



Yoga Therapy
for Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome
(hEDS)

Yoga Therapy

for Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS)

Hi there... I've been a yoga teacher for nearly 20 years, and for the past 10 years most of my work has been as a facilitator of Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), working individually with people on Medicaid who have complex or relational trauma.

As someone who has experienced trauma, it's been especially meaningful to me to support people in healing from it. And, a lot of the people I work with also have chronic illnesses and/or chronic pain conditions. So I wanted to learn how to better support them in these areas of their experience as well.

In 2024 I began a two year training in SomaYoga, to become a yoga therapist in this approach which is especially focused on relieving chronic muscular tension and chronic pain.

I'm making this presentation as a way to help myself better understand the experiences of people I work with who have hEDS, and to improve my ability to support them.

I hope that you might find something useful here too.

—Clare



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy

for Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS)

There are two main reasons I've decided to explore hEDS in this presentation...

Reason 1: Experiences with people I work with

- One person experienced partial dislocations in their joints (subluxations), and later they were diagnosed with hEDS. They decided that while yoga had helped with their trauma, it wasn't a good fit for their body in other ways. I think maybe it could have been, if I'd had a better understanding of how to work with people who have hEDS.
- Two current clients have hEDS diagnoses, each with different combinations of symptoms
- Another has many symptoms, believes they might have it, but no diagnosis
- Another is hypermobile with chronic pain, no diagnosis
- Another has fibromyalgia, may be hypermobile, and has symptoms similar to hEDS, two conditions that show up together in many people

I want to have a better understanding of how to help hyper mobile people keep themselves safe from injury in their yoga, and also how to use yoga practices to alleviate specific symptoms connected with hEDS.



Yoga Therapy

for Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS)

Reason 2: SomaYoga therapy seems especially well-suited for working with people who have hEDS

- **De-emphasis on stretching** (which can sometimes be unsafe for people with hEDS), instead releasing muscular tension primarily through pandiculations (tensing and slowly releasing muscles), then developing stabilization and strength.
- **Good opportunities for developing more accurate interoception and proprioception**—people who have hEDS tend to have interoception that can feel intense and dysregulated or shut down and numb, and proprioception that isn't strong. SomaYoga practices can help with both.
- **Emphasis on gentle breathing and energy practices:** Many people with hEDS have trouble breathing well due to the laxity of their connective tissues, and also have dysautonomia and diminished functioning of the vagal nerve. Gentle breathing practices may help with these problems.
- **Other gentle-on-the-body tools of traditional yoga and Ayurveda, such as koshas, marmani, mudras, dinacharya, etc.**





Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common Definitions of hEDS

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS

Allopathic definitions of EDS

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS) is **a genetic condition that affects the body's connective tissues.**

These tissues provide strength, support, and elasticity to structures throughout the body, including the skin, blood vessels, and joints. When connective tissues are affected, individuals with EDS may experience a wide range of symptoms and complications.

EDS is caused by genetic mutations that affect the production or structure of collagen, a key component of connective tissues. Collagen is responsible for maintaining the strength and flexibility of these tissues, and any abnormalities in its structure or production can lead to the characteristic features of EDS.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS

Allopathic definitions of hEDS

13 forms of Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes have been identified so far, affecting different types of connective tissue. All are considered inherited and incurable, so treatment focuses on managing symptoms. **hEDS is by far the most common and the most difficult to diagnose, as it can present in different people in very different ways, and there's no genetic test for it.**

- Diagnosed through a common set of symptoms, along with a family history of hEDS.
- *Symptoms and their severity vary considerably from person to person, even within the same family.*
- *At the end of 2026 a new guide to hEDS will be published, updating classification criteria, assessment and treatment best practices and a diagnostic pathway for clinicians; to learn more about this, visit: <https://www.ehlers-danlos.com/road-to-2026/>*



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS



Allopathic definitions of hEDS

Libby Hinsley, yoga therapist and author of *Yoga for Bendy People*, has hEDS and also works with hypermobile people. She writes:

“Hypermobile EDS (hEDS) is diagnosed when specific criteria are met and when other connective tissue disorders are ruled out.

Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD) is diagnosed when someone does not meet all the hEDS criteria but has hyper mobility with associated symptoms, and other connective tissue disorders have been ruled out.

Many people mistakenly believe HSD is a lesser diagnosis than hEDS. However people with HSD can have the same or greater severity of symptoms.”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS



Allopathic definitions of hEDS

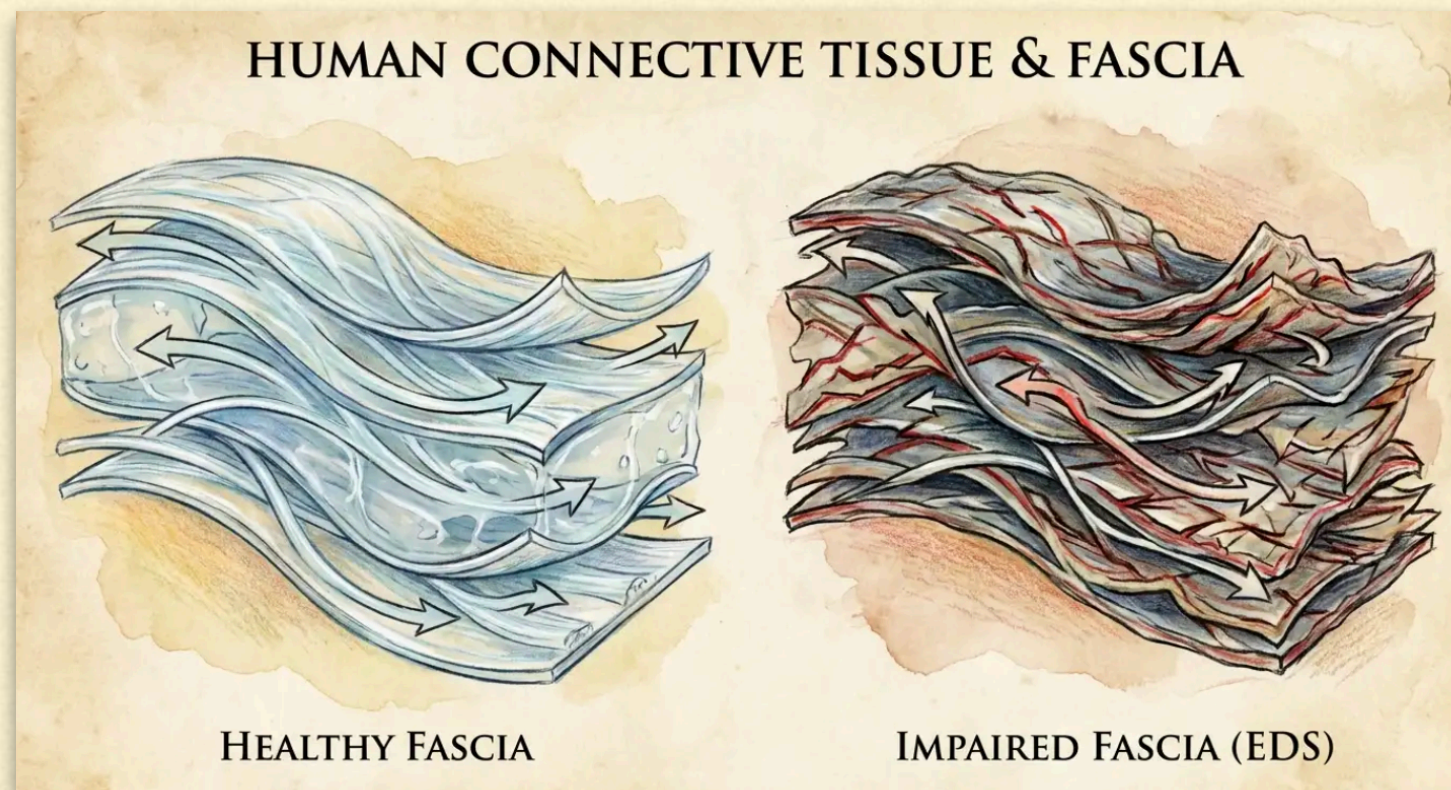
Recent research suggests that hEDS and HSD may actually be slightly different versions of the same condition.

For the purposes of this presentation I'll use the term hEDS inclusively— meaning also people diagnosed with HSD.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: definitions of hEDS

Massage therapist Sarah Mitchell has hEDS, and works with people who have it as well. She writes:

“What feels like a therapeutic stretch to a typical body can actually cause micro-tears, overstretching, and deep tissue trauma in your hypermobile body.

In a typical body, ligaments and joint capsules provide a hard stop to movement. In your body, those stops are made of faulty collagen, allowing joints to move beyond their normal range of motion.

Your muscles are constantly contracting, trying to act as stabilizers for joints that lack ligamentous support. Your muscles feel rock-hard and chronically “tight,” but that tightness is your body’s desperate attempt to hold itself together.”

