Y12SR: The Yoga of 12-Step Recovery

Step Study Intensive for Application and Understanding

Nikki Myers, Yoga Therapist, Somatic Experiencing Practitioner, Certified Recovery Specialist, MBA
Y12SR: THE YOGA OF 12-STEP RECOVERY

- Created in 2003: 6-week class
- Grassroots Evolution:
  - Weekend intensive for 12-step and Yoga Practitioners
  - Weekly classes
  - Space holder leadership training

Vision:
- Y12SR meetings as pervasive as other 12 step meetings
- Y12SR adopted as recognized intervention for addiction recovery

- 60+ meetings held throughout U.S., International presence: Canada, London, 152 active Leaders, more than 550 trained Leaders

- Y12SR foundation: fiscal sponsorship agreement with Off The Mat, Into The World (OTM)

- Y12SR Research: work toward evidenced-based study
- Y12SR Treatment Center Initiative
- Recovery 2.0 and Y12SR Alliance
- New Y12SR Offering: Transforming the Samskara Of Co-Dependency

- Inaugural Leaders Retreat
Y12SR

What is it?

Relapse prevention program: Based in YS 2:16

12-step based addiction recovery model coupled with yoga philosophy and practices that weave together the ancient wisdom of yoga with the practical tools of the 12-step programs.

Open to anyone dealing with their own addictive behavior or affected by the addictive behavior of others.

What it is not...

A replacement for meetings, sponsor, or any other part of the 12-step program
OBJECTIVES

- Investigate addiction and recovery from the body/mind/spirit perspective
- Recognize the roots of addictive patterns
- Discover tools to address patterns
- Examine yogic and program principles at personal level
- Embrace practices to enhance physical, mental and spiritual well-being
- Deepen understanding and application
Ground Rules

Foundation of creating and holding sacred space

Confidentiality:
- What’s said/done here stays here
- Okay to talk about your experience; don’t put a name with it

Allow everyone to have their own experience - refrain from the tendency to fix, manage, control or advise

Please be on time

Stay away from sexual advancement or relationship with anyone that you didn’t come with

All voices are welcome. AND... part of sharing is sharing time.

Use ‘I’ statements

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Intros

Please share:

Name?

Three things that are important to you

How addiction has affected your life; your experience with yoga and/or 12-step programs

After sharing, we breathe together
God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.
God, grant me the serenity
Awareness, connection with something bigger

To accept the things I cannot change,
Acceptance, foundation, turning the vessel right side up

The courage to change the things I can
Action, core, preparing the vessel for sail

And the wisdom to know the difference.
Let go, expression, set sail on spiritual voyage
Overview:
The Dis-ease of Addiction
A Solution
Yoga Philosophy
## FEELINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Carried or denied can produce</th>
<th>Gift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Rage</td>
<td>Strength, energy, motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Panic, paranoia</td>
<td>Wisdom, protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Depression, hopelessness</td>
<td>Healing, growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Isolation, helplessness</td>
<td>Reaching out, reaching in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Worthlessness</td>
<td>Humility, humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>Immobility</td>
<td>Amends, values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Hysteria</td>
<td>Hope, healing and spirituality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopted from Tennie McCarty - Shades of Hope

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A Way of Being

- Information vs. Experience

- “I know”

- “What the hell does ‘I know’ have to do with it?”
The Disease of Addiction
The Dis-ease Process

Disease Process - ‘a definite morbid process having a characteristic chain of symptoms. It may affect the whole body or any of the parts, and its etiology (cause), pathology and prognosis may be known or unknown.’

Diland’s Medical Dictionary
Addiction: Clinical Definition

Addictions and compulsions are destructive behaviors that an individual acquires as a method of coping with the pressures of life. Some addictions have genetic components and are passed down through biological families. Alcohol and drug addictions are examples of genetic conditions. Other addictions can be linked to survival reactions in response to family trauma.

