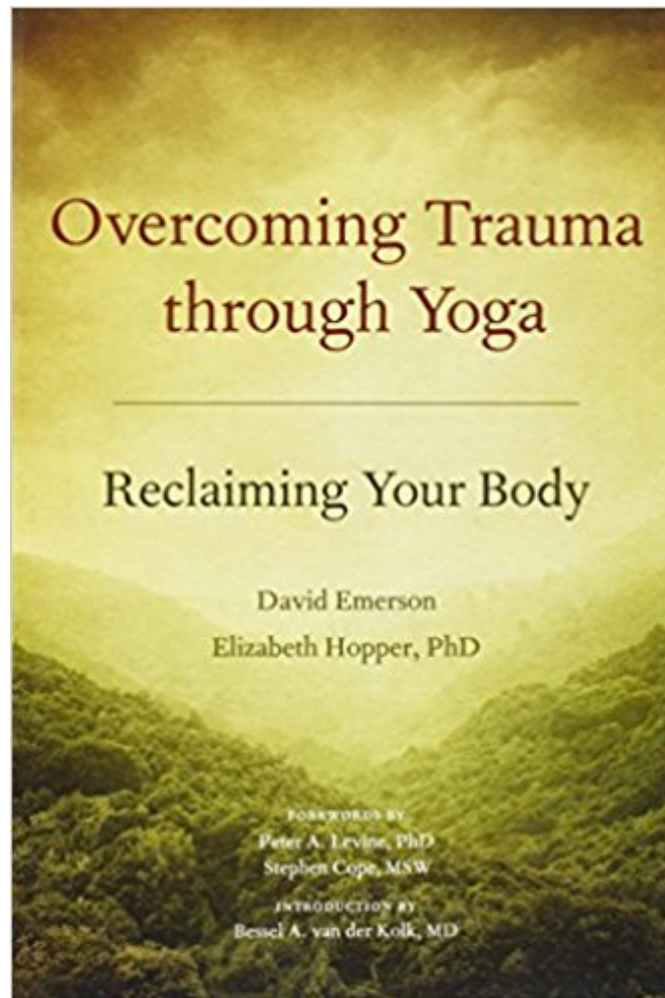




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Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body



Synopsis

Survivors of trauma—whether abuse, accidents, or war—can end up profoundly wounded, betrayed by their bodies that failed to get them to safety and that are a source of pain. In order to fully heal from trauma, a connection must be made with oneself, including one's body. The trauma-sensitive yoga described in this book moves beyond traditional talk therapies that focus on the mind, by bringing the body actively into the healing process. This allows trauma survivors to cultivate a more positive relationship to their body through gentle breath, mindfulness, and movement practices. *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* is a book for survivors, clinicians, and yoga instructors who are interested in mind/body healing. It introduces trauma-sensitive yoga, a modified approach to yoga developed in collaboration between yoga teachers and clinicians at the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute, led by yoga teacher David Emerson, along with medical doctor Bessel van der Kolk. The book begins with an in-depth description of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including a description of how trauma is held in the body and the need for body-based treatment. It offers a brief history of yoga, describes various styles of yoga commonly found in Western practice, and identifies four key themes of trauma-sensitive yoga. Chair-based exercises are described that can be incorporated into individual or group therapy, targeting specific treatment goals, and modifications are offered for mat-based yoga classes. Each exercise includes trauma-sensitive language to introduce the practice, as well as photographs to illustrate the poses. The practices have been offered to a wide range of individuals and groups, including men and women, teens, returning veterans, and others. Rounded out by valuable quotes and case stories, the book presents mindfulness, breathing, and yoga exercises that can be used by home practitioners, yoga teachers, and therapists as a way to cultivate awareness, tolerance, and an increased acceptance of the self.

