



HOW YOGA AND EASTERN PHILOSOPHIES CAN HELP US IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND LIFE

*Dr. Fiona McHardy
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AIMS



**TO EXPLORE HOW YOGA CAN SUPPORT GPS AND
EDUCATORS IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL AND
PERSONAL LIVES, USING BOTH PRACTICAL TOOLS
AND PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHTS TO ENHANCE
WELL-BEING, TEACHING, AND LEARNING**





OBJECTIVES

1. Understand Yoga beyond the physical practice
2. Experience embodied learning
3. Learn key insights from yoga philosophy
4. Apply yoga principles to teaching and learning
5. Take away practical tools to enhance well-being



INTRODUCTION

GP
Mum to 3 children
Trainer
Appraiser
GP tutor
Coach
Yoga Teacher



YOGA BEYOND THE MAT

**"YOGA IS
NOT ABOUT TOUCHING YOUR
TOES, IT IS ABOUT WHAT YOU
LEARN ON THE WAY DOWN."**

JIGAR GOR



Yoga isn't just about flexibility or perfect poses. It's about cultivating presence, balance, and resilience in the face of stress. It's about using the body to anchor the mind, to restore energy, and to gain clarity amidst the chaos



DO try this at home...

and work
and anytime you want really

Close your eyes

Feel the bits of your body in contact with your chair

Notice the weight of your body and how you are supported

Let yourself be heavy and be held

Now notice your breath. Cool air entering through the nostrils, warmer air leaving.

Chest lifts and expands as you inhale.

Shoulders draw down the back as you exhale

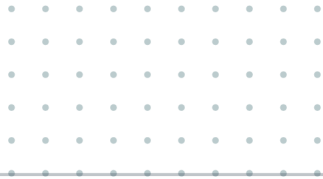
How does it feel to draw the diaphragm down so breath is drawn low into the belly?

Take 3 deep belly breaths



WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

HIS SIMPLE ACT OF BREATHING—OF COMING BACK TO OUR BREATH—IS ONE OF THE SIMPLEST WAYS YOGA HELPS US. IT'S A TOOL TO RESET AND REGAIN PRESENCE. WE CAN USE IT IN MOMENTS OF STRESS, WHETHER IT'S WITH A CHALLENGING PATIENT OR A DIFFICULT TEACHING SESSION



THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

Patanjali

Yoga is not a religion and its roots are derived from teachings from all over the world over centuries.

I'm not an expert, but I'll share some of the valuable insights I've had.

Patanjali collected these sutras or aphorisms (An aphorism is a concise, terse, laconic, or memorable expression of a general truth or principle. Aphorisms are often handed down by tradition from generation to generation.) around 200BC.

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

Yama
Niyama
Asana
Pranayama
Pratyahara
Dharana
Dhyana
Samadhi

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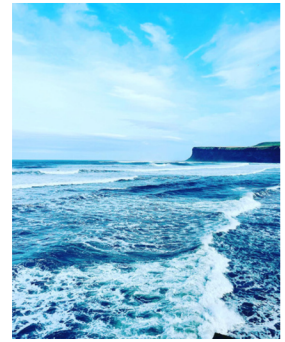
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YAMAS

Offer ethical guidelines for how we interact with the world.

- Ahimsa (Non Violence) - Compassion in action
- Satya (Truthfulness) - Honesty with Care
- Asteya (Non stealing) - Respecting Energy and Boundaries
- Brahmacharya (Moderation) - Sustainable Energy Mangement
- Aparigraha (Non-Attachment) - Letting go of Control



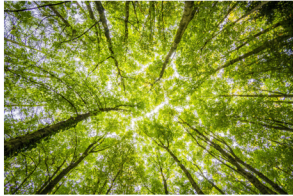
The Yamas are the first limb of the 8 Limbs of Yoga, offering ethical guidelines for how we interact with the world. As GPs and educators, these principles can support compassionate care, professional integrity, and personal well-being.



Ahimsa (Non- violence)

- **Compassion in action**

- Kindness towards patients, students, and colleagues.
- Self-compassion: reducing self-criticism and perfectionism.
- Creating a non-judgmental, safe space in consultations and teaching.



