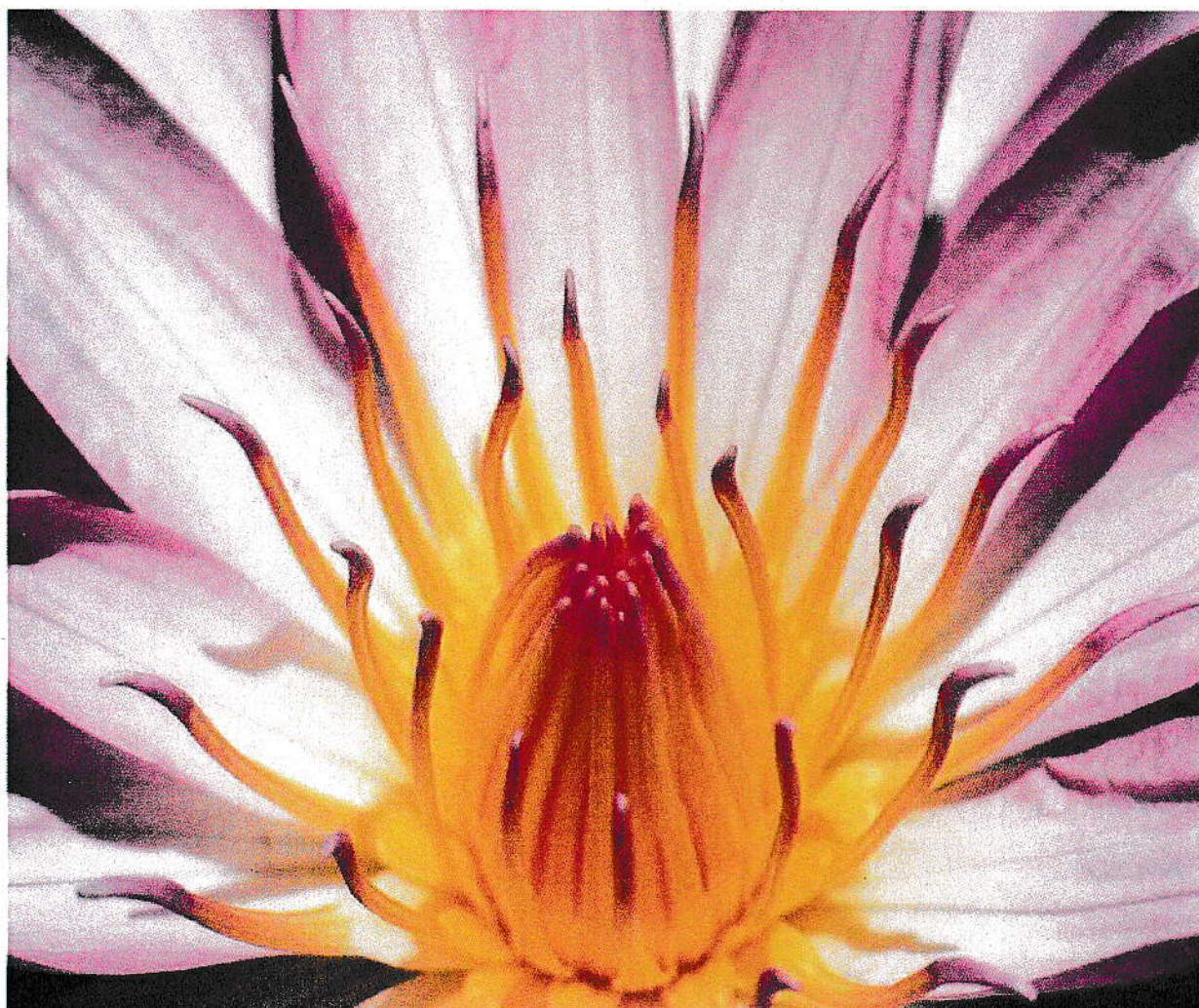


YOGA CIKITSA 2007-2010 - YOGA THERAPY PROJECT

YOGA CIKITSA FOR "BURNOUT" CONDITIONS

Petra NAWROTH BORSALINO



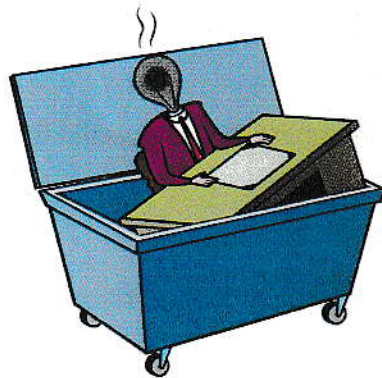
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Mentor: Frans MOORS

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YOGA CIKITSA FOR "BURNOUT" CONDITIONS



I. INTRODUCTION

Burnout is one of the most "popular" illnesses of our time. According to a recent study of the scientific Institute of AOK (Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse), which is one of the biggest German health insurers, the number of people unable to work because of exhaustion syndrome is nine times higher in 2011 than it was in 2004 and has taken epidemic dimensions.