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Customer Reviews

"In this landmark book the authors offer survivors a gentle, step-by-step mindful yoga that is tailored for their specific needs. This well conceived book is a tremendous resource for therapists and yoga teachers. By engaging the wisdom of their bodies, it is a great companion and guide to those taking the journey of recovery from trauma to wholeness. Overcoming Trauma through Yoga is a gift for those taking the hero's journey of recovery and vibrancy." •From the foreword by Peter A. Levine, PhD, author of the best-selling *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*

"This book sets out to facilitate the creation of healing environments. Clinicians will learn basic yoga skills that can be implemented within individual therapy sessions. Yoga teachers will find thoughtful advice on how to make assists that won't trigger internal defenses. And trauma survivors will receive edict-free encouragement for using yoga as a tool for self-discovery. Thoughtful and thorough, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* brings a spirit of optimism to the process of healing past wounds and reclaiming body and mind." •Rolf Sovik, PsyD, Yoga International Magazine

"Trauma-related conditions are complex disorders involving dysregulation of the mind, body, and the mind/body interface. Although yoga is a mind/body practice known to have significant therapeutic benefits, yoga for healthy individuals is not the same as yoga therapy for patients, which must take patient limitations into account. The trauma-sensitive yoga developed by the authors through practical and clinical experience, and described carefully, practically, and systematically in this book, incorporates the best that yoga has to offer with what will benefit trauma patients safely and comfortably." •Sat Bir Khalsa, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Director of Research for the Kundalini Research Institute

"At last, an engaging, accessible, theoretically grounded guide for the safe and effective use of yoga to heal from trauma! With a rich understanding of both the practice of yoga and the legacy of trauma, the authors skillfully weave together theory, research, mindfulness, case vignettes, yoga instruction, and more into a clear and compelling argument for reclaiming the body through their trauma-sensitive modified yoga. Innovative and practical, this book is an indispensable resource for traumatized individuals, yoga teachers, clinicians, and anyone else who is looking to rediscover the natural intelligence of the body." •Pat Ogden, PhD, founder of the Sensorimotor

Psychotherapy Institute and author of *Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy* – “There is a real need to extend yoga to those affected by traumatic experience and this book is a guide toward that action serving yoga practitioners, yoga teachers, and clinicians who are interested in working somatically. This guide fills the gap in the yoga student’s training with a solid knowledge base of trauma and offers ideas about creating a trauma-sensitive yoga class. Furthermore, clinicians can give insight into working with the body in the therapy session. The yoga skills presented here are designed to center, to ground, to increase mindful awareness, to encourage curiosity about experiencing the present, to help regain the sense of empowerment, enhance affect-regulation, and to befriend the body, all in a trauma-informed way. From a yoga perspective, this guide presents how to work with an individual suffering from symptoms associated with traumatic experience as a fine balance between knowledge and sensitivity.”

• *Somatic Psychotherapy Today* – “If you have suffered trauma or are a yoga teacher looking for ways to expand your class offerings, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* stands alone in providing a complete program developed by clinical experience especially designed to address the needs of trauma survivors. [The book] offers survivors a mindful approach to healing through calm, step-by-step yoga tailored to their specific requirements in order to engage and awaken the wisdom of their own bodies.”

a superb book. This gem deserves a place on the bookshelf.

• *Yoga Flavored Life* – “Authors Emerson and Hopper demonstrate how to deliberately and systematically intervene in the body’s alarm systems, and the yoga-based approaches they present in *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* use a series of postures and breathing techniques to rebuild a sense of connection to the self. *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* is highly recommended for trauma clients, therapists, and yoga teachers who want to work together toward complete recovery.”

• *New York Journal of Books* – “In his book *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga*, coauthor David Emerson (with Elizabeth Hopper, PhD) discusses the importance of treating not only patients’ minds, but also their bodies, where memories of traumatic events are stored. They write, “While talk-based therapy serves a critical role in the healing process, many are finding that it is insufficient by itself. Yoga and other forms of therapeutic physical activity may be the missing link.”

