

Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body

By David Emerson, Elizabeth Hopper

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Survivors of trauma—whether abuse, accidents, or war—can end up profoundly wounded, betrayed by their bodies that failed to get them to safety and that are a source of pain. In order to fully heal from trauma, a connection must be made with oneself, including one's body. The trauma-sensitive yoga described in this book moves beyond traditional talk therapies that focus on the mind, by bringing the body actively into the healing process. This allows trauma survivors to cultivate a more positive relationship to their body through gentle breath, mindfulness, and movement practices.

Overcoming Trauma through Yoga is a book for survivors, clinicians, and yoga instructors who are interested in mind/body healing. It introduces trauma-sensitive yoga, a modified approach to yoga developed in collaboration between yoga teachers and clinicians at the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute, led by yoga teacher David Emerson, along with medical doctor Bessel van der Kolk. The book begins with an in-depth description of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including a description of how trauma is held in the body and the need for body-based treatment. It offers a brief history of yoga, describes various styles of yoga commonly found in Western practice, and identifies four key themes of trauma-sensitive yoga. Chair-based exercises are described that can be incorporated into individual or group therapy, targeting specific treatment goals, and modifications are offered for mat-based yoga classes. Each exercise includes trauma-sensitive language to introduce the practice, as well as photographs to illustrate the poses. The practices have been offered to a wide range of individuals and groups, including men and women, teens, returning veterans, and others. Rounded out by valuable quotes and case stories, the book presents mindfulness, breathing, and yoga exercises that can be used by home practitioners, yoga teachers, and therapists as a way to cultivate awareness, tolerance, and an increased acceptance of the self.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The book sets out to facilitate the creation of healing environments. Clinicians will learn basic yoga skills that can be implemented within individual therapy sessions. Yoga teachers will find thoughtful advice on how to make assists that won't trigger internal defenses. And trauma survivors will receive edict-free encouragement for using yoga as a tool for self-discovery. Thoughtful and thorough, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* brings a spirit of optimism to the process of healing past wounds and reclaiming body and mind."

—Rolf Sovik, PsyD, *Yoga International Magazine*

"Trauma-related conditions are complex disorders involving dysregulation of the mind, body and the mind/body interface. Although yoga is a mind/body practice known to have significant therapeutic benefit, yoga for healthy individuals is not the same as yoga therapy for patients, which must take patient limitations into account. The trauma-sensitive yoga developed by the authors through practical/clinical experience, and described carefully, practically and systematically in this book, incorporates the best that yoga has to offer with what will benefit trauma patients safely and comfortably."

—Sat Bir Khalsa, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Director of Research for the Kundalini Research Institute

"In this landmark book the authors offer survivors a gentle, step-by-step *mindful* yoga that is tailored for their specific needs.... This well conceived book is a tremendous resource for therapists and yoga teachers. By engaging the wisdom of their bodies, it is a great companion and guide to those taking the journey of recovery from trauma to wholeness. *Yoga and Trauma* is a gift for those taking the hero's journey of recovery and vibrancy."

—From the Foreword by Peter A. Levine, Ph.D., author of the bestselling *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*

"At last, an engaging, accessible, theoretically grounded guide for the safe and effective use of yoga to heal from trauma! With a rich understanding of both the practice of yoga and the legacy of trauma, the authors skillfully weave together theory, research, mindfulness, case vignettes, yoga instruction, and more into a clear and compelling argument for reclaiming the body through their 'trauma-sensitive' modified yoga. Innovative and practical, this book is an indispensable resource for traumatized individuals, yoga teachers, clinicians, and anyone else who is looking to rediscover the natural intelligence of the body."

—Pat Ogden, PhD, founder of the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute and author of *Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy*

"There is a real need to extend yoga to those affected by traumatic experience and this book is a guide toward that action serving yoga practitioners, yoga teachers, and clinicians who are interested in working somatically. This guide fills the gap in the yoga student's training with a solid knowledge base of trauma and offers ideas about creating a trauma-sensitive yoga class. Furthermore, clinicians can give insight into working with the body in the therapy session. ... The yoga skills presented here are designed to center, to ground, to increase mindful awareness, to encourage curiosity about experiencing the present, to help regain the sense of empowerment, enhance affect-regulation and to befriend the body, all in a trauma informed way. From a yoga perspective, this guide presents how to work with an individual suffering from symptoms associated with traumatic experience as a fine balance between knowledge and sensitivity."