<https://goodhandsmassagetherapy.com/massage-therapy-for-ehlers-danlos-syndrome-gentle-techniques-for-hypermobile-clients/>



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: definitions of hEDS

“Why is hEDS so controversial?”

hEDS is often controversial in the medical community because it lacks a definitive genetic blood test, relies on clinical diagnostic criteria (like the Beighton score), and overlaps heavily with other conditions like fibromyalgia and dysautonomia.

This leads to medical gaslighting and delayed diagnoses for many patients.”

—Sarah Mitchell, massage therapist

<https://goodhandsmassagetherapy.com/massage-therapy-for-ehlers-danlos-syndrome-gentle-techniques-for-hypermobility-clients/>



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common definitions of hEDS



Ayurvedic and Yogic definitions of hEDS

“EDS encompasses several types, with the most common being hypermobile EDS (hEDS). **Individuals with hEDS often experience:**

- **Joint hypermobility:** Excessive movement in joints, instability.
- **Skin symptoms:** Soft, velvety skin that may bruise easily.
- **Chronic pain:** Ongoing discomfort in muscles and joints.
- **Fatigue:** Persistent tiredness that affects daily activities.

Because EDS is genetic, there is currently no cure. **Treatment primarily focuses on managing symptoms, preventing injury, and improving quality of life.”**

—Ayurvedic Doctor, Dr. Vikram Chauhan

<https://blog.drvikram.com/ehlers-danlos-syndrome-ayurvedic-treatment/>





Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common Understandings of Causes

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

Allopathic: causes of hEDS

Though the cause(s) of hEDS have not been identified, the condition appears to follow an autosomal dominant inheritance pattern. This means that **each child of a parent with hEDS will have a 50% chance of having hEDS.**

The unknown mutation of a specific gene or set of genes affects the connective tissue found all over the body. That means **hEDS is a multi-system disorder, affecting anything and everything from the brain to the toes, eyes and bones.**



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

Allopathic: Common understandings of causes

“Unlike other EDS subtypes with known genetic mutations, hEDS lacks definitive markers, suggesting **a multifactorial etiology involving both mitochondrial dysfunction and non-mitochondrial pathways.**”

This scoping review, conducted in accordance with the PRISMA-ScR guidelines, **highlights mitochondrial dysfunction as a potential unifying mechanism in hEDS pathophysiology.** Impaired oxidative phosphorylation (OXPHOS), elevated reactive oxygen species (ROS) levels, and calcium dysregulation disrupt cellular energetics and extracellular matrix (ECM) homeostasis, contributing to the hallmark features of hEDS.”

— <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39996855/>
published Feb 2025



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

Allopathic: Common understandings of causes

“For years, the general assumption was that the profound, bone-crushing fatigue of hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS) was purely mechanical. The thought was that the body was simply exhausted from muscles working double-time to hold a loose skeleton together.

But emerging 2025 research is suggesting a different angle. Scientists are exploring whether, in some hEDS cases, the mitochondria—the actual "batteries" inside the cells—are struggling to produce enough energy.

Think of the body like a car: researchers are asking if the problem isn't just a loose chassis, but if the engine itself is struggling to burn fuel efficiently.”

—Mpho Matseka “Ehlersdanlosboy” on social media



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

Allopathic: Common understandings of causes

“Here is what this research could mean for the hEDS community:

Validating the exhaustion: *It supports the idea that this fatigue has a deep biological basis. It is not "deconditioning," and it is not laziness. Looking at systemic symptoms: This cellular focus is helping researchers understand the profound muscle weakness, brain fog, and digestive stalling so many experience.*

Future areas of study: *While joint support is crucial, this research opens the door for science to study **whether supporting mitochondrial health (exploring things like CoQ10 or targeted antioxidants) could one day play a role in symptom management.***

—Mpho Matseka “Ehlersdanlosboy” on social media



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: causes of hEDS

“Is Ehlers-Danlos too much or too little collagen? The answer is neither; it is faulty collagen.

- Your body produces plenty of collagen, but the genetic blueprint is flawed, resulting in tissue that is overly stretchy and structurally weak.
- Because collagen is the primary structural protein in your skin, ligaments, tendons, and blood vessels, this creates a cascade of systemic issues.”

—Massage therapist Sarah Mitchell

<https://goodhandsmassagetherapy.com/massage-therapy-for-ehlers-danlos-syndrome-gentle-techniques-for-hypermobile-clients/>



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

Ayurvedic & Yoga: causes of hEDS

In Ayurveda, **the doshas are fundamental bio-energetic forces** derived from the five elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth) **that govern physical, mental, and emotional health. There are three primary doshas, known collectively as the Tridoshas:**

Vata: Combining qualities of air and ether, vata governs movement and communication, and is seen as dry, light, cold, and mobile.

Pitta: Combining qualities of fire and water, pitta regulates digestion and transformation, with hot, sharp, and oily aspects.

Kapha: Combining qualities of water and earth, kapha maintains structure and stability, with heavy, slow, cool, and smooth traits.

Health is maintained when these doshas are in balance according to an individual's unique constitution (Prakriti), while imbalance (Vikriti) is believed to lead to disease.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

In Ayurveda, hypermobile EDS and many conditions that often come with it—Dysautonomia (POTS & Orthostatic Intolerance), gastric disturbances, anxiety and insomnia—are seen as being either caused by or worsened by imbalanced or aggravated Vata.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common understandings of causes of hEDS

Ayurvedic & Yoga: causes of hEDS

- “Caused by beej-beej bhav (genetic or chromosomal defect). Disturbs dhatu (tissues) and this results in symptoms like skin **hyperextensibility** or **hypermobility**. Ayurveda supports this condition with herbal medicine to help produce healthy collagen.
- **Joint hypermobility is linked to an imbalance in the Vata dosha, which governs movement and flexibility in the body.** When Vata is aggravated, it can lead to excessive movement and instability in the joints, resulting in hypermobility. **This condition may arise due to factors such as improper diet, stress, or lifestyle choices that disturb the natural balance of the doshas.”**

—Ayurvedic Doctor, Dr. Vikram Chauhan

<https://blog.drvikram.com/ehlers-danlos-syndrome-ayurvedic-treatment/>





Yoga Therapy for hEDS
Onset of Symptoms, and Diagnosis

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Onset of symptoms, and diagnosis

Allopathic: diagnosing hEDS

Dr. Nathan Rudin is a physiatrist, or a rehabilitation physician, at UW Health in Wisconsin, specializing in hypermobility disorders.

“...He estimates roughly 12,000 people in Wisconsin are living with hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, or hEDS, the most common type of EDS out of 14 variants...**The prevalence of hEDS is roughly one in 500 people.**”

Obtaining a diagnosis for hEDS takes an average of 10 to 16 years, according to a 2024 study of international EDS support groups. **Rudin said many people wait more than two decades.”**

https://captimes.com/news/health/thousands-in-wisconsin-live-with-a-tissue-disorder-struggle-for-care/article_47ffb196-0f0f-4d27-8b55-e023b79d3bde.html



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Onset of symptoms, and diagnosis

Allopathic: diagnosing hEDS

“The criteria for diagnosing hEDS are based on three categories.

(1) **Practitioners use a Beighton Score to determine a person’s level of hypermobility.** This measure involves various maneuvers, like having patients bend their thumb toward the inside of their forearm and reaching down to touch the floor without bending their knees.

(2) **Medical professionals also look at family history** and other symptoms unrelated to joint issues, such as skin elasticity.

(3) The last step... involves **trying to rule out other connective tissue disorders.** The entire diagnostic test is one page.”

https://captimes.com/news/health/thousands-in-wisconsin-live-with-a-tissue-disorder-struggle-for-care/article_47ffb196-0f0f-4d27-8b55-e023b79d3bde.html





Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common Symptoms and Co-morbidities

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



Allopathic: Common symptoms of hEDS

“If you can’t connect the issues, think connective tissues’

There are many ways in which you may begin to suspect a patient has hEDS/HSD:

- Multiple, or unusual symptoms**
- Patients may not respond as expected to treatments**

<https://gptoolkit.ehlers-danlos.org/>



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



Allopathic: Common symptoms of hEDS

<https://youtu.be/1Jrj1eLSAw8?si=7bOEmFua2-tnOEiv>

In this video Dr. John Campbell interviews Dr. Michael Cohen, who describes four patients with a wide variety of conditions—all linked to the weakened connective tissues of hEDS.

Dr Cohen describes hEDS as:

“One problem wearing five different costumes.”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Common symptoms of hEDS

The patients described by Dr. Cohen in this interview each developed, over time, a series of seemingly unrelated conditions eventually traced to the problematic connective tissues of hEDS:

Patient 1: Prolapsed vertebral disc, inguinal hernia, varicose veins, metabolic syndrome (pre-diabetic)

Patient 2: Significant varicose veins, disc prolapse in the neck, carpal tunnel, vertigo, hearing loss, tinnitus

Patient 3: High blood pressure without clear cause, preeclampsia

Patient 4: New onset migraines, aneurism (not the cause of the migraines, and itself caused by a bulge in a weakened arterial wall in the brain); new onset high blood pressure, varicose veins, hernia.

