



THE ADAPTIVE YOGA GUIDE

For people with various disabilities,
yoga teachers, healthcare professionals,
& caregivers

BY CAROLINE HUGHES, PTA, RYT
ACCESSIBLE YOGA PRACTICES

ADAPTIVE YOGA IS...

a style of yoga that caters to **all** bodies
and ability levels.

It consists of yoga poses, breathing
practices, meditations, mantras,
and community building.

ADAPTIVE YOGA
IS FOR ALL OF US.

accessibleyogapractices.com

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01



THE CREATION OF ACCESSIBLE YOGA PRACTICES

Welcome to the Adaptive Yoga Guide! My name is Caroline Hughes, and I am immensely grateful for your interest in adaptive yoga. I'm a Physical Therapist Assistant, Yoga Teacher, and Founder of Accessible Yoga Practices.

I've been teaching yoga to individuals with various neurological conditions and disabilities since 2017. I have had the opportunity to practice yoga with people who have a wide range of diagnoses such as Multiples Sclerosis, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, Spinal Cord Injuries, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Strokes, Down Syndrome, and many more. Through trust, communication, and open-mindedness we have discovered beautiful ways to adapt the practice to their bodies.

Working with these students inspired me to create Accessible Yoga Practices, an online and in-person community of yogis with disabilities and injuries. This guide aims to showcase what yoga looks like in the context of disability and how it benefits the body, mind, and soul. **We want to show you that yoga is for everyone and every body. We just have to be creative and openminded to find poses that work for YOU!**

The goal of AYP is to share the teachings of yoga with people who might not feel included in "standard" yoga studios. We also want to demonstrate that yoga is much more than a physical practice. Yoga includes meditation, breathing practices, physical postures, singing, and much more. This guide will show you what you need to start your practice. It will provide you with a ***yoga tool kit*** full of practices to help you calm your mind, reset your nervous system, and connect with your higher-Self, your soul.



As someone who deals with anxiety and periods of depression, I have found yoga (and talk therapy) to be the most holistic and effective treatment for me. Yoga has many benefits mentally and physically. My clients and students report benefits like reduced stiffness and tightness, lower stress levels, improved mindset, improved posture, increased strength, decreased pain levels, and much more.

I created this guide because physicians frequently recommend their patients try yoga for these benefits. However, physicians might not have taken the time to explain **how to find adaptive yoga teachers or yoga therapists in your area to address your concerns.**

I can imagine that wheelchair users and folks with mobility issues might encounter challenges when searching for teachers who specialize in adaptive yoga. **If you are a wheelchair user seeking in-person adaptive yoga, consider looking up yoga therapists in your city or nearby areas through google.** Yoga therapists have completed nearly 1000 hours of training. You can also reach out to Physical Therapists or Occupational Therapists and see if they teach yoga or have someone they can recommend.

I'm confident that many teachers would be willing to work with you and help you with your practice. Reach out to a few yoga teachers, therapists, or studios, and inquire about their experiences. Interview the teacher you want to work with and choose the person you feel most comfortable with. Virtual sessions are always a possible option, too.

I've created this guide with the intention of sharing the benefits of this practice with anyone who is interested. Certain sections are designed for your independent practice, particularly the chapters dedicated to yoga philosophy, breathing practices and meditation.

You can also use this guide to engage in yoga with a friend or a loved one. I encourage you to foster curiosity. Approach these practices with patience and an open heart. Immerse yourself in them and pay close attention to the impact they have on your well-being.



Try and let go of your attachments to what a yoga practice “should” look like. Instead gravitate towards what feels good to Y O U R body. Lean in to what feels warm, comfortable, and supportive. One of the goals of the practice is to remain attuned to your breath—keep it steady, slow, and even.

Above all, don't take yourself too seriously! Some of my yoga sessions have been filled with laughter, while others have served as a time to process grief. Occasionally, my practice has felt unremarkable, but most have been filled with wonder and gratitude for this wild and precious life.

Our practice represents our life. It's full of contrast, highs and lows, and polarities. Our minds are like bodies of water that experience intense storms, but also calm and peaceful days. It's when we pause and reflect on our inner world that we tap into our inner knowing, our inner guide. We find more calm in the storms of life. We learn to regulate and be compassionate before we react to something in a negative way.

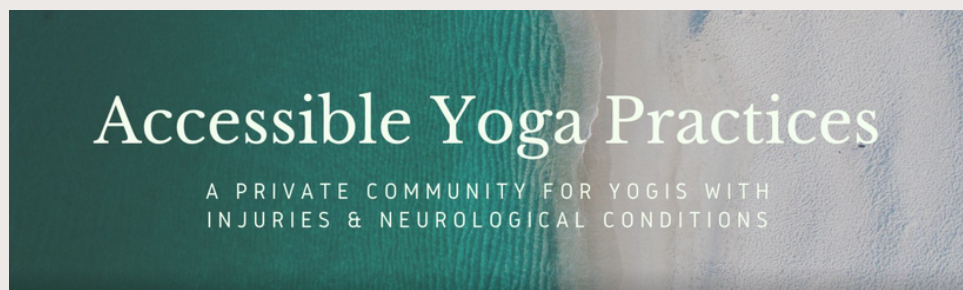
Thank you again for your interest in adaptive yoga! Together we can change the idea that yoga is only for the able-bodied. Adaptive yoga is for all of us!

