

Words About Wellness

**Restorative Yoga**

Submitted By: Hanna Leong, Psy.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow



Yoga was initially developed in Northern India over 5,000 years ago. Current scientific journals abound with increasingly rigorous studies about the efficacy of centuries old practices such as yoga, meditation and mindfulness. The practice of Yoga comes in as many variations and permutations as people are capable of creating. From our favorite corpse pose (Savasana) to the athleticism inherent in Ashtanga or power yoga, there is a version of yoga for you. No time with young children? YouTube has videos on Animal Poses as well as “Mommy [Daddy] and me” to engage the youngest yoga fans. Today, we are going to talk about Restorative Yoga.

One definition of RESTORE means to repair so as to return it to its original condition. The everyday wear and tear of life can leave us far from our original conditions. This world of 7-minute work-outs, fast food, multiple emails with push notifications, texting and demands for productivity can take its toll on our health and wellbeing. Stress, strain, exhaustion and injury can take down even the hardest of weekend warriors. Sometimes we just need to take some time to RESTORE.

Restorative Yoga is built upon the teachings of B.K.S Iyengar. It was developed in the US in the 1970s by Judith Lasater who studied under Iyengar. The primary focus of restorative yoga was to assist in the recovery from illness or injury. It is reportedly ideal for restoring quality of life to individuals on the way to burn-out from the stress of the hectic modern life. The practice of restorative yoga stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which slows the heart rate, regulates blood pressure and relaxes the body. Benefits are reported for anxiety, insomnia, headaches as well as other stress-related conditions.

Comfortable, supported and using as little physical effort as possible are words often used to describe the practice. Even the most sedentary of us can move slightly, slide a pillow under us and relax more, right? Typical practice consists of 5-6 poses that are held for 5 minutes or more. Get in the pose, make it comfortable, relax into it and just do nothing for a while. There is no lack of appeal.

As part of the PM&R Resident lectures on wellness and complementary and alternative medicine, Laura Terry, a physical therapist and yoga instructor from Thousand Petals Yoga on Franklin Street, came and facilitated a restorative yoga session for the resident. The class was fun and informative, and Laura followed up with an offer to provide vouchers for a free class to the residents and discounted classes for other health care system employees. For more information, she can be reached at yogaandpt.com