Sex addictions and eating disorders can have roots in emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Addictions such as overwork, gambling, overspending, smoking, and compulsive exercise appear to be the result of bad habits. Most addictive behaviors are maladaptive responses to unresolved trauma.
The Dis-ease of Addiction...

Anything used to escape an intolerable reality is something that could lead to or form an addiction.

How do you know? ‘I used when I knew better; when I really didn’t want to’
Here's how people communicate.

Transmitter

Receptor

Here's how brain cells communicate.

Neurotransmitter

Receptor

Concept courtesy: B.K. Madras
Drugs In the Brain

ALL DRUGS OF ABUSE TARGET THE BRAIN’S PLEASURE CENTER

Brain reward (dopamine) pathways

These brain circuits are important for natural rewards such as food, music, and art.

All drugs of abuse increase dopamine

Typically, dopamine increases in response to natural rewards such as food. When cocaine is taken, dopamine increases are exaggerated, and communication is altered.

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Brain Function: Methamphetamine

Decreased brain function in methamphetamine abuser

Healthy Control

Drug Abuser

Methamphetamine abusers have significant reductions in dopamine transporters.

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Characteristics of Addiction

- Dishonesty (denial, projection, delusion)
- Not processing feelings in a healthy way (distortion, frozen feelings)
- Need to control, rigidity, fantasy
- Loss of personal morality (compromised value system, loss of spiritual base)
- Fear, depression, self-centeredness, negativism
- Thinking disorder (ego-orientation, obsessive thinking, linear thinking, over-reliance on logic & analysis, etc.)
- Perfectionism, inferiority/grandiosity
- Judgmentalism, external referencing, attention/approval seeking
A Solution
The Steps, The Traditions & Spiritual Principles

The Steps: Bring us into ‘right alignment’ in something greater than ourselves

Steps 1 - 3: Foundation: Turning the vessel right side up
1. We admitted we were powerless over ____ and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

Steps 4 - 9: Core: Preparing the vessel for sail
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all the persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Steps 10 - 12: Expression: Set sail on the spiritual voyage
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitting it.
11. Sought through pray and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to ____ that still suffer and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
The Steps, The Traditions & Spiritual Principles (cont’d)

The Traditions: Bring us into harmony with ourselves and those around us

The Spiritual Principles: Inspire positive behavior, Shift attitudes, Promote love

- Awareness
- Honesty, Open-Mindedness, Willingness (HOW)
- Acceptance, gratitude
- Surrender
- Hope, Faith and Trust
- Self-acceptance, humility
- Compassion, patience, and tolerance
- Forgiveness
- Unconditional love
- Sharing, caring and service
A Little History

Founded of AA Dr. Bob and Bill W.

Formed in 1935

“The generally accepted story is that the steps came to AA via the Oxford group of the Theosophical Society, who developed them by systematizing teachings of the rishis (saint, sage, yogi) of India.”

From ‘Addictions a Systems Approach published @ www.yogamag.net
Yoga Philosophy
Yoga - What Is It?

Ancient art and science of self-development that teaches people the fine art of balancing our multi-dimensional lives while living in a complex world.

English translation of word yoga: balance, integration, union, relationship

More than well-being in our bodies, yoga is a path toward deeper meaning and healing in our lives.
Characteristics of Addiction

Dishonesty (denial, projection, delusion)

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Judgmentalism, external referencing, attention/approval seeking
Mind, Body, Spirit

$H_2O$

Substance as different forms

Solid - Ice - Body

Liquid - Water - Mind

Gas - Vapor - Spirit

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Yogic Model of the Multi-Dimensional Self

Ideally the human system is an integrated whole

Yoga Model of the Multi-Dimensional Self

Annamaya – physical, asana

Pranamaya – energy, pranayama

Manomaya – thinking, chanting

Vijnanamaya – character, mantra, meditation

Anandamaya – heart, prayer and ritual

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The Multi-Dimensional Self

When the bodies are misaligned, disconnected or imbalanced the system is susceptible to disease and dysfunction.

“Hell is the place where nothing connects.”