This guide covers yogic philosophy, different styles of yoga, yoga props, breathing practices, yoga in rehabilitation, and 10 common yoga poses with variations in standing, sitting, and lying down.

We are here to support you on your yoga journey. Feel free to reach out with any questions you may have after reading the guide. **Our goal is to create resources tailored to YOUR needs, so let us know what you would like to learn more about. How can we make the guide more accessible for you?**

Consider joining the AYP Facebook group, a private online community for individuals with injuries and various disabilities who practice yoga. In the group, you can ask questions that relate to yoga and your disability. We are all here to assist each other. Welcome to your online yoga home!

[Join the Adaptive Yoga Facebook Group Here](#)



My story...

Shortly after becoming a yoga teacher, I worked with a woman named Lisa who had been living with ALS for 8 long years. My mentor, Kelly Haas, helped me plan a sequence for Lisa to improve her posture, her joint range of motion, and assist her in feeling comfort and ease.

Lisa used eye gazing technology to tell me how amazing the poses felt to her. I saw her forehead and eyes soften as she relaxed into the restorative postures, supported by bolsters, blankets, and yoga straps.



During our session I uncovered my **dharma**, or my life's purpose. My mission is to help people feel good in their body so they can quiet their mind and tune into their inner-guide. In a world that can be cruel at times, it's SO IMPORTANT for us to have tools that make us feel good physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Here is a list of my certifications and trainings. I strongly believe in investing in oneself through education. It is something no one can take away from you.

EDUCATION, TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS:

Licensed Physical Therapist Assistant...2022
400-hour Registered Yoga Teacher...2016
30-hour Restorative Yoga Training...2017
100-hour Yoga Therapeutics Training...2023
10-hour Adaptive Yoga Training...2018
80-hour Thai Yoga Massage Course, Chiang Mai, Thailand...2019

Our goal at AYP is to certify people with disabilities to become yoga teachers. I want to see more disabled people practicing and teaching yoga.

My hope is that our teachers take their lived experience and share the teachings with their communities. It's such a gift to teach. You really get to make a positive impact in your community and demonstrate that yoga is for all of us. It's a wonderful offering that uplifts others' health, wellness, and vitality.

If you're interested in our YTT vision please mention this in the survey at the end of the guide. We are currently looking for participants in the program and funding options.

C H A P T E R

02



YOGA PHILOSOPHY & THE MANY STYLES OF YOGA

Yoga is a spiritual practice with origins in India dating back 5000 years. While many people in India practice Hinduism as their religion, it's important to note that yoga itself is not a religion. Instead, it's a spiritual practice that incorporates principles from Hinduism, such as karma and enlightenment.

It is essential for us to recognize and respect the cultural roots of yoga and refrain from appropriating it in any way. We should strive to honor these ancient teachings authentically. One way to do so is by studying Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, which I've included in this guide. Another way is learning from yoga teachers with indigenous backgrounds. There is so much we can learn from one another.

Yoga translates to "union." It's a union with our higher-Self or our soul. We capitalize the S to signify the Soul, the most important part of our being.

It acknowledges that we are not merely the physical body or the thoughts that occupy our minds; rather, we are the **atman**, or the soul. We possess a body, but we are not defined by our body. We have a mind, but we are not limited to our thoughts.

Often, we allow our life stories to define us – where we were born, our family background, our professions and interests. We use these narratives to construct our identities. Frequently, we become deeply attached to the roles we play. For instance, I am Caroline, from Mobile, Alabama. I work as a PTA and a yoga teacher. In my free time, I enjoy listening to podcasts, traveling, reading, playing music, and swimming. What's your story?

What if I told you that all of these titles and identities are an illusion? All just a dream that we've chosen to believe. Yoga teaches us that we transcend our physical body, our thoughts, our interests, and our attachments.

In modern life we are often sold the dream of acquiring a beautiful house, a fulfilling job, a loving spouse. We are told to be good, to do good. To be flawless. When we fall short of these ideals, we might undervalue our self-worth. It's important to recognize that these roles we assume do not define who we truly are. They do not define our soul. Our roles are simply hats we put on, different personas, different costumes. They do not define our worthiness.

What would life be like without our roles and to do lists? What would our life be like if we were free from our attachments? Yoga teaches us how to tap into that freedom WITHIN OURSELVES. It shows us paths, or **margas**, to freedom from material attachments.

The paths of yoga are illuminated in various ancient texts. The Vedas, a compilation of sacred scriptures that initially introduced the concept of yoga, were notated in Northern India over 5000 years ago. Two significant texts that followed closely are the **Yoga Sutras** and the **Bhagavad Gita**.

The **Yoga Sutras** provide a framework for reaching enlightenment, or spiritual liberation through the **8 limbs of yoga**. **The Bhagavad Gita** is an epic tale of a family about to go to war with one another. It discusses important yogic concepts like finding your **dharma**, or your purpose in life. It reminds us to find our dharma even when it entails things we don't necessarily desire.

At times, our dharma can be so freaking hard, kind of like navigating an inaccessible world with a disability. Our practice serves to remind us that we can do hard things. Yoga practice can be a grounding force, allowing for clarity, and serenity in the face of adversity. Did you know that many civil rights activists used yoga techniques to maintain composure during non-violent protests? Perhaps we can use these same strategies to fight for disability rights.

