RELEASING THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD: YOGA THERAPY FOR THE UPPER BACK, NECK AND SHOULDERS

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NEED I SAY MORE?
EPIDEMIOLOGY OF NECK PAIN

- Women, ages 35-49 (risk declines after 49)
- Higher income areas
- Urban vs. rural areas
- Office and computer workers

- Women are more likely than men to experience persistent neck problems, and less likely to experience resolution
- 14.9 % annual incidence in cohort of 1100 Saskatchewan adults
- 22.8% of those report an exacerbation

NEW STUDIES


- Studied 56 individuals with Chronic Neck Pain
- 12 small group sessions supervised by physiotherapist
- Neck Disability Index (NDI) decreased significantly in Pilates and yoga groups and not in control groups

Richards et al. Neck Posture Clusters and Their Association with Biopsychosocial Factors and Neck Pain in Australian Adolescents.
DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS:
WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

- osteoarthritis
- facet joint syndrome
- cervical strain
- disc bulge, herniation, radiculopathy
- shoulder impingement
- rotator cuff tear/tendonitis
- thoracic outlet syndrome
- tennis elbow
- carpal tunnel syndrome

...but they all respond to one of two courses of treatment.
TWO MAIN NECK POSTURES

FORWARD HEAD POSTURE

REVISED CERVICAL CURVE
PHILOSOPHY OF TREATMENT – FORWARD HEAD POSTURE

1) Chest Opening- anterior chest and shoulder musculature
2) Upper Back Strengthening – lower Trapezius, serratus Anterior
3) Mobilization of the Upper Thoracic Spine – T4-T6, mindful twists, moving the vertebrae into the body
4) Normalizing the Cervical Curve – maintaining lordosis
5) Correct Breathing Pattern – using the diaphragm instead of accessory muscles
6) Work on Core Beliefs – carrying the weight of the world, lack of trust, need for control, feeling emotionally unsupported (Vijnanamyakosha)
MOVING THE SPINE INTO THE BODY
PHILOSOPHY OF TREATMENT - REVERSED CERVICAL CURVE

1) Increase Cervical Lordosis - supported positions, back bends

2) Maintain curve in Set Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge), Sarvangasana (Shoulder Stand) and Halasana (Plough) – MUST USE BLANKETS!!

3) Soften Thoracic Kyphosis – Garudasana, supported forward folds

4) Serratus Anterior Strengthening – avoid “squeezing shoulder blades together”

5) Normalize Breathing Pattern – focus on exhalation, breathing into the upper back, sense of surrender in asana and pranayama

6) Focus on Core Beliefs – Need to stay in control, rigidity, difficulty trusting, hard to open heart, holding back love
SYMPATHETIC VS. PARASYMPATHETIC NS

Stress

Increased Respiratory Rate

Increase tightness in Scalenes, SCM, anterior chest musculature

Activation of Sympathetic NS
CLASS SEQUENCE

◆ Mental Centering – decrease mental tension and offer mind to the heart
◆ Seated chest openers – Parvatasana, Gomukhasana, Garudasana, Upper Trapezius stretch,
◆ Releasing Tension in Neck and Upper Back & Increasing Mobility in Upper Thoracic Spine – The Purna Yoga Morning Series
◆ Opening Ant. Chest – pecsStretch against the wall, assisted pec Stretch with partners
◆ Strap Work – Upper trap release with Harness, Figure 8 & arms overhead with strap (increases shoulder mobility), assisted chest opener with strap while moving T-spine into the body
◆ Back bends – Bhujangasana (cobra) moving spine into body, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge) with strap
◆ Seated Sarvangasana Prep
◆ Normalizing Cervical Curve with a Mat and Rod
◆ Savasana with thin blanket along length of spine (accordion fold)
◆ Other: The Wrist series https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fcj21yaChPY
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BOOKS:

YOGA FOR A HAPPY BACK
A Teacher’s Guide to Spinal Health through Yoga Therapy
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Foreword by Aadi Palkhivala

Scoliosis, Yoga Therapy, and the Art of Letting Go