

# Dru Yoga for Transforming Emotional Pain

Dr. Helena Waters

Since leaving clinical psychiatry over 20 years ago, my personal journey has offered me many opportunities for my own inner awakening. I am delighted to have this opportunity to share with my psychiatric colleagues some of the delightfully simple, but powerful, therapeutic movements that I have discovered as part of Dru Yoga. I have used these techniques personally to heal a back injury and in the process have become aware of their healing potential for those with emotional or mental 'pain'.

Dru Yoga was introduced to the U.K. by Dr. Mansukh Patel more than twenty years ago. He had been taught the principles of this gentle style of yoga by his father in East Africa and he subsequently taught it to a small group of friends at Bangor University in North Wales. They then went on to form the Life Foundation, of which Dru Yoga has become an international hallmark. Their aim was to create a safe platform in a busy world where anyone of any age, culture or ability could explore yoga and spirituality.

The word Dru actually comes from the Sanskrit Dhruva, meaning still and unchanging. Historically, Dhruva is the name given to the North Star, which remains fixed while all other stars appear to move around it. In Dru Yoga, awareness is developed in a place inside ourselves, called the Dhruvakasha, which is still and spacious, like the eye of a hurricane, while the winds of life blow all around us.

Dru Yoga has today developed into a powerful series of techniques, capable of transforming health by balancing the energies of body, heart and mind.

## Key principles

One of the principles of Dru Yoga is that the body and the emotions are directly linked. Dr. Candace Pert has illuminated the ramifications of this connection in her work on neuro-peptides, the so-called messenger molecules, in her book '*Molecule of Emotions*'.<sup>1</sup> Distinct groups of these molecules have been shown to correspond to emotional states, for example anger. Pert shows that there is no difference between body and emotion and that the whole body is actually run by emotions. This modern research validates the ancient principle that our bodies, emotions, thoughts and self are all inextricably linked. The Dru Yoga Energy Block Release (EBR) sequences make use of this principle, acting upon the places in the body where our emotions get trapped and releasing emotions by transforming their energy.

Another key principle of Dru Yoga is its ability to activate heart power. In Yoga the heart chakra is known as the psychic centre of transformation. In fact, the electrical field generated by the heart is 60 times greater than that of the brain, according to research from California's Heart Math Institute.<sup>2</sup> When our energy is focused through the heart centre, then creativity and compassion abound. Many eminent scientists, including Dr. Dean Ornish<sup>3</sup>, are now showing how, when we feel loved and have close caring relationships, our immune systems are stronger and we can more powerfully resist diseases such as cancer, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and many degenerative conditions. Dru Yoga is often called yoga of the heart because many of the postures and sequences are designed to work with the heart centre. This is a major factor in its therapeutic efficacy.

## The philosophy

Yoga philosophy describes five layers of our being. The grossest layer is the physical body, more subtle is the layer of prana or energy, which corresponds to our

physiology, next comes the emotional layer and deeper still is the layer of intellectual thought. The fifth and deepest is the layer of soul-force or self-awareness. This philosophy of the layering of being is not unique to Dru Yoga and is described in many ancient yoga texts. However, in Dru Yoga, each layer is targeted and so transformation takes place quickly. In fact, traumas and emotional distress rise like bubbles through the layers of being, surfacing and being released through the physical body.

Dru Yoga focuses on energy flow through its sequences and visualisation, thus enhancing proprioception and directing awareness. The ability to physically perfect a posture is not all-important. It is better to use the maxim: 'perfection is the best you can do in any moment'. All the sequences can be modified to suit the old, the infirm, an excitable child or someone with disabilities.

### **Dru Yoga for detraumatization**

Since 1995, these gentle techniques have been offered in detraumatization workshops in war zones to help aid workers, field staff, therapists and counsellors to manage stress and overcome burnout. In turn, they then offer the techniques to those suffering from the emotional trauma and painful emotions associated with living under such conditions.

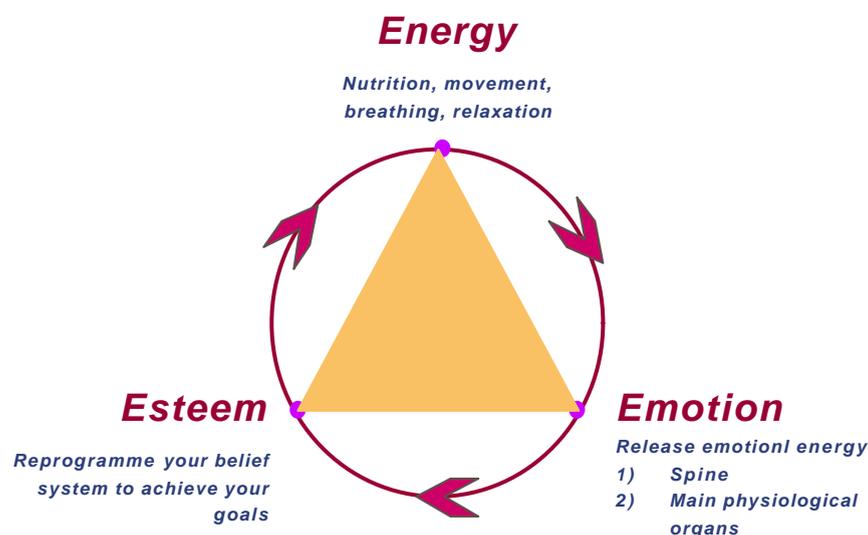
Dru Yoga works because it:

- offers a self-help "tool-box" of techniques and skills which are accessible to everyone
- offers a holistic approach which integrates physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of our being
- is independent of culture, language or religion
- works alongside conventional counselling
- heals pain without stirring up the past
- encourages emotional self-reliance

### **What is the relevance for psychiatry?**

Dru Yoga, through its gentle movements, allows us to access and release the blocked energy that leads to mental and emotional disorders. I like to explain how Dru Yoga works by using the model of the Golden Triangle.

## ***The Golden Triangle***



It is almost as if by not focusing attention specifically on the mental or emotional levels but by just using therapeutic movements, we can 'sneak up' on the psychological problems. Nearly everyone is able to move their body and because of the interconnectedness of the different parts of our being, the release of physical tension in our joints and muscles resulting from these movements leads to a release of emotional trauma and mental distress. With the use of visualization, affirmation and hand gestures (mudras), it is possible to gently transform negative thoughts and emotions into their positive counterparts.

For these reasons, I now prescribe Dru Yoga as my treatment of choice for most common mental health problems:

- de-stress techniques for stress-related disorders, e.g. chronic fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome
- detraumatization techniques for post-traumatic stress disorder
- relaxation techniques for anxiety and phobic disorders
- relaxation, meditation and specific posture sequences for depression
- specific sequences and movements for emotional transformation e.g. fear, anger, guilt
- programmes for managing addictive behaviour

I must admit that I have always been concerned about drug side effects. As far as I know there are no side effects or contra-indications for Dru Yoga but because it is a self-help therapy, it only works if it is practised!

### **The way forward**

Dru Yoga is a CAM - complementary and alternative therapy. I look forward to the day when it is prescribed alongside orthodox psychological treatments as a therapy in its own right. I am hoping to collaborate with researchers and others who would be interested in incorporating Dru Yoga into evidence-based research projects, looking at its efficacy in the management of common conditions. Dru Yoga is a therapy and training is available. I welcome enquiries from any mental health workers who would like to train.

For information about Dru Yoga seminars, workshops, retreats and training courses, please contact Helena Waters 'phone 01372 725327, email: [lifelondon@aol.com](mailto:lifelondon@aol.com)

### **References**

1. Pert C B, (1997) *Molecules of Emotion* Simon and Schuster. London
2. Institute of HeartMath, [www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com) PO Box 1463, 14700 West Park Ave, Boulder Creek, California 95006
3. Ornish D, (1998) *Love and Survival* Harper Collins, New York

### **Additional material available from the author:**

#### **Detraumatization programmes available on video**

Dru Yoga – Transforming Emotional Pain  
Dru Yoga – The Healing Power of the Heart

#### **Dru Yoga – Home exercise programme on video**

Dru Yoga – Energy in Motion  
Dru Yoga – Body, Heart, Mind

## Management of Emotional Pain

A Way with Emotional Pain – video  
Dance Between Joy and Pain – book  
Crisis and the Miracle of Love - book

## Appendix 1: Five Composite Stages of Dru Yoga

1. **Activation** The body is taken through an activation sequence that warms it up and prepares it for stretching and strengthening movements. Subtle internal energy flows are also activated by these simple movements.
2. **Energy Block Release Sequences (EBR)** Unique to Dru Yoga, each EBR sequence has a specific aim of releasing trapped physical, emotional and other subtle energies. These sequences make use of movement, breath, gesture and soft flowing movements.
3. **Dru Yoga Sequences** Specific movements, postures and sequences, practised with special emphasis on softness, direct the body's own natural healing and empowering responses to where they are needed.
4. **Relaxation:** In Dru Yoga, relaxation is placed at the top of the agenda and is part of every stage in the process. Students are taught to soften the body and take their time - the benefits of any movements or postures are felt in the relaxation and not in the action itself.
5. **Meditation:** Enables students to make friends with their mind and find that quiet space within - the space of Dhruva.

## Appendix 2: Places where The Life Foundation has worked:

*North Caucasus, 1998-2002:* Training programme for child psychologists

*Northern Ireland, 1995 - 2002:* Seminars, retreats for cross-community workers and the general public

*Bosnia and Croatia, 1996 & 1999:* Seminars for therapists of the UNHCR, the Croatian Association of Psychotherapists

*Kenya, 1999-2000:* Detraumatization seminars for USAID, US Embassy, South Sudan  
*Nepal, 1999:* *Bangladesh, 1999:* Training for UN representatives in Dhaka  
Community Development trainings

*South Africa, 1999:* Seminars for police stress counsellors & carers at trauma centres

*Russia, (Nalcheck, St. Petersburg and Moscow), 1998:* Seminars for child psychologists and orphans in St. Petersburg and Moscow

*Israel and the West Bank* – over the last 10 years