Yoga philosophy is one of the myriad paths to yoga. The following page lists various ways to engage in yoga practice. If any of these pique your interest, feel free to embark on a research journey through Google. There is an abundance of literature and videos available on these subjects.

THE MANY STYLES OF YOGA

Here's a list of the different “margas” or paths of a yoga practice:

Raja Yoga: Focusing on understanding the mind, meditation, or **dharana**.

Karma Yoga: Embracing selfless service, also known as **seva**.

Bhakti Yoga: Practicing devotion through singing, chanting songs, or **mantras**.

Hatha Yoga: The physical practice of yoga, or **asana**, aimed at purifying the body.

Jnana Yoga: Pursuing wisdom and knowledge through literature.

Nada Yoga: Engaging with sound, speech, and deep, mindful listening.

Here's a list of common styles of Hatha Yoga that are accessible in nature.

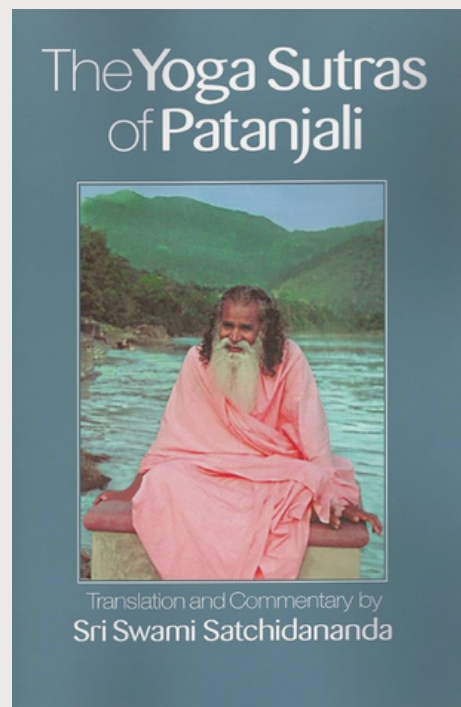
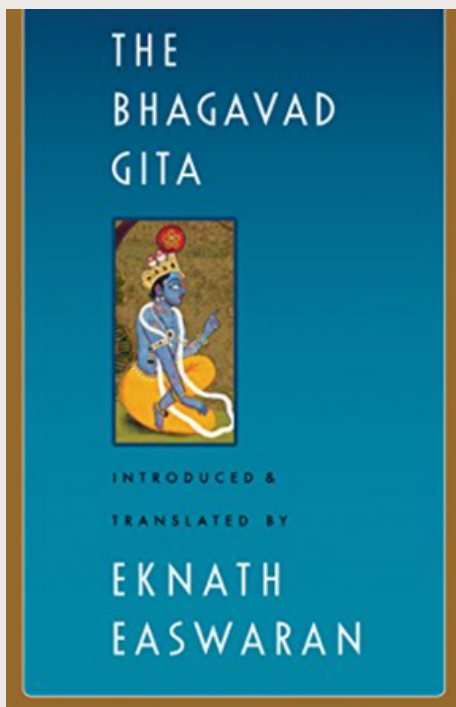
- **Adaptive Yoga:** customized approach to yoga practice that modifies poses and techniques to accommodate individuals with disabilities or special needs, promoting their physical and mental well-being.
- **Chair Yoga:** a form of yoga practice that involves performing yoga poses and exercises while seated in a chair.
- **Restorative Yoga:** a gentle and therapeutic style of yoga that utilizes props and long-held poses to promote deep relaxation, stress reduction, and rejuvenation.
- **Yoga Nidra:** a guided meditation and relaxation technique that induces a state of conscious relaxation, allowing for deep rest and mental clarity.
- **Iyengar Yoga:** a precise and alignment-focused style of yoga that uses props like belts and blocks to assist practitioners in achieving correct postures and greater body awareness.
- **Yin Yoga:** a slow-paced and meditative style of yoga that involves holding passive poses for extended periods to target the connective tissues and improve flexibility and inner stillness.

THE MANY STYLES OF YOGA

Here are some common styles of Hatha Yoga that can be modified, but are typically more physically demanding:

- Vinyasa Yoga
- Yin Yoga
- Beginner's Yoga
- Hot Yoga/Bikrim
- Aerial Yoga
- Kundalini
- LYT Yoga
- Ashtanga
- Anusara
- Jivamukti
- Many, many more...

TRANSLATIONS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND THE YOGA SUTRAS WE RECOMMEND...



CHAPTER

03



PROP IT UP & BREATHE IT OUT

Yoga props are a must have for adaptive yoga. You have the option to purchase props or **you can use things you already have lying around your house.**

In Chapter 4 we cover 10 common yoga poses and modifications for these poses while sitting, standing, or lying down. Know that any of the props in the pictures are **O P T I O N A L**. Try them out and if it doesn't work for your body, no big deal. Most importantly explore and find what feels good to you!

Yoga props make everything better, (in my humble opinion). Some styles of yoga include tons of props like restorative yoga, adaptive yoga, and Iyengar yoga. Some styles don't include many props at all. It might be more challenging to find comfort and good alignment in your poses without them.

