flow your thoughts to your pen. Out of your mind and body.”

3. After the free writing session has passed, ask participants to lie on their backs, knees bent. **3 Part Breath**. “Relax there for a moment or two and just slow your breath down. Please make sure your chin is down slightly, back of your neck open. Relax your eye gaze. Relax your jaw, your muscles in your face. Focus only on breathing through your nose and travel the breath all the way down to your lower back. Then, allow the air to float back up in slow motion as it travels back out of the nose. Imagine the air is like a stream that continues past this room, outside of the building and beyond.” (allow them to repeat this for 3-5 breaths – as they are working, consider the following:)

“From this place of stillness, please bring to your mind someone you know – a friend or loved one – who might need a little extra help today. Think of the color blue starting in your heart. Radiate that color throughout your body and send it out to your friend. Take this moment of silence to send any message along with the healing energy toward your friend.” (please pause for 3-5 breaths)

4. **Gentle Imprinting**. “Bringing your awareness back inside this room, please bend your knees and keep your feet parallel, hip width apart on the floor. Simply imprint your lower back onto the floor as if there is ink from the back belly button to the tailbone. Imprint that ink onto your yoga mat like a fossil. Gently sustain the pose for 3-5 breaths (relaxing your jaw, eyes, glutes, shoulders) and then relax.” Please repeat this series 3-5 times encouraging relaxed, slow movement focusing on timing the body to the breath. As they are working, please consider reading this aloud:

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“Throughout your practice today, external thoughts may enter your mind. This is perfectly natural. Simply acknowledge those external/critical thoughts and notice them from a place of mindfulness. Observe the thoughts with non-judgment and non-fear and simply acknowledge that they exist. Ask those thoughts to leave you in peace for the next 60 minutes. Remember that this is your time. Your sacred space.”

**5. Imprinting to Two Legged Table.** “As you approach your next inhalation, begin by imprinting, then transition into Two Legged Table by pressing into your heels and lift your tailbone up slowly toward the ceiling. Working with your breath, lower each vertebra back onto the mat in slow motion and repeat by flowing your body with your breath. Please keep your chin down slightly, your breath flowing. As you inhale, you are lifting, as you exhale, lowering. Just flow your body with your breath and work in slow motion. Remember that your breath is your life force or prana. In yoga we try to never cut off the breath or life force, but flow with it. Just close your eyes and give yourself the gift of a full, slow motion breath today. See if you can get lost in the movement of your own breath.”

**4. Single knee stretch or "Wind Releasing Pose".** “Return your spine back to floor, knees bent. Extend your left foot straight out on the floor. Bend the right knee and gently hug it to your chest. Allow yourself to take in one full inhalation, one full exhalation. Chin down, eyes relaxed. Slowly lower the right foot to the floor. Bend the left knee, then hug to chest for 3-5 breaths. Allow your body to enjoy being breathed.”

**5. Supine Pigeon.** “Lifting the bottom of the left foot to the ceiling, cross the left ankle over the right knee. Gently lift the right knee toward your chest. Breathe slowly for 6-8 breaths. Keep your chin down, jaw relaxed. As they are in Supine Pigeon, consider reading this:

"If you could call it  
perfection  
What would it look like?  
How would you know it  
Feel it  
Be it

Wherever you are

**now**

Call it perfection  
And know  
That in this moment  
It is really enough"

~Leza Lowitz

**Supine Pigeon on Right Leg:** "Unwind the left leg slowly. Then lift the bottom of the right foot to the ceiling, cross the right leg over the left knee. Lift the left knee to chest and give a little pressure under the left knee -- 6-8 breaths. Relax. Breathe. Be."

6. **Easy Two-Legged Twist.** "Inhale both knees toward the ceiling, arms out to the sides and mindfully lower both knees to the right and take a look over the left shoulder with your nose. Long deep inhalation. Easy, slow motion exhale. Inhale the nose to the ceiling, then the left knee, then the right and mindfully lower both knees to the left and take a look over the right shoulder with your nose. Deep, easy breath all the way down to the small of the back. Easy, slow motion exhale. Continue rolling left and come up to **Table** position for:"

7. **Balancing Cat.**

8. **Dog / Cat.** (NOTE: Please do not call this COW/Cat! That is a negative trigger for ED patients!) I usually use language like "inhale up to a happy dog wagging its tail and as you exhale come into angry cat stretching between your shoulder blades."

9. **Child's pose.** As they are in Child's please read:

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“As you enter Child’s pose, remember that yoga is a practice. In this pose we are practicing relaxation, surrender which is something we rarely allow ourselves to do in real life. If we practice it here on the yoga mat, we can bring it to our real life as well. Scanning your body, ask yourself if there is any tension in your fingers, your wrists. Ask your shoulders if they are okay and if they aren’t, please take care of them by moving your fingers to your sides or behind your back. Is there anything stressful or tense in your neck, your jaw, your lower back? If so just ask your body to let it go. As you focus on your breath, I’d like to read this quotation from Jon Kabat Zin’s *Wherever You Go, There You Are*:

Everything we are in contact with connects us to the whole world in each moment. Things and other people, places and circumstances are only here temporarily. Now is everything.