Satya (Truthfulness)

- **Honesty with care**

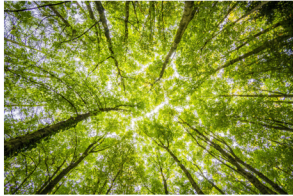
- Clear, honest communication with patients and learners.
- Balancing truth with compassion—delivering difficult messages with sensitivity.
- Authenticity in leadership and professional relationships.



Asteya (Non-Stealing)

- **Respecting Energy and Boundaries**

- Valuing time—our own and others’.
- Avoiding overcommitment and setting healthy professional boundaries.
- Acknowledging and respecting the contributions of others



Brahmacharya (Moderation)

- **Sustainable Energy Management**

- Avoiding burnout by pacing ourselves and maintaining work-life balance.
- Being mindful of where we direct our energy.
- Cultivating presence and focus in patient care and teaching.




Aparigraha (Non-Attachment)


- **Letting go of control**
- Releasing attachment to outcomes—accepting what we can and can't change.
- Practicing detachment from ego and the need for perfection.
- Encouraging curiosity and openness in teaching and learning.

Reflection question

How might these principles support your role as a GP or educator?



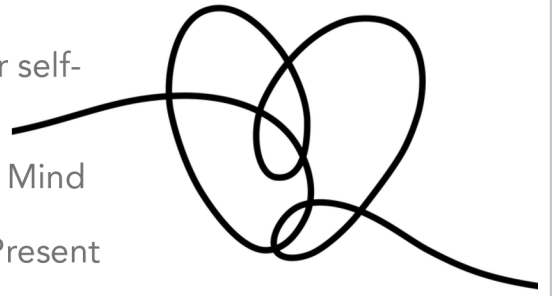
**"WHEN WE ARE KIND
TO OURSELVES AND
OTHERS, WE CREATE A
MORE PEACEFUL
WORLD AROUND US."**



NIYAMAS

Offer self care guidelines and personal practices for self-discipline, well-being, and inner resilience

- Shaucha (Purity/Cleanliness) – Clarity in Body & Mind
- Santosha (Contentment) – Finding Ease in the Present
- Tapas (Discipline & Inner Fire) – Sustainable Motivation
- Svadhyaya (Self-Study & Reflection) – Lifelong Learning
- Ishvarapranidhana (Surrender & Trust) – Letting Go of Control

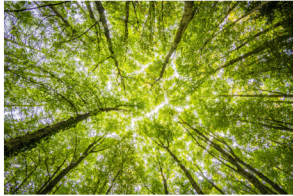


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Shaucha - Purity/Cleanliness

- **Clarity in Body & Mind**
- Prioritising self-care: rest, nourishment, movement.
- Maintaining clear and focused thinking to support decision-making.
- Cultivating a clean, calm working environment to reduce stress.



Santosha - Contentment

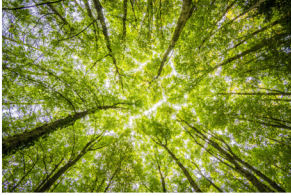
- **Finding Ease in the Present**
- Accepting what is, rather than constantly striving for more.
- Appreciating small moments of joy in work and life.
- Letting go of comparison and embracing 'good enough' over perfectionism.



Tapas - Discipline & Inner Fire

- **Sustainable Motivation**

- Committing to practices that support well-being (movement, breath, reflection).
- Cultivating resilience—showing up even when things feel tough.
- Harnessing passion for teaching and patient care without overworking.



Svādhyaya - Self-Study & Reflection

- **Lifelong Learning**

- Developing self-awareness—how do we react under pressure?
- Reflecting on experiences to grow as professionals and individuals.
- Recognising patterns of thought and behaviour that no longer serve us.



Ishvarapranidhana - Surrender & Trust

- **Letting Go of Control**

- Accepting uncertainty and the limits of our influence.
- Practising presence rather than trying to control every outcome.
- Trusting the process—whether in patient recovery, student progress, or personal growth.