It's important to note that setting up some of the poses and props may be tricky at first, but once you're in position, you can hold the pose for as long as you like. Pay attention to the energetic sensations within. Mindfully scan your body, from your feet and legs to your trunk, spine, arms, and head. Breathe slowly and steadily, and observe how the poses affect your state of mind. **Remember not to be overly concerned about perfect alignment;** refinement can always come later.

Let these pictures be a reference, but allow the pose to become your own expression. The poses will reflect your own beautiful individuality. Exit the poses slowly and with caution, taking a moment to rest before transitioning to the next asana.

CHAPTER 3

Here is a list of the yoga props that we used in the making of this guide. No worries if you don't have access to the same props. **Below I have included household items you can use that will serve the same purpose.**



- 1. Chairs:** get creative with furniture
- 2. Blankets:** you can use a towel or pillow
- 3. Yoga Mat:** make sure it grips well. You can use a towel, blanket, or rug
- 4. Blocks:** you can use a stool or a stack of books
- 5. Strap/Belt:** use a dress tie, rope, or gait belt
- 6. Rectangular Bolster:** use pillow, couch cushions, or stack of folded towels
- 7. Round Bolster:** use pillow, couch cushions, or stack of rolled up towels
- 8. Massage table:** you can practice yoga in your bed or on your couch

Pranayama: Yogic breathing exercises

Prana: life force energy

Yama: restraint or control

Yoga reminds us that we have little control in life. We are all passengers on this wild human ride. One thing we **might** be able to control on this wild ride is our breath. We can breathe slow, fast, shallow, deep, and wide. It's accessible for many people, but it's important to remember it's not accessible or indicated for A L L people.

Where breathing practices might be the perfect solution for one person to quiet the mind, it might be incredibly agitating for another person. Our yoga practice is deeply personal in this way. I want to normalize that if you try these breathing practices and they don't feel great to you, do not be discouraged. Put them on the back burner for now, explore it when or if you feel ready, know that things always change.

If you have difficulty accessing your diaphragm, difficulty with breathing deeply, or use a ventilator, tune into how these breathing practices make you feel. You might love it! It might challenge you in a powerful way. But, it might also make you feel anxious or short of breath. **Remember to gravitate towards what feels best to you.** Approach these exercises with softness and curiosity.

Breathing practices can strengthen your diaphragm and breathing accessory muscles, improve lung function, and increase lung capacity. They can be practiced independently and have profound effects on your mind. When you feel anxious try breathing slow and wide. When you're feeling tired try breathing a little faster and more shallow. Explore how the pace of your breath can influence your energy.

Research suggests these are tips for optimal breathing in day to day life.

1. Breathe in and out through the nose to moisten the air coming into the lungs
2. Breathe less, slow your respiration rate down to enhance the parasympathetic nervous system (resting mode for brain)
3. As you breathe in your rib cage moves up and out. As you breathe out your ribcage moves down and in



Pranayama: Yogic breathing exercises

Here are 3 Yogic Breathing Practices you can try while sitting in meditation or while practicing **asana**, yoga poses.

- **Diaphragmatic Breath:**
 - Breathe in and out through your nose
 - Breathe into the lower abdominals (front and back body) and let your abdomen expand.
 - Breathe out feeling a light engagement of the core
 - Repeat for about 1 - 5 minutes
- **Sama Vritti:**
 - **Sama** = equal, **vritti** = fluctuation
 - Breathe in and out keeping the inhalations and exhalations the same duration
 - Count how many seconds it takes you to breathe in as slowly as you can, exhale for the same amount of time
 - Set a timer and breathe like this about 10 times or for 2 - 5 minutes
- **Physiological Sigh:**
 - a. Breathe in deeply and hold the breath. Breathe in a little more air then hold the breath again for about 3 seconds.
 - b. Slowly exhale all of the air out of your lungs
 - c. Repeat 10 times or for 2 - 5 minutes

Meditation: exercises for mental clarity and evoking calm states

Meditation is an essential aspect of the yoga practice. Truly it deserves a whole guide book of its own. There are **many** different ways to practice meditation, but ultimately it's a mindfulness practice where you focus the mind on different tasks like scanning your body or quieting the mind.

Some people prefer seated meditations, while others feel more comfortable lying down. I highly recommend downloading a F R E E app called **Insight Timer** which offers a variety of guided meditations. Start with short sessions like 1-2 minutes and work your way up to 5 minutes, 10 minutes, maybe even 45 minutes eventually. It took me many years to appreciate my meditation practice, but with dedication and perseverance, it can be one of the most rewarding ways for us to connect with our inner selves. In meditation, you can choose to calm the mind or explore your thoughts, especially if faced with a difficult decision.

In meditation we learn how to have control of our mind and reduce stress caused by negative cyclical thinking. The true goal of meditation is to achieve a calm and balanced state of mind. [Check out the HubermanLab podcast episode titled, "How Meditation Works & Science Based Effective Meditations.](#)

C H A P T E R

04



10 COMMON YOGA POSES & MODIFICATIONS

One of my clients, Jennifer, expressed her desire to return to practicing in yoga studios. Jennifer, an incredibly successful lawyer in her 40s, had survived a brain aneurysm that affected her left arm, left leg, and balance. She was passionate about pilates and yoga before her brain injury. When she shared her goal to return to studio classes, I was confident that, with some guidance, she could make it happen.