“Collagen creates the structure in our bodies, if even subtly impaired or weakened it can create a wide variety of issues...”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS: **Common symptoms & Co-morbidities**



Allopathic: Common symptoms of hEDS

Dr. Cohen also points out that **much of the pain with hEDS is structural** —caused by overstretched ligaments, unstable joints, and compressed nerves —and that in contrast to pain caused by inflammation, these kinds of pain often don't respond well to painkillers.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Common symptoms

“How many times did you cry over a bumped elbow or a scratch, only to be told: **“Stop being such a drama queen. Toughen up”**? You learned to hide your pain because no one believed the intensity of what you felt.

Spoiler alert: It wasn’t drama. It was **Central Sensitization**.

The Clinical Reality: Research suggests EDS patients suffer from **Nociceptive Amplification**. Your nervous system volume is stuck on **High**.

What was actually happening:

The Broken Filter: A normal brain filters out “background noise” pain. Your brain was processing every signal as a “Code Red” emergency.

The Bruise: Because your tissues are fragile, a “minor bump” caused deep micro-trauma that others couldn’t see.

The Punchline: You weren’t over reacting. **You were living in High Definition pain in a Standard Definition world.”**

—Mpho Matseka “Ehlersdanlosboy” on social media



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Common symptoms

- Chronic pain
- Chronic muscle tension
- Joint instability, dislocation, partial dislocation/subluxation
- Labral tears in cartilage around joint socket, hips and shoulders
- Sprains (ligament injury) and strains (muscle or tendon injury)
- Mild skin hyperextensibility and abnormal scarring
- Pelvic floor dysfunction, gynecological challenges
- Headaches, including migraines
- Exercise intolerance, impaired balance, problems walking / gait
- Brain fog (difficulty in thinking clearly)
- Plantar fasciitis & other foot pain
- TMJ (<https://www.eds.clinic/articles/tmj-and-ehlers-danlos-syndrome>)



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Common symptoms

- **Digestive disorders and disordered eating**
IBS, chronic constipation, leaky gut, food sensitivities, anorexia
- **Confusing interoception**
Often overwhelming internal sensations from the autonomic nervous system, internal organs, skin and connective tissue, blood vessels, immune and endocrine systems, and nociception/pain processing—connected with dysautonomia, malfunctioning of the autonomic nervous system. Shut-down or numbness may also occur.
- **Impaired proprioception**
Impaired/diminished sensations from the muscles and joints that would ordinarily help in perceiving body position and movement—caused by lax connective tissues, reduced signaling from mechanoreceptors in the muscles, and diminished parietal cortex, the part of the brain that processes proprioceptive signals.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



Allopathic: Common symptoms

- **Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVA):** blood pooling in the legs. Tiny one-way valves in the veins become weak or damaged, causing blood to flow backward and accumulate in the lower extremities instead of returning efficiently to the heart.
- **Dysautonomia / POTS:** a condition in which the autonomic nervous system does not work properly. This **may affect the functioning of the heart, bladder, intestines, sweat glands, pupils, and blood vessels.**
- **Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS):** an immunological condition in which **mast cells, a type of white blood cell, inappropriately and excessively release chemical mediators, such as histamine;** primary symptoms include cardiovascular, dermatological, gastrointestinal, neurological, and respiratory problems



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS w/ connected conditions

Theories about connections among hEDS, MCAS and Dysautonomia:

- **Mast cells reside within connective tissue...**
- **Abnormal connective tissues may lower the activation threshold of mast cells**
- **Mast cell mediators (like histamine) further disrupt connective tissue integrity and autonomic nervous system regulation.**

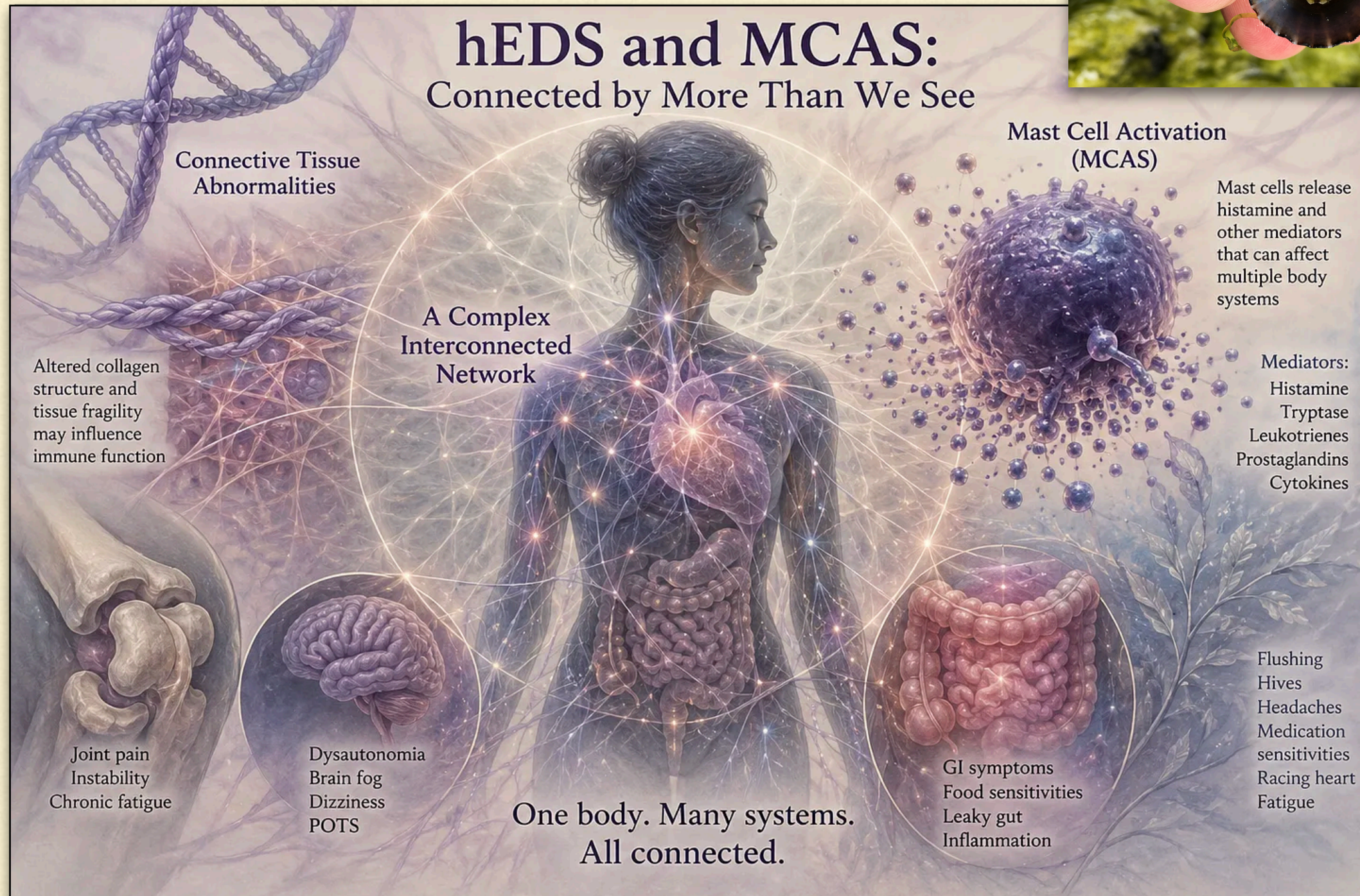


Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



hEDS and MCAS: Connected by More Than We See



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS w/ connected conditions

“If you react to foods, meds, heat, fragrance, stress, or all of the above, and every allergy test comes back "normal," read this...

Mast cells are immune cells that release histamine and other chemicals to protect you. In Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS), they misfire, dumping those chemicals when there's no real threat. That's why the reactions are real, but the standard tests look clean.

(MCAS) shows up beside hEDS and POTS so often that patients named the pattern, the "trifecta"; before medicine caught up.

You are not imagining it. You are not "difficult." Your alarm system is set too sensitive, and that is a describable, researchable thing.”

—Mpho Matseka “Ehlersdanlosboy” on social media



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS w/ connected conditions

When hEDS, MCAS and Dysautonomia / POTS are combined, additional symptoms may include:

- Flushing
- Itching or hives
- Gastrointestinal distress
- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to foods, chemicals, or medications
- Blood pressure instability
- Vascular instability
- Chronic inflammation
- Impaired tissue repair
- Heat intolerance
- Orthostatic intolerance (intolerance to standing upright)



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS w/ connected conditions

“Dysautonomia & POTS: That neck and shoulder ache when you're upright has a name. It's called coat hanger pain, and it's named for its shape: base of the skull, across the neck, out over the shoulders. It is a documented symptom in autonomic disorders, and researchers describe it as muscle hypoperfusion.