Break out room questions

- **Practicing the Yamas (Restraints)**
 - Which of the Yamas (such as non-violence, truthfulness, or non-attachment) do you find most challenging in your work or personal life? How might practicing it more intentionally improve your well-being?
- **Applying the Niyamas (Observances)**
 - How do you currently practice self-care or cultivate inner contentment (such as through cleanliness, contentment, or self-study)? How could you bring more of these Niyamas into your daily routine?
- **Balancing the Yamas and Niyamas**
 - The Yamas focus on how we interact with the world, and the Niyamas focus on self-discipline. How do you balance external responsibilities with internal practices in your life? Can you think of a time when both were challenged?



Reflection question

How might these principles support your role as a GP or educator?



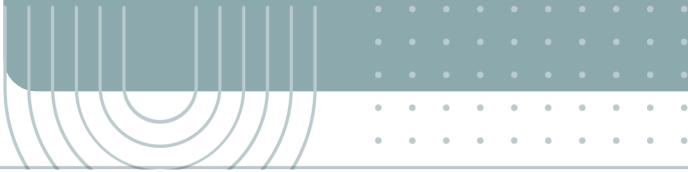
**"TRUE YOGA IS NOT
ABOUT THE SHAPE OF
YOUR BODY, BUT THE
SHAPE OF YOUR LIFE."
— AADIL PALKHIVALA**



Asana - physical postures
Pranyama - breathwork
Pratyahara - Sense withdrawal
Dharana - Focused concentration
Dyana - Meditation
Samadhi - Bliss or Enlightenment

THE CHAKRAS

A complex and ancient energy system , first mentioned in the Vedas around 1500 to 1000 BC

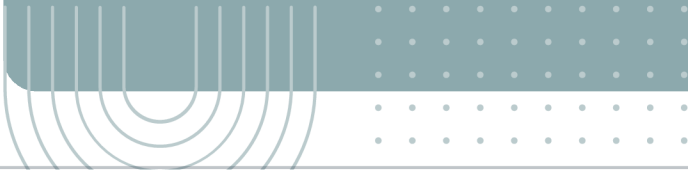


CHAKRAS

Thought to be spinning discs of energy that should stay "open" and aligned

Correspond to bundles of nerves, organs, and areas of the energetic body that effect out emotional and physical wellbeing

7 Main chakras which run along the spine



THE SEVEN CHAKRAS

AND THEIR MEANINGS



- Root Chakra (Muladhara) – Helps us feel grounded and resilient in high-pressure medical and educational environments.
- Sacral Chakra (Svadhithana) – Supports creativity and adaptability, essential for problem-solving and emotional connection.
- Solar Plexus Chakra (Manipura) – Strengthens confidence and self-belief, crucial for decision-making and leadership.
- Heart Chakra (Anahata) – Encourages compassion and balance, preventing emotional burnout in caregiving roles.
- Throat Chakra (Vishuddha) – Enhances clear, authentic communication, vital for patient care and teaching.
- Third Eye Chakra (Ajna) – Develops intuition and insight, helping us make wiser, more holistic decisions.
- Crown Chakra (Sahasrara) – Connects us to purpose and meaning, reminding us why we chose this path.

Root Chakra (Muladhara) – Linked to stability and grounding. As medics and educators, we need to feel secure and supported, both physically and emotionally, to provide care and guidance without burnout. Grounding practices like mindful breathing or standing postures can help build resilience in high-pressure environments.

Sacral Chakra (Svadhithana) – Associated with creativity and emotional flow. In teaching and patient care, adaptability is key—we must navigate unexpected challenges, connect with others empathetically, and think creatively in problem-solving. Movement and breathwork can help unlock this energy.

Solar Plexus Chakra (Manipura) – Governs confidence and personal power. Whether leading a team, delivering a lecture, or making clinical decisions, a strong sense of self-belief is crucial. Practices like core-strengthening yoga poses (e.g., Navasana, Boat Pose) can boost inner strength and clarity.

Heart Chakra (Anahata) – The center of compassion and connection. As caregivers and educators, we give a lot emotionally, and an open heart chakra helps us cultivate kindness without depleting ourselves. Heart-opening postures (e.g., Camel Pose, Anahatasana) can support emotional balance.

Throat Chakra (Vishuddha) – Governs communication and self-expression. Whether explaining a diagnosis, teaching students, or advocating for a patient, clear and authentic communication is essential. Chanting, breathwork, and neck-stretching poses can help release tension and

enhance vocal expression.

