

**MENOPAUSE, STRESS AND YOUR HEART:
A Yoga Program for Health and Healing**

By

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To Joseph LePage, Founder and Director of Integrative Yoga Therapy
To my many teachers, family, friends and guides
Who were in the right place at the right time with the right guidance

Namaste

Listen to the Hipbones

my hipbones held me up
carried me forward
through bubbling joy
carried me forward
through secret rage
carried me forward
to now
me, the lucky one
me, the plucky one
firstborn
compulsive
golden

my hipbones insulated me
rushing past skepticism
moving beyond obstacles
knocking down barriers
these bones guarded my heart
brushing right by
careless slips of the tongue
these bones
protected me from others
protected me from myself

now at midlife
my hipbones rebel
joints lose juice
muscles freeze
forward motion halts
pain is constant
bone rubs bone
sparks fly
doubt and confusion
catch fire
their questions
burn my soul
how do I live without moving on
where would I go if I could

my hipbones refuse
a future of onwards
a future of upwards
they whisper
then speak
then shout
I still myself to listen
and hear the answer
my next move forward
will be within

Elizabeth Gibbs, 1996

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Menopause, a Personal Journey on the Yogic Path

"Like dead-seeming cold rocks, I have memories within that came out of the material that went to make me,"

--- Zora Neale Hurston
(Zinsser, 1987, 111)

Looking back on the last decade of my life, it is the impact of menopause that I remember the most. In 1990 I had what seemed like "it all" --- professional success, a nice home, a blended family and a busy social life. However, my second marriage had developed serious problems, my job was financially rewarding but not at all fulfilling, and the social life that had seemed so glamorous rapidly turned repetitive, boring and empty. Restlessness, sadness and confusion filled my emotional space. What had gone wrong? These were things I had asked for. They were not making me happy. Why? The questions came faster and harder. Everything in and around my life, my relationships, and my work, became an effort. Frustration and stress increased and manifested itself physically as TMJ (temporal mandibular joint dysfunction), constipation, headaches, frequent sore throats, colds, and allergies.

When it seem like things could not get worse, they did. In March of 1992, my period was very late. For a few days I worried that I might be pregnant. Finally my period came and dragged on for two weeks with cramping and flu-like symptoms. I would feel well in the morning but by late afternoon I would run a temperature and feel shaky. The day after it stopped, I dragged myself to work but was so sick I could not eat. I went home early and fell into bed.

That night an intense pain in my abdomen woke me up and doubled me over. I thought I was constipated. My husband insisted on taking me to the emergency room. With great reluctance I did as he asked. I did not want to 'bother' anybody for what I thought was 'nothing'. Three hours later, 'nothing' escalated into a CT Scan, an ultrasound, an X-ray, and finally exploratory surgery.

When I woke up I learned that I had undergone a complete abdominal hysterectomy due to ruptured ovarian abscesses. The doctor told me that I was lucky to be alive.

The hysterectomy resulted in two weeks in the hospital and six weeks at home to recuperate. Surgical menopause resulted in roller coaster emotions, hot flashes, mental confusion, dry skin and the reflection of one very angry woman who stared back at me when I looked in the mirror. It was easy to read her mind. She was thinking, "What is this? This was not supposed to happen to me. What did I do wrong? I followed all the rules. I worked hard and did what people expected of me. Why am I being punished?"

The anger would not go away in spite of my trying to push it down. "I should not feel angry. Anger is not a 'good' emotion," I reasoned. At that time, however, it was the predominant emotion. Apparently it had been there all along, damned up and held fast by the life I had chosen, the responsibilities I had accepted and the expectations that I was striving to meet. I did not yet know that emotions are a tool and the ability to feel them and understand their information and meaning is a crucial step in the healing journey. Eventually that buried anger proved to be the motivation for the actions that led to major changes in my life. Surgery and my introduction to menopause finally released it and set me on my path to healing.

In terms of my physical recuperation, debilitating weakness, and general discomfort were daily occurrences. My taste buds were off, the incision was tender and sore, but the worst sensations were the gas pains that began when my body started to wake up from the shock

of surgery. For three weeks I had very little energy. I slept a lot, and felt disconnected from my lower body.

Until my doctor prescribed hormone replacement therapy two weeks later, anger, mood swings, irritability, crying jags and hot flashes occurred frequently. Estrogen took the edge off and I calmed down.

Taking action in the face of difficulty has always been my response to stress. Determined to bounce back, I did everything I could to speed my recovery. I walked every day. It was hard two weeks passed before I could do a mile without resting. Yoga stretches were next.

The movement, as always, was therapeutic. The resting was hard. My life had been reduced to a standstill -- -- -- a holding pattern -- -- -- a lateral drift. I experienced that as frustration and restlessness. Being forced to give up 'doing' to experience 'being' was a struggle. During that scary, restless time I often sat on the back deck of the house. The view is very peaceful, a pond, a state forest and a huge weeping cherry tree. One day in early May, the first pink blossom appeared on the drooping branches of the cherry tree and I watched it with focused fascination. Over the next few days it bloomed in all of its ordinary magic. As that bud blossomed, something inside me blossomed as well. An insight emerged full-blown from the depths of somewhere into my conscious mind. I 'got' the fact that I had almost died. I 'got' the understanding that 'maybes', and 'some days', could be snatched away at any moment and that life could turn on a dime. A thought popped, "There is another way to live and I have got to find it."

There was a lot to think about and lots of time to 'be' and simply reflect. It was a major change from the way I managed my life before the surgery and the onset of menopause. Moving quickly, making lists, adding more than could be done in a reasonable time, pushing the envelope and running on stress and adrenalin to do just 'one more thing' made me feel powerful, and

needed. It seemed like progress at the time but now I know that I was dependent on stress, adrenalin and excitement, along with sugar. These things were my defense against fear and feelings of failure. I was a perfectionist with tendencies toward co-dependency. I learned that after several visits to a therapist who named it and when I saw myself in the quote,

"We have become so accustomed to crisis and deadlines that we feel almost lost if we are not putting out some kind of fire. In fact, if we really were honest, there is something dramatic and exciting about handling a crisis. It makes us feel as if we have some modicum of control in our lives," (Schaefer, 1990, 1/05).

Real progress, I learned, is not like the excitement of taking on a new project, trying to get everything done before sundown or dashing in to rescue a situation. Real change, deep life change was something else and although I did not know how to approach it or where it would take me, I knew I needed to do it and that it was going to require hard work and a lot of uncomfortable feelings, situations, and experiences.

Years of trying to fix myself to fit in to what I accepted as normal had not gotten me what I had been looking for. Now I did not want to fix myself, I wanted to understand myself, to go inside and go deep. I wanted to be alone to reflect and think. It was almost a primitive instinctual feeling, and I had no context for why it was happening now until I read *Transformation Through Menopause* by Marian VanEyk McCain. Reading that book was a real 'Aha!' moment. McCain describes menopause as a cocoon,

"A cocoon is, in a way, a place of rest, almost a place of death, for it is a place where some creatures go in order to die out of their previous form. Thus it is also a place of rebirth, a place from which the new form, in its own time will emerge," (McCain, 1991, 6).

She goes on to quote Ursula LeGuin who said: "The woman ---- must become pregnant with herself at last. She must bear herself, her third age, her old age, with travail and alone. Not many will help her with that birth (McCain, 1991, 6). McCain and LeGuin were speaking

directly to me in words and concepts I felt deeply but could not have formed on my own because all I knew about menopause was that your periods stopped and you had hot flashes. It sounded like a most unpleasant time of a woman's life. The idea that menopause was a multi-year process involving a woman's entire being, body, mind and possibly soul was totally new. I'd never heard that menopause was a prime time for women to begin an inner journey to give birth to the next age. I thought of menopause as the beginning of the aging process and death. Now I had a context in which to put these urges and impulses that felt like labor and could not be ignored. I knew I was not going crazy and that knowledge alone lifted weight off my shoulders.

Estrogen had helped stabilize my hormonal balance but I needed something to help me with the inner turmoil. Yoga seemed like a reasonable place to start since it had been a part of my life since the early 1970's. At the time I did not know much about Yoga psychology and philosophy but I did know that both the goal and the process of Yoga was focused on self-awareness and integration of the body/mind.

" -- -- the major focus of Yoga is actually on the alteration of one's self awareness and his relationship to the world. It is a complete system of therapy which includes work on developing awareness and control of the physical body, emotions, mind and interpersonal relations" (Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 2).

When I started doing Yoga, it was for the physical exercise that never failed to leave me feeling relaxed, clearer, and calmer. The philosophical and psychological sides of the practice had seemed too close to religious precepts for my practical, independent, somewhat rebellious, externally focused self. Now, however, I was vulnerable physically, energetically, mentally, emotionally, and in need of help. Maybe, just maybe, the philosophy and psychology could help me understand what was happening to my mind and my life.

"Yoga is the focusing of attention to whatever object is being contemplated to the exclusion of all others," (Feuerstein, 1998, 6). The object I began to seriously pay attention to

and contemplate was myself. My practice of Yoga took on a new depth as I incorporated the use of the breathing and relaxation techniques I learned in a Kundalini Yoga class. The more traditional Hatha Yoga classes that I had been drawn to did not make breathing and relaxation a priority as the focus was centered on the postures and performing them correctly. The effective use of the breath and the experience of long deep relaxation after posture practice was new for me. The calming effects were immediate, and with practice I learned to 'see' inside my body and breathe into its parts. More often than not, I could shorten hot flashes and catch myself in the act of rushing or entering a negative thought pattern. I learned to notice anger as it manifested, accept the anger as useful, integrate the information it brought me and express the anger appropriately.

After five years on hormone replacement therapy, I stopped because of unpleasant side effects. Like many women, I feared the return of intense hot flashes, dry skin, and decreased libido. Fortunately, the symptoms were mild and I was grateful. I began to think of the hot flashes as 'power surges,' and used the other symptoms as physical sensations to pay attention to in order to intuit which to respond to and which to simply be aware of.

The discipline of doing Yoga with real focus helped me develop a better awareness of my body and the need to slow down. In the process of slowing down I found time to try my hand at writing which until that time had been limited to a notation under hobbies and interests, on my resume. I found that keeping a journal and doing creative writing were effective ways for me to do personal research, to sort out the new thoughts, and feelings around these changes that were happening. Writing helped me gain a vantage point from which to view my life and go beyond what happened to the meaning and truth behind and inside the experiences and memories.

There is something definitive about putting words on paper. They have a concreteness, a certainty. They are there when you return the next day. The written word carried more solidity

then my mental thoughts which seemed to flit and drift like fireflies in the night. Writing thoughts, insights and memories on paper was like capturing those fireflies and putting them in a jar with a little grass so they could live in captivity and so I could pay attention and study them.

This application of awareness to my inner world resulted in a desire to live a more authentic life. To find out what that might mean, I read books, journaled, wrote short stories, essays and a novel, talked to friends and began consciously unpacking emotional baggage from my past, childhood included. Some of that information was revealed through my body as it did Yoga or received massage. My hips and low back released oceans of emotions as I worked with the chronic contractions of my body. If I had not experienced this first hand I would not have believed that muscles hold memories and emotions (Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 4 - 13).

One result of this work was the gradual change in my appearance. A new very short natural haircut brought an incredible sense of freedom from perms, curling irons and pink plastic rollers.. Long skirts, boots and sweaters replaced business suits, pantyhose and high heels. What comfort! A sterling silver toe ring brought a delicious sense of artistic eccentricity. All the external trappings that had marked me as traditional, and conservative and helped me fit into a world in which I was no longer comfortable, dropped away. What people saw when they looked at the new me reflected who I had always been inside, but had been too scared to reveal for fear of rejection.

Flip Wilson, the late comedian often took on the persona of a sassy, self-possessed woman named Geraldine. One of Geraldine's famous lines was, "What you see, is what you get." The other was, "If you've got it, flaunt it." I felt like Geraldine. I was out there and up front with who I was inside. No more masks. Rejection came from some hurtful quarters but now I was strong enough to see it for what it was -- -- -- it had little or nothing to do with me and more to do with the person doing the rejecting.

My opening to the true meaning and gift of menopause together with my progress on the Yogic path has evolved slowly over the past ten years. One by one I have called out my demons to, “face them, trace them and erase them” (*Stuart Saves His Family*, 1995), and I have looked at the face of my shadow and invited it in for tea (Norian, 1997).

Ken Wilber discusses the shadow in his book, *No Boundary*. The refusal to deal with shadow material results in projecting that quality onto others, manifesting symptoms (inferiority, depression, anxiety) and then trying to hide the symptoms. He says,

"We must touch our symptoms with awareness and as much open acceptance as we can command. And this means to allow oneself to feel depressed, anxious, rejected, bored, hurt or embarrassed. We invite the symptom right into our home, and let it move and breathe freely while we simply try to remain aware of it in its own form. That very simply, is the first step in therapy" (Wilber, 1979, 97).

Calling out the shadow was easy, dealing with it face to face was and is hard work, but the push to self-healing is stronger than the fear of facing my demons and the dark side of my nature and the consequences of my actions.

Through the physical experience of Yoga and my continuing study of Yoga psychology and philosophy, I learned that I had a choice about how I could respond to all this. If I chose a five-sense material world interpretation, anger, panic, feelings of being a victim and placing blame for outcomes I did not like on something or someone outside myself could go into full sway and I could be gloriously and self-righteously bitter. If I chose a multi-sensory, symbolic archetypal model, I would need to become aware of and accept responsibility for my fears, my feelings, my choices and my actions that brought me to this point in my life. Carolyn Myss points out, "---- seeing and admitting the truth about ourselves, about our role in creating our own problems, and about how we relate to others is vital for healing" (Myss, 1996, 45).

With the help of the inner work I had done since 1992, I consciously chose to look at my life from the perspective of symbol and archetype. The hard work has been worth it. The

temptation to let anger, bitterness and judgment reign supreme is always there but with the self-discipline, self-inquiry and self-healing that Yoga brings, those energies are manageable. I am healthier and able to be more mindful and aware. I make better decisions about where to put my energy. I feel more balanced, less angry and fearful. I am also learning to be more compassionate, and I think I have become a better friend and companion to myself and to others in my life without always feeling the need to rescue in exchange for feelings of acceptance, power and self-worth. Peace at any price is no longer an option.

When I look back over the past nine years since the onset of my surgical menopause I see that I am still learning and relearning all my lessons. They keep presenting themselves in different places in my body. They cycle into my life with different people, situations, emotions and insights. I do not live in serenity, but I get to be a guest from time to time. Yoga helps me see with new eyes each time I visit.

My experience with the practice of Yoga evolved into a desire to teach and share what I learned. It took a while to find a certification program that was compatible with my independent nature. Though I was drawn to the ideas and philosophy of the East I was wary of the guru tradition and suspicious of organizations that required a participant to follow strict rules, and to accept truth as propounded by one tradition. Having grown up feeling that way about my own religious and cultural institutions, I was not disposed to accept what I saw as the rigid trappings of another. Having learned internal validation at a great price, I was suspicious of giving it up to gain spiritual validation from an external source. I wanted a certification that would be flexible enough to allow me to blend what I had gained from the practices of traditional Hatha Yoga and Kundalini Yoga. My goal was to learn practical applications of Yoga that could help people manage stress and take responsibility for their own self-healing or transformational journey.

About a year after my search began, a brochure from Integrative Yoga Therapy appeared in my mailbox. It was perfect. It was Yoga aligned to the latest research in mind/body health. All Yoga traditions were respected. I called and spoke to the director, Joseph LePage and asked him if there was a guru. He laughed and said, "No, there's just me." Two phone calls later, I was enrolled for a two week intensive, followed by a ten month home internship which included, a long reading list, written assignments, teaching classes, conducting private sessions, and regular contact with a mentor.

My experience with menopause and Yoga has resulted in a belief that women can consciously use their menopausal experience to 1) help themselves manage "The Pause," and/or 2) help them go deeper and use the menopausal experience as a catalyst to transform their approach to their lives. The goal is up to each woman. Either way, it is an amazing process, and an ongoing journey in which awareness becomes your best friend. Yoga can provide the introduction.

Goals of the Project

The path of understanding follows an ascending spiral rather than a straight line.

- - - Joanna Field
(Eisen, 2000)

Menopause with all its symptoms, trappings and jargon has entered our cultural consciousness largely because so many 'baby boomers' are entering this phase of life. Menopausal women are now an audience, an audience with a need and the discretionary dollars to address that need. And so, the medical professions, drug therapy merchandisers and alternative/complementary modality therapists have taken a keen interest in menopausal women.

Talk to many members of the medical profession who hold to the efficacy of the allopathic model of intervention and you learn that menopause is often viewed as a disease to be avoided, postponed, or medicated. Menopause, in other words, is seen as an end -- -- -- an end of fertility, youth and cultural usefulness. Discuss menopause with many feminists and healers from the alternative/complementary medical modality and you learn that menopause is viewed as a time of magical change, wisdom, and zest, - - - a beginning of freedom from cultural roles and a celebration of the self.

Most women's experience of menopause probably falls somewhere along the continuum between the two ends of this duality. Talk to many women going through menopause and you find a group of human beings experiencing a wide variety of unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable physical, mental and emotional symptoms. They may also be facing bewildering changes in many of their most stable relationships, and find themselves questioning many of their most cherished beliefs about themselves, their experiences and their world. No one view of menopause can satisfactorily answer all their questions, treat all their symptoms or help them

find internal understanding and acceptance of "The Pause" and the changes inherent in the transition of menopause. To make matters worse, American culture does not provide many positive models or guidelines for women to hold on to as they navigate menopausal waters.

What is a woman to do?

Many women dealing with menopause find physical and mental relief through the experience that Yoga exercise provides. Teachers who possess the ability to relate Yoga as method, technique and prescription to the larger picture of Yoga as a complete system of philosophy and psychology can increase the ability of students to apply awareness to themselves and their lives.

Yoga philosophy and psychology with its focus on attention and awareness provides women with a tool for self-discipline, self-inquiry, and self-healing during what is often an immensely confusing time. With self-discipline and self-inquiry comes the ability for a woman to make appropriate and correct choices about what she needs to navigate through her experience, and use awareness of that experience for acceptance and self-healing. Doing so can cut away layers of cultural, medical, social, and psychological paradigms and baggage surrounding this time of a woman's life. Focused self-awareness allows each woman to view her own menopause as a conscious transition to self-healing and growth in whatever form or meaning that may have for her. One size does not fit all.

The science of Yoga contains the theory and the practices that a woman can use to help her understand and manage her menopausal experience in ways that compliment her understanding

of her internal and external selves and her journey through the physical plane of life.

So where does one go to find reference material on the relationship between Yoga and menopause? A review of the offerings on the self-help books shelves of my local bookstores

revealed that a small but growing number of books in print now focus on menopausal women and their special circumstances, but few mention the use of Yoga-centered techniques as a way to manage menopausal change. Conversely, a survey of Yoga literature yields little information on women's health in general and menopause in particular.

Therefore the purpose of this project is to help fill that gap by sharing a perspective on how Yoga philosophy and psychology, through the application of the Integrative Yoga Therapy model of health and wellness, can be utilized to help women view menopause as a conscious transition to creativity, empowerment and self-healing.

Even though American cultural values around power and women's roles can prevent women from seeing this perspective and although these same cultural norms often contain obstacles to adopting this point of view, the current rise in the popularity of Yoga provides an opportunity to expose women to this perspective while at the same time providing physical exercise and relief of many menopausal symptoms.

Methodology

Primarily I drew from several sources for this work: my own experience as a practitioner and teacher of therapeutic Yoga, and the work of others through their teachings and writings. I surveyed menopausal women and conducted interviews with teachers and therapists who work with women in the menopause process. All of these sources have confirmed, validated and amplified the information and materials I have been working with.

The philosophical context for this project will propose Yoga as both a theoretical framework and a practice for viewing menopause in a positive light and will use the Integrative Yoga Therapy model as a method of implementing the framework. The result is a comprehensive Yoga program that will address several mind/body issues confronting women in menopause:

- Stress Reduction
- Balancing the Endocrine System
- Heart Health
- Preventing Osteoporosis
- An Overall Program for Menopause Health & Healing
- Managing Specific Menopause Symptoms

Part One begins with chapter two which presents my field research. This consists of the design, distribution and results of two external research efforts undertaken for this project. The first was a twenty question survey targeted to women in all stages of the menopause experience. The second was a series of interviews and communication with several Yoga teachers from different traditions who are working with women and menopause. The purpose of this effort was to gain a context of the current applications of Yoga to menopause. Examples from both the women's survey and the teacher's interviews are used throughout the paper to illustrate certain points. The names of the women whose stories I share have been changed to protect their privacy.

Chapter three looks at definitions of the various stages of the menopause journey, and discusses the different ways women can perceive menopause and the impact that their perception can have on the way they choose to look at and manage their menopause experience. Chapter four presents an overall framework of Yoga philosophy and psychology based on the work of the Indian sage Patanjali. His Eight Limbs of Yoga model is discussed and each limb is connected to the menopause experience through personal experiences of myself and the women who responded to the survey. These four chapters set the stage for a discussion of the practical application of Yoga to menopause which begins with, “Part Two: Healing the Whole Woman.”

Because stress and the perception of stressors is important to individual health, chapter five discusses both the Western and Eastern view of stress. These views are different and an understanding of them is important for Yoga teachers and therapists because the orientation of a woman toward either the Western or Eastern model will affect how a Yoga program will need to be presented. Chapter five also discusses the practice of Yoga and how it can reduce stress in the individual.

The heart, or the fourth *Chakra*, from the Eastern viewpoint, is the key to using one’s experience as fuel for healing or for the fire of transformation. The writings of several Western medical professionals, such as Dean Ornish and Mehmet Oz now reflect this ancient belief. Chapter six will look at the spiritual, psychological and physical aspects of heart health for the menopausal women. With the discussion of stress and the heart complete the thesis moves on to chapter seven and the presentation of the Integrative Yoga Therapy model of health and wellness which is used to translate the theoretical framework of Yoga into practical applications. After a discussion of its psychological foundation in the *Koshas*, or five levels of awareness, a case study is presented to illustrate its application to menopause.

“Part Three: The Program,” begins with chapter eight and presents the principles behind the program I’ve developed. They are based on Patanjali’s Eight Limbs of Yoga and the Integrative Yoga Therapy model of health and wellness. A sample workshop, an eight-week class format and a model for managing private sessions are included. Chapter nine presents the full program and includes a list of the most common menopausal symptoms and referenced Yoga techniques for working with women to manage them.

Finally, chapter ten sums up the project with my conclusions and some interesting questions for additional thinking, work and research with this topic.

The Yoga program proposed here is not a teacher certification program. It does not claim that doing Yoga will cure menopause related problems or eliminate the need for counseling, psychotherapy or other traditional approaches. It does claim to offer an alternative framework which presents menopause in a positive non-medical perspective and it does claim that Yoga used with awareness can reduce stress, induce relaxation and help women understand and use menopause as a conscious tool for self-healing and transformation.

This project is targeted to Yoga teachers and therapists working with women in menopause with the hope that they will help and encourage their students and clients to consciously engage menopause as a natural and transformative life event.

PART I: OVERVIEW
MENOPAUSE AS A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER 2

FIELD RESEARCH

The power to question is the basis of all human progress.

--- Indira Ghandi

(Eisen, 2000)

The most accessible survey of relevant research on menopause that I have found to date has been collected by the North American Menopause Society. Abstracts and full articles can be found in their Journal, *Menopause, The Journal of the North American Menopause Society*. This collection of studies is also available from their web site: www.menopause.org. For the most part, however, research and information on the application of Yoga to menopause is largely anecdotal. And funding for this research is often hard to come by. Dr. Geraldine Fabergas of the University of Connecticut Health Center recently told me about her experience. She collaborated with Wendy Dion, owner of YogaPuram, an Iyengar Yoga Center in Hartford, Connecticut, to mount a year long study on the effects of weight bearing Yoga postures on osteoporosis and bone density. Her research proposal was turned down by the National Institutes of Health who cited safety concerns about the effect of the postures on fragile bones in spite of the fact that Wendy's sequencing uses props and modifications to assure that students can accomplish the postures safely (telephone conversation with author, April, 2001). Judith Lasater, a physical therapist, Yoga teacher, writer and lecturer had three words to say about difficulty of obtaining money to do research on Yoga and menopause, "It's not sexy" (telephone conversation with author, May, 2001).

Even in-depth reading material on Yoga and menopause is not readily available. Books on menopause may have a mention of Yoga but there are very few books that deal with these topics together in the kind of detail that would be useful and helpful for women in helping them develop their personal practices or to teachers and therapists working with this population.

In light of this situation, it seemed prudent to do field research in an effort to seek information from menopausal women as well as from Yoga teachers and therapists who are working with Yoga and menopause. I conducted two surveys - - - the first was a survey of menopausal women to collect anecdotal information about their experience with menopause and with Yoga. The other was done with Yoga teachers to gather information on their application of Yoga to menopause. This chapter discusses the design, distribution, and results of both surveys.

Methodology

Survey I: Menopause Research Survey

The survey consisted of twenty open ended questions about the respondent's experience with menopause. I designed the survey and did not use any pre-existing survey as a resource for the questions. The questions covered four areas: 1) personal and lifestyle information, 2) stress management, 3) menopause information and 4) introspective questions. A copy of the full survey can be found in Appendix one.

The survey instrument was reviewed by Dr. Mala Matacin, a psychology professor with a research specialty in women and stress at the University of Hartford. Once that was completed and some minor changes made, I used the following methods of distribution:

- The survey was mailed or Emailed to selected friends, Email 'joke buddies,' and family members who were of menopause age.
- Copies of the survey were passed out to students in several of my Yoga classes.
- Colleagues on the Integrative Yoga Therapy chat list were asked to distribute the surveys to their students.

Twenty four women responded. Fifteen of the women had experienced Yoga on their own or as students in a formal class, six were Yoga teachers and three individuals had never

done Yoga. Sixteen of the respondents are known to me personally, some for a few months and others for as long as twenty years. The remainder came from my Integrative Yoga Therapy colleagues and their students. The answers to the survey provided anecdotal information and examples to illustrate key points in this thesis/project. All the names of the respondents have been changed to protect their privacy.

Survey II: A Comparison of Field Practices

It seemed prudent to seek information from Yoga teachers and therapists who are specifically working with Yoga and menopause in order to have a broader context for the application of Yoga to menopause for the program I am developing. Through networking, Email conversations and phone calls, information exchanges took place with teachers who are doing work with menopausal and post menopausal women. None of the teachers referred to in this second survey were respondents in the first survey and they are all identified by their real names.

A total of twenty five contacts were made. I was disappointed not to get a response from Nischala Devi who has done focused work on the *Chakras* and Yoga for heart health, Hari Kaur, who conducts teacher training in the Northeast for the Kundalini Yoga Teacher's Association and works with both prenatal and menopause issues, Linda Sparrowe who is writing a book on women's health, and Patricia Walden who is an internationally known Iyengar teacher.

However, of the twenty five contacts made, I was able to talk or communicate with thirteen teachers who have or are currently working with Yoga and menopause. Of those thirteen I eliminated teachers whose practices duplicated another's as I wanted to give the report variety. Not surprisingly, many of these teachers are themselves menopausal women who first noticed how their personal Yoga practice helped them manage their own transition.

For this survey, I developed four questions. They were:

- Please give me a summary of your Yoga training and background.
- Please describe your application of Yoga to menopause.
- Are there yogic philosophical or psychological principles that inform the approach and use of the practice/s recommended. If so, what are they?
- How long have you been working with menopausal women?

An overview of their practices and the principles behind their practices has given me a context from which to develop my Yoga programs for women in various stages of the menopause transition.

Results

Survey I: Menopause Research Survey

Although small and anecdotal in nature, these first person responses from the first survey shed interesting light on what a wide variety of women are thinking when it comes to their own personal menopause and how they choose to think about it, feel about it and deal with it. What follows are highlights of several of the key questions the group was asked to answer.

Personal, and Lifestyle Information

Question: Tell me a little about who you are, about your life and what have been the most important highlights, and challenges.

Although the majority of the respondents live in Connecticut (as I do), the sample brought in responses from Oregon, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Colorado, Michigan and Florida. The majority are Caucasian, three are African-American, one is Hispanic and one is of Native American heritage.

Backgrounds of the women varied widely in terms of relationship patterns and parental status. Twelve women were married with children and, of that number, three were in second marriages. Two women were married with no children, five were divorced with children, two were divorced with no children, one is a widow with children and two were single with no children.

The following is a list of highlights and challenges mentioned in order of frequency, however, it should be pointed out that many women say that their highlights were also their challenges.

Highlights

- Having and raising children (11)
- A sense of accomplishment with regard to careers, education and personally satisfying life achievements (13)
- Managing or having a variety of interesting relationships (friends and lovers) (9)
- Being in a successful marriage (7)
- Self-awareness and personal growth (6)
- Good health (1)

Challenges

- Difficult family and relationship issues (including marriage and divorce) (20)
- Career and work situations (8)
- Health issues (7)
- Deaths of loved ones (5)
- Recovery from addiction (4)
- Not becoming a parent (2)
- Cultural role limitations (2)

The life achievement highlights mentioned ranged from risk taking activities like jumping out of airplanes, marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Civil Rights Era and living in a “little cabin in the woods.”

Of those women without children, most did not mention feeling sad or regretful. However, two women specifically mentioned their childlessness as a sadness and something they are grieving. In terms of difficult relationship issues, one woman in a long term marriage with

two adult children reported a mid-life change of sexual preference and says she is now bisexual.

Stress Management Information: Stress Levels & Triggers

Question: What is your stress level; what tends to bring on or trigger stress in your life?

Seven of the twenty four respondents said that their stress level was 'low,' ten said 'moderate,' six said 'high' and one reported that her stress level was 'very high.' Work was the highest source of stress mentioned by the group(16). This was followed by relationships and relationship conflicts (11), demands on time and energy (4), negative thoughts and negative self-talk (2), menopause (1), life changes (1) and money (1).

Stress Reduction Techniques

Question: Please list the ways you find most effective for releasing stress

Seventeen of the twenty four respondents specifically mentioned Yoga or meditation as one tool that they use to help relieve the stress they feel at this point in their lives. Other techniques mentioned were physical activities like walking, and jogging (16), talking with friends and family (7), being in nature or having a change of scenery (7), gardening and yard work (5), and reading or journaling (4). Other activities mentioned were: listening to music, napping, shopping, taking a bath, being alone, volunteering, pets, cooking, listening to motivational information, watching television, eating and crying.

Those who listed experience with Yoga specifically mentioned receiving a variety of benefits from the practice:

- Overall well-being (6)
- Inner peace (6)
- Management of menopause symptoms (5)
- Relaxation (5)
- Physical flexibility (4)
- Pain relief (3)
- Celebration of life (1)

Menopause Information

Question: Where are you in the process of menopause?

One woman is experiencing premature menopause, two are premenopausal, nine are in perimenopause and twelve are post menopausal.

Question: Please indicate which of the following symptoms you have/had or may be currently experiencing.

The women were given a list of 37 symptoms culled from a variety of research sources. The list of symptoms checked off in order of frequency are:

Hot flashes and flushes 23
Night sweats 19
Forgetfulness 17
Insomnia 15
Depression 13
Fluctuating energy levels (increase and decrease) 13
Inability to concentrate 13
Joint Pain 13
Headaches (pressure, stress and migraine) 12
Fatigue 11
Loss of estrogen, and fluctuating hormone levels 11
Fuzzy thinking and confusion 11
Heart Palpitations 10
Headaches (pressure, stress and migraine) 10
Cold hands and feet 10
Changes in the libido (increase, decrease and change of sexual preference) 10
Vaginal dryness 9
Mood swings (rage, grief, crying jags) 8
Irritability 8
Inner turmoil 7
Indigestion 7
Numbness and tingling 5
Osteoporosis 5
Oversensitivity 5
Feelings of suffocation and anxiety 4
Dry eyes 4
High Blood Pressure 4
Formication (a feeling of 'ants crawling all over their body') 3
Urinary incontinence 2

Breast Cancer 2
Heart disease 1
Anxiety attacks/fear/extreme nervousness 1
Blind spots 0
Burning mouth 0
Diabetes 0
Dementia 0
Bone fractures 0

Christiane Northrup provides research data that discusses a link between the intensity of menstrual symptoms, chronic stress and the severity of menopausal symptoms experienced by women (Northrup, 1998, 60 - 65, 526-529). This survey did not yield specific information that might substantiate or refute that link among the twenty four respondents. It is also not possible to distinguish among the symptoms that may be related to the natural process of aging or the presence of other disease. However, it is interesting to note that the two women who listed the highest number of symptoms (24 and 23 respectively) are also the two women who seem to be living the most challenged lives. Between the two of them they have experienced a number of illnesses, including Asthma, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Degenerative Disk Disorder, Fibromyalgia, Sjrojen's, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, Thyroid Dysfunction and substance abuse addictions. Both have also experienced abusive, broken and strained relationships, homelessness, and loneliness. One is currently grieving over never becoming a parent and the other was recently reunited with a daughter she gave up for adoption.

Introspective Information

Question: What does your menopause mean to you? Please be as complete as possible and include any experiences, changes in the following areas: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual (changes in the way you practice or relate to your chosen spiritual path and/or changes you see in your life's purpose).

The three women who had never taken Yoga either saw menopause as simply cessation

of the menses or had not given it much thought:

- “It means freedom from the inconveniences of having a period,” - never done Yoga.
- “I haven’t really thought about it,” - never done Yoga.
- “I’m afraid it didn’t mean a great deal to me,” - never done Yoga.

Another three with experience in Yoga also felt this way:

- “Not sure,” - Yoga student.
- “Mostly it just makes me feel old,” - Yoga teacher.
- “Really have not given menopause much thought,” - Yoga dabbler.

However, the majority of women responded that it meant more to them than the physical cessation of menstruation. Their responses show that they have thought about this long and deeply. Here are sample phrases from the answers of each of those respondents:

- “It means that I am moving on to a different place in my life,”- Yoga teacher.
- “I see menopause as the springtime of the second half of my life - to quote Christiane Northrup,”- Yoga teacher.
- “A change in my life, an aging process but one I want to control,” - Yoga dabbler.
- “I know I’m going to experience many changes and I want to learn more how to handle them so I don’t feel so frustrated,”- Yoga student.
- “Everything I’ve valued can now be pursued,”- Yoga teacher.
- “I guess you could say that menopause launched me into my search for myself because that’s when I started all my work on me and began handling my interpersonal as well as physical problems,”- Yoga dabbler.
- “ - - - my spirituality is now at the forefront of my career,”- Yoga teacher.
- “I question that Christ is the only path to God,”- Yoga student.
- “Menopause is a time to evaluate one’s life and chart a deliberate path of growth

for the next phase of life,” - Yoga teacher.

- “Menopause means blossoming,”- Yoga student.
- “I feel like I have been transitioning for the last 14 years. I’m thinking menopause is a process not an event,” - Yoga teacher.
- “I am more aware that I am entering one of the final stages in the life cycle, but with plenty of good times ahead, “ - Yoga dabbler.
- “I’ve done the misinformed pity pot and now I’m feeling more proactive. I’m going to do my best to care for me with the same love that I have extended to my loved ones,”- Yoga student.
- “I don’t feel any spiritual connection with the onset of menopause perhaps with the exception of being more consciously aware of my mortality,” - Yoga dabbler.
- “Moving away from procreation changes my desire for sexual relating to a desire for more spiritually-infused sexuality with my husband,”- Yoga teacher.
- “Spiritually, I feel as though I’m free at last to pursue my own preferences in life,” - Yoga dabbler.

The other question that I consider ‘juicy’ is the one which asks them how they know what they know about themselves.

Question: How do you know what you know about yourself, your life and your world?

Although many of them essentially said, life experiences, and learning from older relatives and past mistakes, some of them said it in creative and interesting ways:

- “Most of what I know came from observing, reading and reflecting (which often begins as worrying). But what I’ve learned has been made more valuable -- more "mine" -- through discussions with close friends with whom I am totally honest, “ - Yoga dabbler.
- “Self awareness and by interacting with other humans, that’s how I learn about me - it also causes me to re-examine the values instilled in me from my upbringing,” - Yoga student.
- “Journal writing, spending time with myself, spiritual awareness, consistent introspective activities i.e running and Yoga,” - Yoga student.

- “Through my sensors, they are much keener now, “ - never done Yoga.
- “Spiritually, my view even of myself and my life is based on Buddhist views of emptiness. There is so much to learn about nothing,” - Yoga teacher.
- “I think, I pray, I meditate, I have experimented and I have had many good years of therapy,” - Yoga teacher.
- “I know what I know about myself because I can see my life, my path. Where I have come from and what I have lived through. So I know my story and can understand why I feel the way I do about various things. My experience has created my world,” - Yoga dabbler.
- “I have a sense of my self that has been there for a long time. I have misplaced it at times when I granted someone else authority over me (for whatever reason). My experience tells me what is true about me and the world at the time of the experience. Everything else in the world is hypothesis or second hand information. However, truth can be supplanted by further experience. With this view of reality, there's lots of room for transmogrification and miracles, “ - Yoga student.

Reflections

Overall, the survey responses were rich in the level of detail these women provided about their lives and showed a great deal of awareness of both the wanted and unwanted issues and situations in their lives and how they are coping and dealing with them. Several of the women have told me, some in the survey and others later in person, that they thoroughly enjoyed doing the survey, that it gave them an excuse to really dig deep into what they were experiencing. One said that she thought it would be wonderful to do a survey of this introspective nature every five years for the rest of her life.

There were some interesting differences in the overall responses to the surveys between those women who had taken, currently take or teach Yoga and those who had never taken Yoga. I read through the surveys many times and I gradually began to notice that the three women who had never taken or experienced Yoga were much less forthcoming about their lives and their

issues. Their survey responses were short and brief with many questions left unanswered, especially the ones requiring introspection. Since all three of these women are known to me personally for at least 20 years, I feel safe in saying that they tend to live their lives 'on the surface.' All of them have done either psychotherapy, twelve step work or both, and the level of self-awareness they have reached has helped them function very well on the social level. For whatever reason, however, they remain unaware of or are unwilling to share deeper levels of self-awareness.

This would seem to fit with Ken Wilber, Swami Rama, and Rudolph Ballentine's Ballentine view of the Western view of consciousness, and ego development. In their writing, personal development is ego development and consciousness is a characteristic of the ego (Wilber, 1979, 7, Rama, Ballentine et al., 2006). Personal development and maturing the ego for the purpose of social functioning and appropriate behavior is an important place to start one's healing journey. Joseph LePage, the founder and director of Integrative Yoga therapy is clear in stating that an individual needs to develop a healthy ego in order to move beyond it into the deeper levels of introspection that Yoga encourages (LePage, 1994, 9.41).

The women who have dabbled in, currently take or teach Yoga expressed a much deeper and richer level of awareness about what goes on for them in their lives, with their issues and with menopause. The survey results also show that those women who practice, teach or have dabbled with Yoga seem to have a greater awareness of the growth and potential for empowerment that can be theirs as a result of the work they do on themselves and their lives during the menopause transition. What is not clear is whether these women were already more aware and open and were drawn to Yoga because of that predisposition or whether it was the Yogic process that opened them. That is a question for another project. However, it is clear that they are aware and open and are using the opportunities and challenges of their menopause

journey to reflect, re-organize, change and express themselves in ways that truly reflect the deeper levels of their consciousness and how they see and understand themselves. This is a crucial part of the healing and spiritual journey. It is also clear that for the majority of them, Yoga is a tool that they are consciously using to help them make their transition through menopause.

The open ended questions and the fact that the majority of the women were known to me personally were both a strength and a weakness of the survey. On the one hand, the questions and, I believe, my relationship with the women yielded rich detailed information. On the other hand it was often very difficult to code or count the answers to many of the questions because the answers were so personal and not consistent from survey to survey.

Results

Survey II: A Comparison of Field Practices

“Although there are many styles of Yoga, the differences are usually about emphasis, such as focusing on strict alignment of the body, coordination of breath and movement, holding the postures, or the flow from one posture to another. No style is better than another; it's simply a matter of personal preference. More important than any style is the student-teacher relationship” (john@yogasite.com, 2000).

Represented in this next section is my report on the work of teachers who have been certified in or studied with teachers from the a variety of Yoga traditions and styles. The following descriptions of those traditions and styles, with the exception of Integrative Yoga Therapy, were provided by www.yogasite.com.

Anusara Yoga

Anusara (a-nu-SAR-a) means, "to step into the current of Divine Will", "following your heart", "flowing with Grace", "to move with the current of divine will." A new style developed by John Friend, Anusara Yoga is described as heart-oriented, spiritually inspiring, yet grounded in a deep knowledge of outer and inner body alignment. Each student's various abilities and limitations are deeply respected and honored.

Integral Yoga

Developed by Swami Satchidananda, the man who taught the crowds at the original Woodstock to chant "Om," Integral classes put almost as much emphasis on pranayama and meditation as they do on postures. Integral Yoga is used by Dr. Dean Ornish in his groundbreaking work on reversing heart disease.

Integrative Yoga Therapy

Integrative Yoga Therapy is aligned with the latest findings in mind/body health and provides a 5 step model for the application of Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga to a wide variety of teaching situations and health conditions. It promotes the development of Yoga in a wide variety of mainstream settings such as corporate stress management, mental health, health care and senior care, and traces its roots to Viniyoga and Krishnamacharya.

Iyengar Yoga

B.K.S. Iyengar is one of the best-known Yoga teachers and the creator of one of the most popular styles of Yoga in the world. His style of Yoga is noted for great attention to detail and the precise alignment of postures, as well as the use of props such as blocks and belts.

Kripalu Yoga

Called the Yoga of consciousness, Kripalu puts great emphasis on proper breath, alignment, coordinating breath and movement, and "honoring the wisdom of the body" -- you work according to the limits of your individual flexibility and strength. Alignment follows awareness. Students learn to focus on the physical and psychological reactions caused by various postures to develop their awareness of mind, body, emotion and spirit. There are three stages in Kripalu Yoga. Stage One focuses on learning the postures and exploring your bodies abilities. Stage Two involves holding the postures for an extended time, developing concentration and inner awareness. Stage Three is like a meditation in motion in which the movement from one posture to another arises unconsciously and spontaneously.

Kundalini Yoga

Kundalini Yoga in the tradition of Yogi Bhajan, who brought the style to the West in 1969, focuses on the controlled release of Kundalini energy. The practice involves classic poses sequenced in carefully structured '*kriyas*', or groupings of postures and exercises, breath practices, coordination of breath and movement, and meditation.

Viniyoga

Viniyoga is not so much a style as it is a methodology for developing practices for individual conditions and purposes. This is the approach developed by Sri. T. Krishnamacharya, teacher of well-known contemporary masters B.K.S. Iyengar, K. Pattabhi Jois and Indra Devi, and continued by his son, T.K.V. Desikachar. Key characteristic of the asana practice are the careful integration of the flow of breath with movement of the spine, with sequencing, adaptations and intensity dependent upon the overall context and goals. Function is stressed over form. Practices may also include pranayama, meditation, reflection, study and other classic elements. Personal practices are taught privately.

Following are profiles of the practices of ten teachers working with Yoga and menopause from three teaching styles or traditions: 1) Eclectic, 2) Integrative Yoga Therapy, and 3) Iyengar Yoga.

As awareness of the menopause transition has penetrated American consciousness, many Yoga teachers have responded by developing Yoga sequences for classes, private sessions and workshops that address the physical symptoms and smooth the transition to the later years of a woman's life.

ECLECTIC YOGA **“A Little of This, A Little of That”**

Patricia Hansen

Patricia Hansen is one of the founding mothers of American Yoga. She began to study Yoga as a result of an injury she sustained while caring for her terminally ill husband. She is a founding member of The International Association of Yoga Therapists, a founding member and a

past president of the Yoga Teachers of Colorado. She helped organize the first national Yoga teachers conference in 1984 and continued helping to organize the yearly conferences until Yoga Journal assumed responsibility in 1996. She is an internationally recognized teacher and lecturer on Yoga, and has written two Yoga study guides for the University of Denver and Metropolitan State College in Denver. She teaches regular classes, and does private sessions and ayurvedic readings.

In terms of her Yoga tradition identification she considers herself eclectic. She traces her training to her first teacher, Indra Devi, who was the first female student of Krishnamacharya. Patricia has studied Integral Yoga with Swami Satchidananda, Kundalini Yoga with Yogi Bhojan and Ayurveda with Dr. Vasant Lad. She holds a masters degree in Comparative Religion from the University of Denver. Her thesis is titled: "Ayurveda: A Theory for Human Wholeness and Health."

Patricia's approach to applying Yoga to menopause reflects her training and her experience as a post-menopausal woman. She emphasizes the application of classical Yoga and *White Tantric* in a gentle and consistent way over time according to the body and personality type (*dosha*) to gain lasting benefits. Her work is grounded in the Eight Limbs principle and she feels that women must go beyond postures to obtain Yoga's full benefits at this time of transition.

Patricia's menopause course is titled: The Magic of Menopause. It is comprehensive in its coverage of Patanjali's Eight Limbs. In terms of postures, Patricia's basic recommendation to provide a foundation for reproductive health is for women to practice Cobra, Half Bow, Full Bow, Half Locust, Full Locust, gentle Shoulder Stand, supported if necessary, and twists. This would be followed by *pranayamas* like Alternate Nostril Breathing, and Yoga Nidra, *mantra*, *mudra*, chanting and meditation. Patricia uses the *Koshas* and the *Chakras* in her work as well. She is emphatic about discouraging women at mid-life to practice Power Yoga or Bikram Yoga

unless they are *Kaphas* (an *Ayurvedic* body type needing heat and stimulation). Older women, she says, have metabolism shifts and strenuous practices need to take a back seat as women turn to the other limbs of Yoga that the west has ignored. There is a growing movement in American Yoga to incorporate more of the full experience of Yoga into classes, workshops and private sessions. Menopausal women, she thinks, may be a key group in helping to speed up that process. Women she says, have a 'knowingness' that doctors don't know or understand (Hansen, 2001).

Judith Hanson Lasater, Ph.D.

Judith is a physical therapist, and has been teaching Yoga since 1971. Her doctorate is in East-West psychology and she has written extensively on the therapeutic aspects of Yoga. She studied with and is certified by B. K. S. Iyengar, and considers her practice and teaching to be eclectic but Iyengar influenced. She currently teaches classes and trains Yoga teachers in kinesiology, Yoga therapeutics and the *Yoga Sutras* at the Iyengar Yoga Institute in San Francisco, California. She is President of the California Yoga Teachers Association and serves on the board of the International Association of Yoga Therapists (Lasater, 2001).

Judith's path of working with Yoga and menopause came through her own personal experience and trial and error in terms of what worked with students. Her practice uses the therapeutic aspects of Yoga to stimulate the endocrine system, particularly the ovaries and the pituitary glands and to quiet the nervous system.

She believes that women have a rhythm that needs to be honored. She believes that this rhythm is subclinical and therefore not easily recognized by the medical profession or often by women themselves. She writes that, "menopause is a rite of passage that marks the beginning of the second half of a woman's life" (Lasater, 1995, 191).

For Lasater, the postures, or asanas, are only a part of Yoga. She likes concepts about the

practice of Yoga that widen horizons as opposed to narrowing them and therefore, she encourages women in the art of ‘dis identification from the ego.’ She doesn’t use the word “detachment” because she feels that it is often means “apathy” in the Western interpretation.

Her specific practice for menopause is based on restorative poses and contains modifications for those with less flexibility. A full description of these postures and the principles behind them is detailed in her book, *Relax and Renew*. Judith also offers a variety of generally calming poses for stress and menopause that alleviate symptoms and balance the body’s energy. These can be accessed on ‘Judith Lasater’s Yoga Room’ at www.Onebody.com.

Susan Winter Ward

Susan Winter Ward is certified by the White Lotus Foundation run by Tracy Rich and Ganga White who are, in her words, “ somewhat Iyengar based, but very eclectic.” She holds certification from Yoga of the Heart Cardiac Yoga and Thai Massage, is on the faculty of Deepak Chopra’s web site and teaches internationally. She is currently studying Anusara Yoga with John Friend who was a senior Iyengar Yoga teacher (Winter Ward, 2001).

She has been teaching for eight years, operates the ‘Yoga at the Springs Center’ in Pagosa Colorado, and has produced a videotape on Yoga and menopause titled, "*Yoga For the Young at Heart: Embracing Menopause*." Her views on menopause see it as a natural process and “a path to peace and power. ”

Her rationale in using Yoga with mid-life women is based on the fact that Yoga helps the practitioner ‘listen to the body.’ She sees Yoga as giving women “a palette of paint” to chose from and by listening to the body women come to understand their personal palette and learn how to select and mix the colors in order to put together a practice that is appropriate for them.

She recommends inversions for menopause to help balance the endocrine system. In terms of the instruction to never practice inversions during the menstrual flow, Susan leaves that

decision up to the student because she believes that bodies are intelligent and that they know what to do for themselves, “---- if we get out of the way.”

Susan hopes that her students will learn to build awareness and ultimately learn to do their own Yoga. More on her philosophy and approach to Yoga and menopause can be accessed on her web site www.yogaheart.com (Winter Ward, 2001).

INTEGRATIVE YOGA THERAPY

Karen Kordisch

Karen, a Yoga teacher from Palatine, Illinois, received her basic Yoga training from the Himalayan Institute and has also completed the Integrative Yoga Therapy program. Since she is post menopausal, developing a class for women at mid-life, “seemed like a sensible thing to do.” Because research indicated that the causes for most menopause problems are hormone changes and stress, she decided to place the emphasis in her class on breathing and relaxation. Her classes include body awareness, pranayama, gentle warm-ups, with postures geared toward stimulating the endocrine system, and pelvic area. She employs restorative poses, relaxation, and meditation. She says,

“Because the class was small, we were able to talk, and I encouraged it. When I suggested stress might be a contributor to menopause problems, a couple of the women were surprised to consider that recent parental deaths might be affecting them. Sigh - - - .”

Karen worked with the principle of non-harming (*ahimsa*) and she encouraged the women to practice self-love as the first step in practicing non-harming (Kordisch, 2001).

Susan McCain

Susan is certified through Integrative Yoga Therapy. She is a wellness coordinator at a Senior Center, and is employed in the employee wellness center at a local hospital in Lima, Ohio

(McCain, 2001). In addition to working with menopausal women, she teaches Yoga classes for women with breast cancer and fibromyalgia. She came to work with menopausal women through teaching a Yoga class at a local YWCA . For three years she worked with the same core group of women between 48 and 60 years of age. Her focus with the group was stress management. She concentrated her efforts on breath work and standing poses using props when necessary. As they progressed, she introduced the classic Sun Salutation, restoratives and education on the *Chakras*. The Yogic principles she worked with were non-competitiveness and acceptance. In her words,

“ As this particular group matured and we knew each other on a personal level I would have to say that acceptance (leading to growth) was the underlying attitude. Myself, going through the menopausal changes with the students, I personally struggled with acceptance of my changing body and lifestyle,”
(McCain, 2001).

Satya Rita Milelli

Satya has been a Yoga student and practitioner for twenty seven years. As she learned more about the spiritual aspects of Yoga she searched for ways to incorporate this learning into her life. One result of this period of self-inquiry was the completion of her initial Yoga training in 1997 at the Kripalu Center Yoga Teacher Certification Program in Lenox, Massachusetts. Her education continues with the Professional Yoga therapist program offer by Integrative Yoga Therapy and the Kripalu Advanced Yoga Teacher Training Program. She teaches classes in Restorative Yoga, Yoga basics, meditation, Sun-Moon Yoga, Pre and Post Natal Yoga, and Yoga for Seniors. Currently she is a teaching staff member and mentor-apprentice at the PremYoga and Wellness Center in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Recently she began to do more work with women in menopause and has incorporated a full program called “Moon sisters: Honoring the Menstrual Cycle and Menopause.” Her

program is culled from a variety of sources (including an earlier version of my menopause symptom list which can be found in chapter 9). She offers postures, breathwork, meditations and visualizations to:

“Help them awaken or deepen awareness of their relationship with their female bodies, to strengthen the core of their being, the heart of the womb, and to bring them into a sense of empowerment and comfort in who they are as women” (Milelli, 2001).

Her resources include two of the ones I have found useful: Judith Lasater’s books, and Stephen Levine’s, “Heart of the Womb Meditation,” from his book, *Healing Into Life and Death* (Levine, 1987, 151). She says, “teaching Restorative Yoga also allowed me to witness the strong desire that women (and men) have to be open, relaxed, strong and comfortable in their bodies.”

One item that makes her program unique is the Moon Salutation posture flow developed by Laura Cornell. This posture flow was developed in the 1980's by senior Yoga teachers at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. It was created as a way to honor the feminine divine and to be appropriate during menstruation, pregnancy and other times when the Sun Salutation's heating qualities might not be suitable. Also, because the posture orientation is lateral it can be practiced in a circle and stretches muscles not reached by the classic Sun Salutation.

Debbie Padnuk

Debbie Padnuk, from Fort Myers, Florida is a registered nurse who holds a B.S. in the professional arts and has taken several graduate level courses in counseling and development. She trained as a Yoga therapist in 1998 with Joseph LePage of Integrative Yoga Therapy. By blending a deep love and respect for the traditions of the East with a medical and cultural background in the West, Debbie hopes to provide her students with tools to use in their daily life strengthen the body, calm the mind and renew the spirit.

Her menopause course is titled, “ The Developing Wise Woman,” and is a mixture of

sharing, education, postures, breathwork, relaxation, and guided meditation. The women who took her initial course had varied Yoga backgrounds: two had done no Yoga, two had limited Yoga experience and one had done Iyengar style Yoga. For resources, she turned to Somatics. The Somatic exercise system she uses was developed by Thomas Hanna and is based on the work of Moshe Feldenkrais. The basic premise is that much of the body's decline that we accept as inevitable is due to SMA (sensory motor amnesia). Somatics teaches sensory motor awareness which helps students become aware of chronic muscular holding patterns. She also uses Judith Lasater's restorative postures, provides information on the endocrine system and the *Chakras* and uses the Yoga Nidra scripts from the Integrative Yoga Therapy Manual. Her rationale for developing a program that contains a broad experience of Yoga is this:

“Yoga can be defined as the union of our physical, emotional and spiritual being. What better time than when we are having a “coming apart” feeling to experience Yoga? The physical benefits include balancing the hormonal system, muscle toning, stimulation of organs and increased flexibility and balance. Emotionally we are given a chance to take some control over this transition. Through practice and meditation, stress is relieved. And finally, spiritually we create an opportunity to allow a new purpose, a new connection to life to develop. Yoga helps us to view the menopausal years as transformative years - - - the development of the ‘wise woman’ (Padnuk, 1999).

IYENGAR YOGA

Wendy Dion

Wendy has a masters degree in Health Science/Rehabilitation Counseling and is a graduate of the two year Teacher Training Program, Iyengar Yoga Center, Boston, Massachusetts. She is the Owner, and Director of YogaPuram Center in Hartford, Connecticut, teaches classes at a hospital wellness center and gives private lessons to clients with therapeutic needs. In preparation for the University of Connecticut study on Yoga and osteoporosis, Wendy developed a posture flow to stress and strengthen bone which takes into consideration a student's ability, flexibility and physical condition with regard to high blood pressure, low back pain and

knee pain and weakness (see Program 6 in chapter nine). Wendy describes the principles behind her osteoporosis practice:

“Weight-bearing poses, particularly standing balancing poses, are generally recommended to build bone density. They can be performed at the wall, or a trestler for extra support if necessary. Props such as blankets, belts, and blocks are used to prevent strain and encourage proper actions. For poses requiring external rotation in the front leg, the front foot should be turned out more than 90 degrees for those with osteoporosis. Standing poses may also be done with short holds and several repetitions rather than holding the poses, in order to lubricate the joints. Additional modifications can be made for those with other conditions such as low back pain, knee pain/weakness, high blood pressure, etc.

Poses are held for short periods of time for beginners (15-30 seconds on each side) and gradually increased as students gain strength, stability, and flexibility. (up to 60 seconds each side) The breath should be fluid and unstrained at all times. For osteoporosis, standing poses may also be done with short holds and several repetitions rather than holding the poses, in order to lubricate the joints,” (Dion, 2001).

Suza Francina

Suza Francina is a certified Iyengar Yoga instructor with over 20 years of experience in the field of Yoga and exercise therapy. She is the author of *The New Yoga for People Over 50* and the director of the Ojai Yoga Center in Ojai, California. She specializes in classes and workshops for people over 50. She is now going through menopause herself and is using Yoga as a support (Francina, 2001).

She believes, like the other Yoga practitioners in this chapter, that menopause is a time for reflection and re-direction and that Yoga offers a powerful tool for helping women experience this stage of life as positive, both physically and spiritually. Yoga, she says, balances the endocrine system and reduces the effects of hormonal changes. Regarding the aspect of transformation or spiritual opening she says,

“During menopause many experienced (*Yoga*) practitioners discover they are more open to exploring the spiritual aspects of Yoga. They feel a deep pleasure in the peace and feeling of unity with the universe that they glimpse during their practice” (Francina, 1997, 114).

About hot flashes she believes, as many other practitioners do, that hot flashes may carry an energetic message and help remove bacteria and toxins from the body. However, her book does offer several postures for the relief of hot flashes and night sweats. The book also offers specific postures for specific symptoms like mood swings, depression, fatigue, headaches, incontinence and menstrual irregularity. Supported versions of more advanced postures are included as well (Francina, 1997, 114).

Lois Steinberg

Lois has over 25 years of study and teaching experience in Iyengar Yoga. As the director of the BKS Iyengar Yoga Institute of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, she has spent a cumulative of over four years studying with the Iyengar family in their general, medical, and intensive classes in Pune, India. She has a Ph.D. in nutritional sciences. About the application of Iyengar Yoga to menopause, she says,

“The Iyengar Yoga method teaches women to practice asana and pranayama according to their cycles. Menstrual, post-menstrual, and premenstrual practices are learned to keep the body healthy from menarch to menopause. A woman in her 40’s and beyond has to adjust her practice so that she doesn’t invite problems while going through the changes of menopause. For example, the menstrual flow at that time may become very light or very heavy. Both are normal, but require a different asana and pranayama practice during menstruation than the general menstrual sequence.

Many women have endometriosis, fibroids, and thyroid dysfunction that may make the transition to post-menopausal zest very difficult. Very specific variations on the classical Iyengar Yoga asanas are used by experienced teachers to help with these areas of concern.”

She is writing a book for the female Iyengar Yoga practitioner (Steinberg 2001).

Reflections

Conducting this field research with other Yoga teachers was an exciting and uplifting experience. To find that Yoga teachers are working with Yoga and menopause was gratifying; to find that many of those surveyed were incorporating elements in their programs and practices that are similar to mine was validating. What follows are a series of reflections the findings.

The most helpful in detailing the ‘how to do’ the classical postures were teachers from the Iyengar tradition, mainly because the Iyengar focus is centered on the body, how it operates and how it moves. The central focus of two of the Iyengar teachers I spoke with is on the physical aspects of a woman’s menstrual cycle. Lois Steinberg sums the basic Iyengar approach clearly. When asked what yogic principles informed her work, she said:

“Many women are unfamiliar with how to synchronize their Yoga practice with ovulation, menstruation, pre- and -post menstruation cycles. Some know that when menstruation begins, inversions are to be avoided and forward extensions and supine poses are to be practiced. A women's practice, however, is more thorough than that. Hormonal changes occur throughout the cycle, and to maintain a healthy balance of the endocrine system, a woman should also have a pre- and postmenstrual practice. The time after the postmenstrual phase has passed and before the premenstrual phase begins is then open for other practices, but still the organic body should be tended to with care” (Steinberg 2001).

When asked the same question, another Iyengar certified teacher, who has been working with women’s reproductive cycles for eight years and has written a pamphlet on the application of Yoga to the menstrual cycle, responded, “Can you please reword that. I'm not quite sure what you’re after.” This was a clear indication that for her the heart and soul of what she teaches is centered on the postures. I responded with a clarification and have heard nothing back to date.

For both of these teachers, the focus was clearly centered on when and how to do specific postures. The energetic, mental, emotional and spiritual levels, although they may have been there, were not addressed.

Suza Francina discusses the role and impact of menopause on a woman's life from a broader perspective in her book, *The New Yoga For People Over 50*, and brings in the spiritual aspect but her program also keeps the focus primarily on the physical postures, in terms of how to do them and how to modify them for aging bodies. Wendy Dion's work on osteoporosis also is clearly focused on the physical and physiological.

In a search for more information on how Iyengar Yoga deals with menopause, I went to the source and eagerly read Geeta Iyengar's book, *Yoga, a Gem for Women*. I was looking for information on the application of the Eight Limbs of Yoga to the menopause transition. What I found were four paragraphs discussing menopause (Iyengar, 1990, 52) and a list of postures to, "give a soothing sensation to the nerves" and "correct the functioning of the endocrine system" (Iyengar, 1990, 83-84).

Linda Sparrowe and Patricia Walden, teachers in the Iyengar tradition, are also, along with Steinberg, working to provide more information for women on how to modify and change their practice with regards to their reproductive cycle. Much of the credit for this, according to Susan Winter Ward goes to Patricia Walden. Susan said, "I think the info from the Iyengar tradition is due, in large part, to Patricia Walden's study with Geeta Iyengar" (Winter Ward, 2001). Although the focus, from my perspective, and from what these teachers have shared with me, is primarily on the physical and physiological aspects of Yoga postures, it is important work and will amplify and feed the work of those whose application of Yoga to menopause is more broadly focused and more inclusive of the other limbs of Yoga.

When looking at the practices developed by those who consider themselves 'eclectic' and those from the Integrative Yoga Therapy tradition we find a more deliberate holistic view of Yoga and of the student. The concept of holism as defined by Suzan Walter, President of the American Holistic Health Association, starts with recognizing the interrelationship between all

aspects of an individual, the premise that achieving health is an ongoing personal journey toward optimal functioning, and the concept that the whole is made up of interdependent parts. The other piece of this foundation rests on the idea that the healthcare professional and the patient work as partners and that symptoms are a guide that ask us to look below the surface for the root cause (Walter, 2001).

The Eight Limbs structure that Integrative Yoga Therapy and other teachers profiled in this chapter apply in their work are consciously used to work with all the levels of a woman's being. This includes, studies of the ethical system (*Yama, Niyama*), breathwork, *Yoga Nidra*, other forms of sensory awareness and meditation. Each of these teachers has chosen one or more psychological or philosophical concepts to inform their presentation of postures in a class, workshop or private session situation. Judith Lasater focuses on 'sub clinical' rhythms and Restorative Yoga as well as encouraging women to 'dis-identify' with their ego.