T.S. Eliot
Roots of Disconnection

**Kleshas** – conditioned beliefs and behaviors that keep us bound, separate

**Dvesa** – avoidance, refusal, rejecting things, dislikes, ‘I don’t wanna’

**Abhinivesa** – fear

**Raga** – attachment, craving, likes, ‘gotta haves’

**Asmita** – ego, constructed Self

**Avidya** – incorrect comprehension, false understanding

Adapted from ‘The Heart of Yoga’, T.K.V. Desikachar

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Manifestation of the Obstacles

- Sickness, disease
- Density, stuckness, procrastination
- Doubt, undermining the potential to move forward
- Carelessness, hastiness
- Lethargy, lack of passion
- Craving
- False perception of self, low self-esteem/exaggerated self-importance
- Not grounded, failing to attain stages of practice
- Instability, falls back, inability to maintain

YS 1:30 Vyadhi, Styana, Samshaya, Alasya, Avirati, Branti-Darshana, Alabdha-Bhumikatva, Anavasthitatva Chitta-Vikshepa te Antarayah

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The 8-Limbed Path to Wholeness

Yamas – relationship to the world around us

Niyamas - relationship to self to ourselves

Asana – relationship to our physical bodies; postures for removing blocks in the body

Pranayama – relationship to our breath; breath control

Pratyahara – relationship to our senses; turning inward

Dharana – concentration; one-pointed attention

Dhyana – meditation; quieting the mind

Samadhi – self-forgetting; oneness
## The Similarities....

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Yoga Philosophy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 (Came)</td>
<td>Conscious Awareness “Until I am Aware”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 (Came To)</td>
<td>Sanctity of the Moment; Restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 (Came To Believe)</td>
<td>Surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4: Inventory</td>
<td>Svadyaya: self study; Vichara: inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 11: Prayer and Meditation</td>
<td>Prayer and Meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 12: Service</td>
<td>Karma, Seva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>Sangha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Power; GOYU</td>
<td>Ishvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Doing the same thing....’</td>
<td>Samskara (Habitual Conditioning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Just one More’</td>
<td>Samsara (Circle of Suffering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 Meetings In 90 Days</td>
<td>TAPAS (Discipline)</td>
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The 8-Limbed Path to Wholeness

**Yamas – Relationship to the World Around Us**
- **Ahimsa** - non-violence
- **Satya** - truthfulness
- **Astaya** - honesty, non-stealing, acting in faith
- **Bramacharya** - moderation, sexual appropriateness
- **Aparigraha** - non-greed, humility, non-hoarding

**Niyamas – Relationship to Self to Ourselves**
- **Saucha** - cleanliness
- **Santosa** - contentedness, acceptance
- **Tapas** - willingness, burning desire
- **Svadhyaya** - self-study, self reflection
- **Isvara Pranidhana** - surrender, devotion to Higher Power
**Model of Transformation**

- **Dukha** - Suffering exists
- **Jnana** - Knowledge of suffering; it affects me
- **Iccha** - Desire to change; willingness
- **Kriya** - Actions
- **Dharma** - Bigger work in the world
- **Svadharma** - Personal Dharma
- **Vairagya** - ‘Giving it away’
Foundation: Turning The Vessel Right Side Up

Steps 1 - 3

Understanding and Application
The Steps

Foundation

Steps 1 - 3: Turning the Vessel Right Side Up

1. We admitted we were powerless over ____ and that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
Foundation

- Honestly accepting what is
- Stop and name the problem
- Recognize that there is a solution beyond me
- Make decision to change
THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Spiritual Principles underlying steps 1 - 3:

- Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness (HOW),
- Humility,
- Acceptance,
- Surrender,
- Faith,
- Trust
**APPLICATION**

**What are we really recovering?????**

- **To recover = to find something that was lost. What did you Lose?**

- **If drugs/alcohol/food/sex/etc. etc. etc. are only symptoms of the disease what’s behind the symptoms?**

- **What parts of you were split off?**

- **How/when did the split happen?**
The Body Bears The Burden

“All bodies record the physical and emotional traumata of living – the happenings of life”.