Third Eye Chakra (Ajna) – Linked to intuition and insight. As medics and educators, we rely on more than just logic—we develop a “gut feeling” about patients and students. Meditation and reflective practices can strengthen this inner knowing, helping us make wiser, more compassionate decisions.

Crown Chakra (Sahasrara) – Represents wisdom, purpose, and connection to something greater. Whether through professional fulfillment or a deeper sense of meaning, this chakra reminds us why we do what we do. Practices like meditation and savasana help us reconnect to purpose and prevent burnout

Break Out room questions

- **Identifying Energy Blocks**

- Which chakra do you feel is most relevant to you right now? Is there a part of your body or life where you often feel blocked or out of balance? How might this relate to a specific chakra?

- **Everyday Challenges and the Chakras**

- Can you think of a time when you felt physically or emotionally out of balance at work or in your personal life? Which chakra might have been affected, and what signs or symptoms did you notice?

- **Simple Practices for Balance**

- What simple practices (like breathwork, yoga, or mindfulness) could you use to help bring balance to a specific chakra and improve your overall well-being?

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LAYERS TO THE SELF

5 KOSHAS

Annamaya Kosha
Physical body



Pranamaya Kosha
Energy Body



Manomaya Kosha
Emotional Body



Vijananamaya Kosha
Wisdom Body



Anandamaya Kosha
Bliss Body



The Koshas: Layers of the Self

The koshas are layers of being that obscure our true nature — pure consciousness (Atman).

The journey through the koshas is a process of self-inquiry, gradually peeling back layers to uncover blissful, infinite awareness beneath.

The Five Koshas

Annamaya Kosha (Physical Body)

We often identify with the body, believing it defines us.

Yoga and mindful living help us realize we are more than just our physical form.

Pranamaya Kosha (Energy Body)

Working with breath and energy flow (prana) dissolves the illusion of separation from nature.

Manomaya Kosha (Mental Body)

Thoughts and emotions shape our perception of reality.

Meditation helps us see the mind as a tool, reducing attachment to mental fluctuations.

Vijnanamaya Kosha (Wisdom Body)

Deep insight and discernment emerge, helping us recognize the impermanence of thoughts, roles, and identities.

Leads to inner freedom and detachment from false beliefs.

Anandamaya Kosha (Bliss Body)

Connecting with this layer brings moments of deep peace and joy.

This bliss is our true nature, beyond changing experiences.

Duality and The Koshas

Body v Mind
Thought v Intuition
Pleasure v Pain
Me v The World



How Duality Relates to the Koshas and Enlightenment

The koshas illustrate this dualistic experience because they make up the layers of identity that separate us from our true nature. For example:

We see body vs. mind (Annamaya vs. Manomaya), forgetting they are interconnected.

We experience thought vs. intuition (Manomaya vs. Vijnanamaya), rather than recognizing deeper wisdom beyond mental chatter.

We chase pleasure vs. pain (Anandamaya), missing the underlying peace that exists beyond fleeting experiences.

Enlightenment (Advaita, or non-duality) is the realization that these separations are an illusion. As we move through the koshas, we see that there is no "me" and "the world", only one unified consciousness. Yoga, meditation, and self-inquiry help dissolve these boundaries, leading to a sense of wholeness, peace, and connection with everything.

Break out room discussion

- **Duality in Our Work**
 - What are some examples of dualities you experience in your role as a medic or educator (e.g., work vs. rest, self vs. others)?
 - How do these dualities affect your well-being and your ability to connect with others?
- **The Koshas and Self-Awareness**
 - How do you currently take care of each layer of the koshas (physical, energetic, mental, wisdom, bliss)?
 - Are there any koshas that you feel are more neglected in your daily life? How might you address this?
- **Connecting with Our True Nature**
 - Reflecting on the concept of "bliss body" (Anandamaya Kosha), what activities bring you peace and joy in your work?
 - How can we reconnect with our deeper purpose and inner wisdom during times of stress or overwhelm?
- **Applying Non-Duality in Your Practice**
 - How could embracing a non-dual perspective (where we are interconnected with everything) change the way you approach patient care or teaching?
- What steps can you take to shift from a fragmented approach to a more holistic, integrated way of working?

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THANK YOU

Do you have any question?

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