Karen Kordisch works with the principle of non-harming; Susan McCain, and Debbie Padnuk with the principle of acceptance. Susan Winter Ward centers her program on listening to the body and making Yoga personal while Satya Rita Milelli works with "awareness of mind-body-spirit wholeness and wellness." Their programs are consciously presented with these principles and lend a more holistic energy to working with the postures.

This profile is intended to point out the similarities and differences in approaches that different Yoga traditions and styles advocate in applying Yoga to menopause. All of the applications are valid, viable and provide opportunities for women to benefit from their practice. Fortunately, we live in a time where there are many forms and styles of Yoga to choose from. Personally, I am delighted and gratified to find others outside of the Integrative Yoga Therapy organization using the same holistic approach that I have chosen.

CHAPTER 3

MENOPAUSE AS EVENT, PROCESS AND TRANSFORMATION

*Doorways are sacred to women for we are the doorways of life
and we must choose what comes in and what goes out*

--- Marge Piercy

(Eisen, 2000)

Menopause as Event

Before discussing menopause conceptually as event, process or transformation, and the impact that those views can have on the experience of menopause, it will be important to know what menopause is and understand the transitional stages a woman can experience as she moves through the menopausal journey. How an individual woman understands menopause is crucial to developing a Yoga program to help her with menopausal issues. Menopause, according to Dr. Susan Lark, means different things to different women. Some women see menopause as an event or a collection of symptoms. Others view it as a process that lasts a lifetime (Lark, 1990, 4). Because of the existence of divergent belief systems, it becomes important to recognize, and understand the consequences that a definition or perception of menopause can have on individual women. If the belief system or perception of menopause that a woman holds is solicited in the intake process of a class, workshop or private session, it can play a key role in helping Yoga teachers and therapists design programs to help individual women understand and deal with their personal process.

Because this issue is so important, the following definitions of the major phases of the menopause process will be helpful to women trying to understand where they are in their menopause process (Rosenthal, 1999, 1-7). Personally, I was so confused that it took me a year to understand mine because I could not find clear definitions of the menopausal process stages.

Premature Menopause

This term refers to the menopausal transition that occurs in one out of every one hundred women in their thirties or early forties. It is usually faster and shorter in duration than the normal menopausal transition. Premature menopause is often due to an illness or chronic stressor (Northrup, 2000, 111).

Premenopause

The term premenopause refers to women whose periods have just begun to get irregular but who have not yet experienced the classic symptoms of menopause. Their menstrual cycle may shorten, or get longer with bleeding heavier or lighter. In addition to slightly irregular periods, premenopausal women may begin feeling tired, need to take naps, experience minor sleep disturbances, strange little aches and pains and emotional irritability. One woman reported this as feeling, "just a bit off my game." Premenopause usually begins in the mid forties. However, not every woman experiences this stage. Some women go right into the perimenopausal stage (Rosenthal, 1999, 1-2).

Perimenopause

This term applies to women experiencing a variety of symptoms and is used to cover the symptomatic (or non symptomatic) time prior to the last official menstrual period and the symptomatic (or non symptomatic) time following the last official menstrual period. Women in this stage who go to their doctor are usually experiencing a multitude of symptoms which interfere with their lives. Symptoms can be physical, mental/emotional, or a combination of both. Susan Lark, Marian Thornton, Christiane Northrup and David Simon list the most common physical symptoms of menopause (Lark, 1996, 4-10; Thornton, 1997, 274 - 283; Northrup, 2001 124-133; Simon, 1997, 283 - 4).

Physical Symptoms

Loss of estrogen, and fluctuating hormone levels

Insomnia

Hot flashes and flushes

Heart Palpitations

Night sweats

Headaches (pressure, stress and migraine)

Cold hands and feet

Numbness and tingling

Formication (a feeling of 'ants crawling all over their body')

Joint Pain

Urinary incontinence

Vaginal dryness

Osteoporosis

Blind spots

Susun Weed adds several other lesser recognized, but important symptoms that can be experienced during the menopausal process (Weed, 1992, 53 - 118).

Additional Physical Symptoms

Dry eyes
Burning mouth
Indigestion
Fatigue
Fluctuating energy levels (increase and decrease)

Thornton, Weed, Northrup and Marian VanEyck McCain list a wide variety of mental and emotional symptoms that can be experienced during this time.

Mental/Emotional Symptoms

Mood swings (rage, grief, crying jags)
Depression
Irritability
Anxiety attacks/fear/extreme nervousness
Forgetfulness
Inability to concentrate
Changes in the libido (increase, decrease and change of sexual preference)
Oversensitivity
Fuzzy thinking and confusion
Inner turmoil
Feelings of suffocation and anxiety

Menopause

This term refers specifically to the date of a woman's last menstrual period, and can only be determined retroactively after six months to a year without any bleeding. The date of the last period is the official date of the menopause. During this time a woman may experience, some, none or all of the symptoms listing under perimenopause. Women who undergo hysterectomies are officially 'menopausal' on the date of their surgery (Rosenthal, 1999, 1-2).

Post menopause

This term refers to women who have been free of menstrual periods for at least six months to one year. It includes women who have gone through surgical menopause, premature menopause and natural menopause (Rosenthal, 1999, 1-2). Women can anticipate spending up to one third of their lives in this post menopausal state. Health issues of particular importance to the post menopausal woman are:

Health Issues/Concerns

Cardiovascular disease
Osteoporosis
Diabetes
High Blood Pressure
Dementia
Bone fractures

Menopause is one of the most significant life stages a woman experiences. Christiane Northrup, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Gail Sheehy, Marian VanEyk McCain and Susun Weed's written work describe menopause as a developmental process that encourages women to examine and heal their lives. The physical nature of the process changes women at the cellular level (Northrup, 1998, 515-518); the energetic/spiritual nature urges women to uncover, process and resolve unfinished business, journey inward to the self and bring the process of living into full consciousness (McCain, 1991, 103-107).

However, Western culture, with its long history of subjugating women to second class citizenship and marginalizing their talents and contributions, has, not surprisingly, marginalized menopause. Only with the baby boomer generation has menopause received attention. Unfortunately, most of the attention has come from the medical establishment which defines menopause, natural or artificial, as a clinical event -- -- -- " a simple biological happening which for certain people has emotional 'side effects" (McCain, 1991, 159). The conventional medical view is that menopause is a "deficiency disease, not a natural process" (Northrup 1998, 522).

This view of menopause is a reflection of the way our Western medical system pathologizes and medicalizes women's health in general. Women's reproductive systems are described in terms of functional failure; breasts and genital organs gradually "atrophy," "wither" and become "senile." Menopause is viewed as "failed production." The female reproductive system has "shut down," (Longscope, Hunter & Franz, 1998, 518). Women's bodies and life

functions, including menopause, are subject to this view (Northrup, 1998, 518).

Although most women recognize the physical changes their bodies undergo during menopause many do not tend to view the process with the same harsh imagery used by the medical profession although they do express a variety of mixed feelings. Lois, a married, post menopausal grandmother says,

“Physically, I am delighted to be on the other side of menopause. Once I'd had our children, I considered my periods a nuisance. Skipping that monthly inconvenience does not make me feel less womanly. But the wrinkles, gray hair and creeping pounds -- now that's something I do regret! Spiritually, I feel as though I'm free at last to pursue my own preferences in life. No longer young, I have little value in this society. On the one hand that's very annoying, but on the other, my invisibility also opens the door out of the gilded cage of others' praise and approval.”

The majority of women in a study published in *The Journal of The North American Menopause Society*, defined menopause as the "(1) cessation of their periods, (2) end of their reproductive ability, (3) a time of hormonal changes, (4) a change of life, (5) a changing body, (6) changing emotions, and (7) an aging process. Few women in this cohort held the medical view of menopause as a time of symptoms, disease risk or a time for medical care. However, most were uncertain of their expectations of their own menopause or had no expectations at all (Woods & Mitchell, 1999, 167 - 173).

Even so, menopause and its symptoms are perceived by many women to be biological events to be fixed or forgotten. Even women who look forward to ending menstruation and their child bearing years can have difficult moments if menopause and its symptoms are perceived simply as biological events. Hot flashes are a good example. A friend of mine recently called to tell me that her hot flashes had returned two years after her last period. She is a highly intelligent woman who had dutifully done research, read the latest books, and peppered her doctor with well thought out questions. She felt in charge and in control. She consciously chose to use herbal

phytoestrogen supplements instead of hormone replacement therapy, made healthy changes in her diet, took calcium supplements to prevent osteoporosis, and committed to a daily exercise program. She was elated when her 'year without periods,' was up and her hot flashes stopped. Now, two years later the hot flashes had returned. She was upset, bewildered and concerned. She was, according to the technical definitions, post menopausal, so why, she wondered, was she having hot flashes?

Northrup, in her book *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, points out that hot flashes, perhaps, among the most bothersome symptoms of menopause, may occur for years after the climacteric -- -- -- the time before and after the last period (Northrup, 1998, 546). I also asked my own naturopath about my friend's concern. She laughed, confirmed Northrup's statement, and said, "Tell your friend that this a life long process. She'll have to get used to it." When I told my friend about this, she was stunned, "Why, she asked, didn't my doctor tell me that?" I do not think that my friend is unusual. Hot flashes, for her, were a time-bounded symptom of menopause that had been 'fixed.' They were an event, not part of a process.

A woman's last menstrual period is an event that can only be determined retroactively. Between the time of the last period and a woman's certainty that it was her last period, there exists a period of time. Thornton states, "The tent is being packed up, but the circus is not out of town until six spotless months have gone by" (Thornton, 1997, 273). The only circumstance in which a woman can be certain that a particular period is the last one of her life is if she is preparing for a hysterectomy. Otherwise, one day she will look back and realize that she has passed the mark of six months or one year and is now officially 'menopausal' (McCain, 1991, 164).

Approximately eighty percent of women experience some symptoms of menopause (Lark, 1996, 4). Many women who seek medical help are those whose symptoms are intense,

those who may be experiencing physical and emotional problems, or those who see menopause as a time of unpleasantness, disease and discomfort. Northrup cites studies indicating that women who have a history of uncomfortable or severe PMS (*premenstrual syndrome*) are more likely to have a difficult transition through menopause (Northrup, 2000, 41-42, 499). Deborah is one of these women.

Deborah was a colleague of mine from a former job. What I know about her, I know because of our friendship. She had a childhood filled with loss and trauma. She was born in a Polish concentration camp and came to America as an immigrant after World war II. She is currently locked in a difficult relationship with her mother who was never able to get past feeling like a victim and still views life negatively. Deborah seemed to be approaching menopause with her mother's attitude. She had a history of PMS and migraine headaches and was now experiencing a rough perimenopause. Her periods were irregular, she experienced a lot of cramping and pelvic pain, headaches and mood swings which caused her to miss days at work each month. We worked in a small all female office and the three of us shared our experiences openly. When Deborah talked about menopause, her conversation was centered around which therapist she had last seen and what they had prescribed to help fix the problem. One pill for headaches, birth control pills for her irregular periods and something else for her moods. She saw each symptom as a separate entity. Susan and I, both post menopausal as a result of hysterectomies, talked to Deborah about the mind/body connection and the need to do internal work. She eagerly participated in the discussions, and read the recommended books. In spite of her verbal acceptance of this perspective, she often complained about her situation and wished for a hysterectomy to "get it all over with."

Violet is another friend of mine whom I have known for twelve years. Her experience is the opposite. She says,

"Fortunately, I am one of those women for whom menopause was not a very big deal. My mother hadn't found it to be a momentous event in life either, so I think that I wasn't expecting it to be. In fact, at times I have marveled at how this very natural process is so often portrayed as somehow unnatural and in need of "fixing." But of course such an attitude ensures the sale of still more products to "fix" women. At the time of my hysterectomy at age 40, my ovaries were left intact. Because they were not removed, I was told that I would still have to go through menopause, which I did at around age 50 or so (I don't even remember exactly.)"

Deborah makes the round of doctors hoping to find one who can prescribe something to fix her. Violet's experience of menopause was uneventful. When asked about PMS symptoms, she reported that they were mild. When asked what menopause meant to her she said, "I don't remember attaching any great meaning to menopause. It came, it wasn't difficult, it went, and I forgot about it in fairly short order. Haven't much thought about it since."

Marlena, a childless woman by choice, is also in this category. She, like Violet, had few symptoms of PMS. She is post-menopausal, has had a bout with breast cancer, refused hormonal replacement therapy and deals with hot flashes, night sweats and fatigue through diet and exercise. When asked what menopause means to her, she replied, "It means freedom from the inconveniences of having a period."

Deborah, Violet and Marlena perceive menopause as a biological happening, something to be either fixed or forgotten, but there is another meaning to menopause. Life presents everyone with many points of entry to begin or continue the ongoing process of evolution. Even if Deborah, Violet and Marlena have done inner work through therapy or other means, menopause provides an additional opportunity to broaden and deepen that work in a myriad of ways. Whether the response to menopause is one of discomfort and frustration or relief from periods and reproductive worries it is my opinion that women who overlook the deeper meaning of menopause as a catalyst for healing and transformation have missed an opportunity to consciously participate in a vital developmental process.

Menopause as Process

The personal, if it is deep enough, becomes universal, mythical, symbolic

- - - Anais Nin

(Eisen, 2000)

Process is defined by Webster's as a "continuing development involving many changes." Menopause is, indeed, a multi-year process which brings with it life altering changes and sometimes transformation. Dr. Christiane Northrup, a leading expert in women's health issues and a physician open to alternative and complementary methodologies, offers a process oriented definition of menopause. She says, "The years surrounding menopause and encompassing the gradual change in ovarian function constitute an entire stage of a woman's life, lasting from six to thirteen years, known as the climacteric" (Northrup 1998, 515). This natural menopause tends to take place between the ages of forty-eight and fifty-two. Artificial menopause, which is the surgical removal of uterus and both ovaries, can occur at any age after the onset of menstruation and premature menopause can occur as early as the thirties (Northrup, 1998, 518).

There are more women entering menopause than ever before. "With the graying of the baby boomers in America, the number of menopausal women is increasing dramatically. It is estimated that currently 4,000 women each day enter menopause" (Thornton, 1997, 273). Given today's emphasis on health and living longer, and the fact that life expectancy for women is now approximately eighty-four years, a woman in America can anticipate spending thirty or more of those years, close to one-third of her life, in a post reproductive state. Without reproductive and care-taking responsibilities, more of a woman's time can be utilized for this inner work of personal self-development, healing and realization.

However, for some women who have not borne children, a conscious mourning process is often needed before they can move on to the next phase of life. Two women who responded to the menopause survey discussed in chapter two commented on that issue. Dodie, has entered

perimenopause and has no children. She has accepted this situation and her only comment about it was, "Doors open, doors close." Nadine, who is post menopausal, is less philosophical. She found herself empty, jealous of her friends' children and grandchildren and, " -- -- -- angry at God." She is aware of these feelings and is working with them. It is a pattern she knows must change if she is to move on. Understanding the significance of menopause and how individual women perceive it based on history, lifestyle, and belief patterns is crucial for anyone interested in working with women at this stage of life.

Many world cultures and societies recognize the deeper purpose of the menopause process and celebrate it with ritual or openly acknowledge that a woman's role has changed. For example:

In some native cultures post menopausal women are seen as wise and powerful retaining their "wise blood" instead of shedding it every month. (Northrup, 1998, 517)

In many cultures studied by Margaret Mead, post menopausal women are given the status and privileges of men. (McCain, 1991, 21)

One of the clearest examples of how our culture does not recognize this process or view menopause in a positive light is illustrated by Dr. Christiane Northrup in her book "*Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*." She is describing the cover of a magazine called *Menopause Medicine*, "A woman stands by an open window with filmy curtains blowing at her side; only her back is visible. She is looking out at a landscape covered by dead trees and parched dry earth. The caption underneath this illustration reads, "The Fate of the Untreated Menopause." The women who accept this grim view of their mid-life experience as well as many of those who do not, still feel as though their lives are coming apart at the seams.

One issue key to the discussion of our culture's view of menopause and menopause as a process centers around the use of the word itself. The word menopause is used in the social

context to cover the entire spectrum of the menopausal process and in the medical context to pinpoint the date of the last menstrual period. This use of the word to note a single event in time can cause confusion in understanding menopause. Many physicians do not understand that the transition through menopause is a complex process that can take years and manifest a variety of subtle symptoms over time depending upon a woman's biological and psychological makeup. As a result, patients may be misdiagnosed (Barbach, 2000, 7).

For example, after my surgery, I began hormone replacement therapy. The hot flashes and mood swings stopped but I began getting upper respiratory infections and sore throats regularly and experienced a great deal of fatigue. I spoke with my surgeon who had no answers for me. My general practitioner did a few tests to rule out thyroid problems and prescribed an antihistamine, telling me it was probably due to allergies. I refused the prescription, talked to some post menopausal friends and got the name of a naturopath who specialized in women's health. One visit later, I was taking a supplement to restore intestinal bacteria that the naturopath said had been stripped by the anesthesia I had received during my hysterectomy surgery. One week later, I was my old peppy self.

Five years later, I experienced horrid and persistent indigestion. I thought it was stress because I was unhappy in my job and my marriage. A friend gave me Susun Weed's book on menopause and I was astonished to read that indigestion can be a symptom related to menopause. I went to see my gynecologist to ask about it and to see if the hormone replacement therapy could be involved. She shook her head, "No, not likely." I went to see my naturopath and asked the same question. Her response was radically different. She told me that the estrogen I was taking was processed through the liver and since my digestive system was the first part of my body to feel stress it was quite likely that hormone replacement therapy was a culprit. I stopped taking the pills and the indigestion was gone in forty-eight hours. Since that time I've been on

natural menopause supplements with very positive results and no return of indigestion even when I've been under stress.

For some women, the goal of seeing menopause as a process may be limited to symptom relief, maturing the ego, strengthening self-esteem and embarking on external self-improvement. These are often the places we start the process of change. I certainly started there with a change in hairdo, diet, clothes and my first ever visit to a counselor. Some stay there, but others will find themselves ready to move deeper into internal change. For those ready to accept the deeper work of the process, the goals will be to recognize and accept ourselves as we are with all the changes taking place in our body/minds, and to select grounding principles which can help us avoid the trap that Frances Vaughn calls the, "golden chains," those subtle distractions, temptations, spiritual beliefs and practices that we feel cannot be questioned and so keep us tied to one narrow aspect of the spiritual journey (Vaughn, 1995, 6-7).

Often the psychological process and the spiritual practice follow one another. For instance, I began doing Yoga *asanas* a way to feel physically fit without having to do aerobics. The psychological process of inner reflection and the spiritual aspect of my Yoga practice snuck up on me, and I'm still working to understand the difference between the two. Often I will find that a particular exercise or meditation releases something psychological. I am not always aware of the root or source of the feeling or sensation, but I know when it is being released and can often tie it to something that had happened or is happening in my life.

This process of self discovery and transformation is often ignited in women when they encounter menopause. When I began to understand that I was involved in a process that was affecting and changing everything in my life, I began to write, "The Lateral Drift of Mariposa Jones," as a way to tell and understand my own story. For me, the journey of my main character served as one way to become and remain aware of the lessons of my menopause journey. The

process was incredibly therapeutic. Although the external events in the novel are total fiction, the inner life and thoughts of the main character and her struggle to face the impact of her hysterectomy on her life is absolutely real and true. I think I chose fiction as a way to express this because I have always thought that the English language is not always suitable for revealing the real truth of things. It does not hold enough. It's like reading about yourself in the newspaper. All the facts may be true, but they too often fail to capture the full truth of the experience. Swimme talks about this in *Canticle to the Cosmos*, the companion to *The Universe Story*. He describes the process of trying to photograph a sunrise. You capture the image, but the real sunrise cannot be caught on film. An objective sunrise exists, but you have to find another way to see it. Some choose sculpture, painting, poetry or music. I have chosen to plunge into Yoga and writing to understand and integrate the lessons of the menopause process.

Women who are exposed to this idea of menopause as process and opportunity for transformation may find a valuable opportunity for conscious self-healing and change. However, if all that can be seen is a time of endings, and discomfort or release from the 'inconvenience' of menstrual periods, the rich possibilities inherent in this organic process may be missed.

Menopause as Transformation

Heroes take journeys, confront dragons, and discover the treasure of their true selves.

- - - Carol Pearson
(Eisen, 2000)

For all women, menopause is a process that involves much more than physiological changes in the body. This is true even if they are not aware of all the multi dimensional changes that may be taking place in their lives. Mainstream medicine, mainly through medication, is focused on helping women manage these changes and the symptoms sometimes associated with them but does little to help women understand how menopause can transform the ways in which they experience themselves, as human beings, at this time of their lives. Kaitlin, is finding this out. She is perimenopausal, experiencing hot flashes and mental confusion. She talks of feeling 'disconnected' from her professional colleagues and her work. She is dealing with a challenging time in her marriage. She says she no longer feels, 'normal.' In addition to taking a Yoga class which she says helps her "stay sane," she has made the rounds of professionals in search of a medical reason for her constant low back pain and what she believes is sciatica. She has been tested, imaged and scanned and told that there is nothing physically wrong with her. She has been advised to take estrogen, and seek counseling. Last year she attended Yoga class every week and stayed behind to talk. She was beginning to examine some of the major issues she is challenged by -- -- -- a variety of menopausal symptoms, including inner turmoil that distresses her, heart palpitations, a daughter entering puberty, a critically ill husband and aging in general. Kaitlin has been finding some relief in her Yoga asana practice, "Yoga is the most helpful thing for joint pain." At this time she is not ready or able to engage the deeper practices of meditation, "I can't sit down long enough and concentrate -- -- -- too scattered." Even so, Kaitlin is interested in learning and she eagerly participated in the experimental Yoga and menopause class

discussed in chapter eight and currently attends weekly facilitated Yoga practices which I hold in my home.

Northrup says that our hormonal cycles provide women naturally with several wake-up calls that can point us in the direction of life changing transformation if we heed them. We ignore them, she says, at our own peril. These wake up calls come as PMS, postpartum depression, seasonal affective disorder and menopause. If women who experience these conditions do not pay attention to the irritability, mood swings, depression and anger that can be experienced at such times, they can probably expect a more difficult time at menopause, "the mother of all wake-up calls," (Northrup, 2000, 36-41). These wake-up calls are our body's way of letting us know that we need to do inner work to heal an experience, conflict or issue in our lives. At menopause women have increased psychic energy available for this inner work. The psychic energy available is related to a menopausal woman's fluctuating hormone levels that alter the brain chemistry by 'sparking' changes to the temporal lobes associated with enhanced intuition -- -- -- the right brain hemisphere. This process which began with menstruation continues into menopause (Northrup, 2000, 10 -38).

"At midlife, the hormonal milieu that was present for only a few days each month during most of your productive years, the milieu that was designed to spur you on to reexamine your life just a little at a time, now gets stuck in the on position for weeks or months at a time" (Northrup, 2000, 38).

The menopausal wake-up call can put a woman in conflict with her understanding of herself and her life. When this happened to me, I, like many others, sought traditional Western psychotherapy. I have many friends who have benefited from traditional psychotherapy and it can be a useful tool in beginning the healing process. However, and here I speak only for myself and my own experience, after two years of on and off individual and couples counseling with my husband, I realized that I got most of my understanding, healing and relief from talking to a good

friend, from creative writing and from doing Yoga. Once I realized that the physical postures of Yoga relaxed me and helped me safely examine the issues in my life that I needed to address, and be more present in the middle of my new experiences I had to know more about the psychological and philosophical context of Yoga. What I found was a wealth of information that continues to help me with my own healing and transformative process. Yoga provided a context for helping me understand my new sense of self within the menopausal experience. The most significant lesson I learned was that over time the physical work of Yoga had been releasing stress and tension from my body. Many of my students have heard me say, "Yoga has saved me thousands of dollars and many years on a shrink's couch. I now do most of my inner work on the mat."

Yoga tradition holds that there are four stages of life: the student the householder, the forest dweller and the renunciate (Feuerstein, 1998, 930). As a student you learn about your role in society, as a householder you either raise a family or make a contribution to your tribe or society through your relationships, work or volunteer efforts. As a forest dweller, or seeker, you isolate yourself from your former life and begin the preparatory work for spiritual realization, and finally you become a renunciate, a *Samnyasin*, or holy person and begin a life of wandering which turns your final years into a sacred opportunity for wisdom and enlightenment. For women, the forest dweller stage seems perfectly timed to occur about the time she enters menopause, and her children, if she has any, leave home to begin lives of their own. This view of the female human life span is supported by many Western writers and thinkers who point to the urge or drive which occurs during the menopausal years and moves women to begin the inner journey, address unfinished business, and claim the wisdom and power inherent in this time of their lives (McCain, 1991, 42; Myss, 1996, 143; Northrup, 1998, 515). Mary Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule and Clarissa Pinkola Estes

discuss the developmental journey toward self-knowing without tying it to a specific age but recognize that significant numbers of women begin this journey around the age of menopause (Belenky, et al. 1986, 55; Estes, 1995, tape 1). Seen from this perspective, the menopausal process is a natural rite of passage that can lead to transformation.

The discussion of menopause as an opportunity for transformation of consciousness needs to be based on a definition of transformation, an explanation of the differences between the Eastern and Western perspectives of consciousness, and an understanding of the role initiation plays in the transformative process.

Transformation is a change in the character, form, nature or condition of something or someone, and can take place on many levels (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1988, 1420). The physiological transformation of menopause is clear. Menstruation stops and hormone levels change. The body can experience real and visible changes such as dry skin, hot flashes, thinning hair, weight gain and wrinkles. The psychological and spiritual transformation that can occur at this time is not as clear. These changes are psycho-spiritual and internal in nature, visible to others only by noticeable changes in behavior. Information that could be helpful in providing guidelines, stories and a context for women having psycho-spiritual experiences during their menopause years is not widely available. A review of popular literature shows that the topics of transformation and menopause are seldom encountered in the same article or book. However, there are a few books that discuss this subject directly and intelligently. One excellent resource is Marian Van Eyk McCain's, *Transformation Through Menopause*. McCain discusses menopause as process and an opportunity for conscious transformation. The metaphor of caterpillar to butterfly is used to express that relationship:

"Imagine yourself inside the cocoon. Imagine that it would be possible to feel the changes happening. Like a crucible, that cocoon of change needs heat in order to create the metamorphosis within. ---- ---- --- feel the fire that is rearranging your cells, the creative fire of your metamorphosis into

the woman you will eventually become, a woman whose menstrual blood will have changed, alchemically into wisdom" (McCain 1991, 42).

This "seeing the world in a new way," progresses to living the transformation through practice and experience. This process of becoming aware of who we newly are at this time of life, of accepting that self and integrating that self into the larger world requires inner work and a transformation of consciousness (McCain, 1991, 163).

Eastern and Western perspectives on what constitutes consciousness are different. In the West, consciousness is usually discussed as a psychological process centered around what the ego or thinking mind can see or understand. Personal development is ego development and consciousness is a characteristic of the ego (Wilber, 1979, 7; Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 206). In Yoga, the thinking mind or ego is only one part of consciousness which has many levels. Consciousness, in the Eastern view is Reality and the ego a small part, simply one level of many. The aim of conventional psychotherapy is to create a strong and healthy ego, and an acceptable self-image. The ultimate goal of the Eastern view of Consciousness is to heal the split between the total being and the environment, to reveal a direct experience of the divine (Goleman, 1977, 173-4; Feuerstein, 1998, 3-5; Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 206).

According to the commentary on the *Yoga Sutras* by Swami Venkatesananda, the only way to get close to the truth of Reality, or the Eastern view of Consciousness, is to not strive, not try, but to realize "spontaneous self awareness," which provides a complete and total change whereby old habits and tendencies drop away (Venkatesananda, 10).

This state of Consciousness is non dual, and occasionally graces seekers and non-seekers alike with its pervading indescribable presence. As Ken Wilber says, "non dualism - has an unbelievably awkward characteristic: namely its utterly compelling answer cannot be captured in words, a type of metaphysical catch 22 that absolutely guarantees to solve all your problems as

long as you don't ask it to," (Wilber 1983, xii). It means that we have cast off our illusions about reality and accept, on faith that it is more than we can observe, more than science, and more than intellect can define. It can be approached through spiritual practice and contemplation, but even here Wilber offers a caution. He says, “

-- --all three of these modes of knowing (*perception, reason and contemplation*), can be validated with similar degrees of confidence; and thus all three modes are perfectly valid forms of knowledge. Accordingly, any attempt at a comprehensive and graceful understanding of the Cosmos will most definitely include all three types of knowing; and anything less comprehensive than that is gravely, *gravely* suspect on its own merits. (Wilber, 1983, xiii)

Not surprisingly, Wilber's *No Boundary* ends with a paradox:

It thus becomes apparent why the search for unity consciousness was so exasperating. Everything we tried to do was wrong because everything was already and eternally right. Even what appeared as a primal resistance to Brahman was actually a movement of Brahman because there is nothing but Brahman. There never was, nor will there ever be any other time than Now. -- -- -- Original enlightenment is wondrous practice. The eternal Now is its movements. The ocean waves surge freely against the shore, wetting the pebbles and shell. (Wilber, 1979, 159)

This is pretty deep material and seeking transformation on the spiritual level may be too foreign a concept or too frightening a goal for many Western women. Working directly with the classical texts and practices and applying them to Western women in menopause without regard for the differences between the cultural perspectives of consciousness and level of ego development of a woman can present challenges and dangers. In India, traditional Yoga was not generally offered to the public or to women until early in the twentieth century. The texts, and the practices were designed predominately by men for men in a fairly homogeneous society. However, today in America it is women who flock to Yoga. According to the April 2001 issue of *Yoga Journal*, "approximately 80 percent of Western Yoga practitioners are women" (Rowling, 2001, 110). Because of the differences between the cultural environments in which Yoga arose

and the one in which Yoga is now finding a home, Joseph LePage, Director of Integrative Yoga Therapy, believes that Yoga needs a different focus in its application in the West. However, he believes that we still need to look to the classical texts to provide a source for that new focus (LePage, 1994, 9.42).

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, is one of the earliest codifications of the science of Yoga. Taimni's interpretation of the *Yoga Sutras* discusses a two phase approach to spiritual realization. The first phase is preparation to strengthen the body, quiet the mind and to determine the individual's suitability to engage the deeper practices of Yoga. The second phase is designed to move an individual to a sustained direct experience of the divine (Taimni, 1961, 127-225). For most women, the first step alone is a long and often difficult task, but because its purpose is compatible with the current Western personal growth movement it is more easily adapted as a place to start.

Ken Wilber's model of human consciousness embodies both Western and Eastern perspectives. My impression of his work is that he has made an attempt to bring these two viewpoints together, to create a blend of the Eastern and Western ways of looking at, understanding and working with Consciousness. Wilber explains how and why we create our boundaries, which often lead to suffering, and illusions about Reality and our place in it. Wilber puts forth the idea that there is a natural evolution toward Consciousness, and along the way the taking on and dropping of boundaries is a natural part of the process (Wilber, 1979, 10-160). His model discusses human consciousness based on the Western perspective of the persona/shadow, evolves through a description of the ego, the total organism and transpersonal bands and culminates with the Eastern view of Consciousness. Wilber's model recommends different forms of therapy for individuals at different stages of development, beginning with simple counseling and supportive therapy for the persona/shadow level and culminating with the study

and practice of Eastern philosophies and esoteric forms of Islam, Christianity or Judaism for the transpersonal bands and the many levels of Consciousness. Of interest to this discussion are Wilber's 'transpersonal bands.' At this stage of development, the individual realizes that she is more than ego, more than a single individual and may even experience extrasensory perception, intuitive 'gut' hunches, and deep insights, but has not yet reached Unity Consciousness,

"In unity consciousness the person's identity is with the All, with absolutely everything. In transpersonal experiences, the person's identity doesn't quite expand to the Whole, but it does expand or at least extend beyond the skin-boundary of the organism. "
(Wilber, 1979, 8-12)

The two phase process discussed by Taimni and the graduated model of human consciousness discussed by Wilber recognize the need for applying the right kinds of practice or therapy for an individual based on their level of development and readiness. Integrative Yoga Therapy also recognizes the need for this type of adaptation by encouraging its Yoga teachers and therapists to address the needs of students and individual clients with consideration for physical condition, age, culture, religion and readiness. This viewpoint also recognizes that a mature, well-developed ego is needed to process unconscious material, before moving to the deeper spiritual practices of Yoga. "Witnessing the unconscious is hard work and requires a very strong container. If parts of the personality are revealed that an individual is not prepared to look at, the level of repression could actually deepen (LePage, 1994, 9.41).

Strengthening the body, quieting the mind, and preparing the self for change becomes an appropriate place to begin work with a woman or group of women who may present with confusion around their issues, the menopause experience, unresolved emotional wounds, or poor body image. Basic postures, a gentle introduction to breathwork, body specific and affirming visualizations may be most appropriate. Women who have worked through some self-healing on their own and have stronger, more mature egos may be ready for deeper introspective work,

longer holding times for postures, stronger breath practices and the full practice of guided sensory awareness (*pratyahara*) to engage deeper levels of meditation and transformation of consciousness.

The inner work that can lead to transformation is hard work and needs to be entered by conscious choice and with awareness. McCain says of inner work:

"If we accept the challenge of re-examining the junk and cleaning the cellars of our unconscious minds, we may find a surprise hidden there. -- -- -- When the cellar is swept clean - in other words, when we have discovered as much as we can about the contents of our own unconscious minds - its surprising secret is revealed. For the floor of that cellar is a trapdoor. And below the trapdoor is a passage to another cellar. Only this other deeper cellar, rather than being below the foundations of our own house, is as big and wide as the whole earth itself (McCain, 1991, 78-79)."

Other women, particularly those who work with menopause and Yoga, recognize the transformational opportunities inherent in the menopause journey. Susan Winter Ward, creator of a Yoga video for menopause, says that menopause is a blessing in which women find freedom from tampons, the ups and downs of the hormonal cycle, cramps and periods. Through menopause, she says, "We can focus our energy and become more creative, more empowered, wiser and more deeply beautiful," (Ward, 2001). Two other Yoga teachers who specialize in menopause are Patricia Hansen and Debbie Padnuk whose work was discussed in chapter two. Both see menopause as a process of transformation that can help women break free of lifelong negative habits, addictions and self neglect, open to increased self-care, and begin a new phase of exploration and fulfillment (Hansen, 2001; Padnuk, 2001).

Susun Weed's description of inner work relates menopause directly to the transformational phenomenon of initiation:

" The Change (menopause) is a metamorphosis (complete change at a cellular level). This metamorphosis follows, and may even be the matrix for, the three classic stages of initiation: isolation, death and rebirth/reintegration," (Weed, 1992, ix).

The word initiate means to start doing something new or to be admitted as a member into a club through a special ceremony. Women's lives have a series of opportunities for initiations connected directly to their biology. Menstruation, first sexual contact with another person, childbirth and menopause are perhaps the most dramatic. Each of these significant life experiences carries the elements of initiation within them. At each stage a woman is isolated from others who have not shared the experience, her former life symbolically dies and she is reborn into a new role with new expectations and responsibilities.

In menopause we find that many women, like myself, and Kaitlin, often feel isolated from parts of their lives that used to 'fit.' Relationships that were comfortable now seem somehow slightly off kilter, new thoughts and feelings occur and women often begin questioning everything they have ever accepted in terms of values, work, appearances, and sometimes social and sexual roles. Death occurs in the sense that fertility is dying and as women reflect on what that means to them they can consciously experience the death of other parts of themselves as well. McCain confirms this view:

"It helps to rehearse (for death) and menopause is a way of rehearsing. Each of the separate transitions is a little death in itself. The acceptance of one's fading "looks," the end of fertility, the loss of one's natural hormones, and the consequent decision about whether to accept that or to start the replacement therapy, all these are transitional issues. Each is a little death in its own way of some aspect of the known familiar self we have lived with for so long" (McCain, 1991, 98).

Often what dies are illusions that keep women from examining their deepest dreams and their shadow material. These are illusions of guilt, anger, fear, separation, worth, and beauty. It may also be a time for grieving what may not have occurred such as a happy marriage, loving intimacy with a partner or childbearing. It is a time to let go and come to full self-acceptance of what is. As women consciously make decisions about their menopause and examine their illusions, they can come to a place of re-birth and reintegration. They find a new and different

concept of self that can result in healing the ego and the small self or experiencing Unity Consciousness as the big Self. Once initiation into the fourth stage of life has taken place successfully, women often feel increased energy for life, a 'post menopausal zest,' and often for the first time in their lives, view themselves as complete beings who are worthy of existence just because they live and breathe.

A major resource for information on the deep recognition all cultures have with the phenomenon of isolation, death, rebirth and reintegration can be found in stories and myths. The late Joseph Campbell, one of the country's most distinguished experts on mythology talks about initiation through the Hero's Journey, whereby the young hero, or heroine, leaves the comfort of home to seek their fortune. On the way they are met with seemingly insurmountable obstacles which represent their demons or life lessons which must be overcome or learned. Campbell suggests two ways of meeting the challenges. In one, the hero or heroine is first shattered into fragments and then re-born. In the other the hero or heroine fights and triumphs but takes on an aspect of the demon or obstacle in order to integrate its power into themselves before returning to share whatever has been won (Campbell, 2001).

Regina Barreca, an educator, humorist, is the author of one of the most cleverly titled books I have ever encountered -- -- -- *I Used to Be Snow White, But I Drifted*. Barreca, through a story in a recent newspaper column titled, "An Emotional Rescue in the Dark Night of the Soul," offered a third option of dealing with the hero's journey. This option illustrates the Yogic principle of acceptance. In her story, three demons decided to ambush a woman who lived alone. They were manifestations of her worst nightmares, fear, anxiety, and despair. They broke into her house and for hours upon end, they ruined what she held dear and disfigured what she cherished. They were enormously confident because they saw that she was all alone and past her first youth. As they continued into the wee hours of the night they began to notice that although

weary, the woman had calmly begun to boil water on the stove and set out three cups on the table. When they asked in astonishment what she was doing, the women stared at them tolerantly and said, "I know all of you by now. You've been here before, and you'll be here again. You might as well make yourselves at home. What kind of tea would you like?" (Barreca, *Hartford Courant*, 6 August, 2001, D2). This woman was not shattered into fragments and she did not fight her demons, she simply became aware of them, recognized them and accepted them thereby accepting herself.

Another wonderful source of these references centered completely on women's initiation into self-realization can also be found in the work of Clarissa Pinkola Estes, a Jungian analyst and storyteller. She lays out a woman's life in phases of seven years each. Each of these phases stands for a certain set of experiences, lessons and learnings and represent the process of initiation. According to Estes, the ages of 35 - 56, which relate roughly to the years of a woman's climacteric (premenopause to menopause) as well as the Yogic stage of the forest dweller, correspond with the following life tasks:

35 - 42	Age of the seeker/learning to mother self/seeking the self
42 - 49	Age of early crone/finding the far encampment/giving courage to others
29 - 56	Age of the underworld/learning the words and rites
56 - 63	Age of choice/choosing one's world and the work yet to done, (Estes, 1992, 446 - 448).

The work of each of these stages can be taken at the level of mature ego development, the goal of Western psychology, or spiritual realization, the goal of Eastern psychology. The choice belongs to each woman depending upon her life situation, her perception of her menopause and her level of readiness and ability. Whichever level a woman is inclined to begin work on, she will notice gains on many levels; biologically, psychically, psychologically, energetically and spiritually. And why choose Yoga as a companion on the menopause journey where 'coming

apart at the seams' is an all too common feeling? Yoga provides an alternative view of life that sees all life circumstances, menopause included, as an opportunity for a woman to practice the awareness needed to appropriately respond to the conditions of her life. Debbie Padnuk, who teaches a menopause class called, "The Developing Wise Woman," says, "Yoga can be defined as the union of our physical, emotional and spiritual being. What better time than when we are having a 'coming apart' feeling to experience Yoga?"

Women who choose to see menopause as a natural rite of passage, a time to embark on the heroine's journey or an opportunity for self-healing or spiritual realization will find great gifts and challenges on the path. They will also find a reliable and helpful companion in Yoga.

CHAPTER 4

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF YOGA

*The initial mystery that attends any journey is:
How did the traveler reach his starting point in the first place*
---Louise Bogan
(Eisen, 2000)

The Science of Yoga

This paradox is an appropriate beginning a discussion of the overall theoretical framework that informs this project. It is important to understand some of the history and philosophy of Yoga in order to be able to present the practice of Yoga to students and clients in a context. This discussion, although theoretical, will consistently bring the philosophical concepts to the realm of the practical and relate them to the lives of western women going through the menopausal transition.

Yoga is one of the six fundamentals of Indian philosophic thought. It was developed as a system to train those searching for something "beyond the ego" (Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 176-178). The science of Yoga has its roots in the Vedas, a compilation of hymns, prose, poems, prayers, spells and charms. The Vedas form the basis for Indian philosophy in general, and the science of Yoga in particular. Yoga, like the other five classic systems of Indian philosophy -- -- *Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Purva Mimamsa, and Vedanta*:

- Has its own theory of knowledge
- Subordinates reason in favor of intuition
- Holds a belief in something which transcends self-consciousness
- Erects a standard of objective reality as opposed to an eternal, unstable flux
- Accepts the view of a great world rhythm
- Believes in rebirth and preexistence
- Believes in development of the self as a continuous process
- Believes in unconditional unselfish love and detachment
- Recommends cleansing of the heart as the basis of a morality
(Sarvepali & Moore, 1957, 349 - 354)

"Yoga is the union of the individual psyche with the transcendental self" (Feuerstein, 1998, xix). Yoga literally means "to yoke." What is yoked or united is the body, mind and spirit, the small 'self' of an individual which in turn is yoked to the higher transcendental 'Self.' This union enables right thinking, right action, and detachment from the outcomes of thinking and acting which is 'right knowledge' and reduces or eliminates suffering and false understanding (*avidya*). Practically speaking, the preparatory goal of Yoga is to help each individual realize and accept themselves as they really are with all the foibles and complications of their humanness. The practice of Yoga on a regular basis brings the student to a point where they begin selecting the exercises, practices and disciplines that they are 'drawn' to and surrendering to the power of the practice to change, and integrate those changes within the body/mind. This leads to acceptance of the small self which eliminates judgment and allows an individual to accept others in the same light. This preparation can move an individual to the next level where their study and discipline can result in a direct experience of their divine nature as big or transcendent Self. Yoga is a never-ending process of self-discipline, self-inquiry, surrender and transformation.

The science of Yoga contains an immense body of knowledge, philosophy and practice. The beauty of Yoga is that it is approachable and accessible by all who are drawn to it. It is a little like the elephant described by the group of blind men in Aesop's fable. Each man approaches the elephant from a different angle, each feels a different part, and describes it. Each man argues that the part he experiences is real and correct and that the experience of the others is wrong. However, when the state of Yoga is directly experienced, seekers understand that their experience is true, and that the experience of others is also true. No argument, no disparity, just subjectivity, diversity and community, the three underlying principles of all existence (Chopra, 1994, 88-90).

The science of Yoga has many paths. Each path has its own focus, but all lead the student or seeker to clarity and an understanding of unity consciousness. The Bagavad-Gita, one of the earliest Yoga scriptures, according to Feuerstein, lists 18 paths. Desikachar lists nine, Feuerstein lists eight and Iyengar lists five. Since there is such a wide variety between these sources, what follows are the commonalities between Desikachar, Feuerstein and Iyengar (Desikachar, 1995, 135 - 140);

Jnana-Yoga	Scholarly knowledge and wisdom
Bhakti-Yoga	Devoted prayer and service to God
Hatha-Yoga	Physical development and discipline
Karma-Yoga	Action in alignment with one's innermost being
Raja-Yoga	Meditation and contemplation to understand the role of the mind

Additionally there are other forms of Yoga, like *Kriya-Yoga*, the Yoga of ritual action, *Tantra-Yoga* and *Kundalini-Yoga*, exercises and meditation techniques for focusing energy, and *Mantra-Yoga*, the repetition of specific words and sounds. Yoga is, therefore, “--- a multitude of Yogic paths and orientations with contrasting theoretical frameworks and occasionally even divergent goals, though all are means to liberation,” and all styles, schools and forms of practice agree that transcending the personality, or the ego, is necessary to end suffering and reach enlightenment,” (Feuerstein 1998, 36).

The Yoga Sutras

The tools and techniques of Yoga most frequently encountered in Western Yoga classes are derived from the work of an Indian sage named Patanjali. Although nothing definitive is known about Patanjali, it is speculated that he was more of a collector and organizer than originator of material. In any case, his *Yoga Sutras* are considered to be the most significant, systematic and comprehensive codification of the science of Yoga (Feuerstein, 1998, 285).

Patanjali identified all the teachings on the mind and organized them in a precise form called *sutras* which summarize much of the historical thinking and debating on Yoga (Feuerstein, 1998, 284 - 311). The word *sutra* (from which we get suture) means thread. This basic literature of Yoga is arranged in 196 Sutras, divided into four sections that provide specific instruction and answer basic questions such as:

- What is Yoga?
 - Why should anyone practice Yoga?
 - What are the Eight Limbs of Yoga?
 - What is enlightenment?
 - What is it like to live the Yogic life?
- (Taimni, 1993, viii-ix)

In contrast to other Indian systems of philosophy that state that nothing is real except God, Patanjali, whose *sutras* are believed to be at least 5,000 years old, believed that everything in a person's experience is real, that everything is in a process of change. Desikachar restates this in his book, *The Heart of Yoga* and adds that if we select the appropriate means and practice with the help of a teacher we can achieve the peace, wisdom and well-being that is our potential (Desikachar, 1995, 145-46).

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

Patanjali's system likens the mind to a lake. In its natural state the lake is clear, calm and peaceful. The modifications of the mind or the thoughts, stir the calm waters and hide the true nature of the lake. Through the application and practice of Yoga the mind is calmed and quieted and one's true nature is realized (Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976, 73). Patanjali presents the application of Yogic principles in the form of The Eight Limbs of Yoga. The Eight Limbs can be depicted as a wheel with eight spokes, or a ladder with eight rungs (Feuerstein, 1998, 324-337). The first four limbs work on preparing and strengthening the body/mind to engage the

deeper practices of Yoga. The the last four limbs, the practices of sensory awareness, concentration, and meditation, can lead a woman to self-realization and the various states and levels of consciousness which lead to enlightenment (*samadhi*) (Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976, 77).

The science of Yoga provides many techniques, postures, breath practices and meditations to choose from in designing a personal practice, group classes or private sessions. Key to the application of Yogic theory and practice for oneself or students is Taimni's interpretation of a two phase approach to spiritual realization. Yoga teachers and therapists should have a clear and deep understanding of this two-phase process when working with themselves and especially when working with students and clients. The first phase of preparation is intended to strengthen the body, and quiet the mind. This is a crucial step because most Westerners who come to Yoga classes or seek one-on-one Yoga therapy sessions are working on this preparatory level.

The next section will discuss each Limb, from the viewpoint of several interpretations and present illustrations and examples of how they can be used to help menopausal women understand their experiences as stepping stones to growth, and healing. The series of questions, or discussion starters, serve to help the teacher or therapist create awareness of patterns of belief, encourage change or help a women understand that not changing is also a choice.

The First Two Limbs: Yama and Niyama

The foundation for Patanjali's Yoga, and for all authentic spiritual traditions, is a system of ethics containing guidance on morals and behaviors, or self-restraints. This system of ethics makes up the first two limbs which describe ten guides to living habits and lifestyle that help students bring awareness to the values they hold and how those values are expressed in their

relationship with themselves and others.

"The attitude we have toward things and people outside ourselves is called *yama* in Yoga, and how we relate to ourselves inwardly is called *niyama*" (Desikachar, 1995, 97). In working with this system of ethics, Yoga students need to keep in mind that any changes made in behaviors toward themselves and others must come from the inside out and is gradual. What changes first is awareness, then attitude, and then behavior. The morals (*yamas*) and behaviors (*niyamas*) are:

Morals (*yamas*).

- Non-harming (*ahimsa*)
- Truthfulness (*satya*)
- Non-stealing (*asteya*)
- Chastity (*bramacharya*)
- Voluntary simplicity (*aparigraha*)

Behaviors (*niyamas*).

- Purity (*saucha*)
- Contentment (*samtosha*)
- Austerity (*tapas*)
- Study (*svadhyaya*)
- Devotion to God (*ishvara-pranidhana*)
(Feuerstein, 1998, 325-330)

The Yamas

Ahimsa: Non-harming

Ahimsa is often defined as non killing but the full meaning of ahimsa is non-violence in thought and action. Contemporary writer and yogi Vimala McClure, whose message is targeted to women, broadens the definition of *ahimsa* to mean kindness, and thoughtful consideration of the self, of other people and all things. McClure rightly points out that violence and doing harm is a part of the very order of the universe. "We cannot live one minute without taking a life. We must breathe and destroy millions of microbes, we must eat to survive, we must protect

ourselves and others from harm, sometimes by doing harm to an aggressor” (McClure, 1997, 140). McClure suggests that the key in thinking about non-harming is to bring full consciousness to those impulses, acts and behaviors that do harm in order to reduce the “needless harm we do.” Women need a clear understanding of the violence or harm they do to themselves by placing themselves last in relationship to others and should extend the meaning of *ahimsa* to encompass self-esteem, the development of healthy boundaries and the appropriate expression of anger (McClure 1997, 141-143).

In order to field test some of the best ways to apply Yoga to menopause, I conducted an experimental eight week class which is discussed in detail in chapter eight. Five women participated. Homework was a part of the process and the first week’s homework assignment was to read an article titled, “ Violence Against Self,” by Phillip Moffitt (Moffitt, 2001, 52). When we discussed it at the start of the following week session, three of the women admitted that they had never thought about ways in which they harmed themselves. As we talked they named things like, negative self-talk, not exercising, and over eating. It was an enlightening discussion. My hope is that they are remaining aware of those things and treating themselves with more compassion and kindness.

In working with the principle of *ahimsa* with menopausal women it may be helpful to use the following discussion questions:

1. What is your personal understanding of *ahimsa*?
2. Are there ways in which your beliefs, attitudes or behaviors result in self-harm?
3. If so, are you ready to make a change?

Satya: Truthfulness

Truthfulness in thought, word and deed is the ideal. The conundrum that many women encounter in working with this moral concerns right action when the principle of non-harming is

involved. Desikachar suggests saying nothing if the truth would harm another (Desikachar, 1995, 98). McClure suggests that withholding the truth is another method of dishonesty and that the challenge here is, “the right use of words with a spirit of benevolence” (McClure 1997, 153-155). This is particularly important to women who are often encouraged to deny and hide the truth of their lives in order to, 'keep the peace,' and please others.

Many women, myself included, have faced situations in which we fail to tell the truth of our lives in order to keep the peace, to feel loved or avoid guilt. I experienced this viscerally during a marriage counseling session. In my marriage I was the caretaker, fixer, pleaser, rescuer. After the onset of menopause I began questioning that role and tried to find ways to be whole within the marriage which was already in deep trouble. One of the most serious problems from my point of view was that my husband would wait until a fixable problem became an emergency and then he would turn to me for rescue and of course I'd be angry but I was always ready to do what it took to fix the problem, or rather the symptoms of the real problem.

My husband was a diabetic, and despite my efforts to convince him that he needed to change jobs and work closer to home, he continued to commute an hour and a half to work each way. One night he had a car problem and wanted me to drive down to where he worked and pick him up because his insulin works were at home. I had suggested several times that he keep an extra set at work but he had chosen not to do that. I had reached the end of my rope and refused to drive down. He was angry. I felt guilty but stuck to my guns. I suggested that he spend the night with his parents who lived nearby and call a local drugstore to get insulin for the morning. He called again at five a.m. the next morning and demanded that I bring him his insulin. I did. When this came up our next counseling session, he complained that I was not there for him in emergencies. I explained that the majority of his emergencies were totally avoidable but that he would not take responsibility for himself. The counselor turned to me and said, "Your husband

wants to know that he can count on you in any emergency that he defines as an emergency. Can you do that?" I stammered and repeated my prior statement. The counselor repeated his question. What would I answer? A good wife according to our culture, and my thinking at the time, would say yes. A bad wife would not. I did not want to be a bad wife. I had married in the hopes of having a culturally accepted 'normal' existence. It was the safe route. To stay on that route I had buried a lot of who I was and now in that moment in the counselor's office I felt as though I would have to bury it forever or be a bad wife. I felt like a butterfly whose wings were being pinned to rice paper. Time stopped. My mouth opened and out popped my truth. "No, I can't do that." I expected condemnation from the counselor and outrage from my husband. The counselor said, "OK." My husband said nothing. The world continued to turn. I felt as though I'd had a tremendous breakthrough. And, I was not a bad wife, just a truthful one.

Some questions for working with *satya* with menopausal women might be:

1. Do you know what would constitute an authentic life for you?
2. If so, when and how did you know? If not, is this something you want to know?
3. Who would you tell about the truth of your life? Who would you not tell and why?

Asteya: Non-stealing

Unauthorized appropriation of things of value. Desikachar adds depth to this *yama* by pointing out that it also refers to our ability to not take advantage of those who trust or confide in us (Desikachar, 1995, 99). Iyengar states that controlling our cravings is the Yogic way to reducing the temptation to take what does not belong to us and extends non-stealing to mean that we also do not take more than we absolutely need (Iyengar, 1979, 34). McClure's description is fuller and richer. *Asteya*, to her, means more than not stealing or taking more than is absolutely necessary. She says the real meaning of *asteya* is related to the inner motivation for stealing

whether the object is time, space or material goods. It's about withholding vs. the ability to respond. It's about boundaries and how women often deny them and have to deal with the problems that occur because their boundaries are too rigid or non-existent. It is because of these factors that stealing and/or withholding takes place. We steal or withhold because we do not feel whole and need to "take from others and hold on to what we have" (McClure, 1997, 161-163).

Personally this has evidenced itself in my life as I encountered and began to deal with my shadow material. The ability to do this consciously has enabled me to shorten periods of suffering and negativity, to soften the effects of stress, and to behave in a centered manner (for the most part - I do have my 'slips) in a difficult and very stressful financial situation which is still in process at this writing. It enables me to not take energy from others but to remain centered and use my energy to move in ways necessary for me. This is easier to do in the workplace.

Where I have more difficulty doing this is in my personal relationships. I seem to have a difficult time figuring out where I end and the other person begins with regards to obligations and responsibility. I think this is tied up with my Rescuer/Victim archetypes and my attempts to mature them. When I feel wronged or taken advantage of, I tend to withhold and withdraw instead of dealing with the uncomfortable situation head on. I'm getting better at dealing with this issue. There's still a lot of work to be done to sort this out, make sense of it and transcend it so I do not take unnecessarily from others. When my relationship with *asteya* is in balance, I can give more of myself without expecting something in return.

Suggested questions for working with *asteya* in classes workshops or private sessions are:

1. Do you know people who steal or drain your energy? Who are they?
2. In what situations do you seek to gain energy from others? Why?
3. Are you feeling the need to make any changes?

Brahmacarya: Chastity

Abstention from sexual activity in thought, word or deed is the traditional meaning of *brahmacarya*. McClure's interpretation, however, focuses on the concept of responsible behavior; placing the tool of celibacy in its proper perspective and to keep it from becoming an obstacle instead of a tool. Because McClure's discussion of the *yamas* and *niyamas* is based in *tantra*, or the application of the spiritual to everyday life including sex and the sensual, she does not rule out the physical expression of sexuality. McClure writes that the application of consciousness to the moment leads to responsible sexual behavior. In her discussion, *brahmacarya* is the feeling of unity that allows us to have faith, to be 'in the moment,' and surrender to our life as it is which then makes responsible behavior in all areas of our lives effortless (McClure, 1997, 166-173). My interpretation of this concept builds on McClure's and adds the word integrity as the foundation of responsible behavior sexual or otherwise. It is integrity that allows us to act in ways that keep our inner landscape flowing with ease - it's doing the right thing in each situation we encounter. Samantha's menopausal life shake up serves as a good example.

One of more uncommon (or unadmitted) changes that can manifest at menopause is a change in sexual orientation (Northrup, 2001, 267). Samantha, a friend of several years, checked this off on the survey and later told me during one of our regular 'life check' telephone calls that she was totally 'bowled over' to know that this could happen at menopause because it had happened to her and she was deep into the process of trying to figure out the hows and the whys. Samantha, a certified Yoga teacher, has been immersed in dealing with several major changes in her personal life over the past three years. These include, moving across country due to her husband's career, a subsequent impending divorce after years of counseling plus the added stress of her change in sexual preference. She has not put the label of Lesbian on herself in spite

of pressure from her husband and his counselor. Both of them had been telling her that in order to move forward and bring closure to her marriage and impending divorce it would be necessary for her ‘come out’ and inform her two grown children that she was a Lesbian. Her husband even threatened to tell the children himself. Samantha, already trying to adjust to this change and not yet sure what it meant for her, was thrown into confusion -- -- -- what was the right thing to do? Finally she acted in a manner that felt responsible to her. She told her husband that if he told the children, he would have to do it without her. It would be his choice and he would have to take full responsibility for the results of his actions. She would tell the children when she was clearer on what had happened to her and she was not finished with that process which she describes as, “long and thoughtful.” The only term she will accept at this point is bisexual. About her first relationship with a woman, she says,

"Right now, discovering that I am bisexual has been a huge readjustment to my view of myself. It has been both scary and exhilarating, sometimes simultaneously! The process of coming out is a long and thoughtful one. It will be the biggest challenge of my life."

Suggested questions for working with *brahmacarya* are:

1. Can you think of a situation in which you did not act with responsibility or integrity?
2. How did you feel afterwards and could you feel it in a specific part of your body?
3. How do you know when you’ve acted responsibly or with integrity?

Aparigraha: Voluntary Simplicity

Iyengar defines the successful seeker as one who, “makes his life as simple as possible and trains his mind not to feel the loss or lack of anything,” In this manner the seeker sees through all illusions about life and receives what he needs in abundance and on time (Iyengar, 1979, 35-36).

Simplicity is the central meaning of *aparighaha* as defined by McClure. It requires us to take an honest look at our lives and analyze our acquisitiveness with an eye to removing greed as a motivating factor. Her discussion encourages women to find their inner world and then create an external world to match it; to live as centered a life as possible. She clarifies this as not meaning poverty or self-denial, but as, “a different sort of richness.” She includes the necessity for women to examine their relationships and spend energy on those which enrich and support them on their journey (McClure, 1997, 173-180).

Susan, whose adult son died in a hiking accident, is post menopausal, an adult child of an alcoholic parent, a widow, and caretaker for a retarded sister. She recently relocated to the Northwest to be closer to her daughter and grandchildren. Her years of inner work have led her to become wiser about how she chooses to relate to her environment. Her comments on the menopause survey express McClure’s views on *aparigraha* eloquently,

“My life is much quieter and simpler. I care about my family, my friends and relationships and making a contribution to “society” through some type of work. Coming through these changes took a lot of energy out of me. I took six months just to basically adjust to a totally new environment and culture before looking for work. I did find a job that I kept for a year. I developed an exercise program for seniors that I loved, but I came to hate the management style and staff interactions which I found attacking, demeaning, abusive and shallow. I had never been in a situation like that before and it shocked me. I kept waiting for it to change, or for me to make an impact on the situation. Finally, I realized that it was not going to happen and I had to take a good, hard look at my values and acknowledge that I was denying myself and living in opposition to everything I believed and expressed. And instead of making a difference in the situation, I was being affected and becoming stressed out and very negative and sarcastic. There did not seem to be a solution. I talked with my financial advisor and I realized I could make the choice to leave and be financially responsible. I have NEVER left employment because of the management, but I did. Another and very big first for me! So here I am in "my lateral drift" (thank you Beth, I LOVE that term), and "regrouping" while I decide what to do next. I have decided whatever work I do needs to support and feed me and my values so I experience the gratification that comes with the feeling of "job well done." I will not sell myself short again.”

Here are questions to get women's thoughts flowing about the concept of *aparigraha*:

1. What do the storage areas in your home look like? How cluttered is your mind?
2. Can you relate this concept to your life as you are living it now?
3. What needs to go? What needs to stay?

The Niyamas

Sauca: Purity

Desikachar mentions three aspects of purity: cleanliness of the outer body, proper functioning of the inner organs, and clarity of mind (Desikachar 1995, 101). Iyengar adds the importance of cleansing the mind of impure thoughts, "hatred, anger, lust, greed, delusion, and pride" (Iyengar 1979, 36).

McClure says that *saucha*, " --- encompasses the whole range of behaviors around the value of being clean, clear, simple, and direct. It's about cleaning the bathroom, and doing the laundry, but it's also about how our minds get cluttered with nonsense, how our world gets poisoned by the waste products of greed, and how all of these seemingly different things are connected" (McClure 1997, 180). *Saucha* as a behavior is an ideal to think about, discuss with others and practice with balanced awareness. For example, women need to carefully consider the standard of purity as cleanliness and apply it reasonably to their lives because the cultural ideal of the good woman with a spotless home and squeaky clean floors can be a difficult goal for many working women to manage and, without balance, can result in an unhealthy 'attachment' and the feeling that what they do is never enough. Judith Lasater, in giving advice to teachers about correcting and fixing a student's postures says, "many of us are slaves to this judgment in our lives. Our house is never clean enough, our meals never "organic" enough, our teaching never sophisticated enough, the list could go on forever."

She goes on to point out that, "-- -- while there is always room to grow, where we are

right now has a wholeness and beauty to it as well.” When this behavior gets out of balance for me, I have to remind myself that I’m “purity in progress,” (Lasater, www.judithlasater.com)

While working on purity and cleanliness as a goal, a menopausal woman will need to accept the disorder that her body/mind may appear to go through at this time of life and recognize the real wisdom in Lasater’s statement that purity is a process and so is she.

Ann Wilson Schaeff also cautions women about an obsession with cleanliness. She says, “Women who work outside the house aren’t the only women who are obsessed with work. Women who are home full-time rarely have time for themselves and their creative projects. After all, children are twenty-four hours a day and the house is twenty-four hours a day. there is always something to do.” (Schaeff, 1990, 2/19).

Some discussion starters for *saucha* are:

1. What are your personal beliefs around purity and cleanliness?
2. If you were expecting company in ten minutes and your living room needed straightening but you noticed a sunset happening outside your window, what would you choose to do and why?
3. Are you experiencing inner turmoil at this time of your life? If so, is there anything you might need to change or clear out of your life or thinking in order to return to a peaceful state of mind?

