Introduction

- What is this presentation about?
- Why I’m doing this work
Yoga

- What is it?
  - Uniting, oneness, “skill in action”
- History
- Yogic philosophy
- Yogic psychology
Types of Yoga

- Hatha yoga: physical practices
- Karma yoga: action / work
- Bhakti yoga: devotion
- Jñana yoga: knowledge / wisdom
- Raja yoga: cultivation of the mind (eight-limbed path)

Different practices for different people
An eight-limbed path
From Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras

- Yama – restraints
- Niyama – observances
- Asana – postures
- Pranayama – breathing exercises
- Pratyahara – ‘sense withdrawal’
- Dharana – focused concentration
- Dhyana – meditation
- Samadhi – total absorption (enlightenment)
Holistic Applications

- Mindfulness:
  - Equanimous awareness of present moment experience
- Kripalu Yoga approach:
  - "Nonjudgmental introspective focus during the coordination of breath and movement"
  - – a meditation in motion.”
  - Three Stages
- Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy
  - Person- & body-centered transformation
  - Therapist supports client in gentle yoga postures
Benefits of Yoga

- Physiological
- Cognitive / Emotional
- Psycho-spiritual
Physiological benefits

- Strength
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Bone density
- Weight loss
- Heart Rate Variability (HRV)
- Circulation
- Oxygen absorption efficiency
Cognitive – Emotional benefits

- Access to emotion
- Mood state
- Stress relief
- Coping skills
- Motivation
- Acceptance
- Resilience
Psycho-spiritual benefits

- The original purpose of yoga
- Expanded worldview
- Meaning-making
- Connection to a high power/ universe
- Faith (in life / reality)
- Experience of oneness
- Transcendence
Body-Mind in Psychotherapy

- Somatic psychotherapies:
  - Wilhelm Reich – body armor / orgone
  - A. Lowen – Bioenergetics
  - Body Psychotherapy
- Acceptance-based approach
- John Kabat-Zinn – Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- *Yoga Psychotherapy*?
Clinical Applications

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Bipolar disorder
- Substance recovery
- Schizophrenia
Clinical Applications

Studies show that practicing Yoga:
- Increases oxytosin and prolactin levels, improving mood
- Reduces cortisol levels, reducing stress
- Balances the biochemistry of the brain
- Certain practices stimulate the vagus nerve (to treat depression)
- Develops the ability to control one’s state of mind.
Clinical Research Findings


Therapeutic factors of Yoga

- Internal awareness & knowledge
- Realizing the internal locus of control
- Self-acceptance & self-love
  - Body, mind, heart, and spirit
- Tangible, practical techniques
  - The yoga tool bag
Practical helpfulness

- Self-help skill-building
  - daily practice to maintain balance
  - to use as needed (e.g., stressful situation, depressive episode, substance use urge)
- Discipline → motivation
- An offering: try-it-yourself-and-see approach
- Thanking yourself
  - promotes encouragement and appreciation
Potential concerns

- Acceptability: religious conflict?
- Dissociation
- Spiritual bypass
- Agitation → Mania → Psychosis
- Directive or non-directive?
- Compliance
  - External and internal
Psychotherapeutic Yoga Resources:

Conclusion

- Yoga psychotherapy: an emerging field

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- Questions?