• *Whole Life Times* – “Though the reason for buying this book will vary greatly, I think the message is the same for everyone. I expected some tips and tricks, but instead I got a great discussion on understanding my body and that my healing must come from within myself as well as physically. I am not a yogi; I have watched a few videos and stumbled around my living

room, but this book was a great read even for a beginner like me. It was easy to follow the instruction and simple exercises. I am certain that this book has been a great addition to my recovery.

• Alexandria Vail, Chicklit Club

“Very useful book

The essential wisdom imparted here is that a simple hatha yoga practice can support the treatment of trauma by a) reintroducing the PTSD client to having and making meaningful choices when it seems like all choices have been taken away; b) cultivating a sense of living in the present in a way that feels safe; c) taking effective physical action, in direct opposition to what happens in a trauma situation where great effort is made, and often unsuccessfully, toward simply getting away from the threat; and d) establishing personal and interpersonal rhythms when the client may feel out-of-step with his or her own biorhythms, emotions, other people, etc.

I liked the straightforward tone, and the material is streamlined enough that you can pretty much absorb the whole thing in one or two sittings, and start applying it immediately.

• PCarino, Intellectual House o’ Pancakes

“Overcoming Trauma through Yoga tells how trauma survivors can use yoga to reconnect to one’s body and introduces the concept of trauma-sensitive yoga, a modified yoga program developed at the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute. It focuses on reinforcing positive relationships between body and mind through breathing and gentle yoga exercises, and provides an in-depth description of post-traumatic stress disorder. Yoga teachers and therapists alike will find this a fine, specific guide to integrating yoga-based interventions into therapy.

• Midwest Book Review

“The authors, David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, PhD, have done an excellent job connecting the dots for readers.

Overcoming Trauma through Yoga eloquently describes and clearly illustrates how trauma-sensitive yoga has been and continues to be an effective tool for trauma survivors, healing them from the inside out. Generally, I would encourage anyone who experiences stress or disconnect from their bodies to give this book a chance.

• Angela Andiorio, Space & Time

“For yoga teachers, [Overcoming Trauma through Yoga] is invaluable for showing that all students are not the same, and that adapting your class just takes compassion, special care and knowledge, which this book provides. Clinicians will benefit by learning that yoga unlocks traumatized bodies.

Although trauma survivors may have moments of discomfort and strong emotions may surface as they read, Overcoming Trauma through Yoga offers something critical to their healing: hope.

• Dawn Hamilton, Life Force Yoga Healing Institute

“The information in this book can help anyone engaged in the practice of yoga and the process of healing the effects of traumatic experiences.

Reading this book helped me understand intellectually what I knew experientially. Namely, that the greatest benefit practitioners of

yoga receive is the positive shift in outlook. In the context of trauma, this becomes empowerment. •Temani Aldine, LifeParticle.com

David Emerson is the director of yoga services at the Trauma Center (traumacenter.org). In 2003 he codesigned the Trauma Center Yoga Program that includes classes and teacher training programs. He lives in Cambridge, MA. Elizabeth Hopper, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist specializing in traumatic stress and works as the associate director of training at the Trauma Center. She lives in Somerville, MA.

Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body by David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, PhD
Reviewed by Dawn Hamilton, LFYP - 2
This concise book is a helpful and uplifting reference work for clinicians, yoga teachers as well as survivors of trauma. As a LifeForce Yoga Practitioner, I can say that the book is completely aligned with the compassionate guidance I received at LFYP training. Using recent discoveries in neuroscience as well as their own clinical experience at The Trauma Center, the authors clearly demonstrate that yoga, when adapted to the unique sensitivities of trauma survivors, can help them manage the debilitating onset of triggers in their daily lives, assisting them forward on their healing journey. Emerson and Hopper provide a good framework for understanding the deep impact of trauma on the entire human being, with profound and compassionate descriptions of PTSD and trauma. The book includes an informative history of the treatment of people affected by various forms of trauma, whether it be war, abuse, violence or accident, and the evolution of that treatment. They reveal new scientific research which shows our sense of selves is deeply anchored in a vital connection with our bodies. This tells us the wounds of trauma are held deep within the human body, and therefore to fully heal, treatment must include somatic elements. The intrinsic mind/body connection of yoga provides the practitioner with the vital link between wounds stuck inside the body and the deep healing needed. The authors do an excellent job distinguishing specific needs of trauma-sensitive yoga practitioners from other yogis by sharing case studies of trauma survivors bravely attending classes. They discuss the need to pace a trauma-sensitive yoga class slowly, the importance of creating a safe space to practice, careful attention to the words uttered by the yoga teacher, and whether or not to offer physical assists. They offer practical yoga exercises adapted to trauma survivors, including language for instructors emphasizing choice and empowering their students as collaborators. Overall, the book is a powerful addition to existing research which is now starting to concur that yoga can truly heal. For yoga teachers, it is invaluable for showing that all students are not the same, and that adapting your class