Samtoshā: Contentment

Desikachar defines *samtoshā* as contentment. He discusses it in relation to detachment and the process of releasing ourselves from the results of our actions while learning from them (Desikachar, 1995, 101).

Iyengar adds that contentment is necessary for concentration, and the ability to concentrate is necessary to achieve peace of mind and tranquility (Iyengar, 1979, 37). McClure discusses *samtoshā* as it relates to our modern lives and relationships. Acceptance of ourselves and others is a must if we are to realize contentment (McClure, 1997, 186). This is a key concept for menopausal women with changing bodies to work with, especially since we live in a culture

with a focus on youth and physical beauty. The practice of Yoga can help a menopausal woman reach a state of inner contentment even though her life may be rife with situations that are unpleasant and unsatisfactory. An understanding of outer satisfaction versus inner contentment is needed. Here, I use myself as an example. Since my husband's death, I live in a house I can't afford and struggle to pay the bills and make repairs. I can't take vacations, my workload is double what I'd like it to be because I have two mortgages to pay and I haven't been able to put anything away towards retirement for the past four years. My house has been on the market for almost a year. My lawyer and the real estate agent are encouraging me to do a short sale which would leave me with a poor credit rating for four years. Part of my sense of integrity is attached to managing the energy of money by paying bills on time and maintaining an A+ credit rating. This is a hard situation for me to be in. Outer satisfaction here is in the minus range. Inner contentment, however, is doing fine. I am in this situation but this situation is not me. I feel this. I see the paradox. I am content.

Nadine, 52, is struggling with the difference between outer satisfaction and inner contentment. She is divorced, childless, and a Yoga teacher and massage therapist. She suffers from a number of illness including Sjogrens (a close cousin of Lupus), Thyroid Dysfunction and Fibromyalgia. When I added up the number of symptoms she checked off as relating to menopause, Nadine had the second highest level of symptoms (23). About her childlessness she said,

"Growing up, the belief was that a woman would get married, have kids and be a mom. I was married but never had children. That is something that I regret. It wasn't a choice. My husband and I were both tested for physical problems, and there were none. I would try to console myself by thinking there was a reason, there's a reason for everything. That led to being angry with God a lot. But I feel very empty. I'm envious, and jealous now of my friends' kids and grand kids. I feel as if I wasn't enough of a woman to have children. That's my belief, one that I need to change."

Nadine has a good awareness of both her light and dark sides and has embraced the path of spiritual growth in order to heal and evolve, "I'd like to find, and am working at finding, more emotional and spiritual balance. I don't like the roller coaster life. They say, with age comes wisdom -- -- -- and I hope that will be a change."

The following questions can be used to open dialogue on the topic of *samtosha*:

1. Have you ever had moments of true contentment in your life?
2. What were you doing when you experienced those feelings?
3. What, if anything, would you need to do to help bring those feelings to your present life situation on a more frequent basis?

Tapas: Austerity

Iyengar talks about three types of *tapas* which he defines as a “burning effort” to achieve a definite goal which involves purification, self-discipline and austerity (Iyengar, 1979, 38).

Desikachar talks about *tapas* as an effort to keep the body fit and recommends postures (*asanas*), correct breathing techniques (*pranayama*), and proper diet in making the effort (Desikachar, 1995, 101). McClure’s discussion is enlightening. She gives a brief history of the meaning of the word beginning with the earliest definitions in which *tapas* (austerity) implied the mortification of the flesh. Later interpretations describe *tapas* in a more positive light using words like ‘self-discipline,’ ‘self-restraint,’ and ‘self-sufficiency,’ -- -- all concepts that can be useful to a woman engaging her mid-life change as process or transformation.

In the application of Yoga to menopause, *tapas*, means to me to make a commitment to do the work of life, whether it is posture, breathwork, meditation or making necessary lifestyle changes. Elena is a woman facing many professional, and personal stressors, including migraine headaches and a bout with uterine cancer. She has just found out that her eleven year old daughter has Diabetes. Because of her exposure to Yoga, she knows and has practiced several

Yoga techniques that work for her; namely Legs-Up-The-Wall, The Cooling Breath and Child's Pose. She has also used a *Yoga Nidra* tape to help her sleep . However, at this time she is not applying any of them. Her excuse, like that of many people, is a lack of time. This is really a lack of self-care and self-discipline (*tapas*.)

Since *tapas* is a crucial step in moving awareness of a situation to changing it, the following questions are important for menopausal women to address:

1. Do you make New Year's resolutions? If so, do you keep them or not? Why?
2. Exercise for menopausal women is not an option, it's a necessity for health. Do you exercise regularly? If not, what keeps you from doing so?
3. What would you need to change in order to apply self-discipline and self-care to your healing journey?

Svadyaya - Study

“All reflection, all contact that helps you learn more about yourself is *svadyaya* (Desikachar, 1995, 101).” Desikachar deepens this definition by pointing out the need to use reference points prepared by the ancients, whether it is Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the Bible or another book of personal significance (Desikachar, 1995, 101). Iyengar's discussion of self-inquiry builds on this point and encourages the seeker to read all of the sacred books of the world in order to better appreciate his own spiritual path (Iyengar 1995, 39) and McClure says that it is the use of the mind to understand. “It is much more than reading books or listening to sermons; it is true understanding, which requires an effort to grasp the underlying significance of spiritual ideas, and using our rational judgment in concert with our feelings and intuition,” (McClure, 1997, 196). This study self-inquiry, and right understanding of the small self that needs attention and healing and the transcendental Self that always is, is important to women at mid-life and to the Yoga therapist who works with them. Northrup points out in her book, *The Wisdom of Menopause*, that women, through their menstrual cycle, are given monthly inner hormonal tugs

to study and reflect on themselves and their lives. At menopause, “The mother of all wake-up calls,” the hormonal switch that used to turn on and off gets locked in the ‘on’ position. Ignoring the need for study and self-inquiry at this point may result in escalating menopausal symptoms (Northrup, 2001, 36-41).

Self-study, however, means different things to different women. Kristen is 58 years old, post menopausal, married with two adult children and teaches fifth grade in an inner city elementary school. She is a recovering alcoholic, is proud of her sobriety and continues to attend three to five Alcoholics Anonymous meetings each week. Her idea of self-study is centered in the here and now of physical life. She knows what she knows about herself because she has, “spent the past eighteen years doing exhaustive self-inventories.” The things she knows about herself are mostly anchored to the physical ego-centered plane -- -- -- being a woman and having men open doors, believing the feminist movement to be “highly overrated,” enjoying shopping for jewelry and being highly opinionated. Kristen also suffers from high levels of stress, and headaches, conditions which she manages with Fiorocet and Zoloft. For Kristen, who lists twelve menopausal symptoms, menopause is “just another life stage.”

Amina listed six symptoms. She sees self-study from another angle, one of openness and wonder. She is post menopausal, 51 years old and the mother of two adult children. She has recently closed her own business and is using her new found free time for herself. She knows what she knows about herself, “By bumping into a lot of walls, sometimes the same one over and over-- -- -- by being open and willing to experience whatever life gives to me/or takes from me -- -- -- by having many wonderful teachers.” Menopause to Amina is, “a change of life which is exactly what’s happening with me. I am able to slow down enough to become aware of what my heart’s desires are and what I will choose to do with the second half of my life. I am open to see where it leads me and what doors will open.”

Some questions to start a discussion on *svadhyaya* are:

1. How do you know what you know about yourself?
2. What does menopause mean to you?
3. What are your main methods for understanding your life?

Ishvara Pranidhana: Devotion to God

Iyengar talks of this *niyama* as emptying the mind of all desires. One's life becomes devoted to serving the Lord and the *mantra* repeated by the seeker is, "Thy will be done" (Iyengar 1995, 40). Desikachar says simply, "In the context of *niyamas*, we can define *ishvara pranidhana* as the attitude of a person who usually offers the fruits of his or her action to God in daily prayer (Desikachar, 1995, 102). McClure prefers to use the word spirituality and define this *niyama* as a "joyful surrender - a decision to make spirituality the point and purpose of our lives" (McClure, 1997, 199).

Another interpretation of *isvara pranidhana* is surrender. For women in our culture the question may well be, surrender to what, who, when and how. The answer for each individual woman requires 'right understanding' in order to avoid simply switching surrender from a husband or church to a guru, or ritual practice without understanding the importance of surrender to the transcendent Self and the moment-to-moment process of her own life; to find joy in all that informs her life, the good and the difficult, the dishes and shopping, cleaning and dancing; talking and resting. It is all sacred and everything that presents itself to her at all times is an opportunity for self and Self realization.

Holly, premenopausal and a divorced mother of three, is coming to that self and Self-realization. She says, "I will continue to search for the deeper meaning to all this 'life' and also to work at the quality of all my relationships including the relationship with myself. My real life is within me. I want that light to shine, be felt even when I am a little old lady."

McClure includes the following definition of *ishvara pranidhana* by P. R. Sarkar from the book, *A Guide to Human Conduct*, that illustrates this expanding nature of spirituality beyond the limitations of cultural role expectations.

“Spirituality is not a utopian ideal but a practical philosophy which can be practiced and realized in everyday life. Spirituality stands for evolution and elevation, not for superstition or pessimism. All divisive tendencies and group or clan philosophies that create shackles of narrow mindedness are not connected with spirituality and should be discouraged. Only that which leads to broadness of vision should be accepted (Sarkar, 1997).”

I find this view of spirituality to be very liberating. It gives me strength to move past limiting cultural roles when confronted with situations that put my personal ‘flow’ up against a cultural ‘should.’

Three questions that help broach this subject with students who are ready are:

1. Do you have a spiritual practice?
2. What does that practice mean to you?
3. How does that practice inform your life and your view of the universe?

In the final analysis, the morals (*yamas*) and behaviors (*niyamas*) delineated in the first two limbs of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras are ideals to be considered, contemplated and practiced to the best of one’s ability. Whatever the level of acceptance and practice students have achieved, they should be prepared to relax their focus if they find themselves becoming driven or obsessive in the practice of these ethical principles. To become fixated on any of these ethical principles

and standards may increase attachment and suffering instead of decreasing it. Yoga through awareness, acceptance and surrender is an expanding, not a contracting, process.

The Third Limb: Asana

The purpose of Yogic postures/exercises (*asanas*) is to balance and strengthen the physical body. The growth of Yoga for therapeutic purposes came much later in the development of Yoga and for Patanjali, postures were a way to immobilize the body and make it insensitive to the external environment and to prepare it to sit in meditation (Feuerstein, 1998, 330 - 31). The Western Yoga movement is currently predominated by an emphasis on Yoga postures (*asanas*) often to the exclusion of the other seven limbs. It is the focus on *asana* that most often brings new students to a Yoga class. That's what brought Kaitlin to my class. She is perimenopausal, 49 years old and married with one child. One of her menopausal complaints is low back and hip pain. She knows that she feels pain free after doing Yoga but does not do Yoga outside of class. During the summer break her pain worsened and she went back to her doctor to ask if there was anything else that she could do. He told her to double up on her Yoga and book therapeutic massage. She is now taking two Yoga classes a week and I expect to work with her over the next few months to develop a customized audio cassette program targeted to her low back and hips that will help her establish a regular personal practice.

Yoga therapists need to be aware of the fact that many menopausal women who find their way into a Yoga class, workshop or a private session may be in pain or and are likely to be inexperienced in proprioception, the ability to know where and how their bodies are situated in space. They may also be very tight and inflexible. Because of this it will be crucial for Yoga teachers and therapists to know how and when to modify postures so that they can be performed with ease and comfort by the students. Then the benefits of the posture can be felt safely by the student who performs them. Even experienced Yoga students and teachers may have Yoga related injuries or may be performing postures in an effort to look like the models in the books instead of fitting it to their own bodies.

Questions that all Yoga students, beginning and experienced need to ask themselves as they practice are:

1. Where in my body do I feel comfort and openness or stress, pain or fatigue?
2. Is this posture healthy for my body?
3. How is my body moving through space?

The Fourth Limb: Pranayama

Breathwork (*pranayama*) is the study and discipline of breath and energy control. *Prana* is known by many names, *Prana* in Sanskrit, Chi in Chinese, Ki in Japanese, Mana in Polynesian. It has also been called Orgone (Wilhelm Reich) -----bioplasma (Russian researchers), and animal magnetism. Energy fields, and life force are more modern English terms (Rama, Ballentine, & Hymes, 1976, 45-6). The authors of the book, *Science of Breath* offer this definition of *Prana*, "the infinite, all pervading energy of the universe - - cosmic energy. All the diverse forms of this universe are sustained by the energy of *Prana*" (Rama, Ballentine, & Hymes, 1979, 91).

Although it is associated with the breath, Prana is not the breath. *Prana* is the energy or life force that arises and sustains the body/mind through the action of breathing. It is sensed internally through bodily sensations. *Prana* includes the physical, mental and emotional energy that can most easily be sensed when the individual is calm and focused. Breathwork helps the student manage their energy/pranic levels, learn to conserve energy and tolerate the higher levels of energy required for the deeper practices of Yoga (Rama, Ballentine, & Hymes, 1976, 54-61).

Working with the breath is key to applying Yoga to menopause because many of the effects of Yoga as a stress reducer and as a technique to manage fluctuating energy levels or reduce the intensity of hot flashes and night sweats can first be felt through the simple techniques of breath awareness, long slow deep breathing and the cooling breath.

Questions to be aware of in dealing with the level of breath and energy are:

1. Is my level of energy high or low?
2. How is my breathing - long, short, even or erratic?
3. Where in my body am I feeling the breath - belly, ribs, or chest?

The Fifth Limb: Pratyahara

This practice of *pratyahara*, or sensory awareness, quiets the mind. In Integrative Yoga Therapy this is often presented as *Yoga Nidra*, psychic or dynamic sleep, a technique where students practice awareness of the body/mind, and breath, create a *sankalpa*, an affirmation or resolution and experience a detailed rotation of consciousness through the body and a guided visualization. This practice helps the student focus their awareness internally. A full explanation of *Yoga Nidra* and sample scripts will be found in chapters eight and nine. Although *pratyahara* is traditionally translated as sense withdrawal, the Integrative Yoga Therapy approach uses *pratyahara* as an opportunity to practice and experience awareness of the senses. Practice of the first four limbs of Yoga prepare the student to become aware of, welcome and witness the senses without being dominated by them. “A maxim of holistic health is that we can only heal what we can feel,” (LePage, 1994, 8.6). The mind remains alert and aware and begins the first of the deeper practices of Yoga. Many symptomatic menopausal women can benefit greatly from a regular practice of *Yoga Nidra* and the relaxation it induces. Elena, whom we met earlier, easily fits the profile of a perimenopausal, fairly inflexible Yoga student with chronic back pain, who can and has benefited from *Yoga Nidra* in class although she has yet to begin to practice it regularly on her own.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga work as a continuing process toward preparation through awareness with the goal being a direct experience of the Divine. There is a logical flow to the Eight Limbs model. Study and application of the first two limbs, the morals (*yamas*) and

behaviors (*niyamas*) help the student begin to recognize patterns in their thinking and actions which may need adjustment. Taimni describes the coordination of the remaining five limbs:

“*Asana* and *Pranayama* eliminate the disturbances arising from the physical body. *Pratyhara*, by detaching the sense-organs from the mind, cuts off the external world and the impressions which it produces on the mind. The mind is thus completely isolated from the external world and the *Sadhaka* (student) is thus in a position to grapple with it (the mind) without any interference from the outside. It is only under these conditions that the successful practice of *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* is possible, (Taimni, 1993, 275).

The Sixth Limb: Dharana

Concentration (*dharana*) focuses the mind. The definition of concentration is to direct, focus and hold one’s attention on an object to the exclusion of all other objects. There is a difference in this psychological definition of concentration and the yogic meaning of the word. In the general definition, the mind focuses and attention is held on the chosen object but the mind continues to move in the background. In yogic terms, “though concentration begins with the controlled movement of the mind it can reach a state in which all movement or change stops. In this ultimate stage the mind becomes one with the essential nature of the object concentrated upon and can thus move no further” (Taimni, 1993, 276-277).

For women in menopause this is an important ability to cultivate. This practice can help still the mind and provide access to levels of the subconscious mind to help women become aware of and witness underlying beliefs that help to inform thought patterns and lifestyle behaviors both positive and negative and open doors to that "something more," that many women are seeking as they transition through menopause.

However, there is a caution that needs to be mentioned here. We live in a culture that accepts dualism as a cultural perspective and to some extent we all operate within this ego, mind/body split, where things of the mind are considered lofty, intellectual and spiritual, and

things of the body gross, dirty and low (Wilber, 1979, 85 - 103).

Therefore, It is important to to distinguish between the psychological process and spiritual practice. They may overlap, or proceed in tandem, but they are not the same. The psychological process through its many and varied therapies examines behavior, personality, and the mind with the end result of regulating human interaction with the environment, -- -- -- changing behavior (Wilber, 1979, 162). Spiritual practice techniques such as *dharana* are used to help the individual recognize, acknowledge, and embrace the true nature of Reality (Wilber, 1979, 141-160).

Some questions that will be helpful is working with *dharana* are:

1. What kinds of activities allow your mind to quiet down?
2. What kind of activities or objects can you concentrate on?
3. What happens when your mind is quiet?

The Seventh Limb: Dhyana

Meditation (*dhyana*) opens the door to deeper levels of experience. It is a process designed to interrupt and still the workings of ordinary mental activity. The goal is to empty the mind but keep alert (Feuerstein, 1998, 334). There are many meditation techniques ranging from simple awareness of the breath to complex exercises involving hand positions, sounds and postures. All of the various techniques or systems of meditation ranging from Yoga to Buddhism fall within three classifications: “(a) concentration, in which mind focuses on a fixed mental object - Yoga; (b) mindfulness, in which mind observes itself- Buddhism; or (c) both operations present in integrated combination (Goleman, 1977, 105-6).

The main technique in Yogic meditation focuses on one-pointed concentration on breath, mantra or physical posture. Swami Satyananda Saraswati proposes that true one pointedness can only be realized when the mind is relaxed and that most Westerners have difficulty relaxing and

end up practicing 'forced concentration' which results in the failure to achieve meditation.

Saraswati recommends a variety of techniques that allow the mind to be active but to give it a focus so that it gradually quiets of its own accord (Saraswati, 1981, 5).

When I look back at the development of my *asana* practice, I realize just how long it takes to develop a new habit. Making sitting meditation a regular practice was no exception. I find that I will go for a week or two and be very regular then something will disrupt the schedule for a few days, or longer.

The other thing I've noticed about my practice is that it changes as I change and flows as I flow. Some days all I want to do is insight meditation - to sit and witness whatever comes up. On other days I want to do concentration meditation -- -- -- chant a mantra or count my breath. In any case I have always been disciplined enough to get back to doing something.

Of the practices from Saraswati's, *Yoga and Kriya*, I had the most consistent success with *Ajapa*. The instructions were to do *Ujjayi* breathing (throat breathing) and *Kechari Mudra* (rolling the tongue upwards and backwards so that the underside of the tongue is placed on the roof of the mouth). The purpose of this mudra and *Ujjayi* breathing is to stimulate the carotid sinuses which direct the brain to lower blood pressure and induce relaxation (Saraswati, 1981, 140). I've always had difficulty maintaining *Ujjayi* breathing for any length of time. Adding *Kuchari Mudra* increased my discomfort. One reason for this may be that my blood pressure is already lower than normal and a practice that lowers it further seems to induce discomfort. Another reason is that *Ujjayi* is mildly heating and my Ayurvedic constitution, which is *Pitta* and predominately fire, recommends cooling breath techniques. So I used Long Deep Breathing to focus my attention on the breath and substituted 'Hook Mudra', (thumb pressed to middle finger) for *Kuchari Mudra*. I noticed an immediate quieting of my mind. The remainder of the instructions were to inhale, bringing the breath from the navel to the throat while mentally

intoning ‘*So,*’ and exhale the breath from the throat to the navel while silently intoning, ‘*Ham.*’

I know that some teachers and traditions discourage changing instructions to practices but Integrative Yoga Therapy teaches that customizing the practice to the client facilitates ease, comfort and compliance. I found that doing it this way really enhanced my ability to focus on the movement of the breath and the repetition of the *mantra*. I also noticed a definite increase in the circulation of energy throughout my body, mostly in the back and along the arms.

When I first began to develop my meditation habit it was blissful stuff all the time - creativity, poetry, ideas for stories, insights about my past -- -- -- yummy stuff. I journaled like a madwoman trying to get it all down. Now that I’ve been into it for a while it ranges from nothing, to shadow material, to agitation to peaceful nothings with an occasional bliss moment.

Physically I’ve experienced automatic breath stopping, spontaneous root locks and a feeling of what I call ‘bliss bombs’ - - - something like a rush of tingling up my back and down my arms. Psychically, I have begun to notice that significant disruptions in schedules, and plans tend to occur after a night of troubled sleep. I usually sleep like a baby and it’s very rare that I don’t so this tendency was easily noticeable after it happened a few times. In terms of my response to it (so I don’t get hooked on the idea of it) - - - I use a statement one of my Yoga teachers told me after I excitedly told her of an image of a ‘blue dot’ that sometimes appeared when I meditated, “keep meditating,” she told me, “and it will go away.”

Some questions that help introduce the practice of *dhyana* are:

1. What is your understanding of meditation?
2. Have you ever tried it?
3. What was your experience like?

The Eighth Limb: Samadhi

Direct experience of wholeness/unity (*samadhi*) leads to self-realization. Feuerstein describes this as ecstasy which ensues when all the movements of the mind have stilled and lucidity is still present. There are many and varied states of *samadhi* and Patanjali subsumes them under two major categories, conscious ecstasy, in which the subject and object become one and although thoughts occur they do not interrupt the ecstasy, and supraconscious ecstasy, which is a complete transformation of the body-mind leading to liberation. Liberation is, “a transmental state of sheer Presence and pure Awareness” (Feuerstein, 1998, 335-38). This state is not one that can be accomplished by an act of will. The seeker can only practice, open themselves up and wait for grace. (Feuerstein, 1998, 335-38). Creativity, including poetry, is one way to express this.

The Veil Is Very Thin

When I was asleep
I waited
to be seen
I wanted
to be recognized
I longed
to be connected
to sense you in me
to see me in you
to feel understood.

Now that I'm awake
boundaries
dissolve
illusions
fade
I see through
separateness
into wholeness
the veil is very thin
now that I'm awake.

(Gibbs, 1997)

Reflections

Yoga is designed to bring unconscious material to the surface so we can "trace it, face it and erase it," (*Stuart Saves His Family*, 1995). A well developed and mature ego (or sense of individual self) is needed to process this material, accept it, integrate, and then let it go -- a necessary preparatory step. Witnessing our own 'stuff' is hard work. If we are unable to deal with the material due to lack of a mature ego, we could actually deepen our level of repression, separation and distressful patterns. Once this step has been realized a woman can move on to dis-identify with the ego and complete her spiritual transformation if that is what she has chosen for herself.

The tools and practices described in this project are concentrated on the first level or phase of self-healing, strengthening and preparation through use of the first Five Limbs of Yoga and the principles of self discipline, self-inquiry and acceptance. These teach awareness, and help women to quiet the mind. Understanding that this is a necessary step toward reaching the transcendental states is important for Yoga therapists in helping their students and clients choose appropriate practices. Ultimately it will be the woman's choice to move further. If the Yoga therapist has not trod that path herself it will be time to help the woman in question find another teacher.

PART II

HEALING THE WHOLE WOMAN

CHAPTER 5

UNDERSTANDING STRESS: PERSPECTIVES FROM EAST AND WEST

If you can't change your fate, change your attitude.

- - - Amy Tan

(Eisen, 2000)

Stress & Menopause: A View From the West

This chapter will present a brief overview of stress from the Western and Eastern perspectives, address the stressors that impact menopausal women and discuss the general benefits of Yoga for reducing and managing stress.

Stress, in the clinical sense, is any stimulus that interferes with the normal physiological equilibrium of an organism (Zinn, 1990, 249-50; Sapolsky, 1998, 6-7). In Ayurveda, the medical system that compliments the science of Yoga, stress is defined as, "that which interferes with the spontaneous flow of nature's intelligence in human physiology as it moves from unmanifest to manifest" (Simon, 1997, 247). Stress can result from a variety of sources. Dr. Christine Benner offers a helpful list of some main stressors:

Behavioral/Medical or Mechanical

Inactivity, working excessively

Structural misalignments (scoliosis), trauma (accidents) or other health issues

Heavy lifting, repetitive motion (typing, playing a musical instrument, etc.)

Mental/Emotional - Fear, Anger, Guilt, Excitement

Money worries, marriage and relationship stress

Fear-based behaviors: aggression, cynicism, isolation, blaming etc.

Career problems and changes

Chemical/Environmental

Sugar, caffeine, nicotine (second hand smoke or smoking addiction)

Water and air quality

Pollen, molds, and other allergens

(Benner, 1998)

Stress can also result from conflicts with cultural standards of being different due to race, gender, physical appearance, sexual orientation; economic or class values and political or spiritual beliefs. The severity of response to one or more of these stressors varies from person to person largely depending upon the perception the person has of the stressor and the body's reaction or response to it (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 247).

When a short term stress reaction occurs from a single stressor that one interprets as dangerous or scary, the sympathetic arm of the autonomic nervous system, what is also referred to as "fight or flight" is engaged. When this occurs, the heart rate and blood pressure increase. Blood is shunted away from the abdominal organs to the arms and legs as hormones (adrenaline & cortisol) are pumped into the body to prepare it to fight or run -- -- the fight or flight reaction. When the situation is over, or if one is able to shortcut the stress reaction, the parasympathetic arm of the nervous system is engaged and the body experiences a reduction in heart rate and muscle tension. Breathing slows and the body releases acetylcholine which gives a sense of balance and well being.

Long term stress from any of the above sources or from an habitual danger/fear stress reaction can have serious physiological effects on the body such as:

1. A long term increase in heart rate and blood pressure
2. Lack of blood circulation in the abdominal organs and digestive tract
3. The stomach lining consistently flooded by stress chemicals

Ann O'Leary's research on long term stress has shown that the immune system becomes subject to suppression and that prolonged stress then becomes a factor in a variety of auto immune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, aids, and Rheumatoid arthritis (O'Leary, 1990, 363 - 68). Over time chronic stress that depresses the immune system becomes a factor in the development of chronic illnesses or diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, colitis and irritable bowel syndrome (Sapolsky, 1998, 41- 150).

Hans Selye, the pioneering endocrinologist defined the Western concept of stress. His theory is called the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). According to Selye's theory, the stress reaction happens in three stages. The first stage occurs when a situation that a human perceives as life threatening occurs. The adrenal glands pump out extra hormones which trigger the release of glucose to provide extra energy to handle the situation. After the crisis is over, the adrenals quiet down and the body rests and repairs itself. The second stage occurs when the body has been exposed to stress over a long period of time. The adrenals adapt to chronic stress by increasing in size and robbing the body of nutrients in order to keep up the production of energy to meet the perceived demand. The third stage of the stress reaction occurs when the point of adrenal exhaustion is reached (Selye, 2001, 148 - 9).

Christiane Northrup, in discussing menopause and stress, draws a clear relationship between adrenal function, stress and menopause. For example: the adrenal glands which sit on top of the kidneys are the body's 'shock absorbers.' The hormones they produce are adrenaline, cortisol and DHEA. Adrenaline is the hormone that prepares the body to react to a situation that is perceived as an emergency (fight or flight). Cortisol enhances the body's resistance and endurance and DHEA reverses many of the effects of excessive cortisol. It's the balance between cortisol and DHEA levels that enable the body to respond to the stresses of daily life in healthy and flexible ways.

During the menopausal years, if internal mental/emotional stressors and external physical stressors such as overwork, surgery, or menopausal symptoms are too great, the delicate balance breaks down and can lead to adrenal dysfunction, fatigue and other illnesses as well as additional menopausal symptoms (Northrup, 1998, 526-529).

Northrup describes a clear relationship between the perception of stress and the severity of menopausal symptoms based on imbalances between the sympathetic and parasympathetic

nervous system in conjunction with the changing hormonal fluctuations of menopause (Northrup, 2001, 60 - 65). Basically, the higher a woman's stress reaction is to daily events, thoughts and emotions, the more symptoms she may have or the more intensely she may experience her symptoms. Conversely, the more stress hardy a woman is, the more likely she is to experience milder symptoms or have less intense reactions to her symptoms. The following examples from three perimenopausal women are anecdotal but will serve to illustrate the point.

Caroline, married and with two grown children, always appears smiling, calm and in control. However, she says that her stress level is "usually high." Her major challenge, she says, comes from the insurance agency that she runs. Her current health challenges are TB and Lupus (currently arrested), and diverticulitis. In terms of menopause she lists 14 symptoms -- hot flashes, night sweats, heart palpitations, migraines, joint pain, fatigue, indigestion, fluctuating energy levels, mood swings, depression, irritability, forgetfulness, libido changes and inner turmoil. She is beginning to look at ways to manage her stress better,

"I certainly don't know what the future holds for my health but I'm more conscious of it. Turning 55 this year and getting my first 'senior' discount made me take a step back and look at myself. I do more it seems than when I was younger as it is certainly a faster and more hectic lifestyle. I recognize the need to slow down and enjoy the beauty around me -- especially for my health."

Kaitlin reports her stress levels as moderate, caused she says by, "negative self talk, usually related to perceived inadequacy at work." She is a 49 years old and married with one child. Her husband is battling cancer. She lists eleven menopausal symptoms. She experiences fatigue, lethargy, insomnia, depression, irritability, joint pain, hot flashes and night sweats. Because she is highly intellectual, her most troublesome symptoms, are fuzzy thinking, inability to concentrate, and a high degree of inner turmoil. She handles her stress by talking about it with friends and a spiritual director at her church. She does Yoga for the joint pain and is beginning

to see some relief from that symptom. She would like to do sitting meditation, but says, “ If I could really do it, I’m sure it would help, but I can’t sit down long enough and concentrate -- -- -- I’m too scattered. Yoga is very helpful because I can move and the movements make me feel better.”

Andrea reports her stress level as low. She is 48, married, and because of a congenitally deformed uterus and eventual hysterectomy (uterus only) due to fibroids, has no children. She, like her mother and grandmother, copes with recurring depression but keeps it under control with Yoga and a low dose of an antidepressant. She wants to come off the medication and does well with Yoga and diet for long periods of time between recurring bouts. Her life’s most stressful event was her parent’s divorce which occurred when she was twelve. “ Even though it probably needed to happen, it was the most difficult event in my life. I think in many ways, Yoga saved my life, along with music.” Andrea has practiced Yoga for many years and is currently a Yoga teacher and Integrative Yoga Therapist. She has done a lot of her own psychotherapeutic work, and according to her is experiencing a lot of self-confidence and is happy with her life. When asked to list the ways she found most effective for releasing stress and dealing with her five menopausal symptoms (hot flashes, night sweats, headaches, vaginal dryness and a “little fuzzy thinking at times”), she replied, “Yoga, Yoga, Yoga.”

Menopausal women’s experience of stress can affect their health on all levels during the menopause passage. Menopause itself may be a source of significant stress.

- Johanna Archer’s review of the medical literature resulted in her determination that depression is more common in women than in men and seems to be increased at times of changing hormone levels in women (Archer, 1999, 71-78).
- Deborah Gordon and Molly Siple state that stress hormones and sex hormones effect each other. This fact, backed by research, is particularly relevant to women in the matter of changes in estrogen levels, which affect how stress hormones act in the body along with the neurotransmitter serotonin and the metabolism of endorphins, to regulate body temperature, sleep patterns, mood and well-being (Gordon & Siple, 2001, 147-51).

- Alice Domar and Henry Dreher state that stress added to fluctuating hormones increases the intensity and frequency of hot flashes (Domar & Dreher, 1996, 290-95).
- Susan Lark explains that stress can have an added impact on the menopausal woman due to the combination of hormone and biochemical changes that women are subject to during the menopausal years (Lark, 1996, 136 - 152).

Stress can come from sources already present in women's lives in addition to those stressors specifically related to menopause. Although several of the twenty four women who responded to the menopause survey mentioned some menopausal symptoms as a stress factor, the most consistently mentioned factors were work, the demands of family relationships, and interpersonal conflicts. This is consistent with Northrup's research (Northrup, 1998, 558).

Gordon and Siple add that what menopause means to a woman can also be a source of stress, often due to the negative perception that our culture has of menopause and menopausal women as old and useless in a culture dominated by an emphasis on youth and beauty. McCain agrees, "The first thing I discovered was that the way a woman experiences menopause is to a great extent defined by the culture in which she lives" (McCain, 1991, 20-22). Northrup says of Western culture, " the patriarchal organization of our society demands that women, its second class citizens, ignore or turn away from their hopes and dreams in deference to men and the demands of their families" (Northrup, 1998, 3-6). The following list of cultural stressors mentioned by Northrup, and McCain may affect the impact of menopause upon women regardless of racial, ethnic, and class differences.

Cultural Stressors

- Unequal legal rights
- Second class citizenship
- A preoccupation with physical beauty, diet and body image
- Pressure to look young
- Poverty
- Lack of support for the mid-life change
- Emphasis on menopause as an estrogen deficiency disease

A high incidence of violence against women
Cultural devaluation
(Northrup, 1998, 3-6; McCain, 1991, 20-22)

As women become aware of the cultural sea in which we all swim, and the stressors which exist in Western culture to devalue and dismiss the aging female, women will be in a better position to examine their personal 'buy in' to the cultural beliefs about their experience of themselves, their power, their bodies, their menopause and their aging process. As this process of awareness grows, women will be better able to reduce and manage the stressors they face during their menopausal years.

Although none of the twenty-four women who responded to the menopause survey, specifically connected the quality of their menopausal experience to the impact of these cultural stressors, the five women referenced below expressed a clear awareness of cultural bias and stressors when asked what being a woman meant to them. All of these women are middle class and college educated.

Dodie, a perimenopausal woman married with no children, said, "Unfortunately it has meant, and continues to mean a disadvantage (\$.79 to the dollar) and unequal treatment." A similar sentiment was expressed by Lois, a post menopausal, married woman with two grown children who said,

"I know that the traditional feminine traits -- -- compassion, thoughtfulness, generosity, sensitivity -- -- are part of nature's plan for balance in relationships and in the world. So it's hard to see these good qualities dismissed as unimportant, emotional, 'girl stuff.' I am also exasperated when I see time and time again, that most men consider themselves automatically superior to all but the most exceptional women (Madame Curie, Mother Theresa). But frustrated as I am by this age-old battle, I focus not so much on 'being a woman' as being Lois."

Both Dodie and Lois are Caucasian. When I looked at the answer to this same question from Bernice, Lea and Clarisse, who are African-American, the responses were dramatically

different. They ranged from statements like, “I was born liberated,” and “As a black female, I am very confident of who I am and where I want to go -- -- -- I will not let anyone take advantage of me knowingly,” to “Being a black woman means that I’m allowed (and expected) to be strong without casting suspicions on my sexuality.” Although Clarisse did not offer further explanation of the meaning of her sexuality comment, in light of cultural stereotypes of African American women, and based on my own experience, it usually means that appearing strong and in control for a black woman often means being labeled a ‘ball breaker’ or ‘castrating bitch.’

For Mala Matacin, a professor of psychology at the University of Hartford whose research interest is women and stress, the cultural bias in favor of males is a factor in the lack of research on the effects of stress on women’s lives. Matacin’s work encourages Western science to shake off old paradigms of androcentric research which assumes that what is true for the male is also true for the female. She writes, “it is standard practice in animal model studies that only male rats are used because the estrus cycle of female rats introduces a ‘nuisance’ variable that researchers have to control.” And also,

“All human activity, which includes research, is encompassed and restricted by its context (cultural values and norms). Thus when science restricts women or people of color from its research, the questions, methods and results often reflect an inherent bias that primarily benefits whites and men” (Matacin, 2000/01, 49).

Fortunately this is changing slowly and there is useful research being done in this area. Studies show that women, more so than men, are more likely to recognize events in their lives as stressful and are also more likely to rate the intensity as higher (Davis & Matthews, 1999, 89). There is also research from the North American Menopause Society showing that African American women at menopause reported more physiological symptoms than white women.

Psychological symptoms were equally reported by both groups (Freeman, Grisso et al., 2001, 33-42). I was not at all surprised to read this in the abstract. It felt very real. It has long been an opinion of mine that African American women deal with an additional layer of stress caused by racial discrimination and prejudice and that this impacts their experience of menopause.

This is something that may be difficult for white women to grasp until they find themselves in the position of the minority as Samantha did when she began circulating with the bisexual and Lesbian community. She told me during a phone conversation that she understood for the first time what it really meant to be in the minority. "It's awful!" She said that when she and her partner went out in public together she always had to be concerned about who was watching and whether or not she and her partner were being appropriate for the environment. She said, "You have to be on guard at every minute." Listening to her talk, I knew she really 'got it.'

American culture provides few models or guidelines for viewing menopause as a natural rite of passage, a positive life change and opportunity for transformation -- -- -- all of which can help to reduce and manage the stress of menopause both positive and negative. To find those things and the tools and techniques for supporting them, women will need to widen their search. Stress is a fact of life and having some stress is vital to existing. Since the climacteric is a multi-year process it becomes important for a menopausal woman to know what her stressors and stress reaction patterns are, and how they may be related to mid-life and menopause. Then, if the stress reaction patterns are found to be dysfunctional and self-harming or violent (*ahimsa*), the goal will be to develop healthy and appropriate ways to respond to the stressful situations in her life.

Avidya: A View From the East

The yogic process of understanding stress and the stress reaction begins with the recognition of each human being as unique, valuable, worthy and complete. Using the model of the *Koshas*, the five levels of awareness, stress is understood as separation from the from the knowledge of Reality as Self (Unity Consciousness) and therefore separation from the physical, breath/energy, mental emotional, and wisdom levels as well. See chapter seven for a full explanation of the *Koshas*. The more firmly a woman identifies herself as small self (ego, and thinking mind) and sees that as the only reality, the more easily the stage is set for suffering and dysfunctional responses to stressful situations. This separation, according to Yoga therapy, will also manifest in one or all of the *Koshas*: physical, breath/energy, psycho/emotional, witness consciousness and bliss.

In the Yogic view of suffering and stress, false understanding (*avidya*), is the belief or illusion that the five sense physical world is the only reality. The more a woman senses, feels, experiences and knows that Self (Unity Consciousness) constitutes Reality and understands herself as unique, valuable, worthy and complete, the less stressful situations will result in negative stress reactions and suffering. *Avidya* is a central concept to the discussion of stress from the Yogic viewpoint.

Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine and Swami Ajaya in *Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness*, discuss *avidya* as a pattern of ‘ignorance,’ an obstacle to personal development, and a cause of misery from which psychopathological conditions may emerge. From this viewpoint *avidya* is the cause of all fear, anxiety, and depression; and a person who remains enmeshed in a narrow, comfortable, familiar and limited perception of reality will encounter restrictions in personal growth (Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 175). Therefore, the

higher the level of separation or *avidya*, the higher the perception of stress and the higher the stress levels.

In Western psychology the goal is a distinction is made between a person with ‘normal’ patterns and those whose patterns are bizarre enough for the culture to consider them mentally ill. In the Yogic system less focus is placed on making this distinction. Instead there is simply *avidya* and the recognition that proper training in Yoga for those who are ready and able will gradually peel away the layers of *avidya* until all superficiality and illusion is replaced by true knowledge of what is Real (Swami Rama et al, 1976, 175-6). To go even deeper into the meaning and relevance of *avidya*, to the discussion of stress, we will look to the *Yoga Sutras*. Here are three sutras from chapter two which deal with *avidya* and the way to remove it. The following translations are by Feuerstein (1998, 293 - 94).

2.1: Tapa svadhyaya isvara pranidhanani kriya yoga

Ascetism, study and devotion to the Lord constitute the Yoga of Action.

My commentary:

Self-discipline, understanding our values, and patterns of belief and living an authentic life are action steps that will lead a woman to self-healing or Self-Realization

2.3 Avidya asmita raga dvesa abiniveshah klesah

Ignorance, I-am-ness, attachment, aversion, and the will-to-live are the five causes-of-affliction.

My commentary:

Pain in life is a given, we will all experience it. Suffering from the pain is a choice. As we come to understand our true natures, dis-identify from our need for acquisition and ego control and become less fearful, we lessen the amount of suffering we feel.

2.4: Avidya ksetram uttaresam prasupta tanu vicchinna udaranam

Ignorance is the field of the other causes which can be dormant, attenuated, intercepted or aroused.

My commentary:

Contrary to the popular saying, ignorance is *not* bliss. Ignorance of the truth of our lives and of our true selves is what keeps us suffering from the situations and repeating patterns

of our lives. Once we become aware of that, we are better able to understand and manage our desires, our aversions, our egos and our fear of death.

This discussion will contrast commentaries on the *Yoga Sutras* by three authors; Desikachar, Venkatesananda, and Taimni. All of these commentaries define *avidya* as ignorance or misapprehension of the true nature of Reality and the relationship of Reality to the self/Self. Basically, according to Yoga, Reality is non-dual, a seamless whole of cosmic intelligence --- the 'all that is.' Because we perceive ourselves as being different from, or outside of 'all that is,' we suffer from an illusion of separateness and are therefore subject to suffering in the form of obstacles (the *klesas*: ego, attachment, aversion, fear, and pain). If we choose to proceed along the path of Yoga we hopefully and gradually reduce our level of *avidya*. In time we may have a direct experience of 'all that is' and ourselves as Self (Unity Consciousness).

The differences between commentaries lie in the depth of their discussions of what *avidya* is, why it is considered to be the cause of the obstacles that lead to human stress and suffering, and what can be done by the student to relieve, reduce or remove it.

Of the three, *The Heart of Yoga*, in my opinion, has the briefest, and in terms of language the most 'Western friendly,' discussion on the meaning of *avidya* (Desikachar, 1995, 165, 166):

2.1: Tapa svadhyaya isvara pranidhanani kriya yoga,

The practice of Yoga must reduce both physical and mental impurities. It must develop our capacity for self-examination and help us to understand that, in the final analysis, we are not the masters of everything we do.

My commentary:

Through the practice of awareness we bring attention to our thoughts, words and behaviors. Where attention goes, energy follows. If our attention and intention is to work towards being authentic, we can take the necessary steps to attempt change, but in the final analysis we'll realize that the only thing we truly control is the quality of our response to what happens on our journey through life.

2.3 Avidya asmita raga dvesa abiniveshah klesah

The obstacles are misapprehension, confused values, excessive attachments, unreasonable dislikes, and insecurity.

My commentary:

Misunderstanding or lack of awareness and clarity about how values, belief patterns, thoughts and behaviors express themselves in her life may keep a woman locked into certain life roles.

2.4: Avidya ksetram uttaresam prasupta tanu vicchinna udaranam

Misapprehension is the source of all the other obstacles. They need not appear simultaneously and their impact varies. Sometimes they are obscure and barely visible; at other times they are exposed and dominant. It is only when they are completely exposed, that the effects of these obstacles are evident to other people, although not necessarily to the individual concerned.

My commentary:

Misunderstanding is the root of the other obstacles (confused values, excessive attachments, unreasonable dislikes, and insecurity). A woman's motivations and behaviors based on misunderstanding may often be clearer to other people long before she becomes aware of them. Only when she becomes aware of how these obstacles manifest in her life will she be able to change and move forward.

Avidya, according to Desikachar, can be described as years of accumulated unconscious actions, reactions and ways of perceiving that restrict actions taken in the present because we respond out of those unconscious perceptions (Desikachar 1995, 9-12). In other words, we may react to a situation in the present based not on the actual unfolding of the event that is happening in the moment but out of a reaction it triggers in us -- -- -- a reaction that is often due to something that happened to us in the past. As we become aware of this, and bring compassion and forgiveness to the situation, the emotional charge related to the past event gradually diminishes and we can find ourselves responding more to the situations of our lives instead of reacting to them.

Venkatesananda's look at *avidya* provides narrative which places the meaning of *avidya* in a deeper yogic context by not only discussing the nature of the mind but also bringing in the notion of oneness, a basic tenet of Yoga psychology (Venkatesananda, 11-15).

2.1: Tapa svadhyaya isvara pranidhanani kriya yoga

The kindling of the inner psychic fire that at once burns away all of the impurities (coloring) and limitations of the mind-stuff, the study of both scriptural texts and one's own reactions to situations from moment to moment, and the meaningful, dynamic and devotional surrender to the indwelling omnipresence - these three simultaneously constitute active Yoga, or practice of the indivisible unity.

My commentary:

Self-discipline, self-study and alignment/surrender to the truth of one's life (*Kriya Yoga*) is the recommended Yogic process for reducing ignorance and misunderstanding of who we truly are. An understanding of these three principles and their relationship to *avidya* is as important as implementing them within one's life in terms of practice.

2.3 Avidya asmita raga dvesa abiniveshah klesah

The mind is restless because of the many unresolved problems. The elements that disturb mental equilibrium and thus generate psychic distress are:

- (1) ignorance of the truth concerning
- (2) one's self or egotism which seems to be the obvious truth in ignorance, and the belief in the separate individuality,
- (3&4) psychological and unnatural extension of attraction and repulsion
- (5) blind clinging to the present physical 'life' born of the ignorant division of timeless eternity into life and death.

My commentary:

At menopause many women experience inner turmoil, mental confusion anxiety and fear. Christiane Northrup says it's because our right brain is trying to talk to our heart to get us to wake up to the truth of our lives and make needed changes (Northrup, 2001, 459).

When a woman starts the inner journey, and listens to her heart and to her soul she becomes a more authentic participant in her own life and the turmoil, fear and anxiety, I believe, will subside.

2.4: Avidya ksetram uttaresam prasupta tanu vicchinna udaranam

Obviously ignorance of the truth of oneness, or the invisibility of cosmic intelligence, is the cause of all the other sources of psychic distress, whether these latter seem to be completely hidden or dormant, veiled or weak, or actively spread out, creating the notion that they are not related to spiritual ignorance, that they are independent of ignorance, and can, therefore, be dealt with by means other than self-knowledge.

My commentary:

Awareness of self is the first and most crucial step on the path of true self-healing and transformation. Awareness and acceptance are necessary preparations before a woman can move from participating in the drama of her life to the point of being able to witness it and herself in it. Once that occurs, ignorance or *avidya* is decreased.

In *The Science of Yoga*, Taimni follows his translations of the Sanskrit with an extensive discussion of what *avidya* means to the life of the reader and provides a much deeper explanation of how to decrease the effects of *avidya* and ultimately eliminate it altogether.

2.1: Tapa svadhyaya isvara pranidhanani kriya yoga

Austerity, self-study and resignation to Isvara constitute preliminary Yoga

My commentary

Self-discipline, self-study and surrender to the authenticity of one's life through awareness are necessary steps for most women before attempting to use menopause or any other life situation as an opportunity for spiritual realization.

2.3 Avidya asmita raga dvesa abiniveshah klesah

The lack of awareness of Reality, the sense of egoism or 'I-am-ness', attractions and repulsions towards objects and the strong desire for life are the great afflictions or causes of all miseries in life.

My commentary

Awareness is the key that will unlock our involvement in the patterns of our lives and help us understand why we suffer.

2.4: Avidya ksetram uttaresam prasupta tanu vicchinna udaranam

Avidya is the source of those that are mentioned after it, whether they be in the dormant, attenuated, alternating or expanded condition.

My commentary

Ignorance or lack of the ability to witness our patterns is the source of all the other obstacles (ego, attachments, aversions, fear). These obstacles may be in our awareness or not, but the key to lessening their affect on our lives is awareness of their effect on the patterns of our lives through the reduction of ignorance (*avidya*) and realization of the truth of our lives and of our true natures.

Taimni's commentary differs from the other two in that it is a full length book presenting his discussion in light of modern thought. This makes it a rich resource, providing the reader with clarity and as well as a practical guide for understanding the yogic path and the nature of Reality (Taimni 1961, 132-134). This realization of the nature of Reality and the ability to live that realization removes *avidya* and allows one to see beyond the ego and thinking mind. In terms of Yogic science it is the disciplined daily practice of awareness over time that will bring about this realization and the disappearance or lessening of *avidya* which is then gradually reduced as Self-Realization grows step by step (Taimni, 1961, 225-229).

However, Taimni cautions students to properly prepare themselves by practicing the practical, preliminary aspects of *Kriya Yoga*; a progressive theoretical and practical technique of mind/body transformation which includes self-discipline, self-study and surrender. Only then should students begin to delve into the deeper practices of Yoga. By deeper practices, Taimni means reaching for the spiritual goals of Yoga which go beyond the physical culture of postures (*asana*), breathing techniques (*pranayama*), and beyond the therapeutic goals of reducing stress and/or lessening emotional and psychological difficulties (Taimni 1961, 132-134).

Avidya, therefore is a false understanding of the true nature of Reality (Unity Consciousness) which results in our inability to separate pain from suffering, release our attachment to the working of our egos or 'thinking mind,' and realize our true nature and the nature of Reality (Self; Unity Consciousness). When we are experiencing separation from Self, and are in the state of *avidya*, we do not realize that "pain is a given, but suffering is a choice." Becoming aware of the role that *avidya* plays in our lives, and making the decision to begin the conscious effort of removing or lessening its effect on our perceptions and choices is a lifelong process which requires an open mind, patience and discipline. It also requires trust in the process, and faith in the paradox that asks us to make the effort and then release any desire or

attachment to the outcome of our actions and efforts. For most of us, elements, layers and veils of *avidya* will be with us throughout our lives. The presence of *avidya* seems to be an integral part of the human experience in the physical world and Yoga provides tools to understand, reduce and remove it.

Yoga and Stress Reduction

According to Yoga, it is the presence and degree of *avidya* which causes separation from Self (Unity Consciousness) which can then result in a corresponding level of increased stress reaction on the body/mind to perceived internal and external stressors. Reduction and removal of *avidya* increases integration, balance and connection with Self (Unity Consciousness) and reduces the levels of stress reactions on the body/mind even though the stressor/s may still exist.

Yoga, (eg. Hatha, Kundalini and others) work with stress directly by reducing the symptoms. The practice of Yoga has been shown to reduce stress and teach practitioners to manage stress in healthy flexible ways. As part of my preparation for writing this paper, I conducted an eight week class on Yoga and Menopause. A full description of the class will be found in chapter eight and the materials and participant evaluations in appendix two. All of the women who took the class reported relief from some of their symptoms by the third week of class. The most common was the use of a cooling breath practice (*Sitali Pranayama*) to reduce the intensity of hot flashes and night sweats.

Although the ultimate goal of Yoga is Self-Realization, the practical application of Yoga techniques is well suited for managing stressful situations and and body/mind imbalances created by lifestyle, behavioral, medical, emotional or environmental stressors (Saraswati, 1993, 217).

- Asana practice releases physical tension from the body through stretching, toning and stimulation of organ systems.

- Pranayama, efficiently done, engages the parasympathetic nervous system which brings on the relaxation response.
- Guided imagery and visualization is a part of *Yoga Nidra* and can have a beneficial effect on boosting the immune system and stimulating the body's natural healing process.
- Meditation calms the mind and produces acetylcholine at higher levels for increased relaxation and tension release.

Dean Ornish and John Kabat-Zinn, are two of the more well known Western medical and health professionals who use Yoga as a significant part of their programs. For example, Ornish has shown that heart disease can be reversed for some individuals through a program of Yoga, meditation, group therapy and diet,

"It was in the mid seventies that researchers in various parts of the world began to prove how effective stress management techniques and a low fat vegetarian diet could be. Studies in Boston, New York, California, England and in other parts of the world were proving, for example, that meditation can lower blood pressure, decrease the frequency of irregular heart rhythms, reduce cholesterol levels and so on. Almost all of these techniques ultimately derive from yoga" (Ornish, 1996, 140)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., Founder and Director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Mass Medical Center, uses Yoga and meditation to help his clients reduce stress and manage chronic pain,

"Step number one in caring for your body, whether you are injured, sick or healthy, is to practice being "in" it. There are many different ways to practice being in your body. All enhance growth and change and healing, especially if they are done with meditative awareness. One of the most powerful in terms of its ability to transform the body, and most wonderful in terms of how good it feels to do it, is hatha yoga," (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 95-113)

Research that has been conducted on the effects of Yoga on the body/mind is encouraging. James Funderburk cites studies on the efficacy of Yoga postures and breathing techniques in increasing flexibility, cardiovascular efficiency, and lung capacity. He also cites studies which show that the regular practice of Yoga can slow the heart rate, lower blood

pressure, and increase autonomic balance for stress resistance (Funderburk, 1977, 7-78). Swami Satyananda Saraswati reports that a study done at East Texas University concluded that Yoga postures and relaxation techniques should be prescribed more frequently for relieving menstrual dysfunction and pain (Saraswati, 1993, 229-30). Although more research needs to be done on the specific application of Yoga to menopause, Alice Domar's work on hot flashes found that women who practiced relaxation techniques daily experienced a significant reduction in the intensity of their hot flashes. Her research has been borne out by research at Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan State University and the Lafayette Clinic in Detroit Michigan. Alice Domar recommends Yoga for menopausal women because it is "an active form of relaxation" (Domar, 1996, 282-293).

Yoga postures, exercises, breathing techniques, guided imagery, and meditation have an overall positive effect on health, and if practiced correctly and regularly, the benefits are experienced by each of the body's system's (LePage, 1994, 7.6 - 7.65). Following is a general listing of the body's systems and the potential effect of Yoga on each one according to the Integrative Yoga Therapy model of health and wellness:

The Circulatory System & Yoga

The circulatory system, carries oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and organs of the body, removes waste products of metabolism and delivers them to the lungs, skin and kidneys for excretion. It serves as a communications pathway for hormones and chemicals produced by the brain, glands and other parts of the body, and helps maintain body temperature. Both Simon (1997, 226-240) and Kabat-Zinn (1990, 396-401) discuss the mind/body and lifestyle factors that have resulted in the current epidemic of heart disease. The main ones are a fast paced stress filled lifestyle compounded by a high fat/high sugar diet with a lot of processed foods and little

exercise. This set of factors can lead to stress becoming chronic with the "fight or flight" syndrome being the main mode of operation.

Yoga postures and exercises help to modify the stress reaction, relieve pressure in the arteries, improve elasticity in the arteries and increase circulation, thereby reducing the risk of stroke or tissue damage. Yoga rests and strengthens the heart, assists the veins in returning blood to the heart, helps control blood pressure, and can help release blocks and strong emotions from the heart center (LePage, 1994, 7.6-7.11).

The Digestive System & Yoga

The mouth, teeth, salivary glands, pharynx, esophagus, peritoneum, stomach, small and large intestines, liver, gall bladder, pancreas, spleen, kidneys and the urinary tract are all components of the human digestive system. The ability of these organs to function properly is directly connected to their ability to remain relaxed and receive adequate movement and fluid supply. When stress hits and the fight or flight syndrome enacted, these muscles contract and blood is shunted to the extremities. Chronic long term stress can result in any number of disorders if the negative response to stress is not modified. Disorders can range from nervous stomach to ulcers, gastritis, constipation, hemorrhoids, Crohn's disease, diverticulitis and colon cancer.

Stretching, holding and then releasing areas of the body, the "squeeze and soak" effect of Yoga postures, brings an increase of blood flow and nutrients to the abdomen, boosts metabolism, and absorption of nutrients. Yoga improves elimination by increasing the peristaltic movement of the intestines, and improves circulation in the organs through stretching and relaxation (LePage, 1994, 7.14 -7.23).

The Endocrine System & Yoga

The glands of the endocrine system are crucial to the health of the body/mind and especially important to the health of menopausal women. They produce the chemical messages that regulate the body's physiological reactions. When the pituitary gland (the master gland) is stimulated, it releases its hormones, which influence the other endocrine glands which secrete their hormones and the stress reaction or response is engaged. The endocrine system can be thought of as the physical bridge between the body and the mind.

Yoga postures and breathing techniques help to create awareness of thought patterns that trigger release of the stress hormones, create an awareness of the workings of the body/mind, increase the occurrence of positive emotions by stimulating the release of endorphins and serotonin, boosts the immune functions of the thymus gland, and revitalizes the glands and organs involved in stabilizing blood sugar levels (LePage, 1994, 7.24-7.31).

The Immune System & Yoga

Medical science has now realized that stress and lifestyle directly affect the functioning of the body/mind's immune system (Sapolsky, 1998, 126-158). Sapolsky discusses the relationship between immunity, stress and disease in detail. Chronic stress, a high fat/low fiber diet and a sedentary lifestyle can suppress immune function. A suppressed immune system can lead to increased wear and tear of organs and glands. Some of the diseases that have been linked to a suppressed immune system are: Rheumatoid Arthritis, Herpes virus outbreaks, Multiple Sclerosis, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Asthma, Colitis and HIV.

Yoga's breathing, postures and relaxation techniques stimulate the immune system. Yoga works to deepen the mind/body connection by quieting the cortex and allowing the positive messages of health and well being to bypass conscious thought and gain direct access to the

subconscious. Postures and yogic breathing improve lymph flow, which relies on muscular action to move, short circuits the reaction to stress and allows the body/mind to respond appropriately to stress, helps balance the autonomic nervous system, and releases endorphins that give a sense of well-being and allow for healthier growth at the cellular level (LePage, 1994, 7.32-7.44).

The Muscular System & Yoga

Muscles help the body function by maintaining the body/mind in an upright fashion, allowing for movement of the arteries and internal organs, and the effective pumping action of the heart. All muscles are important in the production and retention of heat. Stress often causes chronic contraction of muscles groups which squeezes the blood vessels and prevents nutrients from reaching the muscle. Farhi 's work (1996, 48-65) focuses on breathing patterns, stress and the work of the muscles. She effectively illustrates how muscles contract when the body is under stress, and that chronic stress can move muscles from a state of tension to a state of spasm. When muscles reach a fibrotic state the spasm or contraction squeezes the blood vessels and prevents nutrients from reaching the muscle. Lack of nutrients (oxygen) leads to a build up of lactic acid (toxic waste). This sends additional stress messages to the brain further increasing muscle tension.

Yoga postures and breath techniques help to create balance between strengthening, lengthening and stretching. The action of Yoga postures removes lactic acid buildup from the muscles, increases the supply of nutrients, massages injured muscles, helps reduce pain, maintains tone, aids in the release of stored muscle memories, prevents deterioration of the muscles, and relieves muscular contraction (LePage, 1994, 7.46-7.48).

The Respiratory System & Yoga

Breath is the link between mind and body, between our insides and the outer world. This link occurs in the lungs through the oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange of our respiratory system. Both Donna Farhi (1996, 73-102) and Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine and Alan Hymes (1979, 45-55) discuss the ways in which stress affects the breathing process by constricting the primary breathing muscles and moving the origin of the breathing process from the diaphragm to the chest. Some of the long term effects of chest breathing are: increased heart rate, increased perception of pain and cardiopulmonary stress.

Postures open the lung and chest area to stimulate diaphragmatic breathing, and also open parts of the lungs which might not be accessible through normal posture and body position. Yoga postures and breath techniques can teach clients to relax and control the breath, even under difficult circumstances (LePage, 1994, 7.49-7.59).

The Skeletal System & Yoga

Bones produce blood cells, store calcium and phosphorous and provide a solid framework for upright posture, support and movement. Bone health is a significant concern in women's health because of the connections between the level of stress and the health and strength of a woman's bones (Northrup,1998, 550 & 748).

Yoga postures provide a way to stretch, stimulate, relax, strengthen and align the body, . Yoga helps keep the spine strong, supple and resilient, helps bones keep their proper alignment, creates flexibility and lubrication of all the joints, insures bone health & density through weight bearing postures, works toward keeping the spinal disks and joints healthy and fed, and reduces muscle tension which in turn reduces pressure on disks & the spine (Maddern, 2000, 6-7).

The Reproductive System and Yoga

The female reproductive system functions to allow the body/mind to experience sensual and sexual pleasure and reproduce through giving birth. The issue of reproductive health for women facing menopause and the stress of this major life change are many.

Yoga postures are very effective in removing congestion in this area of the body. The stretching energizes and balances the female reproductive organs (Lark, 1996, 34-35) and relaxation techniques of slowing the breathing and 'tuning in' with guided visualizations often help the practitioner reduce stress and manage menstrual irregularity and pain (Saraswati, 1993, 230).

For women who are journeying through the menopausal years, the Yogic view of stress which recognizes them as whole, unique, valuable and complete can be a useful theory and model to work with. Yoga also provides practical tools for helping women reduce *avidya*, lessen feelings of separation from self and others, manage stress levels, reduce the severity and number of symptoms and change dysfunctional reactions to stressful situations to more appropriate responses.

CHAPTER 6

THE SPIRITUAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF HEART HEALTH

Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge. They are chaotic, sometimes painful, sometimes contradictory, but they come from deep within us. And we must key in to those feelings - - - This is how new visions begin.

- - - Audre Lorde
(Eisen, 2000)

The Spiritual and Psychological Aspects of Heart Health

In Yoga philosophy everything begins on the energetic/spiritual level and then moves to the physical, including the experiences of health and illness. The organization of this chapter follows that philosophical theory and begins with a discussion of the *Chakras*, which are believed to be the energetic component of our physical bodies. Therefore, the emotional and psychological aspects of heart health are related and connected to the physical aspects of heart health. This chapter will discuss that viewpoint and present a section on Yoga's impact on heart health.

There is increasing acceptance of the mind/body connection on the part of Western scientists. Dean Ornish, and Mehmet Oz are pioneers in using Yoga and meditation in heart health programs (Ornish, 1990; Oz, 2000). Kenneth Pelletier, a senior clinical fellow at the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention and director of the Stanford Corporate Health Program at the Stanford University School of Medicine, writes, "There is now a great deal of evidence for direct connections between the central nervous system and the immune system -- -- -- parts of the body that had long been thought to be independent. Nerve endings have been found in the organs and systems of the immune system -- -- -- the thymus, lymph nodes, spleen and bone marrow -- -- -- and immune system cells respond directly to chemical signals produced by the nervous system and released into the bloodstream" (Pelletier, 1993, 21).

This is important information for menopausal women to gain as the risks for high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and heart attacks are increasingly real during and after menopause, due in some measure to the decrease in estrogen and the fluctuating hormone levels prevalent at this time. The Yogic view would pose that repressed and unresolved emotional issues around grief, anger, fear, and love in the fourth chakra are also factors.

This discussion proposes that it may be as important for menopausal women to understand and care for the spiritual and psychological aspects of heart health as it may be to stop smoking, eat a healthy diet and exercise. In terms of this viewpoint a concentration on the physical without work on the psychological and spiritual may be too little too late depending upon the actual health of a woman.

