



Complex Trauma and Body Centered Healing, Part 5

Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga / Other healing resources

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If you have come to help me, you
are wasting your time.

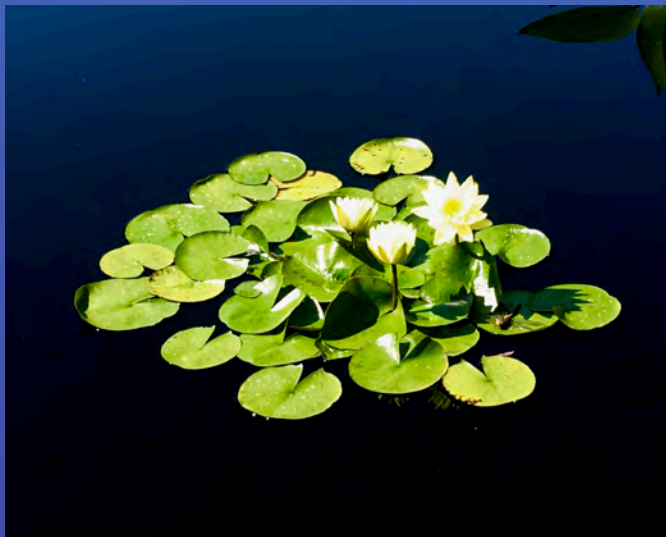
But if you have come because your
liberation is bound up with mine,
then let us work together.

*Lilla Watson,
and other Australian indigenous activists*





Sometimes learning about trauma can feel overwhelming;
during this presentation please feel welcome to take care of yourself as needed.



If you like, you might take a moment or two here,
to breathe, stretch, and notice how you feel, before going on.



Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY):



- Developed at The Trauma Center of the Justice Resource Institute in Brookline MA by David Emerson, *with psychologist Jenn Turner, other clinicians, trauma researchers, and people living with complex trauma.*





Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY):



- Recognized by SAMHSA
(Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration)
as an empirically validated
adjunct treatment for complex
trauma and C-PTSD.





TCTSY can be especially helpful for people who:

- Want to try yoga without being touched, watched, or corrected, or who don't feel comfortable in regular yoga classes
- Want to use yoga to practice being in charge of their own bodies while in safe connection with another person





TCTSY can be especially helpful for people who:

- Want to explore movement and their own experience at their own pace
- Want to practice body-based mindfulness or interoception





TCTSY can be especially helpful for people who:

- Want to work with someone who has in-depth training and a solid understanding of trauma
- Want to be treated with respect for their perceptions and abilities





TCTSY is used with:

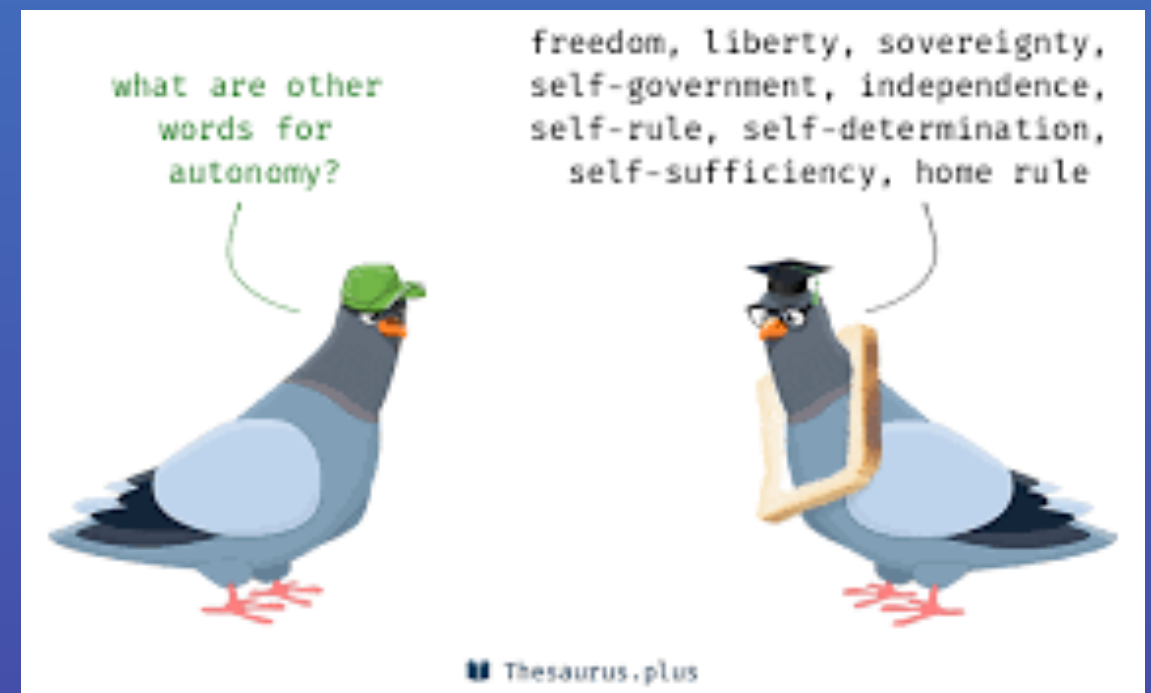
- Adults, small group or larger sessions, individual sessions
- Youth, mainly one-on-one sessions or sometimes in pairs or small groups
- Children, one-on-one in short sessions





One key way that TCTSY can be different from some yoga classes is in the relationships between people.