When blood pressure drops or blood pools lower in the body, those muscles are working without enough supply.

Why the neck and shoulders? Stand up and they become the highest working muscles you have. Furthest from the pump, with gravity against them, and they can't stop, because they're holding your head up...

The tell is the posture pattern. It eases when you lie flat and returns when you stand. A strained muscle doesn't behave like that...

Injury, arthritis, tension headaches and plenty of other conditions cause pain here, and this isn't something to self-diagnose. But if your neck pain has been treated as a neck pain for years and nobody has ever checked what your blood pressure does when you stand, that's a question worth asking.”

—Mpho Matseka “Ehlersdanlosboy” on social media



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Freezing... Then Suddenly Overheating

The same symptom can have multiple causes.
In hypermobile Ehlers Danlos syndrome and HSD,
autonomic dysfunction is one possible explanation.



@ehlersdanlosboy



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Other conditions that occur much more frequently in people with hEDS:

- Both neurodevelopmental and mental health differences: Autism Spectrum, ADHD, Anxiety
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic Fatigue syndrome, sleep disturbances
- **Deafness / hearing loss** <https://www.acibademhealthpoint.com/ehlers-danlos-syndrome-and-hearing-loss-guide/>
- **Rheumatoid Arthritis & Ankylosing Spondylitis**
(<https://www.emjreviews.com/en-us/amj/rheumatology/article/the-association-between-hypermobility-ehlers-danlos-syndrome-and-other-rheumatologic-diseases/>)



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: hEDS and trauma

1. Unrelated trauma may activate the nervous system and sensitize it to pain— awakening or intensifying awareness of pre-existing hEDS conditions.

<https://www.painri.com/post/trauma-and-onset-of-symptoms-in-ehlers-danlos-syndrome>

2. Due to their condition, **people with hEDS often have numerous and cumulatively traumatic experiences with medical providers and others: disbelief, misdiagnosis, invasive procedures and experiences, etc.**

This can cause complex relational trauma, affecting their autonomic nervous system in ways that can intensify many hEDS symptoms.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667321523000215>

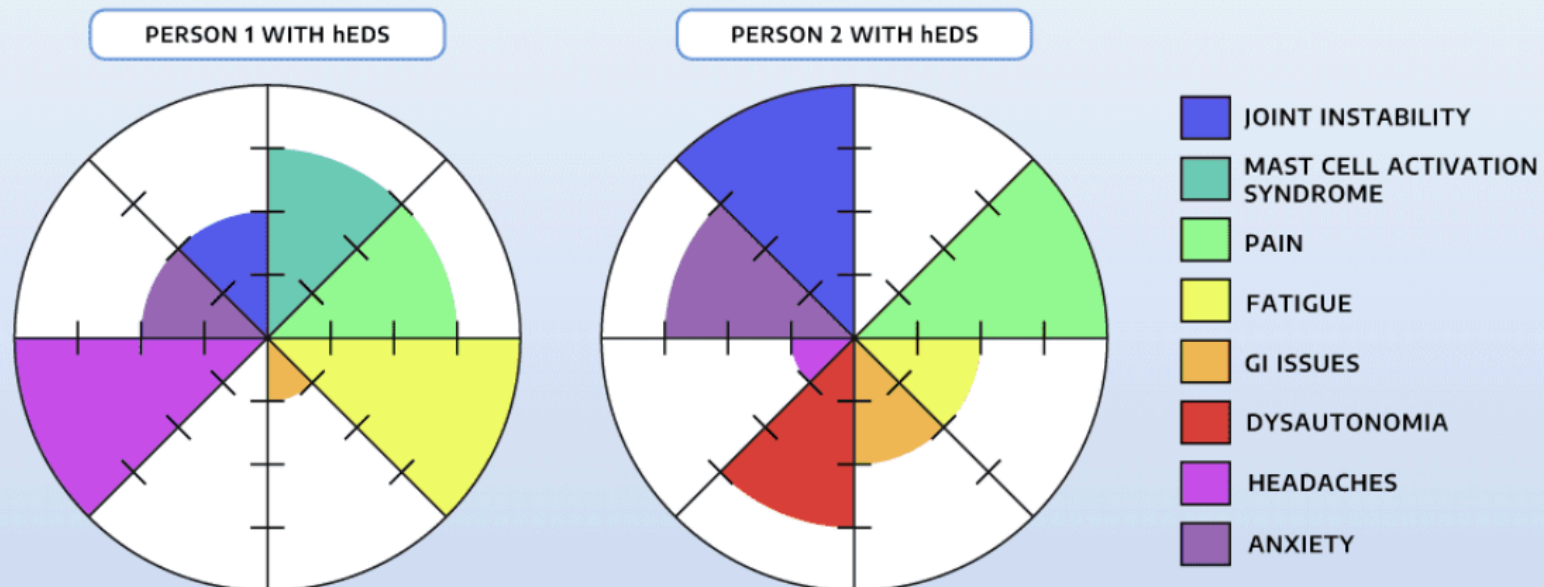


Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



PEOPLE WITH THE SAME TYPE OF EDS MAY EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

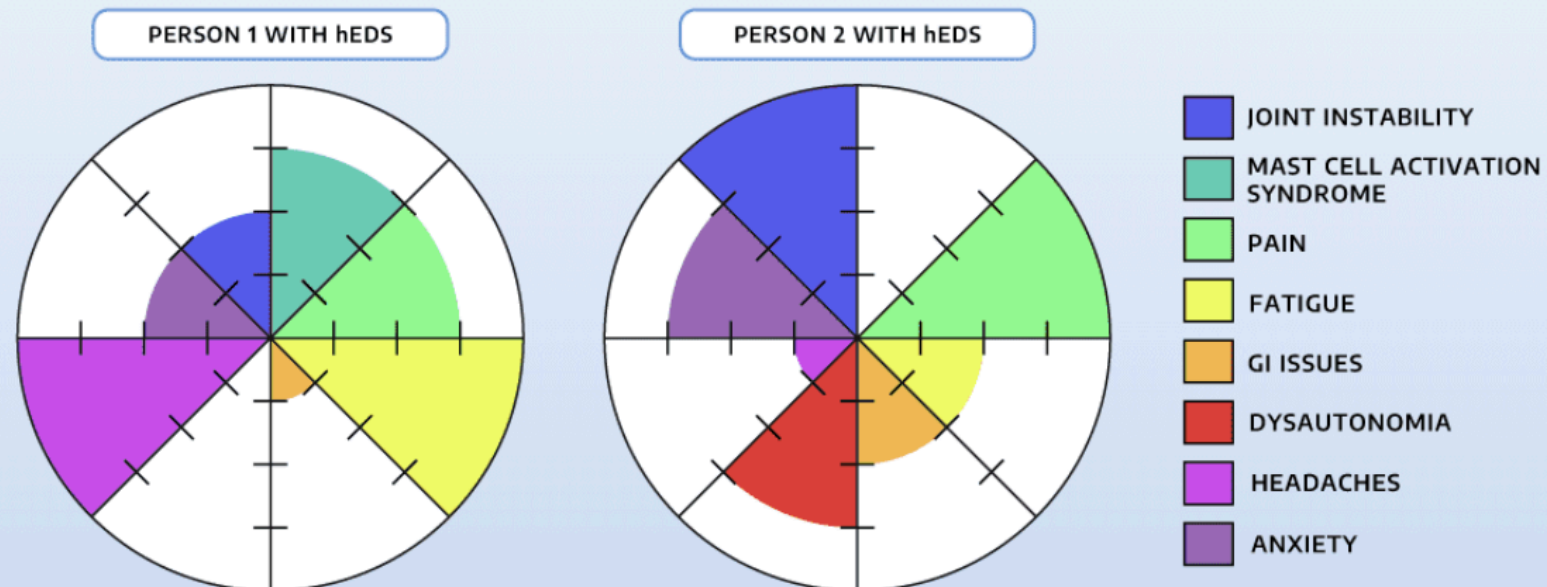


Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



ONE SINGLE PERSON MAY EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT KINDS AND DIFFERENT INTENSITIES OF SYMPTOMS ON DIFFERENT DAYS



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS

“EDS Disability Is Not Static...

Suddenly, on what looks like an ordinary Tuesday, the threshold is crossed and the body crashes. There was no dramatic incident. There was just **the last straw** landing on a pile that had been building for days....

- **A drop in barometric pressure causes subtle joint space changes** that lax joint capsules cannot buffer.
- **A mild cold triggers systemic inflammation** that degrades already-compromised connective tissue.
- **A hormonal shift**, particularly in oestrogen, which directly modulates collagen synthesis, **can drop joint stability overnight**.