Healing the heart means becoming whole and recognizing the multi-dimensional aspects of the heart: physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Dean Ornish writes that sometimes healing of the physical heart follows healing of the emotional, psychological and spiritual heart. When that takes place it is referred to as the, “opening of the heart” (Ornish, 1990, 196). Our everyday language uses many other such phrases that relate to the emotional and spiritual life of the physical heart. We use words like:

- Cold heart
- Heartfelt
- Heartless
- Heart broken
- Heart of the matter
- Heart of darkness
- Sweetheart
- Hard hearted
- Soft hearted
- Faint hearted
- In my heart of hearts
- Heart of gold
- Heart and soul

These words are not referring to the muscle inside our bodies which pumps blood to our organs but rather to the energetic emotional and spiritual meanings that inform the work of the physical heart.

The spirit or energy of the heart is represented in Yoga philosophy and psychology by the fourth *Chakra*, or energy center. According to Anodea Judith, the *Chakra* system is a seven-leveled philosophical model of the universe with each of the seven major *Chakras* expressing a pattern related to our life issues. The *Chakras* receive, assimilate and express life force energy which has a strong relationship to our physical functioning (Judith, 1996, 5-8).

Carolyn Myss describes the *Chakras* in a practical technical sense as 'energy anatomy' with the lower three *Chakras* representing human, five-sense externals and the the upper four *Chakras* as divine, multi-sensory internals that can help us change our perspective of grief, disappointment and suffering and aid us in learning forgiveness and compassion (Myss, 1996, 68-70 & 98-101). The *Chakras* are our human hard drives and our belief patterns; the energetic software through which we first learn to relate to our tribes and families of origin, then to each other through friendship and intimacy, then to ourselves for self-awareness and then to our higher power through an awakening or opening of the heart (Myss, 96 - 101).

Joseph Campbell refers to the *Chakras* as stages of power and the fourth *Chakra*, says Campbell, is the key to this transformation to our higher power, a “virgin birth of the spirit” (Campbell, 2001).

The *Chakras* are seen as the energetic corollary to our physical anatomy and they hold a major key in helping us understand our spiritual natures (Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976, 273-280). There are seven major *Chakras* located at various points along the spine in close proximity to the main glands of the human endocrine system. Each *Chakra* is related to an endocrine gland and life issues we all face. The following table is simplistic, but communicates the relationship

between the physical gland and its function and the corresponding *Chakra* and life issues. It was synthesized from the works of Anodea Judith, Caroline Myss, and Rama, Ballentine and Ajaya.

Gland	Physical Function	Energetic Function	Chakra
Adrenal	Mediates stress response	Safety/Security	Root
Gonads	Regulates sexual function	Relationships	Sacral
Pancreas	Regulates blood sugar levels	Personal power	Solar Plexus
Thymus	Source of immune cells	Love/compassion	Heart
Thyroid	Regulates metabolism	Judgment/mercy/will	Throat
Pituitary	Emotional processing	Wisdom/truth	Brow
Pineal	Related to circadian cycles	Grace/bliss	Crown

(Judith, 1952, 35; Myss, 1996, 96-101; Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 221-223)

An understanding of the *Chakras* is useful in interpreting the relationship between illness and optimal health. According to this model, any physical, mental, or emotional experience can be first related to the energy of one of the *Chakras*. Such an examination through this model will often yield fruitful results in trying to understand one's experience of an illness or life situation. For example, when I went back to my journal and found the following entry, I was able to see my hysterectomy, which included the removal of my ovaries, as an event related to the energy of my second and fourth *Chakras* :

February 10, 1996

Reading Bernie Siegel Book, *Love Medicine and Miracles*. I now know exactly why I had that hysterectomy. I have been fighting against giving birth to myself because of my response to the needs of others - read job and marriage, and my fears in disappointing them. I am co-dependent! It is as clear as a bell. Finally, my body said, "OK. I've tried to get through to you and have you do what is necessary to move on and begin work on what the hell you are here for. You got scared and took a sabbatical from the path to get married, and build a relationship. Fine. Now it's time to get back and integrate your work into the framework."

I blocked and rationalized and continued to hold off the birth until my body just refused to hold back any more. Marriage or not, husband or not, lifestyle or not -IT WILL NOT BE DENIED!!!!!! So - I lost ALL my reproductive organs and in the healing process have truly given birth to myself and understand what I am supposed to do with the knowledge and the freedom. Whether my job and marriage will survive remains to be

seen. It is no longer in my control. I surrender that to the universe - it will or it won't, BUT my birth/growth will continue because that is the most important thing here.

This re-evaluation and interpretation was also related to the beginning of the opening of my heart and the ability to forgive, an important contributor to my heart health since neither my job or my marriage survived my process.

Stephen Levine is convinced of this connection between the second and fourth *Chakra* -- -- heart and the womb. He refers to them as the “upper heart” and the ‘lower heart,” (Levine, 1987, 134). Because so many women have experienced rough handling, ranging from outright sexual abuse to objectification to insensitivity to the female experience, many women find their upper heart closed or guarded. Therefore, until the wounds of the womb are healed it may not be possible for a women to feel safe enough to open the heart (Levine, 1987, 134-136). This, I feel, is something for Yoga therapists to carefully consider before introducing any intense heart opening postures and breath techniques to women who may carry some deep and serious wounds which have yet to be healed.

The wounds in my case stemmed from lack of approval, emotional support and encouragement. Anodea Judith writes about this connection between the *Chakra* system and the Western mind,

"Healing the heart involves attending to the most vulnerable and sacred aspects within ourselves. Only through attending to their truth can we drop the protective armor that keeps us bound to the ego, bound to smaller parts of ourselves. Manipulation, derision, criticisms, or command will not work. We can only melt the armor with the combination of feeling and understanding that is love," (Judith, 1952, 293).

Judith has developed a series of six personality types that describe methods of coping strategies and chronic holding patterns or in other words, unconscious habitual reactions. I easily fit the profile of the Rigid/Achiever - - - “Wounded at the heart by lack of approval, this type tends to focus their energy on achievement. They are highly functional but often afraid of

relationships, commitment, and feelings of intimacy” (Judith, 1952, 23). A key healing practice is release of emotional grief and forgiveness work. As a highly functioning rigid/achiever who has stepped onto the path of Yoga, I began to do my grief and forgiveness work honestly, earnestly, and diligently. It is ongoing and sometimes hard but I am very much content with where I am right now.

A major piece of this work occurred during a shamanic journey in 1996 at the New Age Health Spa in Neversink, New York. Peter Blum and his assistant led the journey. It was raining so instead of a sweat lodge in the woods, we trooped to the gym and spread ourselves out in a circle on the ground. Peter began to beat the drum and his assistant sang. We had to decide whether to go underground to meet animal guides, go above ground to meet spirit guides or stay ground level and travel/visit another place. I started to go underground but found myself ‘shifted’ above ground where I met my Great Aunt Lucy who was dressed African style in feathers, and beads. She had a drum and a rattle. She danced with me and during the dance which took place in the air, she gave me "all her stuff" -- -- -- the beads, the feathers, the rattle and the drum, told me it was my turn and then disappeared. This was profound for me on several counts. My aunt had died when I was about 18, and at that moment in the Shamanic journey, I realized how much I missed her. A strong woman and very talented, she was the major nurturing figure in my early life. By giving me "all her stuff" it seemed she was saying -- -- "your path is important, deal with whatever resistance and reluctance you feel and forge ahead.”

About a year later I had a very powerful dream in which she appeared and showed me a right hand glove in a bright red color with the thumb folded over the hand towards the little finger. I heard the words, "You will do this the right way, won't you?" I puzzled over that for the longest time and finally came to understand that the hand position might be a *mudra*. I poured through all my books in the hopes of finding it and learning what the energetic meaning

might be. I finally found it in one of my Kundalini Yoga books and learned that the hand position (or *mudra*) is suggested for use with exercises to adjust the hips, lower back, kidneys and adrenals, to repair the energy drained by long term stress, and to help the heart (Bhajan, 1994, 51). It came as no surprise to me that the red color of the hand in my dream is also the color of the root *Chakra* and related to the issue of safety, security and the relationship to the family, tribe or culture. This is because my mid-life struggle has centered around breaking free of the expectations I think they have of me.

These psychic events have strengthened me and enabled me to forgive those who ‘seemed’ to be resisting my changes. My heart is softer, my anger situational and more easily released. I am learning to set realistic boundaries and respect them so that others will have to respect them as well. I am less afraid of intimacy and more careful of who I allow to be in my personal inner circle. I’m doing a better job of standing up for myself and I have learned the importance of using my own energy to move forward and not wait for others to support me. This personal experience is consistent with the role of the heart *Chakra* in the process of spiritual evolution described by Rama, Ballentine and Ajaya,

“It (*the heart Chakra*) marks a sort of transition between those chakras below it, which are concerned with the more biological matters of self-maintenance and survival, and the chakras above it, which are associated with a more evolved consciousness” (Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976, 243-253).

When women learn to listen to their hearts they can often find a spiritual or energetic cellular truth that will help them understand themselves and live their lives authentically. Key to the listening process will be learning to witness, accept and process the full range of emotions that may be encountered. One key emotion that may be prevalent is grief. Grief, according to Anodea Judith is the “demon of the heart’ (Judith, 1952 249, 287). Grief in a menopausal woman may be due to issues such as never having children, mourning the loss of personal

authenticity, or recognizing and releasing dreams that can no longer come to fruition in their original form. Julie Motz, an energy healer who worked in the operating room at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital with cardiac patients undergoing heart transplants says, “My heart patients very often had sorrow in their blood, and the energy of this sorrow, passing through the heart over and over again, weakened it” (Motz, 1998, 63). Recognizing what the heart holds, accepting what is found and working with this information can go a long way to building and maintaining heart health in the post menopausal years.

Since the heart *Chakra* and by association the heart, is the seat of the emotions, coming to grips with what a woman feels is important in understanding and working with the heart. Grief, disappointment, forgiveness and compassion are key emotions that may need to be dealt with. This work is difficult and requires courage.

Although the ultimate goal of Yoga is movement beyond the ego to spiritual realization the practice of preparatory Yoga as described in this thesis/project can help a woman become aware of how she perceives these emotions and the issues related to them. If perceiving these emotions brings up a great deal of strong and difficult issues, Yoga teachers and Yoga therapists may need to refer her to traditional counseling and psychotherapy which can be done first or in conjunction with Yoga therapy.

It is important to remember that the deeper path of Yoga requires a prepared and healthy individual. The ability to move beyond grief and disappointment involves the ability to see loss as an event, not a never ending story. According to Phillip Moffitt, seeing a loss as a story is *avidya* and creates an identity, a you, that is solid and never-changing when in reality the ego is made up of a group of personality traits which are constantly changing (Moffitt, 2000, 63). If the woman is able to access her witness consciousness and see her issues, emotions and life situations from an event and symbolic viewpoint, Yoga therapy may be enough to help her

move beyond her issues, do her forgiveness work, open to compassion and move into the realm of healing and spiritual realization.

Menopause and Heart Disease

- Heart disease is rare in premenopausal women
- Heart disease (including hypertension and stroke) is the most frequent cause of death in women over the age of fifty.
- Heart attack, though usually occurring later in life, is twice as deadly in women as in men
- One in two women will eventually die of coronary artery disease or stroke
- Only one woman in twenty-five will die of breast cancer (Northrup, 2001, 455).

Heart disease is the number one killer of American women over the age of fifty. All in all, women count for 250,000 of the 550,000 deaths from cardiovascular disease each year, and women at menopause are at higher risk because the protective mechanism of estrogen is reduced when the hormonal milieu changes, (Thornton, 1997, 267). It is cardiovascular disease that indicates how healthy a woman may be in her post-menopausal years.

Both David Simon (1997, 226-240) and Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990, 396-401) discuss the mind/body and lifestyle factors that have resulted in the current epidemic of heart disease. The main ones being a fast paced stress filled lifestyle compounded by a high fat/high sugar diet with a lot of processed foods and little exercise. The major risks for heart disease in women are:

- Smoking
 - High Blood Pressure
 - Cholesterol levels (high total and LDL and low HDL)
 - Diabetes
 - Obesity
- (Chervenak, 2001, 2)

It is interesting to note that in spite of these facts, the women's health issue most prevalent in the media and in many American minds is breast cancer. Dr. Mehmet Oz, a cardiovascular surgeon at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital says,

" Breast Cancer takes women tragically in the middle of a productive life, so it's visible. Heart disease happens to older women and at that point you're not an important member of society - you're not a forty-five year old executive with young children who is running a business" (Berne, 1999, 86).

That comment, sadly is another indication of how our culture views women in general and older women in particular and further solidifies the view of menopause for many women as an end rather than a time of new beginnings. One of the new beginnings that I refer to in this work is the application of Yoga to help menopausal women look at the physical health of their hearts through the lens of spiritual and emotional awareness.

Because there exists a great deal of accessible and clearly written information about the heart and blood vessel size difference between men and women and the impact those differences have on symptom presentation, detection, diagnosis, treatment, recuperation and survival rates of women with cardiovascular problems (Northrup, 2001, 459- 487; Legato & Coleman, 1991, 15-127; Siegfried, 1996, 3-12; Notelovitz & Tonnessen, 1996, 13 - 33; Ojeda, 1998, 54-59), this section will limit itself to a discussion of emotional stress and heart health.

Regarding the connection between stress and heart health, Kenneth Pelletier reports research by Candace Pert, Suzanne Kobasa, Robert A. Karasek and Martin Seligman that shows that heart health depends somewhat on stress hardiness, risk factors, mental attitude and social supports (Pelletier, 1993, 27-30). The work of Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe at the University of Washington showed that life changes concentrated in short time periods relates directly to patterns of illness and a positive correlation of heart attacks occurring relatively early in mid-life from total upsets from life events in the preceding year, (Pelletier, 1993, 27).

Stress and the perception of stress is a recognized factor in the health of a woman's heart. Dean Ornish, in his book, *Love and Survival*, states that optimal heart health and survival after a heart attack depends upon the healing power of love, intimacy and relationships. Ornish argues that lack of love and intimacy makes us sick and their presence can heal us even when a cure is not possible. According to Ornish, the healing power of love and relationship has been documented in an increasing number of well-designed scientific studies involving hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world (Ornish, 1997, 85-103).

Northrup cites a 1999 French study by Tremollieres which showed that depression, anxiety panic and grief have been shown to cause constriction in the blood vessels, thereby impeding the free flow of blood (Northrup, 2001, 454). Also according to Northrup, women use both side of their brains simultaneously and because they have more frequent access to their right brain which is associated with music, emotion, intuition and self-knowledge and experience, there are more neuronal connections between the heart and the right brain than between the heart and the left brain (Northrup, 2001, 459). This would lend credence to the belief that repressed anger, unexpressed grief, and perceived high stress levels can be a factor in heart disease in menopausal women. Judith (1996, 287), Myss (1996, 201-204), and Ornish (1998, 39-71) discuss the importance of coming to terms with love, grief and anger in order to heal the heart on the energetic, spiritual and physical levels.

The real impact that these factors have for menopausal women is that even though most don't perceive menopause itself as being stressful, the emotional stress in their lives is felt more intensely at this time. Bea is a friend and a fellow Yoga teacher. She has a lot going on in her life right now -- -- -- menopause, a late life two and a half year old baby girl, a twelve year old daughter from a former marriage who has come to live with her and her new husband, a stressful job as a researcher for a domestic violence project, a new Yoga business and a pending

appearance as a witness in a sexual harassment suit. Bea, who is usually efficient and punctual has experienced growing periods of mental fuzziness. In addition she has been losing track of time, not showing up for appointments and being late for others. She is experiencing what for her is an uncomfortable level of inner turmoil. During a recent friend to friend conversation she said, "I don't really think I have more stress than usual - - - it's just that - - - I feel it more now." Bea's experience and those of Caroline, Kaitlin and Andrea discussed in chapter five confirm this. All of these women see their stressors coming mainly from their work and relationships and not from menopause, although they feel those stressors more intensely.

Northrup says that the higher a woman's stress reaction is to daily events, thoughts and emotions, the more symptoms she may have or the more intensely she may experience her symptoms. Conversely, the more stress hardy a woman is, the more likely she is to experience milder symptoms or have less intense reactions to her symptoms (Northrup, 2001, 60 - 65).

Often these symptoms can be experienced in as heart palpitations, one of the most common heart related menopausal symptoms. Ten of the twenty four women who responded to the menopause survey discussed in chapter two checked off heart palpitations as a symptom they were experiencing. This symptom is often related directly to the need to address deeply held emotional concerns. In other words, these women may need to listen to their right brains and their wombs as well as their hearts and fourth *Chakras*.

As we learn to release our feelings of attachment and repulsion, we relax our bodies which in turn helps our circulatory system flow with greater ease. Carolyn Myss points out that we cannot heal our emotional wounds and love ourselves long term in third *Chakra* material ways - - - - by shopping sprees, trips and toys, and massages. Yoga vacations and meditation retreats can only benefit a woman if she is doing the real hard work of listening to the heart's emotional messages (Myss, 1996, 202). Material reactions to emotional and life stressors will

work for a short time but in the long run only understanding and responding appropriately to difficult situations can decrease the likelihood of long term chronic stress. A better response to perceived stress is an awareness of one's situation and a conscious choice about how one will deal with it. Refusal or inability to listen often shows up in menopausal women in the form of heart palpitations. Northrup says that heart palpitations come from increasing heart energy trying to get in and be recognized and embodied in a woman's life as the heart becomes more sensitive during menopause (Northrup, 2001, 456).

There is scientific evidence that strongly suggests that this energy exists and carries information. Research at the institute of Heart Math has shown that when the electrical patterns of the brain are synchronized with the electrical patterns of the heart, more intelligence and intuition become available to the brain and that the heart's electrical activity is 40 to 60 times stronger than the brain's and that the heart's electromagnetic field can be measured several feet away from the body (Northrup, 1996, 7).

Paul Pearsall studies the experiences of heart transplant patients and is a proponent of the idea that the heart, in addition to being a pump, is an energetic information carrying organ. In his book, *The Heart's Code*, he states that the energetic information stored in the heart's cells is available to and often accessed by recipients of donor hearts. He recounts several stories of heart recipients who suddenly take on habits and language patterns that belonged to the deceased heart donor (Pearsall, 1998, 75, 117, 122, 152).

Two scientists have proposed a new field of study based on this idea. Cardiac psychology was first proposed in 1996 by Dr. Robert Allan, a cardiologist and Dr. Stephen Schmidt, a health psychologist. The concept was to study the psychological and social risk factors for the development of cardiac disease, the psychological repercussions of illness and lifestyle changes that can prevent or minimize serious damage (Pearsall, 1998, 70). This,

however, is still a Western medical and psychological view of the heart. It does not address the need for accessing the spiritual awareness and wisdom contained in the heart that can be used for healing. The Western view is largely centered on curing; the Eastern on healing. Although the meanings of the two words are similar, curing has more of an ‘end to disease or condition’ feeling to it. While healing has come to mean the ability to ‘be whole and at peace’ even if a disease or condition cannot be cured.

Pearsall differentiates these connotations by asking the brain and heart the question, “What is Healing?” In his opinion the brain answers,

“Healing is the biochemical influencing of the body’s systems by direct attempts to fix, correct, and restore a mechanical system to its version of “normal” functioning. Modern American medicine is the most effective repair system in history” (Pearsall, 1998, 210).

The heart answers,

“Healing is making whole, reconnecting, recovering molecular memories that promote healing, and being alert to risks to our well-being from being out of balance with the energy of all systems around us” (Pearsall, 1998, 210).

For menopausal women this difference is important to note. Symptoms of menopause can be lessened or eliminated but menopause cannot be cured or reversed. However, difficult issues around a woman’s perception and experience of menopause can be healed. Natural symptom relief may be a by product of that healing. Therefore, given the energetic and spiritual connections between the brain, heart and the womb, menopausal women are encouraged to address the effects that repressed emotional stress can have on the health of their hearts.

Another voice that talks about the emotional and spiritual aspects of the heart and their relationship to the physical health of the heart belongs to cardiovascular surgeon, Dr. Mehmet Oz, Director of Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center’s heart assist device program and co-founder of the hospital’s Complementary Care Center. His book, *Healing from the Heart*

discusses his journey in detail.

He says,

“Certainly love resonates - as does rage or anxiety - prompting fluctuations in specific neurotransmitters, hormones and various chemicals in the brain and blood. Why can't such emotions - in the form of thoughts or prayers - resonate beyond the body, reaching out around us or across great distances? Modern medicine, I concluded would someday have to cross the chasm separating hard science and the realm of spirituality. I imagined that the human mind, body and spirit were rays of light, intersecting somewhere inside the body. I wanted to find out where the rays fell, where the body, mind and spirit met.” (Oz, 1998, 39-40).

To do that, he began integrating alternative/complementary modalities for his patients who were waiting for heart transplants. Many of them are confined to the hospital grounds for up to a year or more. The modalities offered ranged from reflexology to energy healing and included a Yoga program developed and taught by Robyn (*Priti*) Ross, a certified Kripalu Yoga teacher. Robyn worked with Dr. Oz's patients for three years. At a professional Yoga therapist training she recounted her experiences and told us how simple Yoga stretches and breathing techniques brought peace of mind to many of the patients. In particular, she mentioned one man who resisted her classes but finally took one, and ended the session in tears as he told her that he had never in his life felt so calm, peaceful and relaxed (Ross, 2001).

One way to become aware of that calm, peaceful, relaxed feeling and to access the heart's energetic information is through the practice of Yoga. One of the main benefits of Yoga is the creation of awareness with compassion which allows a women to safely explore emotional issues at her own pace and in her own time. The Yoga therapist's job is to create a safe, client centered environment to allow that scenario to unfold. The experience of Yoga also has real physiological benefits for the heart. The next section will address the application of Yoga to the heart health of menopausal women.

Yoga and its Effects on Heart Health

Physically the heart and the circulatory system, including the lymph system, is responsible for carrying oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and organs of the body, and removing the waste products of metabolism by delivering them to the lungs, skin and kidneys for excretion. It also serves as a communications pathway for hormones and chemicals produced by the brain, glands and other parts of the body.

The question the heart *Chakra* asks is "What about me? Yoga requires us to heal ourselves first before trying to heal others and the world. This "what about me," question gets to the heart of the matter and is not 'selfish' in terms of the Western model of 'selfish' which is 'me ahead of and before anyone else'. This 'self' ish question is about the need to heal personal and life wounds with the goal being the ability to move beyond the self to become compassionate towards others and then to move out from that in whatever way fits the life and talents of the individual. At its best, the process results in a feeling of, 'what's appropriate for me' and then 'how can I help, serve, and use my talents to help others and my environment'. This requires answering some tough questions, tough because the answers can pit a menopausal woman against many or all of the rules and norms and ways in which she's lived her life up to this point. It's a balance walk through a gauntlet, with service to others lined up on one side and the need for self-care lined up on the other. However, when those questions are grappled with and answered, whole new worlds open. This was my experience and the experience of many of the women who answered my survey.

For example, Susan, a widowed post menopausal woman has recovered from being co-dependent. She has survived the death of her adult son in a mountaineering accident, breast cancer and her husband's death. She says of her life now:

I see myself continuing to mature and learning how to deeply love others, gaining experience and wisdom as I go. I LOVE this process, as difficult as it might be. Because I am living "life live" as I put it, and not from a script handed to me by someone else. It is a fresh, always changing path. I never know what new opportunity will turn up. My life has steadily gotten fuller and richer, so this is what I expect forever.

Jan is 52, and divorced with two adult children whom she raised and schooled in a transcendental meditation (TM) community. She is in perimenopause and working as a Yoga therapist and physical therapist. About the changes in her ability to walk in balance between care for self and others, she writes,

I am amazed at the change in my relationship to others. I was always the youngest child in my classes at school. Now I am one of the elders and I see myself as a teacher and leader.

And Samantha, who is perimenopausal and a mother of two adult children is going through a divorce and grappling with a change in sexual preference at the same time says,

BIG TIME CHANGE! I have met and fallen in a love with a most wonderful woman who has helped me to appreciate my body and being female in general. Being with her has made me feel less crazy about what I want/need from a relationship. Women are wonderful partners! I feel more independent and empowered and less willing to put up with b.s.

All three of these women have used Yoga as one important tool in their mid life health kit. To explore further how Yoga impacts heart health and a woman's ability to achieve a sense of 'relaxed balance', we'll look at suggested Yoga techniques applied to the heart through the five *Koshas*, the levels of interconnected and intercommunicating community of energy and intelligence of human beings (LePage, 1994, 2.1).

Physical Level - Anamayakosha

This is the body is where most women first experience their menopause through symptoms such as menstrual irregularity, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, and joint pain. Yoga postures and exercises through stretching and moving with awareness, help to modify the stress reaction by calming the nervous system. The movements of Yoga help to relieve pressure in the arteries, improve elasticity in the arteries and increase circulation. Yoga rests and strengthens the heart, slows the heart rate, assists the veins in returning blood to the heart, helps reduce and control blood pressure, and can help release blocks and strong emotions from the heart center (LePage, 1994, 7.6-7.11). These effects of Yoga on heart health are also recognized by Dean Ornish, John Kabat-Zinn, Mehmet Oz and Kenneth Pelletier (Ornish, 1990, 144 - 171; Kabat-Zinn, 94 - 113, 1990; Oz, 1998, 148 - 150; Pelletier, 1993, 215-216). Yoga's heart opening postures also allow awareness of the cellular energy and information that exists in this part of the body.

During my initial Yoga training we were practicing the Bridge pose which is a strong chest opener. While in this pose, I felt a rush of vulnerability. It was absolutely palpable and real. As I stayed there and experienced it, I was able to trace it to feelings of fear and of not being adequate. Knowing these emotions existed within myself, I could no longer cover them up with denial and perfectionism. Over time, I learned to recognize them, acknowledge them and watch them pass as 'mind storms' and then respond to whatever situation I was in that triggered them. Although I can't prove it scientifically, I believe that experience was a real healing for my heart.

Breath/Energy Level - Pranamayakosha

The proper use of the breath is highly effective in enabling women at menopause. Becoming aware of and correcting inefficient breathing patterns can enhance health and well-being. Effective breathing practices reestablish the alignment and correct use of the primary and secondary breathing muscles. Among other benefits are increased lung capacity and a lower breath rate per minute which helps induce the relaxation response and lower stress levels (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 47 - 58). Practices such as Long Slow Deep Breathing (*Dirgha*) and the Cooling Breath (*Sitali Pranayama*) help to manage symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats. Since energy, or *prana* arises in the body through the act of breathing, effective breathing will also enhance the quality and flow of energy and encourage the stabilization of energy levels that often fluctuate during the menopausal transition. Several of my students use the Cooling Breath to mitigate hot flashes and night sweats. This effect is supported by scientific studies (Siple & Gordon, 2001, 130; Farhi, 1996, 6; Domar & Dreher, 1996, 283).

Psycho/Emotional Level - Manomayakosha

Women at menopause are often caught in the drama of life with all its 'oughts, shoulds and musts' which conflict with the 'wants, needs and musts' that often occur when the heart calls at mid-life (Northrup, 2001, 63-65). The practices of Yoga work toward distracting a mind in turmoil and move it from a restless or stagnant state to one more quiet and peaceful. The primary practice recommended by Integrative Yoga Therapy, and Swami Dharmakirti of the Bihar School of Yoga is *Yoga Nidra* (Dharmakirti, 2001). *Yoga Nidra* is a structured method for quieting and training the mind and giving specific direction to the sub conscious. It is fully described in chapter eight and several scripts are presented in chapter nine. *Yoga Nidra*, by inducing a deep state of relaxation, can help a woman listen to and work with information

contained within the right brain, womb and heart and help her to restore clarity, balance and a sense of being in present time.

Witness/Wisdom Level - Vijnanamayakosha

When we pay attention and are aware of this *kosha* we witness, and accept ourselves and our patterns with compassion and without judgment. Here the main Yogic tool is concentration which can be done through meditative exercises using postures, breath, *mantra*, or *mudra* applied in a consistent manner to focus the mind on its object to the exclusion of all others or at the very least (and where most of us operate) to be aware that the mind is wandering and consciously, continuously and gently bring it back to its object of concentration. As the witness ability is sharpened it becomes easier to look at the values, and patterns with clarity and see that some of them may no longer serve a woman's life.

According to Frances Vaughn,

“clarity is a quality of spiritual vision that is necessary for discernment on a path of love. Since love is reflected everywhere, the source is not to be confused with the manifestation. If the source is perceived to be in the object, then one becomes attached to the object. When the source is discovered within, love is everywhere.”
(Vaughn, 1995, 85)

Bliss Body - Anandamayakosha

This is the level in which the mind recognizes itself as mind and rests in a state of bliss and ease. This, according to Yoga, is the natural state of all humans. It exists in all, whole, perfect and complete waiting for each personality to realize itself after the ‘fluctuations’ separation, confusion, imbalances, distractions and obstacles have been removed. In it we are always healed, even if our bodies are ill and cannot be cured. We've all visited there from time to time. If we're not sure, all we need to do is to remember when we were so engrossed in an

activity, person or event that time stood still. All we can do to get there again is to practice consistently. True bliss, like *Samadhi*, is a state of grace which effort cannot attain. One can only practice with patience and wait.

Reflections

In working with heart health on the physical level the focus is on lowering risk factors and preventing heart disease. On the emotional and spiritual levels the focus is on opening and balancing the fourth *Chakra*, and it's energies with realization of love for self, for others and for all of creation. Basic to this journey through the heart is self examination which should be grounded in compassion and forgiveness first for self and then for others.

Barbara Hand Clow puts it this way,

“The heart chakra is experienced very physically, and it is possible to actually feel the heart open at mid-life as the kundalini energy flows in: Many of my clients for example, report a burning in their heart areas. ” Also, “ The heart chakra opening is the signal of ‘radical embodiment’- the soul totally in the body-which is the most exquisite experience available on Earth. The integrity of a person with an open heart is always astounding.” (Clow, 1996, 455).

It is prudent for any menopausal women contemplating heart work to be alert to obstacles, hindrances, pitfalls and dangers. Many Western women who begin to pursue self-healing or Self-Realization, do so with the view that somehow they will achieve everlasting bliss with out problems. It is prudent to address this in working with menopausal women, many of whom are in real pain and seeking relief. Although transformation on any level can change consciousness it is important to help women understand that any new way of seeing things offers both gifts and challenges (Vaughn, 1995, 20)." Just going through the transformational process that Yoga can initiate does not bring with it an automatic ease of continuing our everyday lives. The process of Yoga asks us to be aware of ourselves, to strengthen our bodies, to open our

hearts, open our eyes, and open our minds. It asks that we learn to to live well and create happiness for ourselves and others. And it requires that we practice our new knowledge (Cope, 1999, 26). It is important for Yoga therapists to be aware of what their clients and students mean by their use of the words self-healing and transformation. It is the job of the Integrative Yoga Therapist to understand and to provide clear instructions for preparing women to undertake the steps of their journey through the heart with safety. A Yoga therapist will need to do her own work in this area before attempting to bring another along the path.

Nanna Aida Svenson, a writer and teacher from Denmark, wrote a personal letter to Dr. Christiane Northrup in which she expressed many of the same sentiments discussed in this chapter,

“The heart it seems, yearns for connection. A great grief arises when connection to others seems to comes at the cost of connection to ourselves. I notice how dead I become inside, even if only subtly, when I try to conform to other people’s idea of who and how I should be and forgo my own feelings - my connection to myself. when the natural generosity, compassion, and caring of the heart becomes distorted or usurped, then all sense of aliveness, generosity, creativity and true self-expression seems to go and I am left feeling empty and drained. It takes a great deal of energy to shape oneself to fit someone else’s needs and expectations, to conform to their demands, to be codependent. And no matter how tempting it is in the hope of gaining love, or of being kept safe, it always costs. Just as it always costs to demand conformity to our needs by others - to be in a hierarchy when the heart is yearning for partnership. You can see that cost in the faces of so many couples. You can see the suppressed anger or the deadness that resides there. Though the heart may long for connection and love, it also, it appears, longs to be free.” (Northrup, 2001, 453).

This letter illustrates Northrup’s belief, and mine, that failure to open the heart and live with the energy of emotional expression and full partnership, may result in heart disease as a potential physical manifestation of blocked and repressed heart energy (Northrup, 2000, 455).

It may also help to reflect on this list of what makes us sick and what makes us well that was inspired by Naomi Rachel Remen's book, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*:

What makes Us Ill

Loneliness
Isolation
Alienation
Seeing oneself as a victim
Self pity
Inappropriate or chronic anger and rage
Judgment of self and others
The pursuit of perfection
Addictions
Unacknowledged loss and grief
Feeling like a failure
Inappropriate self labeling
Negative thought patterns
Need to always be in control
Inability to love yourself as you are
Lack of intimacy (in the deepest sense)
Loss of emotional and/or spiritual integrity
Chronic stress
Denial of your own story or truth
Failing to honor your personal value system
Shame
Inability to listen to your body's messages
of pain and discomfort
Inflexibility
Being other directed
Lack of body/mind connections
Inability to give and receive love
A loss of the sense of the sacred

What Makes Us Well

Listening to the stories of others
Telling our own stories
Being open to the unknown mysteries of life
Celebrating life
A sense of connection & belonging to
community
A sense of awe and wonder
Tenacity & the will to live
The ability to forgive
Surrender to the life force
Imagery/visualization that 'speaks' to us
Self love which includes acceptance of the
'shadow'
Integrity
Feeling, accepting and integrating your
emotion/s
The ability to ask for help
Affection & touching
An attitude of gratitude
Ability to be centered and at peace even
during difficult times
Living in the present
Ability to make your own luck
Healthy anger
Open communication
Healing rituals (formal or home-made)
Helping others
Prayer & compassion for self and others
Time & patience
(Remen, 1996)

The regular practice of Yoga can help women at menopause safely and gently listen to and open their hearts for self-healing and Self Realization.

CHAPTER 7

INTEGRATIVE YOGA THERAPY

Our primary relationship is really with ourselves. Our relationships with other people constantly reflect exactly where we are in our process.

- - - Shakti Gwain
(Eisen, 2000)

A Healing Model

In this chapter the health and wellness model provided by Integrative Yoga Therapy will be introduced and explained. This encompasses a discussion of the model, its foundational components, therapeutic process and an illustration of how it is used in a private session with a menopausal woman. This discussion will set the stage for Part III which will present a complete program for working with women and menopause using the model provided by Integrative Yoga Therapy.

Yoga therapy is the use of Yoga technologies - body awareness, effective breathing, postures and exercises, progressive relaxation, guided imagery and visualization, deep relaxation and meditation to help individuals and groups heal physical conditions and existing splits between body, mind and spirit.

“Yoga Therapy is that facet of the ancient science of Yoga that focuses on health and wellness at all levels of the person, physical, psychological and spiritual. Yoga Therapy focuses on the path of Yoga as a healing journey that brings balance to the body and mind through an experiential understanding of the primary intention of Yoga: awakening of Spirit, our essential nature” (Le Page, 1999, 1.1).

The system of Yoga philosophy and psychology provides a theoretical framework that encompasses both behavioral and introspective components. As we saw in chapter four, it is a comprehensive program of self-study that encourages the release of involvement from personality traits and cultural roles. It actively encourages training the awareness to make the

kinds of changes in habits, thought patterns and self- concepts that lead to a broadening of consciousness (Rama, Ballentine & Hymes., 1976, 305). Within this framework, the use of Yoga practices and principles to balance, strengthen and heal the individual is well documented through the ancient texts (Feuerstein, 1998, 521-23). Currently, this use of Yoga is being professionalized as Yoga therapy and the boundaries and parameters are still being defined relative to the medical profession, and traditional Yoga (Feuerstein, 1998, 521-23).

Questions about what separates and differentiates Yoga therapy from counseling and psychotherapy are being asked and examined by my colleagues in the Integrative Yoga Therapy program and those who practice psychotherapy. This is a complex topic and is beyond the scope of this paper. What is appropriately within the scope of this paper is to point out that fact and admit that there are gray areas that need more discussion and work. The other point that I can comfortably make is that as a result of discussions I have personally had with other Integrative Yoga Therapy colleagues and the students I mentor in the Professional Yoga Therapist Program is that we are aware of this issue and work hard not to cross the sometimes wavy and tenuous line between the two disciplines.

The following factors are at the heart of the Integrative Yoga Therapy program:

- Seeing the whole person through models of traditional Yoga psychology
- Community service and introducing Yoga to mainstream audiences
- Integration of Western scientific studies with Yoga
- Application of Yoga in medical schools and settings
- Research to test hypotheses and quantify results
- Guru-disciple relationship model is less of an overt focus

(Le Page, 1999, 1.7)

This approach to health is based on the integration of body, mind and spirit through an experiential connection to all the levels of a human being, physical, breath/energy, mental/emotional, witness consciousness and bliss until the essence is realized. As the healing process

continues, a re-union with ourselves, with nature, other people and with spirit can take place. Each individual or class is assessed for their needs and abilities and any Yoga practice presented is done so with regard and consideration for age, culture, religion, and specific physical conditions. Integrative Yoga Therapy recognizes that not all illness and disease can be cured but it does provide a methodology to heal lives, reduce pain, and stress, and relieve physical symptoms and psychological suffering. Integrative Yoga Therapy is helpful as an adjunct to needed allopathic treatment or psychotherapy for stress related illnesses or conditions.

Integrative Yoga Therapy was founded in 1993, by Joseph Le Page, a Yoga teacher in the Kripalu tradition. The design of the Integrative Yoga Therapy program developed out of Joseph's studies of traditional healing arts in over one hundred countries together with his masters degree work in experiential education, and input from Richard Miller, a student of the Viniyoga tradition as established by Krishnamacharya. Viniyoga is a methodology for developing a personal practice that is customized to the age and physical condition of the student. Krishnamacharya's work is being continued by his son, T. K. V. Desikachar at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram in Madras, India.

Because Integrative Yoga Therapy has the potential to play an important role in the evolving field of healthcare, an agreed upon model that contains a coherent description of the function and goals of Yoga therapy is required. Integrative Yoga Therapy is grounded in the Yoga psychology model of the *Koshas*, or five levels of awareness.

The Koshas

“From the perspective of Yoga, the body is an interconnected and intercommunicating community of energy and intelligence arranged in a series of layers that vibrate at different frequencies," (LePage, 1994, 2.1). To understand this process better and on a deeper level we need to examine the model of Yoga psychology -- -- -- the *koshas*, five levels, or layers, of awareness. This model of Yoga psychology addresses each individual as multi-dimensional with the foundation, core and source being the spiritual dimension. This model of the *koshas* forms the basis of Yoga psychology, and explains human existence as developing from the subtle to the gross -- -- -- energy to matter. The *Koshas* are a model of human bioenergetics, each level with its own frequency vibration, interconnected with each other and ultimately with everything else as well as universal intelligence/cosmic consciousness/collective unconscious, and Self/Unity Consciousness. Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine, Swami Ajaya (1976, 98) and Joseph LePage (1994, 2.1) discuss the *Koshas*, or levels of awareness as progressing from the dense physical form of matter to the lightest energetic, subtle form of pure consciousness.

Physical Level - Anamayakosha

This is the body that we can see, hear, feel, touch, taste -- -- the anatomical structures and physiological processes. It's the material manifestation of energy. The physical body is the *Kosha* that most Westerners readily relate to. It is also where most women first experience their menopause through physical symptoms such as menstrual irregularity, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, and joint pain. It is on this level that the results of long term stress are often manifested in one or more of the body's systems as illness or disease.

Breath/Energy Level - Pranamayakosha

The proper flow of energy is necessary for maintaining good health. Therefore, the breath/energy level of awareness is identified with *prana* (vital energy) and the breath which is the vehicle for the entry of oxygen and energy (*prana*) into the body through the act of breathing. Becoming aware of and correcting inefficient breathing patterns can enhance health and well-being. Effective breathing practices reestablish the alignment and correct use of the primary and secondary breathing muscles. Since energy, or *prana* arises in the body through the act of breathing, effective breathing will enhance the quality and flow of energy and encourage the body's healing system to aid in the restoration and maintenance of health. Pranayama, or the science of breath, contains a wide variety of heating and cooling techniques to accomplish these results (Rama, Ballentine & Hymes, 1979, 94-107). An understanding of this level of awareness is important to women seeking an understanding of their menopause experience. One of the most practical reasons is that studies that have shown how long slow deep breathing can decrease the severity and frequency of hot flashes, one of the most common menopausal symptoms (Siple & Gordon, 2001, 130; Farhi, 1996, 6; Domar & Dreher, 1996, 283).

Psycho/Emotional Level - Manomayakosha

The mental/emotional level reflects the patterns of beliefs, thoughts and emotions that make up the personality or self with a small 's.' Here the human being functions largely in a stimulus response pattern -- -- caught in the drama of life with all its 'oughts, shoulds and musts.' It is at this level of awareness that where the individual is encouraged to "go within, quiet the mind and listen. For a menopausal woman it is often at this time of life that unexamined thoughts, and repressed emotions make themselves known as the hormonal milieu of the body changes (Northrup, 2001, 63-65).

The practices of Yoga work toward distracting a mind in turmoil and moving it from a restless or stagnant state to one more quiet and peaceful. This process can help to create an understanding of one's values, beliefs and patterns, restore clarity, balance and a sense of being in present time.

Witness/Wisdom Level - Vijnanamayakosha

This aspect of the mind is the witness consciousness which illuminates all aspects of ourselves for integration and acceptance. When we pay attention and are aware of this *Kosha* we witness, and accept ourselves and our patterns without judgment. At this level of awareness, we consciously choose to make changes. We step out of our personal and cultural conditioning and sense a difference between the small self (ego and thinking mind) and the big Self; between personality and Unity Consciousness. Marian Van Eyk McCain, Christiane Northrup, Susun Weed, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Iyanla VanZant and Judith Lasater are just a few of the women whose writings urge women in menopause to take the inner journey, witness and examine their lives and bring forth the courage to acknowledge themselves as strong, creative and wise within a culture that often sees in them the exact opposite qualities.

Bliss Body - Anandamayakosha

This is the level of meditation in which the mind recognizes itself as mind and rests in a state of bliss and ease. This, according to Yoga, is the natural state of all humans. It exists in all, whole, perfect and complete waiting for each personality to realize itself after the 'fluctuations' separation, confusion, imbalances, distractions and obstacles of the mind have been removed. As women experience this, even for a few brief moments, it becomes gradually easier to live a more authentic life, and to accept the positives and negatives that one faces. As a result of my

personal experience of this, I wrote an essay which was published in *Yoga International* in 1995.

I ended the essay, which was titled, "Enough" with the following words,

" I no longer think that "enlightenment" will come suddenly, bliss me out and take away all my struggles. I rejoice in the fact that underneath the African, underneath the American and underneath the woman, is a being who can occasionally and surprisingly "be here now." In those fleeting moments, I can rest amid chaos and be present in the midst of my life with all its problems and joys. I can experience it and me at the same time. I am competent, capable and connected, a credit to universal consciousness in all its forms. And that is enough" (Gibbs, 1995, 55).

Unity Consciousness

Samadhi, according to Yoga, consists of many levels and layers. It is the concept of re-union, the end result of re-uniting the personality with its divine aspect. At the lowest levels bliss can be felt but the mind is still aware of itself. This is,

" - - - the highest of all conditions and the condition of all conditions; the highest rung in the ladder and the wood out of which the ladder is made. Anything less than that paradox generates either pantheistic reductionism, on the one hand or wild and radical transcendentalism on the other," (Wilber, 1996, xii.).

"It is the state of mind of enlightened masters. It describes reality as a unified field, a whole in which the individual self, like a drop in the sea, has re-united with the ocean of life" (LePage, 1999, 1.3).

Unity Consciousness is beyond the *Koshas* and cannot be attained by will. One can only practice patience and wait for grace.

The *Kosha* model of human psychology is closely related to the Eight Limbs of Yoga. The following table describes a relationship between the *Koshas* and the larger theoretical framework of Yoga, with the first three *Koshas* and the first five limbs of Yoga keyed to practices for preparation and self-healing, and the fourth and fifth *Koshas* and Unity Consciousness keyed to the last three limbs and the deeper practices of Yoga (LePage, 1999, 1.9):

Koshas	Eight Limbs of Yoga
Physical level (<i>Anamayakosha</i>)	Postures, lifestyle awareness (<i>Asana, Yama, Niyama</i>)
Breath/energy level (<i>Pranamayakosha</i>)	Breath regulation (<i>Pranayama</i>)
Mental/emotional level (<i>Manomayakosha</i>)	Sensory awareness (<i>Pratyahara, Yama, Niyama</i>)
Witness consciousness level (<i>Vijnanamayakosha</i>)	Concentration (<i>Dharana</i>)
Bliss body level (<i>Anandamayakosha</i>)	Meditation (<i>Dhyana</i>)
Unity Consciousness	Self realization (<i>Samadhi</i>)

The Yoga Therapy Process

The Integrative Yoga Therapy model has a five step process for working with individuals or groups. The steps are:

1. Gather a global picture of the individual or group by describing what is happening at each level of awareness. Through assessment tools, which include intake and personal history, health and lifestyle assessment forms, along with an interview and visual observation, the Integrative Yoga Therapist builds a picture of the individual or group which consists of some or all of the following questions:

- How do habits and lifestyle affect the condition of the individual or group?
- How aware is the individual/group of their essential breathing patterns and energy flow in the body?
- What are the belief systems (I'm worthless, I'm special, the world is hostile, I'm a victim, I'm queen) that may be operating to increase feelings of stress, separation and suffering?
- How deeply is the individual/group caught up in their own drama?
- Can they tune into their own guidance and wisdom?
- Do they have a spiritual practice?

2. Check for the existence & depth of *avidya*, the false understanding of Reality that can result in separation/disconnection from unity in each of the levels. What the term false understanding of reality means in this context is not the physical, mental/emotional and social realities and situations our personalities create for us to deal with. It refers to a false

understanding of how each of us fits into the larger Reality that is Consciousness. It is this feeling or sense of disconnection that often results in suffering instead of acceptance. Here the therapist is looking for the degree to which the individual or group understands the concept that all life is part of a vast interconnected web and that they are an integral part in that web.

3. Examine the role of stress and the stress response at each level. Here the therapist looks for symptoms of stress on the physical level (eg. muscle contractions, constipation, chronic conditions), breath/energy level (eg. respiratory distress, low energy, chest breathing), mental emotional level (eg. depression, anxiety, irritability), the witness wisdom level, (eg. victim mentality, caught in their own drama, inability to see patterns and the big picture), bliss level (eg. identification with ego and self as reality). Now the therapist begins to make connections between what stresses the client or group is facing and how they habitually react or respond to those stresses.

4. Seek, research, intuit and develop a list of Yogic principles, tools and techniques that will facilitate wellness. The main source is the Eight Limbs of Yoga. The first three limbs (*yama, niyama and asana*) provide tools for awareness of and making changes to diet, values and lifestyle, and practicing specific postures for conditioning the body, creating awareness and preparing to quiet the mind. The fourth limb (*pranayama*) supplies breath practices for balancing the flow of energy in the body and bringing awareness to the fluctuations of the mind. The fifth limb (*pratyahara*) provides practices like *Yoga Nidra* (dynamic sleep) to reduce external stimuli and increase internal focus, thereby reducing the effects of stress on the body/mind. The sixth limb (*dharana*) provides basic meditation practices to help develop the ability to concentrate. This can help develop dis-identification from ego states. The seventh limb (*dhyana*) encourages the regular practice of meditation and the realization of witness consciousness. The eighth limb (*samadhi*) refers to the individual's ability to accept the Self

(Unity Consciousness) as reality and surrender to the moment-to-moment process of her life, listen to her intuitive wisdom and recognize the conscious process of healing that is already present within. Whatever tools and techniques are chosen must be selected and applied with the ability and condition of client or class in mind.

5. Establish a specific practice based upon the work of steps one through four and recognize that this may change from session to session depending upon the needs of the individual or group. The program will be based on the understandings gained about the individual or group and the condition of the individual or group serves as a foundation for the development of the program.

These steps are used as general guidelines and are not meant to be seen as a rigid protocol. This is because every, client, every class, and every group is different with different aspects to their situations and needs. Therefore some aspects of this process may not apply or be appropriate. This certainly holds true when dealing with women at mid-life. Each woman is dealing with an individual menopause and each woman needs to be evaluated according to that essential truth.

An example of customizing this approach is Elena. Elena is an Hispanic woman going through perimenopause. She has two children eleven years apart; one from a first marriage and the other, born prematurely, from her current second marriage which is going through a rough period. She is concerned about her body and her health as a result of perimenopause and a bout with cancer of the cervix for which she underwent cone and laser surgery. Family is very important to her so this and her physical health are sources of stress. She suffers from migraines, menstrual irregularity, mood swings, depression and a variety of other menopausal symptoms. She takes Prozac and has been coming to a therapeutic/beginner Yoga class for the past three months. She hopes to reduce her Prozac dosage. Elena usually arrives to class late and in a high

state of agitation, but is visibly much calmer afterwards. This intensity is also exemplified in her coloration: red hair, reddish cast to the skin, and the frequent wearing of red and orange clothing, and red lipstick. After three months of Yoga classes, Elena changed to wearing yellow and blue clothing, has switched to pink lipstick and appears calmer more of the time. She has also begun doing a few Yoga postures at home -- -- most notably, Legs-Up-The Wall, a cooling, restorative pose. She has indicated on her personal history form that she currently has no spiritual dimension to her life. If Elena opted to begin private Yoga therapy sessions, it would be important to understand cultural differences since she grew up in Puerto Rico. It would also be prudent to take her current stance on the spiritual dimension of life into consideration. That most likely would mean a focus on dealing with her physical, breath/energy and mental, emotional concerns while holding off on connecting them to spirituality through work with the witness/wisdom and bliss levels until she has experienced a glimpse of those levels and indicates a readiness and willingness to go further.

Application: A Case Study Illustration

The role of the Integrative Yoga Therapist is to serve as a facilitator or guide through the client's journey of self-discovery. The purpose is not to diagnose and prescribe a Yoga treatment for a specific condition. Rather, the focus is to devise a program with the client's input which will help the client come to a better understanding of her body, breath and energy patterns, mental emotional and spiritual life. The idea is to help them learn to use their own innate resources for self-healing, stress reduction and optimal health. This means creating and holding space for the process of a session to unfold without diagnosing, lecturing, counseling, judging or defining the client's reality in any way (LePage, 1999, 1.4).

Currently I serve as the director of the internship program for the Integrative Yoga Therapy Professional Yoga Therapist Program. I mentor ten students as they conduct a total of forty Yoga therapy sessions for individuals and classes on a variety of themes such as, “Creating a Safe Environment,” “Healing with the Breath,” “Posture Analysis,” “Stress Management,” and “Creating Programs for Specific Conditions.” The following case study is the report of an actual session conducted by Cathy Prescott with a client I’ll call, “Nancy.” Nancy’s purpose in coming to the session was to deal with depression, mood swings and hot flashes due to menopause. This report will serve to illustrate how the process of an Integrative Yoga Therapy session works. The client’s name has been changed and certain facts which may be identifying have been eliminated.

Step 1: Intake and Body & Breath/Energy Assessment

In general, Nancy is in very good health and has a good sense of the five *Koshas*. Right now, however, she has a sense of being out of control with her body and mind, and this is wreaking havoc on her personal life and how she feels about herself. She is committed to doing something about it and that is why she started taking a Yoga class and signed on for Yoga therapy sessions. She has also just started on allopathic prescriptions to treat depression and hot flashes even though this is not her first choice of action. She continues to explore other options. Nancy really believes that Yoga will help her symptoms and enhance her life over the long term. She filled out the Ayurvedic assessment forms at home, so I will be reviewing them to see what "flavor" of session might best suit her for pacing/holding/etc. as well as any asanas that might be more conducive to her constitution.

We began the session with a standing body awareness. During this time, I also assessed her posture. Nancy was very comfortable with this exercise and readily tuned into the process.

Nancy then filled in a body map (*see appendix four*) and shared her internal observations. Nancy was a reverse breather (*author's note: abdomen moves in on the inhalation and out on the exhalation - see Donna Farhi's, The Breathing Book for a complete understanding of this condition*) and has been working on diaphragmatic breathing whenever she gets the chance. I observed her in the three part breath during the body awareness as part of that exercise.

Posture Selection

Before the session, I had put together short sequences that would address her primary concerns -- depression, hot flashes, and a general balancing sequence -- and let her choose where she would like to focus on today. Her focus was to start with an energizing and uplifting sequence to see how that would help with mood swings and depression. Because she wants to bring Yoga in as a regular practice, I decided to start with the 'Range of Motion' movements to assess joint flexibility and to serve as warm-ups. By the time we had gone through the intake, body awareness, and Range of Motion movements, we were nearly out of time. Nancy is familiar with the Six Movements of the Spine sequence, so I added child pose into upward dog, repeating child and upward dog up to five times on the breath (*ujjayi* breathing), and then resting in child pose. The upward dog will present some challenges with her wrists and arm strength, so we modified the sequence using the wall as an alternative way to practice. I also suggested that the Warrior I into Warrior II could be added at home, as they are being done in class. From here, we moved to the wall, where she did standing *Uttanasana* with the hips against the wall and her forearms and head supported by a chair -- this was more in response to a single posture that could be done almost anywhere for cooling and calming. Before moving into relaxation, I went over *Surya Bhedana* breathing for its warming, uplifting effects, and *Sitkari* breathing as a tool during hot flashes. She had tried *Chandra Bhedana* breathing, and had found that helpful.

Guided Imagery

Watch the breath moving into and out of the lower belly. As it fills the belly, it massages the organs and brings in healing energy, and as it leaves the belly, it removes any tension, leaving the area revitalized and nourished.

Deep Relaxation

For relaxation, I placed her in legs-up-the-wall with a bolster under the hips. I explained about the use of an elastic bandage wrapped around the eyes and forehead to increase the relaxation effect. She chose not to do that in this session, but would try it at home. She held this pose for about five minutes.

Meditation

Breath awareness meditation for about two minutes.

Final Sharing: Verbal sharing.

Session Integration

As the verbal sharing ended, Nancy shared that she felt so much better now, and that she feels the beneficial effects of Yoga on her body and even how it's crossing over into her life. She also expressed a lot of enthusiasm about learning the upward dog. While it will be a challenge for her (arms and wrists), she felt so good in the movement (belly and back). I had diagrams of the movements, so we went over the sequence. I also asked her what kind of commitment to a home practice she could make and she opted for 30 minutes, inclusive of a five minute relaxation that could be lengthened when there was time.

Step II: Session Notes on Separation (Avidya)

Physical Level: Separation from their own bodies, including the different systems of the body, especially ones that are presenting challenges.

The sense of separation occurs only in having a sense of loss of control as she goes through her body's responses to menopause. On the other hand, she is very aware of what's happening in her body. She is looking for the tools to help her maintain more balance through the changes.

Breath/Energetic Level: Lack of awareness of the breath or the different breathing areas; lack of sensation or awareness in the energy centers; lack of sensations and awareness of the prana vayus; disconnection from nature and other sources of *prana*, such as lack of *prana* in their interpersonal environment.

Very aware of the breath now that she is practicing diaphragmatic breathing. I did not address the *chakras* (will be done in a future therapy session). Definitely aware of the energy channels in the body (*nadis*).

Psycho/Emotional Level: Separation from other people, especially family and other close interpersonal relationships; separation in their professional environment; separations from parts of themselves, areas of their lives or parts of their personality, such as anger with which they are unable to see or distance themselves from.

Definite sense of separation, especially from family due to severe mood swings and depression. At the same, she is well aware, but not in control, of what's happening. She is taking a proactive role in addressing this area of separation.

Witness/Wisdom Level: To what extent are they able to see the underlying beliefs and patterns that have created the challenges, obstructions, difficulties, issues they are facing? To what extent, especially during the Yoga therapy session, are they able to gain wisdom or insight about their life journey?

She does see menopause as only a stage, a change that she must work with rather than fight. The lack of control is what exacerbates areas of separation. She does see the big picture. Interestingly, she has always been a "take care of everyone else, soft-spoken" person (underlying pattern). She sees how that does not serve the big picture anymore and is taking the steps necessary to take care of herself, speak what needs to be said, etc. Comes back to finding balance. During the session, she asked relevant questions, spoke up when a movement needed adjustment, etc.

Spiritual Level: What is their level of connection with Spirit, Source, Unity Consciousness? What is their process or journey in coming to discover themselves?

She found this question very interesting; no one had ever asked her about this area of her life. There is a strong sense of the spiritual in her being even though she'd never really talked about it. She feels connected to the spiritual and believes that each of us has a mission to pass our knowledge/gift on to the next generation, however that manifests.

Step III: Stress Response & Client Health

Menopause is creating a high stress level in her overall health. She rated herself 7 on a scale of 10. She has an intellectual knowledge of stress and is now trying to apply stress reduction methods to improve her health. Her first focus is to regain control which is why she is taking the prescription medications, then applying Yoga techniques, and finally finding alternative options for HRT (hormone replacement therapy) and depression.

Step IV: Selecting Tools of Yoga

The primary objectives for this client are to relieve menopausal symptoms through forward bending and restorative asanas, and breathing exercises -- for cooling effects during hot

flashes and "hot" mood swings. Eventually work on toning and concentration of energy in the lower *chakras*. Also, a general sequence of *asanas* that balance the body as a maintenance-type program when not experiencing adverse symptoms. The objective is also to regain flexibility and muscular strength (has been sedentary over the last year), and to begin to strengthen the skeletal structure as a defense against osteoporosis. In the next session introduction of a regular meditation practice. I suggested sitting for five minutes daily in the week ahead and watching the breath (she has done this already a few times at home). I am putting together a 30-minute tape with a focus on standing postures for energizing and balancing. This will be the focus of the next session, one week from today. A second 30-minute tape will focus on a kneeling / prone / seated sequence that is also energizing and balancing.

Step V: The Program

Four-part pelvic tilt, graduating to a supported bridge; upward dog and downward dog (cat/child pose at this point) *vinyasa* for strengthening and energizing the body, Warrior I and II; *Surya Bhedana* breathing -- for depression and low energy days. The backward bending and forwarding bending will also massage the abdominal area -- -- Restorative inversions.

What to Avoid

Less is more right now. No advanced postures and no long holding of individual postures (except for restoratives) or *vinyasa* sequences. She has a strong drive to get everything taken care of right now; at the same time, her body is letting her know what its limits are, and she is willing to honor that.

Client Evaluation

Nancy was very positive about the experience. She was rather surprised by the lack of range of motion in several areas of her body and also where muscle weakness was showing up.

She used to be very flexible, very toned, and now, she's often tight, weak-muscled, and gaining weight. Even though this is hard to accept, she understands why it is happening on an intellectual level and can laugh about it in the moment. She also knows that some of this can be improved with a Yoga practice and walking.

Therapist's Experience

As I drove to the session, I began to get nervous. Nancy was my first non-family/friend client for IYT (Integrative Yoga Therapy) and someone who was really looking for help with menopause. I didn't want to let her down, so I explored those thoughts -- I had 30 minutes to gain perspective! As I set up the room, I began to let go of my issues and focused on the client. I think the session went well. Everything we did brought a lot of body awareness and there was a strong sense of optimism surrounding her. Her inherent belief in the benefits of Yoga will certainly be supportive for both of us. The session had more of a technical flavor to it with the Range of Motion assessment and reviewing quick fixes for hot flashes. But then, that seemed to be what she was looking for. The next session will be in her home, using the props that she has available to fully customize the sequence.

Summary

Nancy and Elena's experiences are two examples of how the Integrative Yoga Therapy model can be applied to women in menopause. Both women clearly are benefiting from the practice.

Although all forms of Yoga therapy offer effective ways to apply Yogic principles to the growing field of wellness modalities, the Integrative Yoga Therapy model is unique in its approach in that it actively encourages its teachers and therapists to see all forms and traditions of Yoga as resources for tools and techniques that may help their students and clients.

CHAPTER 8 PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

Any of us can dream, but seeking vision is always done not only to heal and fulfill one's own potential, but also to use that potential to serve all our relations; the two-leggeds, the four leggeds, the wingeds, those that crawl upon the Earth and the Mother Earth herself.

- - - Brooke Medicine Eagle
(Eisen, 2000)

The first indication I had that menopause was more than a physical event was during recuperation from my hysterectomy. I was amazed at how my thoughts changed, how memories and ideas and feelings I had not thought about in years would just pop into my mind and insist on being noticed; how old buried dreams resurfaced and pushed me to do something about them. I found myself rebelling at the thought of stuffing my body back into the business suit and heels I had accepted as my uniform or the roles I was supposed to play as mostly co-dependent wife, worker and friend. I needed to change. I HAD to change.

Change, of course, brought disturbances. The following quote from Indira Ghandi on the June 27, 2001 page of the *Believing In Ourselves* calendar put this perfectly. Ghandi said, "Whenever you take a step forward you are bound to disturb something. You disturb the air as you go forward, you disturb the dust, the ground" (Eisen, 2000).

My menopausal life adjustments brought great disturbances in my marriage and professional life but through it I was able to recognize, accept and integrate my version of Judith Lasater's 'sub clinical rhythms' (chapter two), Christiane Northrup's menopause wisdom and Marian Van Eyk McCain's 'inner knowing' (chapter three). I began and continue my own healing and transformational journey. An important part of that journey for me, is Yoga. Like many other teachers working with Yoga and menopause, I made an internal connection that my Yoga practice was incredibly effective in helping me to weather the physical, mental, emotional

and spiritual changes I was experiencing.

I believe that the practice of Yoga, through physical postures, exercises, breath control, deep relaxation and an ethical lifestyle 'tunes' our human bodies to manage the energy and effort necessary for deepening concentration, meditation and functioning at a higher spiritual level. Yoga also provides the clarity of mind that enables one to recognize and act in concert with the Unity that connects all life (Taimni, 1993, p. 203-4). Yoga has been doing that for me and it is from what I have received that the program described in chapter nine has been developed. It comes from my own interests, research and practice, from the experience of other women in my classes and workshops, from those who answered the survey as well as from the information shared by the teachers profiled in chapter two.

The program is based on three main principles - The Eight Limbs of Yoga, the *Koshas* and the Integrative Yoga Therapy approach to the application of the first two principles. What follows is a brief restatement of those principles which have been discussed in detail in chapters four and seven and an illustration of how they may be used in implementing the program in class, workshop, or private session formats.

Principle #1

Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga

This format, discussed in chapter four, feels like a circle to me and as circles are symbolic of feminine energy it seems appropriate to apply it to the issue of Yoga and menopause. I've been field testing this format through six years of trial and error in my regular weekly classes, workshops on menopause and most recently through an experimental class on Yoga and menopause that ran with five women over an eight week period during the summer of 2001.