It is only by being fully in this moment that any future moment might be one of greater understanding, clarity, and kindness, one less dominated by fear or hurt and more by dignity and acceptance. Only what happens now happens later.”

**10. Dynamic Flow: Baby Cobra into Child's.** “Gently lower all the way down to a prone position. Thumbs are at your chest, tops of your feet are touching the floor. Gently draw your tailbone forward first, then gently inhale up to Baby Cobra. As you exhale, press into your palms and come back to Child's Pose.”

Allow them to repeat this series for at least 3 cycles.

In the last **Child’s Pose**, please ask them to relax, breathe, let go and read the following:

yoga  
is a way of moving  
into stillness in order to  
experience  
the  
truth  
of who you are . . .

*~Eric Schiffmann*

11. Slowly begin to stand by looking up toward your fingers. Slowly walk your right foot up in between your hands, then the left. Resting your elbows on your knees, slowly straighten and bend the knees, remembering to relax the back of the neck and jaw. Continue straightening and bending the knees as you time your movement to your breath. Inhale, straighten. Exhale, bend. After a few breaths, bend the knees, press down through the heels and

12. Inhale arms up above head to **Upward Facing Hands**. As you exhale, bend the knees and lower the palms through heart center, resting the elbows on the knees. Straighten and bend the knees a few times, then repeat again.

13. **Warrior II. Triangle**. Repeat on each side.

14. **Tree Pose**. Focus here is on balancing right and left mind, but also to teach us self-discipline: "dristi helps teach us self-discipline. It encourages our mind to focus on only one thing, when the mind wants to focus on so many things. With gratitude, kindness, encourage your mind to embrace self-discipline in this moment. Right now. Find your dristi. Relax your eye gaze. Relax your jaw. Breathe slowly and easily in tree..." Repeat the pose on each side.

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15. **Journal.** After Tree Pose, please ask the participants to return to their journal to free write for another 10 minutes. Give them a word: balance or self-discipline. Allow them to write and flow.

When they are finished writing:

16. Begin in **Mountain Pose** and inhale arms up above head to **Upward Facing Hands**. As you exhale, bend the knees and lower the palms through heart center, resting the elbows on the knees. Straighten and bend the knees a few times, then repeat again.

17. **Eagle Pose.** Repeat on both sides.

18. Return to **Mountain Pose** and inhale arms up above head to **Upward Facing Hands**. As you exhale, bend the knees and lower the palms through heart center, resting the elbows on the knees. Straighten and bend the knees a few times, then repeat again.

19. Lower down to a **squatting** position to stretch the toes and ankles. Bring the toes up to a forced arch, then gently flex the heel to stretch the calves. Repeat two times.

20. **Seated Twist.** Work both sides emphasizing working slowly. Isolating the three parts of the spine slowly as you twist, rather than rushing to the twist, etc.

21. **Up Boat** (or a modification)

22. **Windshield Wipers** (feet are as wide as the mat, knees are bent, slowly float both knees to the left side, stretch the abs and release the lower back, then float the knees to the ceiling and exhale to the right, repeat two times.)

23. **Legs Up the Wall.**

“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.”

~Anais Nin

24. **Happy Baby.** Remind them that they are stretching both sides of the lower back at the same time. Encourage them to keep letting go. Relaxing the jaw, the eyes. Breath is deep, etc.

25. **Savasana** or Relaxation Pose. Please emphasize during this pose:

“The goal of this pose is to remain completely still in body, mind and spirit. It is during this pose that all of the benefits of yoga come

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together on the molecular level. This pose promotes health for your parasympathetic nervous system which helps calm your entire being."

The participants will need to be walked through Savasana and may have a great deal of difficulty sitting through this pose. Please ask them to create then release tension in every part of their body from their feet to their head. Walk them through a meditation (Mountain Meditation) as they rest.

As they come out of Savasana, please encourage them to stay internal. To work in slow motion as they roll to the right side and slowly come up to an easy seated position.

**26. Re-Centering.** In closing, please re-center the participants from an easy-seated position. Draw their attention to the stillness and peace. Remind them that this is their natural state and that it is always inside of them.

**27. Journaling.** From this place of stillness, ask them to take out their journal one last time and free write for ten more minutes. Encourage them to write freely without editing or revising. Flow their thoughts and experiences onto the page.

**28. Closing quotation.** Please consider printing out a closing quotation (*see the back of this packet*) and reading it out loud. Hand out one quotation to each participant and ask them to put it in plain sight.

THANK YOU for sharing your incredible light.

