

## How Yoga Therapy Can Combat Stress

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Do you frequently experience stress? If you answered, “yes” you’re not alone. Most people experience some level of stress everyday. What can help combat stress is yoga therapy. To help understand how yoga therapy can help you reduce stress, I have interviewed therapist Laura Carite, LPC RYT.

[Tell me a little bit about yourself.](#)

“I have 20 years experience in Mental Health. I have a Masters in Clinical Psychology from University of Hartford CT and I am a Licensed Professional Counselor. I recently completed a 4-year clinical fellowship training in Gestalt Psychotherapy with Gestalt Associates in Psychotherapy (GAP) in NYC and a 2-year certification in Developmental Somatic Psychotherapy NYC. I have a 200 hour Yoga Teacher certification as well as a 200 hour Yoga Therapy certification. I work from a mind-body orientation using the framework of Gestalt and Somatic Psychotherapy in conjunction with yoga. I particularly enjoy helping others cultivate and strengthen the mind-body connection. My approach aims to gently awaken the whole body and increase present moment awareness. I never stop studying, exploring, or inviting further growth as a therapist and as a person.”

[What type of impact can stress have on someone’s overall life?](#)

“This is a big question and the answer is five fold, namely Physical, Mental, Emotional, Social, and Spiritual. The physical effects of stress are well-documented in as far as catalyzing and exacerbating physical illness. We can say with certainty at this point that a whopping 90 percent of doctor’s visits are stress related. That is not so staggering when you consider that stress is a normal part of everyday life. What is staggering is the fact that almost no one has a stress management plan. Stress simply refers to demands needing your attention. We live VERY demanding lives therefore we live VERY stressful lives. Our bodies are designed to meet new demands with astounding efficiency. Therefore, we keep piling on the demands and our bodies keep meeting them through activation of the ‘stress response’ initiated in the sympathetic nervous system . This is otherwise referred to as the fight, flight or freeze response. In the physical realm, there is no distinction between everyday life stress and a real emergency so essentially we are fighting, flying and freezing all day long while meeting higher and higher demands. This includes, but is not limited to, increase heart rate, blood pressure, hyper-vigilant muscles, shallow breathing, decreased digestion and metabolic rate and decreased immune functions. There is a global systemic shift in the body putting us on high alert. Chronic high alert status leads to a myriad of break down in the body and eventual chronic conditions such as, heart disease , high blood pressure, diabetes, IBS, migraines etc.

Mental effects include pessimism, self-criticism, intolerance of others, narrowing of thought processes, loss of focus and concentration. Some of the emotional effects are anxiety, anger, irritability, depression, heightened emotional sensitivity, emotional numbing and insensitivity to others.

Social effects can vacillate from isolating to excessive socializing. This arena also includes behavioral effects like increased smoking, drinking, eating or the reverse such as missing meals, lack of pleasure in

activities, decrease in daily living activities. The effects in the social dimension are as varied as there are different people.

The spiritual dimension is most often overlooked. This refers to religious affiliation and practice but more importantly, it refers to meaning. When taxed by stress, we begin to separate from meaning in our lives and go about our demands like robots. This disconnection from meaning begins to erode the very core of our existence. Meaning gives us the 'why' in our lives. Without 'why' we lose the motivation to continue and this meaninglessness pervades all other dimensions causing yet further stress in those arenas. Furthermore, consider that all dimensions influence one another, which is why it is important to address all dimensions when dealing with stress ."

### How can yoga therapy combat stress?

"I simply love this question. I know all the stress junkies out there are pressed for time and Yoga is a one stop shopping trip for stress. Yoga addresses all of the 5 dimensions listed above in each one-hour session. Attending general yoga classes regularly will address the 5 dimensions mentioned above. The physical tensions of stress are stretched, squeezed, twisted, reversed and turned upside down. The mental effects of stress are cleared, calmed, focused, and re-framed. The emotional impact of stress is pacified, grounded, soothed, and released. Finally, the spirit is recognized and rediscovered as well as lifted and connected to something bigger.

Yoga 'ÉœTherapy' is a wellness tailored version of all the principles of yoga as they relate to your personal needs. Yoga Therapy operates from the principle of restoration of the body, mind and spirit to its innate state of balance and equanimity. It is done one on one and focused solely on the demands of your life and how they are manifesting in your body/mind/spirit."

### Where can someone find more information on yoga therapy help for stress?

"In the spirit of stress reduction, the simple answer is to go to any local yoga studio and start with beginner, gentle or restorative yoga .

### There are some very helpful books:

Relax and Renew by Judith Lasater, Yoga as Medicine by Timothy Mccall, and Yoga for Wellness by Gary Kraftsow. To find a yoga therapist, the internet works wonders and in particular, the websites listed below offer loads of information and a therapist directory.

Another is [www.iytyogatherapy.com](http://www.iytyogatherapy.com) Integrative Yoga Therapy. IYT is a leader in the yoga therapy field and offers a worldwide therapist directory as well as information on yoga therapy and training programs for those interested."

### Would someone need additional types of help to help maximize the positive impact of yoga therapy on stress? If "yes" then what?

"Combining healthy options is always recommended and in fact, this is the very intention of 'complimentary medicine'. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When we combine the best practices of various disciplines, the collective effect is much greater than each practice would be on its own. With that said, it should not deter anyone from starting yoga or yoga therapy tomorrow. Yoga is potent in and of itself and can be life changing. As mentioned above, yoga therapy is a specialty and one should find a practitioner who specializes. I recommend a symptom specific combination such a physical

therapist/yoga therapist for physical limitations or conditions. A psychotherapist/yoga therapist when the manifestations are mental, emotional or behavioral and soon.”

Thank you Laura for doing the interview on how yoga therapy can combat stress. For more information on Laura Carite or her work you can check out her website on [www.restoremindandbody.com](http://www.restoremindandbody.com) .