The Class

I organized the hour and a half classes into an eight week format:

Stress Reduction: 2 weeks

Menopause Symptom Management: 2 weeks

Heart Health: 2 weeks

Balancing the Endocrine System: 1 week

Preventing Osteoporosis: 1 week

Informational handouts about each focus and homework assignments, such as reading articles, journaling, or contemplating a life event were given every week as a way to encourage the students to think about what they learned in class and as a method of empowerment to encourage them to practice outside of class. See *Appendix two* for class outlines, supporting materials, handouts and the students evaluations of their experience.

The women for the experimental class were recruited from my regular Yoga classes. I was looking for a group of perimenopausal women who would be interested in committing to the eight week program. Five women filled out the menopause survey and personal history forms. The class met in my home on Monday evenings 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., from April 30 through June 25, skipping Memorial Day. I charged only a \$15 materials fee. The five women were:

Caroline

Caroline is 55, and happily married with two children. She is a large heavy woman. Her favorite color is purple. Her daughter survived a very serious automobile accident 10 years ago and still has residual difficulties which cause Caroline a lot of emotional pain. Caroline herself, has dealt with tuberculosis, Lupus which is now in remission, as well as diverticulitis. She runs her own insurance agency and, like Dodie, considers work her greatest source of stress. Caroline is experiencing quite a number of typical menopausal symptoms, including vaginal dryness, forgetfulness and mood swings. About menopause, she says, "It is part of a woman's life and we

need to accept it.” Caroline is new to Yoga. She joined my Saturday morning Therapeutic/Beginner class but missed half the classes due to work and vacations. She made all but one of the experimental Yoga and menopause classes. Because of her size and the need to modify even the most basic postures in order for her to be comfortable, I doubted that she was getting anything out of the classes. That question was answered on the last evening. As she left, she hugged me, thanked me and said that the classes had, “helped her so much.”

Dodie

Dodie is 42 years old, and married with no children. She has completed a masters degree in Public Health, and is a competitive athlete who enjoys running, calligraphy, reading, gardening and hiking. She feels most of the stress in her life from the workplace. She is of medium height and slight with a wiry build. Her favorite color is green. Her energy level is generally good but she is experiencing insomnia, heart palpitations, night sweats, fluctuating energy levels with inner turmoil, and some depression. She describes herself as introverted, active, interested and a homebody. She has been taking my Thursday night Yoga class, on and off, for three years. She likes the stretching and getting into the ‘zone,’ but says she has yet to reach the ‘zone’ in the middle of a stressful situation. She sees menopause as a time of increased freedom, understanding and opportunity, - - - “doors open, doors close.” I speculate that one of her ‘closing doors’ is related to the fact that she has no children but it is only speculation because she has never talked about that either verbally or in writing on the survey. She is comfortable with the process of menopause as long as her symptoms do not become overwhelming.

Elena

Elena is Puerto Rican. She became a single mom when her first marriage ended in divorce and she moved to the mainland to achieve a better life for herself and her daughter. She married again and had another daughter. She feels guilty because she thinks she may have done

something to cause her second daughter's premature birth and current learning difficulties. She has since been sterilized and undergone cone and laser surgery to remove the beginning stages of uterine cancer. She worries about her husband's health and her children's progress in life. Family is very important to her. Her concerns about her family and her own physical health are sources of great stress. She suffers from migraines, menstrual irregularity, mood swings, depression and a variety of other menopausal symptoms. She takes prozac and started coming to my Saturday morning Therapeutic/Beginner Yoga class in February 2001. She hopes to learn how to handle her menopausal challenges, reduce her level of frustration and lower her prozac dosage. There has been a marked difference in her demeanor since taking the classes. She is more relaxed and calm. Although it is tempting to say that it's due to Yoga, Elena is sensitive to the seasons and has stated that the winters are very hard on her emotionally. She credits some, but not all, of her progress to Yoga. She has begun to practice a few things at home on her own - - most notably, Legs-Up-the-Wall, the Anti-Anxiety Breath and Long Deep Breathing. About the affect of those simple practices on her levels of stress and discomfort, she says with animation and delightfully rolling 'R's, "It's incredible!"

Rowena

Rowena is divorced with no children. She has been dealing with fibroids for many years and is using a variety of complementary modalities such as Yoga and energy healing to avoid surgery. Since she entered perimenopause, the fibroids are starting to shrink. She describes herself as a 'workaholic,' and not comfortable with showing her emotions. Soon after her divorce she was laid off from her job and spent seven years as an organizational consultant. The financial difficulty led to foreclosure on her condominium unit. Finally, last year she secured another full time job and moved to an apartment where she is working to stabilize herself financially and figure out what she needs to do with the rest of her life. She is also experiencing

many changes,

“This time I’m experiencing the physical changes I ignored and the emotions I suppressed when I was a teenager - - - In truth, I’m aiming for an amalgam that didn’t exist before - - authenticity (being myself), wisdom, expansion, joy, love, effectiveness in my life and in the world.”

About menopause, she says it means blossoming and reports the experience of the women in her family,

“My paternal grandmother got back into painting (oils) when she was in her mid -50’s. She got into watercolors in her 80’s. My mother started writing non fiction in her early 60’s and continued until she passed away at 72.”

Rowena has been taking my Yoga classes for three years and is now working to alleviate the menopause symptoms she is, ‘fully noticing.’”

Kaitlin

Kaitlin is 49 years old and married with one daughter. She comments ruefully that she wished she hadn’t waited so long to give birth and advises other women, “Don’t delay as long as I did. It’s hard to have a daughter going into puberty when you’re going through menopause.”

Kaitlin’s husband has an incurable cancer. She said that for the past few years she’s been able to deal with her husband’s situation but now that she’s going through menopause, the strain and stress of that situation is more intense. She also feels stress from the workplace where she is competing against younger colleagues. Interestingly, she reports her stress levels as moderate, and says that they are triggered by, “negative self talk.” She listed 11 menopausal symptoms on her survey but says that the most troublesome ones are fuzzy thinking, inability to concentrate, and a high degree of inner turmoil. She started coming to my Yoga classes last year and often stayed behind to talk. She does Yoga for her almost constant hip, leg and thigh pain and is beginning to see some relief from those symptoms as long as she practices the postures daily. She would like to do sitting meditation, but admits that she is too restless and scattered at this

time. When classes started this year, she began by arriving to class after the education, stayed for the postures and left before the deep relaxation. Recently however, she has been coming on time and staying for the whole class.

What follows is a sample of the structure for the Yoga and menopause class using the Eight Limbs of Yoga format along with tools and techniques to focus awareness on the *Koshas*. This way of structuring my classes has evolved slowly over the past six years. At first I was concerned about taking time out of a ninety minute class to do anything other than postures, a short breath practice and a short progressive relaxation. Internally I felt as though I wasn't 'doing' anything and that I was being 'lazy' by not putting in more time on the postures. Studying the *Yoga Sutras* and getting a better understanding of the purpose of Yoga and the rationale behind the Eight Limbs of Yoga has reduced those concerns 90 percent. The remaining ten percent, I'm sure is my residual perfectionism/aim to please tape which still runs in my mental background.

I crystallized this format during my teaching of a meditation course last year for the fifth module of the masters work. Evaluations for that class revealed that the students felt positively about going through the full Eight Limbs. Several of them said that it helped them sit for longer periods in meditation. Since the ultimate goal of Yoga is to help people accomplish sitting in meditation to set the stage for Self-Realization, I became convinced that applying the Eight Limbs format to all my Yoga classes, and the work I'm doing with Yoga and menopause was the right thing to do. I let go of the feeling that I was 'cheating' because I wasn't doing postures for the majority of the class time. That letting go was hard to do since my personality is one that puts emphasis on doing more instead of undoing and being but the format is working for my classes and it's also working for me by helping me to better pace myself and balance my own energy.

Yoga and Menopause: A Sample Class Structure

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

The beginning of the class is often the best place for education or discussion on yogic principles of morals and behaviors (*yama/niyama*). For menopausal women, I have found the most valuable discussions take place on non-harming, acceptance, surrender. Each time I've asked groups of women to look at the list of yogic ethics and choose one or two to discuss or explore, these three are consistently mentioned. This class was no exception. In addition to discussion on ethics, I also offer specific information on the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of the class theme or topic.

After checking in, education, and sharing each program moves to a short body scan, centering exercise or opening chant to bring the student more deeply into contact with their bodies.

Limb Three and Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Select and sequence an *asana* (posture) class focused on stress, heart health, menopausal symptoms, balancing the endocrine system, prevention of osteoporosis or any theme and combination of postures suitable for the class. All postures and exercises are done with breath awareness and breath regulation, generally inhaling on expansive movements and exhaling on contracting movements.

Limb Four: Breath Control (*Pranayama*)
Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Select and teach suitable general breath awareness practices, such as the Three Part Breath, or Alternate Nostril Breathing.

One of the best ways to begin teaching the Three Part Breath is to place students in the Crocodile Pose. Have the students lie on the stomach with the legs comfortably apart and pointing the toes out (or in). Fold the arms in front of the body, resting the hands on the biceps. Position the arms so that the chest is lifted off the floor as much as possible. Relax the forehead on your arms and begin to watch the natural flow of the breath. In this position it is much harder to breath into the chest and students can feel the breath moving into the ribs and abdomen. (Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1979, 112).

Limb Five: Yoga Nidra - Awareness of the Senses (*Pratyahara*)
Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

Yoga Nidra is “a systematic method of inducing complete, mental and emotional relaxation,” (Saraswati, 1993, 1). It consists of several components which together are designed to release muscular, emotional and mental tensions, deeply relax the body and open the connection between the sub conscious and unconscious dimensions which can lead to levels of higher awareness or consciousness. This technique is described in detail in chapter nine.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

This is a period of breath and/or *mantra* meditation, guided meditation or chanting (with or without *mudra* (hand or finger placements said to have specific effects on the the body/mind). In most of my classes this exercise is three to five minutes long. I inform students that after three to five minutes I’ll sound a chime and they are welcome to continue with the concentration

practice or move to any other variation of meditation that they are comfortable with.

I recommend starting with the breath as the object of concentration and usually suggest one of two techniques:

1. The Relaxation Breath (see chapter nine)
2. Ajapa (see chapter nine)

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)

Bliss Level/s, Realization of Self as Unity Consciousness (*Anandamayakosha*)

This limb is a continuation of Limb Six. I'll signal it with the sound of a chime and give no further instruction. Students either continue with the concentration practice or move to any other variation they are comfortable with. This exercise is usually three to five minutes long.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)

Unity Consciousness is Beyond the Koshas and Individual Effort

This is exemplified by a closing ritual to symbolize Unity Consciousness. It may include a 'thought for the day,' a poem, or my personal favorite, the Three Breath Blessing (one breath for self, one for another and one for the whole planet). Because the realization of one or more of the many levels of *Samadhi* is so personal and ineffable a state, it can only be hinted at in a typical group gathering and it is mentioned here only to give a sense of completion to the class and not to presume that the activity has resulted in Self-Realization or enlightenment for anyone.

Reflections

The Eight Limbs format provided an effective way to proceed through the class and move the students from being outer directed to an awareness of their inner landscape and levels of being (*Koshas*). However, it became clear early on that I would need more than ninety minutes to cover all the material I had gathered and written. The women indicated a need to share and

process what they were learning about Yoga, about menopause and about themselves.

What typically occurred is that the education and sharing time expanded because the women were excited to have a forum to talk about their personal menopause experience, life issues and situations. However, the need for the same amount of sharing time was not universal. Rowena, Caroline and Elena spent large amounts of time talking and sharing. Kaitlin and Dodie, participated with interest but wanted to move more quickly into the postures. As a facilitator it was often difficult to manage this pull of opposites and as a result we were not always able to fully complete all of the class components. This pull between following the format and providing the class what it seemed to need was also affected by the fact that the women were gaining insights on how the Yogic principles played a role in their lives and they needed to talk about that. Most notable was the discussion around non violence and non-harming (*ahimsa*). The women found it intriguing to think that negative self talk could be seen as harming to the self and just as violent as doing harm to another. This dialogue about non-harming, acceptance, surrender and opening the heart generated rich dialogue, sharing and discussion. As a result I often shortened the *asana* (postures) and the *Yoga Nidra* sections of the class to allow the time for sharing and to provide the students with a full experience of all Eight Limbs of Yoga.

The students were very appreciative of the articles and the home practice handouts. My sense is that this format contains a real opportunity for learning and would benefit from being done as a ten week class with each class session being two hours long. I would also change the order of presentation to put work on the endocrine system and symptom management back to back. The format for the next opportunity to teach this material will look like this:

- Stress Reduction: 2 weeks
- Balancing the Endocrine System: 2 weeks
- Menopause Symptom Management: 2 weeks
- Heart Health: 2 weeks
- Preventing Osteoporosis: 2 weeks

Whether this Yoga program is used as part of a workshop, class or private session it is organized, as much as possible, on the philosophical foundation of Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga. This means that the group of students or individual client is brought through an experience of each limb. The Eight Limbs can be depicted as a wheel with eight spokes, or a ladder with eight rungs (Feuerstein, 1998, 324-337). The first four limbs correspond with the tenets of *Hatha-Yoga* which work on preparing and strengthening the body to engage the deeper practices of Yoga and the the last four limbs correspond to the tenets of *Raja-Yoga*, the deeper practices which lead to self-realization and the various states and levels of consciousness which lead in turn to Self-Realization (*samadhi*) (Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, p. 77).

Principle #2

The Koshas

With practice we learn to become aware of, or conscious, of ourselves on five levels. These five interconnecting levels, also referred to as sheaths or bodies, represent how Yoga looks at human beings philosophically and psychologically. The ability of a woman to become aware of herself as more than mind or ego and bring attention to what she finds allows her to accept and integrate all aspects of herself - - pleasant and not so pleasant; positive and not so positive - - and make conscious changes (if she chooses) that will bring her into alignment with her life and whatever her life situation may be. Doing Yoga helps women learn to discover and explore these levels of awareness. They are: physical, breath/energy, psycho-emotional, witness/wisdom and bliss (see chapter seven for a full explanation of the *Koshas*).

For this format I designed and implemented four workshops focused on Yoga and Menopause. Two of them were presented locally to the general public and two nationally to Yoga teachers attending the Integrative Yoga Therapy Advanced Training in Estes Park,

Colorado in May 2000 and the Professional Yoga Therapists Training at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in August 2001.

The major purpose of the first two workshops was to ‘field test’ a self-help program of Yoga techniques for dealing with menopausal symptoms, stress reduction and heart health. The purpose of the second two was to share the information with my peers and encourage feedback.

My secondary purpose in doing the workshops was to encourage the view of menopause as a transition to creativity, empowerment and growth, as opposed to seeing menopause as a pathology to be feared, fixed and forgotten.

I learned several things about sharing this material in the workshop format. One of the most important was learning to match the amount of material to the time allotted. The first workshop was two hours, the second, three hours, the third, four hours and the fourth, five and a half hours.

What follows next is a sample of the latest workshop format for the public using the *Koshas* as a key component. This is followed by my evaluation of the workshop format experience. The participant evaluations for the workshops will be found in *Appendix three*. The material presented next is targeted to the general public and is best served by a full day format.

Yoga and Menopause: A Sample Workshop Structure

9:00 - 9:20 a.m., Welcome

Pass Out Materials (*and collect any personal history forms, stress evaluation tools, cardiovascular risk factor forms or other assessment tools you have chosen to use.*)

- Overview & Purpose
- Review The Day's Activities
- Introductions/Sharing/Questions/Concerns

9:20 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*),

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*), Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Education: Menopause Stress and Your Heart

- Menopause as event, process and opportunity for transformation
- Stress and Menopause
- Heart Health at Mid-Life
- Lifestyles, and Risk Factors
- The *Koshas* (a model of human psychology)

The Five Levels of Awareness (the Koshas). Do a complete body/mind scan.

Participants are to watch out for anything that presents itself on any of the five levels. We do all five so students can notice what they can and cannot tune into at this point.

Kosha & Body Map Exercise Visualization Script

Adapted from:

Integrative Yoga Therapy Manual by Joseph LePage, Blue Lake, California 1994

The Breathing Book by Donna Farhi, NY: Henry Holt and Co. '1996

Transformation Through Menopause, by Marian Van Eyk McCain, NY, Bergin & Garvey, 1991

I'm going to guide you on a journey through the body. We will travel through and explore the physical body, the breath/energy body, the emotional body, the mental body and the spiritual body. As we travel on this journey, allow yourself to experience all that presents itself, - sensations, thoughts, images, colors, emotions - experience everything with awareness, acceptance and compassion. Allow yourself to participate fully without judging the experience or yourself.

Come to a comfortable sitting position and allow yourself to relax. Tune into your breath and feel it flow in and out of your nostrils. Now picture your body as a whole, scan it from top to bottom and notice the first color that comes to mind - - - what color did you experience? Open your eyes and outline your body map using that color. Good.

Physical Body

Lie down on your mat. Come into relaxation pose with your arms relaxed by your sides, palms up. Bring your awareness to your physical body. Notice the surface of the skin and the difference between the outside of your body and the inside of your body.

Bring your awareness to the different regions of your body that I will mention. As you travel through your body pay particular attention to all the physical sensations you may feel - sensations such as tingling, warmth, feelings of openness or stuckness. Notice your feet - - - ankles ----- lower legs --- knees - --- upper legs ---- pelvis and buttock s---- abdomen and all your organs of digestion, reproduction and elimination --- low back --- solar plexus ---- mid back ---- chest ---- heart ---- lungs --- upper back --- shoulders --- arms --- hands ----- draw your awareness up into your neck ---- face ---- and into your head.

Sense your skeleton ----- visualize your bones ---- feel your muscles and the connective tissues, the ligaments and the tendons ----- now sense your respiratory system, the lungs and the nasal passages. Become aware of your circulation ---- oxygenated blood flowing from your heart throughout the body and the return of de-oxygenated blood to your heart ----- experience your nervous system ---- the continual flow of sensory messages throughout the body/mind --- your state of arousal or relaxation ---- now sense the digestive system --- and the endocrine system and the overall balance or imbalance that exists in your body right now. Finally sense the skin of the entire body. *Long Pause.*

Breath/Energy

Now, bring your awareness to your breath. As you travel through your breath and energy body notice your breath and all its parts----- ”let your breath come and go naturally ----- don’t try to change it in any way. Just enjoy the ebb and flow ---- the rise and fall ---- the in and out of the natural, essential breath ---- your breath, good. Now ask yourself a question --- “Where do I feel my breathing? ---- Is the breath more noticeable in the belly? The abdomen? The chest? The nostrils? Now ask yourself, “Where does the movement of my breath begin? The nostrils? The chest? The ribs The belly? Somewhere else in the body? Now ask yourself, “ Now ask yourself, “What does my breathing feel like? What is the quality of your breath? Is it smooth or jerky? Labored or light? Notice whatever words or images arise, good. Now bring your attention to the inhalation- and notice the length of your inhalation. Focus on the depth of your inhalation. Does your inhalation feel deep or shallow? Just notice --- don’t judge. Now bring your attention to the exhalation - and notice the length of your exhalation. Focus on the length of your exhalation. Is your exhalation short or long? Just notice --- don’t judge. Sense the nature of your breath and the quality of energy that moves with it through your body ---- sense the upward flowing movement of energy ----- sense the downward flow of energy --- notice the circular movement of energy within the belly ---- and in the throat ---- notice the flow of energy through the arms and hands ---- legs and feet ---- now notice the flow of energy around the body----notice a cushion of energy around the body ---- If you don’t feel this experience - that’s fine. Just follow along as best you can. Over time your ability to tune in to your energy will increase. Focus on the flow of energy in and around and through your body. *Long Pause.*

Psycho - Emotional Body

Now, bring your awareness to your mind, your thoughts and your beliefs. Pay particular attention to any changes in thought patterns that you are experiencing at this time. Become aware of your thoughts and the movement of your mind. Are you thinking differently about yourself or about others in your life? What thoughts are you having? Are you finding it hard to think about anything at all? Are your thoughts focused and sharp? Fuzzy or clouded? Confused or clear? If you could describe your mind in words or pictures what would that description be like? Notice any picture, words or symbols that come to mind. Now imagine that you are sitting high above yourself and watching. Detach yourself from your thought and belief patterns and observe them. Notice each thought and acknowledge it as a part of you but know that you are not your thoughts. Watch your thoughts and then notice the watcher. Who is this person who is having these thoughts? Who is this person watching this mind? *Long Pause.*

Now, bring your awareness to your emotions. Become aware of the emotional climate in your body and know that many emotions, even contradictory ones can be present simultaneously. Notice where each of the following emotions lives in your body and notice the quality of those emotions --- their color,size,shape, texture and density --- are they heavy or light? ---- notice the boundaries of these emotions ---- are they fixed or can they move. Notice, now, any feelings of anger. Try to locate that anger in your body. Where does anger live in you? Notice the quality of your anger, its color, size, shape, texture and density. Is it heavy or light?----notice the boundaries of your anger ---- does anger move around the body? Or does it stay in one place?

Notice, now, any feelings of fear. Try to locate that fear in your body. Where does fear live in you? Notice the quality of your fear, its color, size, shape, texture and density. Is it heavy or light?----notice the boundaries of your fear ---- does your fear move around the body? Or does it stay in one place?

Notice, now, any feelings of grief, pain or sadness. Try to locate those feelings in your body. Where does grief live in you? Notice the quality of your grief, pain or sadness - - - its color, size, shape, texture and density. Is it heavy or light?----notice the boundaries of your grief ---- does grief, pain and sadness move around the body? Or does it stay in one place?

Notice, now, any feelings of love. Try to locate the love in your body. Where does love live in you? Notice the quality of your love, its color, size, shape, texture and density. Is it heavy or light?----notice the boundaries of your love and joy ---- do they move around the body? Or do they stay in one place? Become aware of your overall emotional tone. *Long Pause.*

Spiritual Body

Now, bring your awareness to your spiritual self. As you explore your spiritual self pay particular attention to all the sensations and changes that you have been or are experiencing at this time in your life - - - changes in the way you see your life's purpose - - - changes in whatever it is that gives deeper meaning to your life? - - - changes in the things that nourish and nurture you? - - - changes in the things that bring you joy and happiness - - - changes in your spiritual practice - - - in your beliefs or values - - - note any changes in your relationships with your family, with your work. Notice any changes in your relationship to yourself and to your personal power - - - any changes in your ability to give and receive love - - - any changes in your ability to surrender to the flow of life - - - notice any changes of your understanding of the Self that you are - - - your authentic Self - - - the essence that lies beyond all labels and definitions - - - let the images, words and sensations flow as you rest for 3 minutes, deeply, restfully, peacefully.

Gently roll over on your right side and use your hands to help you come into your comfortable sitting position. Take your body map and on it draw anything that you experienced

or noticed or became aware of as we explored all of your selves through the five levels of awareness (*Koshas*). Note in picture or words or symbols that have meaning to you anything you noticed about the state of any or all of the levels.

Note: I put colored markers in a big wicker basket in the middle of the group (two baskets if the group is large). When they are close to finishing the Body maps, ask each person to choose one aspect of their current menopausal concerns, symptoms or experiences that they would like to work on in the asana portion of the workshop, write it down on a 3 x 5 card and hand it in. While they are sharing in small groups, and during the break, plan the asana class based on the information gathered beforehand through personal history forms, the recently collected cards and what you've observed about the group during the workshop.

Sharing

Have the group break into small groups of two or three and allow them to chat and share with each other anything that came up for them during the *Kosha* scan. Ask each small group to select a yogic ethical principle that they would like to explore. Then share in the larger group.

10:50 - 11:00 a.m. Break.

11:00 - 11:45 a.m.

**Limb Three and Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*),
Physical level (*Anamayakosha*) and Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)**

- Asana class customized for the needs of the participants

11:45 - 11:50 a.m.

**Limb Four: Breath Practice (*Pranayama*)
Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)**

- Select and teach suitable breath practices.

11: 50 a.m. - 12:05 p.m.

Limb Five: Yoga Nidra - Awareness of the Senses (*Pratyahara*)

Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha and Yama, Niyama*)

- Select an appropriate *Yoga Nidra* practice.

12:05 - 12:10 p.m.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)

Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

- This is a period of breath and/or *mantra* or *mudra* meditation.

12:10- 12:15 p.m.

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*), **Bliss body level** (*Anandamayakosha*)

- Students practice their own personal form of meditation.

12:15 - 12:20 p.m.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)

Unity/Self realization (*Samadhi*)

- Closing ritual

12:20 - 1:30 p.m.: LUNCH

(Note: lunch time can be shortened by a few minutes if the morning activities run over.)

1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Checking In, Discussion and Sharing

Yogic principles: discussion on the principles chosen in the small groups and their significance in understanding one's process and lifestyle habits and patterns. These less physical activities give time for the digestive process to be completed. Other activities that work here are:

- Journaling
- Drumming
- Chanting
- Personal stories
- Interactive exercises (*ex. asking each to choose one memory from their life they would be happy reliving over and over or choosing one wound that needs to be healed and choosing one technique that will help them begin the healing work*).

- Creative artwork
- Sharing of resources
- Guided healing meditation: ex. “Opening The Heart of the Womb,” (Levine, 1987, 151)
- Q and A

2:30 - 3:45 p.m.

Yoga Instruction and Practice

Instruction in other yogic techniques that may be helpful to the group such as teaching Laura Cornell’s Moon Salutation, instruction and practice in sitting and walking meditation or additional postures for heart health, balancing the endocrine system and the chakras, preventing osteoporosis, and using props and modifying postures for the work place or other environments. Appropriate choices will be made based on previous components of the workshop.

3:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Evaluations
Closing Ritual

As I continued to work with the material between the first and second workshops, I found ways to more effectively organize it. Based on my thinking and the student’s evaluations, I worked with the following ideas:

1. Begin with the visualization on the *Koshas* and then ask each participant to select one physical manifestation/symptom/ache, pain or concern to work with throughout the workshop.
2. Allow more time for sharing and discussion.
3. Simplicity works best when presenting new information to students, and ‘too much too soon’ makes the lesson confusing.

By the time I did the second and third workshops, I had trimmed the material and was able to cover all the material in the outline but still felt a need for more time for sharing, journaling, and a longer session on meditation. In an effort to better use the time and manage the flow of the workshop and to follow the ‘less is more’ idea, I dropped discussions of *Kriya Yoga* and the *Chakras* and focused strictly on the Eight Limbs format and the *Koshas*. As a result of

evaluations I received from the presentation at the Integrative Yoga Therapy Advanced Training, I plan to incorporate the following for future workshops:

1. Allow more time for introductions and a 'getting to know you' exercise.
2. Shorten the body scan, slow the rate of presentation and incorporate longer pauses.
3. Change the body map to reflect the female form.

I found that making up the Yoga class 'on the spot' based on the participants note cards to be effective and appreciated. I keep with me a resource of possible options in a notebook. After the posture class for the second student workshop, I wrote on each participant card the postures and breathing techniques used to address their particular concerns and handed them back so that each woman left with a mini-Yoga practice to take home. For the first Yoga teachers workshop I prepared a handout with a resource list of postures and breathwork under the heading of the corresponding symptoms.

All workshops were well received and the Yoga philosophy component went over very well. Self-doubt was an early and regular visitor through all the workshops except the most recent one in August 2001. By that time, I was more comfortable about what could be accomplished within a given time frame, much more steeped in the material and more experienced in presenting it.

The workshop delivered in August 2001 was targeted to Yoga teachers choosing to specialize in Yoga therapy. They were there to learn the Integrative Yoga Therapy model for applying Yoga to various conditions such as back pain, chronic pain, multiple sclerosis and menopause. I was given a five and half hour block of time (including a fifteen minute mid morning break). From 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., I taught the Heart Health sequence described in chapter nine. After breakfast, I had planned to lecture for an hour and a half and then teach the

sequence on balancing the endocrine/*Chakra* systems. The participants wanted to hear more of my ideas about Yoga and menopause and they had questions and stories of their own to share. It was a lively session and I ended up lecturing for three hours and fifteen minutes and ending with a brief *asana* class -- -- -- demonstrating one *asana* for each endocrine gland/*Chakra*. I was pleased with my presentation and the response from the audience. It was exhilarating to be so well received by my peers, including the three men in an audience of fifty one women. They men were respectively, a Yoga teacher, a surgeon and a chiropractor and were interested in the topic because many of their students and patients are women in menopause.

Principle #3 Therapeutic Approach

Integrative Yoga Therapy is based on a perspective of health which uses the tool of awareness to explore, accept, affirm, and integrate the multidimensional aspects of being human. This approach believes that health ultimately rests on a foundation of spirituality which integrates the whole person through body, mind and spirit. Therefore, Yoga teachers and therapists who adopt this approach, address the needs of their students and individual clients with consideration for age, culture, religion, and specific physical conditions in order to facilitate optimal health and healing.

At the end of the eight week menopause class discussed earlier in this chapter, I raffled off three private sessions as a way to say thank you to the women for taking the time to help me. Elena won the raffle and each step of the Integrative Yoga Therapy model described below is followed by notes from the first session I did with her. Samples of forms used for a private session, including a body map, will be found in *Appendix* four.

Steps 1- 3

1. Intake and Body/Breath/Energy Assessment
2. Separation Versus Unity
3. Stress Response & Client Health

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)
Physical level (*Anamayakosha*),
Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Step 1: Intake and Body/Breath/Energy Assessment

Gather a global picture of the individual by describing what is happening at each level of awareness. Through assessment tools, which include intake and personal history, health and lifestyle assessment forms, along with an interview and visual observation, the Yoga therapist builds a picture of the individual or group which consists of some or all of the following questions:

- How do habits and lifestyle affect the condition of the individual or group?
- How aware is the individual/group of their essential breathing patterns and energy flow in the body?
- What are the belief systems (I'm worthless, I'm special, the world is hostile, I'm a victim, I'm queen) that may be operating to increase feelings of stress, separation and suffering?
- How deeply is the individual/group caught up in their own drama?
- Can they tune into their own guidance and wisdom?
- Do they have a spiritual practice?

Elena is verbal and seems to release some stress through talking. Since she had completed her intake forms for the class in June, it was not necessary to re-do them. I reviewed them with her including the evaluation sheet which showed that after the eight week class, she was sleeping better, exercising more and generally feeling better (see appendix four). I asked if there was anything different or new to add. Here is what she told me.

Elena vacationed in Florida with her husband and daughter for several weeks this

summer. During that time she did not do any Yoga unless her feelings of stress and pain became intense and then she did Legs-Up-The-Wall.

Her physical complaints continue to be migraines brought on by stress, tight shoulders, and low back pain. Now, her right knee is causing her a great deal of pain and she plans to see a doctor. The newest source of stress in her life is her daughter's medical condition. Her daughter was recently diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. The shock of learning that plus the time spent with the doctors and in the educational workshop provided by the hospital set off Elena's latest migraine which lasted for several days. She ultimately went to her doctor for a shot of Imitrex. She still takes prozac and menopausal symptom she is experiencing at this time is menstrual irregularity and insomnia. Her hot flashes and flushes have subsided. Her main complaint and the one she wants addressed in this session is stress reduction.

For breathwork I had her bring her attention to the breath, consciously slow it down and then do Relaxation Breath to elongate the exhalation. I introduced her to the technique of wrapping the head which she can use the next time she has a headache (Lasater, 1995, 91). For warm ups we did foot massage, simple shoulder movements, neck & head movements, Spinal Flexes, Spinal Rocking and Pelvic Tilts. These were followed by restorative postures, a shoulder stretch and Dynamic Cobra, which she did spontaneously. This was followed by a five minute meditation (back against the wall and knees supported with blankets) using *Adi Mudra* which brings security and confidence to the heart and a relaxing earth energy to the body (LePage, 2000, Handout) *IYT Manual*). We ended with the three breath blessing and a Namaste.

Step 2: Separation Versus Unity

Through study of the assessment forms, dialogue, observation and intuition, check for the existence & depth of *avidya*, false understanding of reality that can result in feelings of

separation/disconnection from unity in each of the levels (*Koshas*). Here the therapist is looking for the degree to which the individual or group understands the concept that all life is part of a vast interconnected web and that they are an integral part in that web.

From what I know of Elena and her feelings about her daughter, I can speculate that some of what keeps her from taking care of herself may stem from feelings of guilt about her daughter's premature birth and current medical condition. She has verbalized the guilt in the past but has not made any connections between that feeling and her present levels of stress. She does not talk about herself and her feelings for long but seems to bring the discussion around to her daughter, her husband and the facts about their lives. She seems to be experiencing some separation about the larger picture of her life, and her place in it.

Step 3: Stress Response & Client Health

Examine the role of stress and the stress response at each level. Here the therapist looks for symptoms of stress on the physical level (ex. muscles contractions, constipation, chronic conditions), breath/energy level (ex. respiratory distress, low energy, chest breathing), mental emotional level (ex. depression, anxiety, irritability), the witness wisdom level, (ex. victim mentality, caught in their own drama, inability to see patterns and the big picture), bliss level (ex. identification with ego and self as reality). Now the therapist begins to make connections between what stresses the client or group is facing and how they habitually respond to those stresses. Again, the main tools are the study of the assessment forms, dialogue, observation and intuition.

Physically, Elena is aware of the pain in her body and knows that it is calling for attention. She is not answering that call at the moment and says that her daughter's medical situation, her husband and her two part time jobs take all her time and that she is too tired to do

anything at the end of the day.

Energetically, she is intense and high strung at the moment - - - always in a rush moving from one thing to another, taking care of others and fixing situations.

Psycho-emotionally, Elena is an emotionally intense person. About her life right now, she has said, “sometimes I'm happy, but some times I hate everybody and everything.” She also expressed the fact that she doesn't feel trusting of others, and has a lot of anger.

Witness Consciousness: She may be aware of some of her underlying belief patterns and behaviors but seems unable to express or address them in a way that will allow her to make lasting changes in how she takes care of inner herself. She relies on her doctors and her medications, including complementary therapies to ‘fix’ her physical body. My sense is that she is using the rushing, moving and fixing as a long term reaction to her feelings of stress. In my opinion, she has yet to develop a conscious healthy long term response to those perceptions that will allow her to witness, examine and heal what is going on at her deeper levels and increase her feelings of well being.

Bliss Body. We did not discuss this during this session. The timing did not feel appropriate and I will wait until she provides an opening.

Step 4: Selecting Tools of Yoga

Step 5: The Program

Limb Three and Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)
Physical level (*Anamayakosha*) and Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Limb Five: *Yoga Nidra* - Awareness of the Senses (*Pratyahara*)
Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha and Yama, Niyama*)

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)
Bliss body level (*Anandamayakosha*)

Limb Eight: Unity/Self realization (*Samadhi*)

Seek, research, intuit and develop a list of yogic principles, tools and techniques that will facilitate optimal wellness for the group or individual. The main source is the Eight Limbs of Yoga. Whatever is chosen must be selected and applied with the ability and condition of client or class in mind. Bringing a client through all Eight Limbs may not always be possible and the decision will be made by the therapist based on each individual situation.

Once a specific practice based upon the work of steps one through four has been established, it is important for the therapist to recognize that this may need to change from session to session depending upon the needs of the individual or group. The program will be based on the understandings gained about the individual or group and the condition of the individual or group serves as a foundation for the development of the program. Implementing the program with awareness, sharing and evaluation enlightens both the client and the therapist.

Stress and dealing with her reaction pattern to stress will be the overriding issue in working with Elena. The goal will be to use the sessions to cool her intensity and offer her an opportunity to 'be' instead of to 'do.' Hopefully, this will encourage and empower her to select at least one Yoga technique that she will commit to do on a regular basis.

Since I will be working with her for two more sessions and I know that she is in the habit of rushing, fixing and doing, the program that we'll develop together will continue to use Restorative Yoga for stress reduction and menstrual irregularity. The warm ups will include postures and exercises to bring awareness to her shoulders and low back. The restoratives used for this session were Supported Bound Angle (ten minutes) to relieve pelvic and low back discomfort and harmonize *apana* or feminine energy (Lasater, 1995, 162), and Legs-Up-The -

Wall (five minutes) (not during menstruating) for relaxation and stress reduction. We tried Supported Child but she could not get comfortable so I returned her to simple Child Pose and said that if she wanted to move in the posture to go ahead. She began to do Dynamic Cobra (see chapter nine) on her own and continued for about a minute. Meditation, with back support, will include *mudras* for relaxing the heart and bringing energy to the low back and pelvis.

Her overall evaluation of the session was good. She liked the head wrap idea and loved Supported Bound Angle. She said she was not awake or asleep but felt very relaxed. When I asked about her experience of the *mudra*, she said that she felt ‘drawn down out of her head’ and relaxed. Her shoulders were still tight at the end of the session but her back felt much better. She is looking forward to the next session.

I enjoyed the session as well. After putting her in the restoratives and during the meditation, I sat in front of her, closed my eyes and repeated a mantra for people with intense fiery energy like Elena (and myself). It was, “I am not the doer.” I learned it from Swami Dharmakirti of the Bihar School of Yoga (Dharmakirti, 2001). It felt right and it seemed to settle the energy in the room. I did not plan it ahead of time. It just happened, I think, because I have a tendency to rush and hurry to the next thing on the list. Since that is Elena’s tendency as well, I realized that I wanted my energy in the session to reflect being and not doing.

Doing restoratives other than the basic Relaxation Pose (*Savasana*) is new for me. Restoratives take time to set up and unless a teacher or therapist has a small class and an inventory of props, they are not really suitable to the class format. For private sessions they can be wonderful tools. I spent the previous evening trying them out on myself and organizing the bolsters and blankets for the session. I think the fact that she is again taking a regular Yoga class, in addition to the sessions, that she may be more motivated and disciplined to pay attention to the signals her body/mind is sending. I’m pleased to be a participant in her process.

Summation

In this chapter we've examined the principles upon which the program in chapter nine is based and given examples of how they may be utilized in the workshop, class or private session format. All materials used for these formats will be found in the appendices. Hopefully, Yoga teachers and therapists interested in working with menopausal women will find this background discussion on principles helpful in working with the programs described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

THE PROGRAM

Wisdom is harder to do than it is to know.

--Yula Moses
(Eisen, 2000)

This chapter contains a full description of the basic programs and posture sequences I've put together for the application of Yoga to the menopause transition. The program is organized into six sections which holistically address many of the changes and symptoms women experience at this time of life. They are:

- Stress Reduction
- Balancing the Endocrine System
- Heart Health
- Preventing Osteoporosis
- An Overall Program for Menopause Health & Healing
- Managing Specific Menopause Symptoms

All but the Managing Specific Menopause Symptoms program is organized into the Eight Limbs format and is presented with a full complement of postures and healing techniques along with helpful hints on pacing and timing. An indication of the Integrative Yoga Therapy approach to each limb and technique is included along with notations of the *Kosha*, or level, most involved. The Managing Specific Menopause Symptoms program is organized in a list format by symptom with a variety of suggested applications from referenced sources on Yoga.

Each of these programs is designed to bring awareness to key areas and systems of the body/mind and to help Yoga teachers and therapists work with menopausal women in many contexts. Because there are a wide variety of Yoga tools to choose from, I've selected those most suitable for reasonably healthy women who have come to Yoga at midlife. I've chosen this audience because the majority of students I've taught over the past six years fall into this category.

One useful tool for encouraging stress reduction and relaxation in the Integrative Yoga Therapy model for health and wellness is *Yoga Nidra*. *Yoga Nidra* is “a systematic method of inducing complete, mental and emotional relaxation” (Saraswati, 1993, 1). Its several components are designed to release muscular, emotional and mental tensions, deeply relax the body and open the connection between the subconscious and unconscious dimensions which can lead to levels of higher awareness or consciousness. The components of *Yoga Nidra* are:

- Introduction
 - Selection and silent repetition of a personal resolve or affirmation
 - Rotation of consciousness
 - Breath awareness
 - Visualization
 - Silent repetition of the personal resolve or affirmation
 - Experience of stillness
 - Return to external awareness
- (Saraswati, 1993,78 - 82)

Yoga Nidra works by turning attention from external stimuli to the internal landscape and the subconscious mind. It is within the subconscious mind that old habits and patterns can be changed, and personal transformation can begin. *Yoga Nidra* can help menopausal women:

- Learn to relax
- Develop self- awareness
- Experience positive changes in their sleep patterns
- Develop a positive and balanced outlook on life
- Enhance creativity
- Manage stress levels

One of my students who suffers from panic attacks and anxiety uses a *Yoga Nidra* scripts regularly to help her relax and go to sleep. *Yoga Nidra* can be done as a small part of a complete class, as the major part of a workshop or a private session. How you use it will depend on your students, their condition, the amount of time you have and what you wish to accomplish. Notes throughout the program scripts will give prompts as to what can be eliminated, shortened or

lengthened depending upon your teaching situation.

To begin, help the students come into their most comfortable *Relaxation Pose*, either stretched out on the ground with the legs flopped out to the sides and arms a few inches from the body, palms up. Have your participants remove watches, glasses, and jewelry. If low back discomfort is a factor, there are several options to relax the low back:

- Have them place a rolled blanket or bolster under their knees
- They can bend their legs, knees up feet flat on the floor
- Place the calves on a chair (Legs-Up-The-Wall-variation)

If other props are to be used, take time to help the students place them. Have them put on socks, cover up with a blanket to stay warm, or place eye bags over the eyes. If you are using music allow it to begin playing softly in the background and continue throughout the script. If you choose to use music only during the deep relaxation, select it before the practice begins so its introduction into the program will not distract the students. Many students fall asleep during *Yoga Nidra*. It is helpful to explain that falling asleep or experiencing a wandering mind during *Yoga Nidra* is perfectly fine. Falling asleep may mean that the student may be suffering from sleep deprivation. You can suggest that they try to get more sleep during regular sleeping hours and that when their sleep ‘bank account’ is filled they will find it easier to stay aware during the practice of *Yoga Nidra*. Lasater suggests this technique - - - “help them prop themselves up higher on blankets or cushions so that the top half of your body is about 18 inches from the floor. This position will be less likely to evoke the sleep response” (Lasater, 2001, *Judith Lasater’s Yoga Room*, www.OneBody.com.)

In any case, reassure students that if they sleep during *Yoga Nidra* it will be a refreshing sleep that will help fill their sleep ‘bank account.’ It is important to understand that *Yoga Nidra* is not a concentration exercise. According to Saraswati, a drifting vacillating mind is still benefiting from the teacher’s instructions and the goal is for the student to watch and view all

experiences with awareness and detachment (Saraswati, 1993, *Yoga Nidra*, 31)

Once everyone is settled in, guide them through the steps of *Yoga Nidra* as outlined in the script. Although progressive relaxation is not technically a part of *Yoga Nidra*, many women benefit from a short round of contracting and relaxing the body part by part beginning with the feet and working upwards to the head. Progressive relaxation came into popularity in the West through the work on Progressive Muscular Relaxation by Edmund Jacobson in the 1920's, (LePage, 1994, *IYT Manual*, 6.16). The Integrative Yoga Therapy approach recommends this as an easily accessed method of beginning relaxation for students and I have included a short progressive relaxation in several of the *Yoga Nidra* scripts in this chapter.

Now, here are a few overall guidelines, cautions and contraindications for the use of these programs in order to keep them gentle and consistent:

General Guidelines

- Select the number of components that will fit into the time frame allotted for the class, workshop or private session. The programs are presented with all Eight Limbs in order to provide a context but it will be more important to provide a timely and appropriate experience for the situation at hand.
- Design the classes or sessions with a sense of 'flow.' This helps set up an environment that helps students and clients relax into the work.
- Warm the body with gentle stretches.
- Work the body according to ability and personality. In planning the *asana* portion of a program it will be important to move the body six ways: forward bending, backward bending, stretching the sides of the body, twisting the spine, inverting the body and practicing balance.
- Practice breath regulation throughout the session, except for portions of *Yoga Nidra*, relaxation and meditation.
- Rests are indicated after most postures and exercises. These rests are important as they encourage the student to 'tune in', and become aware of the flow of energy and information that may reside in the area of the body that is being stimulated, or relaxed.

- Cool and rest the body at the end of the *asana* session.
- Integrative Yoga Therapy is an art as much as it is a science. The programs are designed to be mixed, matched, shortened or lengthened according to the needs of your class or client.
- Empower the student or client to practice on their own.

Cautions and Contraindications

- When lateral bending be mindful of the need to stabilize the pelvis and low back so that the ‘pot (pelvis) and the ‘tree’ (spine) either move in one line or the student is aware of how far off the ‘one line’ plane the pelvis and spine have moved.
- When twisting be mindful of the need to stabilize the pelvis and low back so that the twist happens predominantly through the thoracic region.
- Watch to be sure the student or client is engaging the pelvic floor and the abdominals in order to stabilize the pelvis and engage core strength.
- In students or clients who may be suffering from depression it will be important to have them keep their eyes open and to employ a warming and stimulating session.
- Be careful of inversions for women who are menstruating and those with heart conditions and High blood Pressure.

Modifying Poses and Exercises

- Some programs contain different versions of a selected posture. In mixed levels classes the easier version can be used as a warmup for the more challenging one/s or those who need a more restorative practice can choose to do the easier version while those who need more activation can do the more challenging version.
- You can choose to work with fewer postures and do each posture three times working from the gentlest version to the most challenging and inserting a counter pose at the end of the series.
- In beginner classes the warmups and the gentlest versions can be utilized and in more advanced classes the warm ups and more advanced version of the poses can be used.
- Many of the postures can be easily modified with a chair or wall as a prop for those with size or physical limitations. Straps are also helpful props for those with less flexibility.
- Many of the standing strength postures, forward bends and balancing postures can be

first done in the supine position, or against a wall for gentler versions and to practice alignment. This is especially helpful for beginners and for those whose bodies are tight and inflexible.

- For bedridden or immobile clients, or those in with real physical limitations, breathwork, *Yoga Nidra* and meditation can form the basis of a Yoga program.
- When doing private sessions consider having an inventory of props and adding suitable restorative postures

Since the target audience for this project are certified Yoga teachers who are knowledgeable about basic Yoga postures, many of the descriptions have been shortened for the sake of space. Consulting the original sources cited will help teachers and therapists modify the postures and exercises even further for students who may need additional modifications - - - either more gentle or more challenging. Key modifications from the original sources are in boldface. Some of the techniques are repeated in each section and the corresponding text has also been repeated in each section for ease of use. The reader is encouraged to go to the original source for full detailed descriptions.

In applying these programs to women transitioning through menopause, it will be helpful to remember that as Yoga teachers and therapists, we will need to “respect the limits of our profession” (LePage, 2001, 4.16). Here it is important state that Yoga therapy is not psychotherapy and to again distinguish between the psychological process and spiritual practice. They may overlap, or proceed in tandem, but they are not the same. The psychological process is a Western concept and through its many and varied therapies it examines behavior, personality, and the mind with the end result of regulating human interaction with the environment, -- -- -- changing behavior (Vaughn, 1995, 162). Yoga is an Eastern concept and practice that is used to bring the balanced mature ego beyond itself to recognize, acknowledge, and embrace the true nature of Reality (Swami Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 175-178).

Yoga teachers and therapists need to understand the differences in order to appropriately and ethically work with their students and clients, especially those who may be coming to Yoga to find help with ego issues like self-esteem and setting appropriate boundaries.

We can not offer Yoga as psychotherapy or as a diagnosis or treatment of menopausal symptoms. We can, however, offer Yoga practices to bring conscious awareness to the part or system of the body/mind that is manifesting discomfort or concern or simply asking for attention. We can offer Yoga practices to bring conscious awareness to the level or *Kosha* that may be a factor in the situation and part of the reason why the student or client has come to Yoga. Our purpose will be to help the student or client access and witness physical, energetic, psycho-emotional, and spiritual information that may be relevant to their situation. We can offer Yoga practices that help the student or client understand the connections that exist between mind and body; and between ‘self and Self,’ and we can offer Yoga practices that respect their individual needs as they change over time. As Krishnamacharya points out, a true teacher is one who can take all they have learned and then teach it in their own way not as it applies to them but as it applies to the specific needs of the student (Krishnamacharya 1994, 4.16).

In the spirit of Yoga and with deep gratitude, I offer this Yoga program for health and healing in the hope that it will help women optimize and transform their journey through menopause and mid-life.

SECTION I
YOGA FOR STRESS REDUCTION

Background

Because women tend to experience their life stress more intensely during menopause, the Yoga applications I've selected are gentle warm ups, restorative postures, healing breath, and relaxation techniques and simple meditation practices that are designed to relax and renew the body/mind.

When presenting the topic of menopause, stress and Yoga it is helpful to begin with an explanation of stress and its effects on the body (see chapter five) along with some specifics of how stress can be experienced and its negative effects mitigated by a regular Yoga practice. This helps the students begin to connect these principles with their own lifestyle patterns and ethics.

Whether stress is triggered from behavioral, medical, mechanical, mental, emotional, chemical, environmental or cultural sources, the severity of response to particular stressors varies from woman to woman largely depending upon perception of the stressor and her awareness of her pattern of response. Here are two examples, one from the survey and one from my own life.

Susan is post menopausal. At this point in her life she is very aware of what her stressors are and she knows what she needs to do to mitigate the stress reaction. This was not always the case. She has experienced a great deal of turmoil in her life. She is 61 years old and the child of an alcoholic father and a clinically depressed mother. She was raised with a "middle class, white, suburban standard of living." She also describes her upbringing as a southern gentlewoman who was taught to deny problems, repress emotions and carry on with a smile no matter what. She continued this pattern into her adult life when she married, had two children, lived in the suburbs, worked part time, managed her household and underwent a number of illness and surgeries (including a hysterectomy that she now attributes to repressed feelings and

energy). The most painful and difficult challenges of her life came during her 50's. Her 26 year old son died in a mountaineering accident, she dealt with breast cancer a year later and the death of her husband six years after that. She has been involved with a number of modalities to help her deal with her stressors and challenges: psychotherapy, twelve step programs, energy healing, herbs and Yoga. They have all helped her come to a point where she learned that she could, "handle just about anything by being open, both trusting myself and my intuition as well as reaching out and allowing myself to be supported as I walked through crisis. I found my spiritual center."

She now knows what triggers stress for her. Being out of control, being rushed, over committed, ignored and being in environments with no opportunity for real personal interaction are the situations that most trigger stress for Susan. She also knows what to do when she feels stressed and she uses this knowledge in her daily life. As a result of the personal work she's done she is now aware of her stress patterns, can recognize them manifesting early and instead of participating in the drama and playing them out as she did in the past, she has developed a variety of responses that work for her to mitigate the effects of the stressors on her body/mind.

She shared a long list of options:

- Solitude, journaling and "listening to my inner voice"
- Music, and singing
- Yoga and meditation
- Cooking
- Playing
- Getting a massage
- Reading

One example from my own life that I have shared in many of my classes revolves around my relationship with my car. Cars for me are a means for transportation - - period. They need to start when I turn the key in the ignition and run without problems until it's time to replace them.

For me, having a car problem is an invitation to panic. Until a few years ago, car problems brought out all my shadow fears about being abandoned, stranded, rejected and uncared for. I would be beside myself with frustration, fear and anger until the tow truck came to charge the battery or take the car to the mechanic. Then one night about seven years ago, I came out of my Yoga class and reached into my pocket to get my car keys. They weren't there. I looked into the car and saw them in the ignition. I walked back into the church basement and told one of the students who then drove me to the police station. An officer followed us back, and worked his magic with a long metal instrument. I thanked them, got into my car, started it up and was halfway out of the parking lot when I realized with a jolt that, "I didn't panic!" I was totally amazed. This was my first visceral real life example that Yoga could work for me on levels other than the physical.

Since that time I've applied that awareness and ability to stay centered through much more challenging and harsh situations that occurred rapidly within the past three years - - - loss of my job, a major career change, a troubled marriage, my husband's illnesses, (diabetes, brain cancer and stroke), his subsequent death and the financial difficulties caused by all of that. Yoga has been a reliable companion through it all. As I tell my students, "Do Yoga regularly and the emotional charge that comes with your most stressful situations can be gradually reduced to a level that you can become aware of early on and manage. Pain is a given, suffering is a choice."

Following the Integrative Yoga Therapy model, I've found it helpful to engage the students in a few minutes of education and sharing about stress, including examples from my own life and that of women I've known.

Yoga For Stress Reduction

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Bring Awareness to Lifestyle Habits and Patterns

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Education and Sharing

- Stress & menopause from the western perspective (chapter five)
- Stress & menopause from the yogic perspective (chapter five)
- Q & A, discussion, sharing around stress

Centering

After checking in and education, move to a short body scan, centering exercise or opening chant to bring the student more deeply into contact with their body. Example:

Come to a comfortable seated position with your hands resting on your knees. Close your eyes and bring your attention to the base of your body. Become aware of how the base of your body is connected to the floor. Then bring your attention to the base of your spine and feel, sense, or imagine how your spine connects to the pelvis. From that point, allow your awareness to move up your spine, vertebrae by vertebrae, allowing the spine to stretch upward, not arched too far forward or slumped in the middle - easy and comfortable. When you reach the top of your spine allow your attention to travel over the back of the head and come to rest on the top of the head. Then feeling grounded through the base of your body, centered through the spine and torso and lifted through the shoulders, neck and head, bring your hands together in prayer position with the backs of the thumbs pressed against the sternum and let's bring ourselves to this time and place. (*Note: use any opening chant you are comfortable with or just allow the students to sit quietly for :30 seconds to a minute*). Now inhale and hold the breath for a few seconds, slowly exhale and relax the hands down to the knees and bring your attention to your breath. Feel your own natural essential breath flow in and out of your body. Don't change anything. Just watch the natural flow of your breath and breathing. (:30 or longer). Now let's

count the number of breaths we are breathing per minute. When I say begin, start counting. One inhalation and one exhalation together count as one. All right? Begin. (*silence for a full minute while they count*) Good. Now make a mental note of the number of breaths you took or write it down in your journal. We'll return to this later.

Breath Inquiry

We will now practice a simple three step method of breath awareness that can help us reduce the negative effects of stress. We will:

1. Bring your awareness to your breath
2. Slow down the rate of breathing to reduce anxiety.
3. Lengthen the exhalation to soothe the nervous system

(Farhi, *The Breathing Book*, 1996, 146- 147)

FIRST: Bring yourself into a comfortable seated position and watch the natural flow of your breath as we ask ourselves a few questions. Our intention is to be aware of our natural breath and breathing patterns because we cannot effectively change what we are not aware of. Where do you notice the movement of your breath? Is it in the lower part of your body? The ribs? Or is it in the upper part of your body, in your chest? Watch closely as you take the next couple of breaths. Notice the texture of your breath. Is it smooth and even, or jerky. Thready and silky or jagged? Does your breath feel deep or shallow? Just notice all the information that is available to you about your breath. If you could describe your breath in one word, symbol or picture - - - what would it be? Notice the first word or image that arises - - - don't change it - - - just note it.

SECOND: Now make a conscious effort to slow your rate of breathing by consciously taking a little more time with your inhalation and your exhalation. Mentally make the intention that you are slowing the number of breaths you take per minute. Add a few more beats to the

inhalation - - - a few more beats to the exhalation. *Long Pause.*

THIRD: Now gradually bring your attention to your exhalation. Notice when and where the exhalation begins. Which part of your body moves as the exhalation begins? Watch the breath from its point of origin and follow the outward flow through the nostrils until it ends. Is exhalation longer or shorter than your inhalation? Or are they both the same duration? Notice how long your inhalation takes. As you exhale consciously make your exhalation longer than the inhalation. As you practice you can work to make your exhalation up to twice as long as your inhalation. Long exhalations soothe the nervous system and help to short cut the stress reaction. Let's practice this for a few more breaths (1 - 3 minutes), (adapted from Farhi, *The Breathing Book*, 1996, 1996, 15).

Limb Three & Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Relax, Renew and Rest the Body

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

WARM AND STRETCH THE BODY

Sacral Rocking I and II

Sacral Rock I. Have students lie on their backs with their knees up and feet on the floor. Inner edges of the feet touch and the knees are kept together. **Although Schatz's description does not include regulated breathing, this program does.** With the feet and the knees together, inhale. On the exhalation move the knees slowly 6 - 8 inches to the left and inhale back to center. Exhale and move the knees 6-8 inches to the right. Repeat at least 10 times. (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136)

Sacral Rock II. Cross the left leg over the right, **keep the back of the left thigh closed completely over the top of the right thigh (no spaces peeking through).** With **regulated breathing**, rock back and forth as you did in *Sacral Rocking I*. Repeat at least 10 times, then repeat with the right leg crossed over the left. (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136). Rest.

Pelvic Tilts

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low

back off the floor. **Students with Lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to inhale while holding the pelvis in neutral.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Repeat slowly at least 10 times. Rest. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21).

4 Part Pelvic Lift

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to simply press the belly button toward the backbone.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Pressing the feet into the floor, inhale and lift the spine off the floor rolling up one vertebrae at a time. Hold the breath and the lift a second or two at the upper limit, then exhale down. Repeat slowly and easily several times. Bring both knees to your chest, and rest. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21).

Leg Lifts

Lie on your back, knees bent or straight depending upon comfort. Inhale and bring the arms overhead. Exhale and bring the right knee to the chest with the arms clasping the knee or placed behind the thigh. Inhale and lift the left leg up stretching through the toe, flex the foot, stretch out through the heel and exhale it down. Continue for at least :30 seconds at whatever pace and speed is comfortable. Then reverse and do the other side. Rest. (adapted from Bhajan, *Yoga for Health and Healing*, 1989, 19). Rest.

Stick Posture

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the arms sideways and then overhead, until they are stretched to full length; bring the palms together if possible. At the same time, stretch the body and legs to the fullest comfortable extent. Pull the toes up and back and push out through the heels. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Rest. Repeat once, (Weller, *Yoga Therapy*, 1995, 48). Rest.

Supine Half Moon

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the right arm overhead as you walk the heels to the left creating a stretch to the entire right side of the body. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat to the opposite side. LePage also refers to this as *Tadaka Mudra*. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.19).

Simple Spinal Series

Seated Hip Rotations. Sit in a comfortable position on the floor or in a chair. With the hands on the knees or thighs, begin rotating the hips and waist in big easy circles, inhaling on one rotation and exhaling on the next. Continue for at least :30 seconds in one direction and then the same amount of time in the other direction. Rest.

Spinal Flexes. In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shins or knees, (thighs if in a chair). Inhale and flex the spine and pelvis forward, with the chest lifted and the chin parallel to the floor. Exhale, flex the spine and pelvis backward, straightening the arms. Keep the chin parallel to the floor. Continue for at least :30 seconds. Inhale and hold the breath in on the forward flex for a second or two. Exhale and hold the breath out on the backward flex for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest.

Spinal Twists. In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shoulders, fingers in front, thumbs in back. Keep the elbows high. Inhale and twist the upper torso to the left, allowing the head and hips to follow along. Exhale and twist to the right. Continue at a comfortable and steady pace for at least :30 seconds. Inhale, twist to the left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, twist to the right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest.

Shoulder Shrugs. In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the knees and pressing into the knees, with the elbows in tight to the body, inhale and lift the shoulders, exhale and press or drop them down. Continue for at least :30 seconds with a slow easy pace or faster if its comfortable. Inhale, shrug the shoulders up and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, roll the shoulders back and down. Repeat twice, then Rest.

Head and Neck Stretches. In an easy seated pose, with the hands on the knees, inhale and slowly turn the head to the left, exhale to center. Inhale and turn the head to the right. Exhale to center. Repeat slowly for at least :30 seconds. Inhale the head left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale to center. Inhale the head right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center. Lie down and rest. (*Simple Spinal Series* adapted from Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 45).

Modified Danda-Cobra Series - Gentle

Bring yourself onto your hands and knees. Move slowly. Exhale and sit back onto your heels into *Child's Pose*. Inhale back to the hands and knees position. Repeat slowly several times, (Desikachar, *Heart of Yoga*, 1998, 235)..

Mountain Pose

Stand erect with feet together, toes and heels touching (**or shoulder width apart if necessary**), with the weight of the body in the center of the arches. Stretch the toes from

the bottom and keep them relaxed. Keep the ankles in line with each other. Tighten the knees, pull the knee caps upward and tighten the quadricep muscles. Keep the shins in line with the thigh bones. Breathe normally. Compress the hips and tighten the buttocks. Keep the spine erect. Lift the sternum and expand the chest. Lift the abdomen upwards. Keep the neck erect and the head straight; do not tilt forwards or backwards. Look straight ahead. Keep the arms by the sides of the body, fingers together and hands downward, the palms facing the thighs and in line with them. Do not lift the shoulders. Stand still for 20 - 30 seconds (**work to a minute or longer**). (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110). Rest.

Tree Pose - Gentle

Stand erect in *Mountain Pose*. Interlock the fingers, turn the wrists and palms outwards, and stretch the arms forwards in line with the shoulders. **Inhale and** take the extended arms upwards by the sides of the ears. The palms should face the ceiling. Move the back ribs forward. Lift the chest and take the shoulder-blades deep in. Keep the head erect and look straight forward. Breathing normally, maintain this posture for 10-15 seconds (**work up to a minute or more**). **Exhale and** lower the arms down. Release the fingers. **Rest in *Mountain Pose***. Note: Many sources call this a variation of *Mountain Pose* but Geeta Iyengar calls it *Tree Pose*. (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110). Rest.

RELAX, RENEW AND REST THE BODY: RESTORATIVE POSTURES

According to Judith Lasater, restorative postures, 1) use props for complete support, 2) move the spine in all directions, 3) use the force of gravitational pull to enhance heart function, 4) Stimulate and soothe the organs, and 5) Balance energy (*prana*) (Judith Lasater, 2001)

Down Face Dog with a Chair - Gentle

Put a sturdy, level chair against a wall. Place the heels of the hands on the edge of the chair shoulder width apart with the fingers spread wide. Step a full arms length back until the heels are slightly behind the hips, with the feet hip width apart. Press the hands into the chair and push the chair towards the wall. Inhale and come up onto the toes, exhale lower the heels. Adjust the legs toward or away from the chair until a lengthening stretch is felt through the spine. Bend the knees if necessary. Relax your head. Think of moving your body back toward the legs as you push the chair toward the wall. Keep the breathing steady for :30 seconds to a minute. To come out, step the right foot forward, bring the left knee to the floor, bring the right knee to the floor and rest in *Child's Pose*. Or step forward, and stand up slowly. If you feel lightheaded, sit in the chair for a few minutes. This can also be done against a wall, or a tree, (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66).