These are not excuses. They are documented physiological mechanisms. A body built on defective collagen is exquisitely sensitive to conditions that a healthy connective tissue system would simply absorb without notice.”

—Mpho Matseka “Ehlersdanlosboy” on social media



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS

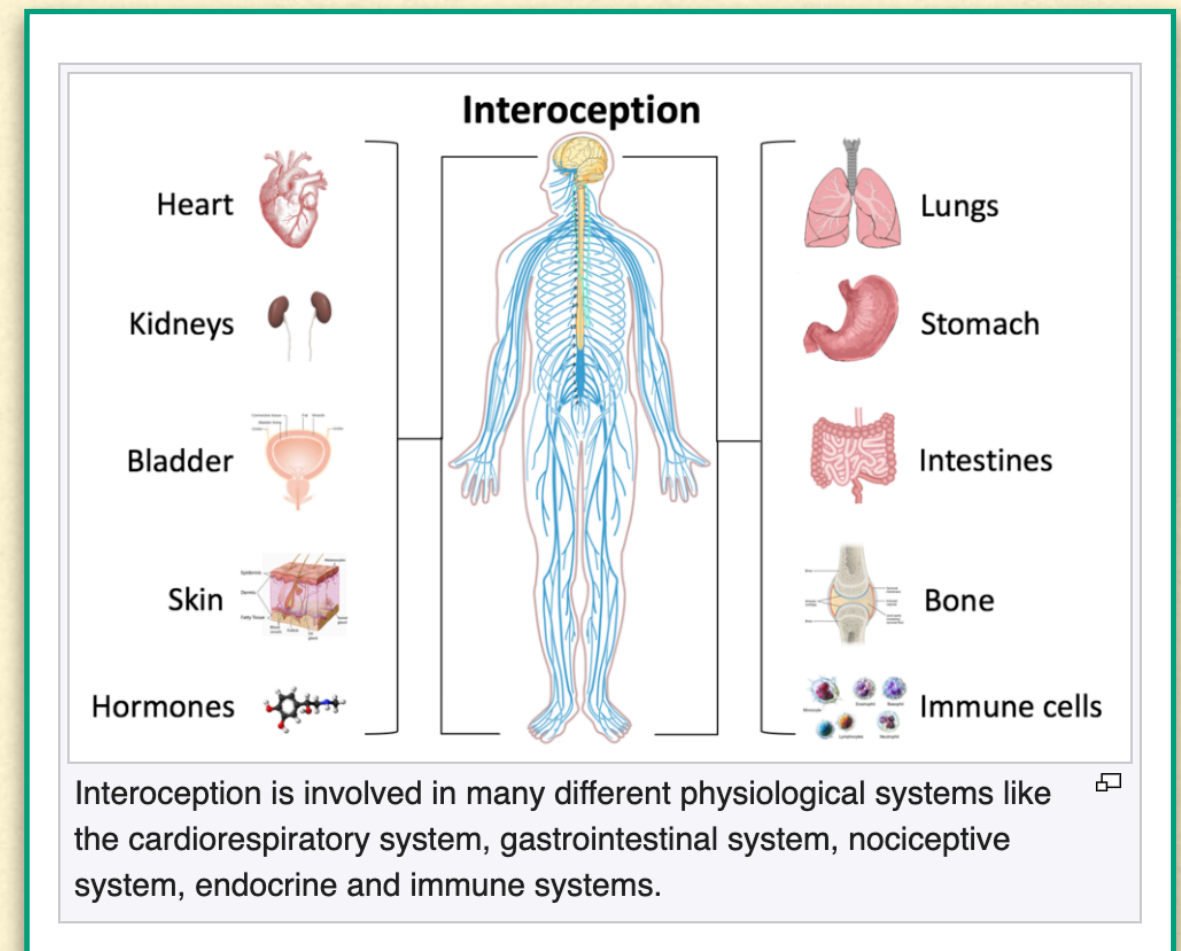
People with hEDS often have highly sensitive and confusing interoception...

“People with hyper mobility have been shown to have a heightened sensitivity to interoceptive signals, which is correlated with dysautonomia.

It’s like the volume on their interoception is turned up...

This means their sense of changing physiological states can be distorted, inaccurate, and often overwhelming.”

—Libby Hinsley, PT, DPT, C-IAYT



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

Allopathic: Symptoms of hEDS

People with hEDS often have impaired proprioception:

“Because bendy connective tissue is floppy, its mechanoreceptors aren’t as easily stimulated. That means they’re *not as good at detecting and transmitting important sensory information such as pressure, stretch, motion, and joint position during movement...*” — *creating diminished proprioception.*

Meanwhile research has shown that **people with hypermobility tend to have a smaller parietal cortex** than their counterparts without hEDS. This is the place in the brain **that receives and processes sensory information from the body.**

“Having less body-mapping real estate is thought to contribute to decreased sensory awareness, poor proprioception, and lack of coordination....”

—Libby Hinsley, PT, DPT, C-IAYT



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: Symptoms of hEDS

“EDS...can influence joint stability, muscular control, nervous system function, breathing mechanics, vascular structures, pelvic health, and overall movement coordination...”

—EDS specialist **Dr. Marcia Cristiane Perretto** (Doctor of Physical Therapy, Certified Orthopedic Manual Therapist) **says that as hEDS compromises connective tissues throughout the body, it can also create conditions such as:**

- Thoracic Outlet Syndrome
- Slipping Rib Syndrome
- Pelvic floor dysfunction
- Chronic neck pain and muscle knots
- Breathing issues

<https://www.actifypt.com/post/ehlers-danlos-syndrome-misdiagnosed-symptoms>



Yoga Therapy for hEDS:

Common symptoms & Co-morbidities



PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: Symptoms of hEDS

Chiropractor Dr. Mamak Shakib writes: “Our brain knows the precise location of our joints because of the tension that exist in the ligaments.

Similar to Google maps showing you a circle versus the precise location of a place, a hypermobile brain knows of the joint existence and location but not the exact pinned area in its map of body parts.”

<https://chiropractor-irvine.com/hypermobility-collection/>

- Dr. Shakib emphasizes that **impaired proprioception** and **lax connective tissues** affect the posture, and therefore the breathing, of people with hEDS.
- “Keeping the ribcage stacked correctly is a ‘foreign’ concept with hypermobility, but it can become natural with practice.”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS: **Common symptoms & Co-morbidities**



Yoga & Ayurveda: Symptoms of hEDS

- **Joint hypermobility:** Excessive movement in joints, instability.
- **Skin symptoms:** Soft, velvety skin that may bruise easily.
- **Chronic pain:** Ongoing discomfort in muscles and joints.
- **Fatigue:** Persistent tiredness that affects daily activities.





Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

Allopathic: things to avoid with hEDS

In **Nutritional Considerations for Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome**, by Cheryl Iny Harris, Dacre R. T. Knight, Lisa A. Mejia, Laurie Bilyeu, the authors write:

“(M)ost patients with hEDS have a myriad of manifestations within the gastrointestinal tract that affect dietary tolerance...

These include irritable bowel syndrome, functional dyspepsia, gastroparesis, constipation, and celiac disease.

Other common co-morbidities include postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome and mast cell activation disorders—which **may impact fluid and electrolyte balance, food intolerances, and contribute to anxiety around food.**”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

Allopathic: things to avoid with hEDS

In this article the authors make detailed recommendations for foods to avoid, and other dietary recommendations—*according to the specific co-morbidities affecting each person.*

<https://practicalgastro.com/2024/06/17/nutritional-considerations-for-hypermobile-ehlers-danlos-syndrome/>



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: things to avoid with hEDS

Massage Therapist Sarah Mitchell writes:

“Is deep tissue massage bad for hypermobility?
For the vast majority of people with hEDS, yes!

Your brain perceives... deep pressure as a threat, and sends out more pain signals to protect you, causing the muscles to tighten even further.

Furthermore, **because your collagen is inherently weak, deep friction and sustained pressure can cause micro-tears in the muscle fibers and fascia**, leading to increased pain and joint instability days after the session.”

<https://goodhandsmassagetherapy.com/massage-therapy-for-ehlers-danlos-syndrome-gentle-techniques-for-hypermobile-clients/>



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications



PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: things to avoid with hEDS

Sarah Mitchell also writes:

“The Therapeutic Alliance—the relationship you have with your therapist—is the cornerstone of safe bodywork.

If you do not feel listened to, believed, and completely in control of the session, your nervous system will remain in a hyper-vigilant state.

This limits the effectiveness of the treatment and increases the likelihood of a flare.”

This is true in yoga therapy for people with hEDS as well.