In TCTSY the teacher or facilitator is present to offer possibilities for movement, and space for people to explore movement and mindfulness in their own way at their own pace.





There is great diversity in yoga practices, even among traditional lineages in India. For purposes of healing complex trauma, TCSTY creates a different kind of relationship among practitioners, with no gurus or master teachers.

Yet TCTSY owes a great deal to the long history of yoga and the people who have practiced and refined it for millennia.

Their collective wisdom lives in TCTSY both in the practice of asanas, or physical forms, and in the ways that TCTSY reflects the principles of beneficial living central to most yoga traditions: the yamas and niyamas.



These are not dogma, and may not be mentioned at all in a TCTSY practice.
But they influence it, and at times may be felt:

Yamas

Ahimsa: do no harm

Satya: be truthful

Asteya: be trustworthy

Brahmacharya: conserve energy

Aparigraha: live simply, let go

Niyamas

Saucha: live cleanly

Santosha: accept the moment

Tapas: practice to create change

Svadyaha: see beyond thoughts

Ishwara Pranidhana: practice
gratitude for all that is larger than
your self



How is TCTSY different...

- From other kinds of yoga classes?
- From trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive yoga classes?





General Yoga Classes

(Hatha, Flow, Yin, Ashtanga, Iyengar, Hot Yoga, etc.)

- May help relieve symptoms of trauma and increase feelings of peace
- May feel unsafe or triggering for some people with trauma
- Teachers are usually trained to tell students what to do
- Teachers may touch or physically correct students' body positions
- Teachers may not understand the physiological basis of trauma
- Teachers may give directions to breathe in particular ways





Trauma Informed / Trauma Sensitive Yoga Classes:

- Various styles of yoga may be trauma-informed (Hatha, Flow, Yin, Ashtanga, etc.)
—with a teacher trained to help create safety and respect after trauma
- Teachers may focus on helping people learn to feel safe and calm
- Teachers may encourage curiosity and avoid judging people
- Teachers may still tell people what to do (directive teaching style)
- Teachers may emphasize breath to calm the nervous system
- Physical contact from teacher may be optional or may not happen
- Some yoga positions may be avoided
- Teachers know about trauma, but training varies (often 2 - 20 hours)





Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)

- Evidence-based adjunct treatment for complex trauma
- Emphasis: strengthen a person's own sense of themselves, their agency and self-sufficiency
- Based on trauma theory, neuroscience, attachment theory, hatha yoga
- Attention to emotional safety and emotional regulation
- Targets, strengthens and reconnects specific areas of nervous system hurt by trauma
- Found to alleviate or heal many specific symptoms of complex trauma
- TCTSY facilitators: 300+ hours of training in complex trauma, healing, with ongoing supervision from the Center for Trauma and Embodiment





A TCTSY facilitator (TCTSY-F):

- Has completed a minimum of 300 hours TCTSY study, certification
- Respectful, supportive, carefully non-coercive
- Works with primary symptoms of complex trauma
- Maintains confidentiality, healthy boundaries
- Uses less-triggering language and yoga forms
- Individualizes one-on-one sessions as needed
- Helps people own their own practice
- Receives ongoing supervision, peer support, training through the Center for Trauma and Embodiment





Emotional Safety in TCTSY

- Everything is an invitation: there is no pressure to do anything that you don't feel like doing
- You always have choices: simple a/b choices; choose between them, or do something different.
- There isn't one, external, "right" way to do the yoga forms— what matters is how they feel
- There are no corrections, assists, or physical contact; and as much personal space as possible
- Language is used to encourage choice and safe connection with one's own body
- Omission of certain yoga forms, breathing, or language that may be triggering for those w/ trauma
- TCTSY facilitator stays at the front of the room also participating (to invite synchrony, attunement and the possibility of a safe attachment relationship with clear boundaries)
- Confidentiality, and respect for the decisions of each person
- Participants are encouraged to also work with a primary therapist, as needed



Physical safety in TCTSY

- TCTSY facilitator offers simple suggestions for ways to move safely into and out of yoga forms
- The TCTSY facilitator offers yoga forms that have a relatively low risk of physical injury and different versions to fit different needs
- If it seems that someone may be at risk of physical harm, the TCTSY facilitator may repeat safety cues, or invite the class to come out of a form —
- without calling attention to anyone



Complex trauma is what happens when a person is trying to survive under conditions of chronic disempowerment...

... (so) the approach to treatment is mostly about empowerment and not about calming down.

—David Emerson

Healing through
body-centered empowerment
within a supportive relationship





We are not separate. We are of this world and of each other,
and the power within us is a great, if not invincible, power.

Though we can be hurt, we can heal;
though each one of us can be destroyed, within us is the power of renewal.

And there is still time to choose that power.