Supported Child's Pose

Select a carpeted area or use a Yoga mat to practice this pose. Gather a large round pillow or two. Kneel down and sit back on your heels. Place the pillow(s) in front and between the knees, Lean forward to rest on them. If this feels uncomfortable for the knees, try adding another pillow. Either hug the pillow(s) or place your arms back along side of the body. Turn the head to one side, close the eyes and breathe quietly. Hold this pose for one to two minutes. To come up, place the hands underneath the shoulders, push up with an inhalation, come up on the hands and knees, and walk back with the hands so the weight is on the feet. (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, 2001, www.onebody.com).

Simple Twist

In an easy seated position on the floor move the lower legs off to the left side so that you are mainly sitting on your right hip. Open the knees apart about a foot. If the left hip is off the ground, insert the blanket under the RIGHT hip to lift it up to the level of the left hip. Reach across the body with the left hand and hold the outside of the right knee. Place the right finger tips on the floor behind the buttocks for support. Inhale, and with an exhalation, use the left arm to twist around to the right. As soon as resistance to the twist is felt, stop, breathe, and let the body adjust to the new position. Then gently twist to the right some more. The head can twist in the same direction of the body, or can turn toward the left so it is moving in the opposite direction of the body's twist. Hold the twist for three to five breaths and then release. Repeat and then practice the pose to the other side two times. **If the student is in a chair, have them sit in the middle of the chair so that the feet rest flat on the floor. Reach across the body with the left hand and hold the outside of the right knee. Place the right hand or arm on the back of the chair for support and follow the directions above. Rest.** (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, 2001, www.onebody.com).

Legs Up the Wall Pose

Caution. Not recommended during menstruation or pregnancy. Check with your health care professional if you have any concerns about elevating your legs. Use a sturdy wall and a folded towel or small pillow for the head. Select a carpeted area or use your Yoga mat to practice this pose. Sit on the floor about a foot from the wall with the left shoulder facing the wall. (Sit parallel to wall.) With an exhalation, roll back and swing the legs up the wall and lie back. Place a very small pillow or folded towel under the neck for comfort, if needed. This will serve to keep the chin from lifting higher than your forehead. Close the eyes and breathe normally. In the beginning, stay in the pose for five to 10 minutes. Gradually work up to 15 minutes. To come out, bend the knees halfway toward the chest and roll to the side, using the arms to sit up slowly. Legs Up the Wall Pose is not intended to stretch the back of the legs, so if you feel pulling there, move further from the wall, (*Lasater, Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, www.onebody.com). This posture can also be performed with the calves on a chair for a gentler version (*Schatz, Back Care Basics*, 1992, 73-74).

Head to Knee Pose

Lie on the back with the legs straight. If this causes discomfort in the lower back, start with the knees bent and the feet on the floor. With an exhalation, bring the right knee toward the chest. Place the hands between the calf and thigh so that the hands are in the back of the knee joint. **With regulated breathing, exhale** and lift the head toward the knee and the knee is pulled gently into the chest. Hold for two breaths and then release and lower the leg on an exhalation. Repeat and then practice on the left side, (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, 2001, www.onebody.com). Rest.

Butterfly

Come to a seated position with the legs outstretched. Bring the soles of your feet together, with the heels as close to the groin as possible. Make sure that the knees are comfortable with no excessive pressure. Place blankets or bolsters under your knees if needed. Use your hands to gently open your feet like the pages of a book (or place them behind you if you need to support your back), press your sitting bones down into the earth and lengthen your spine up through the crown of your head. If your spine is rounded, place blankets just behind the sitz bone so that your pelvis tilts slightly forward or you can practice this against a wall. Stay here for as long as you like. Breathe deeply into the abdomen, groin and hips. Let the breath massage your lower back. When you are ready, straighten your legs (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.162).

Limb Four: Breath Control (*Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach:

Notice the Breath, Slow the Rate of Breathing and Lengthen the Exhalation
Breath/Energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Anti-Anxiety/Relaxation Breath

Sit straight on the floor or in a chair with a comfortable relaxed spine. Relax the chest and shoulders. Close the eyes. Inhale. Exhale. Hold the breath out and silently count “one thousand one, one thousand two.” Inhale. Exhale. Hold the breath out and silently count “one thousand one, one thousand two.” Continue for 2-3 minutes. This breathing technique automatically brings awareness to the breath, slows that rate of breathing and lengthens the exhalation, (Weller, *Yoga Therapy*, 1995, 74).

Breath Inquiry

Now we will count the number of breaths we are breathing per minute at this point. When I say begin, start counting. One inhalation and one exhalation together count as one. All right? Begin. (*silence for a full minute while they count*) Good. Now make a mental note of the number of breaths you took and compare it the number you recorded at the beginning of class. (Note: *Encourage verbal sharing. Most students will experience a*

reduction in the number of breaths per minute. According to Donna Farhi, (Farhi, The Breathing Book, 1996, 23) the normal rate is 12 - 14 breaths per minute. the relaxation response is induced when the rate of breathing drops to 5 - 8 breaths per minute).

Limb Five: Sensory Awareness (*Pratyahara*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Focus the Awareness on Sensations in the Body
Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

Yoga Nidra for Stress Reduction

Introduction

After all the students are in *Relaxation Pose*, you can begin with a progressive relaxation. (Note: this section can be lengthened by contracting and relaxing the smaller sections of the body part by part; it can also be eliminated if time is short - just begin with the words "Relax the whole body" --)

Inhale and press the toes away from the head as you press the backs of the knees into the floor, contracting all the muscles of the legs and squeezing the buttock muscles into a tight hard knot. Exhale and relax. Inhale and make fists of the hands, tightening all the muscles of the upper body and face, head and neck. Exhale and relax. Inhale and lift the shoulders up to the ears. Exhale and roll them back and down. Inhale and stretch your chin up to the ceiling. Exhale and relax. Inhale and press your chin into the your chest. Exhale and relax. Inhale and roll your head to the left. Exhale and relax. Inhale and roll your head to the right. Exhale and relax. *Pause.* Relax the whole body. The whole body. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. Become aware of your body lying completely relaxed on the floor, -- *Pause* -- totally relaxed on the floor, -- *pause*.-- completely and totally relaxed on the floor. *Pause.* Mentally say to yourself, "I am going to practice *Yoga Nidra*. I am aware. I will not sleep." *Pause.*

Choosing A Resolve

A resolve is a short positive statement that gives instructions to the subconscious mind to work on a goal for a student's life. It is best to encourage each student to choose a resolve and work with the same resolve each time they do *Yoga Nidra* until their goal is reached. The following are examples of resolves that seem appropriate for menopausal women:

I will become more aware
I accept myself unconditionally
I joyously release the past

Ask your students to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. *Pause.*

Rotation of Consciousness

Now we come to rotation of consciousness, by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible the awareness is to go from part to part. Repeat the part in your mind and become aware of that part and feel its energy as best as you can. Keep yourself alert but don't concentrate too intensely. (*Note: this part is done fairly rapidly; you can lengthen it by repeating it up to three times and going more slowly each time it is repeated. If time is short it can be eliminated as long as Yoga Nidra is preceded by asana practice {Dharmakirti, 2001})*

(Right Side)

Bring your awareness to the right side of your body and to the right hand. *Pause.* To the right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the right waist, the right hip, the right thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- --*pause.*

(Left Side)

Bring your awareness to the left side of your body and to the left hand. To the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand,

the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the left waist, the left hip, the left thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the left foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- -- *pause*.

(Back)

Bring your awareness to the back of your body. Become aware of the right shoulderblade, the left shoulderblade, -- the right buttock, the left buttock --- the spine -- the whole back together -- *pause*.

(Front)

Now go to the top of the head -- -- the forehead, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the tip of the nose, the upper lip, the lower lip, the chin, the throat, the right breast, the left breast, the heart, the navel center, the abdomen ---

(Major Parts)

The whole of the right leg --- the whole of the left leg---both legs together. *Pause* The whole of the right arm --- the whole of the left arm --- both arms together. The whole of the back, buttocks, spine, shoulder blades -- the whole of the front---the whole of the head---the whole body together---the whole body together--- whole body together-- -- total awareness --- total stillness --- no sleeping---- *Pause*. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. See your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. Your body is lying on the floor --- perfectly still -- -- on the floor --- in this room. Visualize this image in your mind (adapted from Saraswati, *Yoga Nidra*, 1993, 93).

Breath Visualization: Prana Vayu Scan for Stress Reduction*

(Note: In the system of Yoga, the Prana Vayus represent the movement of breath/energy in certain areas of the body to regulate the body's functions, (Swami Rama, Ballentine et al., 1979, p. 92-93). This part should be done slowly and leisurely). Become aware of your natural

breath flowing through your body lying on the floor -- *pause*. Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. Do not change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic --- you are not doing it --- there is no effort --- *pause*. Maintain awareness of the breath. Feel the breath moving in and out of the body, flowing in and out of the body. *Pause*. Be completely aware of the movement of the breath, in and out of the body - - - do not force the breath - - - just awareness - - - just awareness. *Pause*. Maintain your awareness of the breath, complete awareness of the breath.

APANA VAYU: Now bring awareness of your breathing to your organs of reproduction and elimination. Visualize your breath as a smoky gray color. *Pause*. See each inhalation move slowly and deeply downward into your lower body - - - to your lower body - - -to your lower body. *Long Pause*. See your breath illuminate your organs of reproduction and elimination like a flashlight shining into a cave. *Pause*. As you look around, notice if there are places in your upper and lower intestines, rectum, vaginal area, uterus, ovaries or fallopian tubes that appear to be blocked, stuck, imbalanced, painful, tight or tense. If you find such places, or if all is clear and open, direct your breath, attention and awareness there - - - direct your breath, attention and awareness there - - - your breath, attention and awareness there. See your smoky gray breath as a heavy earthen broom slowly sweeping, sweeping, sweeping through your upper and lower intestines, rectum, vaginal area, uterus, ovaries and fallopian tubes -- -- sweeping cleansing, healing, clearing, balancing and energizing all the organs of reproduction and elimination. *Pause*.

SAMANA VAYU: Bring awareness of your breathing to your organs of digestion. Visualize your breath as a cool white color. *Pause*. See each inhalation flow lightly downward into your stomach, liver, spleen and pancreas - - - flow lightly downward into your stomach, liver, spleen and pancreas - - - flow lightly downward into your stomach, liver, spleen and

pancreas, flowing lightly downward. See your breath illuminate your organs of digestion, like a flashlight shining into a cave. As you look around, notice if there are places in your stomach, liver, spleen and pancreas that appear to be blocked, stuck, imbalanced, painful, tight or tense. If you find such places, or if all is clear and open, direct your breath, attention and awareness there. See your cool white breath as a bubbling mountain stream flowing, - - - flowing, - - - flowing through your stomach, liver, spleen and pancreas, cleansing, clearing, healing, balancing and energizing all the tissues of your organs of digestion. *Pause.*

PRANA VAYU: Bring awareness of your breathing now to your heart and lungs. Visualize your breath as a fiery golden color. *Pause.* See each inhalation of this fiery golden color draw vital life force and energy into your heart and lungs - - - drawing vital energy into your heart and lungs - - -vital energy into your heart and lungs. See your breath illuminate your heart and lungs, like a flashlight shining into a cave. As you look around, notice if there are places in your heart and lungs that appear to be blocked, stuck, imbalanced, painful, tight or tense. If you find such places, or if all is clear and open, direct your breath, attention and awareness there. See your fiery golden breath burn through any blocked, stuck areas and let its golden heat burn, - - -burn - - - burn away any tightness or tenseness. See your fiery golden breath cleansing, clearing, healing, balancing and energizing all the tissues of your heart and lungs. *Pause.*

UDANA VAYU: Bring awareness of your breathing to your throat. Visualize your breath as a blue-green color. *Pause.* See each inhalation of this blue green color as bringing gusts of fresh air to your throat - - - fresh air to your throat - - - gusts of fresh air into your throat. See your breath illuminate your throat, like a flashlight shining into a cave. As you look around, notice if there are places in your throat that appear to be blocked, stuck, imbalanced, painful, tight or tense. If you find such places, or if all is clear and open, direct your breath, attention and

awareness there. See your blue green breath as a vital wind blowing - - - blowing - - - blowing through any blocked, stuck areas. Let the power of this wind loosen, lift and remove any tightness or tension in your throat. See your blue green breath cleansing, clearing, healing, balancing and energizing your throat. *Pause.*

VYANA VAYU: Bring awareness of your breathing now to your entire body. Visualize your breath as a sky blue color. *Pause.* See each inhalation of this sky blue breath bring radiant energy and balance to the entire body - - - radiant energy, - - - radiant energy and balance to the entire body. See your breath illuminate your entire body like a flashlight shining into a cave. As you look around, notice if there are any places left in your body that appear to be blocked, stuck, imbalanced, painful, tight or tense. If you find such places, or if all is clear and open, direct your breath, attention and awareness there. See your sky blue breath as vital radiant energy surrounding and filling, - - - surrounding and filling - - - filling and surrounding any blocked, stuck areas. Let the power of this radiant energy surround, fill and remove any tightness or tenseness in your body. See this radiant energy float into the body on each breath you take, cleansing, clearing, healing balancing and energizing your entire body -- and all of its organs and systems. Rest for a moment in the healing light of this radiant energy. (adapted from, LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 4.2; Swami Rama et al., *Science of Breath*, 1979, 92-93)

Repeating the Resolve

Ask your students to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, intention, feeling and emphasis.

Complete Stillness/Deep Relaxation

(Notes: 1] *This is an excellent place to play music. The best choices are mantra tapes, or music designed for relaxation; 2] if time is short, this section can be eliminated).*

Finish

Become aware of your breathing, your natural breathing, your natural breathing. Awareness of breathing. Awareness of relaxation. Awareness of your body lying on the floor. Awareness of the whole body lying on the floor. Begin to move your body by rolling the wrists and ankles in little circles in one direction and then the other. Inhale the arms over head and stretch through the fingers and out through the heels. Inhale and roll the body onto one side and stretch. Roll the body onto the other side and stretch. Roll onto your back and bring the feet up in the air and place the soles of the feet together and the palms of the hands together and rub hard and fast, bringing up some heat. Bring the knees into the chest and the palms over the eyes. breath and relax. Use the fingertips to massage the temples and any other place on the face that needs a little help. Roll over onto one side and use your hands to help you up into a seated position.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Strengthen the Skill and Ability to Concentrate
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

Ajapa Stage I.

This is a breath channeling exercise to focus the attention and train the student in the art of concentration. Do not suppress the mind's activity, just be aware of it.

Step 1. In an easy seated position. Inhale and imagine the breath entering through the navel center of the body and rising to the level of the throat. Exhale and allow the breath to exit downward from the throat to the navel center. Repeat. If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath.

Step 2. If more of a challenge is desired, use the *Chinmaya Mudra*. Place the tip of the thumb and the index finger together. Allow the other three fingers to fold in and press against

the palm. Relax the hands on the knees or the thighs if the student is in a chair. This mudra is cooling, soothing and relaxing. It is said to focus the breath in the low abdomen and is good for stress reduction and balancing sexual energy, (LePage, IYT Manual, Mudra handout). If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath.

Step 3. To add yet another layer of concentration use the mantra ‘*So*’ on the inhalation and ‘*Ham*’ on the exhalation. The *mantra* means, “I am consciousness,” If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath and the *mantra*. “This practice brings mental peace and onepointedness of mind and leads directly to meditation. Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits (adapted from Saraswati, *Yoga and Kriya*, 1981, 497-98).

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Meditation

Bliss Level/s, Realization of Self as Unity Consciousness (*Anandamayakosha*)

Silent Meditation

Students practice their own personal form of meditation (continuing with concentration meditation, relaxing the concentration practice and practicing mindfulness meditation or any other variation that suits the student or client). Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Surrender

Unity Consciousness is Beyond the Koshas and Individual Effort

Closing Ritual

Closing rituals may include the practice of Yoga Mudra, the chanting of “OM,” a 'thought for the day,' a poem, or my personal favorite, the Three Breath Blessing:

Take one long deep breath and hold it. See a miracle happening for yourself in this

minute. Let the breath go. Take a long deep breath and hold it; this time for someone or a group of people you love or care about, and see them at their very best. Let the breath go. Take a third long deep breath and hold it; this time for the entire planet and see the Earth as a place of peace and love. Let the breath go and returning full circle breath and become aware of yourself and see if your body needs a last stretch, twist or move. Give your body what it is asking for and then slowly and gently bring yourself back to this room in a relaxed state of awareness. Namaste.

SECTION II BALANCING THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

Background

The glands of the endocrine system are key to the health of the body/mind. The glands and their secretions regulate just about every aspect of bodily function through production and distribution of chemical messages that regulate the body's physiological reaction to thoughts and events (Sapolsky, 1998, 19-30). The endocrine system can be thought of as the physical bridge between the body and the mind.

The endocrine system participates with the autonomic nervous system to initiate and extend the fight or flight response to stress over an extended period (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 7.24 - 7.31). The endocrine system's interaction with the stress response can become exacerbated during menopause when the hormone levels begin to fluctuate. Stress can have an added impact on women as depression is often more frequent, sleep patterns can be disrupted and perceived stress increases the intensity and frequency of hot flashes (Archer, 1999, 71-78; Gordon & Siple, 2001, 147-51; Domar & Dreher, 1996, 290-95; Lark, 1996, 136 - 152).

In the Yoga system the *Chakras* play a significant role (see chapter six). In this system we have an energy body which corresponds to our physical body and every part of this energy body has a physical counterpart. The seven main *Chakras* are the energy counterparts to our endocrine system, and each Chakra corresponds to a particular endocrine gland. According to this system, the *Chakras* take their nutrients in the form of *prana* (universal energy) which comes into the body via the breath. The *Chakras* then distribute *prana* to the body's energy system to keep it healthy. When the *Chakras* are closed or blocked due to trauma, stress or imbalance they cannot perform this function efficiently. That dysfunction can manifest in the physical body which may become subject to dis-ease (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.1 - 5.2).

The *Chakras* also hold a major key in helping us to understand our spiritual natures (Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya, 1976, 273-280). According to Anodea Judith, the *Chakra* system is a seven-leveled philosophical model of the universe with each of the seven major *Chakras* expressing a pattern related to our life issues. The *Chakras* receive, assimilate and express life force energy which has a strong relationship to our physical functioning (Judith, 1996, 5-8). Carolyn Myss's approach to the *Chakras* describes them in a practical technical sense as 'energy anatomy' with the lower three chakras representing human, five-sense externals and the the upper four main chakras as divine, multi-sensory internals that can help us change our perspective of suffering and aid us in transcending it (Myss, 1996, 68-70, 98-101). An understanding of the relationship between the *Chakras* and the endocrine system is useful in helping women in menopause understand underlying issues and beliefs that lead to habits, lifestyle choices and patterns of behavior. Awareness of these issues can help women take advantage of opportunities for personal healing and transformation.

The following table is simplistic, but it communicates the relationship between the physical endocrine gland and its corresponding *Chakra*, or energy anatomy. It was synthesized from the works of Judith, Rama et al., and Myss (Judith, 1952, 35; Myss, 1996, 96-101; Rama, Ballentine & Ajaya, 1976, 221-223):

Gland	Physical Function	Energetic Function	Chakra
Adrenal	Mediates stress response	Safety/Security	Root
Gonads	Regulates sexual function	Relationships	Sacral
Pancreas	Regulates blood sugar levels	Personal power	Solar Plexus
Thymus	Source of immune cells	Love/compassion	Heart
Thyroid	Regulates metabolism	Judgment/mercy/will	Throat
Pituitary	Emotional processing	Wisdom/truth	Brow
Pineal	Related to circadian cycles	Grace/bliss	Crown

Yoga helps to bring awareness of the *Chakras*, and regulate and balance the glands of the endocrine system. It is believed to accomplish this in the following ways:

Adrenals

Asana, Pranayama and meditation help the body/mind to regulate the functioning of the autonomic nervous system to create a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches by changing our perception of threat and fear and enabling the body/mind to calm itself even when threatened or afraid. Frog, Butterfly, Pelvic Lifts, Bridge, Knee to Chest, Knee Drops, Head to Knee, Tree, Spinal Twists, and Seated Boat are postures that stimulate and revitalize the adrenals (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.3).

Gonads

Cobra, Sphinx, Boat, Bow, Locust, Bow, Butterfly, Child with Separated Knees, 'double sided' postures that balance polarities (Triangle, Warrior II, Head to Knee, Knee Down Twist), Hip Circles, Pelvic Lifts and Tilts, Spinal twist, Forward Bends, and Hero are Asanas that directly massage the glands and help to balance the emotions and reduce the stress reaction to promote increased circulation and oxygen transmission (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.4).

Pancreas

Yoga postures help to reduce the chronic stress reaction; balance, detoxify and revitalize other glands and organs involved in the "sugar dance;" directly massages the pancreas by compressing and opening the area and balances the energy in the third Chakra. Key postures are Bow, Bridge, Seated Boat, Inclined Plane, Breath of Joy, Warrior and the Sun Salute (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.5).

Thymus

Yoga postures, Pranayama and *Yoga Nidra* increase the occurrence of positive emotions and boost the immune functions of the thymus gland. Fish, Child Pose, Upward Facing Dog, Triangle, Passive Back Bends, Cobra, Bow and Camel stimulate the thymus and balance the thymus in conjunction with the brain (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.6).

Thyroid

Yoga postures compress and revitalize this gland through Neck Stretches, Half Shoulderstand, Plow, Fish, Rabbit. Pranayama meditation and imagery are recommended to open the energy in the fifth *Chakra* to increase pranic flow (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.7).

Pituitary

The squeeze and soak effect of Yoga postures, breathing techniques and meditation enhance the functioning of the pituitary gland; create balance in the brain and awareness

of the thought patterns that trigger release of stress hormones and the endorphins. Yoga helps to create a higher awareness which increases the ability to "witness" thought patterns and the underlying belief systems that feed them. Key postures are Yoga Mudra, Spinal Twist, Plow, Bridge, and Legs-Up-The-Wall (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 5.8).

Pineal

Yoga practice through the Eight Limbs helps to stimulate the pineal gland and create awareness of higher states of consciousness. Key postures are Rabbit and *Yoga Mudra*.

Yoga for Balancing The Endocrine System

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Balance and Energize the Endocrine System and Chakras

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Education and Sharing

- Where are my endocrine glands and what do they do?
 - What are *Chakras* and how are they related to my health?
- (Note: *Pass out handouts showing locations of the glands and Chakras*)
- Q & A, discussion, sharing around the endocrine glands and the *Chakras*

Centering

After checking in and education, move to a short body scan, centering exercise or opening chant to bring the student more deeply into contact with their body. Example:

Come to a comfortable seated position with your hands resting on your knees. Close your eyes and bring your awareness to the base of your physical body. Become aware of how the base of your body is connected to the floor. Feel grounded through the base of your body. Bring your awareness to the base of your spine and allow your awareness to move up your spine, stretching the spine straight, like the stalk of a flower reaching toward the sun. Feel centered through the spine, heart and torso. Allow your awareness to move from the top of the spine to the top of the head feeling a sense of lift through the shoulders, neck and head. Bring your hands together in prayer position with the backs of the thumbs pressed against the sternum and let's bring ourselves to this time and place. (*Use any opening chant you are comfortable with or just*

allow the students to sit quietly for :30 seconds to a minute). Now inhale and hold the breath for a few seconds, slowly exhale and relax the hands down to the knees and bring your attention to your breath.

Prana Vidya (breath/energy visualization) to the Endocrine Glands

(Note: Take three breaths for each gland and pause after breathing into each gland)

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into your ovaries.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the kidneys and adrenal glands.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pancreas.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the thymus gland (tap the thymus center, alternating left and right hands).

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the thyroid gland.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pituitary and pineal glands deep inside the brain.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy and light into the entire body (adapted from Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 86; LePage, *IYT Advanced Training Intensive*, 2000).

Limb Three & Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Balance and Energize the Endocrine system and *Chakras*

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

WARM, AND STRETCH THE BODY

Sacral Rocking I and II

Sacral Rock I. Have students lie on their backs with their knees up and feet on the floor. Inner edges of the feet touch and the knees are kept together. **Although Schatz's description does not include regulated breathing, this program does.** With the feet and the knees together, inhale. On the exhalation move the knees slowly 6 - 8 inches to the left and inhale back to center. Exhale and move the knees 6-8 inches to the right. Repeat at least 10 times (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136).

Sacral Rock II. Cross the left leg over the right, **keep the back of the left thigh closed completely over the top of the right thigh (no spaces peeking through).** With **regulated breathing**, rock back and forth as you did in *Sacral Rocking I*. Repeat at least 10 times, then repeat with the right leg crossed over the left (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136).

WORK THE BODY

BALANCE AND ENERGIZE THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM AND THE CHAKRAS

Adrenals/Root Chakra (balances stress hormones - - - issues: safety/security)

Knee Drops

Lie on the back with the arms out in a T position, with the heels drawn up to the buttocks. On an exhalation the knees drop to the left as the head goes right. Inhale to center, exhale to the opposite side reversing the posture. GENTLEST variation - spread the feet wider than hip width apart and allow one knee at a time to drop toward the opposite ankle. Inhale the knee up as the other drops inward. Continue slowly and gently (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.24)

Pelvic Tilts

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with Lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to inhale while holding the pelvis in neutral.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Repeat slowly at least 10 times. Rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21).

4 Part Pelvic Lift - Gentle

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to simply press the belly button toward the backbone.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Pressing the feet into the floor, inhale and lift the spine off the floor rolling up one vertebrae at a time. Hold the breath and the lift a second or two at the upper limit, then exhale down. Repeat slowly and easily several times. Bring both knees to your chest, and rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21)

Pelvic Lifts - Moderate

Lie on your back with your knees up and your feet hip width apart, heels close to buttocks, palms down on the floor. Exhale, press your lower back into the floor. Inhale, press your feet into the floor and lift your buttocks as high as you can. Exhale down. Repeat 10 times. Rest. Lark calls this a *Spinal Flex* (Lark, *Menopause Self-Help Book*, 1996, 193).

Head to Knee Pose - Gentle

Lie on the back with the legs straight. If this causes discomfort in the lower back, start with the knees bent and the feet on the floor. With an exhalation, bring the right knee toward the chest. Place the hands between the calf and thigh so that the hands are in the back of the knee joint. **With regulated breathing, exhale** and lift the head toward the knee and the knee is pulled gently into the chest. Hold for two breaths and then release and lower the leg on an exhalation. Repeat and then practice on the left side (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, 2001, www.onebody.com). Rest.

Spinal Rock and Rolls

Bring your knees into your chest. Place your hands around your knees or behind your thighs. Inhale and rock back. Exhale and rock forward. Rock and roll on the spine 10 times and then rock and roll to a seated position (Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 57).

Butterfly

Come to a seated position with the legs outstretched. Bring the soles of your feet together, with the heels as close to the groin as possible. Make sure that the knees are comfortable with no excessive pressure. Place blankets or bolsters under your knees if needed. Clasp your hands around your feet (or place them behind you if you need to support your back), press your sitting bones down into the earth and lengthen your spine up through the crown of your head. If your spine is rounded, place blankets just behind the sitz bone so that your pelvis tilts slightly forward or you can practice this against a wall. Stay here for as long as you like. Then, Inhale and on your exhale, hinge forward at

the hip joints. Press the forearms toward the floor and relax the shoulders down from the ears. Keep your head in alignment with your spine. Breathe deeply into the abdomen, groin and hips. Let the breath massage your lower back. When you are ready, slowly hinge back up, release your feet, straighten your legs (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.162).

Seated Spine Stretch - Gentle to Moderate

Kneel on the floor, with the front of your feet flat on the floor. **Separate your knees.** Lean back and place your palms flat on the floor about 4-6 inches away from your heel with the fingers pointing towards your heels. Inhale and lift your hips, and arch your back as high as possible. Drop your head back and **press your chest forward** and focus on lifting and **stretching the front of your body**, your hips and the front of your thighs. Breathe slowly for **two to three breaths** (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 38).

Bow in Cat Posture - More challenging

Kneel on all fours, with palms down. Lock the right elbow. Bend your right knee and reach around with your left hand and take hold of your right foot. Holding your balance steady, inhale and lift your foot up, back and away from the buttocks to create a lock in your lower back over the adrenal glands. Breathe slowly and keep lifting your foot and knee high, to create a greater lock. Look up. Hold this position for four breaths and on each exhalation lift the knee a little higher. Release to all fours and do a few *Cat/Cow* movements to completely release the lock over the adrenal glands. Repeat on other side. (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 116). Rest.

Ovaries/ Sacral Chakra (reproduction, sexual health - - - issues: relationships)

Modified Danda-Cobra Series - Gentle

Bring yourself onto your hands and knees. Move slowly. Exhale and sit back onto your heels into *Child's Pose*. Inhale back to the hands and knees position. Repeat slowly several times (Desikachar, *Heart of Yoga*, 1998, 235).

Modified Danda-Cobra Series - Moderate

Bring yourself onto your hands and knees. Move slowly. Exhale and sit back onto your heels into *Child's Pose*. Inhale and move the forehead, chin, and chest along the floor, coming into *Cobra* and exhale back into *Child Pose*. **Or inhale and come up through table position and lower yourself into low *Cobra*. Keep your shoulders down and your elbows into the body. Or keep your arms straight if you cannot keep the elbows in tight to the body.** Exhale and push yourself back into *Child's Pose*. Place your awareness on your breath and the movement and rhythm of your body. **Repeat slowly for 30 seconds to a minute. Hold the *Cobra* position for 3 - 5 breaths and then rest in *Child Pose*** (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.13).

Boat Pose in 3 Stages - Gentle to More Challenging

1. Come to a comfortable seated position. Bend your knees, place your feet on the floor and place your hands behind your thighs or clasp your arms underneath your thighs. Straighten your spine and breathe.
2. Rock back on your tailbone, grasping your wrists underneath your knees. Find the balance here before continuing (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room: 2001, www.onebody.com*).
3. Next, straighten your knees while allowing the legs to move slightly further away from you. Hold the back of each knee separately. Finally, if you are balanced here, then release the arms and place them alongside of your legs like the oars of a boat. Remember to breathe during the pose. Hold for three to five breaths, and then bend the knees and place your feet on the floor to rest. Repeat two more times. Rest (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room: 2001, www.onebody.com*).

Spinal Twists

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shoulders, fingers in front, thumbs in back. Keep the elbows high. Inhale and twist the upper torso to the left, allowing the head and hips to follow along. Exhale and twist to the right. Continue at a comfortable and steady pace for at least :30 seconds. Inhale, twist to the left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, twist to the right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest (*Kundalini Research Institute, Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice, 1974, 45*).

Water Wheel - Gentle

Stand comfortably with your feet about a foot apart. Put your palms against your lower back, fingertips beside your spine and pointing down. Inhale and gently arch backwards, supporting your lower back with your hands. Exhale dropping forward allowing your body to hang. Let your shoulders relax, droop and dangle (*Gach, Acu-Yoga, 1996, 53*).

Standing Forward Bend - More Challenging

Stand against a wall with your feet hip width apart. Inhale, stretch your arms over your head, and then stretch and lengthen out of both side of the body opening the ribs while lifting up through the spine. Bend forward with a flat back, and clasp your legs wherever your arms fall. Drop your head down as close to your knees as possible. Inhale and stretch your chin forward lengthening in the spine. Exhale and bend your elbows out and draw your chest down along your upper thighs creating a lock over the ovaries. Inhale and stretch your chin, exhale and squeeze your upper body closer to your groin while pushing your buttocks higher up the wall, to improve the lock. Repeat the stretching and squeezing for five long deep breaths. To release, inhale your arms forward over your head in a wide circle back to your thighs (*Maddern, Yoga Builds Bones, 2000, 103*). Rest.

Pancreas/Solar Plexus Chakra (blood sugar metabolism - - - issues: personal power)

Standing Side Stretch - Gentle - Moderate

Stand in *Mountain Pose* with your feet together (or hip width apart. As you inhale raise your left arm above alongside your ear, with the palm facing inward. Place your right hand on your right hip. As you exhale, lean to the right. Turn your head to look down and press your hips sideways. Be here :30 seconds to a minutes and then do the other side. **Or you can inhale up and exhale down, alternating from side to side for an easier version** (Schiffman, *The Art and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, 1996, 102). Rest.

Warrior II - Gentle

Begin in a short standing stance with the right foot turned out and the left foot turned slightly back. Bring the arms up, stretching them out sideways with the fingertips stretching away. Bend the right knee slightly and look out over the fingertips (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.42).

Warrior II - Moderate

Place your hands on a wall shoulder width apart and just above shoulder height. With your left toes turned up the wall and the sole of the foot on the floor, step the right foot back 3.5 to 4 feet. **Come up on the toes of the back foot and press the ball of the foot into the floor. This helps you to keep the hips square.** Square your hips to the wall as much as possible by bringing the right hip forward and the left hip back. Exhale and bend the left knee toward the wall as close to 90 degrees as you can while keeping the right leg straight and strong. Keep the arms straight, the shoulder blades moving down the back and open the chest as wide as you can. Bend and straighten the leg 3-5 times. Repeat on the other side (Sparrowe & Walden, *Yoga Journal*, June 2001, 110). Rest.

Warrior - More Challenging

Stand in *Mountain Pose*. While inhaling, jump the feet 4 to 4 1/2 feet apart and stretch the arms out sideways in line with the shoulders, palms facing down. Turn the right foot sideways to 90 degrees and the left foot slightly in. Keep the legs straight. Take a breath. While exhaling bend the right leg to 90 degrees. Turn the head to the right and keep the left eye focused on the right palm. Breathe normally and remain steady for :20 to :30 seconds (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 115). Rest.

Elephant - Gentle - Moderate

Stand with your feet hip width apart. Inhale. Exhale and bending forward, place your hands shoulder width apart on a chair seat or block. Move your body weight forward onto your hands and push your hips up to the ceiling while straightening your legs, (**Gentle**). Kneel on the floor, hands shoulder width apart; knees hip width apart, toes tucked under. Inhale. Exhale and move your body weight forward onto your hands and push your hips up to the ceiling while straightening your legs (**Moderate**). Stretch

through the spine with your head hanging loosely between your shoulders. Move your weight into the back of your heels by pushing on your palms. Breathe slowly seven times. Repeat. To release move the weight forward onto the hands. step the feet together and bend the knees. Sit back on the heels and rest. before coming into a seated position. **Additional helpful modifications: Once in the posture, adjust your position so that both your feet are able to press evenly into the floor. You may need to step the feet apart or brings the legs further in or away from the hands** (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 141, 178).

Spread Leg Forward Fold - More Challenging

Stand easily. Place the hands on the hips with the fingers pointing forwards. Step the legs 4.5 to 5 feet apart (your widest stance). Tighten the knees, keep the toes pointing forward. Place the hands on the floor in line with the feet, fingers spread wide (or on a block or stool). Tighten the elbows. Raise the head up keeping the back concave. Stay here for 10 - 15 seconds breathing normally. To come out, place the hands back on the hips, **press the feet into the floor and lift up with a straight back. Step the feet in and rest in Mountain Pose** (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 122). Rest.

Supported Upside-Down Bow Pose - Gentle-Moderate

Sit on the edge of a chair (padded with blankets if needed) or a large comfortable ottoman. Place your feet against a non moving surface such as a couch or a wall. Lie back over the chair/ottoman and stretch your arms overhead. If you need more support, place blocks or bolsters or other supports under your feet and head. If your periods are normal do not do inverted postures during your cycle (Francina, *New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 123). **During your menstrual cycle a good modification would be Water Wheel.**

Bow Pose - More Challenging

Lie down on the floor on your belly with your arms at your sides. Slowly bend your feet and bring them to your buttocks. As you exhale, reach back with your arms and carefully take hold of one foot or ankle and then the other. flex your feet to make grasping them easier. Take a deep inhalation and raise your trunk from the floor as far as possible. Lift your head and bring your knees as close together as possible. Squeeze the buttocks. Hold for 10 - 15 seconds. Slowly release the pose. Bring your chin to the floor first and then release your feet. Rest in *Child Pose* (Lark, *Menopause Self-Help Book*, 1996, 200).

Breath of Fire - Moderate

Sit in your comfortable seated position or in a chair. Raise your arms out to the side to about a 60 degree angle, thumbs to the ceiling and fingers folded into the fists. Keep your spine straight. Breath of Fire consists of short rapid breathing through the nose. The inhalation and the exhalation are of the same duration. It's also called the 'sniff' breath -

- - sniff the breath in and sniff the breath out. Go slow or fast. **Start with :30 seconds and work up to 3 minutes.** Be sure to rest for the length of time that you do the breath, (Singh, *Kundalini Yoga for Strength, Success and Spirit*, 1991, 12). (**Note: If a woman is menstruating, has high blood pressure or is experiencing hot flashes she should do Long Deep Breathing or Alternate Nostril Breathing instead.**).

Thymus Gland/Heart Chakra - (immune system, heart health, - - - issues: love/compassion)
Spinal Flexes with Locked Elbows

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the knees and keep the elbows locked. Inhale and flex the spine and pelvis forward, with the chest lifted and the chin parallel to the floor. Exhale, flex the spine and pelvis backward, keeping the elbows locked. Keep the chin parallel to the floor. Continue for at least :30 seconds. Inhale and hold the breath in on the forward flex for a second or two. Exhale and hold the breath out on the backward flex for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest (Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 45).

Propeller Exercise - Gentle to Moderate to More Challenging

In an easy seated pose, place your left hand at sternum level, palm facing out. Your right hand faces inward. Hook your fingers with the forearms parallel to the floor. As you inhale, the left elbow goes up and the right one goes down. As you exhale, the right elbow goes up as the left elbow goes down. Do this with strong powerful breathing for **up to 3 minutes**. To end, inhale hold the breath and try to pull the hands apart. The arms are parallel. Exhale, hold the breath out and pull. Place your neck in Neck Lock (tucked in with chest lifted). on the shoulders, fingers in front, thumbs in back. Keep the elbows high. Inhale and twist the upper torso to the left, allowing the head and hips to follow along. Exhale and twist to the right. Work at your own pace from 1-3 minutes. Inhale, twist to the left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, twist to the right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest (Singh, *Kundalini Yoga for Strength, Success and Spirit*, 1991, 23).

Beauty Breathing - Gentle to Moderate

Sit on your heels if you can **or in your comfortable seated position**. Interlace your hands behind your back **or clasp on wrists with the other hand**. Stretch and lift your chest, and bring your shoulder blades together as you lift your arms off your back and begin Long Deep Breathing. Hold and breath for 1 - 3 minutes. Take a deep inhalation and hold for a count of 5-4-3-2-1. Repeat two more times. Relax your arms and hands and Rest breathing normally (Singh, *In Style Yoga*, 1995).

Head-To-Knee Pose

Sit on the floor and stretch out both of your legs in front of you. Bend your left leg and place the sole of your left foot against the inside of your right thigh. Press your heel into the floor and curl your toes back toward your head to keep the right knee straight. Inhale,

look up, lock your thumbs, and raise your arms overhead as far as you comfortably can. Exhale, bending forward from the hips, keeping your back straight. Take hold of your foot, calf, knee or thigh or whatever you can comfortably reach. Allow your head to relax **Keep the sternum lifted and stretch the chest out over the legs. Don't round your spine in the middle. Use a strap around your feet if that helps you keep your head up and spine straight.** Breathe normally. Hold this position for up to :10 seconds, and repeat this with the other leg. Repeat 2 or 3 times with each leg. With regular practice, gradually increase the time you spend in the position but do it fewer times. Then rest in Relaxation Pose (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

Seated Forward Bend

Sit on the floor and stretch both of your legs in front of you. Press your heels into the floor and curl your toes back toward your head to keep the knees straight. Inhale, look up, lock your thumbs, and raise your arms overhead as far as you comfortably can. Exhale, bending forward from the hips, keeping your back straight. Take hold of your feet, calves, knees or thighs or whatever you can comfortably reach. Allow your head to relax. **Keep the sternum lifted and stretch the chest out over the legs. Don't round your spine in the middle. Use a strap around your feet if that helps you keep your head up and spine straight.** Breathe normally. Now exhale and allow the head to relax. **Hold this position for up to 3-5 breaths. To come out, lengthen the spine and inhale up with a flat back.** Repeat 2 or 3 times with each leg. With regular practice, gradually increase the time you spend in the position but do it fewer times. Then rest in Relaxation Pose (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

Back Arch - Gentle

Sit in your comfortable seated position, place the hands behind the back with the fingertips facing backward or forward. Inhale, arch and extend the back, lifting the chest. be sure to squeeze the shoulder blades together opening the chest and if comfortable, allow the head to fall back. Keep lifting the chest and lengthening the spine. **Hold for 3-5 long slow breaths and exhale back to center. Repeat, then rest** (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.32).

Flower Exercise - Moderate

Sit in Rock Pose. Interlace your fingers behind your back or clasp one wrist with the other hand. As you slowly inhale, rise up on your knees, straighten your arms, lengthening your shoulders away from your ears and pulling your shoulder blades together. Lengthen the spine up out of the pelvic girdle as you drop your head back. Bend back and press your chest, torso and thighs forward as far as you comfortably can. As you slowly exhale, sit back on your heels, raise your arms off your back and lower your forehead to the floor. Inhale up and back, exhale down and forward. Move back and forth between the two positions s-l-o-w-l-y. Place your awareness on the movement and rhythm of your body. Repeat **s-l-o-w-l-y** for 30 seconds to a minute pausing for a

second or two between inhalation and exhalation (retention of the breath). Rest in Child Pose (Singh, *In Style Yoga*, 1995).

Seated Spine Stretch - More Challenging

Kneel on the floor, with the front of your feet flat on the floor. **Separate your knees.** Lean back and place your palms flat on the floor about 4-6 inches away from your heel with the fingers pointing towards your heels. Inhale and lift your hips, and arch your back as high as possible. drop your head back and pinch your shoulder blades together, and focus on lifting and **stretching the front of your body**, your hips and the front of your thighs. Breathe slowly for seven breaths. repeat twice more, holding the position for seven breaths. Rest (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 38).

Thyroid/Parathyroid Glands/Throat Chakra (metabolism - - - issues: communication)

Shoulder Shrugs - Gentle

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the knees and pressing into the knees, with the elbows in tight to the body, inhale and lift the shoulders, exhale and press or drop them down. Continue for at least :30 seconds with a slow easy pace or faster if its comfortable. Inhale, shrug the shoulders up and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, roll the shoulders back and down. Repeat twice, then Rest (Singh, *Kundalini Yoga for Strength, Success and Spirit*, 1991, 58).

Bear Grip Turns - Gentle to Moderate to More Challenging

In an easy seated pose, place your left hand at throat level, palm facing out. Your right hand faces inward. Hook your fingers with the forearms parallel to the floor at throat level. As you inhale, your head turns left as the hands go right. As you exhale, your head turns right as the hands go left. Do this with strong powerful breathing for **up to 3 minutes**. To end, inhale hold the breath and try to pull the hands apart. the arms are parallel. Then relax the hands to the knees. Rest (Singh, *Kundalini Yoga for Strength, Success and Spirit*, 1991, 58).

The Lion - Gentle

Sit on your knees (or cross legged) with your hands stretched forward on your thighs. Make claws of your hands. Stretch your body upward. Inhale. As you exhale, widen your eyes, stick out your tongue with intensity and push the body forward. Hold this position for a count of 10. Repeat 5 times (Lark, *Menopause Self-Help Book*, 1996, 203) Rest.

Legs-Up-the-Wall-Pose (or Calves-on-A-Chair Pose) - Gentle

Caution Not recommended during menstruation or pregnancy. Check with your health care professional if you have any concerns about elevating your legs. Use a sturdy wall and a folded towel or small pillow for the head. Select a carpeted area or use your Yoga mat to practice this pose. Sit on the floor about a foot from the wall with the left

shoulder facing the wall. (Sit parallel to wall.) With an exhalation, roll back and swing the legs up the wall and lie back. Place a very small pillow or folded towel under the neck for comfort, if needed. This will serve to keep the chin from lifting higher than your forehead. Close the eyes and breathe normally. In the beginning, stay in the pose for five to 10 minutes. Gradually work up to 15 minutes. To come out, bend the knees halfway toward the chest and roll to the side, using the arms to sit up slowly. Legs Up the Wall Pose is not intended to stretch the back of the legs, so if you feel pulling there, move further from the wall, (Lasater, *Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, www.onebody.com). This posture can also be performed with the calves on a chair for a gentler version (Schatz, *Back Care Basics* 1993, 73-74).

Half Shoulderstand - Moderate

Warm up with Rock n' Roll 10 - 12 times. Lie down on the floor and place the hands at the sides of the body. Draw the knees into the chest allowing the pelvis to lift off the ground. Place the hands along the back with palms cupping the ridge of the pelvis. Lift and lengthen the legs at a 45 degree angle to the pelvis. Lengthen through the legs but don't lock the legs. Bring your focus to the abdomen and allow it to soften. Stay here for as long as you are comfortable. To come out tuck the knees into the chest and roll down the spine one vertebrae at a time supported by the hands under the back and buttocks. Bring your knees to your chest and make gentle knee circles in both directions. Rest. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3. 146).

Plow - Moderate to More Challenging

Place a chair on your mat. Lie on your back, facing upward away from the chair. Arms are at your sides and palms are facing downward so that they press against the floor. Legs should be together. Slowly raise your legs and hips over your head until your toes touch the chair. Bend your knees if necessary to keep the movement smooth. Lift the spine by stretching the back muscles as much as possible. This exercise will alleviate compression of the lumbar spine. (More challenging: Bring your feet to the floor instead of onto a chair. Do this only if you have no concavity in your back). To come out, bend your knees and roll onto your back. Rest (Lark, *Menopause Self Help Book*, 1996, 197).

Supported Fish - Gentle

Lie on the floor. Place a bolster or rolled blankets or a firm couch cushion under your spine with your head and neck hanging off the edge. Legs can be bent or extended. Use additional props to raise your buttocks if needed for comfort. **Breathe slowly for seven breaths.** Rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994 3. 156-3. 157).

The Fish - More Challenging

Do not do Fish Pose if you have injury to the neck or osteoporosis. Lie on the floor, roll onto your left hip and slide your right hand, palm down under the right buttock. Roll onto your right hip and slide your left hand, palm down under the left buttock. Cross your

thumbs under your buttocks and sit on your crossed thumbs on the floor. Pinch your shoulder blades together and push on your elbows to lift your head and shoulders off the floor. Your feet will slide away. Let your head hang back between your shoulders to create a lock over the parathyroid glands in the side of the neck and restrict the circulation. Breathe slowly for seven breaths. Keep your chest strongly arched and push on your elbows to increase the arch in your spine. To release, lower your head to the floor and flatten the back of your neck. Release your arms from under your body and rest in Relaxation Pose for a few minutes (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 134).

Pineal Gland/Third Eye Chakra (circadian cycles - - - issues: witness consciousness)

Pituitary Gland/ Crown Chakra (nervous system, - - - issues: unity consciousness)

Supported Yoga Mudra - Gentle

Come into a kneeling position and sit back on your heels. Place a chair or a bolster in front of you. Interlace your fingers behind your back. Inhale and as you exhale slowly drop your forehead to the chair seat or bolster and raise your hands off your back (LePage, *Integrative Yoga Therapy Manual*, 1994, 3. 48). If sitting on your heels is not possible, sit in easy pose or you can use two chairs. Sit in one chair and separate your knees wide. Place another chair in front of you. Interlace your hands behind your back or simply clasp one wrist with the other hand. Inhale and as you exhale slowly drop your forehead to the other chair seat (pad it with a blanket for extra cushioning and raise your arms off your back. Hold for 5 - 7 breaths. Inhale up and rest. Repeat .

Yoga Mudra - Gentle to Moderate

Sit in a comfortable position with a straight spine. Curl your thumb and forefinger in the OM position. Place the hands on the backs of the knees. Inhale and take both arms out to the side at shoulder height and bend the elbows (opens the heart). Exhale, bend forward taking the arms behind the back, crossing the wrists. Rest the wrists on your back and drop your head forward as close to the floor as possible and pause. Inhale, return the arms to shoulder height. Exhale and return the backs of the hands to the knees and pause. Repeat two more times (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 168).

Rabbit - More Challenging

Come onto your hands and knees. From this position drop the crown of your head onto the floor and tuck your chin into your chest. Stretch your hands toward your feet. Grasp your heels if you can or relax the hands along the floor, palms up. Slowly turn your head from side to side a little bit and lean forward so all areas of the neck are stretched. Breathe deeply. Remain in this position 30 seconds to a minute. Longer if you want more of a challenge. Repeat and then rest in Child Pose (Gach, *Acu-Yoga*, p. 200 and LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3. 156-3. 157). Rest.

COOL AND REST THE BODY

Seated Spinal Twist

Sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you. **Bend your right knee and step your right foot over your left leg. Find a comfortable place along your leg for your foot to rest flat on the floor. Stretch out through the heel of your left foot.** Hug your right knee to your chest with your left arm. Turn to the right. Inhale and extend your right arm to shoulder height. Exhale and place the back of your hand behind the small of your back. Inhale and lift up, straighten your spine. Exhale and looking to the right, pull your right shoulder and hip back. Hold for three breaths increasing the twist with each exhalation. Untwist and repeat to the other side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 98). Rest.

Limb Four: Breath Control (*Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach:
Energize and Balance the Endocrine system and the Chakras
Breath/Energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit relaxed with a straight spine. Relax your jaws. Close your eyes. Breathe through both nostrils. Rest your left hand on your lap or knee. Exhale fully. Use the thumb of your right hand to block off your right nostril (allow your middle fingers to curl into the palm or rest on the bridge of the nose). Inhale slowly and smoothly through the left nostril. Close the left nostril with your ring finger, release your right nostril and exhale. Inhale through the right nostril. Close your right nostril, release your left and exhale. This completes one round of *Alternate Nostril Breathing*. Gradually extend your exhalations until they are about twice as long as your inhalations. Continue doing this for :30 seconds to 3 minutes. If at any time you feel like you are not getting enough air, simply resume breathing normally (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

Limb Five: Sensory Awareness (*Pratyahara*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Focus the Awareness
Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

Yoga Nidra for Balancing the Endocrine System and the Chakras

Introduction

Have the students come into their favorite *Relaxation Pose*. Relax the whole body. The

whole body. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. Become aware of your body lying completely relaxed on the floor, -- *Pause* -- totally relaxed on the floor, -- *pause*-- completely and totally relaxed on the floor. *Pause*. Mentally say to yourself, “I am going to practice *Yoga Nidra*. I am aware. I will not sleep.” *Pause*.

Choosing A Resolve

Suggest that they choose a resolve or affirmation to support their heart health, such as:

My glands and energy centers are balanced and healthy

However, let them know that any resolve they wish to work on is fine. Ask them to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. *Pause*.

Rotation of Consciousness

Now we come to rotation of consciousness, by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible the awareness is to go from part to part. Repeat the part in your mind and become aware of that part and feel its energy as best as you can. Keep yourself alert but don't concentrate too intensely. (*Note: this part is done fairly rapidly; you can lengthen it by repeating it up to three times and going more slowly each time it is repeated. If time is short it can be eliminated entirely as long as Yoga Nidra is preceded by asana practice {Dharmakirti, 2001})*

(Right Side)

Bring your awareness to the right side of your body and to the right hand. *Pause*. To the right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the right waist, the right hip, the right thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- --*pause*.

(Left Side)

Bring your awareness to the left side of your body and to the left hand. To the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the left waist, the left hip, the left thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the left foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- -- *pause*.

(Back)

Bring your awareness to the back of your body. Become aware of the right shoulder blade, the left shoulderblade, -- the right buttock, the left buttock --- the spine -- the whole back together -- *pause*.

(Front)

Now go to the top of the head -- -- the forehead, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the tip of the nose, the upper lip, the lower lip, the chin, the throat, the right breast, the left breast, the heart, the navel center, the abdomen ---

(Major Parts)

The whole of the right leg --- the whole of the left leg---both legs together. *Pause* The whole of the right arm --- the whole of the left arm --- both arms together. The whole of the back, buttocks, spine, shoulder blades -- the whole of the front---the whole of the head---the whole body together---the whole body together--- whole body together-- -- total awareness --- total stillness --- no sleeping---- *Pause*. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. See your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. Your body is lying on the floor --- perfectly still -- -- on the floor --- in this room. Visualize this image in your mind.

Breath Awareness and Visualization: Balancing the Endocrine Glands and the Chakras

(*Note: this part should be done slowly and leisurely*). Become aware of your natural breath flowing through your body lying on the floor -- *pause*. Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. Do not change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic - - - you are not doing it - - - there is no effort - - - *pause*. Maintain awareness of the breath. Feel the breath moving in and out of the body, flowing in and out of the body. On the inhalation it enters the body. On the exhalation it leaves the body. *Pause*. Be completely aware of the movement of the respiration, in and out of the body - - - do not force the breath - - - just awareness - - - just awareness. *Pause*. Maintain your awareness of the breath, complete awareness of the breath.

Prana Vidya to the Endocrine Glands

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the ovaries - - - into the ovaries - - - deep into the ovaries. Notice the quality of energy in this area of the body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - - - allow it to expand. Notice how this area is affected by the breath. *Pause*.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the kidneys and adrenal glands - - - exhaling heart energy to the kidneys and adrenals - - - the kidneys and adrenals. Notice the quality of energy in this area of the body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - - - allow it to expand. Notice how this area is affected by the breath. *Pause*.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pancreas - - - energy to the pancreas - - - heart energy to the pancreas. Notice the quality of energy in this area

of the body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - -
- allow it to expand. Notice how this area is affected by the breath. *Pause.*

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the thymus gland - - - to the thymus gland - - -heart energy to the thymus - - (tap the thymus center, alternating left and right hands). Notice the quality of energy in this area of the body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - - - allow it to expand. Notice how this area is affected by the breath. *Pause.*

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the thyroid gland - - - to the thyroid gland - - - energy to the thyroid gland. Notice the quality of energy in this area of the body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - - - allow it to expand. Notice how this area is affected by the breath. *Pause.*

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pituitary and pineal glands - - - to the pituitary and pineal glands, the pituitary and pineal glands deep in the center of the brain. Notice the quality of energy in this area of the body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - - - allow it to expand. Notice how this area is affected by the breath. *Pause.*

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy and light into the entire body - - - the entire body - - - the entire body, lying on the floor - - - in this room. Notice the quality of energy in your body. Allow any sensations of warmth and tingling to expand - - - warmth - - - tingling - - - allow it to expand. Notice how your entire body is affected by the

breath. *Pause.* Rest quietly and visualize the circulation of light and balanced energy throughout your entire body (adapted from Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 86; LePage, *IYT Advanced Training Intensive*, 2000).

Repeating the Resolve

Ask your students to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, intention, feeling and emphasis.

Complete Stillness/Deep Relaxation

(Notes: 1] *This is an excellent place to play music. The best choices are mantra tapes, brain sync tapes or music designed for relaxation that does not have a melody; 2] if time is short, this section can be eliminated).*

Finish

Become aware of your breathing, your natural breathing, your natural breathing. Awareness of breathing. Awareness of relaxation. Awareness of your body lying on the floor. Awareness of the whole body lying on the floor. Begin to move your body by rolling the wrists and ankles in little circles in one direction and then the other. Inhale the arms over head and stretch through the fingers and out through the heels. Inhale and roll the body onto one side and stretch. Roll the body onto the other side and stretch. Roll onto your back and bring the feet up in the air and place the soles of the feet together and the palms of the hands together and rub hard and fast, bringing up some heat. Bring the knees into the chest and the palms over the eyes. breath and relax. Use the fingertips to massage the temples and any other place on the face that needs a little help. Roll over onto one side and use your hands to help you up into a seated position.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Strengthen the Skill and Ability to Concentrate
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

Thousand Petaled Lotus Meditation

Come to a comfortable sitting position. Keep the spine straight. Rest the hands on your knees connecting the tips of the thumbs and index fingers. Open your eyes slightly and look at the tip of your nose. Inhale four times, four short breaths one right after another to the count of 1, 2, 3, 4. This meditation balances the relationship between the pineal and pituitary glands. Exhale slowly and smoothly. Continue to breath deeply and quietly. Straighten your spine, visualizing a circulation of light throughout your entire body. Close your eyes and roll them up, imagining that you are breathing into a window that opens into the top of your head (Gach, *Acu-Yoga*, 1996, 75).

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Preparation for Meditation
Bliss Level/s, Realization of Self as Unity Consciousness (*Anandamayakosha*)

Silent Meditation

Students practice their own personal form of meditation (continuing with concentration meditation, relaxing the concentration practice and practicing mindfulness meditation or any other variation that suits the student or client). Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Surrender
Unity Consciousness is Beyond the Koshas and Individual Effort

Closing Ritual

Closing rituals may include the practice of Yoga Mudra, the chanting of “OM,” a 'thought for the day,' a poem, or my personal favorite, the Three Breath Blessing: Take one long deep breath and hold it. see a miracle happening for yourself in this minute. Let the breath go. Take a long deep breath and hold it; this time for someone or a group of people you love or care about, and see them at their very best. Let the breath go. Take a third long deep breath and hold

it; this time for the entire planet and see it as a place of peace and love. Let the breath go and returning full circle breath and become aware of yourself and see if your body needs a last stretch, twist or move. Give your body what it is asking for and then slowly and gently bring yourself back to this room in a relaxed state of awareness with your endocrine system and Chakras balanced and energized. Namaste.

SECTION III
YOGA FOR HEART HEALTH

Background

Heart disease is the number one killer of American women over the age of fifty. According to Northrup, one in two women will eventually die of coronary artery disease or stroke while only one woman in twenty-five will die of breast cancer (Northrup, 2001, 455). All in all, women count for 250,000 of the 550,000 deaths from cardiovascular disease each year, and women at menopause are at higher risk because the protective mechanism of estrogen is reduced when the hormonal milieu changes (Thornton, 1997, 267). Women, especially menopausal women need to pay close attention to the physical, energetic and spiritual aspects of their hearts.

As we saw in Chapter six, women use both sides of their brains simultaneously and because they have more frequent access to their right brain which is associated with music, emotion, intuition and self-knowledge and experience, there are more neuronal connections between the heart and the right brain than between the heart and the left brain (Northrup, 2001, 459). There are also strong connections between the heart and the womb, between the “upper heart” and the ‘lower heart” (Levine, 1987, 134). Because so many women have experienced rough handling, ranging from outright sexual abuse to objectification to insensitivity to the female experience, energy, and thinking, many women find their upper heart closed or guarded. Therefore, until the wounds of the womb and brain are healed it may not be possible for a women to feel safe enough to open her heart. Levine is correct in his statement that although this connection is particularly relevant to women, the disconnection from the upper heart through wounding is a universal condition (Levine, 1987, 136-138). In working with recognizing, healing and moving through the wounds we all have, Levine urges caution and encourages

approaching this work with the heart slowly, and with absolute respect for a woman's readiness to do the forgiveness work of self and others necessary to heal the heart on the physical, energetic and spiritual levels (Levine, 1987, 141).

Yoga postures and exercises open and stretch the chest, modify the stress reaction, improve elasticity in the arteries and increase circulation. Yoga rests and strengthens the physical heart, and can help release blocks and strong emotions from the heart center. Breathwork, sensory awareness and meditation bring awareness and insight to the energetic information that may be held in the brain, heart and womb. This is information that the body/mind needs in order to begin the healing process in earnest.

Because postures which bring the head below the heart are contraindicated for people with cardiovascular problems, the postures in this program for heart health are designed with modifications to avoid the 'head below the heart' position for those for whom it is contraindicated (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 7.6 - 7.13).

Yoga For Heart Health

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Open the Chest; Stimulate and Balance the Heart Center
Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)
Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Education and Sharing

- Psychological and spiritual aspects of heart health (chapter 6)
- Physical aspects of heart health (chapter 6)
- Q & A, discussion, sharing around heart health

Centering

After checking in and education, move to a short body scan, centering exercise or opening chant to bring the student more deeply into contact with their body. Example:

Come to a comfortable seated position with your hands resting on your knees. Close

your eyes and bring your attention to the base of your physical body. Become aware of how the base of your body is connected to the floor. Then bring your attention to the base of your spine and feel, sense, or imagine how your spine connects to the pelvis. From that point, allow your awareness to move up your spine, vertebrae by vertebrae, allowing the spine to stretch upward, not arched too far forward or slumped in the middle - easy and comfortable. When you reach the top of your spine allow your attention to travel over the back of the head and come to rest on the top of the head. Then feeling grounded through the base of your body, centered through the spine and torso and lifted through the shoulders, neck and head, bring your hands together in prayer position with the backs of the thumbs pressed against the sternum and let's bring ourselves to this time and place (*Note: use any opening chant you are comfortable with or just allow the students to sit quietly for :30 seconds to a minute*). Now inhale and hold the breath for a few seconds, slowly exhale and relax the hands down to the knees and bring your attention to your breath.

Limb Three & Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Open and Balance the Heart Center

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

WARM AND STRETCH THE BODY

Sacral Rocking I and II

Sacral Rock I. Have students lie on their backs with their knees up and feet on the floor. Inner edges of the feet touch and the knees are kept together. **Although Schatz's description does not include regulated breathing, this program does.** With the feet and the knees together, inhale. On the exhalation move the knees slowly 6 - 8 inches to the left and inhale back to center. Exhale and move the knees 6-8 inches to the right. Repeat at least 10 times (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1994, 136).

Sacral Rock II. Cross the left leg over the right, **keep the back of the left thigh closed completely over the top of the right thigh (no spaces peeking through).** With **regulated breathing**, rock back and forth as you did in *Sacral Rocking I*. Repeat at least

10 times, then repeat with the right leg crossed over the left (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136).

Pelvic Tilts

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with Lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to inhale while holding the pelvis in neutral.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Repeat slowly at least 10 times. Rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21).

4 Part Pelvic Lift - Gentle

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to simply press the belly button toward the backbone.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Pressing the feet into the floor, inhale and lift the spine off the floor rolling up one vertebrae at a time. Hold the breath and the lift a second or two at the upper limit, then exhale down. Repeat slowly and easily several times. Bring both knees to your chest, and rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21)

Stick Posture.

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the arms sideways and then overhead, until they are stretched to full length; bring the palms together if possible. At the same time, stretch the body and legs to the fullest comfortable extent. Pull the toes up and back and push out through the heels. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Rest. Repeat once (Weller, *Yoga Therapy*, 1995, 48).

Supine Half Moon

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the right arm overhead as you walk the heels to the left creating a stretch to the entire right side of the body. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat to the opposite side. LePage also refers to this as *Tadaka Mudra* (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.19).