"You are a song. A wished-for song."  
~Rumi

Namasté

### Other Yoga Practices

#### SAMPLE 15 MINUTE YOGA PRACTICE

**Beginning “yoga” for all students – at any age.** This work can be done with students in a classroom setting or in a yoga studio. It is ideal for individuals working through recovery and is a simple illustration of the peace and centering that yoga and mindfulness can bring to any human being.

***Please Note:** For those who have never taught a yoga class or practice, please try to bring your students into a peaceful, serene environment before beginning the practice. Perhaps play some tranquil music in the background (Reiki, relaxation, classical piano, violin or trumpet are all very comforting and aid in the relaxation process). Try to dim the lights or maybe light a few candles and speak in a tone that is calming, grounding and peaceful. Please do not make jokes with your students or encourage them to speak during the practice. The goal is for them to go “internal” and to perhaps learn self-discipline in the process. While it is best that yoga is taught by a professional, the below practices are gentle enough to be taught by anyone.*

#### WHAT I WANT MEDITATION

*The point of this exercise is to teach individuals how their ambitions, desires and needs change the more relaxed and centered they become. Students will need a private yoga journal, a pen and a comfortable place to sit (preferably on a yoga mat).*

Begin your yoga practice by setting out your yoga mat in a peaceful, clean setting. You will need your yoga journal and pen or pencil nearby. Sitting on your mat in an easy position (“cross-legged” or “Indian” style), focus on your breath momentarily. Just embrace the potential to have a genuine experience today, in this moment. Throughout the course of this yoga practice external thoughts will enter your mind. Please know that these thoughts are natural. Simply acknowledge that these thoughts exist and ask them to leave you in peace as you work on your yoga for the next fifteen or twenty minutes.

After taking in several relaxed breaths, begin free writing for ten minutes into your yoga journal about the question or phrase “What Do I Want”? Allow your mind to run free as you write nonstop and keep your focus on answering the mantra “What do I want?”

Once the free writing exercise is finished, set your journal aside and return to an easy seated position with your palms together at heart center.

Feel your heart beat on the other side of your thumbs.

As you sit in this easy position, please consider the following quotation from Jon Kabat Zin’s *Wherever You Go, There You Are*

“Interconnectedness: What are events that have happened in the last week or month that you could envision being interconnected to each other. Perhaps you were two minutes late starting your car one morning, then you noticed on the freeway you nearly missed a car accident by that same amount of time. Everything is related to everything else. What is more, everything is in flux. Stars are born, go through stages, and die. Planets also have a rhythm of formation and ultimate demise. Everything we are in contact with connects us to the whole world in each moment. Things and

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other people, places and circumstances are only here temporarily. Now is everything.

It is only by being fully in this moment that any future moment might be one of greater understanding, clarity, and kindness, one less dominated by fear or hurt and more by dignity and acceptance. Only what happens now happens later."

The way we connect to "now" is through our breath.

We will now practice mindful / Samavritti ("sa-ma-VREE-tee) breathing or "equal part breath". Begin by simply noticing where your breath is right now in this moment. As you focus on your breathing, try to match the amount of time or space it takes to inhale, to the amount of time or space it takes to exhale. You can do this by counting to 4 or 5 or just by feeling how much time or space it takes to breathe in and breathe out. Samavritti means "equal part breath" – matching the time or space it takes to breathe in, to the amount of time or space it takes to breathe out. As you work on your Samavritti, notice the moment that exists before you breathe in and the moment that exists before you breathe out. Some say that this is the greatest place of peace that exists in our bodies – the moment before you inhale and the moment before you exhale. Without holding or stopping your breathing, simply notice that this place exists inside of you.

Please now return to your yoga journal (change positions, if your legs are uncomfortable) and journal for five continuous moments about the idea of "balance" in your life. Where do you find you are "in balance" in your life? Where are you a little out of balance?

Please put your yoga journal to the side and sit in an easy seated position with your palms face down on your knees just to symbolize calm and peaceful energy. Imagine drawing one molecule of oxygen in through your nose and imagine it traveling all the way down to the base of your spine. Allow that oxygen molecule to float back out of your nose as it floats back up past your ribs, past your collar bone and beyond.

Return to that image of interconnectedness – the idea that you are an important part of the entire universe. That your being on this planet is no accident. You are here and you deserve to live a life of peace, of happiness, of wholeness. You deserve to feel at home wherever you go.

Now please journal one last time about what you want in your life. Set an intention for yourself from this place of internal groundedness and centeredness and please write about it in your journal for the next five minutes.

**Discussion for teachers:** The goal in the "What Do I Want" exercise is to illustrate the differences we feel inside when we first sit down to do this exercise versus the end of the exercise when there is greater relaxation. Are there differences in what a student wants or desires when they are in a more relaxed state of mind? Ask students to discuss those similarities and differences in their journal. Discuss how students should always be in a state of clarity, peace, stillness when they make their life decisions and important choices for themselves.