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

Ayurveda and Yoga: things to avoid with hEDS

Again: in Ayurveda there are three Doshas, or qualities present in the body and mind, which can be brought into balance. A person with hEDS is seen as having unbalanced Vata, so they would be encouraged to **avoid eating Vata-activating foods such cold and raw foods, dry and light foods, gas-producing foods, and stimulants.**



Foods to Avoid and Include for Vata Balance			
CATEGORY	FOODS TO AVOID	FOODS TO INCLUDE	KEY BENEFITS
Cold and Raw Foods	Raw salads, smoothies, iced beverages	Warm soups, steamed vegetables, herbal teas	Improves digestion and prevents bloating
Dry and Light Foods	Popcorn, rice cakes, crackers	Root vegetable stews, dishes with ghee or olive oil	Reduces dryness and supports hydration
Gas-Producing Foods	Black beans, kidney beans, cruciferous vegetables	Mung beans, lentils, well-cooked legumes with spices	Prevents bloating and enhances gut health
Stimulants	Coffee, caffeinated sodas, energy drinks	Chamomile tea, tulsi tea, golden milk	Calms the nervous system and promotes relaxation
Preferred Diet	N/A	Warm, oily, and grounding meals	Balances Vata dosha and boosts energy

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

Ayurveda and Yoga: things to avoid with hEDS

Yoga therapist Libby Hinsley recommends that people with hEDS **avoid end-range movements, and especially avoid prolonged passive stretching at the end range:**

“In asana practice I **generally recommend that bendy people stop a movement before they get to the end range—try to go to about 80% of what’s available.**”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Contraindications

Ayurveda and Yoga: things to avoid with hEDS

Libby Hinsley also recommends that a person with hEDS avoid:

- Doing deep forward folds, shoulder stands, or head stands
- Staying in any given position for long (instead move among standing, sitting, hands & knees, supine, prone, side-lying, etc.)
- Trikonasana, sitting twists, hip openers (to avoid destabilizing the SI joint)
- Doing long asymmetrical sequences:

*“Bodies with hyper mobility tend toward pelvic asymmetries, meaning the two sides of the pelvis aren’t even with each other.... It’s okay to be asymmetrical; in fact, most bodies are. But **for a bendy body, it’s more common for asymmetries to be problematic and to be exacerbated by highly asymmetrical asana sequences.**”*





Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Allopathic: common treatments

- hEDS is managed by **addressing the symptoms** a person is experiencing.
- **Key aspects of care include physical therapy and pain management.**
- Everyone with hEDS is different, so each person should work with their care team to develop a care plan that meets their individual needs.
- There is no cure for Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, but treatment can help you manage symptoms and lessen the risk of serious complications.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“Principles of management for hEDS include:

- Relieving pain where possible
- Education and behavior changes
- Minimal reliance on painkillers
- Improving the endurance and strength of muscles that provide postural support and stabilize joints.
- Improving balance and coordination.
- Improving stamina and general fitness.
- Re-educating posture and gait
- Relaxation & visualization techniques for pain & insomnia”

—*Physical Therapy for Hypermobility*,
by **Rosemary Keer & Dr. Jane Simmonds**

<https://www.ehlers-danlos.org/information/physical-therapy-for-hypermobility/>.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“Principles of management for hEDS:

- The key is to balance out the activities so the amount done on each day is not enough to cause a flare-up.
- It is better to vary the activities, trying not to spend too long in any one position or activity.
- If necessary an activity can be repeated a few times a day rather than being done all in one go.”

—*Physical Therapy for Hypermobility*
by Rosemary Keer & Dr. Jane Simmonds.

<https://www.ehlers-danlos.org/information/physical-therapy-for-hypermobility/>.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“Landmark work by Proske and Gandevia has emphasised the importance of skin in proprioception and kinaesthetic sense.

Because of the skin laxity, we recommend enhancing sensory input via the skin by the use of ‘hands on’ movement facilitation...and the use of tape during specific exercise or functional rehabilitation sessions.”

—*Physical Therapy for Hypermobility*
by Rosemary Keer & Dr. Jane Simmonds.

<https://www.ehlers-danlos.org/information/physical-therapy-for-hypermobility/>.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“Balance and proprioception as well as pain, muscle strength and quality of life were significantly improved by an eight week programme of closed chain exercise (weightbearing) combined with practice on a balance board.

These simple exercises include **squats, pli  , bridging, four point kneeling, standing on one leg...**”

—*Physical Therapy for Hypermobility*
by Rosemary Keer & Dr. Jane Simmonds.

<https://www.ehlers-danlos.org/information/physical-therapy-for-hypermobility/>.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“Sleep Hygiene: improving sleep quality is essential. Strategies include **maintaining a regular sleep schedule, creating a restful sleep environment, and avoiding stimulants** like caffeine before bedtime.

Nutrition: **A balanced diet rich in anti-inflammatory foods can help manage symptoms.**”

—*Physical Therapy for Hypermobility*
by Rosemary Keer & Dr. Jane Simmonds.

<https://www.ehlers-danlos.org/information/physical-therapy-for-hypermobility/>.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“Somatic Pandiculation: Perform gentle, slow contractions and releases of tight muscles while lying down **to retrain the brain's connection to muscle length and tension.**

These exercises are particularly effective for **retraining posture and improving body awareness** by allowing muscles to completely relax, making it easier to reset the resting level of muscle tension before integrating these patterns into standing activities.

Core stability exercises performed lying down primarily target deep abdominal muscles, pelvic floor, and spinal alignment to support the back and improve balance.”

<https://www.ehlers-danlos.org/information/physical-therapy-for-hypermobility/>.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

Massage therapist Sarah Mitchell recommends three kinds of gentle massage & gentle self-massage for people with hEDS, each of which could be integrated into a yoga practice. She writes:

“...Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome means shifting your mindset from “fixing” tight muscles to “calming” an overworked nervous system.

Gentle, proprioceptive, and circulatory (massage) techniques offer the most relief with the least risk.”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments



PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“(1) Effleurage: long, gliding strokes that follow the direction of muscle fibers and lymphatic flow...light to moderate pressure, never forcing through tissue resistance...”

- *Warms tissues*
- *Improves local circulation*
- *Rhythmic, predictable input to hypersensitive nervous system*
- *Reduces sensitivity of pain-signaling nerves (nociceptors)*
- *Influences how brain and spinal cord interpret those signals, a process known as neuromodulation”*



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro: common treatments

“(2) Supportive myofascial work: instead of actively stretching the fascia, (with hEDS) the (person) places their hands gently on the area of restriction and allows the tissue to soften under its own weight.”

Sometimes called “fascial listening,”

- *Respects the fragile nature of your collagen*
- *Encourages fascia to glide more efficiently”*



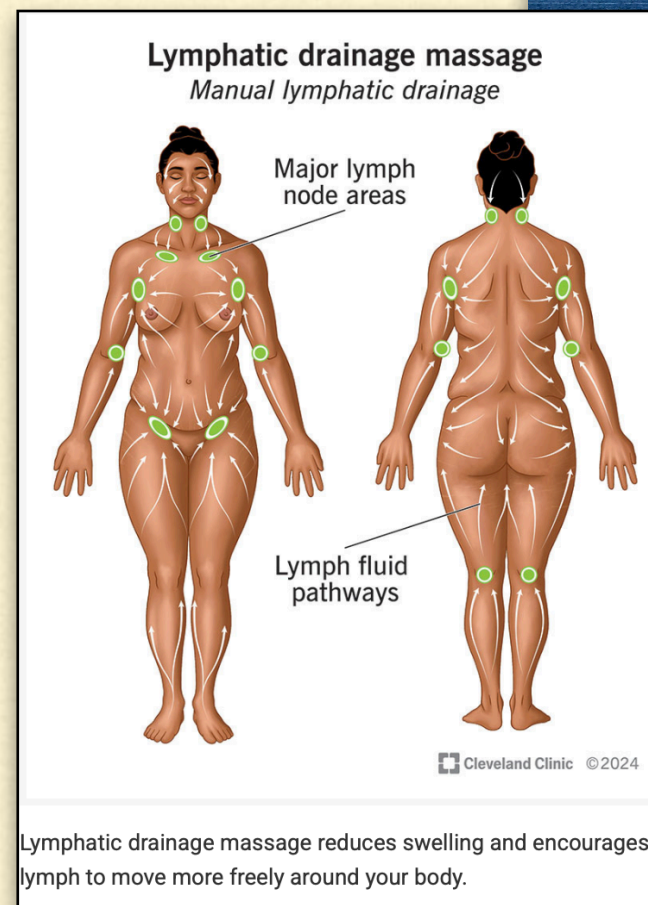
Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

PT, Massage Therapy, Chiro:
common treatments

“(3) Lymphatic drainage massage: utilizing incredibly light, rhythmic strokes...to encourage lymphatic flow toward lymph nodes.

- *Helps circulation and immune system*
- *Activates parasympathetic nervous system*
- *Helps release chronic muscle guarding*
- *Improves your body’s spatial awareness.”*



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

Again, in Ayurveda hEDS is seen as being caused, or exacerbated, by an excess of Vata in the body. To counter this, people with hEDS might eat a **Vata-pacifying diet**:

Warm soups, steamed vegetables, root vegetable stews, mung beans, lentils, cooked greens, well-cooked legumes with spices, ghee, olive oil, chamomile tea, tulsi tea, golden milk; warm, oily, grounding meals.

