

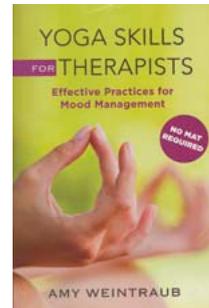


mood lifter

Yoga teacher Amy Weintraub, the author of *Yoga for Depression*, has been bringing together yoga and mental health care for more than two decades, training therapists and yoga teachers to use breathing exercises, simple mantras, meditation, and yoga nidra (yogic sleep) in clinical settings. Her new book, *Yoga Skills for Therapists: Effective Practices for Mood Management*, offers mental health professionals yoga-based techniques for helping clients manage their moods. Weintraub, who recovered from her own depression with the help of yoga and meditation, culled through the vast treasury of yoga's teachings to find accessible tools that help to balance the emotions. *Yoga Journal* spoke with her about yoga's power to make you feel better.

**Yoga Skills for Therapists:
Effective Practices
for Mood Management**
Amy Weintraub

W. W. Norton & Company



Q YOGA JOURNAL Why has the use of yoga as a tool for mental health care become more prevalent?

A AMY WEINTRAUB There's a growing number of research studies providing evidence that yoga belongs in a mental health treatment plan. It lowers cortisol, the stress hormone; it activates the parasympathetic system, which is calming; and it deactivates the limbic brain, which is overactive in people who are very anxious or have a history of trauma. And more therapists are experiencing the effects of yoga themselves and realizing this is a wonderful tool to offer clients.

Q YJ What's the connection between mood and the body and breath?

A AW As yogis have understood for thousands of years, when we have events in our lives that are difficult, the body constricts. Any emotional constriction has a physical corollary. We can address the emotions by working with the body and the breath. For example, when we're anxious, the breath is shallow in the upper chest. When we deepen the breath, we're activating the parasympathetic nervous system and releasing some of the anxiety. We're actually balancing the mood by extending the exhalation.

Q YJ Can yoga's philosophical teachings also help with anxiety and depression?

A AW The message of yoga is that deep within you, you are whole and healed, no matter what is going on in your life. Yoga

can help you reconnect with a felt sense of that wholeness, of who you really are, beneath the current mood.

Q YJ What underlies your approach to bringing yoga into therapy?

A AW My teaching is based on the pillars of self-awareness and self-acceptance: *svadhyaya* and *karuna*. Self-awareness in a yoga practice is paying attention to sensations in the body, being attentive and attuned. But when you're paying attention to sensation, emotion will arise. If all you did was look at yourself without compassion, you'd burn up. It would be like Shiva dancing in the fire of self-awareness. That's why you have to stay present with *karuna*. And that's what both good psychotherapy and yoga practices offer.

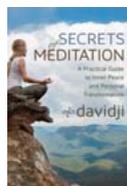
Q YJ Your book is a good argument for mental health professionals to learn about yoga. Is it also valuable for yoga teachers to know about mental health?

A AW It's important for yoga teachers to know how to set a safe container and give options and modifications. There are certain breathing practices that can trigger anxiety, for example, and some that are contraindicated for bipolar disorder or eating disorders. There are a lot of subtleties that yoga teachers could benefit from learning. CARMEL WROTH

mind practices

Secrets of Meditation: A Practical Guide to Inner Peace and Personal Transformation | Davidji

Hay House



We all struggle with our monkey minds. And the right meditation teacher—one who cares, who's been there, who wants and wills you to succeed—can make

the difference between embracing a life-transforming practice and giving up altogether. Davidji (a.k.a., David Greenspan), a former dean of the Chopra Center, is that kind of teacher.

Davidji recognizes that when it comes to meditation, different techniques work best for each of us. In *Secrets of Meditation*, he explores many forms of the practice, including those focused on sounds,

mantras, breath, body movement, aromas, tastes, and the chakras. The right practice for you, he says, is the one you love—and will do. Trying out a few is part of the process. Davidji shares his own journey in such a personal way that you know he's sincere in his belief that meditation can change the world. His book offers new inspiration if you're in the meditation doldrums and guidance for those just starting to meditate. And for those of us in the murky middle—perhaps struggling and stumbling—it's a beacon of hope. HILLARI DOWDLE

air show

Learn to Float: Jump Back & Jump Through | David Robson

self-released



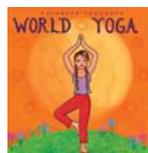
Even the most seasoned Ashtanga Yoga student has struggled with the jump-back and jump-through vinyasas, signature movements that ideally link the postures with a level of skill and grace that make the practitioner "float." David Robson, in his new instructional DVD, *Learn to Float: Jump Back & Jump Through*, acknowledges how hard it can be to master these dynamic moves and offers simple tools to learn them.

In just 30 minutes, the Toronto-based instructor simplifies these transitional jumping moves in five progressive and surprisingly manageable steps. He also offers five additional exercises to build strength and confidence. This video is one that will become a staple in every Ashtanga Yoga student's library, no matter how long you've been practicing. PEG MULQUEEN

global sounds

World Yoga | various artists

Putumayo World Music



Yoga is a global phenomenon with a truly global soundtrack. The *World Yoga* compilation brings together relaxing, meditative music from Mali to Sweden, Tibet to Armenia—fusing diverse sounds with

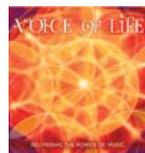
the familiar strains of mantra musicians such as Deva Premal and Miten, Mirabai Ceiba, and Sean Johnson and the Wild Lotus Band.

The result is a blissful blend of acoustic instrumentals and vocals designed to sync with the arc of a typical asana class. The opening track features the hypnotic sounds of Gambian musician Sona Jobarteh, fostering focus and balance. Rhythm gently enters the mix with the heart-opening groove of the third track, Deva Premal and Miten's "Om Asatoma." Welsh group 9Bach brings a wistful Celtic mood, and Portugal's Sara Tavares interjects a jazzy note. And while the set is made to accompany your yoga practice, it's good for inducing that spacious mood of postasana tranquility off the mat, too. ALAN DI PERNA

all together now

Voice of Life | various artists

self-released



Voice of Life is a stunning collection of songs by bhakti yogi musicians such as Donna De Lory, Ben Leinbach, Suzanne Sterling, and Dave Stringer. But here's the twist: It's not a kirtan album. Produced by Peter Wolff, a yoga teacher and sacred music producer, and David Ari Leon, an Emmy-nominated musician, the spiritually inspired, mostly English tracks help you explore singing as a form of mind-body medicine. Each song features a simple, catchy melody and offers plenty of room for improvisation so you can sing your heart out.

Some of the album's highlights include Donna De Lory's moving invocation to the universal "Mother," buoyed by her Madonna-esque vocals and her ethereal Indian improvisations. On the title track, didgeridoo and flute cavort with a hand-clapping gospel choir, and mantra music artist Prajna Vieira's soulful voice soars. And on the album's solo mantra track, Suzanne Sterling shines in "Om Mane Padme Hum." Sit still and let the sound wash over you—or even better, dance and sing along. SHANNON SEXTON ❀