### SAMPLE 30 MINUTE PARTNER YOGA PRACTICE

*This practice is IDEAL for Mothers and Daughters in recovery for eating disorders, but can be used between any two individuals in a classroom or yoga setting.*

#### *Instructions for Teachers*

Consider embarking on a special fifteen minute journey with your students – preferably the first part of the day, if time and circumstance allow. Ideally, a practice like this should be done every morning, but obviously time doesn't always allow.

If you decide to offer this practice to your students, please print out the next two pages and give a copy to every student. You can either guide them through the instructions on the next page as they sit in their desks, or you can ask them to read to each other and move around the room, as is scripted. Ideally if they are doing the practice with each other, they should only read ahead **IN THE MOMENT**. In other words, the act of turning the next page and beginning the practice is – in itself – an act of practicing yoga and mindfulness.

To help you navigate through the attached practice, there are two kinds of text: *italic* and **bold**. The text written in bold is scripted text. When either student reads the bold text aloud, they should also try to “do” what the text is saying – in other words, both students should stay in the practice from the moment they begin. The italic text is instructions to the students – it can be read in silence and is simply there to guide them. A general note: if it is possible, try to ask the students to speak slowly and calmly to each other. This will help a lot.

When you are ready to begin the journey, please encourage the students to take their time and work slowly through the practice. They should work as quietly and peacefully as they can. Ideally, they should be in separate areas of the room – or even outside so that each person can read aloud and not be distracted by other groups in the room. Please ask each student to decide who is “A” and who is “B.” Hand them the attached yoga practice, and side-coach throughout as giggling may occur due to the intimacy of simply breathing and being still. If you want to try out the practice with a partner first, that is great, too. At the end of the practice, I have included two quotes that the participants read to each other. Ideally, they should actually hand each other these quotes so that each can put the quote somewhere as a daily reminder of this practice. I have included a template at the back of this curriculum, so the quotes can be printed out on postcard sized stock.

## THIRTY MINUTE PARTNER YOGA PRACTICE

### *The Practice*

*A please read the following instructions aloud to B:*

*A (reading aloud to B):*

The Sanskrit term *yoga* literally means “to unite” and refers to uniting our minds with our bodies and our spirits. Our process of uniting together in this moment is also echoed here. The practice of yoga can be replicated any day of our life no matter where we are or how much time we have.

Let’s find our own space that is relatively uncluttered. This space is preferably quiet and can be either indoors or outside. We can sit on yoga mats, pillows, blankets – or simply on the floor or grass. If we haven’t already done so, let’s now journey to our “yoga” place together slowly, in a state of gratitude, mindfulness and ease.

In the next moment we will refrain from speaking to each other and simply listen to the silence as we walk to the “yoga” space. Once we arrive at our yoga space, we will sit in an easy seated position facing back-to-back. Once seated, we will pause for a moment and simply enjoy the stillness together.

*B (reading aloud to A):*

As we now get settled in our easy seated position, we should know that all kinds of external thoughts will attempt to come into our minds. This is completely natural. We will just acknowledge the external thoughts and ask them to leave us in peace for the next fifteen minutes as we practice together... these external thoughts are a metaphor for external life. The external clutter will always be there. We can always choose when and how we address it... individually or together.

*(please now take two or three breaths together as you sit back-to-back)*

*A (reading aloud to B):*

Take your time finding stillness. Allow your body to settle, and ask any tension or stress to leave your body. Think about the area behind your toes and ask any

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tension that is living there to leave. *(pause)* See if there is anything stressful behind your knees and ask it to leave your body. *(pause)* Keep your chin down slightly in order to keep your neck long and open. Your jaw is relaxed. Now in this moment, allow yourself the gift of breathing slowly and effortlessly in this moment. Taking your time, working in slow motion, feel your breath as you breathe in through your nose. Float one molecule of oxygen through your nose and follow it as it travels down past your collar bone, past each and every rib all the way to the small of your back. *(pause)* When you inhale you are breathing in potential, possibility, life, optimism. Take your time and experience the pause that exists after you inhale. Simply notice and observe this peaceful place within you. Without judgment, working from a child's mind – a state of inquiry – in slow motion follow your breath back out of your body as you exhale – float the air with gratitude – past your ribs, past your collar bone and allow it to travel out your nose. Imagine the air continuing outside of you -- past us -- all the way outside of your body and beyond. When you exhale you are taking away anything stressful or painful, paving the way for new opportunity to fill the cells of your body. Allow your body to inhale slowly, effortlessly, knowing there is absolutely nowhere else we need to be in this moment. Enjoy the gift that is this shared breath between us.

