

Adaptive Yoga & Mindfulness

*Mindful Self-Regulation: Practical Coping Strategies through Yoga and
Mindfulness for Brain Injury Professionals*

Stacie Wyatt

About Stacie

Stacie Wyatt, CBIS, E-RYT 500, is the Founder and Director of Embracing Spirit Yoga and Wellness in Colorado Springs, Colorado. With nearly two decades of experience at the intersection of mindfulness, movement, and behavioral health, Stacie is recognized for her work in making yoga and mindfulness accessible, therapeutic, and trauma-informed for individuals with neurological conditions, brain injury, and those living in assisted and supportive care environments.

Stacie is a Certified Brain Injury Specialist (CBIS), an Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher (E-RYT 500), a Behavioral Health and Wellness Coach, and a Qualified Behavioral Health Assistant (QBHA). Her professional background uniquely bridges clinical understanding with compassionate, body-based practices, allowing her to translate complex neurophysiological concepts into practical tools that support self-regulation, resilience, and emotional well-being. She has spent many years working directly with individuals affected by brain injury, neurological disorders, chronic illness, and aging-related challenges, as well as training and mentoring caregivers, healthcare professionals, and yoga teachers.

Through Embracing Spirit Yoga and Wellness, Stacie develops and delivers workshops, trainings, and educational programs that integrate adaptive yoga, mindful movement, breathwork, and meditation into rehabilitation, behavioral health, and assisted living settings. Her approach emphasizes safety, choice, and accessibility, ensuring practices can be adapted for a wide range of physical, cognitive, and emotional needs. She is particularly passionate about mindful self-regulation strategies that support both clients and care providers, recognizing the importance of preventing burnout and fostering sustainable, compassionate care.

What Are the Four Pillars of Adaptive Yoga & Mindfulness

Community

Movement

Breath

Gratitude

Community

Research has shown that social connection improves physical health and can have powerful effects on mental and emotional well-being. Social engagement is an essential component of successful aging. Strong social connection can strengthen the immune system, help recovery from disease, and increase longevity.

Yoga is a mood-booster; the combination of movement, breathing and meditation can create an overall sense of well-being. Plus, because yoga is done in a class setting with peers, participants get the benefit of staying socially active, as well.

How to Foster Community

To fulfill our greatest desire to be seen I have found through my experiences that the following guidelines to connect really make the clients feel seen and valued:

- **Speak equally to them no matter what.** Be mindful of not assuming because they may have aphasia (Aphasia is a communication disorder that results from damage to the parts of the brain that contain language) that they are not able to receive the incoming language. Never question someone's cognitive ability. Assume they understand you.
- **Shake their hands and look them in the eye.** As challenging as it may be, they deserve to be treated with dignity. Part of that dignity is to value them as they are and not give off the energy that their sometimes grotesque features are bothering you. Compassion and respect are the antidotes to judgment and fear.
- **Mind, Body, Spirit Check-in.** This important check-in is key to fostering a sense of compassion and empathy as well as helping the students learn to "tune in" to what they are feeling at the moment.

Benefits of Connection/Community

- Power of touch
- Fostering empowerment
- Encouraging others
- Reciprocal learning
- Demonstrating empathy

Movement

The slow, measured movements involved with yoga poses can lead to better balance and movement, which can also help prevent falls. As falls are the leading cause of injury among seniors, yoga helps provide the tools you need to improve your mobility so you can get around more safely.

By practicing a series of postures, or movements, that work to stimulate the brain through repetition, language, and recall, the participant will develop confidence in the mind-body connection and may increase their ability to find balance within the their body.

Benefits of Movement

- Posture support
- Brain health
- Joint support
- Confidence
- Dopamine, Serotonin etc

Breath

Yoga offers a relaxing way to let go of the tension you're holding in your body, especially in your shoulders and upper back. It's been known to help relieve some of the stresses that lead to hypertension, which in turn leads to not needing as many medications on a daily basis. Yoga also helps reduce anxiety, lowering your heart rate, blood pressure, and helping you breathe easier.

Harvard Health suggests that a wide range of yoga practices suggest yoga can reduce the impact of exaggerated stress responses and may be helpful for both anxiety and depression. In this respect, yoga functions like other self-soothing techniques, such as meditation, relaxation, exercise, or even socializing with friends.

Benefits of Breath Work

- Promotes mental and physical health through the intake of oxygen and energy.
- Brings attention to the present moment.
- Increases awareness of the physical body.
- Calms the body and mind.

Gratitude

A common thread among spiritual teachers and modern psychology is the concept of gratitude. Like most of these teachings, the core lesson is to stop being a victim and see that life is not always perfect. I have learned that most importantly the wisdom that says despite our pain, we can choose to see and appreciate the good in what we do have.

One of my favorite teachings is that when we stop focusing on what we don't have and start focusing on what we do have, our mind begins to open up to the endless possibilities of what life has to offer each of us.

Benefits of Gratitude

- reduces depression
- lessens anxiety
- improves sleep
- supports heart health
- relieves stress
- enhances relationships

Techniques to Engage Participants

- Cake and Frosting
- Football
- Items to hold
- Eye color
- A task
- Togetherness
- Influence you have

Benefits of Adaptive Yoga & Mindfulness

- Connection
- Empowerment
- Self Regulation
- Mental and Emotional Status
- Physical Wellbeing
- Staff perspective
- Staff wellbeing

Final Thoughts

I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

~Mother Teresa

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Mindfulness Book: <https://amzn.to/44V4HTa>

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Thank you so much! Stacie