Starhawk



A very brief recap of Complex Trauma and Body-Centered Healing, parts 1 - 5:

- **Traumatic occurrences** are directly experienced, witnessed, and/or (in secondary trauma) intensely felt through the lives of others. Then...
- **Because of intensity and repetition**, neurons form new pathways within a person's brain and Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)—*the unconscious communication system of the body, designed to keep you safe from harm.*
- **These new pathways create implicit memory to help quickly and unconsciously predict and respond to potential harm**, preparing the various systems of the body to take protective action and/or to shut down (to avoid detection or diminish suffering)
- **Over time these triggered, unconscious responses, originally activated to protect, can turn into chronic stress**, affecting many bodily systems and negatively impacting physical and emotional health, memory and well-being.
- **Healthier responses to stress can be practiced and learned**, mitigating—and in some cases reversing—the negative effects of trauma, and the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences



This presentation is based on the work of:

David Emerson E-RYT, author of *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga*, and *Trauma-Sensitive Yoga in Therapy*

Bud Craig PhD, author of *How Do You Feel? Interoception: the sense of the physiological condition of the body*

Stephen Porges PhD. Author of *Polyvagal Theory : Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, social justice activist and author of *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*

Elaine Miller-Karas LCSW, author of *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models*

And **trauma researchers** with the NICABM Treating Trauma Master Series: **Pat Ogden** PhD., **Dan Siegel**, MD. **Ruth Lanius**, MD, PhD, **Ron Siegel** PhD, **Ruth Buczynski** Phd., **Peter Levine** PhD., and **Bessel van der Kolk** MD; also **Wendy D'Andrea** PhD.

And, yoga teacher-trainers **Marlysa Sullivan** MPT, C-IAYT E-RYT and **Hala Khouiri** MA, E-RYT

Thank you to all of these people for their work supporting trauma prevention and healing.



If you have trauma, some questions you might ask treatment professionals *

- Can you please describe your training and experience working with trauma?
- Can you describe how you work with people? What might I expect in the course of treatment? How might I evaluate when this treatment is successful or complete?
- How do you feel about complementary modalities: bodywork, yoga, meditation, self-help groups, bibliotherapy (self-help books) etc?
- How do you feel about medication? Do you often recommend medication? When yes or no?
- How do you address power dynamics between therapist and client?
Do you work with interpersonal violence or abuse as aspects of systemic inequality and power-over, or do you see them only as a mental health issue?
- What do you do to help clients connect with their own inherent power and ability to move forward?

** from the work of Jean McElhaney, MSW CNVC*



If you work supporting people who have trauma, you might ask yourself, *How can I:*

- Keep myself balanced and connected with others, so that I can maintain the clarity and calm that is needed for working well with other people's trauma?
- Engage with peers and ongoing support so that I'm not alone in my work?
- Help create and advocate for healthy working conditions in other ways, when possible?
- Help clients practice being in the present moment?
- Help clients connect with their own internal rhythms (heartbeat, breath), with rhythms shared with others (movement, music, chanting, rapping), with feeling the passage time?
- Help clients build curiosity and tolerance for physical and emotional sensation?
- Encourage clients to make their own choices and take effective action?
- Explore and express genuine respect for clients' autonomy, experiences, and ways of being?
- Address power dynamics between me and my clients?
- Help clients connect with their own inherent power and ability to move forward?
- Support them in taking ownership of their recovery from trauma?



Trauma Healing Resource List

Greenroot Yoga, Clare Norelle clarenorelle.com / clarenorelle@mac.com

Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terrorism, *Judith Herman, M.D.*

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma. *Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.*

Overcoming Trauma through Yoga *David Emersom and Elizabeth Hopper, Phd.*

Trauma Sensitive Yoga in Therapy *David Emerson*

Interoception: The eighth sensory system. *Kelly Mahler MS. OTR/L (this book is written for people who support people with autism—but developing interoceptive awareness can be key to healing from trauma as well, and the book has good ideas for doing this with children)*

Trauma Stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky (see Laura van Dernoot Lipsky's excellent Ted Talk on youtube)

How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime: TedMed Talk by Nadine Burke Harris (https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en)

Building Resilience to Trauma, by Elaine Miller-Karas A body-centered and skills-based approach to trauma resilience and trauma healing, from the Trauma Recource Institute: <https://www.traumaresourceinstitute.com>

Treating Trauma Master Series from NICABM (National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine) <https://www.nicabm.com/program/treating-trauma-master/>. An excellent online training for working with people who have complex trauma.

Mystic Soul Project: POC-centered Mysticism, Activism, and Healing : <https://www.mysticsoulproject.com>



Thank you for your interest in this presentation.

It was created out of a desire to make information about complex trauma and body-centered healing as accessible as possible. If you share that intention, then you're welcome to share material from the presentation with others—but please acknowledge the sources, out of respect for the work involved.

I am grateful to the trauma researchers listed at the end of this presentation for their research and insights into trauma and healing; and still more grateful to my clients, who teach me so much.

I offer various versions of this presentation in person (in English and in Spanish), and also facilitate TCTSY sessions for large groups, small groups, and individuals.

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