We are confronted with a more and more demanding working environment and it has become an art to combine work, family life and social activities within a 24-hour day. It has shown that even activities we do to balance our stress like sports, hobbies and even relaxation techniques can also contribute to our daily stress. More and more people feel exhausted or burnt out. Sometimes it is called the illness of our modern times which suggests that it is not a real illness, but only an excuse for a variety of other problems we might have, denial of a depression or simply an excuse for our own laziness. In our modern society we have to deal with more and more pressure and it has even become a normal condition to suffer from stress or burnout. It is a fact that more and more people meet the criteria for burnout and are not able anymore to fulfil their normal every day duties and there is a real suffering from pressure of performance.

It is difficult to define exactly how many people are concerned as there is not one real scientific way to "measure" the degree of burnout, but there are numerous parameters and questionnaires with which some criteria of burnout can be defined, and the tendency of people who meet those criteria is constantly increasing.

This has led to the fact that this subject is being talked about more and more.

What is burnout?

But what is burnout exactly? And how does it show? How can we find out what are the individual circumstances that lead us to that condition? There is not one commonly recognised definition for burnout. There are descriptions of symptoms, but it is not always easy to decide whether a person suffers from a "normal" exhaustion or a real burnout syndrome or even something else.

Some definitions say it as a state of a clear physical, psychological and/or emotional exhaustion that does not only show temporarily. As it is a syndrome, there are various symptoms that depend very much on the individual and the degree of the illness. It is one form of protest against an imbalance in our organism.

Burnout cannot be measured objectively, there is not one clear indicator in the blood that would be higher in each burnout patient. The recognition of a burnout syndrome depends on the subjective description of the concerned person and also on the subjective observation of the therapist.

The most objective way to measure burnout is by questionnaires. It is important that the questionnaire asks for as many burnout symptoms as possible as a burnout expresses in many different ways.

Normally it is a gradual process which one is often not conscious about during a certain period of time. The idea of not doing one's work sufficiently well is predominant; one feels mentally and physically exhausted, incompetent and less and less involved in one's work or interested by people who one is in contact at work. Burnout is gradually evolving in different ways with different people. It happens when the circumstances in life no longer work for us. We miss warning signs until our

physical and emotional systems begin to fail. We struggle to get control or return to normal and feel overwhelmed by the task.

Under normal circumstances we tend to be motivated, committed, caring, conscientious and highly valued, we have energy, enthusiasm and clarity. In burnout these qualities diminish leaving us confused, lethargic, exhausted, irritable and unable to cope. Burnout is a state of fatigue and frustration due to a way of life that does not meet our expectations. It is often called "professional exhaustion". Victims of burnout are often talented and enthusiastic people. Professions most affected are those with an important social responsibility and an important human investment like social assistants, doctors, nurses, teachers, policemen, employees. It is the result of a profound social discomfort and the expression of an excessive tension between ideal and reality.

Compared to other chronic illnesses, however, there are some advantages.

As the process into burnout is gradual, there is also a chance or the advantage to recognise that something is wrong before getting to a point of a serious illness. Can we not even be grateful for some annoying but not yet dangerous symptoms of burnout that want to wake us up and show us something in our life is not going in the right direction?

- Burnout is a gradual process, we can recognise it in time and do something against
- Burnout is unpleasant, but not life threatening
- Burnout causes many symptoms, but they are all completely reversible

Our body is protesting against our lifestyle, attitudes and behaviour and wants to tell us that he does not agree with it. It expresses this protest with the symptoms, first in a very mild form, but if we do not pay attention to them, more clearly and at last is forcing us. Our organism is communicating with us - it is up to us to listen!

Where are the imbalances?

Our organism is rebelling against an imbalance. The cause of every illness is in principle an imbalance and its expression in a burnout can be of various nature:

We can have more stress than we can take. The phases of tension and relaxation are not adequately balanced. We have less nutrients than we need for our energetic metabolism. We consume more than is good for us (food, alcohol, cigarettes, sugar, drugs)

If we manage to re-establish the imbalance, we have a good chance to recover and to stop the "protest" of our organism.

Symptoms of burnout

We can have symptoms on various levels of our organism.

physical symptoms

- heart problems**
- digestion problems**
- headaches**
- lack of energy or physical exhaustion**
- lack of motivation**
- tension in muscles**
- back/neck pain**

mental symptoms

- lack of concentration**
- loss of ability to take decisions**
- reduced ability to take stress**
- lack of motivation**
- reduced creativity**

emotional symptoms

- restlessness**
- nervousness**
- negativity**
- depression**
- feeling of inner emptiness**
- reduced self-esteem**
- lack of motivation**

behavioural changes

social disinterest

denial (keeping going and ignoring concerns of friends or colleagues)

extreme difficulty to support the environment

speeding up in an attempt to scope

slowing down in confusion as focus is lost

increasingly ineffective at performing familiar tasks

working harder and harder and achieving less and less

addictive behaviour like increased intake of alcohol, food, drugs, sex, shopping, tv, internet

inability to clearly define the problem

The symptoms show on all levels of our being, they are our "personal" symptoms and our organism wants to tell us something, and this is our "personal" burnout.

Symptoms of burnout patients are similar, but no burnout is the same.

Our "personal" burnout also means that **we** or our organism have developed it and that **we are responsible** (not guilty) for it. And that it is in **our** power to heal our burnout.