Spinal Flexes

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shins or knees, (thighs if in a chair). Inhale and flex the spine and pelvis forward, with the chest lifted and the chin parallel to the floor. Exhale, flex the spine and pelvis backward, straightening the arms. Keep the chin parallel to the floor. Continue for at least :30 seconds. Inhale and hold the breath in on the forward flex for a second or two. Exhale and hold the breath out on the backward flex for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest (Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 45).

Spinal Twists

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shoulders, fingers in front, thumbs in back. Keep the elbows high. Inhale and twist the upper torso to the left, allowing the head and hips to follow along. Exhale and twist to the right. Continue at a comfortable and steady pace for at least :30 seconds. Inhale, twist to the left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, twist to the right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest (Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 45).

Shoulder Stretches

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the knees. Inhale and draw the shoulders back and as you exhale, press them forward. After several rounds allow the spine and head to enter the movement creating an alternate flexion and extension of the entire spine. End with the shoulders in neutral. Then inhale and lift the shoulders towards the ears, exhale and release the shoulders down using the trapezius muscles to actively depress the shoulders. Roll the shoulders in large slow circles front to back 3 times and then back to front 3 times (LePage *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.3).

Head and Neck Stretches

In an easy seated pose, with the hands on the knees, inhale and slowly turn the head to the left, exhale to center. Inhale and turn the head to the right. Exhale to center. Repeat slowly for several rounds. Inhale the head left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale to center. Inhale the head right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center. Then visualize a circle on the wall in front of you, lower your chin to your chest and using your nose as a pointer slowly draw the circle in one direction inhaling as you go upward and exhaling as you come down, and **repeat 3 times** (LePage *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.3).

WORK THE BODY:

OPEN THE CHEST; STIMULATE AND BALANCE THE HEART CENTER

Mountain Pose

Stand erect with feet together, toes and heels touching (**or shoulder width apart if necessary**), with the weight of the body in the center of the arches. Stretch the toes from the bottom and keep them relaxed. Keep the ankles in line with each other. Tighten the knees, pull the knee caps upward and tighten the quadricep muscles. Keep the shins in line with the thigh bones. Breathe normally. Compress the hips and tighten the buttocks. Keep the spine erect. Lift the sternum and expand the chest. Lift the abdomen upwards. Keep the neck erect and the head straight; do not tilt forwards or backwards. Look straight ahead. Keep the arms by the sides of the body, fingers together and hands downward, the palms facing the thighs and in line with them. Do not lift the shoulders. Stand still for 20 - 30 seconds (**work to a minute or longer**) (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110).

Tree Pose - Gentle

Stand erect in *Mountain Pose*. Interlock the fingers, turn the wrists and palms outwards, and stretch the arms forwards in line with the shoulders. **Inhale and** take the extended arms upwards by the sides of the ears. The palms should face the ceiling. Move the back ribs forward. Lift the chest and take the shoulder-blades deep in. Keep the head erect and look straight forward. Breathing normally, maintain this posture for 10-15 seconds (**work up to a minute or more**). **Exhale and** lower the arms down. Release the fingers. **Rest in *Mountain Pose***. Note: Many sources call this a variation of *Mountain Pose* but Geeta Iyengar calls it *Tree Pose* (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110).

Standing Side Stretch - Gentle - Moderate

Stand in *Mountain Pose* with your feet together (or hip width apart. Inhale and raise your left arm alongside your ear, with the palm facing inward. Place your right hand on your right hip. As you exhale, lean to the right. Turn your head to look down and press your hips sideways. Be here :30 seconds to a minutes and then do the other side. **Or you can inhale up and exhale down, alternating from side to side for an easier version** (Schiffman, *The Art and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, 1996, 102). Rest.

Chest Expander - Gentle to Moderate

Stand easily. Relax your arms at your side, feet are hip-width apart (**or together if you'd like more a challenge**). Bring your hands into Namaste (prayer position). Inhale and bring your arms behind your back slowly and gracefully until you can either clasp one wrist with the other hand or clasp them behind your back. Exhale. Stand upright. Do not lean forward. Inhale deeply and bend backward from the waist. Keep your hands clasped and lift your arms off your back as high as you can. Drop your head back a few inches and look upward as you relax your shoulders and the back of your neck. Hold and breathe in this position for a few seconds. Inhale. **Hold your breath, bend forward at**

the waist to a straight back position with the head above or level with the heart. Lift your arms off your back as high as you can. Relax your neck and keep your legs straight with your knees soft. Hold a few seconds, breathing normally. Exhale as you return to the upright position. Release your hands and rest. Repeat 2 more times (Lark, *Menopause Self-Help Book*, 1996, 201). Rest.

Down Face Dog with a Chair - Gentle

Put a sturdy, level chair against a wall. Place the heels of the hands on the edge of the chair shoulder width apart with the fingers spread wide. Step a full arms length back until the heels are slightly behind the hips, with the feet hip width apart. Press the hands into the chair and push the chair towards the wall. Inhale and come up onto the toes, exhale lower the heels. **Adjust the legs toward or away from the chair until a lengthening stretch is felt through the spine. Bend the knees if necessary.** Relax your head. Think of moving your body back toward the legs as you push the chair toward the wall. **Keep the breathing steady for :30 seconds to a minute. To come out, step the right foot forward, bring the left knee to the floor, bring the right knee to the floor and rest in Child's Pose.** Or bring the body forward, bend one knee and stand up slowly. If you feel lightheaded, sit in the chair for a few minutes. This can also be done against a wall, or a tree (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66).

Down Face Dog - Moderate to Challenging

Start on your hands and knees. Knees hip width apart, toes tucked under. Spread the fingers. Inhale. Exhale and push your hips to the ceiling, so that your arms and legs are straight. Inhale, and as you exhale again, press your heels toward the floor and stretch backward. Keep your feet pointing straight ahead. Drop your head. Think of moving your body back toward the legs. Keep the breathing steady; slowly come down after five to 10 breaths. Repeat the pose. When you are finished the second time, come down and sit back on your heels into *Child's Pose*. For an added hamstring stretch, do this with your heels against a wall. Push into the posture but take your right leg up the wall, turn the toes under and straighten your leg. Stretch through both legs and hold for 3 - 5 breaths. Repeat to the other side and then rest in *Child's Pose* (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 54 - 57).

Upward Facing Dog With a Chair - Gentle

Place a sturdy chair against a wall. To move into *Upward-Facing Dog*, position your hands so that they firmly grip the edges of the chair seat. Keeping your hands firmly gripping the seat of the chair, **inhale** and bring the tops of your thighs and pubic bone toward the chair. Continue firmly pressing down into the chair seat, straightening your arms, rolling the shoulders back, lifting the sternum and opening the chest. **On an inhalation**, lift the head back without constricting the neck. Hold the position for :30 seconds. To come out, **inhale**, bring your body forward toward the chair, bend one knee and stand up slowly. Repeat. (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66).

Upward Facing Dog - More Challenging

Lie down on a non-slippery surface. Position your hands next to your chest, keeping the elbows close to the body. Place the feet hip-width apart. Stretch your legs back and pull your knee caps up so that the thigh muscles feel firm. On an inhalation, lift your upper body off the floor straightening your arms and lifting your chest. Look forward or slightly up, keeping the neck muscles long and relaxed. The shoulders should stretch back and down. Try to bring the legs and pubic bone off the floor. Keep the buttocks firm and the legs stretching back. Don't sink the weight of the body to the floor. Keep breathing. Hold for a few breaths, then lower yourself to the floor and rest in *Child's Pose*. As strength improves, stretch from *Upward Facing Dog* back into *Downward Facing Dog*. (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66)

Sphinx (Modified Cobra) - Gentle

Begin in a prone position. Stretch your arms straight out in front and then slide them back until you reach a comfortable position with your forearms resting on the floor slightly forward of your shoulders. Keep your forearms on the floor through the entire exercise. Spread your fingers wide and press your hands into the floor. Stretch your legs and feet back. Tighten your buttocks and push your pelvic triangle into the floor. Use your back muscles as you inhale up and stretch your chest forward. Hold a second or two to feel the stretch in the chest and back. Then exhale and lower slowly. Repeat and hold for 30-seconds to a minute or do it dynamically by inhaling up and exhaling down. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.136). Rest.

Dynamic Cobra - Moderate

Bring yourself onto your hands and knees. Exhale and sit back onto your heels. Inhale and come through table position and lower yourself into *Low Cobra*. Keep your shoulders down and your elbows into the body. If this is not possible, keep your arms straight as you lower your body as far as it will go. Exhale and push yourself up into table and sit down on your heels with your arms outstretched. Repeat at your own pace for :30 seconds to a minute (adapted from LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.13). Rest.

Propeller Exercise - Gentle to Moderate to More Challenging

In an easy seated pose, place your left hand at sternum level, palm facing out. Your right hand faces inward. Hook your fingers with the forearms parallel to the floor. As you inhale, the left elbow goes up and the right one goes down. As you exhale, the right elbow goes up as the left elbow goes down. Do this with strong powerful breathing for **up to 3 minutes**. To end, inhale hold the breath and try to pull the hands apart. The arms are parallel. Exhale, hold the breath out and pull. Place your neck in Neck Lock (tucked in with chest lifted). on the shoulders, fingers in front, thumbs in back. Keep the elbows high. Inhale and twist the upper torso to the left, allowing the head and hips to follow along. Exhale and twist to the right. Work at your own pace from 1-3 minutes. Inhale, twist to the left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, twist to the right and

hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest (Singh, *Kundalini Yoga for Strength, Success and Spirit*, 1991, 23).

Back Arch - Gentle

Sit comfortably, and place the hands behind the back with the fingertips facing backward or forward. Inhale, arch and extend the back, lifting the chest. be sure to squeeze the shoulder blades together opening the chest and if comfortable, allow the head to fall back. Keep lifting the chest and lengthening the spine. **Hold for 3 -5 long slow breaths and exhale back to center. Repeat** (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.32)

Flower Exercise - Moderate

Sit in Rock Pose. Interlace your fingers behind your back or clasp one wrist with the other hand. As you slowly inhale, rise up on your knees, straighten your arms, lengthening your shoulders away from your ears and pulling your shoulder blades together. Lengthen the spine up out of the pelvic girdle as you drop your head back. Bend back and press your chest, torso and thighs forward as far as you comfortably can. As you slowly exhale, sit back on your heels, raise your arms off your back and lower your forehead to the floor **or to a flat back position**. Inhale up and back, exhale down and forward. Move back and forth between the two positions s-l-o-w-l-y. Place your awareness on the movement and rhythm of your body. Repeat **s-l-o-w-l-y** for 30 seconds to a minute pausing for a second or two between inhalation and exhalation (retention of the breath). Rest in Child Pose (Singh, *In Style Yoga*, 1995).

Seated Spine Stretch - More Challenging

Kneel on the floor, with the front of your feet flat on the floor. **Separate your knees**. Lean back and place your palms flat on the floor about 4-6 inches away from your heel with the fingers pointing towards your heels. Inhale and lift your hips, and arch your back as high as possible. drop your head back and pinch your shoulder blades together, and focus on lifting and **stretching the front of your body**, your hips and the front of your thighs. Breathe slowly for seven breaths. Repeat twice more, holding the position for seven breaths (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 38). This is an easier variation of the *Camel*. Rest.

Half Locust

Place chin on the floor. Push your arms underneath your body, with your elbows close under your body and your palms facing your thighs. Keep your pelvis on your arms. **Or place your hands alongside your body with the palms down. Inhale the right leg up, exhale down. Inhale the left leg up. Exhale down. Continue with a smooth easy rhythm.for :30 seconds or more.** Then, inhale, straighten your right leg and slowly raise it off the floor as far as you comfortably can. Hold it in the air for up to ten seconds while breathing normally, then lower it. Do this 2 times with each leg (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151). Rest

Full Locust

Place chin on the floor. Push your arms underneath your body, with your elbows close under your body and your palms facing your thighs. Keep your pelvis on your arms. Inhale, stiffen the body, keep your chin on the floor, and raise both legs together a comfortable distance without bending your knees. Breathe normally. Repeat 2 or 3 times for up to :10 seconds each time (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151). Rest.

Head-To-Knee Pose

Sit on the floor and stretch out both of your legs in front of you. Bend your left leg and place the sole of your left foot against the inside of your right thigh. Press your heel into the floor and curl your toes back toward your head to keep the right knee straight. Inhale, look up, lock your thumbs, and raise your arms overhead as far as you comfortably can. Exhale, bending forward from the hips, keeping your back straight. Take hold of your foot, calf, knee or thigh or whatever you can comfortably reach. Allow your head to relax **Keep the sternum lifted and stretch the chest out over the legs. Don't round your spine in the middle. Use a strap around your feet if that helps you keep your head up and spine straight.** Breathe normally. Hold this position for up to :10 seconds, and repeat this with the other leg. Repeat 2 or 3 times with each leg. With regular practice, gradually increase the time you spend in the position but do it fewer times. Then rest in Relaxation Pose (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151)..

Seated Forward Bend

Sit on the floor and stretch both of your legs in front of you. Press your heels into the floor and curl your toes back toward your head to keep the knees straight. Inhale, look up, lock your thumbs, and raise your arms overhead as far as you comfortably can. Exhale, bending forward from the hips, keeping your back straight. Take hold of your feet, calves, knees or thighs or whatever you can comfortably reach. Allow your head to relax. **Keep the sternum lifted and stretch the chest out over the legs. Don't round your spine in the middle. Use a strap around your feet if that helps you keep your head up and spine straight.** Breathe normally. Now exhale and allow the head to relax. **Hold this position for up to 3-5 breaths. To come out, lengthen the spine and inhale up with a flat back.** Repeat 2 or 3 times with each leg. With regular practice, gradually increase the time you spend in the position but do it fewer times. Then rest in Relaxation Pose (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

COOL AND REST THE BODY

Butterfly

Come to a seated position with the legs outstretched. Bring the soles of your feet together, with the heels as close to the groin as possible. Make sure that the knees are comfortable with no excessive pressure. Place blankets or bolsters under your knees if needed. Clasp your hands around your feet (or place them behind you if you need to

support your back), press your sitting bones down into the earth and lengthen your spine up through the crown of your head. If your spine is rounded, place blankets just behind the sitz bone so that your pelvis tilts slightly forward or you can practice this against a wall. Stay here for as long as you like. Then, Inhale and on your exhale, hinge forward at the hip joints. Press the forearms toward the floor and relax the shoulders down from the ears. Keep your head in alignment with your spine. Breathe deeply into the abdomen, groin and hips. Let the breath massage your lower back. When you are ready, slowly hinge back up, release your feet, straighten your legs (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.162).

Seated Spinal Twist

Sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you. Bend your right knee and step your right foot over your left leg. Find a comfortable place along your leg for your foot to rest flat on the floor. Stretch out through the heel of your left leg. Hug your right knee to your chest with your left arm. Turn to the right. Inhale and extend your right arm to shoulder height. Exhale and place the back of your hand behind the small of your back. Inhale and lift up, straighten your spine. Exhale and looking to the right, pull your right shoulder and hip back. Hold for three breaths increasing the twist with each exhalation. Untwist and repeat to the other side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 98). Rest.

Supported Yoga Mudra

Come into a kneeling position and sit back on your heels. Place a chair or a bolster in front of you. Interlace your fingers behind your back. Inhale and as you exhale slowly drop your forehead to the chair seat or bolster and raise your hands off your back. (LePage, *Integrative Yoga Therapy Manual*, 1994, 3. 48) If sitting on your heels is not possible, you can use two chairs. Sit in one chair and separate your knees wide apart. Place another chair in front of you. Interlace your hands behind your back or simply clasp one wrist with the other hand. Inhale and as you exhale slowly drop your forehead to the other chair seat (pad it with a blanket for extra cushioning and raise your arms off your back if you'd like. Hold for 5 - 7 breaths. Inhale up and rest. Repeat if you like.

Limb Four: Breath Control (*Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Balance, Calm and Relax the Mind and Body
Breath/Energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit relaxed with a straight spine. Relax your jaws. Close your eyes. Breathe through both nostrils. Rest your left hand on your lap or knee. Exhale fully. Use the thumb of your right hand to block off your right nostril (allow your middle fingers to curl into the palm or rest on the bridge of the nose). Inhale slowly and smoothly through the left nostril. Close the left nostril with your ring finger, release your right nostril and exhale. Inhale through the right nostril. Close your right nostril, release your left and exhale. This

completes one round of *Alternate Nostril Breathing*. Gradually extend your exhalations until they are about twice as long as your inhalations. Continue doing this for :30 seconds to 3 minutes. If at any time you feel like you are not getting enough air, simply resume breathing normally (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

Limb Five: Sensory Awareness (*Pratyahara*)
Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Focus the Awareness
Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

Yoga Nidra for Heart Health

Introduction

Have the students come into their favorite *Relaxation Pose*. Relax the whole body. The whole body. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. Become aware of your body lying completely relaxed on the floor, -- *Pause* -- totally relaxed on the floor, -- *pause*-- completely and totally relaxed on the floor. *Pause*. Mentally say to yourself, “I am going to practice *Yoga Nidra*. I am aware. I will not sleep.” *Pause*.

Choosing A Resolve

Suggest that they choose a resolve or affirmation to support their heart health, such as:

My hearts is balanced, strong and healthy.

However, let them know that any resolve they wish to work on is fine. Ask them to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. *Pause*.

Rotation of Consciousness

Now we come to rotation of consciousness, by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible the awareness is to go from part to part. Repeat the part in your mind and become aware of that part and feel its energy as best as you can. Keep yourself alert but don't concentrate too intensely. (*Note: this part is done fairly rapidly; you can lengthen it by repeating it up to three times and going more slowly each time it is repeated. If time is short*

it can be eliminated entirely as long as Yoga Nidra is preceded by asana practice {Dharmakirti, 2001})

(Right Side)

Bring your awareness to the right side of your body and to the right hand. *Pause.* To the right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the right waist, the right hip, the right thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- --*pause.*

(Left Side)

Bring your awareness to the left side of your body and to the left hand. To the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the left waist, the left hip, the left thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the left foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- -- *pause.*

(Back)

Bring your awareness to the back of your body. Become aware of the right shoulder blade, the left shoulderblade, -- the right buttock, the left buttock --- the spine -- the whole back together -- *pause.*

(Front)

Now go to the top of the head -- -- the forehead, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the tip of the nose, the upper lip, the lower lip, the chin, the throat, the right breast, the left breast, the heart, the navel center, the abdomen ---

(Major Parts)

The whole of the right leg --- the whole of the left leg---both legs together. *Pause* The whole of the right arm --- the whole of the left arm --- both arms together. The whole of the

back, buttocks, spine, shoulder blades -- the whole of the front---the whole of the head---the whole body together---the whole body together--- whole body together-- -- total awareness --- total stillness --- no sleeping---- *Pause*. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. See your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. Your body is lying on the floor --- perfectly still -- -- on the floor --- in this room. Visualize this image in your mind.

Breath Awareness and Visualization: Your Healthy Heart

(Note: this part should be done slowly and leisurely). Become aware of your natural breath flowing through your body lying on the floor -- *pause*. Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. Do not change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic - - - you are not doing it - - - there is no effort - - - *pause*. Maintain awareness of the breath. Feel the breath moving in and out of the body, flowing in and out of the body. On the inhalation it enters the body. On the exhalation it leaves the body. *Pause*. Be completely aware of the movement of the respiration, in and out of the body - - - do not force the breath - - - just awareness - - - just awareness. *Pause*. Maintain your awareness of the breath, complete awareness of the breath.

Now notice your heart. Become aware of your heart beating inside your chest. Feel your heart beat inside your chest. Tune into the vibration. *Pause*. Become aware of the vibration of the heart. Gentle sensations making themselves known to you in this moment. Gentle vibrations, gentle sensations. Gentle beating of the heart - - inside the chest. Awareness of the heart inside the chest - - - inside the chest. *Pause*. Breathe gently, kindly into your heart. *Pause*.

Tune into your heart and send gentle tendrils of awareness, gentle sensations floating out from the heart, floating outwards through the body, and traveling upward through the throat and between the eyebrows to the brain - - to the brain - - - the brain. Sense the brain begin to beat, beat in tune with the heart - - - in tune with the heart - - - to vibrate with the heart. *Pause*. Sense the connections that allow these two parts of the body to speak to each other - - -connections of

thought and sensation, of emotions, of love - - - *Pause* - - - anger - - - *Pause* - - -fear - - - *Pause* -
- - and pain. *Pause*. With kindness begin to name your emotions, your feelings, your wounds.
Recognize them. Own them. They are yours. Your guideposts, your sensors, your gateway to
awareness. Sense how noticing and naming your emotions, feelings and wounds with loving
kindness and acceptance allows the heart to open, to heal and to spread that healing to your entire
body.

Now bring your awareness gently and slowly back to the heart center. *Pause*. This time
allow gentle tendrils of awareness to move out from the heart and travel downward through the
solar plexus to the womb - - -to the soft fleshy womb - - -to your womb. Sense the womb
pulsing and vibrating in tune with the heart - - - pulsing - - - vibrating - - - beating in tune with
the heart. *Pause*. Sense all the connections that allow these two parts of the body to speak to
each other - - - connections of thought and sensation, of emotions, of love - - - *Pause* - - - anger -
- - *Pause* - - -fear - - - *Pause* - - - and pain. *Pause*. With kindness name these emotions, your
emotions, your feelings, your wounds. Recognize them. Own them. They are yours. Your
guideposts, your sensors, your gateway to awareness. Sense how noticing and naming your
emotions, feelings and wounds with loving kindness and acceptance allows the heart to open, to
heal and to spread that healing to your entire body.

Now, if you are comfortable, allow awareness of your physical heart, your brain and your
womb to go deeper. Sense the tissues which make up your heart, your brain, your womb. Sense
the cells which make up the tissues. *Pause*. Sense the molecules that make up the cells. *Pause*.
Sense the atoms that make up the molecules and the space and energy and intelligence that fill
the spaces between the atoms. *Pause*. Wide deep vast comforting loving intelligent space and
energy - - vast spaces, loving intelligence - - -radiant energy. For the next minute allow yourself
to rest in that loving space as you begin to sense your energetic nature and the many connections

that exist between your heart, your brain and your womb - - - your three hearts. *Pause.* Tune into the flow of this intelligent energy. Begin to open your channels of internal sensation and communication, listen to any messages, sensations or information your heart, brain and womb send you. Allow yourself to notice any information, any feelings present there. If this is too difficult know that you can withdraw and look from a distance that is comfortable for you - - - notice only what you comfortably can at this moment. Explore what you find as fully as you can. *Pause.* If you can't that's fine, just notice what is or isn't there. If you feel nothing, what does nothing feel like? *Pause.* Now return to sensing the atoms that make up the molecules of your heart, brain and womb -- -- and then the molecules that make up the cells, and the cells that make up the tissues - - -Bring your awareness back to your heart in the center of your chest - - - feel it beat with a rich, full vibrant rhythm. Inhale a long deep breath and imagine that breath coming into your body through the center of your forehead and traveling into your heart. With each exhalation allow any tension in and around the heart to drain away, leaving the heart, refreshed, calm, centered, balanced, relaxed and energized. Again and again and again, inhale long deep breaths through the center of your forehead and into your heart. Exhalation and with loving kindness allow any tension in and around the heart to drain away, leaving the heart, refreshed, calm, centered, balanced, relaxed and energized. Then feel that calm centered relaxation flow from your heart to your entire body. Breathing into the heart - - -letting tension drain away from the heart, and the entire body. *Long pause.* Slowly return your awareness to your physical body - - - and for the next few minutes allow yourself to rest inside your skin and feel the whole of the physical body, your breath, your energy, your brain, your womb and your heart.

Repeating the Resolve

Ask your students to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, intention, feeling and emphasis.

Complete Stillness/Deep Relaxation

(Notes: 1] *This is an excellent place to play music. The best choices are mantra tapes, brain sync tapes or music designed for relaxation that does not have a melody; 2] if time is short, this section can be eliminated).*

Finish

Become aware of your breathing, your natural breathing, your natural breathing. Awareness of breathing. Awareness of relaxation. Awareness of your body lying on the floor. Awareness of the whole body lying on the floor. Begin to move your body by rolling the wrists and ankles in little circles in one direction and then the other. Inhale the arms over head and stretch through the fingers and out through the heels. Inhale and roll the body onto one side and stretch. Roll the body onto the other side and stretch. Roll onto your back and bring the feet up in the air and place the soles of the feet together and the palms of the hands together and rub hard and fast, bringing up some heat. Bring the knees into the chest and the palms over the eyes. breath and relax. Use the fingertips to massage the temples and any other place on the face that needs a little help. Roll over onto one side and use your hands to help you up into a seated position.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Strengthen the Skill and Ability to Concentrate
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

Cross My Heart Pose Meditation

Come to a comfortable seated position with your spine straight. Place the fingers of your right hand in your left armpit and the fingers of your left hand in your right armpit with the thumbs of both hands pressing into your chest. The heart meridian begins under the armpits and this hand position connects the first points. Close your eyes and feel your body. Maintain concentration on your heart area and focus on your heart beat for 1 - 3 minutes. If the mind wanders (it probably will) gently bring it back to your heart (Gach, *Acu-Yoga*, 1996, 70).

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Preparation for Meditation
Bliss Level/s, Realization of Self as Unity Consciousness (*Anandamayakosha*)

Silent Meditation

Students practice their own personal form of meditation (continuing with concentration meditation, relaxing the concentration practice and practicing mindfulness meditation or any other variation that suits the student or client). Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Surrender
Unity Consciousness is Beyond the Koshas and Individual Effort

Closing Ritual

Closing rituals may include the practice of Yoga Mudra, the chanting of “OM,” a 'thought for the day,' a poem, or my personal favorite, the Three Breath Blessing: Take one long deep breath and hold it. see a miracle happening for yourself in this minute. Let the breath go.

Take a long deep breath and hold it; this time for someone or a group of people you love or care about, and see them at their very best. Let the breath go. Take a third long deep breath and hold it; this time for the entire planet and see it as a place of peace and love. Let the breath go and returning full circle breath and become aware of yourself and see if your body needs a last stretch, twist or move. Give your body what it is asking for and then slowly and gently bring yourself back to this room in a relaxed state of awareness with an open, balanced heart.

Namaste.

SECTION IV
YOGA FOR THE PREVENTION OF OSTEOPOROSIS

Background

Bones produce blood cells, store calcium and phosphorous, and provide a solid framework for upright posture, support and movement. Bone health is a significant concern in women's mid-life health and beyond (Northrup, 1998 550, 748). The focus of prevention for this section is one of exercise and relaxation through Yoga. The question of hormone replacement therapy and calcium supplementation is beyond the scope of this program.

Bones are composed mainly of calcium. During the early years of a woman's life, bones are reconstructed as quickly as they lose mass. However, when a woman turns forty, and her estrogen, progesterone and androgen hormonal levels begin to shift, and the collagen mix which forms the foundation of healthy bone changes, the continued reconstruction of healthy bone can weaken so that replacement does not keep up with loss of density. Bone loss is accelerated if a woman is surgically menopausal. This bone loss can lead to osteoporosis, a disease that has been called 'the silent killer.' It is, according to Northrup, "a potentially fatal disease," as the bones become more porous, brittle and subject to fracture. Between 18 and 30 percent of all women over the age of sixty-five will suffer from a hip fracture by the time they reach ninety and 12-20 percent of those with hip fractures will die of related complications (Northrup, 2000, 370). Prevention of osteoporosis should begin during perimenopause but a woman can take assertive action at any stage of menopause to strengthen and reclaim her bone health.

Prevention begins through exercise which stresses and thereby strengthens the bone. Bones grow stronger when they are used. It follows the old adage, "move it or lose it." It has been clearly documented that weightlessness experienced by astronauts and prolonged bed rest results in significant bone loss (Northrup, 2000, .374). Other factors which affect bone health

are the ability of osteoblasts (bone growth factors) to stimulate bone growth faster than osteoclasts (bone growth inhibitors) can inhibit growth. Osteoblasts, the growth factors are stimulated by progesterone, estrogen, testosterone, isoflavones, SERMS (selective estrogen receptor modulators), vitamin D and exercise. Osteoclasts, the bone growth inhibitors are stimulated by immune system disorders, depression, inactivity, nutrient poor diets, steroid drugs and depleted hormones (Northrup, 2000, 374). I also encourage women to get a baseline bone density scan which will measure current bone density so that the effectiveness of her prevention program has something to measure itself against over time.

Yoga can have positive effects on bones health through postures which stress and strengthen the bones and techniques which reduce stress and promote feelings of well-being which in turn affect the health of the immune system. Deep squats are contraindicated for women with osteoporosis who may be at risk for bone fractures.

Yoga For Prevention of Osteoporosis

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Bring Awareness to Lifestyle Habits and Patterns

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Education and Sharing

- What is Osteoporosis?
- How do I know if I'm at risk?
- Q & A, discussion, sharing around osteoporosis

Centering

After checking in and education, move to a short body scan, centering exercise or opening chant to bring the student more deeply into contact with their body. Example:

Come to a comfortable seated position with your hands resting on your knees. Close your eyes and bring your attention to the base of your physical body. Become aware of how the

base of your body is connected to the floor. Then bring your attention to the base of your spine and feel, sense, or imagine how your spine connects to the pelvis. From that point, allow your awareness to move up your spine, vertebrae by vertebrae, allowing the spine to stretch upward, not arched too far forward or slumped in the middle - easy and comfortable. When you reach the top of your spine allow your attention to travel over the back of the head and come to rest on the top of the head. Then feeling grounded through the base of your body, centered through the spine and torso and lifted through the shoulders, neck and head, bring your hands together in prayer position with the backs of the thumbs pressed against the sternum and let's bring ourselves to this time and place (*Note: use any opening chant you are comfortable with or just allow the students to sit quietly for :30 seconds to a minute*). Now inhale and hold the breath for a few seconds, slowly exhale and relax the hands down to the knees and bring your attention to your breath.

Limb Three & Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Postures to Stress and Strengthen the Bones

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

WARM AND STRETCH THE BODY

Sacral Rocking I and II

Sacral Rock I. Have students lie on their backs with their knees up and feet on the floor. Inner edges of the feet touch and the knees are kept together. **Although Schatz's description does not include regulated breathing, this program does.** With the feet and the knees together, inhale. On the exhalation move the knees slowly 6 - 8 inches to the left and inhale back to center. Exhale and move the knees 6-8 inches to the right. Repeat at least 10 times (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1996, 136).

Sacral Rock II. Cross the left leg over the right, **keep the back of the left thigh closed completely over the top of the right thigh (no spaces peeking through).** With **regulated breathing**, rock back and forth as you did in *Sacral Rocking I*. Repeat at least 10 times, then repeat with the right leg crossed over the left (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1996, 136).

Pelvic Tilts

Have students lie on their backs with their knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with Lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to inhale while holding the pelvis in neutral.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Repeat slowly at least 10 times. Rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21).

4 Part Pelvic Lift - Gentle

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to simply press the belly button toward the backbone.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Pressing the feet into the floor, inhale and lift the spine off the floor rolling up one vertebrae at a time. Hold the breath and the lift a second or two at the upper limit, then exhale down. Repeat slowly and easily several times. Bring both knees to your chest, and rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.21).

Knee To Chest

With the left leg extended (**or bent**) **inhale and raise the arms overhead.** Exhale and bring the right knee into the chest. Interlace the fingers around the knee (**or behind the thigh**) and pull the right thigh toward the chest (**or toward the armpit if pulling the thigh toward the torso creates discomfort**). (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 3.63). Inhale, then exhale and bring your chin to your knee and hold. Exhale and return your head to the floor. Repeat three times. Change sides; repeat (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 41)

Knee Circles

With both knees drawn into the chest, and the hands around the knees or behind the thighs, roll the knees in gentle circles. Or place the fists under the body on either side of the sacrum (**or place the palms on the floor and press the knuckles up**) move the hips around rolling over the hands to massage the sacrum, hips, buttocks and lumbar spine or **gently pulse the body up and down moving the knuckles or fists around to find the trigger release points that bring the most relief** (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.20).

Stick Posture.

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the arms sideways and then overhead, until they are stretched to full length; bring the palms together if possible. At the same time, stretch the body and legs to the fullest comfortable extent. Pull the toes up and back and push out through the heels. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Rest. Repeat once (Weller, 1995).

WORK THE BODY:

WEIGHT BEARING POSTURES FOR PREVENTION OF OSTEOPOROSIS

Mountain Pose

Stand erect with feet together, toes and heels touching (**or shoulder width apart if necessary**), with the weight of the body in the center of the arches. Stretch the toes from the bottom and keep them relaxed. Keep the ankles in line with each other. Tighten the knees, pull the knee caps upward and tighten the quadricep muscles. Keep the shins in line with the thigh bones. Breathe normally. Compress the hips and tighten the buttocks. Keep the spine erect. Lift the sternum and expand the chest. Lift the abdomen upwards. Keep the neck erect and the head straight; do not tilt forwards or backwards. Look straight ahead. Keep the arms by the sides of the body, fingers together and hands downward, the palms facing the thighs and in line with them. Do not lift the shoulders. Stand still for 20 - 30 seconds (**work to a minute or longer**) (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110). Rest.

Tree Pose - Gentle

Stand erect in *Mountain Pose*. Interlock the fingers, turn the wrists and palms outwards, and stretch the arms forwards in line with the shoulders. **Inhale and** take the extended arms upwards by the sides of the ears. The palms should face the ceiling. Move the back ribs forward. Lift the chest and take the shoulder-blades deep in. Keep the head erect and look straight forward. Breathing normally, maintain this posture for 10-15 seconds (**work up to a minute or more**). **Exhale and** lower the arms down. Release the fingers. **Rest in *Mountain Pose***. Note: Many sources call this a variation of *Mountain Pose* but Geeta Iyengar calls it *Tree Pose* (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110).

Standing Side Stretch - Gentle - Moderate

Stand in *Mountain Pose* with your feet together (or hip width apart. As you inhale raise your left arm above alongside your ear, with the palm facing inward. Place your right hand on your right hip. As you exhale, lean to the right. Turn your head to look down and press your hips sideways. Be here :30 seconds to a minutes and then do the other side. **Or you can inhale up and exhale down, alternating from side to side for an easier version** (Schiffman, *The Art and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, 1996, 102). Rest.

Tree Pose - More Challenging

Stand erect in *Mountain Pose*. Shift your weight onto the left leg, press your left foot down into the ground as you lift up on your kneecap. Lift your pelvis off the standing leg point your tailbone toward the left heel creating a slight 'cat tilt.' Focus your eyes on a point on the ground, in front of you or straight ahead. Come up on the right toes and rotate the whole right leg outward from the hip joint. Raise the foot and place it alongside the left leg at the height most comfortable for you. Try to press the foot into the leg and the leg into the foot with equal pressure and firm up your alignment: weight placement,

foot, kneecap, abs, tailbone, right leg & foot. Bring your hands into prayer position (*Namaste*) fingers spread wide. When you are ready, raise your hands above your head, palm pressing into palm or interlace your fingers in steeple position (index fingers together and pointing straight up). Draw the shoulders down from the ears and hold *Tree Pose* for several breaths. This can be practiced with the back against a wall at first for a gentler version (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.119). Rest.

Chair Pose - Gentle

Begin in Mountain Pose. Bend the knees and place the hands on the knees or the hips. Tighten the buttocks. Hold for several breaths (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.39). Rest.

Chair Pose - Moderate

Stand with your back to the wall, your feet about 18 inches or more apart. Begin to bend your knees, using the wall for support, and making sure that your knees move directly over your little toes, not your big toes. In other words, the knees should not collapse inward but stay rolled out. As you bend, attempt to bring your thighs parallel to the floor. Keep your breathing even. When you have gone as far as you can toward the completed position, hold it for three to seven breaths, and slowly come up with an exhalation. A variation is to put your arms out in front at shoulder height, as you hold the pose (Judith Lasater's *Yoga Room*, www.onebody.com). Rest.

Chair Pose - More Challenging

With the feet and knees hip width apart, stretch the arms straight out in front or overhead. Sit downward as if sitting into a chair. Draw your weight slightly backward, keep your shoulders down and your knees in line with your ankles. Keep the torso upright with the spine neutral and the chest and back open to the breath, Hold with natural breathing as you allow the heat to build and spread through the body (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.58). Rest.

Warrior II - Gentle

Begin in a short standing stance with the right foot turned out and the left foot turned slightly back. Bring the arms up, stretching them out sideways with the fingertips stretching away. Bend the right knee slightly and look out over the fingertips (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.42).

Warrior II - Moderate

Place your hands on a wall shoulder width apart and just above shoulder height. With your left toes turned up the wall and the sole of the foot on the floor, step the right foot back 3.5 to 4 feet. **Come up on the toes of the back foot and press the ball of the foot into the floor. This helps you to keep the hips square.** Square your hips to the wall as much as possible by bringing the right hip forward and the left hip back. Exhale and bend the left knee toward the wall as close to 90 degrees as you can while keeping the right leg straight and strong. Keep the arms straight, the shoulder blades moving down

the back and open the chest as wide as you can. Bend and straighten the leg 3-5 times. Repeat on the other side (Sparrowe & Walden, *Yoga Journal*, June 2001, 110). Rest.

Warrior - More Challenging

Stand in Mountain Pose. While inhaling, jump the feet 4 to 4 1/2 feet apart and stretch the arms out sideways in line with the shoulders, palms facing down. Turn the right foot sideways to 90 degrees and the left foot slightly in. Keep the legs straight. Take a breath. While exhaling bend the right leg to 90 degrees. turn the head to the right and keep the left eye focused on the right palm. Breathe normally and remain steady for :20 to :30 seconds (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 115). Rest.

Lateral Angle - Gentle

Start in *Warrior Pose* with the right knee bent, knee over the toe. **Inhale** and stretch your right arm up toward the ceiling, reaching out with your fingers. **Exhale**, while keeping the right side of your body long. Breathe naturally and tilt your entire trunk so your right forearm can rest on a table or your thigh can rest against the table (**or the back of a chair**). Be sure to bend from the right hip, not from the waist. Keep your legs active by pushing through your heels into the floor. Once you are steady, reach your left arm **up to the ceiling or** across your left ear so it forms a continuous line with your left leg. Stay in the pose for 2-3 breaths. Repeat on the other side. Schatz calls this, *Extended Warrior* (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 123). Rest.

Lateral Angle - Moderate

Stand with your legs wide apart and your right foot turned out. Your arms are stretched out to shoulder height. Look to the right. Exhale, bend your right knee and lunge to the right. **Bring the right forearm down to rest on the right knee. Keep your knee in line with your ankle at the end of the movement.** Inhale and bring your left arm over your head, palm downward, until your arm is flat against your ears. Breathe evenly for four breaths. On each exhalation, rotate your left hip and shoulder back and lengthen through your left arm and fingers of your left hand. Inhale and return. Repeat two more times on this side, then change sides and repeat three times to the left side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 169). Rest.

Lateral Angle - More Challenging

Stand in *Mountain Pose* jump (**or step**) the legs 4 to 4.5 feet apart and stretch the arms sideways in line with the shoulders. Keep the palms facing the floor. Turn the right leg sideways 90 degrees to the right, and turn the left foot slightly in. Tighten the knees and the thighs. Bend the right leg at the knee until the thigh and the calf form a right angle. the right thigh is parallel and the shin perpendicular to the ground. take one or two breaths. Exhale and take the trunk sideways to the right, place **the right elbow on the knee** or the palm on the floor by the side of the right foot. Stretch the left arm **straight up to the ceiling, or** over the ear. Turn the neck and look up. Hold and breathe normally

for :20 - :30 seconds. To come out, **inhale, straighten the right knee and lift the trunk by pressing the foot into the floor.** Repeat on the other side (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 112). Rest.

Triangle - Gentle

Stand with your feet comfortably wide apart and your arms stretched out to shoulder height. Look to the right and turn your right foot out and your left foot slightly inward. Inhale, then exhale and lean over to the right, stretching your arm parallel to the floor. Drop your right hand to your ankle (or shin or knee) and clasp it firmly. Turn, twist and look up as you inhale, and extend your left arm up to the ceiling at right angles to your body. Exhale and pull your left hip and shoulder back to rotate your spine and create space between your vertebrae for energy to flow freely up and down your spine. Ground through the legs, extend the spine and twist. Hold for several breaths. To return, look down at your right hand, inhale and come back to the starting position. Turn your right foot in, your left foot out and repeat on the other side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 169). Note: Maddern calls this a ***Standing Spine Twist***. Rest.

Revolved Triangle - Gentle

Place a chair (seat facing you) about 3.5 feet from your left side. Place your hands on your hips. Step your left foot forward so that it comes slightly under the chair. Turn your right foot in about 45 degrees and make sure that your knees line up with the feet. **Or come up on the toes of the back foot and press the ball of the foot into the floor.** Square your hips toward the chair as much as possible. As you exhale, place your right hand on the chair back or seat or place your forearm on the seat, whichever is most comfortable, and allow your torso to twist from the abdomen (not the shoulders). Ground through the legs, extend the spine and twist. Hold for several breaths. **To come out, inhale, bend the front knee, press through the foot, exhale and lift up.** Repeat on the other side (Sparrowe & Walden, *Yoga Journal*, June 2001, 110). Rest in *Mountain Pose*.

Spread Leg Forward Fold: Gentle

Kneel on the floor, hands shoulder width apart; knees hip width apart, toes tucked under. Inhale. Exhale and move your body weight forward onto your hands and push your hips up to the ceiling while straightening your legs. **You can also start from standing by placing the hands on the floor or on the seat of a chair depending upon flexibility.** Stretch through the spine with your head hanging loosely between your shoulders. Exhale and move your weight into the back of your heels by pushing on your palms. Breathe slowly seven times. To release move the weight forward onto the hands. Breathe slowly seven times. Step the feet together and bend the knees. Sit back on the heels and rest or come into a comfortable seated position. **Or you can step one foot in, bring the other in after it and rest in standing. Additional helpful modifications: Once in the posture, adjust your position so that both your feet are able to press evenly into the**

floor. You may need to step the feet apart or bring the legs further in or away from the hands. To come out, place the hands on the hips, press the feet into the floor and lift up with a straight back. Step the feet in and rest in Mountain Pose. Maddern calls this posture The Elephant. You can use this posture to warm up for the more challenging version which follows (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 141, 178).

Spread Leg Forward Fold - More Challenging

Stand easily. Place the hands on the hips with the fingers pointing forwards. Step the legs 4.5 to 5 feet apart (your widest stance). Tighten the knees, keep the toes pointing forward. Place the hands on the floor in line with the feet, fingers spread wide (or on a block or stool). Tighten the elbows. Raise the head up keeping the back concave. Stay here for 10 - 15 seconds breathing normally. To come out, place the hands back on the hips, **press the feet into the floor and lift up with a straight back. Step the feet in and rest in Mountain Pose (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 122).**

Down Face Dog with a Chair - Gentle

Put a sturdy, level chair against a wall. Place the heels of the hands on the edge of the chair shoulder width apart with the fingers spread wide. Step a full arms length back until the heels are slightly behind the hips, with the feet hip width apart. Press the hands into the chair and push the chair towards the wall. Inhale and come up onto the toes, exhale lower the heels. **Adjust the legs toward or away from the chair until a lengthening stretch is felt through the spine. Bend the knees if necessary.** Relax your head. Think of moving your body back toward the legs as you push the chair toward the wall. **Keep the breathing steady for :30 seconds to a minute. To come out, step the right foot forward, bring the left knee to the floor, bring the right knee to the floor and rest in Child's Pose.** Or bring the body forward, bend one knee and stand up slowly. If you feel lightheaded, sit in the chair for a few minutes. This can also be done against a wall, or a tree (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66).

Down Face Dog - More Challenging

Start on your hands and knees. Knees hip width apart, toes tucked under. Spread the fingers. Inhale. Exhale and push your hips to the ceiling, so that your arms and legs are straight. Inhale, and as you exhale again, press your heels toward the floor and stretch backward. Keep your feet pointing straight ahead. Drop your head. Think of moving your body back toward the legs. Keep the breathing steady; slowly come down after five to 10 breaths. Repeat the pose. When you are finished the second time, come down and sit back on your heels into *Child's Pose*. For an added hamstring stretch, do this with your heels against a wall. Push into the posture but take your right leg up the wall, turn

the toes under and straighten your leg. Stretch through both legs and hold for 3 - 5 breaths. Repeat to the other side and then rest in *Child's Pose* (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 54 - 57).

Upward Facing Dog To Downward Facing Dog with a Chair - Gentle

Begin in *Downward Facing Dog* with hands on the chair seat. To move into *Upward-Facing Dog*, change the positioning of your hands slightly so that they firmly grip the edges of the chair seat. Keeping your hands firmly gripping the seat of the chair, **inhale** and bring the tops of your thighs and pubic bone toward the chair. Continue firmly pressing down into the chair seat, straightening your arms, rolling the shoulders back, lifting the sternum and opening the chest. **On an inhalation**, lift the head back without constricting the neck. Keep the hands gripping the chair as you **exhale** and stretch back into *Downward Facing Dog*. Go back and forth, **inhaling** into *Upward Facing Dog* and **exhaling** into *Downward Facing Dog*. Work up to 10 times. To come out, **inhale**, bring your body forward toward the chair, bend one knee and stand up slowly. If you feel lightheaded, sit in the chair for a few minutes (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66).

Upward Facing Dog - More Challenging

Lie down on a non-slippery surface. Position your hands next to your chest, keeping the elbows close to the body. Place the feet hip-width apart. Stretch your legs back and pull your knee caps up so that the thigh muscles feel firm. On an inhalation, lift your upper body off the floor straightening your arms and lifting your chest. Look forward or slightly up, keeping the neck muscles long and relaxed. The shoulders should stretch back and down. Try to bring the legs and pubic bone off the floor. Keep the buttocks firm and the legs stretching back. Don't sink the weight of the body to the floor. Keep breathing. Hold for a few breaths, then lower yourself to the floor and rest in *Child's Pose*. As strength improves, stretch from *Upward Facing Dog* back into *Downward Facing Dog*. (Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, 1997, 66). Rest.

Rabbit - More Challenging

Come onto your hands and knees. From this position drop the crown of your head onto the floor and tuck your chin into your chest. Stretch your hands toward your feet. Grasp your heels if you can or relax the hands along the floor, palms up. Slowly turn your head from side to side a little bit and lean forward so all areas of the neck are stretched. Breathe deeply. Remain in this position 30 seconds to a minute. Longer if you want more of a challenge. Repeat and then rest in Child Pose (Gach, *Acu-Yoga*, 1996, 200; LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.156-3.157).

COOL AND REST THE BODY

Shoulder Shrugs

In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the knees and pressing into the knees, with the elbows in tight to the body, inhale and lift the shoulders, exhale and press or drop them down. Continue for at least :30 seconds with a slow easy pace or faster if its comfortable. Inhale, shrug the shoulders up and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, roll the shoulders back and down. Repeat twice, then Rest (adapted from: Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 45)

Head and Neck Stretches

In an easy seated pose, with the hands on the knees, inhale and slowly turn the head to the left, exhale to center. Inhale and turn the head to the right. Exhale to center. Repeat slowly for at least :30 seconds (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.4)

Supported Child's Pose

Select a carpeted area or use a Yoga mat to practice this pose. Gather a large round pillow or two. Kneel down and sit back on your heels. Place the pillow(s) in front and between the knees, Lean forward to rest on them. If this feels uncomfortable for the knees, try adding another pillow. Either hug the pillow(s) or place your arms back along side of the body. Turn the head to one side, close the eyes and breathe quietly. Hold this pose for one to two minutes. To come up, place the hands underneath the shoulders, push up with an inhalation, come up on the hands and knees, and walk back with the hands so the weight is on the feet (*Judith Lasater's Yoga Room*, 2001, www.onebody.com).

Limb Four: Breath Control (*Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Breath Visualization to Strengthen the Bones
Breath/Energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

The Etheric Breath

Sit comfortably and as you inhale imagine that you are drawing golden energy down through the crown of your head to your heart center. Hold your breath and mentally move this energy from your heart, to your solar plexus, to your spleen (the spleen is on the left side of the body, under the heart) and back to your heart in a triangle shape three times. **As you exhale mentally direct your energy to the bones of your skeleton and see them growing stronger and denser, glowing with health and being strengthened with each exhalation of golden energy.** Repeat for a total of seven times. Then sit quietly and see **the bones of your skeleton** being healed (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 86).

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit relaxed with a straight spine. Relax your jaws. Close your eyes. Breathe through both nostrils. Rest your left hand on your lap or knee. Exhale fully. Use the thumb of your right hand to block off your right nostril (allow your middle fingers to curl into the palm or rest on the bridge of the nose). Inhale slowly and smoothly through the left nostril. Close the left nostril with your ring finger, release your right nostril and exhale. Inhale through the right nostril. Close your right nostril, release your left and exhale. This completes one round of *Alternate Nostril Breathing*. Gradually extend your exhalations until they are about twice as long as your inhalations. Continue doing this for :30 seconds to 3 minutes. If at any time you feel like you are not getting enough air, simply resume breathing normally (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

Limb Five: Sensory Awareness (*Pratyahara*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Focus the Awareness
Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

Yoga Nidra for Bone Health and Strength

Introduction

(Note: this section can be lengthened by contracting and relaxing smaller sections of the part by part; it can also be eliminated if time is short - just begin with "Relax the whole body")

Inhale and press the toes away from the head as you press the backs of the knees into the floor, contracting all the muscles of the legs and squeezing the buttock muscles into a tight hard knot. Exhale and relax. Inhale and make fists of the hands, tightening all the muscles of the upper body and face, head and neck. Exhale and relax. Inhale and lift the shoulders up to the ears. Exhale and roll them back and down. Inhale and stretch your chin up to the ceiling. Exhale and relax. Inhale and press your chin into the your chest. Exhale and relax. Inhale and roll your head to the left. Exhale and relax. Inhale and roll your head to the right. Exhale and relax. *Pause*. Relax the whole body. The whole body. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. Become aware of your body lying completely relaxed on the floor, -- *Pause* -- totally relaxed on the floor, -- *pause*.-- completely and totally relaxed on the floor. *Pause*. Mentally say to yourself, "I am aware. I will not sleep." *Pause*.

Choosing A Resolve

Suggest that they choose a resolve or affirmation to support their bone health, such as:

My bones are growing strong and healthy

However, let them know that any resolve they wish to work on is fine. Ask them to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. *Pause.*

Rotation of Consciousness

Now we come to rotation of consciousness, by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible the awareness is to go from part to part. Repeat the part in your mind and become aware of that part and feel its energy as best as you can. Keep yourself alert but don't concentrate too intensely. *(Note: this part is done fairly rapidly; you can lengthen it by repeating it up to three times and going more slowly each time it is repeated. If time is short it can be eliminated entirely as long as Yoga Nidra is preceded by asana practice {Dharmakirti, 2001})*

(Right Side)

Bring your awareness to the right side of your body and to the right hand. *Pause.* To the right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the right waist, the right hip, the right thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- *pause.*

(Left Side)

Bring your awareness to the left side of your body and to the left hand. To the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the left waist, the left hip, the left thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the left foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second, toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe -- -- *pause.*

(Back)

Bring your awareness to the back of your body. Become aware of the right shoulder blade, the left shoulderblade, -- the right buttock, the left buttock --- the spine -- the whole back together -- *pause*.

(Front)

Now go to the top of the head -- -- the forehead, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the tip of the nose, the upper lip, the lower lip, the chin, the throat, the right breast, the left breast, the heart, the navel center, the abdomen ---.

(Major Parts)

The whole of the right leg --- the whole of the left leg---both legs together. *Pause* The whole of the right arm --- the whole of the left arm --- both arms together. The whole of the back, buttocks, spine, shoulder blades -- the whole of the front---the whole of the head---the whole body together---the whole body together--- whole body together-- -- total awareness --- total stillness --- no sleeping---- *Pause*. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. See your whole body lying on the floor. *Pause*. Your body is lying on the floor --- perfectly still -- -- on the floor --- in this room. Visualize this image in your mind.

Breath Visualization: Golden Bones

(Note: this part should be done slowly and leisurely). Become aware of your natural breath flowing through your body lying on the floor -- *pause*. Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. Do not change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic --- you are not doing it --- there is no effort --- *pause*. Maintain awareness of the breath. Feel the breath moving in and out of the body, flowing in and out of the body. On the inhalation it enters the body. On the exhalation it leaves the body. *Pause*. Be completely aware of the movement of the respiration, in and out of the body ---- do not force the breath -- just awareness----just

awareness. *Pause.* Maintain your awareness of the breath, complete awareness of the breath.

Now bring your awareness to the base of your spine, to the point where the base of your spine, the sacrum, connects with the wide flaring bones of the pelvis. Become fully aware of that connection between your upper body and lower body. Breathe into that spot and relax into that spot. *Pause.* Now right in the middle of that spot see a glowing ball of golden energy - - - a glowing ball of golden energy sitting at the base of your spine, right where the sacrum, connects with the wide flaring bones of the pelvis - - - a ball of golden energy - - glowing ball of energy - - - sitting at the base of your spine. Watch carefully as a stream of light slowly emerges from the ball and begins to travel upwards through the bones of the spine --- up --- up --- up --- surrounding and covering each vertebrae of the spine with golden glowing energy, strengthening, healing, filling the bones of the spine with energy and strength. Visualize the stream of light moving through the lower spine. *Pause.* As the stream of light moves up the mid spine to the upper spine, see it divide into smaller streamers and spill out over the ribs, flowing around the curves of each rib from the back of the spine to the front of the body, the upper ribs filling the sternum with energizing golden energy - - -surrounding - - -filling - - - and flowing around the bones of the ribs and sternum. *Pause.* See it rise in a gentle curve through the bones of the neck and over the back of the head and come to rest on the top of your skull. See the golden energy spread in waves over your skull and the bones of your face, strengthening them, energizing them, and healing them - - -spreading in waves - - - ever widening waves - - - covering the bones of the skull and face strengthening,, energizing, and healing. *Pause.*

See the waves of energy flow like a waterfall over the bones of the head and neck; over the bones of the shoulders and down through the bones of the arms into the hands and fingers, penetrating and filling all the bones of your shoulders, arms, hands and fingers with glowing, strengthening, healing energy - - -spreading - - -filling - - - golden energy - - -strengthening

energy - - - healing energy.

Now gently move your awareness back to the to the point where the base of your spine, the sacrum, connects with the wide flaring bones of the pelvis; back to the ball of golden glowing energy. Watch carefully as another steam of light slowly emerges from the ball and begins to travel out over and around the pelvis, soaking the bones with strengthening energy. See the golden energy flow around the pelvis stimulating the growth of the bones of the pelvis and the hips. See the energy penetrating and filling your hip bones with glowing, strengthening, healing energy - - - penetrating, filling, strengthening. Watch as the stream of light energy flows down the thigh bones to the knees. *Pause.* Feel the golden energy soak the bones of the knees with healing, warming, soothing energy and flow on to the bones of the lower legs, ankles and feet, strengthening them, energizing them, healing them - - -glowing pelvis, golden hips, glowing golden leg bones. *Pause.* Now see your entire skeleton, soaked with bright, glowing, golden energy, alive, and vital, bones healthy and growing, becoming heavier and denser and stronger. See and feel your entire skeleton relaxed and rested and filled with strength, health, well being and energy. *Pause.* Wonderful.

Stay quiet and allow the feeling of well-being to penetrate your entire system. Open to whatever insight or perception you need to work toward your optimal bone health. If nothing comes. That's fine too. Let yourself be absorbed in beautiful feelings of strength, health and well-being, deep peace and relaxation. Continue your relaxed breathing and enjoy the feeling of your bones as strong, healthy, energized and balanced.

Repeating the Resolve

Ask your students to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, intention, feeling and emphasis.

Complete Stillness/Deep Relaxation

(Notes: 1] *This is an excellent place to play music. The best choices are mantra tapes, brain sync tapes or music designed for relaxation that does not have a melody; 2] if time is short, this section can be eliminated).*

Finish

Become aware of your breathing, your natural breathing, your natural breathing.
Awareness of breathing. Awareness of relaxation. Awareness of your body lying on the floor.
Awareness of the whole body lying on the floor. Begin to move your body by rolling the wrists and ankles in little circles in one direction and then the other. Inhale the arms over head and stretch through the fingers and out through the heels. Inhale and roll the body onto one side and stretch. Roll the body onto the other side and stretch. Roll onto your back and bring the feet up in the air and place the soles of the feet together and the palms of the hands together and rub hard and fast, bringing up some heat. Bring the knees into the chest and the palms over the eyes.
breath and relax. Use the fingertips to massage the temples and any other place on the face that needs a little help. Roll over onto one side and use your hands to help you up into a seated position.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Strengthen the Skill and Ability to Concentrate
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

Ajapa Stage I (adapted from Saraswati, *Yoga and Kriya*, 1981, 497-98).

This is a breath channeling exercise to focus the attention and train the student in the art of concentration.

Step 1. In an easy seated position. Inhale and imagine the breath entering through the navel center of the body and rising to the level of the throat. Exhale and allow the breath to exit downward from the throat to the navel center. Repeat. If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath.

Step 2. If more of a challenge is desired, use the *Chinmaya Mudra*. Place the tip of the thumb and the index finger together. Allow the other three fingers to fold in and press against the palm. Relax the hands on the knees or the thighs if the student is in a chair. This mudra is cooling, soothing and relaxing. It focuses the breath in the low abdomen and is good for stress reduction and balancing sexual energy, (LePage, IYT Manual, Mudra handout). If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath.

Step 3. To add yet another layer of concentration use the mantra *So* on the inhalation and *Ham* on the exhalation. The mantra means, “I am consciousness,” If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath and the mantra. “This practice brings mental peace and onepointedness of mind and leads directly to meditation. Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits (Saraswati, *Yoga and Kriya*, 1981, 497-98).

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Preparation for Meditation

Bliss Level/s, Realization of Self as Unity Consciousness (*Anandamayakosha*)

Silent Meditation

Students practice their own personal form of meditation (continuing with concentration meditation, relaxing the concentration practice and practicing mindfulness meditation or any other variation that suits the student or client). Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)
Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Surrender
Unity Consciousness is Beyond the Koshas and Individual Effort

Closing Ritual

Closing rituals may include the practice of Yoga Mudra, the chanting of “OM,” a 'thought for the day,' a poem, or my personal favorite, the Three Breath Blessing: Take one long deep breath and hold it. see a miracle happening for yourself in this minute. Let the breath go. Take a long deep breath and hold it; this time for someone or a group of people you love or care about, and see them at their very best. let the breath go. Take a third long deep breath and hold it; this time for the entire planet and see it as a place of peace and love. Let the breath go and returning full circle breath and become aware of yourself and see if your body needs a last stretch, twist or move. give your body what it is asking for and then slowly and gently bring yourself back to this room in a relaxed state of awareness. Namaste.

SECTION V

OVERALL PROGRAM FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

Background

Because it is not always possible to have props on hand or to have a group of students or clients that all want to work on the same issue or aspect of menopause, I have sequenced an overall program that combines key elements of each of the previous programs and takes into consideration the ‘mixed levels’ component of most general classes. The following sequence uses no props, describes the posture in graduated levels so that those who wish a gentle practice can do the gentle or moderate modification; and those who want a more active practice can use the gentle modification to warm up and then do the moderate or more challenging level. This program follows the principles of practice described in chapter eight.

Yoga For Overall Health and Healing

Limbs One & Two: Lifestyle/Ethics (*Yama/Niyama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Bring Awareness to Lifestyle Habits and Patterns

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Mental/emotional level (*Manomayakosha*)

Education and Sharing

- How Yoga works to bring awareness to the body/mind
- How Yoga helps to reduce stress, improve health and the sense of well-being
- Q & A, discussion, and sharing

Centering

After checking in and education, move to a short body scan, centering exercise or opening chant to bring the student more deeply into contact with their body. Example:

Come to a comfortable seated position with your hands resting on your knees. Close your eyes and bring your attention to the base of your physical body. Become aware of how the base of your body is connected to the floor. Then bring your attention to the base of your spine

and feel, sense, or imagine how your spine connects to the pelvis. From that point, allow your awareness to move up your spine, vertebrae by vertebrae, allowing the spine to stretch upward, not arched too far forward or slumped in the middle - easy and comfortable. When you reach the top of your spine allow your attention to travel over the back of the head and come to rest on the top of the head. Then feeling grounded through the base of your body, centered through the spine and torso and lifted through the shoulders, neck and head, bring your hands together in prayer position with the backs of the thumbs pressed against the sternum and let's bring ourselves to this time and place (*Note: use any opening chant you are comfortable with or just allow the students to sit quietly for :30 seconds to a minute*). Now inhale and hold the breath for a few seconds, slowly exhale and relax the hands down to the knees and bring your attention to your breath.

Breath Inquiry

We will now practice a simple three step method of breath awareness that can help us reduce the negative effects of stress. We will:

1. Bring your awareness to your breath
2. Slow down the rate of breathing to reduce anxiety.
3. Lengthen the exhalation to soothe the nervous system

(Farhi, *The Breathing Book*, 1996, 146 - 147)

FIRST: Bring yourself into a comfortable seated position and begin to watch the natural flow of your breath and breathing as we ask ourselves a few questions. Our intention is to be aware of our natural breath and breathing patterns because we cannot effectively change what we are not aware of. Where do you notice the movement of your breath? Is it in the lower part of your body? The ribs? Or is it in the upper part of your body, in your chest? Watch closely as you take the next couple of breaths. Notice the texture of your breath. is it smooth and even, or jerky. Thready and silky or jagged? Does your breath feel deep or shallow? Just notice all the

information that is available to you about your breath. If you could describe your breath in one word, symbol or picture - - - what would it be? Notice the first word or image that arises - - - don't change it - - - just note it.

SECOND: Slowly bring yourself back into your comfortable seated position. Now make a conscious effort to slow your rate of breathing by consciously taking a little more time with your inhalation and your exhalation. Mentally make the intention that you are slowing the number of breaths you take per minute. Add a few more beats to the inhalation - - - a few more beats to the exhalation. *Long Pause.*

THIRD: Now gradually bring your attention to your exhalation. Notice when and where the exhalation begins. Which part of your body moves as the exhalation begins? Watch the breath from its point of origin and follow the outward flow through the nostrils until it ends. Is exhalation longer or shorter than your inhalation? Or are they both the same duration? Notice how long your inhalation takes. As you exhale consciously make your exhalation longer than the inhalation. As you practice you can work to make your exhalation up to twice as long as your inhalation. Long exhalations soothe the nervous system and help to short cut the stress reaction. Let's practice this for a few more breaths (1 - 3 minutes), (adapted from Farhi, *The Breathing Book*, 1996, 15).