This aspiration inspired me to create this chapter, demonstrating how certain yoga poses can be adapted for individuals with disabilities or injuries.

Initially, Jennifer and I embarked on modifying ten common yoga poses to suit her needs. We focused on optimizing her posture and transitioning from one pose to another. Additionally, she wanted to get onto and off of the floor without assistance which she has now achieved!

After Jennifer attended her first studio class, she was thrilled to report that our work together prepared her for the class.

She would return to our private sessions with new poses she learned in the studio, and together, we would adapt them to her abilities. Through collaboration, we refined her practice and identified comfortable options tailored uniquely to her.

In just a few hours, we crafted an incredible practice designed for Jennifer. She now attends studio classes frequently and practices at home several times a week. Her yoga practice has become an integral part of her recovery journey and a source of empowerment. I hope you find inspiration in this chapter and find what works for Y O U.

It might be nice to light a candle or some incense for your practice and dim the lights down a little. Find a space where you can relax and practice these poses.

I would like to thank Ashley Speaks and Nicole Marquez for participating in the making of this Guide. We have been practicing yoga for the past year at Split Second Fitness in New Orleans. Ashley (on the left) is a mother, a nurse, and runs a MS support group in New Orleans. She was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2019. Nicole (on the right) is a dancer, actress, and artist who survived a Spinal Cord Injury that mostly affects her hands. Her accident was roughly 10 years ago.



At the beginning of your practice find a comfortable seat or lie down. Take a few minutes to pause and center yourself. Tune in to how you're feeling and tune out the distractions in your environment. Set an intention, a goal to enhance your health and wellness during your practice. What are you working on? What are letting go of? Return to this intention throughout your practice.

Take a few slow and steady breaths in and out through your nose, if possible. Breathe into any areas of your body feeling tense or tight. Allow yourself to feel whatever arises and like a cloud, watch it pass by.

Slow and steady breaths, feel your connection to your seat. Lift your head up towards the ceiling, soften your shoulders, jaw, and face. Bow your head into your practice.

Now is the time for yoga.

When you get settled into these yoga poses, pause and take about 2-10 breaths if you are able. Find a balance between effort and ease. Remember, there are many ways to practice a pose so have fun and make it unique to your body!

TADASANA - MOUNTAIN POSE

TAH- DAHS - UH - NUH



Seated Variation:

- Roll up blanket, yoga mat, or towel behind your spine.
- Set blocks under feet to get knees and hips to a 90 degree angle.
- Use a block between the knees and a strap around legs to improve alignment of legs.
- Maintain a neutral pelvis - try not to tilt the pelvis forward or backward.
- Arms are active and down by your side.

Standing Variation:

- Stand with feet as wide as hips.
- Point toes and knees forward.
- Knees and hips face forward as best as they can.
- Neutral pelvis - not tilting forward or backward.
- Neutral spine.
- Neutral scapula - shoulder blades down and in.
- Block between knees for more muscle energy in legs.

TADASANA - MOUNTAIN POSE

TAH- DAHS - UH - NUH



Supine Tadasana:

1. Lay down on your back. Use a folded blanket or pillow under the head. Use a rolled blanket, yoga mat, or towel under the knees.
2. Place a block between the thighs. Strap the thighs to align the legs.
3. Use something to ground the feet like yoga blocks, a wall, or a bolster.
4. Lightly engage through your entire body.

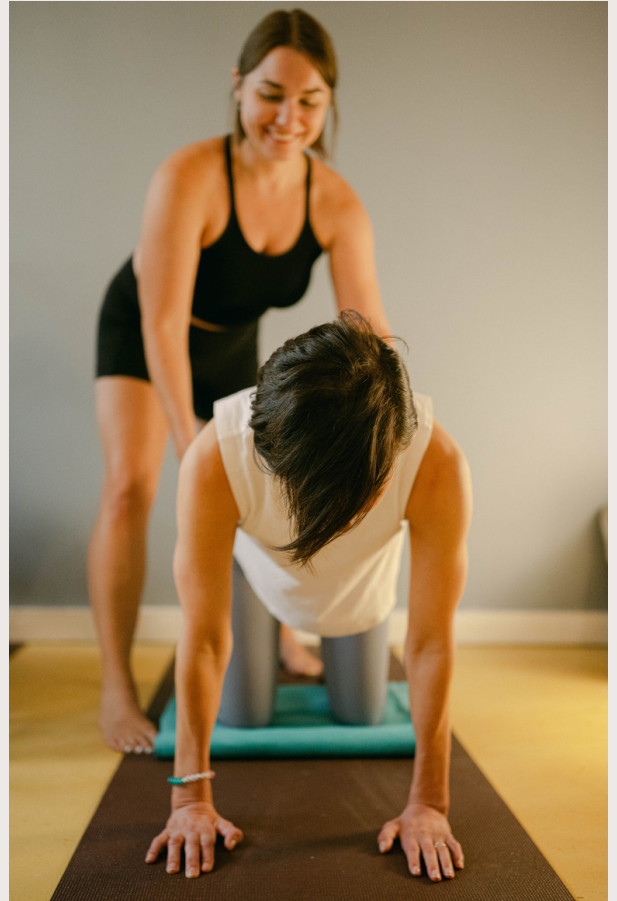
Benefits: Improves posture and body awareness