*Stay in this place together for three or four deep breaths. Just feel each other's backs breathing. Explore the possibility of breathing together. Know that this is a symbol of your support for each other as a friend or as a member of a community. You "have each other's back" in this moment. In yoga, we say that anything we can practice on the yoga mat, can be fully realized in life.*

*After a moment, B please read the following aloud to A while both of you remain in an easy seated position, back-to-back:*

**B** *(reading aloud to A):*

**As you focus on your breathing, I want to share something with you: In yoga, the art of breathing is called "prah-na-YAma" which means "life-force-lengthening." Breathing itself is an act of yoga – uniting our bodies, minds and spirits within ourselves and also uniting us together in this moment as human beings. Even as we actively practice something as simple as breathing, we are practicing mindfulness. We are uniting. In almost every language the translation for the**

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word "spirit" means "to breathe." In yogic traditions, therefore, the act of breathing is a way to connect us to the breath within the breath – or spirit. This can be whatever the word means to you and doesn't necessarily mean anything religious. For the next moment, then, let's remain sitting back-to-back and simply contemplate the concept of the breath – or life force -- within us.

*(pause)*

*After one or two breaths and a moment or two of stillness, A, would you please read the following aloud to B. Remember to try to emulate the work as you read aloud:*

**B** *(reading aloud to A):*

**I'd like to share this quote from Jon Kabat Zin's *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, "When we are in touch with internal stillness, we are whole, we feel at one with everything. When we feel at one with everything, we feel whole ourselves – a state of interconnectedness that brings a deep knowledge of belonging, a sense of being at home wherever we are."**

*From this place of internal peace and tranquility – from this 'home' within yourselves, please take this very important moment to close your eyes and set an intention – a goal for yourself for this day. With your next inhalation and exhalation, seal that intention inside your bodies. Slowly open your eyes and return to your regular breathing.*

*Yoga teaches us to clear out the chaos and clutter from life long enough to be able to hear truth – a conscious stillness and peace that drives life's decisions and choices.*

**B** *(reading aloud to A):*

**Eckhart Tolle in his book *A New Earth* talks about the importance of becoming conscious of stillness whenever we encounter it in our lives because "we are never more essentially, more deeply, ourselves than when we are still."**

*Let's highlight what you have done in order to allow this yoga to happen today: you are operating from a Present state of mind – a place of stillness where you hear your own true voice – you have created some rituals and you are speaking to each other calmly and from a place of ease and relaxation.*

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*You can find small ways to incorporate these priorities into your life as often as you can despite life's challenges. Find ways to slow life down and live in a Present state of mind as you journey through every degree of life's stillness remembering that even in the most challenging moments of chaos or business there exists peace.*

*You have everything you need to endure life's journey right now in this moment. This stillness is innately a part of you. Stillness and peace can be achieved even in the most difficult or challenging moments by actively practicing a simple "yoga" for yourself by uniting breath, body and mindfulness.*

*B, please read the below quotation aloud to A. Ideally, you should each write these quotes down afterwards and keep them posted somewhere as a reminder of this yoga practice today.*

**yoga**  
is a way of moving  
into stillness in order **to**  
**experience**  
**the**  
**truth**  
of who you are . . .

*~Eric Schiffmann*

*A, please read the below quotation aloud to B. Ideally, you should each write these quotes down afterwards and keep them posted somewhere as a reminder of this yoga practice today.*

"If you could call it  
perfection  
What would it look like?  
How would you know it  
Feel it  
Be it

Wherever you are

**now**

Call it perfection  
And know  
That in this moment  
It is really enough"

*~Leza Lowitz*

*Please work individually, now, and place your palms together at your own heart center and simply feel your own heart beat on the other side of your thumbs. When you are ready to "thank" your partner for this practice, speak the word "Namasté" ("nah-mah-STAY") which in Sanskrit means "the light or spirit in you honors the light or spirit in me."*

*This concludes your practice.*

*Namasté*

### **SAMPLE OUTDOOR YOGA PRACTICE**

This practice should be led outdoors. Instructors should outline the boundaries of the space and location prior to starting the practice.

#### **WALKING YOGA**

Begin by sitting in an easy position on the ground or yoga mat. Focus your mind on your breath. See how slowly you can draw in one breath through your nose and travel it down to the small of your back. As you exhale out of the nose, see if you can slow down time by allowing the air to simply float back out of your body as slowly as you can. Allow external thoughts to come and go and proceed in a state of inquiry throughout this exercise. Concentrate only on the following sheet.

*(The below should be distributed as a handout by Leader)*

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### WALKING YOGA

Please follow along and commit to participating in EACH of the below stages with your entire heart and mind. I encourage you not to speak or address anyone throughout this meditation. Stay inside yourself – you will learn so much!!! Follow the instructions as best you can and remain mindful, present and open until Leader resumes speaking with the entire group.

1. Let's start off by getting up and walking away from everyone else in this group. Yes, there will be moments where you are thinking "is everyone else REALLY going to do this, now?" Yes. We are all doing this together – now. No one is watching or judging. If you need to look around just to make sure you aren't the only one, you may.

2. Keeping your eyes and mind focused on this paper, begin walking in any direction – look around at the trees, the ground, the sky, the buildings. Go wherever you want to go within a 2 block radius of our location. This is your time and space. Make a mental note of where your mind is right now (are you having trouble concentrating (that's okay!!)) and where is your breath in your body?

