

‘Healthy Ageing through Yoga’ Graduate Training Course

Introduction:

Life expectancy has increased over the past few decades with the age group over 80 years of age doubling since 1996. (Australian Demographics Statistics. June 2016)

The public health message for Healthy Ageing, emphasizes the importance of exercise. Many health care professionals encourage older people to practice yoga. However, many older people begin yoga with little or no knowledge of yoga and they may be starting their practice after years of a sedentary lifestyle or after a major episode of ill health or surgery.

The ageing body undergoes Primary Ageing Changes (the changes that we all experience) and Secondary Ageing Changes (changes complicated by chronic health conditions).

To benefit from a yoga program, the holistic combination of physical, cognitive and spiritual aims of yoga need to be introduced. The benefits of yoga occur when it is implemented as a way of life (not just an exercise program) and is best done with gentle, regular exercise and the exploration of cognitive relaxation guided by a yoga teacher trained in this field.

The Course:

Between 1996 to 2016, people over the age of 65 increased by 3 % but those aged over 85 years of age, doubled in number. (Australian Demographics Statistics. June 2016)

The yoga teacher who is experienced with working with older students and for the older person who has practiced yoga for some time, they will be aware of the specialised needs of the ageing body. This may not be the case for many yoga teachers.

The ageing population, is being encouraged both in the media and by health practitioners to remain active for a healthy old age. (Johnson et al. 2008). Many are being directed either through personal research or by General Practitioners, to take up yoga. Yoga is being presented as a ‘panacea for all that ails you’. For these reasons many older people turn up at a yoga class with unrealistic expectations and may expect a purely physical activity.

Primary Ageing Changes, to the brain and nervous system, pre- dispose the older

person to reduced cognitive ability. This reduction can be mitigated with relaxation and meditation practices. Dementia is a 'fear' that many older people acknowledge. Yoga has been recognised as mitigating the onset of dementia. (Small et al. 2008). Age sensitive introduction of Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana and Niyama will be included in this training.

With the increased life expectancy, brings more complex management of chronic disease and surgical techniques, polypharmacy and many undiagnosed health conditions. "Rather than directly causing Osteoarthritis (OA), ageing changes in the musculoskeletal system contribute to the development of OA by making the joint more susceptible". (Loeser. 2010).

The older person may have undiagnosed health conditions.

Pre-diabetes and Type 2 diabetes are such conditions. (Shaw et al. 2012). This also applies to hypertension and cognitive deficits. These conditions may not become apparent until the older person starts some form of exercise.

Summary:

This course is not expecting to train the yoga teacher to be a health practitioner, but to provide the background knowledge of the different abilities between a 65 year old and an 80 year old and modify the practice to suit each student and provide a safe and effective practice. It is aimed at the Yoga teacher who has limited experience with teaching the older, beginner student.

"With the changing demographics and the promotion of physical activity, these rates (of injury) will likely increase and recreational injuries among older adults will become a more pressing public health issue". (Gerson et al. 2001)

As many of these older students will have limited background knowledge of yoga, the holistic benefits of breathing, meditation, relaxation and the language of Sanskrit may need to be introduced with the older generation's lack of knowledge and possible suspicion of 'foreign' practices, in mind.

The yoga practice for the older student will include aspects that the general yoga teacher may not have experience with. As an example, the ears, tongue, and jaw all undergo significant Primary Ageing Changes, and strengthening and flexibility practice need to be included in every yoga class. The importance of foot exercises and balancing practice is one of the most reported benefits of yoga.

With the increased Government scrutiny for persons providing care and activities to the older population, consideration will need to be given to the qualifications of the yoga teacher providing yoga sessions to this demographic. Insurance policy cover for yoga teachers who specialise in Yoga for the older person and who enter Residential Aged Care Facilities, may soon require some post graduate training.

References:

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Your Course co-ordinators:

Ruth Campbell, Yoga Australia Senior teacher.

Ruth has been teaching yoga to older students for 12 years and has considerable practical experience in dealing with the particular challenges of this very special age group. Her experience in working regularly at a Retirement Centre on Brisbane's northside has inspired her interest in this field of work. She has specific training in Chair Yoga, Therapy Yoga and the relevant practices of Yin Yoga which can safely be introduced to older students. As a Yoga teacher with over 15 years of experience Ruth enjoys, and constantly learns from the difficulties faced by students who are regarded as "Seniors".



Elizabeth Williams

Liz has worked in the health field for over 40 years. Since 2000 she has been a Clinical Nurse Specialist, Clinical Nurse Educator and Clinical Nurse Consultant of Geriatric Nursing. Her work has involved physical, cognitive, and social assessments in the acute hospital, community and RACF. She has worked with experienced physiotherapists, developing fall prevention exercise interventions, rehabilitation programs following hip, knee and shoulder replacements and fractures. She has also developed an assessment tool for monitoring the confused older patient in hospital and an associated education package for health care staff. Liz has extensive experience working with the older client with cognitive impairment. Her post graduate qualifications include:

- Masters of Health Science:- Aged Care and Healthy Ageing.
- Graduate Certificate:- Mental Health (Aged Care).
- Graduate Certificate:- Aged Care Nursing
- Diabetes:- Advanced Nursing Management
- Wound Management for the Adult.
- Assessing and Managing Acute Adult Pain
- Palliative Care
- Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE 40110

Liz has practiced yoga for many years. She has completed 200 hours of Yoga Teacher Training with Pine Rivers Yoga and Level 2 Chair Yoga Teacher Training with Knoff Yoga.