Foods to Avoid and Include for Vata Balance			
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Preferred Diet	N/A	Warm, oily, and grounding meals	Balances Vata dosha and boosts energy



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

For good information about Ayurvedic approaches to specific forms of Vata imbalance in Dysautonomia or POTS:

<https://www.easyayurveda.com/dysautonomia-ayurveda-understanding/>

For good information about Ayurvedic approaches to Mast Cell Activation Syndrome:

<https://www.saumya-ayurveda.com/post/mcas-natural-treatment-ayurvedic-diet-herbs-and-root-causes>



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

To reduce inflammation, strengthen tissues and manage fatigue, an Ayurvedic doctor might encourage a person with hEDS to take **herbal supplements Ashwagandha, Gutu Kola and Guduchi, also turmeric and ginger**—*consulting with an Ayurvedic doctor regarding dosages.*

For digestion: sip warm ginger tea through out the day, take **triphala** at night for gut health

Mahanarayan Oil is used to increase circulation and reduce pain; use with Abhyanga warm oil massage, or to massage marma points. It contains:

- **Sesame oil** *to carry herbal oils deep into tissues*
- **Shatavari and ashwagandha** *for grounding and calming Vata*
- **Camphor, manjishta and musta** *for warmth, circulation, comfort*
- **Ginger, calamus and clove** *to support cleansing, eliminate toxins*
- **Turmeric and guduchi** *for health and ease in the joints*
- **Punarava, licorice and fennel:** *to move lymph and toxins so that they don't stagnate in muscles and joints*

—Dr. Sara Garg, Ayurvedic physician



Clare Norelle, 2026

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

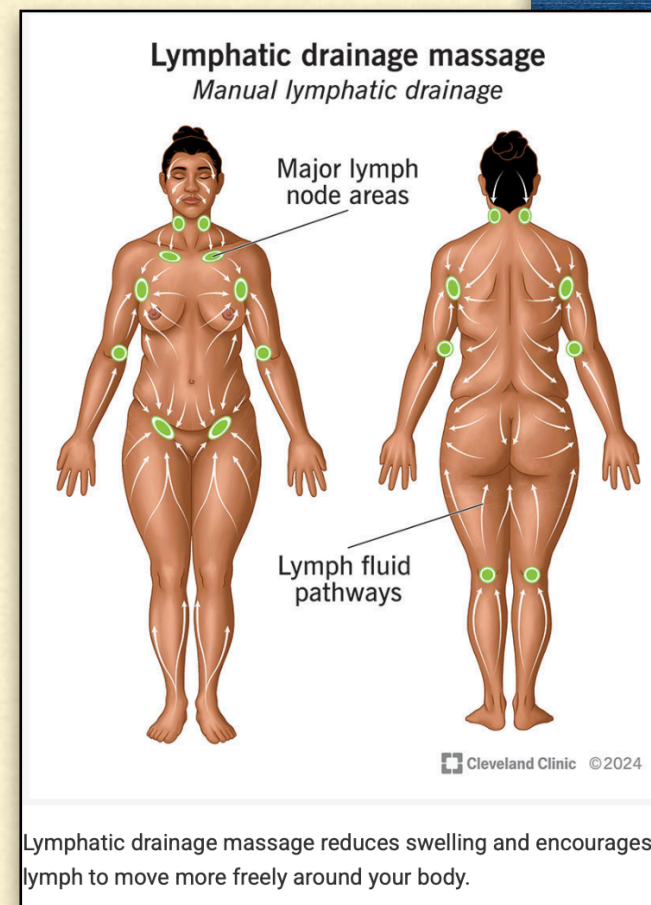
Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

Daily self-care practices, or dinacharya:

- **Dry brushing** (if this feels okay to the person), or **Lymphatic massage**: *Very light pressure, drawing skin from the extremities towards lymph nodes at groin, armpits, collar bones and ears—to stimulate circulation of lymph and blood, and to wake up both interoception and proprioception.*
- **Abhyanga / Warm oil self-massage** with *vata-pacifying sesame oil, and/or with added essential oils to further pacify vata: lavender, clary sage, or vetiver.*

Moving from the periphery towards the heart in long strokes, and circling around the joints; especially good for health of joints, which are likely to be taxed and inflamed with hEDS.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

As part of a yoga practice, “...self massage can:

- Improve flexibility and muscle performance
- Improve blood flow to tissues
- Help flush out cellular waste products that accumulate in chronically contracted muscle tissues
- Can reduce muscle pain, and improve sleep quality...
- Pressure also stimulates mechanoreceptors within fascial tissue, leading to decreased sympathetic nervous system arousal. (More calm).
- Can improve proprioception, decrease delayed onset muscle soreness and post-exercise fatigue”

—Libby Hinsley, PT, DPT, C-IAYT



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments



Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

Marma Chikitsa, or marma therapy, is an ancient Ayurvedic healing technique that **stimulates 107 vital energy points to restore the flow of prana (life force)**, thereby enhancing physical and mental strength.

By **removing blockages in the body's subtle energy channels (nadis) and balancing the three doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha)**, this therapy strengthens the nervous system, improves joint flexibility, and boosts overall vitality and resilience.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

Some general marma points to calm hEDS symptoms —*massaging in circles around each point, first in one direction then the other, then gentle static pressure. **Three points for mental clarity & systemic balance:***

- **Adhipati:** On the apex of the scalp; supports **hypothalamus and pituitary glands, regulating prana/energy, balancing the doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), pacifying Vata, stabilizing the nervous system.** Used for headaches, ADHD/restlessness, insomnia, fatigue, stress, anxiety, and to support mental clarity and memory.
- **Brahmarandhra:** On the midline of the scalp, an inch or so in front of Adhipati, connected with the functioning of the **frontal lobe of the brain.** Used to quickly de-activate a stress response, treat pain in the upper neck, and to induce positive emotions like joy, happiness, peace.
- **Shivarandhra:** At the back of the top of the head, associated with the **parietal lobe of the brain**—the seat of memory, and also of proprioception and navigation. Especially **used to support memory, but also to calm vertigo, treat headaches, and enhance proprioception.**

These three marma points can be massaged individually or together, placing palm of the hand on the top of the head, center of palm on Adhipati and the rest of the hand falling over Brahmarandhra and Shivarandhra,



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

Mudras may also be used to calm symptoms of hEDS. Mudras are **specific gestures** (primarily of the hands, but sometimes using other areas of the body) **that create closed circuits to regulate the flow of prana (life force energy) within the body's subtle channels, known as nadis.**

These gestures also stimulate nerve endings in the hands, which communicate with the brain to influence the endocrine system and specific lobes of the brain, and to enhance interoception.

Key mechanisms include:

Energy Balancing: Each finger corresponds to an element; mudras increase or decrease specific elements to restore bodily harmony.

Neurological Connection: Hand gestures act as pathways to access the mind-body connection, affecting sensory organs, glands, and tendons.

Chakra Activation: Mudras help clear blockages in energy centers (chakras), allowing for the free flow of vital energy.

Mental Focus: The physical act serves as a tool to deepen meditation, calm the nervous system, and enhance concentration.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments



Ayurveda and Yoga: common treatments

Mudras

*Here are two mudras that might be used generally with hEDS, if they don't cause discomfort in hands; **these two are considered Vata-pacifying.***

Shunya mudra: (on top) To perform this mudra, place the tip of your middle finger at the base of the thumb and gently press the back of the finger with the thumb. This signifies curbing the space element with the fire element.

Vayu mudra: (on the bottom) Perform this mudra by placing the tip of your index finger at the base of the thumb and gently pressing the back of the finger with the thumb. Vayu mudra is used to calm your mind, muscles, nervous system, endocrine glands, to relieve stomach problems and increase immunity.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Common treatments

Ayurveda and Yoga: other common treatments

- **Pranayama:** For people with hEDS it can be especially helpful to practice centering the vertical ribcage over the upright pelvis, creating an optimal zone of apposition. From there—or from an aligned supine position if they prefer—if they are comfortable focusing on breathing they might experiment with diaphragmatic breaths, core breaths, subtle breathing, bhramari breathing, alternate nostril breathing, and explore whether any of these might feel calming for their autonomic nervous system.
- **Body scans, guided relaxation, guided imagery, grounding**
- **Gunas:** helping people learn to recognize Rajas, Tamas, and Sattva in their bodies, & explore which practices help them feel movement towards Sattva
- **Meditating on the Koshas:** Anamaya kosha (the physical body), Pranamaya kosha (the energy body), Manomaya kosha (emotions and thoughts), Vijnanamaya kosha (the discerning self, or wisdom self), Anandamaya kosha (the bliss self, that aspect that's not separate).
- **Sound & vibration:** Sa Ta Na Ma meditation; mantras; bhramari breaths





Yoga Therapy for hEDS
**Orientation in offering yoga
for people with hEDS**

Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

It may be helpful to begin by asking people, verbally or in writing, how much they want to focus on these different areas often affected by hEDS—given their own experiences of the condition:

1. **Pain relief** *exploring various practices, seeing what seems to help*
2. **Proprioception** *strengthening awareness of body movement and body positioning, focused on the Somatic Nervous System*
3. **Interoception:** *clarifying and calming internal signals from the Autonomic Nervous System*
4. **Strengthening muscles** *to protect joints*
5. **Stretching muscles gently** *to mid-range or less*
6. **Postural alignment** *for better breathing*
7. **Balance** *and help with vertigo, dizziness*
8. **Digestion**, *gastric issues*
9. **Allergies and congestion** *(with Mast Cell Activation Syndrome)*
10. **Healthy circulation** *(especially with Chronic Venous Insufficiency)*
11. **Mental clarity and emotional well-being**
12. **Good rest, restored energy**



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

Keeping in mind that... when a person has hEDS their **symptoms can vary a lot from one day to the next**—so they may feel like doing different things on different days.