– Ida P. Rolf

Emotional trauma is energy.

Energy collects somewhere

Creates knots and tension

“The issues live in the tissues”
Animals in the Wild
Trauma

On a broad level, trauma is anything from one’s life experience that remains trapped and unresolved causing disturbances at the biological, physiological, emotional, mental or behavior levels.

Traumatic events challenge and overwhelm our capacity to cope and respond physically and/or emotionally.

‘Waking the Tiger’ - Peter Levine

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Indications Of Unresolved Trauma

Intense emotions drive reactions

Capacity to self-regulate is damaged. Responses are often reflexive and impulsive

Capacity to reason and process information diminishes

Difficult to maintain self-control

Ross 2007
Nervous System Regulation

The nervous system:

knows no time

wants homeostasis

To self-regulate we will:

drink, drug, smoke, overeat, numb out on TV, engage in inappropriate sex, shop, gamble, etc., etc., etc.

The practices of yoga and the practical tools of the 12-step program help us manage our states in sustainable non-destructive ways rather than destructive ones
LIFE HANDS US JUST WHAT WE NEED TO HEAL OUR BLOCKS

"Your conflicts and all your difficult things, your problematic situations in life are not chance haphazard, they are actually yours. They are actually designed for you by a part of you that loves you more deeply than anything else. That part of you that loves you more than anything, created roadblocks to lead you to yourself"
Prayer for Surrender

“In any moment we can choose to turn to God. We can empty ourselves and receive Her. There is no distance to travel, no technique to master. Enlightenment is available in each moment when we choose it. It requires only saying yes to the present moment. There is nothing to do. There is no knowledge, no special learning required. No amount of doing will take us there. We need only courage to take the leap into the unknown. For it is in the unknown that we meet God.”

Rishi Prabakhakar

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The Art of Experiencing

1. Acknowledge The feeling

2. Make a decision to Experience it.

3. Become conscious of the Mechanism the mind uses to Attempt escape

4. Bring Attention to the Physical Sensations

5. Ask Higher Power to help you stay with the Sensation (Not the story).
Core: Preparing The Vessel for Sail

Steps 4 - 9

Understanding and Application

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The Steps

Steps 4 - 9: Core: Preparing the vessel for sail

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all the persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
Core

- Identifying the Obstacles
- Initiate the Cleansing Process
- Action for Change
- Cleaning up our House
- Setting our Relationships Right
Spiritual Principles: Steps 4 - 9

A deepening of the principles previous mentioned plus...

- Patience
- Courage
- Compassion
- Forgiveness
- Self-acceptance
- Commitment
- Perseverance
Yoga Application

It Ain’t Easy

Why do we even bother to do this hard work?

Why does self-inquiry sometimes seem so scary?
The Wisdom of Grover...
Step 5

Why bother sharing your inventory with God and another human being?

The wisdom of Rolf Gates

The wisdom of Erykah Badu
Reducing the Kleshas (Seeds)

- Conscious Awareness
- Prayer and Meditation
- Discrimination (Association)
- Self-care and relaxation (not to hungry, angry, lonely or tired)
- Positive Karma (doing the right thing, for the right reason)
“My imperfections and my failures are as much a blessing from God as my success and my talents and I lay them both at God’s feet.”

