



April 5, 2016

Recently, Yoga Alliance issued a directive to their membership about the use of certain words, including the term “yoga therapy”. I was subsequently invited by the IAYT to submit a formal response to Yoga Alliance’s position. The note below is part of an email I sent to my membership of yoga teachers in February 2016. This membership includes people who have been certified by me, people who completed a few courses with me; and people who follow me because they value my opinion.

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Wow! So much can happen during a vacation, especially when you go completely “wired-less”! I thoroughly recommend it.

I returned home this weekend from Cuba where I was without a lick of internet and saw the posting on Yoga Alliance’s position about their members calling themselves “yoga therapists”.

This piggybacks on a January posting by an American lawyer (whom I learned later was hired by Yoga Alliance for her statement). I really hope that as an industry, we have entered into one of those opportune stages of growth that will be rich in discussion and ultimately, in clarity for the worlds of yoga, yoga therapy and, in turn, for a greater understanding by the general public about what the difference is.

In the meantime, while the powers-that-be discuss and debate terminology, I am going to carry on helping clients reduce pain, navigate and recover from chronic conditions and support people in their healing and recovery processes using yoga as my therapeutic modality. That is what I do. I am not a Yoga Alliance member, nor do I run a 200 or 500 hour yoga teacher training program. I do direct and run an IAYT Accredited Yoga Therapy Certification Program.

Truly though, most of my current clients don’t really care if what I do is called yoga or yoga therapy. The same is true for my Yoga Therapy Certification graduates (who live in Canada, UK, Asia, Australia and the United States). The people we teach - both current and new clients - quite simply, just want to feel better and get back to living their lives. Also, if you were to ask those who refer to us - the dentists, doctors, acupuncturists, psychologists, osteopaths, chiropractors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, massage therapists, etc – they don’t care what we are called, they just want us to get the job done and to help their clients/patients. The key here is the fact that we use yoga is not significant. What is significant is HOW we use yoga.

Here is the thing - you can learn all the various aspects of yoga and its therapeutic applications you want; all the anatomy, and biomechanics; all the pranayama and meditation; all the philosophy, mudras, mantras and asanas; you can call yourself a yoga therapist, a yoga teacher, or a yoga educator, . . .and, and, and. Now here's a "but". If you aren't actually skilled at applying the yoga knowledge you have learned, you won't get consistent results. That's the bottom line. And without consistent results, you won't build a very sustainable business and client base, and that whole dream of nurturing others while you nurture yourself, of making a difference while also making a living as a yoga teacher/therapist – that dream will flutter away.

As I see it, how Yoga Alliance has positioned itself is merely a formality, or even a perceived legality for protective purposes. They have placed their stake in the ground. If you agree, then agree. If you don't, then express your opinion, get involved or retire your membership. Whatever you need to do, do it, and get back to teaching and getting paid for doing what you love to do, using yoga to make a difference with your clients.

I am not one to play politics. If I catch myself griping or complaining . . . I find it curious. As I pull it back to myself, I see that it is really about me, and my obstacles. I could philosophize and pontificate until the proverbial cows come home, but would that really support me in doing the good work that I am on this planet to do?

The deep truth of the matter is, that we all know there is a distinction between yoga teaching and yoga therapy. Each requires a different skill set, and if you want to be successful in either format, that skill set needs to be developed, honed and grown.

Which is why I am going to let the "powers-that-be" hash it out. In the meantime, I will continue to spread the word that people don't have to needlessly suffer and that we/I use yoga as our modality to help them find relief from pain and discomfort, to feel better, and get back to leading the lives they want to live.

Best,



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