Burnout and Depression

Depression and burnout are very closely linked and it is often difficult to differentiate. As a matter of fact, many people with burnout are also depressed and many depressed people are exhausted.

Depression, exhaustion and stress have a lot in common: **burnout**

Exhaustion and stress are not the same, but have a lot in common. Stress can lead to exhaustion and vice versa. The same is true for depression and exhaustion as well as depression and stress.

Burnout most commonly has parts of stress, depression and exhaustion in different proportions.

Despite many similarities between burnout and depression, they are two different illnesses.

If there is burnout and exhaustion, there does not necessarily also have to be depression. However, if burnout is already quite advanced, very often there is also resignation, heaviness and desperation. This form of depression is a consequence of the long lasting exhaustion. In this stage there is almost no difference between burnout and depression.

In a primary depression psychological changes happen first and the lack of energy is therefore a consequence of depression.

Burnout phases

We can divide burnout roughly in 3 phases:

Phase 1: Activation Phase

Stress hormones are higher (adrenalin, noradrenalin and cortisol).

Typical symptoms in this phase are sweating, trembling, palpitations, urge to go to the toilet, physical restlessness, nervousness, urge to talk.

At this point, the symptoms alone are not yet dangerous as long as we manage to get enough rest phases to recharge our batteries and allow the stress hormones to lower again after a moment of stress and allow the vegetative nervous system to recover.

Often, we are missing those regenerative phases.

Phase 2: Resistance Phase

The stress hormones are permanently high and symptoms of activation phase can persist.

This leads to high blood sugar, high blood pressure, disturbed sexual function, disturbed sleep, dizziness, aversion to persons or activities, higher aggression.

In this phase stress hormones are still high, heart beats fast, blood pressure is permanently high and blood sugar and fats go to the blood in order to allow the body to perform. Consequently, digestion is disturbed and people often complain about diarrhoea or constipation or both.

The most important symptom in phase 2 is that we start feeling the exhaustion while in phase 1 we still feel quite ok. At this stage we can still act to change, but it is already much more difficult than in phase 1. Symptoms are clearer and much more unpleasant. Many are still able to ignore any signs here.

Phase 3: Phase of Exhaustion

High physical and psychological exhaustion. Patients feel ill, they have lower immune defences and a higher risk for infections. Very frequent heart problems and digestive disturbances. Through increasing exhaustion there is increasing desperation that can go as far as suicide. Whereas in phase 2 there is still energy for aggression, in phase 3 many fall into a deep resignation which can be compared to a depression. Now the patient is really burnt out.

How burnout happens

Exhaustion can be caused on the physical level by illnesses like thyroid problems (metabolism), anaemia or chronic inflammations like rheumatism, asthma or inflammation of intestines. Also lack of nutrients can cause symptoms of burnout (coffee, alcohol, medicines, tobacco).

Psycho-social level

Frequently, burnout is not only caused by working too much. It can be underchallenge and especially missing recognition. There are many psycho-social components that go together like disappointment, perfectionism, etc.

There are many outside factors that we cannot directly influence (high working demands or boring routine jobs, no possibility to advance professionally, little recognition for good work, not enough support from colleagues or relatives, bad working ambiance or even mobbing, relational problems, illnesses (own or in family), few social contacts and friends and missing relaxation possibilities.

Very important in developing a burnout are the “inner” factors. These are attitudes (vasana) towards other people and life, for example perfectionism, not being able to say no or to set our limits, to be too idealistic, too rigid and unable to adapt to changing situations, the inability to see and respect our own needs, defining ourselves through work, the inability to “switch off”.

Causes for burnout

Burnout can have many causes. There is not one single cause, but there have to be at least two or several factors together for a burnout to happen.

We have to ask ourselves:

- How do I contribute to my burnout?
- Where do I not respect my limits? Where do I go beyond my limits?
- Which own and outer factors are involved?
- Can I influence these factors?
- Can I change?

I would also like to briefly mention **chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)**. This syndrome mainly happens between the age of 20 and 50 years and also shows an increasing exhaustion and decrease of "performance" which can last for several months or even years. Differently to burnout the cause for this syndrome is a serious viral infection. Scientific studies have shown that CFS often happens after a serious infectious illness that surcharges and deregulates the immune system.

Typical symptoms are muscle, joint, nerve and throat pain, swelling of lymphatic glands, headache, fever and sleeping disorders.

Other similar syndromes are overload or bore-out syndrome. The overload syndrome is typical for people who do not feel good and healthy anymore, but who are not yet (classically) ill. They are somewhere between "healthy" and "burnout" and often still manage to do their daily work, although they already have many symptoms who make them feel unwell (phase 1 or 2 of burnout).

Bore-out syndrome happens with a permanent situation of underchallenge, boredom and absence of perspectives and make people ill.

Why I have chosen this subject

The idea for my project to write about burnout came to my mind in the first days of the first cikitsa module in Piesendorf. Before leaving I felt that I had no more energy and was quite close to a depression. My body and mind were very tamasic and I had doubts I could even leave as I was too tired. My doctor was sure that a change of environment would help. And so it was!