Mahatma Gandhi
Chakras - The Internal Databases

- 7 energy centers serving integration of physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual facets into a whole.
- Described as disks or wheels.
- State of each chakra reflects the health of a particular area.
- Every thought and experience gets filtered through the chakra databases. "Your biography becomes your biology."
- When chakra energy is blocked or misdirected, emotional and physical illness can arise.
# The Chakra Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chakra</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Central Issue</th>
<th>Excessive Characteristics</th>
<th>Deficient Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Root</td>
<td>Base of spine</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>survival, grounding</td>
<td>Heaviness, Sluggish monoton, obesity, hoarding, greed</td>
<td>Frequent fear, lack of discipline, restless, underweight, spacey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacral</td>
<td>Abdomen, Genitals, low back, hips</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>Sexuality, emotions, desire</td>
<td>Overly emotional, poor boundaries, sex addiction, obsessiveness</td>
<td>Frigidity, impotence, rigidity, emotional numbness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Plexus</td>
<td>Solar Plexus</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>Will, power</td>
<td>Dominating, blaming, scattered, constantly active</td>
<td>Weak will, poor self esteem, passive, sluggish, fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>Love, relationship</td>
<td>Codependency, poor boundaries, possessive, jealous</td>
<td>Shy, lonely, isolated, lack of empathy, bitter, critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throat</td>
<td>Throat</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Excessive talking, no listening, over-extended, stuttering</td>
<td>Fear of speaking, poor rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Between brows, above nose</td>
<td>indigo</td>
<td>Intuition, imagination</td>
<td>Headaches, nightmares, hallucinations, delusions, difficulty concentrating</td>
<td>Poor memory, poor vision, can't see patterns, denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>Top of head</td>
<td>violet</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Overly intellectual, spiritual addiction, confusion, dissociation</td>
<td>Learning difficulties, spiritual skepticism, limited beliefs, materialism, apathy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Forgiveness**

**What is forgiveness?**

Forgiveness is the mental, emotional and/or spiritual process of ceasing to feel resentment, indignation or anger against another person for a perceived offense, difference or mistake, or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution. ‘Jack Kornfield’

‘Forgiving’ From A Sense of

- righteousness
- obligation
- bestowing or pardoning
- pretending
- making excuses

Is **Not** Forgiveness!
Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not about exoneration; instead it keeps a person from being victimized twice.
Expression: The Spiritual Voyage

Steps 10 - 12

Understanding and Application
The Steps

Steps 10 - 12: Set sail on the spiritual voyage

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitting it.

11. Sought through pray and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry it out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to _____ that still suffer and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
Expression

- Maintenance, keeping it clean
- Deepening the inner resource
- Giving it away
Spiritual Principles: Steps 10 - 12

A deepening of the principles previously mentioned plus...

- Self-discipline
- Integrity
- Tolerance
- Unconditional love
- Sharing and Caring
DAILY INVENTORY

Capture and review moments of your day

Invoke divine presence. See, feel, express gratitude for the experiences

Ask yourself if you gave anyone pain today.

If so, feel their pain, bring the image of the person before you and ask for their forgiveness

Ask yourself if you feel pain from any interaction.

Affirm: ‘all pain is not in the fact, but in the perception about the fact’. Blaming or looking to change them or any other distraction will not eliminate the source of the pain

Stay with the it. (The Art of experiencing)

Bless all those who have touched your life today

Bring the images of all that have touched you today. Bless them and give thanks.
Prayer and Meditation

What’s the difference?

Prayer is a conscious act

Meditation just happens; it’s a total immersion on the experience
3 Go-To Tools

Name 3 Go-To Tools you can use when you are Triggered

- Grounding and Breath
- Serenity Prayer
- Tonglen Practice
Tools to Nourish Every Dimension

- **Physical**: Yoga – asana, postures
  - Recovery: Meetings, steps 1-2

- **Energy**: Yoga – breath
  - Recovery: Steps 3-4

- **Intellect**: Yoga – chanting
  - Recovery: Steps 8-9, Slogans

- **Character**: Yoga – mantra, meditation
  - Recovery: Traditions, sponsorship, slogans

- **Heart**: Prayer and ritual,
Resources

- Waking The Tiger - Peter Levin
- The Heart of Yoga - TKV Desikachar
- Yoga for Transformation and Yoga for Wellness - Gary Kraftsow
- One Breath At a Time - Kevin Griffin
- How Yoga Works - Geishe Micheal Roche
- Facing Co-Dependence, Intimacy, and Facing Love Addiction - all by Pia Mellody
- When Things Fall Apart, Comfortable with Uncertainty and anything else by Pema Chodren
- Y12SR Facebook Page
God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.