BHARMANASANA - TABLE TOP POSE

BAR - MAH - NAHS - UH - NUH

Standing Variation:

1. Come onto your hands and knees.
2. Use a blanket to cushion the knees.
3. Hands are directly under your shoulders.
Knees are directly under your hips.
4. Hands are as wide or wider than the shoulders.
5. Pull your shoulder blades down and together
6. Lift your navel away from the floor
7. Gaze toward the top of your mat



Seated Variation:

1. Position yourself close to the wall.
2. Put blocks under your feet
3. Place hands on the wall or on blocks
with your hands as wide as your
shoulders
4. Keep your pelvis and spine as neutral as
you can
5. Pull your shoulders down and together
6. Gaze towards the top of your fingers and
breathe

BHARMANASANA - TABLE TOP POSE

BAR - MAH - NAHS - UH - NUH



Supine Bharmasana:

1. Lay down on your back. Elevate legs on chair, sofa, or ottoman. Aim to get the knees **towards** 90 degrees.
2. Put a block between knees and strap the thighs to improve leg alignment
3. Place blanket or pillow behind head
4. Reach arms up, option is to hold blocks
5. Look up towards your hands and breathe

Benefits: weight-bearing through shoulders and hips can improve muscle strength and endurance.

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA - DOWNWARD FACING DOG

AH - DOH - MOO - KAH - SHVAH - NAH - SUH - NUH



Standing Variation:

1. From Table Top Pose lift your hips and straighten your legs.
2. Lengthen your spine keeping it as straight as possible.
3. If the backs of your legs feel tight bend your knees as much as you need.
4. Option is to push the heels down or lift the heels up - explore both and see what's most comfortable to you.
5. Pause and breathe.

Seated Variation:

1. Sit close to the wall, option is to put blocks under feet to bring legs **towards** 90 degrees.
2. Reach arms up the wall (dresser, shelf, or a chair would work) and place hands as wide as your shoulders.
3. Lengthen your spine up and press firmly into your hands.
4. Look in front of you and breathe.

ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA - DOWNWARD FACING DOG

AH - DOH - MOO - KAH - SHVAH - NAH - SUH - NUH



Supine Variation:

1. Set up in Supine Table Top Pose.
2. Option is to use chair or bolster under the knees.
3. Reach arms up towards ceiling and slightly overhead. Arms as wide as your shoulders.
4. Option is to straighten knees and pull your ankles back towards you if you are able.

Benefits: weight-bearing benefits, lengthens spine, and strengthens arms and legs

ANJANEYASANA - LOW LUNGE POSE

AHN - JUH - NAY - AH - SUH - NUH



Seated Variation:

1. Scoot towards the front of your chair
2. Put one foot under your chair as you bend the knee
3. Be careful with your ankle placement, put a rolled towel under the front of the ankle
4. Place other foot up on 1 or 2 stable blocks
5. Lift arms up overhead

Standing Variation:

1. Start in table pose and step one foot towards the front of the mat
2. Make sure your legs are about as wide as your hips.
3. Keep front knee at roughly 90 degrees
4. Engage your glutes and core and lengthen your spine
5. Reach your arms up overhead or hold on to a wall for support.

ANJANEYASANA - LOW LUNGE POSE

AHN - JUH - NAY - AH - SUH - NUH



Supine Variation:

1. Lie on your back with a blanket or pillow under your head.
2. Let one leg hang off the side of the table.
3. Make sure both shoulders and trunk of the body are on the massage table.
4. Hold on to your opposite leg to bring the pelvis into a neutral position.

Benefits: stretches hip flexors and improves hip range of motion

VIRABHADRASANA II - WARRIOR II POSE

VEE - RUH - BUH - DRAH - SUH - NUH



Standing Variation:

1. Stand in Mountain Pose, Tadasana with feet pointing towards the long edge of the mat. Step the feet out as wide as you can comfortably
2. Point one foot towards the front of the mat, externally rotating the leg. Bend that knee
3. Ground into both feet evenly, engage the legs, hips, and core
4. Reach the arms out wide and look over your front arm.

Seated Variation:

1. Scoot towards the front of the chair. Place one foot up on a block, bend the knee, and externally rotate that leg
2. Slide your other leg to the side and move your leg **towards** straight.
3. Get the pelvis as neutral as possible. Lift your head up towards the ceiling
4. Reach the arms as wide as you can and look over the arm that's pointing over the externally rotated leg.

VIRABHADRASANA II - WARRIOR II POSE

VEE - RUH - BUH - DRAH - SUH - NUH



Supine Variation:

1. Lie down on your back with a blanket or pillow under the head
2. Reach the arms out wide
3. Externally rotate one leg and place a blanket under that knee
4. Straighten the other leg and reach it out to the side
5. Look towards the arm on the same side as the bent knee
6. Engage through the muscles you have access to
7. Soften your face and jaw

Benefits: opens your breath and lungs. stretches hip, groin, and shoulders

VRKSASANA - TREE POSE

VRİK - SHAH - SUH - NUH



Standing Variation A:

1. Start in mountain pose, option is to be close to the wall for support
2. Place one foot up in chair and externally rotate that leg
3. Engage through legs, glutes, and core
4. Reach arms up overhead joining hands together



Standing Variation B:

1. Start in Tadasana, Mountain Pose
2. Externally rotate one leg resting the toes on the ground for support
3. Engage through the legs, glutes, and core
4. Lift up out of spine.
5. Keep hands in prayer or reach the arms up.