—*Somatic Psychology Today*

“If you have suffered trauma or are a yoga teacher looking for ways to expand your class offerings, *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga* stands alone in providing a complete program developed by clinical experience especially designed to address the needs of trauma survivors... [The book] offers survivors a mindful approach to healing through calm, step-by-step yoga tailored to their specific requirements in order to engage and awaken the wisdom of their own bodies... a superb book...this gem deserves a place on the bookshelf.”

—*Yoga Flavored Life*

“Authors Emerson and Hopper demonstrate how to deliberately and systematically intervene in the body’s alarm systems, and the yoga-based approaches they present in *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga* use a series of postures and breathing techniques to rebuild a sense of connection to the self. ... *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga* is highly recommended for trauma clients, therapists, and yoga teachers who want to work together toward complete recovery.”

—*New York Journal of Books*

“In his book *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga*, co-author David Emerson (with Elizabeth Hopper) discusses the importance of treating not only patients’ minds, but also their bodies, where memories of traumatic events are stored. They write, ‘While talk-based therapy serves a critical role in the healing process, many are finding that it is insufficient by itself.’ Yoga and other forms of therapeutic physical activity may be the missing link.”

—*Whole Life Times*

“Though the reason for buying this book will vary greatly, I think the message is the same for everyone. ... I expected some ‘tips and tricks,’ but instead I got a great discussion on understanding my body, and, that my healing must come from within myself as well as physically. I am not a yogi, I have watched a few videos and stumbled around my living room but this book was a great read even for a beginner like me. It was easy to follow the instruction and simple exercises. I am certain that this book has been a great addition to my recovery.”

—Alexandria Vail, *Chicklit Club*

“*Very useful book...* The essential wisdom imparted here is that a simple hatha yoga practice can support the treatment of trauma by a) reintroducing the PTSD client to having and making meaningful choices when it seems like all choices have been taken away; b) cultivating a sense of living in the present in a way that feels safe; c) taking effective physical action, in direct opposition to what happens in a trauma situation where great effort is made, and often unsuccessfully, toward simply getting away from the threat; and d) establishing personal and interpersonal rhythms when the client may feel out-of-step with his or her own biorhythms, emotions, other people, etc. ... I liked the straightforward tone, and the material is streamlined enough that you can pretty much absorb the whole thing in one or two sittings, and start applying it immediately.”

—PCarino, *Intellectual House o' Pancakes*

“*Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga* tells how trauma survivors can use yoga to reconnect to one's body and introduces the concept of trauma-sensitive yoga, a modified yoga program developed at the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute. It focuses on reinforcing positive relationships between body and mind through breathing and gentle yoga exercises, and provides an in-depth description of post-traumatic stress disorder. Yoga teachers and therapists alike will find this a fine, specific guide to integrating yoga-based interventions into therapy.”

—Midwest Book Review

“The authors, David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, PhD have done an excellent job connecting the dots for readers. ... *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga* eloquently describes and clearly illustrates how trauma-sensitive yoga has been and continues to be an effective tool for trauma survivors, healing them from the inside out. Generally, I would encourage anyone who experiences stress or disconnect from their bodies to give this book a chance.”

—Angela Andiorio, *Space & Time*

“For yoga teachers, [*Overcoming Trauma through Yoga*] is invaluable for showing that all students are not the same, and that adapting your class just takes compassion, special care and knowledge, which this book provides. Clinicians will benefit by learning that yoga unlocks traumatized bodies. ... Although trauma survivors may have moments of discomfort and...strong emotions may surface as they read, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* offers something critical to their healing: hope.”

—Dawn Hamilton, Life Force Yoga Healing Institute

About the Author

David Emerson is the director of yoga services at the Trauma Center (traumacenter.org). In 2003 he codesigned the Trauma Center Yoga Program that includes classes and teacher training programs. He lives in Cambridge, MA. Elizabeth Hopper, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist specializing in traumatic stress and works as the associate director of training at the Trauma Center. She lives in Somerville, MA.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Pearlie Henry:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite e-book and reading a publication. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the reserve entitled *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body*. Try to the actual book *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body* as your buddy. It means that it can being your friend when you feel alone and beside that of course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortunated for yourself. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let's make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

Marcos Gorman:

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information presently can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a problem. What people must be consider any time those information which is inside former life are challenging to be find than now's taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen within you if you take *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body* as your daily resource information.

Timothy McKinney:

The reason why? Because this Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will zap you with the secret that inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of gains than the other book include such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking means. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I had been you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Ed Abraham:

The book untitled Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains your ex idea with easy method. The language is very easy to understand all the people, so do certainly not worry, you can easy to read this. The book was written by famous author. The author provides you in the new era of literary works. You can read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book with anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can open up their official web-site and also order it. Have a nice study.

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