

Therapeutic yoga application for individuals who are Differently Abled

Therapeutic yoga is applicable to to all individuals including normal healthy people and individuals who are afflicted with ailments.

What is the role of yoga therapy in normal healthy individuals? Normal healthy state is not a static state. Health is always fluid in nature, it changes all the time. The normal healthy state has to be constantly maintained and to be improved, if possible. Both these goals can be achieved by the application of therapeutic yoga application.

The very purpose of yoga therapy is to apply yoga techniques on individuals who are afflicted with ailments and to bring out therapeutic effects. The therapeutic effects include symptomatic relief, causative cure, strengthening of the whole constitution.

Yoga therapy can be easily defined as an answer to three basic questions. They are:

1. What effect?
2. Where the effect?
3. On whom the effect?

So, we can see that the yoga therapy is both individual as well as effect oriented. Yoga therapy has infinite tools in its armoire that if they are appropriately applied, yoga therapy will bring in both specific effect as that of a surgical treatment as well as comprehensive effects as that of yoga itself.

Since, yoga therapy is both individual and effect oriented, this type of application of yoga is more applicable to individuals who are differently abled. In fact, the differently abled persons have a **special right to yoga therapy**. We will discuss the reasons why differently abled individuals have more right to yoga therapy in the following section.

One: Individualistic study and specific care

Every individual is distinct from every other individual, more particularly in the case of differently abled persons. The medical name of the condition may be the same. But the affected individuals are entirely different. One can not find two individuals who are afflicted by the same condition appear physically, mentally similar.

So, every differently abled individual is uniquely different from every other individuals who are afflicted with the same condition. Yoga therapy is well equipped to offer their requirements according to every particular individual and according to their capabilities.

Two: Anticipate and avoid future complications

Every differently abled individual is either born with or have developed many distinct peculiarities in their constitution later. For most of them, these distinct peculiarities cannot be brought back to normal. They need to lead their remaining life with their distinct features.

We have studied in the first book of this series, about the role of yoga therapy for IDCP-s. Every IDCP can produce some altered functionality as well as some altered physicality in the individual.

This altered nature of the constitution will reduce the functional efficiency of many structures around each IDCP. In the long run, those structures get into some ailments. Yoga therapy is the best choice to anticipate and to prevent all such future complications.

Three: Individualistic distinct constitutional peculiarities need the support of yoga therapy

Every individual, whether normally abled or differently abled, should do some physical, breath and mental practices to maintain the functional efficiency of these components. This requirement is more particularly essential for people who are differently abled. It is because of the reason that their bodily structures are prone to undergo degeneration much earlier than others. If they regularly practice appropriate yoga therapy practices, their structures will maintain physiological efficiency.

Four: To maintain and to improve the available functionality

When we examine such differently abled individuals, the therapists job is to identify two functional divisions from the constitution. First identify which are the functional aspects left intact in the person and observe the capability of the person to perform such activities. Second, they have to ascertain which are the functionalities that are affected and to what degree.

Then yoga therapists work from the positive side. The first focus is to maintain and to improve the functionalities that are existing unaffected. Slowly we should introduce graded movements to the affected regions.

Therefore, for the purpose of maintaining and to improve the functional efficiency of existing functionalities and to gradually improve the functionalities of the regions where there are some restrictions, yoga therapy is inevitable for all differently abled persons.

Five: To work in the opposite direction of the disability

When we examine completely the affected individual, we will be able to understand what is the disability and how is that affecting the person the normal life maintenance activities, the methodology of application of yoga techniques to improve that condition etc,. Many of the disabilities are not only non-reversible but also progressively worsening. If proper yoga therapy is instituted, there is a chance for arresting the progression or slowdown the rate of progression.

Six: To improve the psychological component

Some differently abled individuals, by the nature of the pathology, are not psychologically affected. Their mental functions are normal. In fact, many people show extraordinarily mental capabilities. But, some people, on account of their physical disabilities, slowly develop psychological problems like depression, social avoidance, maniacal behaviours, etc,. Yoga therapy will be helpful for such individuals to improve their mental health.

Seven: To provide family and social support

Sufferings are not limited only with the individual who is differently abled. It affects, in varying grades, all family members, immediate relatives and the society at large. Every differently abled

individual requires some support from all these people. If they are in good mental disposition, then the quality of their support will also be good. Yoga therapy plays a vital role in this direction.

The above stated are some of the important reasons why differently abled individuals have a special right to the Practice of Yoga Therapy.

Methodology

Yoga therapists should study the methodology of application of therapeutic yoga application on individuals who are differently abled. As we know that each differently abled person is different from every other person, the methodology of application for each individual is highly specific. Without compromising on this specific approach, which can be learnt and practiced only from the specific student, we should also study the general principles of application. Unless the general principles are well grounded in yoga therapists, they can not apply specifically on every individual distinctly. We will discuss some of the general principles now.

General principles

Observation

We need to study *annamayam* (physical body) through complete observation. Observe how the students enter into your consultation room. Or, in such students for whom you need to visit them for consultation, observe how they are presenting to you. Observe specifically regarding their comfortable lying, prone, kneeling, seated or standing positions. Check whether they are able to sit, stand or walk on their own. If they need any support for these activities, study the type of support needed. This observation will give you the information regarding how you can provide the support through therapeutic yoga techniques. Use this time to check their general symmetry, spinal alignment. Observe also each major joints separately regarding their alignment, range and ease of movements individually. Observe the finger movements also. Look for any imbalance in standing or walking. Observe if there are any tremors or shaking of the body.

Regarding *prānamayam* (physiological body), therapists should observe the breathing movements on the body, depth of breathing and pulse examination. Observe the extremities to confirm the functionality of the *Vyāna vāyu*. Also enquire about their appetite, bowel movements, energy level, sleep pattern, menstrual history in women, etc,. Observe the talk, deglutition, protrusion of the tongue etc,.

Analysis of the *manomayam* (psychological body) is of paramount importance. We could see in the society, many people, inspite of their severe disabilities, they are determined to prove their worth and work hard and succeed in their attempts. We can also see a few people on the contrary, succumb to their problems. Girls, during their late teens are highly susceptible for psychological and emotional problems.

The way they talk and communicate their requirements, if they are able to, will tell you about their mental state. Specific attention to be given to their ability to be attentive, understanding capability, retaining capacity, coherence in analysing and verbalisation etc,. Many of the differently abled persons may have psychological disturbances as a component of their ailment. Some others develop this psychological problems because of their disabilities. Yoga therapists should specifically look

for any psychological disturbances in the students and the degree of affliction also. If we are able to ascertain this feature, we will be able institute appropriate remedial measures.

I am fully aware of the fact that I have not discussed regarding the principles of application of yoga therapy to any differently abled individual in particular. But exposure to these general principles will give the therapists an idea about what should not be missed while observing any student who is differently abled.

In the following chapter, we will take up a few ailments and study deeply how yoga therapy is applicable to such individuals.