VRKSASANA - TREE POSE

VRİK - SHAH - SUH - NUH



Seated Variation:

1. Scoot forward in chair and put yoga blocks or a bolster under your feet
2. Cross one leg over the other, Option is to use strap or your hands to secure the leg
3. Option is to hold on to the strap and pull your shoulders back
4. Lengthen up out of the spine.

VRKSASANA - TREE POSE

VRİK - SHAH - SUH - NUH



Supine Variation:

1. Lie down on your back with a blanket or pillow under the head.
2. Bend one knee then externally rotate that leg placing a blanket or towel under the knee or femur.
3. Bring hands towards trunk or towards prayer
4. Option is to have friend ground down the thigh of the straightened leg

Benefits: challenges your balance and stability

UTTANASANA - FORWARD FOLD

OOT - TAH - NAH - SUH - NUH



Standing Variation:

1. Stand with feet as wide as hips
2. Line up the pinky toe with the outer heel
3. Knees and hips face forward
4. Fold forward placing your hands on blocks, on your legs, or on the floor
5. Option is to bend the knees as much as you need



Seated Variation:

1. From mountain pose fold forward.
2. Place your hands on blocks or the floor if able
3. Pull your shoulder blades together lightly
4. Reach your spine forward and down

UTTANASANA - FORWARD FOLD

OOT - TAH - NAH - SUH - NUH



Supine Variation:

1. From mountain pose lift your legs up towards the ceiling
2. Have someone push your legs towards your head until you notice a stretch
3. Option is to do this forward fold from long sitting
4. Option is to reach toward your toes.
5. If you have paralysis in the legs it can be helpful to put a yoga mat between your legs and put straps around the thighs and calves to keep the legs straight.

Benefits: stretches hamstrings and spine

UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTASANA - EXTENDED HAND TO FOOT POSE

OOT - HEE - TAH - HAH - STAH - PAH - DANG - GOOS - TAH - SUH - NUH



Standing Variation:

1. From mountain pose, lift one leg up and out to the side, option is to place your foot in a chair
2. Option is to use a strap around the ball of the foot to stretch the back of the leg and ankle
3. Use the wall for stability or reach that arm up to challenge your balance

Seated Variation:

1. From mountain pose, place one foot in a chair and move the chair out to the side
2. Put a strap around the ball of the foot to stretch the ankle and back of the leg
3. Lengthen up out of the spine
4. Look towards the foot or in front of you



UTTHITA HASTA PADANGUSTASANA - EXTENDED HAND TO FOOT POSE

OOT - HEE - TAH - HAH - STAH - PAH - DANG - GOOS - TAH - SUH - NUH



Supine Variation:

1. From supine mountain pose put a blanket under your head and one rolled up under the knee
2. Put strap around ball of one foot and reach your leg out to the side
3. Option is to hold the strap in your hand or you can strap it around your wrist and bend the elbow if dexterity is challenging
4. Have a friend push on your strapped foot to get the pelvis to a neutral position

Benefits: stretches inner thighs

SAVASANA - CORPSE POSE

SHAH - VAH - SUH - NUH



Standing and Supine Variation:

1. Savasana is often done lying down or seated
2. Lie on your back with a blanket under the head and rolled blanket under the ankles
3. Place a bolster behind the knees to soften the muscles around the spine
4. Relax in this posture, breathe naturally without controlling it as if you were asleep
5. Option is to cover the eyes with a eye pillow
6. Enjoy this pose for 3 - 30 minutes

SAVASANA - CORPSE POSE

SHAH - VAH - SUH - NUH



Seated Variation:

1. Rest in your chair with your legs elevated on a chair
2. Put a rolled up blanket, towel, or yoga mat behind your spine to lift and open the chest
3. Option is to stack bolsters under the knees to prevent hyperextension
4. Rest arms on a bolster to soften and support the shoulders
5. Close your eyes and try to quiet the mind

Benefits: lowers blood pressure, relaxes the body and mind

C H A P T E R

05



YOGA IN REHABILITATION SETTINGS

While I was in the Physical Therapy Assistant program I worked in acute care, inpatient rehab, and outpatient settings in New Orleans, LA. I have heard yoga therapy is being utilized in some hospital settings in progressive states and countries, but I didn't personally see yoga being utilized here in Louisiana.

However, I did see many ways yoga practices could be used as an intervention especially as it relates to patient positioning, functional movement, mental wellness, lung function, and more.

There are many pros and cons to the western healthcare model. Now that we are seeing more eastern practices emerging in healthcare like acupuncture and chiropractic care, we can assume that yoga therapeutics could be next. However, because yoga teachers do not have a governing or licensing entity, it may take a long time to be recognized as valid by western medicine.

In my opinion it's up to the licensed physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and other healthcare professionals to bring yoga into the rehabilitation setting.

If yoga has improved the quality of your life, imagine how it could help patients.

If you or a loved one has stayed overnight in a hospital, you know how worrisome it can be. Restorative yoga poses can be a wonderful way to reposition and help people find comfort if they're on bedrest.

