

Editorial

The Future of the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*

Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D., Editor in Chief (incoming)



As I begin to take over the role of editor of the International Journal of Yoga Therapy, my focus is on two questions: What makes Yoga therapy unique as a field, and how can the journal best support Yoga professionals? My reflections on these two questions have shaped

my vision for the journal, and will continue to influence the editorial plan.

What Makes Yoga Therapy a Unique Field?

Compared to other healing professions, Yoga therapy stands out for both the scale of its central aim—to reduce human suffering in all of its forms—and for the incredible diversity of its tools. Yoga professionals must be equally comfortable addressing an individual's back pain, depression, and spiritual isolation. It is not enough to know a little physiology, a few *āsanas*, or the basics of Yoga philosophy. The Yoga professional must learn how to see the individual, and approach his or her condition with the tools that are most appropriate. More importantly, a Yoga professional understands that seemingly separate forms of suffering are not, in fact, inde-

pendent. The solution is not to throw an *āsana* sequence at the back pain, a breathing sequence at the depression, and a Yoga *sūtra* at the spiritual isolation. The solution is to reveal and unravel the connections between the multiple levels of experience.

For this reason, Yoga therapy is the ultimate integrative and holistic approach to healing. It recognizes the connection between all levels of human experience. Yoga professionals see the big picture and understand how the pieces fit together. Yoga professionals are as interested in the functioning of the immune system as in the functioning of the mind; further, we want to know what one has to do with the other, and how the body and mind function as a whole. We want to understand the connections within ourselves, and also between ourselves—as members of families, communities, and cultures, and the experience of meaning and connection that goes beyond our individual identities.

This integrative approach is well grounded in the Yoga tradition, and is also reflected in newer models developing in the fields of psychology and medicine. For example, the traditional model of the five *koshas* (sheaths), which forms the basis for many approaches to Yoga therapy, is remarkably similar to the biopsychosocial model of contemporary medicine. The common principle of these models is that human experience can be considered at many levels, and our ultimate well-being comes from understanding and addressing all dimensions of experience: physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. That Yoga, psychology, and medicine may

be coming to some common understanding of human experience is promising and suggests that Yoga professionals can play a central role in connecting many healing professions.

How Can the *International Journal of Yoga Therapy* Support Yoga Professionals?

Yoga therapists need both a broad understanding of many areas of study, and a deep understanding of their specific Yogic path. As editor of the journal, my central goal is to help Yoga professionals meet this challenge.

Yoga professionals need continued access to ideas and information from diverse perspectives. We need an ongoing conversation about what works, why it works, and how we can adapt it to our own teaching. We also need more information about how Yoga can be successfully integrated into schools, hospitals, and communities—including the financial and practical challenges that Yoga professionals face. We not only need professional support, but also personal support for our own practice. We need to be reminded that our work matters, and that it is our personal journeys as Yoga practitioners that make our work possible.

I envision the journal as a publication that supports Yoga professionals in all of these ways. The content should both inform and inspire. Each issue should provide ideas that span many levels of understanding, and reflect the full scope of Yoga as a healing practice. The journal will continue to ask important questions and provide thoughtful reflection, using the tools of research, philosophy, and practical experience.

Editorial Goals for the Journal

The journal plays an important role in the future of Yoga therapy. As described above, it is a leading resource for Yoga professionals. In addition, it is a public voice for

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Yoga therapy. The journal provides a forum for Yoga professionals to share the best ideas and practices of Yoga therapy with the general public and health care providers. To strengthen these two roles, the journal is undergoing some important changes:

Peer review. We are in the process of instituting peer review, which allows other Yoga professionals to evaluate submitted articles, provide supportive feedback to authors, and make recommendations for revisions and publication. Peer review will help the journal maintain high standards for all articles, while encouraging discussion between authors and leaders in the field of Yoga therapy, research, and practice.

Increasing professional discussion. We also would like to increase discussion in the journal by publishing member letters and comments. The journal provides a forum for thoughtful consideration of where our field is headed, and we want to represent as many voices as possible. Each article we publish should be the starting point of a continued

discussion, and not the final word on the matter.

Publishing frequency. Finally, we would like to begin publishing two issues a year. To meet this goal, we need your continued membership support and outstanding articles.

Calls to Action

There are several things you can do to contribute to IAYT and the journal:

Write a letter to the editor. We welcome responses to articles and general comments about the practice and future of Yoga therapy. Begin by writing to us now about one of the thought-provoking articles in this issue.

Propose an article for the journal. We encourage first-time authors and can help you develop an idea for publication. We publish reports of scientific research on any aspect of Yoga, descriptions of therapeutic approaches/Yoga practices for a specific population or health condition, in-depth case studies that illustrate and evaluate a therapeutic approach, discussions of Yoga philosophy as it relates to Yoga therapy, and discussions of public policy, integrated health care, and professional practices.

Apply to be a peer reviewer or a media reviewer. Share your expertise by reviewing submitted articles or recently published Yoga therapy books and DVDs.

Invite your friends and colleagues to join IAYT. As we continue to build the voice of IAYT in professional and policy discussions, there is

strength in numbers and diversity. As a field, we can best continue to grow through the kind of open communication and education that IAYT supports.

I look forward to hearing from you and serving this organization. Please end your letters, comments,

article proposals, and ideas to kmcgonigal@iayt.org.

Acknowledgments

A special thank you to Trisha Lamb and John Kepner for offering me this opportunity, and to the IAYT board of directors for wel-

coming me and supporting my vision for the journal. Trisha's leadership has provided an excellent foundation for the continued growth of the journal, and I look forward to following in her footsteps.

Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D.

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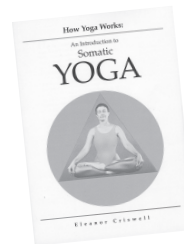
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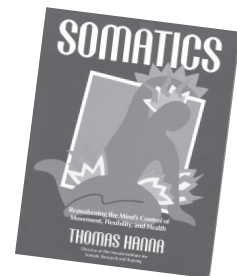


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