I was taken by my job in a political environment where constant stress and pressure are normal and where the individual needs are not considered too much. I had already done yoga for many years and had spent quite some time studying it. However, the deeper I went into yoga and learnt about myself the greater became my unhappiness with this situation and I felt quite “split” between my two lives: professional life and “the other life” that seemed so much more real. The professional life that I feel necessary to gain a living, but also to pay for all my yoga courses and trips. On the other hand knowing exactly that I am not at the right place nor doing the right job.

A feeling that life has taken control over me and I was just reacting instead of living and being or even knowing exactly what I really wanted.

I strongly felt (and still feel) that for me yoga can help. With this project I want to see, if this can be true also for others.

As observation is a big part in the cikitsa training, I started to observe myself and also my friends and colleagues and I see many, too many, who are “surviving” and not living.

I strongly feel that yoga has some answers and can help (me). In this project I want to see, if yoga can help to show a way out of burnout and if yes, how.

II. LITERARY REVIEW

In my research I have found many books talking about burnout. They mostly talk about burnout as a professional exhaustion and mention as symptoms psycho-social factors.

Yoga or relaxation techniques are often mentioned briefly as one way to deal with the stress that is connected with this condition.

I have found two books that have become the main basis for my project and that have inspired me more than others as they have talked about burnout in a different way.

The first book "**The Joy of Burnout**" is written by psychotherapist Dina Glouberman. She is talking about her own story of total burnout and found this was a chance for her to slowly discover again her joy inside. I have personally met her and she is a very impressing and inspiring lady. For her burnout has a message of renewal (change of samskaras): "When we burn out it is our old personality that burns itself out. Then our soul fire begins to light our way and to bring us joy".

In her book Dina tells the story of burnout, of why and how we burn out, and what we can do about it: "This is paradoxical, because above all what we need to do is stop doing and start listening to ourselves in a completely new way.

For me her message is clear and I think with yoga we can reach exactly that point. For our personal yoga practise we need to stop and take time out for ourselves, and then connect and listen to the messages from our bodies (physical, mental, emotional).

She is a psychotherapist and is using image work as therapy for her patients and her message is that this condition (of burnout) is a cry of our soul and if we actually stop and listen, this can be a great chance of renewal.

I would like to translate her message with the use of yoga tools to reach that inner connection that gets lost on the way.

Her message is that burnout is a state of mind, body and spirit reached by those who have come to the end of a particular road, but have not acknowledged this. For her, burnout can be a door to a life with space, love and joy (anandamaya - a complete reconnection to our true self).

She defines burnout as joylessness, a loss of contact to something higher: "When we are unable or unwilling to surrender to our soul's guidance, our soul withdraws its energetic support for what we are doing."

Burnout has to do with the unwillingness to surrender (to our bodies, hearts and souls and reality itself). Healing begins in the moment we do surrender (Isvara Pranidhana).

In the moment we do not know anymore where we are going we need to stop. This can be an active process. We stop, take a breath and let go of what we are holding on to (vairagya). Giving ourselves time and space. Time and space for stillness as stillness brings its own wisdom. Learning to be in the present moment. Time to surrender to whatever is greater than our conscious control mind.

The second book that I found very helpful and complete in its description of burnout **"Burnout: Wenn Arbeit, Alltag und Familie erschöpfen"** (Burnout: When we are exhausted by work, daily routine and family) is written by Dr. med. V. Schmiedel who is a leading doctor in a clinic in Germany and has observed, in the last years, a rapid increase in patients who suffer from a "psychovegetative syndrome of exhaustion" or also called burnout. He extensively describes this condition and his experience in working, as a medical doctor, with people who suffer from this condition.

It is very interesting as he has a global understanding of this illness and also shows ways of treating people in a holistic way. In his very complete description he talks about what burnout is and how it happens. He differentiates between physical causes, psychological causes and psycho-social factors. Most literature on this subject talks almost exclusively about psycho-social aspects and how our own behaviour contributes to this illness, how to change our attitudes, respect our own limits etc. He discusses those very important aspects as well, but also emphasises the importance of also considering (and treating) the possibility of a chronic illness as cause for exhaustion. This could be thyroid problems (metabolism) or anaemia, a lack of nutrients (very important for the functioning of the immune system, for example, are zinc, selen, vitamines C, B6 and D), magnesium (stress), kalium (muscles) zinc and vitamine B6 for sleeping, Q10 etc. According to him, coffee, alcohol, tobacco or medicines play a big role for burnout. He explains, for example, that coffee is mobilising our (last) energy reserves. When our batteries are already empty (like it is the case in burnout) this almost empty battery is emptied even more and he explains

how coffee contributes to burnout. He shows how illnesses connected with chronic inflammations like rheumatism, asthma or inflammation of intestines lead through anaemia to lack of energy as our immune system never rests.

Together with physical and emotional exhaustion there can be many psycho-somatic reactions like circulation problems, digestion problems, tinnitus, muscular tension. Long term psychic stress also leads to a reduced immunity, higher inflammation, oxidative stress etc. That is why it is very important to check out the possibility of missing nutrients or micro-nutrients (vitamins B1, B2, B6, B12 etc.).

In the chapter on finding the way out of burnout he talks about physical exercise, but also the importance of relaxation techniques.