just takes compassion, special care and knowledge, which this book provides. Clinicians will benefit by learning that yoga unlocks traumatized bodies, and because the practices are simple - and can easily be done in an office setting. . Although trauma survivors may have moments of discomfort and from time to time, strong emotions may surface as they read, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga* offers something critical to their healing: hope.

For the student, teacher, clinician, or survivor, this book shows excellent scope with clearly stated goals. It includes contributions from some of the leading researchers and clinicians in trauma work (Peter Levine, and Bessel van der Kolk, among others), but its accessibility is appropriate for a diverse audience. It is a wonderful contribution to the extensive body of research that continues to develop in the field. For further reading, with more of the nitty-gritty "evidence-based" details of the last four decades of research in neuroscience and trauma, the inquiring mind might consult the nine pages of endnotes. For a really fun romp through some of the heavier science behind this work, I recommend reading anything by Stephen W. Porges.Ã A The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation (Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology)

This is definitely a helpful book especially for survivors of trauma and abuse. This book is also helpful for spouses to read so they can begin to understand how trauma gets held in the body and why working the trauma out through yoga is helpful. This book is helpful fir survivors to be able to understand the triggers that can occur in regular yoga classes and ways to be able to avoid those triggers with yoga instructors or to be fully informed when choosing a class and learning what commonly affects survivors and being able to be empowered to take charge of taking care if ourselves and being ok even if it means walking out and re-assess continuing in certain yoga classes. Defunaty a good informative read that I recommend for all survivors, their spouses & therapists.

I highly recommend this book for any yoga teacher, clinician, or trauma survivor.As a yoga instructor, you never know what pain lies underneath the surface of any student's smile. Being aware of these techniques can help make classes more inclusive and safe for all.As a trauma survivor, the techniques and information provided helped me to better understand my own journey and practice.

I teach yoga in institutional settings. Trauma abounds. This book looks at trauma from the point of view of the practitioner, teacher, and health professional. Engaging read. I got through it in a couple of sittings. Gave me insight that I hadn't had before. Take-home message is that you can't offer too much personal choice to students.

I got this book after reading *The Body Keeps Score*, in which the author highly recommended incorporating yoga in treating PTSD. This book is very useful as it has a lot of step by step instructions as well as pictures.

I have suffered from trauma in childhood. I have read many books about how to deal with trauma and spoken to many individuals on how to deal with trauma. No book or discussion has helped me as much as this book! I had been so frustrated (until now) because no one seemed to understand that I could talk about my trauma but that that did not release. David beautifully explains that trauma is stored in the body and this book helps one reclaim your body through Yoga. The Yoga practice in this book is the most healing and peaceful Yoga practice I have ever done or led-- and I am a Yoga instructor! I highly recommend this book for anyone who is longing to overcome trauma or for anyone who would like to help someone begin to overcome a trauma in their life. Thank you David!

I am currently in yoga teacher training and also have PTSD as a part of my life. I love this book! I found a lot of "aha" moments of understanding and appreciation. They explain PTSD so accurately, easily and eloquently. The advice they give for teaching trauma-sensitive yoga is easy to understand and apply.

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