3. Look down and notice the way your feet make contact with the earth. Is your heel touching the ground first? What about your toes? What does the earth feel like? What parts of your feet touch the ground first, second, third? Really study the way your feet experience the earth. Try to memorize what it feels like.

4. Starting with your feet, try to relax your feet as much as possible as you walk. Relax your knees (really do it, don't just read about doing it!!!), relax your legs as you walk, relax your fingers, your arms, your heart, your shoulders in their sockets, your chin down slightly, relax your head – just feel your body floating through the space. Where else can you release tension?

5. Listen to the sounds around you. How many distinct sounds can you count? What are they coming from?

6. Take a look around and find a place – not a tree – in the near distance (up to 2 blocks away). Pick a place that is away from everyone else, if possible. Focus your eyes on that exact spot, slow down your walking speed so that one step takes one inhalation, the next step takes an exhalation. Walk the entire distance to your "special place" using this breathing technique.

7. Arrive just in front of your location and arrange yourself in Mountain pose:

- a. Feet are parallel, hip width apart
- b. Press evenly into the four corners of your feet
- c. Grow taller out the crown of your head.
- d. Chin down slightly.
- e. Palms gently at your sides.
- f. Focus on breathing to your lower back and exhaling freely, evenly, slowly.

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8. Standing in Mountain pose facing your special place/location, close your eyes. Inhale all the way to your lower back. Exhale in slow motion. Envision your ribs expanding to the right and left as you inhale. Repeat 3 times.
9. Inhale and bring your fingertips up over your head. Look toward the sky with your eyes. Exhale and bring your fingertips back to your sides. Repeat 3 times. Move slowly in mindfulness. Just allow yourself to be breathed!
10. Inhale and just look up at the sky. Breathe in the blue color of the sky. The radiant sun. While looking up, whisper to the sky one specific thing you would like to let go of... forgive. Speak truthfully and from your heart. Are there feelings that come up? When we are doing walking meditation, there will be a range of feelings associated with the body. Everything from an annoying pain, to a pleasant feeling of relaxation. In paying attention to feelings, the important thing is simply to notice them without either clinging to them or pushing them away. Just observe - "isn't that interesting, I'm feeling this way or that way."
11. Return your eye gaze back to the earth. Stand a little taller in Mountain pose and reach upwards through the crown of your head. Breathe! Exhale slowly, deeply, from your heart. Inhale and look up to the sky - repeat what it is you would like to be rid of or freed from. Believe it in your heart!!! Ask for help from the Universe, from the sky. Breathe in and out of your heart and imagine a door in your chest wall opening to receive peace, serenity, grace. Ask yourself what you need to do in order to forgive. Listen. Breathe. Believe.
12. Stand in Mountain pose for another 4 slow-motion breaths. Just observe your feelings. Observe your breath.
13. Look around you and find a tree that catches your eye. Walk slowly toward it - - mindfully breathing with each step - focusing your eyes and mind only on that tree. Return to taking one breath per step until you are standing in front of the tree.
14. Enter Tree pose - first standing on your right foot, then your left. Take a minimum of 4 breaths on each leg. Just focus on your breath and your being in Tree pose. Acknowledge any feelings of self-consciousness - embrace those feelings and kindly ask them to leave your mind. Just be here. In Tree pose. Right now.
15. Have a seat on the ground near your tree.

*Journal exercise:* Free write for the remaining time. Write whatever comes up or what you specifically remember from this meditation. Try to write continuously without stopping. When you are finished, return to our meeting area and silently find your own place in an easy seated position. You may sit in mindfulness and/or journal here until Leader resumes speaking.

# HANDOUTS

## NIS MYTH BUSTERS

For yoga instructors who are not familiar with eating disorders, please familiarize yourself with some facts about eating disorders before practicing with individuals in recovery. THANK YOU!



## Myth Busters about Eating Disorders

(Source: National Institute of Mental Health, unless otherwise noted)

(Source: National Institute of Mental Health, unless otherwise noted)