He has developed a questionnaire (see annex 1) that is divided in 3 parts: Block 1 that shows physical/vegetative restrictions; block 2 for psychic/mental restrictions and block 3: factors for burnout. I have used this questionnaire for the students with whom I have worked for this project and found it very clear and practical.

III. OBJECTIVE

People are more and more exhausted. Burnout is a state of physical and psychological exhaustion as a result of high and long-term overstraining of the nervous system. This represents an important reduction in the quality of life.

I have observed myself and many people around me, especially in the working environment, and noticed that this state of being constantly "stressed" and under pressure has become a normal state.

The objective of my project is to work with people who are clearly on their way to burnout or are on their way out of a complete break-down and help them understand why this is or was happening, find out reasons for their situation, prevent further illness and help them to recover complete health and find back joy.

Yoga has many answers and as I personally have found help with yoga I want to find out if other people can improve their situation with yoga and be more happy and connected with themselves.

With the tools of yoga I want to increase awareness. By better knowing ourselves we will better understand our priorities and what is important for us in life and what is less important and learn to concentrate on priorities.

My hypothesis is that yoga can greatly help to connect with ourselves. We often look for happiness outside of ourselves and I want to show with yoga to find it inside. With a better connection to ourselves we will better understand our priorities in life and it will be easier to make the right choices for us and move away from patterns that have lead us to illness and unhappiness. As a result, in my opinion, yoga can be a good tool to help people who suffer from burnout condition.

IV. METHODOLOGY

I have thought about the best way to apply yoga therapy for burnout conditions. The two models that were of great help in my practical approach are the **pancamaya model** and the **vyuha model** and I will present them and explain how I have used them to approach the problematic of burnout.

1. PANCAMAYA Model

One important base for the therapeutical use of yoga is the pancamaya model as described in the **Taittiriya Upanisad** as far back as the 6th century before Christ. This model shows us that our human system is made of five dimensions (physical body, breath/prana, intellect, personality and emotions) that are completely interconnected and interrelated.

In our holistic approach in yoga therapy it is important to understand how these dimensions are related and that when one changes, all others will change as well.

The five dimensions are:

ANNAMAYA: physical body

Annamaya is the physical and most visible and gross aspect of the individual constitution. This aspect can be perceived with our sensory organs. It is called anna as it comes from food, is sustained by food and will finally go back to food.

This is why it is so important to eat correctly. The physical body is made of food. Correct eating habits help to maintain a healthy body. Food also affects our emotions. It is important to have a good quality of food, correct preparation, food combinations, right quantity, eat our food with the right mental and emotional state of mind etc.

Asana practise can be used as a main tool to benefit our physical body, but of course, as all dimensions of our human system are interconnected, asana practise is not limited to the physical body, but also affects the other layers of our body like breath, mind and emotions. With asana practise I have tried to help my students achieve a feeling of lightness in the body (angalaghavam). Asana practise also increases the ability to withstand change (dvandva nabhighatah), helps to have a stable body and focused mind. It also helps to release tension in our body and to feel energised and

relaxed at the same time. Asana can function on many levels of our system and helps us to become aware of our bodies (muscles, alignment of spine, structure of body).

For people who suffer from burnout it is important to work on any of those aspects and to increase self-awareness and self-understanding.

Here are some points that I have worked with on the asana level:

- Self-observation (svadhyaya) and observation of the reaction of our bodies during asana to increase our self-awareness and self-understanding.
- Repetition of asana to help overcome heaviness of body and mind (tamasic energy) that is often a very important obstacle for exhausted people.
- Holding of postures and work with inhale and exhale in the posture to help overcome agitation of mind and body (rajasic energy).
- Breath in asana to help to bring attention to body: inhale for creating space (chest + heart opening) and exhale for letting go

Brahmandanda explains in his commentary of **the Hatha Yoga Pradipika in verse 1.17** "*asanakills out the rajoguna that causes fickleness of the mind. By removing diseases it facilitates concentration; for Patanjali says: "Disease, dullness, doubt, inattention, sloth, worldly-mindedness, false notions, missing the essential and instability are the causes of the distraction of the mind and they are obstacles". Heaviness of body arises from a preponderance of tamas, and asanas remove this.*

PRANAMAYA – breath: the vital body or energy body

Prana is vital energy. This vital energy is in our whole body and goes even beyond the physical body according to the classical yoga texts. It is thanks to this vital energy that we are alive and the different functions in our body can work.

The prana level is very important as breath links our body, mind and spirit. Conscious breath control (pranayama) helps to identify subtle contractions in body and mind and to release them at their root and it also helps to purify subtle channels in the body influencing our awareness and vital energy stimulating the whole system.

On the physical level prana is situated in the thoracic area that is moved through breathing.

By balancing our breathing the entire physiological system is balanced as well. Breathing has a unique function in our body. Most of the time breathing happens automatically and at the same time we can learn to control our breath. Simply by bringing our attention to the breath allows us to lengthen and to harmonise it. If this is practised regularly, other physiological activities can also be balanced like cardiovascular, digestive, endocrine and nervous systems will improve.

On the deepest level prana is located in the hrdaya, the heart center, where our emotions lie. Here we feel sukha (happiness) or dukha (unhappiness).