It could be helpful to start each session by asking things like:

“How are you feeling in your body today?”

“Do you have a sense for what you’d like to work with in this session?”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

I might ask, “How is your energy level just now?”

And what position would you like to start from?

- Standing
- Sitting in a chair
- Sitting on the ground
- Lying down (face up, side-lying, or face down)

Are there one or two basic body positions that might feel more accessible for you today?”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

I might also ask myself...

“Are there ways I can encourage a sense of safety and reliability for someone whose body may not always feel safe or reliable...

and whose pain may have been treated as imaginary or unimportant by other people?”

For many people with trauma, telling them that they're safe may feel unsafe in itself. Instead I might remind them that they're welcome to not do any practices they don't feel like doing, or change how they're doing a thing if they want to, or come out of any practice at any time if they choose to...

I might also watch and try to learn from their responses, to see which kinds of interactions and which kinds of practices seem to help them feel calm and settled.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

Both EDS and trauma can leave people feeling disconnected from their bodies, especially when they are relating with another person who might feel like they have more power—such as teacher or a therapist . These insights from Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) may help with this:*

To support someone in feeling more connected with their body—and to lean away from them feeling any sense of pushing or coercion from their yoga therapist or teacher—

it may help if the yoga therapist or teacher can decrease “I” language, and focus more on “you” language, with a sense of inquiry and real choices.

**Based on years of interviews and research with trauma survivors at the Trauma Center of the Justice Resource Institute in Brookline, MA*



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

For example, the yoga therapist might avoid phrases like:

“I’d like you to...”

“I want you to...” or even

“I invite you to...”

Instead, when possible, saying things like:

“You might choose to...”

“If you like, you could...”

“One possibility might be ...or another option could be....”

“See if you might feel like moving your arm like this... or like this”

“There are a couple of ways you might do this; one could be like this... another might be like this...”



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

- **Language that emphasizes a person's own experiences rather than the yoga therapist's wishes** encourages people to notice what they feel in their own bodies and to use that in helping them choose what they want to do—rather than defaulting to letting the therapist or yoga teacher decide for them.
- For some people this kind of language may feel more inviting
- **For people with trauma caused by other human beings—**who may be especially tuned in to language that can signal whose experience is being centered—**language like this may make the difference between a yoga session feeling safe or feeling inaccessible.**



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS



For some people with EDS or trauma who have lost connectivity with many body sensations, it may help to speak in terms of “your body”, “your arm”, “your head” (*as opposed to “the body”, etc.*)

This can differ from person to person... so if you feel unsure about how a particular person is experiencing this, you might ask them to give attention how the different ways of speaking feel to them, and tell you what they notice. Some people have strong preferences about this, while others don't.



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS

It can also be helpful to assume and acknowledge that we can't know another person's experience, or how their particular soma might respond to a given practice.

**Instead of telling people that something will be helpful,
offering opportunities for them to explore and experiment,
and to learn from the responses they notice in themselves.**

**—Opportunities for them to say both:
“My experience is like this...”**

**and sometimes also:
“No—I don't want to do that.”**



Yoga Therapy for hEDS

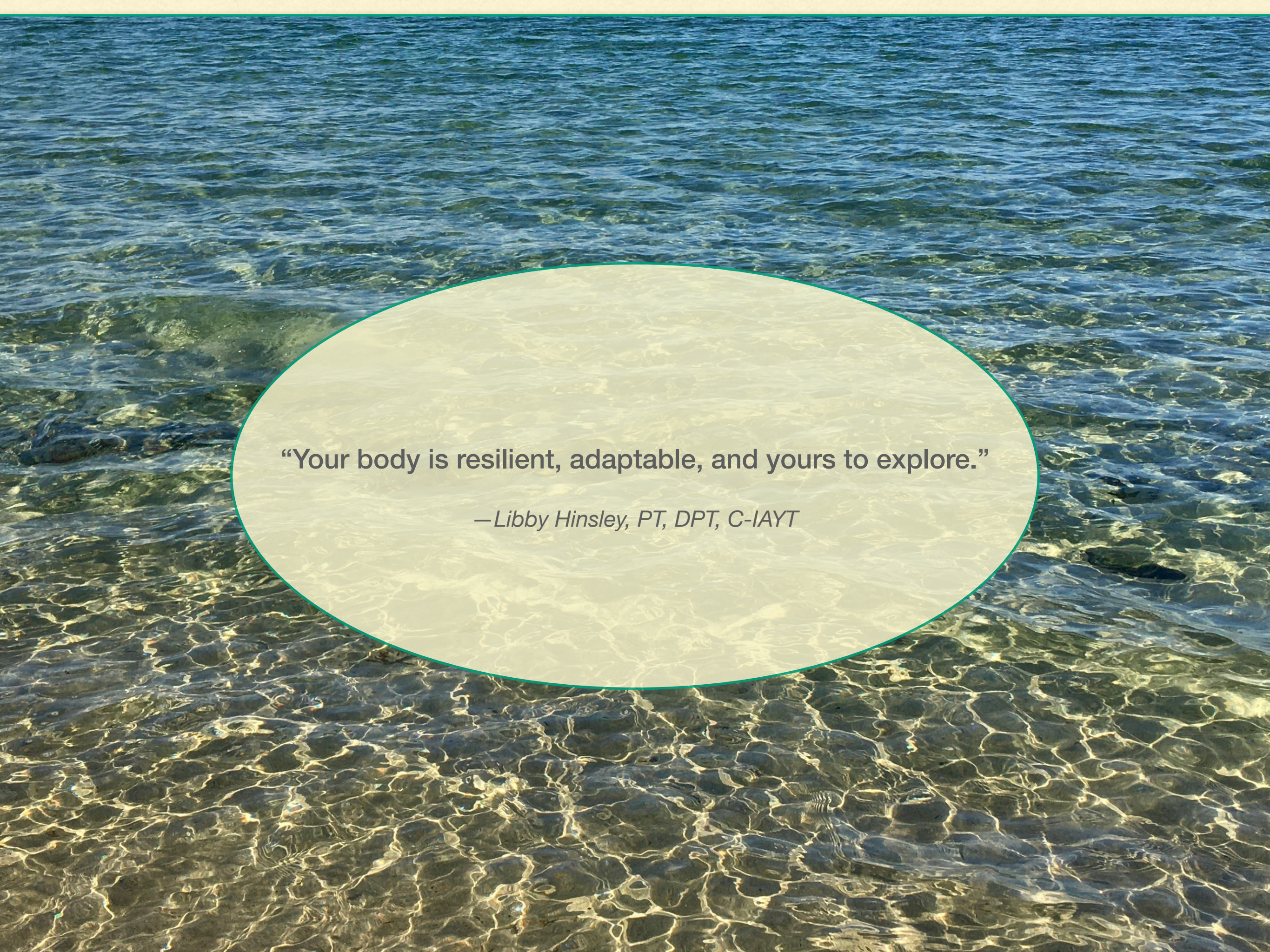
Orientation in offering yoga for people with hEDS



At times saying “no” to a practice may be an important part of a person recognizing and feeling their own embodiment and **their own sense of agency**. This can be key for people with trauma, and also for people living with chronic pain.

If we make space for people to practice saying what their **experience is, and to practice saying “no”**, it can support them in healing from trauma, and also help it become easier for them to say such things in other moments when they need to.



The background is a photograph of a body of water, likely a lake or ocean, with a mix of deep blue and lighter, sunlit areas. A semi-transparent, light-colored oval with a thin teal border is centered in the image. Inside the oval, there is a quote in a dark, sans-serif font, followed by the name and credentials of the person who said it in a smaller, italicized font.

“Your body is resilient, adaptable, and yours to explore.”

—*Libby Hinsley, PT, DPT, C-IAYT*