- Eating disorders are real, treatable medical illnesses with complex underlying psychological and biological causes.
- There are three types of Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia and Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified – for example, Binge Eating Disorder
- 15 million Americans are struggling with binge eating disorder -- binge-eating disorder affects females and males about equally.
- Between 11 and 13 million people in the United States have eating disorders. At least one million will die from their disorder.
- Men and boys account for an estimated 5 to 15 percent of patients with anorexia or bulimia with 25% of preadolescent cases of anorexia occurring in boys.
- People with anorexia are up to ten times more likely to die as a result of their illness. The most common complications that lead to death are cardiac arrest, electrolyte and fluid imbalances and suicide.
- Anorexia nervosa has the highest premature mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder.
- Eating disorders frequently co-exist with other psychiatric disorders such as depression, substance abuse, or anxiety disorders.
- People with eating disorders also can suffer from numerous other physical health complications, such as heart conditions or kidney failure, which can lead to death.
- In 2007, 23.2 million persons aged 12 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or substance abuse problem, 19.3 million for alcohol abuse, 16.5 million suffering from at least one major depressive episode. (Source: Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA) Results from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings)
- At least one-fourth of all U.S. teenage girls are suffering from self-mutilation, eating disorders, significant depression or serious consideration of suicide – or are perpetrating acts of physical violence. (THE TRIPLE BIND, Dr. Stephen Hinshaw, Ph.D.)
- 1/3 of Wisconsin high school girls have reported drinking five or more drinks in a row on at least one occasion in the past month, 16% reported using marijuana at least once in the past month. (Source: Status of Girls in Wisconsin, 2007, Alverno College Center for Research on Women and Girls)
- 40-60% of high school girls diet, 30-40% of junior high girls worry about weight, 40% of 9-year-old girls have dieted—35% of dieters will develop an eating disorder.
- The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (The Wellstone-Domenici Parity Act), enacted into law on October 3, 2008, will end health insurance benefits inequity between mental health/substance use disorders and medical/surgical benefits for group health plans with more than 50 employees. The law becomes effective on January 1st, 2010. Under this new law, 113 million people across the country will have the right to non-discriminatory mental health coverage, including 82 million individuals enrolled in self-funded plans (regulated under ERISA), who cannot be assisted by State parity laws. (Source: American Psychological Association Practice Association)

### Eating disorders:

- **have doubled** since 1960s (Source: Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
- **are increasing in younger age groups**, as young as 7 years old
- **are increasing in diverse ethnic and sociocultural groups**
- 40% of newly identified cases of anorexia are in girls 15-19 years old
- Between 5-20% of individuals struggling with anorexia nervosa will die.



**GUIDE TO FINDING AN EATING DISORDERS SPECIALIST** (Source: Dr. Laura Lees and Lees Psychological Services)

- Anorexia and bulimia require treatment by a psychologist or psychotherapist who has specialized knowledge and training in eating disorders.

These are questions you can ask a therapist to determine if they are an eating disorder specialist:

- Have you had specialized training specifically in eating disorders? What kind of training? Where? How Long?
- Have you ever trained or worked in a hospital eating disorders program? Where? How Long? What was your position?
- Do you have any credentials showing you are an eating disorder specialist? What are they? Through what certifying organization?
- Do you currently have a supervisor who is an eating disorders specialist? Who is it? What are his/her credentials as an eating disorder specialist?
- How often do you review your cases?
- What professional eating disorder associations are you a member of? NOTE: The major associations are: Academy for Eating Disorders (AED), International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals (IAEDP) and National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)
- What eating disorder journals do you read? NOTE: The major journals and newsletters are: International Journal of Eating Disorders, Journal of the Treatment and Prevention of Eating Disorders, Renfrew Perspectives, IAEDP Connections, Eating Disorders Review, Health At Every Size
- What continuing education have you received or taught on eating disorders in the past two years? NOTE: Therapists should attend seminars or conventions or engage in self-study for continuing education credits to continue their professional development on a regular basis.

**If a therapist has no formal eating disorders training, hospital experience or supervisor, it would be advisable to find a specialist with appropriate qualifications to help you.**

**RESOURCES: All eating disorders require professional help and are curable if treatment begins early enough.**

**Resources for Eating Disorders**

- NEDA – National Eating Disorders Association – [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)
- NIS – NORMAL In Schools – [www.normalinschools.org](http://www.normalinschools.org)
- ANAD – National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders – [www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org)
- EDC – Eating Disorder Coalition for Research, Policy and Action – [www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org](http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org)
- APA – American Psychological Association – [www.apa.org/topics/topiceating.html](http://www.apa.org/topics/topiceating.html)
- Something Fishy – [www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org)
- Klarman Eating Disorders Center – McLean Hospital [www.mclean.harvard.edu/patient/child/edc.php](http://www.mclean.harvard.edu/patient/child/edc.php)
- Remuda Ranch – [www.remudaranch.com](http://www.remudaranch.com)

**Resources for Self-Harm, Cutting and Self-Mutilation**

- Cornell Research Program on Self-Injurious Behavior in Adolescents and Young Adults ([www.crpsib.com/whatissi.asp](http://www.crpsib.com/whatissi.asp))



- Youthline ([www.youthline.org](http://www.youthline.org))

**Resources for Depression and Suicide**

- Helpguide.org ([www.helpguide.org/mental/depression\\_teen.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm))
- AFSP – American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- DBSA – Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance – [www.ndmda.org](http://www.ndmda.org)
- SAVE – Suicide Awareness Voices of Education – [www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

**PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:**

- AED – Academy for Eating Disorders – [www.aedweb.org](http://www.aedweb.org)
- IAEDP – International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals – [www.iaedp.com](http://www.iaedp.com)

# HANDOUTS

## Inspirational Quotes

The attached quotation templates can be printed onto pre-cut postcard and business card stock and distributed after each yoga practice.