This level is very important for burnout patients as prana means energy. Energy that is missing people with burnout. The practise of pranayama helps deepen our sense of stillness, to turn our attention inward and to create a feeling of lightness and luminosity in the mind. With concentration (dharana) on breathing we also practise pratyahara, we withdraw our senses from the outside and prepare for meditation (dhyana).

There are five levels of prana (prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana) and each of them has a specific function in our body:

- **prana vayu:** seat is in the chest area (inhale) and is seat of mind and emotions
With burnout patients I have sometimes noticed a tendency to accumulate emotions that manifest when working with inhale and chest opening postures
- **apana vayu:** seat is in abdomen (exhale) and is responsible for elimination (physical and emotional)
Working with burnout patients I have noticed regularly difficulties to let go, there is a tendency to “hold” on to old patterns for example.
- **samana vayu:** seat is in the area around the navel and is responsible for digestion and metabolism

Frequently burnout patients have digestion problems and it is important to be aware of this sensitivity when working with prana. I have often used breath combined with nyasa

- **udana vayu:** seat is in throat region and is responsible for communication and sensory functions of eyes, ears, nose and tongue

Some of my burnout students have complained of a “blockage” in the throat area. A good way of working with udana is through chant

- **vyana vayu:** is located throughout the body, particularly in joints and is responsible for sensations throughout the body

We can use nyasa and mudra to work more specifically with vyana vayu.

Take care of your breath and breath will take care of you!

MANOMAYA: intellectual dimension

Our mind is source and solution of many of our problems, so it is very important to work with the mind. The mind has a great influence on our entire system. We perceive and understand through the mind and senses and part of our problem is that we do not perceive and understand correctly (due to the nature of our mind).

We can use our intellect to understand our situation and why we are in this situation (of burnout) (svadhyaya). The more we learn about our momentary situation and why we are there, the better we can choose the right way to get out again.

One way of training the mind is by sound. Chanting can help us to learn to listen and train our memory.

Patanjali describes in **YS III.9**: “*there are two patterns of mind: vyutthana samskara (agitated mind) and nirodha samskara (stable mind)*”.

When our mind is in vyutthana samskara it is agitated and disturbed, when it is in nirodha samskara, our mind is stable and focused. Being in vyutthana samskara or in nirodha samskara is not only affecting our mind, but all other human dimensions, our entire body is involved.

There are four symptoms connected with **vyutthana samskara** (YS I.31):

- **Duhkham:** emotional disturbance
- **Daurmanasya:** pessimism or negative mind
- **Angamejayatva:** physiological disturbances (body trembling, sweating etc.)
- **Svasa prasvasa:** short, irregular breath

When our mind is stable, we are in **nirodha samskara:**

- **Sukham:** relaxed, happy
- **Saumanasya:** positive
- **Anga Sthairyam:** stable body
- **Dirgha Suksma prana:** breath is long and smooth

In this level people with burnout condition are clearly in vyutthana samskara and my goal is to help move their minds to nirodha samskara where the energy of prana expresses.

We connect to the mind with the help of prana. Pranayama can help us to move our mind to a more sattvic state and that will make disappear barriers.

Our state of mind depends on the gunas (tamas and rajas on the external level).

In yoga we reduce tamas and rajas in order to allow the mind to focus in one direction (YS I.2 citta vritti nirodhah).

Our mind is source of dukkha or sukha. The mind is more subtle than the physiological system and breath is the only way to access it. This is clearly stated in the **Hatha Yoga Pradipika HYP II.2:** *"when breath is unstable, the mind is unstable"*

When our mind is still, it becomes more attentive and there are fewer distractions.

VIJNANAMAYA: personality

The personality level is more subtle than the mind level. This dimension has a great potential for transformation. In this layer we find our conditioning (mahat), our basic beliefs, patterns (samskaras), attitudes (vasana) and potential (svabhava) and the way we relate to our experiences and how we relate to things.

Our personality is shaped by past conditioning (mahat) that influences our present attitudes and behaviour. This manifests in our physical, mental and emotional bodies.

With yoga we can change our conditioning and patterns and the first step is by becoming aware of them.

Yoga can facilitate the process of changing our existing behavioural patterns (samskaras) to new and more appropriate ones:

In order to change something in this level of personality we need to work on strengthening the good **samskaras**.

This can be done on various levels:

1. We can create **new physical patterns** (nava sarira samskara) by working with asana.
2. With pranayama we can create **new breathing patterns** (nava prana samskara).
3. Yama and niyama help us for creating a **new conditioning of lifestyle** (nava vihara samskara).

We have to adapt our lifestyle to the context and if this lifestyle has led us to illness (burnout) it is important to find out what new patterns we can adapt to better fit our needs. Here also personal discipline comes in like choosing the right foods, being content etc.

4. With pratyahara (sense withdrawal) we can learn to **disconnect our senses** (nava indriya samskara) from distractions or to take small breaks. This can be done by visualisation, for example.
5. A **new mental conditioning** (nava citta samskara) can be reached through meditation (dhyanam). Mental conditioning includes concentration (dharana) and Samadhi. Meditation can be a great tool in transforming our personalities by reducing mental agitation and bringing our awareness more and more to the inside.