Breathing practices might be a soothing way to calm the mind and increase oxygen consumption. Gentle standing and balancing postures may help people regain confidence in standing and with walking. How else can you envision yoga being utilized in a hospital setting?

Yoga in rehabilitation settings

In 2024 I am putting together a 20-hour continuing education course for healthcare professionals to use yoga therapy interventions in healthcare settings.

We will greatly expand upon this topic in our course at Split Second Fitness in New Orleans. Please email me at caroline@splitsecondfoundation.org if you are interested in participating. You can sign up for our waitlist.

Here are a few topics we will cover:

- Restorative yoga and positioning in acute care, inpatient, and outpatient settings
- Beginner yoga poses
- Seated and standing balancing exercises
- Supine stretches and functional movements
- Yoga for chronic and acute pain
- Weight-bearing activities
- Tone management
- Mental wellness, meditation, and mindfulness
- Documenting yoga interventions. for insurance reimbursement

Imagine having a healthcare system where physicians, nurses, and rehabilitation specialists all knew about yoga therapy as a possible intervention!



IN CONCLUSION...

Yoga is not a cure all, but it is helpful throughout the highs and lows of our lives. For me, yoga has truly been a lifeline, imparting ancient wisdom that has gifted me with valuable lessons in patience, compassion, and empathy - towards others and, perhaps most importantly, towards myself. Finding self-worth through yoga is incredibly valuable. Additionally, yoga has reminded me time and time again of the healing that occurs when we're in an uplifting community. We are all one great big family.

I hope this guide shows you ways you can use yoga as medicine. You get to become your own inner-physician. Pay attention to how these yoga practices benefit you. When you're feeling anxious, defeated, upset, angry, or tense, take a pause and practice for a couple of minutes. I can't count the number of times I have ended up in the bathroom doing breathing exercises to soothe my nerves. Does it end the emotion tangle you're in? Probably not. Does it help ease the intensity? Absolutely.

Yoga is transformative for those that are open to its mysticism. Undeniably, it has had profound benefits on both my mindset and that of my clients. Are you interested in diving deeper into these teachings? Which of these topics have piqued your interest the most?

Our yoga practice is a place where we cultivate friendship and love with our-Selves. When we can get to a place where we speak kind words about our-Selves, cultivate contentment, and find an equanimous state of mind, we are in yoga. When we speak negatively to our-Selves, when we become attached to things in this material world, and when we let our thoughts run rampant with false narratives, we are in suffering.

The beauty lies in the power to choose between the positive mindset and the negative mindset. We can look at stress as debilitating, or we can look at it as something we can overcome. While many things are beyond our control, we decide how we want to show up in the world.

In yoga, or in suffering. I guess the two exist simultaneously within us all the time, but we have to put in the work to see the light within all things.



Services Offered by Accessible Yoga Practices

Services Offered by AYP

Private Yoga Sessions

integration of physical therapy, yoga, and thai yoga massage principles.

- In-person, virtual
- Cost: Sliding Scale. \$60-\$150 for a 75 minute session.
- Email: carolineelizabethmusic@gmail.com

Anatomy, Neuroscience, and Adaptive Yoga Educational Courses

- For Yoga Teacher Trainings, Conferences, CEU's, or Events
- In-person or virtual
- [Check website for schedule](#)

Adaptive Yoga Classes at Split Second Fitness in New Orleans

* [Check website for the schedule](#)

Vinyasa Flow Class at Swan River Yoga in New Orleans

- Saturday from 11am-12pm
- There is a flight of stairs
- [Check website for the schedule.](#)

SURVEY

Thank you for checking out the Adaptive Yoga Guide.
I sincerely hope you enjoyed it and learned some helpful techniques.

Thank you so much for your time <3

A quick survey on what content you would like to see from
me in the future

[Sign in to Google](#) to save your progress. [Learn more](#)

What do you want to learn more about?

- Yoga in the context of specific diagnoses - SCI, MS, PNI, Stroke, MD, etc.
- Anatomy and body mechanics training
- Yoga teacher training - learn more about enriching yoga practices and how to teach yoga

What location would you be most interested in for a
wheelchair accessible retreat?

- Pensacola, FL
- Asheville, NC
- New Orleans, LA

Any interest in an online membership program with
adaptive yoga, breathing practices, and meditations?

- Yes

RESOURCE LIBRARY

Here are 3 amazing online resources for adaptive yoga and fitness.
They all have many F R E E offerings.



ACCESSIBLE YOGA SCHOOL

with Jivana Heyman

[GET IT HERE](#)



ALLIHOPA ACCESSIBLE & ADAPTIVE YOGA

wheelchair user, Rodrigo Sousa's yoga platform

[GET IT HERE](#)



GATHERING STRENGTH

Fitness classes for people with disabilities by
people with disabilities.

[GET IT HERE](#)

THANK YOU!

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This guide is a gift to you, especially.

Sending everyone love and light. Bowing to you deeply in gratitude.



“Yoga does not just change the way we see things,
it changes the person who sees.” - B.K.S Iyengar



Disclaimer Alert!

The Adaptive Yoga Guide is not medical advice or a treatment plan. This is for general education and demonstration purposes only. Consult with your healthcare providers before participating in the exercises listed below. Please listen to your body and do not force, manipulate, or cause harm to yourself.

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THE
END