Limb Three & Four: Postures and Breathwork (*Asana and Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Relax, and Refresh the Body/Mind

Physical level (*Anamayakosha*)

Breath/energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

WARM AND STRETCH THE BODY

Sacral Rocking I and II

Sacral Rock I. Have students lie on their backs with their knees up and feet on the floor. Inner edges of the feet touch and the knees are kept together. **Although Schatz's description does not include regulated breathing, this program does.** With the feet

and the knees together, inhale. On the exhalation move the knees slowly 6 - 8 inches to the left and inhale back to center. Exhale and move the knees 6-8 inches to the right. Repeat at least 10 times (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136)

Sacral Rock II. Cross the left leg over the right, **keep the back of the left thigh closed completely over the top of the right thigh (no spaces peeking through).** With **regulated breathing**, rock back and forth as you did in *Sacral Rocking I*. Repeat at least 10 times, then repeat with the right leg crossed over the left (Schatz, *Back Care Basics*, 1992, 136)

Pelvic Tilts

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with Lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to inhale while holding the pelvis in neutral.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Repeat slowly at least 10 times. Rest. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 3.21).

4 Part Pelvic Lift

Lie on your back with the knees up and feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward, arms by the sides, palms down on the floor. Inhale, tilt the pelvis forward, arching the low back off the floor. **Students with lordosis (pronounced lumbar curve) may find it more comfortable to simply press the belly button toward the backbone.** Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward and press the lower back into the floor. Pressing the feet into the floor, inhale and lift the spine off the floor rolling up one vertebrae at a time. Hold the breath and the lift a second or two at the upper limit, then exhale down. Repeat slowly and easily several times. Bring both knees to your chest, and rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 3.21).

Alternate Leg Lifts

Lie on your back, knees bent or straight depending upon comfort. Inhale and bring the arms overhead. Exhale and bring the right knee to the chest with the arms clasp the knee or placed behind the thigh. Inhale and lift the left leg up, exhale it down. Inhale the right leg up, exhale it down. Continue at whatever pace and speed is comfortable. Continue for at least :30 seconds. Then reverse and do the other side. Rest. (Bhajan, *Yoga for Health and Healing*, 19).

Knee Circles

With both knees drawn into the chest, and the hands around the knees or behind the thighs, roll the knees in gentle circles. Or place the fists under the body on either side of the sacrum **(or place the palms on the floor and press the knuckles up)** move the hips around rolling over the hands to massage the sacrum, hips, buttocks and lumbar spine or

gently pulse the body up and down moving the knuckles or fists around to find the trigger release points that bring the most relief (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.20).

Stick Posture.

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the arms sideways and then overhead, until they are stretched to full length; bring the palms together if possible. At the same time, stretch the body and legs to the fullest comfortable extent. Pull the toes up and back and push out through the heels. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Rest. Repeat once (Weller, *Yoga Therapy*, 1995, 48).

Supine Half Moon

Lie on your back with legs together and arms by the sides. Close the eyes or keep them open. Breathe regularly. On an inhalation, sweep the right arm overhead as you walk the heels to the left creating a stretch to the entire right side of the body. Hold this position for several seconds but do not hold your breath. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat to the opposite side. LePage also refers to this as *Tadaka Mudra*. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.19).

Simple Spinal Series

Seated Hip Rotations. Sit in a comfortable seated position or in a chair. With the hands on the knees or thighs, begin rotating the hips and waist in big easy circles, inhaling on one rotation and exhaling on the next. Continue for at least :30 seconds in one direction and then the same amount of time in the other direction. Rest.

Spinal Flexes. In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shins or knees, (thighs if in a chair). Inhale and flex the spine and pelvis forward, with the chest lifted and the chin parallel to the floor. Exhale, flex the spine and pelvis backward, straightening the arms. Keep the chin parallel to the floor. Continue for at least :30 seconds. Inhale and hold the breath in on the forward flex for a second or two. Exhale and hold the breath out on the backward flex for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest.

Spinal Twists. In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the shoulders, fingers in front, thumbs in back. Keep the elbows high. Inhale and twist the upper torso to the left, allowing the head and hips to follow along. Exhale and twist to the right. Continue at a comfortable and steady pace for at least :30 seconds. Inhale, twist to the left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, twist to the right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Inhale to center, relax the hands to the knees. Rest.

Shoulder Shrugs. In an easy seated pose, place the hands on the knees and pressing into the knees, with the elbows in tight to the body, inhale and lift the shoulders, exhale and

press or drop them down. Continue for at least :30 seconds with a slow easy pace or faster if its comfortable. Inhale, shrug the shoulders up and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale, roll the shoulders back and down. Repeat twice, then Rest.

Head and Neck Stretches. In an easy seated pose, with the hands on the knees, inhale and slowly turn the head to the left, exhale to center. Inhale and turn the head to the right. Exhale to center. Repeat slowly for at least :30 seconds. Inhale the head left and hold the breath for a second or two. Exhale to center. Inhale the head right and hold the breath out for a second or two. Exhale to center. Lie down and rest (adapted from: Kundalini Research Institute, *Kundalini Yoga: Guidelines for Practice*, 1974, 45)

Cat and Cow

Come to your hands and knees into table position; hands under the shoulders and knees under the hips. Engage the abdominals. Press the shoulders away from the ears, broaden and flatten the back. Hold for a few breaths. Inhale and tilt the pelvis forward so the spine stretches down (like someone was sitting in the middle of your back) and your head arches up. Exhale, tilt the pelvis backward (so you look like a Halloween cat), the spine rounds up and the head drops down. Continue moving between Cat and Cow at your own pace and speed for :30 to a minute (adapted from: LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.7)

Mountain Pose

Stand erect with feet together, toes and heels touching (**or shoulder width apart if necessary**), with the weight of the body in the center of the arches. Stretch the toes from the bottom and keep them relaxed. Keep the ankles in line with each other. Tighten the knees, pull the knee caps upward and tighten the quadricep muscles. Keep the shins in line with the thigh bones. Breathe normally. Compress the hips and tighten the buttocks. Keep the spine erect. Lift the sternum and expand the chest. Lift the abdomen upwards. Keep the neck erect and the head straight; do not tilt forwards or backwards. Look straight ahead. Keep the arms by the sides of the body, fingers together and hands downward, the palms facing the thighs and in line with them. Do not lift the shoulders. Stand still for 20 - 30 seconds (**work to a minute or longer**) (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110). Rest.

Tree Pose - Gentle

Stand erect in *Mountain Pose*. Interlock the fingers, turn the wrists and palms outwards, and stretch the arms forwards in line with the shoulders. **Inhale and** take the extended arms upwards by the sides of the ears. The palms should face the ceiling. Move the back ribs forward. Lift the chest and take the shoulder-blades deep in. Keep the head erect and look straight forward. Breathing normally, maintain this posture for 10-15 seconds (**work up to a minute or more**). **Exhale and** lower the arms down. Release the fingers. **Rest in Mountain Pose.** Note: Many sources call this a variation of *Mountain Pose* but Geeta Iyengar calls it *Tree Pose* (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 110).

Half Sun Salutes - Gentle

Stand in Mountain Pose with your feet hip width apart (or together). Breathe smoothly. When you are ready, bring your hands together in prayer position. Inhale and sweep your arms above your head. Exhale and sweep your arms to the sides and hinge forward at the hips. Place your hands alongside your feet (**bend at the knees if you need to accomplish this**). Bring your forehead toward the legs. Inhale and come halfway up, keeping your back flat and your gaze downward. If your fingers need to leave the floor to accomplish a straight back - do so. As you exhale, fold forward to the floor. As you inhale, sweep your arms to the sides and come back up to Mountain Pose with your arms over your head. Pull in your abdomen and lift your chest. Sweep your arms to the sides as you exhale. Bring your hands back to prayer position. Do 4 - 6 repetitions. (Schiffman, *The Art and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, 1996, 166-169). Rest.

Tree Pose - More Challenging

Stand erect in *Mountain Pose*. Shift your weight onto the left leg, press your left foot down into the ground as you lift up on your kneecap. Lift your pelvis off the standing leg point your tailbone toward the left heel creating a slight 'cat tilt.' Focus your eyes on a point on the ground, in front of you or straight ahead. Come up on the right toes and rotate the whole right leg outward from the hip joint. Raise the foot and place it alongside the left leg at the height most comfortable for you. Try to press the foot into the leg and the leg into the foot with equal pressure and firm up your alignment: weight placement, foot, kneecap, abs, tailbone, right leg & foot. Bring your hands into prayer position (*Namaste*) fingers spread wide. When you are ready, raise your hands above your head, palm pressing into palm or interlace your fingers in steeple position (index fingers together and pointing straight up). Draw the shoulders down from the ears and hold *Tree Pose* for several breaths. This can be practiced with the back against a wall at first for a gentler version (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.119). Rest.

Warrior - Gentle

Begin in a short standing stance with the right foot turned out and the left foot turned slightly back. Bring the arms up, stretching them out sideways with the fingertips stretching away. Bend the right knee slightly and look out over the fingertips (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.42). Rest.

Warrior - Moderate

The feet are a full length apart with the arms stretched out to shoulder height. Turn your right foot out to the side and look to the right. Inhale and level your hips so they face forward. Exhale and lunge to the right as low as possible (**keeping your knee in line with your ankle at the end of the movement**). Keep your hips to the front and back upright. Inhale and return. Repeat two more times. Turn your right foot in and your left foot out, looking to the left side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 169). Rest.

Warrior - More Challenging

Stand in Mountain Pose. While inhaling, jump the feet 4 to 4 1/2 feet apart and stretch the arms out sideways in line with the shoulders, palms facing down. Turn the right foot sideways to 90 degrees and the left foot slightly in. Keep the legs straight. Take a breath. While exhaling bend the right leg to 90 degrees. turn the head to the right and keep the left eye focused on the right palm. Breathe normally and remain steady for :20 to :30 seconds (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 115). Rest.

Lateral Angle - Gentle

Start in *Warrior Pose* with the right knee bent, knee over the toe. The feet are a short distance apart (two and a half to three feet). The right foot is forward and the right knee is bent. Bring the right forearm down to rest on the right knee. Reach your left arm over your head so that the entire left side is extending long creating a straight line of energy from the heel through the fingertips. Repeat on the other side (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994 3.42). Rest.

Lateral Angle - Moderate

Stand with your legs wide apart and your right foot turned out. Your arms are stretched out to shoulder height. Look to the right. Exhale, bend your right knee and lunge to the right. **Bring the right forearm down to rest on the right knee. Keep your knee in line with your ankle at the end of the movement.** Inhale and bring your left arm over your head, palm downward, until your arm is flat against your ears. Breathe evenly for four breaths. On each exhalation, rotate your left hip and shoulder back and lengthen through your left arm and fingers of your left hand. Inhale and return. Repeat two more times on this side, then change sides and repeat three times to the left side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 169). Rest.

Lateral Angle - More Challenging

Stand in *Mountain Pose* jump (**or step**) the legs 4 to 4.5 feet apart and stretch the arms sideways in line with the shoulders. Keep the palms facing the floor. Turn the right leg sideways 90 degrees to the right, and turn the left foot slightly in. Tighten the knees and the thighs. Bend the right leg at the knee until the thigh and the calf form a right angle. The right thigh is parallel and the shin perpendicular to the ground. Take one or two breaths. Exhale and take the trunk sideways to the right, place the palm on the floor by the side of the right foot. Stretch the left arm over the ear. Turn the neck and look up. Hold and breathe normally for :20 - :30 seconds. While inhaling, lift the right palm off the floor and raise the trunk, keeping the right leg at a right angle. take a breath. Inhale, straighten the right knee and come to the starting position. Repeat on the other side. (Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*, 1990, 112).

Triangle - Gentle

Stand with your feet comfortably wide apart. **Bring the hands to the hips. Inhale and keeping your pelvis and spine in one long straight line, exhale and bend to the right. Drop your right hand to your leg and reach the left arm up with the palm facing out. Inhale back to center and repeat to the left.** Try to keep the body in one plane and go only as far as is completely comfortable. Hold for a few breaths on each side **or do it dynamically by inhaling back to the starting position and exhaling into *Triangle***, (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 3. 40). Rest.

Triangle - Gentle - Moderate

Stand with your feet comfortably wide apart and your arms stretched out to shoulder height. Look to the right and turn your right foot out and your left foot slightly inward. Inhale, then exhale and lean over to the right, stretching your arm parallel to the floor. Drop your right hand to your ankle (or shin or knee) and clasp it firmly. Turn, twist and look up as you inhale, and extend your left arm up to the ceiling at right angles to your body. Exhale and pull your left hip and shoulder back to rotate your spine and create space between your vertebrae for energy to flow freely up and down your spine. Ground through the legs, extend the spine and twist. Hold for several breaths. To return, look down at your right hand, inhale and come back to the starting position. Turn your right foot in, your left foot out and repeat on the other side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 200, 169). Note: Maddern calls this a ***Standing Spine Twist***. Rest.

Child's Pose

Kneel down and sit back on your heels. Separate your knees if you need to make room for your torso to relax. Stretch your arms forward or place your arms back along side of your body. Place your forehead on the floor. Breathe quietly. Hold this pose for one to two minutes. To come up, place your hands underneath your shoulders and push up with an inhalation, come up on your hands and knees.

Quarter Dog - Gentle

Start on your elbows in neutral *Cat Pose*. Bring your right hand behind your left elbow. Do not sag into the right shoulder; instead, press downward into the right elbow and lift upward. This creates space in the shoulder joint. Stretch your left arm straight. Spread the fingers, and have as much of your palm on the floor as possible. Tighten the left elbow so it lifts away from the floor. Gently press your hips backward and bring your forehead toward the floor. When this stretch eases up, lift your head, look forward and curve your chest toward the floor. Close your eyes and breathe. Be here :30 seconds and then change sides (Schiffman, *The Art and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, 122). Rest.

Half Dog (The Puppy) - Moderate

Start on your elbows in neutral *Cat Pose*. Slide one hand forward and then the other. Have your hands shoulder width apart, fingers spread, middle fingers pointing straight

ahead. Press your arms fully straight so your elbows stay lifted away from the floor. Press your hips away from you and bring your forehead to the floor. Your thighs should be vertical, with your hips directly above the knees. Close your eyes and breathe. Be here several breaths, being careful not to jam the shoulders. Lift your head, look forward and curve your chest toward the floor. If this bothers your neck go back to being on your forehead. Close your eyes and breathe smoothly. Be here one minute (Schiffman, *The Art and Practice of Moving Into Stillness*, 1996, 123). Rest.

Down Face Dog - More Challenging

Start on your hands and knees. Knees hip width apart, toes tucked under. Spread the fingers. Inhale. Exhale and push your hips to the ceiling, so that your arms and legs are straight. Inhale, and as you exhale again, press your heels toward the floor and stretch backward. Keep your feet pointing straight ahead. Drop your head. Think of moving your body back toward the legs. **Keep your spine and your head in a straight line.** Keep the breathing steadily. Slowly come down after five to 10 breaths. Repeat the pose. When you are finished the second time, come down and sit back on your heels into *Child's Pose* (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 54 - 57).

Sphinx (Modified Cobra - Gentle)

Begin in a prone position. Stretch your arms straight out in front and then slide them back until you reach a comfortable position with your forearms resting on the floor slightly forward of your shoulders. Keep your forearms on the floor through the entire exercise. Spread your fingers wide and press your hands into the floor. Stretch your legs and feet back. Tighten your buttocks and push your pelvic triangle into the floor. Use your back muscles as you inhale up and stretch your chest forward. Hold a second or two to feel the stretch in the chest and back. Then exhale and lower slowly. Repeat and hold for 30-seconds to a minute or do it dynamically by inhaling up and exhaling down. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.136). Rest.

Dynamic Cobra - Gentle - Moderate

Bring yourself onto your hands and knees. Exhale and sit back onto your heels. Inhale and come through table position and lower yourself into *Low Cobra*. Keep your shoulders down and your elbows into the body. If this is not possible, keep your arms straight as you lower your body as far as it will go. Exhale and push yourself up into table and come sitting down on your heels with your arms outstretched. Repeat at your own pace for :30 seconds to a minute (adapted from LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, .3.13).

Upward Facing Dog - More Challenging

Lie face down on your mat. Place your hands, fingers spread wide, next to your chest. Keep your elbows close to your body. Place your feet hip-width apart and keep the tops of the feet on the floor. Stretch your legs back. On an inhalation, lift your upper body off the floor, straightening your arms and curving your body into a gentle 'C'. Avoid

hunching your shoulders. the weight of the body rests on the hands and tops of the feet only. Lift and open your chest. Stretch the thighs and calves and contract the buttock muscles. Breathe deeply and hold for 30 seconds to a minute. Then bend your elbows and release to the ground (Lark, *Menopause Self-Help Book*, 1996, 201).

Child's Pose

Kneel down and sit back on your heels. Separate your knees if you need to make room for your torso to relax. Stretch your arms forward or place your arms back along side of your body. Place your forehead on the floor. Breathe quietly. Hold this pose for one to two minutes. To come up, place your hands underneath your shoulders and push up with an inhalation, and come lying down on your belly.

Half Locust - Gentle

Lie on the floor with the arms along side the body, palms down. Place your forehead on the floor. Inhale the left leg slowly up, exhale it down. Inhale the right leg slowly up, exhale it down. Continue, alternating legs from side to side for :30 seconds. Then inhale the left leg up and hold it in the air for up to ten seconds while breathing normally. Exhale down. Inhale the right leg up and hold it in the air for up to ten seconds while breathing normally, then lower it. Turn your head to one side and rest (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 15).

Half Locust - Moderate

Place chin on the floor. Push your arms underneath your body, with your elbows close under your body and your palms facing your thighs. Keep your pelvis on your arms. **Inhale the right leg up, exhale down. Inhale the left leg up. Exhale down. Continue with a smooth easy rhythm. for :30 seconds or more.** Then, inhale, straighten your right leg and slowly raise it off the floor as far as you comfortably can. Hold it in the air for up to ten seconds while breathing normally, then lower it. Do this 2 times with each leg (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151). Rest.

Full Locust

Place chin on the floor. Push your arms underneath your body, with your elbows close under your body and your palms facing your thighs. Keep your pelvis on your arms. Inhale, stiffen the body, keep your chin on the floor, and raise both legs together a comfortable distance without bending your knees. Breathe normally. Repeat 2 or 3 times for up to :10 seconds each time (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151). Rest.

Back Arch - Gentle

Sit in your comfortable seated position, place the hands behind the back with the fingertips facing backward or forward. Inhale, arch and extend the back, lifting the chest. be sure to squeeze the shoulder blades together opening the chest and if comfortable, allow the head to fall back. Keep lifting the chest and lengthening the spine. **Hold for 3**

-5 long slow breaths and exhale back to center. (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.32)

Flower Exercise - Moderate

Sit in Rock Pose. Interlace your fingers behind your back or clasp one wrist with the other hand. As you slowly inhale, rise up on your knees, straighten your arms, lengthening your shoulders away from your ears and pulling your shoulder blades together. Lengthen the spine up out of the pelvic girdle as you drop your head back. Bend back and press your chest, torso and thighs forward as far as you comfortably can. As you slowly exhale, sit back on your heels, raise your arms off your back and lower your forehead to the floor. Inhale up and back, exhale down and forward. Move back and forth between the two positions s-l-o-w-l-y. Place your awareness on the movement and rhythm of your body. Repeat **s-l-o-w-l-y** for 30 seconds to a minute pausing for a second or two between inhalation and exhalation (retention of the breath). Rest in Child Pose (Singh, *In Style Yoga*, 1995).

Seated Spine Stretch - More Challenging

Kneel on the floor, with the front of your feet flat on the floor. **Separate your knees.** Lean back and place your palms flat on the floor about 4-6 inches away from your heel with the fingers pointing towards your heels. Inhale and lift your hips, and arch your back as high as possible. drop your head back and pinch your shoulder blades together, and focus on lifting and **stretching the front of your body**, your hips and the front of your thighs. Breathe slowly for seven breaths. Repeat twice more, holding the position for seven breaths (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 38).

Child's Pose

Kneel down and sit back on your heels. Separate your knees if you need to make room for your torso to relax. Stretch your arms forward or place your arms back along side of your body. Place your forehead on the floor. Breathe quietly. Hold this pose for one to two minutes. To come up, place your hands underneath your shoulders and push up with an inhalation, and come up into a comfortable seated position.

Head-To-Knee Pose - Gentle

Sit on the floor and stretch out both of your legs in front of you. Bend your left leg and place the sole of your left foot against the inside of your right thigh. Press your heel into the floor and curl your toes back toward your head to keep the right knee straight. Inhale, look up, lock your thumbs, and raise your arms overhead as far as you comfortably can. Exhale, bending forward from the hips, keeping your back straight. Take hold of your foot, calf, knee or thigh or whatever you can comfortably reach. Allow your head to relax **Keep the sternum lifted and stretch the chest out over the legs. Don't round your spine in the middle. Use a strap around your feet if that helps you keep your head up and spine straight.** Breathe normally. Hold this position for up to :10 seconds, and repeat this with the other leg. Repeat 2 or 3 times with each leg. With

regular practice, gradually increase the time you spend in the position but do it fewer times. Then rest in Relaxation Pose, (Ornish, 1990, 151).

Seated Forward Bend - Moderate to Challenging

Sit on the floor and stretch both of your legs in front of you. Press your heels into the floor and curl your toes back toward your head to keep the knees straight. Inhale, look up, lock your thumbs, and raise your arms overhead as far as you comfortably can. Exhale, bending forward from the hips, keeping your back straight. Take hold of your feet, calves, knees or thighs or whatever you can comfortably reach. Allow your head to relax. **Keep the sternum lifted and stretch the chest out over the legs. Don't round your spine in the middle. Use a strap around your feet if that helps you keep your head up and spine straight.** Breathe normally. Now exhale and allow the head to relax. **Hold this position for up to 1-3 minutes. To come out, lengthen the spine and inhale up with a flat back** (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

COOL AND REST THE BODY

Butterfly

Come to a seated position with the legs outstretched. Bring the soles of your feet together, with the heels as close to the groin as possible. Make sure that the knees are comfortable with no excessive pressure. Place blankets or bolsters under your knees if needed. Clasp your hands around your feet (or place them behind you if you need to support your back), press your sitting bones down into the earth and lengthen your spine up through the crown of your head. If your spine is rounded, place blankets just behind the sitz bone so that your pelvis tilts slightly forward or you can practice this against a wall. Stay here for as long as you like. Then, Inhale and on your exhale, hinge forward at the hip joints. Press the forearms toward the floor and relax the shoulders down from the ears. Keep your head in alignment with your spine. Breathe deeply into the abdomen, groin and hips. Let the breath massage your lower back. When you are ready, slowly hinge back up, release your feet, straighten your legs (LePage, *IYT Manual*, 1994, 3.162).

Seated Spinal Twist

Sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you. **Bend your right knee and step your right foot over your left leg. Find a comfortable place along your leg for your foot to rest flat on the floor. Stretch out through the heel of your left foot.** Hug your right knee to your chest with your left arm. Turn to the right. Inhale and extend your right arm to shoulder height. Exhale and place the back of your hand behind the small of your back. Inhale and lift up, straighten your spine. Exhale and looking to the right, pull your right shoulder and hip back. Hold for three breaths increasing the twist with each exhalation. Untwist and repeat to the other side (Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 98). Rest.

Limb Four: Breath Control (*Pranayama*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Energize, Focus and Balance the Body's Energy
Breath/Energy level (*Pranamayakosha*)

Breath of Fire - Moderate

Sit in your comfortable seated position or in a chair. Raise your arms out to the side to about a 60 degree angle, thumbs to the ceiling and fingers folded into the fists. Keep your spine straight. Breath of Fire consists of short rapid breathing through the nose. The inhalation and the exhalation are of the same duration. It's also called the 'sniff' breath - - sniff the breath in and sniff the breath out. Go slow or fast. **Start with :30 seconds and work up to 3 minutes.** Be sure to rest for the length of time that you do the breath (Singh, *Kundalini Yoga for Strength Success and Spirit*, 1991, 12). (*Note: If a woman is menstruating, has high blood pressure or is experiencing hot flashes she should do Long Deep Breathing instead.*)

Prana Vidya to the Endocrine Glands

Relax your hands to your knees. Breath slowly and deeply. Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the ovaries.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the kidneys and adrenal glands.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pancreas.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the thymus gland (tap the thymus center, alternating left and right hands).

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the thyroid gland.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pituitary gland. Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy into the pineal gland.

Imagine your breath as a beam of clear pure light coming into the body through the center of the forehead and traveling to the heart. Exhale healing heart energy and light into the entire body (adapted from Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*, 2000, 86).

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit relaxed with a straight spine. Relax your jaws. Close your eyes. Breathe through both nostrils. Rest your left hand on your lap or knee. Exhale fully. Use the thumb of your right hand to block off your right nostril (allow your middle fingers to curl into the palm or rest on the bridge of the nose). Inhale slowly and smoothly through the left nostril. Close the left nostril with your ring finger, release your right nostril and exhale. Inhale through the right nostril. Close your right nostril, release your left and exhale. This completes one round of *Alternate Nostril Breathing*. Gradually extend your exhalations until they are about twice as long as your inhalations. Continue doing this for :30 seconds to 3 minutes. If at any time you feel like you are not getting enough air, simply resume breathing normally (Ornish, *Reversing Heart Disease*, 1990, 151).

Limb Five: Sensory Awareness (*Pratyahara*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Focus the Awareness
Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

Yoga Nidra for Overall Healing

Introduction

Have the students come into their favorite *Relaxation Pose*. You can begin with a brief progressive relaxation or start with the following: Relax the whole body. The whole body. Become aware of your whole body lying on the floor. Become aware of your body lying completely relaxed on the floor, -- *Pause* -- totally relaxed on the floor, -- *pause* -- completely and totally relaxed on the floor. *Pause*. Mentally say to yourself, “I am going to practice *Yoga Nidra*. I am aware. I will not sleep.” *Pause*.

Choosing A Resolve

Suggest that they choose a resolve or affirmation to support their optimal health, such as:

I am balanced and healthy
I am relaxed and energized
I love myself unconditionally

However, let them know that any resolve they wish to work on is fine. Ask them to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. *Pause.*

Breath Awareness and Visualization: Healing Through the Elements

(Note: this part should be done slowly and leisurely). Become aware of your natural breath flowing through your body lying on the floor -- *pause*. Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. Do not change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic - - - you are not doing it - - - there is no effort - - - *pause*. Maintain awareness of the breath. Feel the breath moving in and out of the body, flowing in and out of the body. On the inhalation it enters the body. On the exhalation it leaves the body. *Pause*. Be completely aware of the movement of the respiration, in and out of the body - - - do not force the breath - - - just awareness - - - just awareness. *Pause*. Maintain your awareness of the breath, complete awareness of the breath. The five elements, Earth, Water, Sunlight, Wind and Spirit are a natural expression of the various aspects of being. As we go through the visualization allow the feeling of these elements to be felt fully by your body/mind.

Allow yourself to begin to relax down into the warm, nurturing earth. Feel as if your body is sinking into the earth and begin to let go - - -let go - - - let go. I'm going to count slowly down from ten to one. Inhale softly as you hear each number spoken and as you exhale let yourself sink even deeper into the warm, loving embrace of the earth. Feel as if you're slowly descending downward in an elevator. With each exhalation, allow your relaxation to double. *Pause.*

Ten - *Pause* - Allow the feet and legs to relax and soften.

Nine - *Pause* - Feel how relaxed you're becoming and allow that relaxation to double.

Eight - *Pause* - Release the hips and pelvis down into the safe support of the earth.

Seven - *Pause* - Let yourself become twice as relaxed now.

Six - *Pause* - Feel the entire spine relax.

Five - *Pause* - Feel where the holding on is and let go even more.

Four - *Pause* - Completely surrender the weight of the chest, shoulders and arms.

Three - *Pause* - Allow your entire awareness to be captured by the sensation of slowly descending downward.

Two - *Pause* - Release the head and neck into the loving support of the earth.

One - *Pause* - Feel yourself at rest now in a place of perfect stillness and contentment.

EARTH: Feel your connection with the warm, nurturing earth begin to deepen, as if your body could grow roots down from the base of the spine, that reach all the way to the core of the earth.. Feel the inner rhythm of the earth and as you breathe, begin to draw in the elements from the earth that you need to heal, restore and balance your entire being. Feel the groundedness, serenity, patience and strength that rise up from deep in the earth to fill your being. Draw in the richness and fertility of the soil. Receive the healing qualities of all the different minerals. Absorb the vital life force of the earth's vast variety of vegetation. Know that your body will intuitively draw in the right elements in just the right quantities - *Long Pause* -. Feel the earth elements being drawn into the body through the feet and into all the bones in the body, all the bones of the body - - all the bones - - - draw the earth elements up through the bones of the feet and the legs, the pelvis, the ribs, the bones of the arms and hands and fingers. Now draw this healing energy up the spine one vertebrae at a time, creating space, strength and vitality in each of the vertebrae. Sense healing earth energy rise all the way to the crown of the head. Feel the entire body now fully grounded and attuned to the healing pulse of the earth.

WATER: Now become aware of the breath gently rising and falling in the abdomen - - - like a gentle wave rolling up onto the shore as you inhale and then softly spreading out through the body as you exhale. Feel the movement of soothing liquid life force throughout the body.

Allow your entire being to become soft and sense the vast universe of sensations and feelings within your body. Feel the flow of sensuous, pleasurable sensations in the body and with each breath, relax deeper and deeper into the healing liquid energy that makes up most of our physical being.. Allow this healing liquid energy to completely wash any tension from the body.. Feel all the muscles of the body relax as waves of liquid life force pulse gently through them- soothing, releasing, relaxing. Sense all the liquid systems in the body come into balance - - - the rhythmic flow of blood that nourishes the spine and brain; the smooth flow of lymph as the body is purified of all toxins. Allow every cell and tissue of the body to drink in the water element. Soak in flexibility and resilience. Feel the body as a spring of healing liquid life force cleansing the body, nurturing your entire being. Taste it, feel it, allow the whole body to just float in it. - - - float - - -just float. *Pause.*

FIRE/SUNLIGHT: Now, journey slowly through the body and become aware of the place that feels most open, most radiant, a place where the breath is flowing in and out in complete openness. Through this place begin to draw in sunlight, pure golden energy. With each inhalation allow sunlight to fill every cell of the body with vibrant energy and gentle warmth. With each exhalation, relax into the growing radiance. Allow sunlight to fill the entire area of the hips and abdomen - - - the vital energy center of our being. Allow your hips and abdomen to be fully energized with radiant sunlight.. Visualize here a luminous golden sun radiating energy and light to heal and balance all the organs of digestion, and reproduction. Allow this energy to flow down into the legs and feet, radiate into the heart, rise up into the shoulders, and flow down the arms, until you feel the palms of your hands become soft pools of radiant sunlight. Feel sunlight travel up the spine and into the crown of the head. Feel your head fill with radiant golden light. Feel sunlight radiate out to every cell in the body. Feel all of your cells becoming billions of golden suns radiating interconnected energy. Let yourself bathe in

sunlight - -bathe in the golden sun - -the warmth of the sun.

AIR/BREATH: Now, again, journey through the body and explore the place of greatest openness. Breathe fully through that place. With each inhalation, feel the body gently expand. With each exhalation, feel the body softly relax. Breathe in through the soles of the feet and draw the breath up the legs and through the spine. As you exhale, allow the legs and spine to soften and float on the breath. Breathe in through the palms of the hands, drawing the breath up the arms. As you exhale, allow the arms to relax into the breath. Fill the head and neck with the breath. As you exhale, allow the head to relax back into the earth. Now bring your aware-ness to the lungs, where a miracle occurs moment by moment as life force revitalizes our entire being with each breath. Feel the radiance and vitality of life force filling every cell of the body as you breathe deeply, fully and completely. As the breath spreads to each part of the body, allow your entire being to softly smile. Feet and legs smiling. Smile spreading up through the hips and torso. Smile flowing down through the arms to the hands and fingers. Smile filling the face and head and softly opening the lips. Experience the whole body smiling as it floats lightly on the breath... smiling - -floating on the breath - -floating on the breath and smiling.

SPACE/SPIRIT: Earth, water, sunlight and breath come together now and fill your entire being with healing, balance and unity. Feel the pulse of energy throughout the body, and know that this is *prana*, the all-pervading life force, the spirit that sustains all of nature. Bring your awareness to the place where the sensation of energy or heat or tingling is strongest in the body and begin to consciously amplify those sensations. Allow them to expand throughout the body. Know that this life force will intuitively be drawn to any areas of the body calling for healing. Feel the energy of *prana* begin to fill every cell, tissue, and organ... Allow *prana* to balance the nervous system.. Allow the life force to balance the glands and hormones... Feel natural healing energy rise up the spine all the way to the crown of the head. Bathe in *prana* as all of the cells of

the body open like gently blossoming flowers.. Allow the flower of the heart to gently open and feel the fragrance of love spread to every cell, - - - love spreading - - - prana balancing - - - the body bathing - - the cells opening - - -like gently - - -blossoming - - - flowers (adapted from LePage, “Yoga And Ayurveda,” 2001, 4.27).

Repeating the Resolve

Ask your students to repeat their resolve silently to themselves three times with awareness, intention, feeling and emphasis.

Complete Stillness/Deep Relaxation

(Notes: 1] *This is an excellent place to play music. The best choices are mantra tapes, brain sync tapes or music designed for relaxation that does not have a melody; 2] if time is short, this section can be eliminated).*

Finish

Become aware of your breathing, your natural breathing, your natural breathing. Awareness of breathing. Awareness of relaxation. Awareness of your body lying on the floor. Begin to move your body by rolling the wrists and ankles in little circles in one direction and then the other. Inhale the arms over head and stretch through the fingers and out through the heels. Inhale and roll the body onto one side and stretch. Roll the body onto the other side and stretch. Roll onto your back and bring the feet up in the air and place the soles of the feet together and the palms of the hands together and rub hard and fast, bringing up some heat. Bring the knees into the chest and the palms over the eyes. breath and relax. Use the fingertips to massage the temples and any other place on the face that needs a little help. Roll over onto one side and use your hands to help you up into a seated position.

Limb Six: Concentration Practice (*Dharana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Strengthen the Skill and Ability to Concentrate
Witness consciousness level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

Ajapa Stage I. (adapted from Saraswati, *Yoga Nidra*, 1993, 497-98).

This is a breath channeling exercise to focus the attention and train the student in the art of concentration. Do not suppress the mind's activity, just be aware of it.

Step 1. In an easy seated position. Inhale and imagine the breath entering through the navel center of the body and rising to the level of the throat. Exhale and allow the breath to exit downward from the throat to the navel center. Repeat. If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath.

Step 2. If more of a challenge is desired, use the *Chinmaya Mudra*. Place the tip of the thumb and the index finger together. Allow the other three fingers to fold in and press against the palm. Relax the hands on the knees or the thighs if the student is in a chair. This mudra is cooling, soothing and relaxing. It focuses the breath in the low abdomen and is good for stress reduction and balancing sexual energy (LePage, 2000). If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath.

Step 3. To add yet another layer of concentration use the mantra *So* on the inhalation and *Ham* on the exhalation. The mantra means, "I am consciousness," If the mind wanders, simply notice that and bring the attention back to the breath and the mantra. "This practice brings mental peace and onepointedness of mind and leads directly to meditation. Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits (Saraswati, *Yoga Nidra*, 1993, 497-98).

Limb Seven: Meditation (*Dyhana*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Preparation for Meditation

Bliss Level/s, Realization of Self as Unity Consciousness (*Anandamayakosha*)

Silent Meditation

Students practice their own personal form of meditation (continuing with concentration meditation, relaxing the concentration practice and practicing mindfulness meditation or any other variation that suits the student or client). Practice for 3-5 minutes or more if time permits.

Limb Eight: Liberation, Enlightenment (*Samadhi*)

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Surrender

Unity Consciousness is Beyond the Koshas and Individual Effort

Closing Ritual

Closing rituals may include the practice of Yoga Mudra, the chanting of “OM,” a 'thought for the day,' a poem, or my personal favorite, the Three Breath Blessing: Take one long deep breath and hold it. see a miracle happening for yourself in this minute. Let the breath go. Take a long deep breath and hold it; this time for someone or a group of people you love or care about, and see them at their very best. let the breath go. Take a third long deep breath and hold it; this time for the entire planet and see it as a place of peace and love. Let the breath go and returning full circle breath and become aware of yourself and see if your body needs a last stretch, twist or move. give your body what it is asking for and then slowly and gently bring yourself back to this room in a relaxed state of awareness. Namaste.

SECTION VI WORKING WITH MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS

Background

This discussion of the application of Yoga to the management of menopause symptoms will begin by looking at the *Koshas*, and the effects that the tools of Yoga are said to have on all levels of a woman's body/mind. Several examples of women's experience with Yoga have been included.

Physical Level (*Anamayakosha*)

Specific postures tone muscles, remove toxins, increase flexibility and are said to stimulate and balance the endocrine system which can alleviate menopausal symptoms:

- Inversions, and restorative postures such as forward bending are recommended for alleviating hot flashes and night sweats (Francina, 1997, 115).
- Inversions such as Half or Full Shoulder stands have a beneficial effect on the glands of the endocrine system (Francina, 1997, 115).
- Back bends such as Bow Pose relieve depression and lethargy (Lark, 1996, p. 200)
- Down Facing Dog and other weight bearing postures prevent osteoporosis (Sparrowe, 2001, 107 - 113).

Andrea, a Yoga teacher, is perimenopausal and has studied Yoga for thirty years. She describes herself as a "Wild Woman With Heart." In addition to menopause symptoms, she struggles with recurring bouts of depression and compliments her allopathic treatments with, "YOGA! No caffeine, soy products, Inversions. Diaphragmatic breathing." This sentiment is echoed by Holly, a forty-two year old divorcee with three children. She has just entered the premenopause phase in which she felt like she, 'was going crazy.'" She is new to Yoga. About the application of Yoga to her menopause she says,

" Before my blood test which confirmed the menopause, I naturally gravitated to Yoga - - - the symptoms pushed me to do it and not wish for it any more so I took your wonderful class. My body yelled to do something - - - Yoga has helped me greatly and I'm an embryo just starting out but glad I have!"

Breath/Energy Level (*Pranamayakosha*)

As proficiency with physical postures grows and a woman experiences the effects directly, the instructions regarding the use of the breath which may have seemed artificial suddenly make sense. Most people take the breath and energy (*prana*), for granted and are astonished when the real effects of breath practice, *Pranayama*, are felt. This is often a revelation to women who have never connected movement and feelings to breathing. It is a crucial step in the re-integration of body and mind. The breath serves as the connector (Farhi, 1996, 4-9).

Both Yoga students and teachers have found breathwork to be effective in combating the most frequently mentioned menopause symptom - - - hot flashes and flushes. Rowena, one of the women in the eight week experimental menopause class learned this as soon as she began applying *Sitali Pranayama* or ‘The Cooling breath’ to her hot flashes and night sweats. The evaluation tool asked the students to note any changes they experienced over the course of the eight week program. Rowena, said, “I’m able to abort hot flashes and flushes with the Cooling Breath. It takes just a few minutes (even if I’m walking in the grocery store!!!). I’m sleeping better because I can reduce the hot flashes.”

Nadine is a Yoga teacher who responded to my survey and began using the Cooling Breath after it was introduced as a discussion topic on the Integrative Yoga Therapy internet ‘chat’ group. In her survey response she said, “ I tried *Sitali Breathing* (Cooling Breath) during a flush, and it did go away faster than usual. Thanks!”

Mental/emotional Level (*Manomayakosha*)

As proficiency with the breath improves, awareness to the mind and emotions which begins with discussion, education and sharing, deepens through the practice of *pratyhara*, or sensory awareness. Connection with the body and the breath help women develop a better sense of their minds and emotions, and how they think and act in their lives. This awareness coupled with breath and posture practice helps women realize that they can have a measure of control over their responses to their lives and that this will significantly improve their stress levels and their overall health and healing. As women begin to recognize the habits and patterns that need attention, they can consciously and deliberately make the kind of productive and honest decisions that free them from needless suffering. This works through a process of deep relaxation, affirmation and visualization called *Yoga Nidra*. A student in my Therapeutic Yoga class told me that she now uses *Yoga Nidra* regularly to help her sleep and to short cut panic attacks.

Witness/Wisdom Level (*Vijnanamayakosha*)

After the body, breath and mind become quiet, we can train the mind to concentrate. This practice can provide access to levels of the subconscious mind to help women become aware of and witness underlying beliefs that help to inform patterns of thought and lifestyle both positive and negative and open doors to that "something more," that many women are seeking as they transition through menopause.

- Practicing concentration or watching the thoughts with detachment quiets the mind.
- When the mind is quiet inner listening takes place.
- This self-discipline and reflection creates the opportunity for surrender.

Bliss Body (*Anandamayakosha*)

Once women "see" or experience an "Aha!" They are in touch with their witness consciousness and can do a better job of understanding their belief patterns, and habits. This gradually leads to more witnessing, watching, and being 'in the moment' on a more frequent basis. Concentration and meditation are the tools that increase the ability to realize that. As the ability to sustain this state of meditation or unbroken awareness grows, a woman can open the door to complete transformation, integration and balance. Yoga, then, often becomes a pillar of support, something to lean on in tough times, and something to celebrate in good times as a woman develops the ability to apply awareness, acceptance and integration to all aspects of her life.

Joy's experience exemplifies this. She is a Yoga student from Florida and is married. She and her husband were unable to have children. That has been a sadness to her but she deals with it by focusing on her daughter from a previous relationship. She is a recovering alcoholic, a survivor of several abusive relationships and still deals with bouts of depression. She is in premenopause and is currently using this time to evaluate her life's path in order to, "chart a deliberate path of growth for the next phase of life." She sees this as a rewarding task but one that can be, "unexpectedly lonely."

Joy has made Yoga a part of her experience on this path by taking classes in Restorative Yoga. She sums up the effect of applying the tools of Yoga to menopause this way, "Yoga has been very helpful, the relaxation and meditation; especially the effects that come later when there is a realization that there is a transformation and openness of being that comes out periodically."

Liberation/Enlightenment/Self-Realization (*Samadhi*)

Often the best way to express this is with a poem. Here is one of mine:

Paradoxically Yours

Unity C's a paradox
A puzzle, a riddle, a mystery,
So practice your enlightenment
And express the truth you see.
For there's no beginning, no past, no end
Is the present a perfect w/hole?
To experience an answer
Let your practice be the goal.

But what need of practice if we're already here?
If Big Mind is ours and we see?
We practice to express who we really are
And to behave like the Buddhas we be.
Even so, we resist it, with our likes and dislikes
With our wants and our hopes, and our fears.
And we stumble along over pebbles and rocks
As our present/s grow into years.

All we do and try not to do
Catches us tight in a trap,
Surrender is the only way
To fall into the Gap.
Gratitude is the ticket
And Yoga is a key
That binds us to an awareness
Of the glorious universal See.

So rest, relax and be aware
Of the Quantum reality
That connects one to all and all to one
And that's the way it be.
When little mind softens to Big Mind
And the Witness says, "I Don't Know,"
Unity 'C' will jump for joy
And we all go with the flow.

(Gibbs, 1998)

Yoga for Menopause Symptom Management

What many Integrative Yoga Therapy teachers have said to me over the past two years is that they would like a list of postures that work or are helpful in dealing with specific menopausal symptoms. Based on the research I've done thus far, what follows is a summary of postures, breathwork and exercises that are believed to help relieve particular menopausal symptoms. This list contains postures and exercises from a variety of Yoga traditions and all the sources are cited for further reference. Because there are so many options and possibilities, the postures are listed and referenced but not described in detail. My goal is to provide a sampling of specific postures and exercises that have been recommended by teachers whose work in this area has been disseminated to the general public. All postures or sequences, except for the osteoporosis sequence by Wendy Dion, have been gathered from published articles, books, video or audio tapes. Yoga teachers and therapists are encouraged to go to the source for detailed descriptions of how to do the postures, breathwork and meditations.

Many of the postures listed can be found in the *asana* sections of the other menopause sequences in this program. In my work I have found this resource list most helpful in the teaching situations where postures need to be selected 'in the moment' to respond to an individual client or group of women who are dealing with specific menopausal symptoms.

In using this list to create a specific program, centering exercises, *Yoga Nidra* scripts, meditations and closing rituals can be selected from other sections in the program.

The symptoms selected for this program are those most commonly mentioned in the research and by those who responded to my survey (see chapter two). I cataloged the responses from the twenty two surveys and chose those symptoms that were reported by a minimum of ten women. The symptoms are listed by the number of times they were mentioned. They are:

Hot flashes and flushes 21
Night sweats 17
Forgetfulness 15
Insomnia 13
Depression 12
Fluctuating energy levels (increase and decrease) 12
Inability to concentrate 12
Joint Pain 12
Fatigue 11
Fluctuating hormone levels (may manifest as mood swings etc.) 11
Headaches (pressure, stress and migraine) 11
Heart Palpitations 10

LIST OF SYMPTOMS AND SUGGESTED YOGA APPLICATIONS

Integrative Yoga Therapy Approach: Varies with the Symptoms

Symptom: Hot Flashes and Flushes

Yoga Therapy Approach: Cool and Calm the Body

Source: Suza Francina, *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p. 132-134
- Half Shoulderstand, p. 229-233
- Supported Legs-Up-The-Wall, p.225-229
- Supported Bridge, p.137-139
- Downward Facing Dog, p. 64-67

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Alternate Leg Lifts, p. 192
- Spinal Flex (Pelvic Lifts), p. 193
- Locust, p. 195
- Wide Angle Pose, p. 196
- Upward Facing Dog, p. 199
- Supported Plow, p.197

Source: Joseph LePage, *IYT Manual*

- Sitali Pranayama (inhale through curled tongue, exhale through nostrils), p. 76

Symptom: Night Sweats

Yoga Therapy Approach: Cool the Body

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Supported Legs-Up-The-Wall, p.225-229
- Supported Bridge, p.137-139

Source: Joseph LePage, *IYT Manual*

- Sitali Pranayama (inhale through curled tongue, exhale through nostrils), p. 76

Symptom: Forgetfulness

Yoga Therapy Approach: Clear and Focus the Mind

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Clear Mind Meditation, p.74

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Mudra (a variation of *Yoga Mudra*), p. 166
- Standing Spine Twist, p. 169
- Alternate Nostril Breathing, p. 170
- Squats, p. 69, 70
- Standing Creative Power Posture (variation of a forward bend), p. 102

Symptom: Insomnia

Yoga Therapy Approach: Relax and Calm the Body

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p. 132-134
- Supported Legs-Up-the-Wall, p. 225-229
- Supported Half Plow, p. 233-237

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Alternate Leg Lifts, p.192
- Relaxation Pose (Sponge), 198
- Child's Pose, p. 198

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Sukra Breath (breath visualization with retention), p. 185
- Candle Meditation, p. 185

Symptom: Depression

Yoga Therapy Approach: Warm, Activate and Stimulate the Body

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Supported Bridge, p.137-139

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Bringing In/Letting Go (Anti-Depression Breath Meditation), p. 154
- Breath of Fire, p. 37

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Upward Facing Dog, p. 199
- Bow, p. 200

Symptom: Fluctuating Energy Levels (increase and decrease)

Yoga Therapy Approach to Increase Energy: Bring More Oxygen to the Bloodstream

Yoga Therapy Approach to Balance Energy: Calm & Quiet the Mind

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Supported Child (calms & quiets the mind), p. 139-142
- Supported Deep Relaxation (calms & quiets the mind), p. 243-246

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Breath of Fire (charges the body with immediate energy), p. 37

Source: Judith Lasater, *Relax and Renew*

- Basic Relaxation Pose with Sandbag & Bolster (calms/quiets the mind), p. 204

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- 8:4 Breath (Inhale 4 counts, exhale 8 counts - calms & quiets the mind), p. 124
- Tapping Breath (tapping chest to clean lungs and increase energy), p. 164
- Lung Stimulation Breath (increases energy), p. 66

Symptom: Inability to Concentrate

Yoga Therapy Approach: Calm and Quiet the Mind

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p. 132-134

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Clear Mind Meditation, p.74

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Mudra (a variation of *Yoga Mudra*), p. 166
- Standing Spine Twist, p. 169
- Alternate Nostril Breathing, p. 170
- Squats, p. 69, 70
- Standing Creative Power Posture (variation of a forward bend), p. 103

Source: Stella Weller, *Yoga Therapy*

- Anti-Anxiety Breathing, p. 74

Symptom: Joint Pain

Yoga Therapy Approach: Move and Lubricate the Joints

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Rotated Tabletop (version of a forward bend), p. 33
- Shoulder Swings, p. 37
- Seated Spine Stretch, p. 39
- Spine Curl (variation of Knee-to-Chest), p. 41
- Seated Spine Twist, p. 99
- Tibetan Breath (for spine and shoulders), , p. 105
- Hip Rolls (a side lying twist), p. 109
- Cross Ankle Stretch (a variation of a seated forward bend), p. 111

Symptom: Fatigue

Yoga Therapy Approach: Relax and Refresh the Body

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p. 132-134
- Supported Legs-Up-the-Wall, p. 225-229
- Supported Half Plow, p. 233-237

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Upholding Heaven w/Two hands (similar to Tall Mountain), p. 165
- Breath of Fire, p. 37

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Upward Facing Dog, p. 199
- Bow, p. 200

Source: Judith Lasater, *Relax and Renew*

- Mountain Brook (gentle supported heart and throat opener), p. 197

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Bhanda (pulling in the stomach and solar plexus to stimulate the pancreas), p. 160, 180
- Metabolic Workout, (4 dynamic exercises to increase and sustain energy), p. 173
- The HA! Breath, p. 143

Symptom: Fluctuating Hormone Levels (may manifest as mood swings)

Yoga Therapy Approach: Balance Hormone Secretions/Endocrine System

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p.132-134
- Downward Facing Dog, p. 66-67
- Lying Down Bound-Angle, p. 125
- Supported Legs-Up-The-Wall, p. 225-229
- Supported Bridge Pose, p. 137-139
- Supported Child Pose, p.139-142
- Lying Down Bent-Knee Twist, p. 143-145
- Supported Deep Relaxation, p.243-246

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Alternate Leg Lifts, p. 192
- Relaxation Pose (Sponge), p. 198
- Child's Pose, p. 198

Source: Judith Lasater, *Relax and Renew*

- Supported Forward Bend: Wall Hang, p. 193
- Hanging Dog Pose, p. 195
- Supported Bridge, p. 201
- Supported Bound Angle, p. 198
- Elevated Legs-Up-The-Wall-Pose, p. 200

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Backward Arch (similar to the second step of the Sun Salutation), p. 93
- Swallow (variation on the Locust posture), p. 121
- The Fish, p. 135
- Tibetan Lift (a variation of a back bend), p. 136
- Elephant (a variation of a forward bend), p. 140

Symptom: Headaches

Yoga Therapy Approach: Bring More Oxygen to the Brain

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p. 132-134
- Supported Dog Pose, p. 66-67
- Supported Legs-Up-the-Wall, p. 225-229
- Supported Half Plow, 233-237

Symptom: Heart Palpitations

Yoga Therapy Approach: Calm the Body, Reduce Heightened/Stress Reaction

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*, pages

- Supported Bridge, p. 137-139
- Long Deep Breathing, p. 198-201
- Anti-Stress Breath, p. 198-201
- Simple Breath Awareness, p. 198-201

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Flapping Wings, p. 69
- Cross My Heart Pose, p. 70
- Calling to The Heart, p.71
- Meridian Balancing, p.108
- Wing Lifting, p. 180

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Upward Facing Dog, p. 199
- Chest Expander, p. 201

Although inadvertently left out of the symptom list on my menopause survey, menstrual irregularity is a common symptom mentioned by the research and so I have included it here.

Symptom: Menstrual Irregularity & Pelvic Congestion

Yoga Therapy Approach: Regulate Hormone Levels, Stimulate Ovaries and Uterus

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Standing Forward Bend, p. 132-134
- Seated Wide-Angle, p. 125
- Lying Down Supported Bound Angle, p.134-137

- Seated Forward Bend, p. 98
- Triangle (against a wall), p. 39-42
- Half Moon (against a wall), p.17

Source: Michael Gach, *Acu-Yoga*

- Pelvic Stretch (a variation of Pelvic Lifts), p. 195
- Pelvic Relaxation (A side lying acupressure exercise for menstrual relief), p. 196
- Locust, p. 209

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Alternate Leg Lifts, p. 192
- Spinal Flex (Pelvic Lifts), p. 193
- Locust, p.195
- Wide Angle Pose, p. 196
- Upward Facing Dog, p. 199

Source: Judith Lasater, *Relax and Renew*

- Supported Bound Angle, p. 160
- Reclining Crossed Legs, p. 162
- Supported Forward Bound Angle, p. 165
- Supported Seated Angle (Wide Angle), p. 168
- Supported Child's Pose, p. 169
- Basic Relaxation with Calves Supported, p. 170

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Standing Spine Stretch
(similar to the first two steps of the Sun Salutation), p. 88

Although not mentioned in great numbers in the survey, urinary incontinence, vaginal dryness and osteoporosis are of considerable importance for post menopausal women and so I have included them here as well.

Symptom: Urinary Incontinence & Vaginal Dryness

Yoga Therapy Approach: Tone the Muscles of the Perineum

Source: Suza Francina. *The New Yoga for People Over 50*

- Aswini Mudra, p. 146

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Alternate Leg Lifts, p. 192
- Spinal Flex (Pelvic Lifts), p. 193
- Locust, p.195
- Wide Angle Pose, p. 196
- Upward Facing Dog, p. 199

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Tibetan Lift (a variation of a back bend), p. 136

Symptom: Osteoporosis

Yoga Therapy Approach: Stress & Strengthen The Bones, Balance and Align the Body

Sequence Source: Wendy Dion (Email, 2001)

Reference Source: Geeta Iyengar, *Yoga, A Gem for Women*

- *Tadasana* (Mountain Pose)
- *Vrksasana* (Tree Pose)
- *Utthita Trikonasana* (Triangle Pose)
- *Utthita Parsvakonasana* (Extended Side Angle Pose)
- *Virabhadrasana I, II, & III* (Warrior Poses)
- *Ardha Chandrasana* (Half Moon Pose)
- *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana* (Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose)
- *Parsvottanasana* (Intense Side Stretch Pose)
- *Prasarita Padottanasana* (Spread Foot/Leg Pose)
- *Utkatasana* (Chair Pose)
- *Ardha Uttanasana* - (Half Forward Bend)
- *Adho Mukha Svanasana* (Downward Facing Dog)
- *Sukhasana* (Easy Seated Pose)
- *Bharadvajasana* (Spinal Twist)
- *Supta Baddha Konasana* (Supine Bound Angle Pose)
- *Viparita Karani* (Legs up the Wall Pose)
- *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* (Bridge Pose with Support)
- *Savasana* (Corpse Pose)

Source: Susan Lark, M.D. *The Menopause Self Help Book*

- Plow, p. 197

Source: Jan Maddern, *Yoga Builds Bones*

- Arm Balance, (Balanced Hip Lift) p. 21
- Downward-Facing Dog, p. 55
- Cobra, p. 62
- Tree, p. 148

- Balancing Tabletop (variation of a forward bend), p. 52
- Warrior Lunges, p. 74
- Pose of A Dancer (with wall support), p. 80
- Kneeling Side Stretch, p.76
- Elephant (variation of a forward bend), p. 140

Reflections

The series of programs in this chapter were developed to provide an alternative way of adapting Yoga to the needs of women entering, and moving through menopause and beyond. The programs are intended to be modular with flexibility built in for Yoga teachers to modify, mix, match and shorten or lengthen to meet the needs of their students, clients and teaching or therapeutic situation. The programs closely follow the Eight Limbs of Yoga structure organized by Patanjali and include the *Kosha* model as a way of including and reaching all the levels of a woman in the process of becoming aware, of healing or working toward spiritual development. Working gently and consistently with the breath, and the psycho/emotional energy as well as with the physical body is, in my opinion the best way to encourage menopausal women to embrace Yoga as a tool they can use on a daily basis. This is a key point since in Yoga philosophy, imbalances begin on the energetic level and work their way toward the physical. These tools are intended to provide Yoga teachers and therapists with guidelines in their work with menopausal women. In the final analysis what is used and how it will be applied will depend upon the client, her situation, the therapist and the environment that surrounds the work.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

Reality is above all else a variable, and nobody is qualified to say that he or she knows exactly what it is. As a matter of fact, with a firm enough commitment, you can sometimes create a reality which did not exist before.

- - -Margaret Halsey

(Eisen 200)

Even though the topic of menopause has given rise to a number of books which treat menopause from a medical perspective, the majority of these books have not addressed these issues from a woman's spiritual, psychological, social and cultural perspectives. There is a paucity of information on the specific application of Yoga to this universal, mid-life transition. Authors Christiane Northrup, Marian Van Eyk McCain, and Susun Weed are among those who recognize this gap in information. They, along with Susan Lark, Jan Maddern and others offer several self-help and holistic methods, including Yoga, for dealing with the symptoms, inner urges to 'something more' and increased perception of stress which often accompanies menopause.

Northrup writes,

“We’re waking up together, you and I. Don’t let anyone tell you that the passions that are now shaking you to the core are simply a hormonal storm. Don’t let anyone tell you that you’re asking too much or that you should be more ‘realistic’. Your passions are real, and they are calling out to you to be acted upon. But don’t panic if you feel some pain. Whenever we give birth to anything important, like the new relationship with our souls that is possible at midlife, there are going to be labor pains. You don’t have to make this transition overnight. You have months, evens years” (Northrup, 2001, 497).

When a woman enters the fourth stage of life, as a seeker, her physical and biological systems change. Often lifelong beliefs, thinking patterns and stable relationships are challenged.

Many women find themselves beginning a quest for "something more" without quite knowing what that "something more" is.

It is estimated that currently 4,000 women each day enter menopause" (Thornton, 1997, 273). Given today's emphasis on health and living longer, and the fact that life expectancy for women is now approximately eighty-four years, a woman in America can anticipate spending thirty or more of those years, close to one-third of her life, in a post reproductive state. Whether the response to menopause is one of discomfort and frustration or relief from periods and reproductive worries, it is my opinion that women who overlook the deeper meaning of menopause as a catalyst for healing and transformation have missed an opportunity to consciously participate in a vital developmental process.

If women choose to look at menopause as a process for self-healing and perhaps transformation, they will find that basic to this process of awareness is self examination which should be grounded in compassion and forgiveness for oneself and others. This is important, for few of us, teacher, therapist or student will be comfortable with all that we find when we begin poking about in our psyches and our lives. This work of self-examination will require us to become familiar with our lifestyle, thinking and behavior patterns as well as those aspects of ourselves that we freely share with others and those aspects that we deny, repress and hide (Wilber, 1979, 85 - 103).

As Yoga teachers and Yoga therapists help their students and clients to that end we will need to remember that the psychological process and spiritual practice often follow or move in tandem with each another but that they are not the same. Yoga teachers and Yoga therapists will need to be aware of this phenomenon in their clients and within themselves in order to keep the lines between counseling, psychotherapy and Yoga therapy clear. For example, in the process of my own evolution I sought counseling and psychotherapy. What I got from that experience is

very different than what I got from doing Yoga. From counseling and psychotherapy I got insight into how I was managing my five sense material world and I learned that some behavioral changes on my part could make that world run more smoothly. From Yoga I learned how to see my five sense world from a larger symbolic view which connected me to a deeper part of myself and my world from a multi-sensory, beyond the ego and thinking mind perspective. This view allowed me to exist and move and 'do' while at the same time remain centered in a state of 'being' that decreased the emotional charge from both positive and negative situations, leaving me more content with what life brings and what it takes away.

The science of Yoga provides a positive way to look at menopause as an opportunity to develop awareness for self-healing, and transformation and a time tested method for helping a woman come to an understanding of herself and what her 'something more' might be. A gentle, consistent practice of Yoga can help a menopausal woman recognize, accept and integrate her sub clinical rhythms, woman's wisdom and inner knowing. It will also help her reduce stress levels and manage some menopausal symptoms.

American cultural values around women's roles and worth can prevent women from seeing this perspective. However, with the current rise in the popularity of Yoga, Yoga therapists from all traditions and forms of Yoga have an opportunity to introduce women to a new point of view while providing healthful physical exercise, relief of menopausal symptoms and an overall sense of wellbeing. A growing number of Yoga teachers and Yoga therapists are applying tools and techniques from the science of Yoga to help women see herself with new eyes and her accepted roles as concepts, attitudes and responsibilities that can be accepted, negotiated, changed or dropped. Trisha Posner, author of *This is Not Your Mother's Menopause*, writes,

“Hopefully, one day American women will be honored at menopause by a culture that acknowledges we have paid our dues and have the wisdom of experience to make some of our most important contributions to family and society.”
(Posner, 2000)

Yoga teachers and therapists from all traditions can benefit from looking at menopause and Yoga with fresh eyes. I often tell my students that what kept me from moving from student to teacher was a perception that teaching Yoga was reserved for those who were thin, flexible enough to do back bends, sit in the Full Lotus position and look good in spandex. It was not until I encountered a teacher who did not fit my stereotype that I was able to change my perspective and move forward. This same perception often keeps women who can benefit greatly from what Yoga has to offer from taking a class. It is my personal hope to model that Yoga is for everybody and every body to all I teach.

It is my belief that Yoga is especially beneficial for women in the menopause transition and that it can and should be modified, customized and individualized to ensure comfort and ease of practice. The Eight Limbs model and the *Koshas* provides a solid psychological and philosophical structure in which that can happen. I learned from personal experience that some of the best teaching is done by those with a holistic and accepting view of a woman's journey and the ways in which her body ages and changes. This, I think, also applies to students. The best learning is accomplished by women who are open to their own lives, and all of their experience wanted and unwanted, light and shadow, positive and negative. I hope the programs presented in this project reflect that holistic attitude and help spread that view among Yoga teachers, Yoga therapists and their students, workshop participants and private clients.

Perhaps the day will come when scientific data will provide research to prove conclusively that Yoga can relieve and reduce the symptoms of menopause, slow the aging process, help women feel better and be more in control of their responses to their menopausal transition. Until that day comes, Yoga teachers and Yoga therapists will continue to rely on each other and the women we work with who tell us that Yoga works. And until that day comes, it is

my hope that those of us who have chosen to work as Yoga teachers and Yoga therapists will carry out our work guided by the following:

May we be grounded through the base of our bodies,
By Unity, Honor and Integrity.
May we be centered in our hearts,
Through Love and Compassion.
May we be lifted through our shoulders, neck and head,
By the energies of Mercy, Wisdom and Grace.

(Gibbs, 2000)

Namaste