- **Patanjali** talks about this is **YS I. 50**: *"one kind of samskara replaces another kind of samskara"* and **YS III.10**: *"this is the process of creating a new samskara"*, but also says in **YS I.13**: *"changing samskaras requires effort and time"*. Furthermore **Patanjali** tells us in **YS I.39** *"to try any tool that is helpful"*.

As we are all different, tools that help will be different for each of us.

ANANDAMAYA: emotional or heart level, spiritual center

This is the deepest dimension. In yoga the ultimate goal is to connect ourselves to our source and to be in touch with the joy that emerges.

This is the level of relationships. In this dimension the sense of meaning and purpose of life can be found (which in burnout is often lost). Here belong our passions and potential for happiness.

The key for transformation lies in having a strong root that helps us to diminish doubt and confusion and in having *sradha*. We want to connect to the heart.

This can be done by *asana*, *pranayama*, meditation, but also chanting. The practise can also include prayer, rituals, *nyasa*, *bhavana*.

When we are connected to our source (*brahma*) and are in complete union with *manomaya*, *pranayama* and *annamaya*, we will experience this limitless joy, *ananda*.



2. VYUHA Model

Another important tool for the therapeutical use of yoga is the vyuha model, as described by Patanjali in the second chapter of the yoga sutras. With the vyuha model Patanjali shows four ways of healing a person.

In the healing process we first need to identify the symptoms that cause the suffering:

First step: Identification of symptoms (HEYAM)

Identification of symptoms helps us to fully understand the complexity of an illness. We also need to accept the symptoms and acknowledge to have a problem. So it is important for the healing process that the "patient" accepts his or her symptoms and acknowledges to having a problem.

Patanjali in YS II.16: *"The first step of clarity is to acknowledge there is a problem".*

The awareness of our problem is the first step of clarity.

The symptoms of burnout are found in all mayas, in our whole system:

Patanjali says in YS I.31: *There are four signs of mental instability:*

- **Duhkham:** anandamaya - emotional suffering
- **Daurmanasya:** manomaya and vijnanamaya - negative thinking
- **Svasa prasvasa:** pranamaya - disturbed breath
In burnout: prana is not there, low energy, tiredness, energy does not penetrate senses
- **Angamejayatva:** annamaya - physiological disturbances (sweating, heart beat goes up, trembling, back pain etc.)

Theses can be on the body level (annamaya) manifesting as physiological disturbances. On the breath level or energetic level (pranamaya) they can manifest as short and irregular breath (svasa prasvasa).

On the intellectual and personality level (manomaya + vijnanamaya) they can manifest as negative thinking (daurmanasya) and finally on the emotional level (anandamaya) as unhappiness (duhkham).

Symptoms come because there are obstacles (antarayas). According to **Patanjali** there are 9 obstacles:

YS I.30: *"There are nine obstacles" (for a mind that is not stable)*

These obstacles are:

1. **vyadhi:** disease, physical imbalance
2. **styanam:** mental heaviness, lack of interest (tamasic mind)
3. **samsaya:** confused mind, doubt, lack of clarity
4. **pramada:** hastiness, carelessness
5. **alasya:** laziness, heaviness, fatigue (body + mind)
6. **avirati:** excessive use of senses, addictions
7. **bhrantidarsana:** distorted perception, denial, delusion
8. **alabdhabhumikatva:** failure, inability to move to the next level, stagnation
9. **anavasthitatvani:** regression, inability to sustain what is achieved

The next step in the healing process is finding out the cause(s) of an illness:

Second step: Knowing the cause(s): (HETU)

It is important to find out the causes for an illness and where the origin of the symptoms can be found. Why is this happening?

The causes can be found in a different layer than the symptoms. Also one cause can have many different symptoms or one symptom can have different causes. And finally one cause can trigger different symptoms in different people as every person is unique! Symptoms are never random, there is always a cause. Sometimes the result is not immediate and we might not recognise it. We can make a mistake today and suffer immediately from the consequences, but at other times, the consequences can come years later.

Patanjali explains in **YS II.13** *"there is a cause for all symptoms – this cause can be known now or later"*.

In the therapy process it can happen that the care-seeker is not aware of the cause or not ready to accept it. Sometimes the knowing of the cause can even make his suffering worse, so the therapist should only say it, when appropriate.

Patanjali also explains that there are many causes for our illness. In **YS II.3** he talks about **klesas**, the sources of our suffering.

The **five klesas** are:

1. **avidya**: ignorance or false knowledge
2. **asmita**: ego
3. **raga**: desire
4. **dvesa**: aversion, hate
5. **abhinivesa**: fear (of death)

Patanjali also talks about the sources of suffering in **YS II.15**:

parinama - duhkha: constant changes (due to the nature of constant changes) affect our being and result in suffering

tapa - duhkha: regret of what we have or have not done

samskara - duhkha: our conditioning

guna-vritti-virodha: the instability of the gunas, especially in our mind

Another cause for our suffering is explained in **YS II.34**:

klesa vritti - the movement of klesas

Patanjali explains that negative thoughts and emotions, whether caused by anger, greed or blindness, will result in pain and ignorance. That is why he suggests to think about the opposite mental attitude.