“One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to

put off living.

We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon - instead of

enjoying the roses blooming outside our

windows today.”

~Dale Carnegie

“If you could call it perfection  
What would it look like?  
How would you know it  
Feel it  
Be it

Wherever you are

**now**

Call it perfection  
And know  
That in this moment  
It is really enough”

~Leza Lowitz

**yoga**

is a way of moving

into stillness in order to

experience

**the**

**truth**

of who you are . . .

~Eric Schiffmann

“For a long time it seemed to me that life was about to begin – real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life. This perspective has helped me to see there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way. So treasure every moment you have and remember that time waits for no one. Happiness is a journey, not a destination.”

~Souza

"Whatever action you take in a state of inner resistance will create more outer resistance, and the universe will not be on your side; life will not be helpful. If the shutters are closed, the sunlight cannot come in. When you yield internally, when you surrender, a new dimension of consciousness opens up. If action is possible or necessary, your action will be in alignment with the whole and supported by creative intelligence, the unconditioned consciousness which in a state of inner openness you become one with. Circumstances and people then become helpful, cooperative. Coincidences happen. If no action is possible, you rest in the peace and inner stillness that come with surrender. You rest in God."

~Eckart Tolle, *A New Earth*

"Problems of all shapes and sizes come up all the time in life. They range from trivial to the profound to the overwhelming. The challenge here is to meet them with inquiry, in the spirit of mindfulness. The first step is to acknowledge that there is a problem, which means there is disharmony of some kind. It might take us forty or fifty years to even come close to acknowledging some of the big demons we carry. But there's no timetable for inquiry. Inquiry means asking questions, over and over again. Inquiry is not so much thinking about answers. It really involves just listening, as if you were sitting by the stream of your own thoughts, listening to the water flow over and around the rocks, listening, listening, and watching an occasional leaf or twig as it is carried along. Inquiry is ... a way to make sure you are staying in touch with the basic mystery of life itself and of our presence here."

~ Jon Kabat Zinn, *Wherever you Go, There You Are*

Wholeness and Oneness:

"When we are in touch with being whole, we feel at one with everything. When we feel at one with everything, we feel whole ourselves. Sitting or lying still, in any moment we can reconnect with our body, transcend the body, merge with the breath, with the universe, experience ourselves as whole and folded into larger and larger wholes. A taste of interconnectedness brings deep knowledge of belonging, a sense of being an intimate part of things, a sense of being at home wherever we are."

~ Jon Kabat Zinn, *Wherever you Go, There You Are*

"I've started being vigilant about watching my thoughts all day, and monitoring them. I repeat this vow about 700 times a day: 'I will not harbor unhealthy thoughts anymore.' Every time a diminishing thought arises, I repeat the vow. I will not harbor unhealthy thoughts anymore. The harbor of my mind is an open bay, the only access to the island of my Self. This island has been through some wars, but it is now committed to peace, under a new leader (me) who has instituted new policies to protect the place. ... This is a peaceful harbor, the entryway to a fine and proud island that is only now beginning to cultivate tranquility. If you can abide by these new laws, my dear thoughts, then you are welcome in my mind – otherwise, I shall turn you all back toward the sear from whence you came. This is my mission, and it will never end."

~*Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert

"And  
the day came  
when  
the risk  
to remain  
tight  
in a bud  
was more  
painful  
than the risk  
it took  
to  
blossom."

~Anaïs Nin

"It was  
a high counsel  
that I once heard  
given to a young  
person,

'Always do  
what you are  
afraid to do.'"

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

"By embracing your mother wound as your yoga, you transform what has been a hindrance in your life into a teacher of the heart."

~Philip Moffitt

"Love comes when manipulation stops; when you think more about the other person than about his or her reactions to you. When you dare to reveal yourself fully. When you dare to be vulnerable."

~Dr. Joyce Brothers

"If it's never our fault, we can't take responsibility for it. If we can't take responsibility for it, we'll always be its victim."

~Richard Bach

**Meditate.**

**Live purely.**

**Be quiet.**

**Do your work with mastery.**

**Like the moon,  
come out from behind the clouds.**

**Shine!**

~Buddha

“Man’s main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is.”

~Erich Fromm

“It is by tiny steps we ascend to the stars.”

~Jack Ludstrom

“If we did all the things we’re capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves.”

~Thomas Edison

“If we did all the things we’re capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves.”

~Thomas Edison

**“If you ask me what I’ve come to do, it is this: to live out loud.”**

~Émile Zola

**“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.”**

~~ Anthony Robbins

“For a long time it seemed to me that life was about to begin – real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life. This perspective has helped me to see there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way. So treasure every moment you have and remember that time waits for no one. Happiness is a journey, not a destination.”

~Souza