Other causes for our suffering are

- inappropriate eating patterns (ayukta ahara)
- inappropriate lifestyle (ayukta vihara)
- excessive use of our senses (asatmya indriya samyoga)
- too much or too little self-respect (ayukta svatmika gaurava)
- being in bad company (asat sanga)
- change (parinama)
- strong desire (tapa)
- inappropriate patterns (samskaras)
- the wrong guna at the wrong time (guna vritti virodha)

- regret or guilt (paritapa)
- wrong connection (a-yoga, ati-yoga, mithya-yoga)

Dynamics of Heyam and Hetu

How can we identify the symptoms and causes? We identify symptoms and causes through

- **darsanam:** observation of a person (physical examination)
- **sparsanam:** touch and feeling
- **nadi pariksa:** pulse examination
- **prasnam:** dialogue

The symptoms and their causes express very differently in each person. We each have our own experiences, defence mechanisms and that is why the cause and effect expresses very differently in each of us.

The next step in our healing process: We have to fix the right (and realistic goal):

Third step: Fixing a realistic goal: (HANAM)

In setting the goal we have to respect the abilities and wishes of the care-seeker. The ultimate goal is complete healing, but this might not be possible so we have to go in steps and start with what is possible and realistic. We gradually move from duhkham to sukham.

Our first goal is **samanam:** relieving of pain or pacification .

Samanam happens on the physical level, we are dealing with the symptoms.

Many people stop doing yoga when they feel a relief from their pain and might not get to **sodhanam**, the actual healing of the disease. In sodhanam we refine and purify. We find the cause and eliminate it.

Patanjali describes the result of this relative elimination in **YS III. 16-35** as siddhis, special accomplishments and the result of this absolute or complete elimination as kaivalya, liberation (of our suffering).

The last step in this healing process is the choice of the right tool to reach this goal.

Last step: Chosing the tool (UPAYAM)

There are several factors that need to be considered prior to choosing a tool. These factors are:

- **kala:** time: how much time is realistic for dedicating to the daily yoga practise for the person? What time of the day will the practise be etc., also time of year (season).

Patanjali explains in **YS I.14** the qualities of a good practise: "*....it should be done regularly, without interruption for a long time*"

- **desa:** place, space (of the practise)
- **vayah:** age or stage of life: the right practise depends on the stage of life of the student and age needs to be considered
- **vritti:** profession or occupation
- **sakti:** capacity/strength of a person (physical/mental/emotional)
- **iccha:** wish: we need to chose a practise that the person will like to do. The wish/desire can be a very great motivator to do the practise.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For my practical yoga therapy project work I have chosen several persons who suffer from burnout syndrome in different stages of the illness.

Two persons have suffered from a severe burnout: one was hospitalised for a period of 6 weeks and spent almost one year in bed afterwards.

The second person was diagnosed "burnout" in a specialised clinic for stress. She was immediately asked to stop her job for several months.

Another person was burnt out with an extreme difficult family situation. She found herself alone with two children after a painful divorce and her ex-husband continued to do everything he could to "destroy" her.

Another person suffered from a burnout as a result of a long-term stressful work situation.

One other person suffered from a burnout more as a result of a severe depression for which he was treated 20 years earlier.

I have also accompanied a person who has given up his highly paid job as a consequence of long-term exhaustion and frustration. He took some time out and has slowly reconstructed an existence in the last years.

And finally I will describe my own case.

I will now present the descriptions for the individual cases I have worked with for this project:

Case 1: Carine, 31 years

She came to see me for the first time 4 years ago. She was sent by my teacher Frans Moors with whom she had just started a four-year long yoga teacher training programme. She had seen Frans as well as his wife Simone in a private class, but Frans suggested to contact me and told me that she was a very unstable person.

When she came to see me it was obvious that she was not well. Her body was trembling, she seemed very anxious and she told me that she had been diagnosed with burnout and spent 6 weeks in hospital a few months earlier. She had stopped any activity and spent her time mainly sleeping. She was also under strong medication as prescribed by her psychiatrist that was making her very tired.



KRISHNAMACHARYA
HEALING AND YOGA
FOUNDATION

23 November 2023

2200 N Commerce Parkway, Room 200
Weston – Florida
United States – 33326
Phone: +1 954 529 2036
WhatsApp: +1 786 381 8502
contact@wykrotalaw.com

Subject: Confirmation of Participation in Yoga Therapy Teacher Training Program for Luiza Angelini Leal Domingues

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of **Luiza Angelini Leal Domingues** who completed 4 years in our Yoga Therapy Teacher Training Program at Krishnamacharya Healing & Yoga Foundation. We are pleased to confirm that Luiza Angelini Leal Domingues actively participated in our program, accumulating a total of 760 hours studied.

Details of the Yoga Therapy Teacher Training Program:

Student Name: Luiza Angelini Leal Domingues

Program Duration: April 2011 to September 2014

Total Hours Completed: 760 hours

Training Content: Our program covers a comprehensive curriculum that includes [brief description of key topics covered, such as [disciplines covered]].

Luiza Angelini Leal Domingues demonstrated a high level of dedication, engagement, and proficiency throughout the training period. This letter attests to their commitment to advancing their knowledge and skills in the field of yoga therapy.

If you require any additional information or have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

Kausthub Desikachar
Chief Executive Officer
Krishnamacharya Healing & Yoga Foundation
kausthub@khyf.net

