

Introduction to Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)

TCTSY Timeline

- * 2002: David Emerson began teaching yoga at the Trauma Center in Brookline, MA. Conducted several small pilot studies on yoga's effectiveness in treating trauma.
- * 2006 – 2008 Current model in development; Jenn Turner, LMHC, RYT joined the team in 2008 and developed the protocol for a proposed randomized controlled trial.
- * 2009: Received the first ever grant given by the National Institute of Health to study yoga for trauma. Conducted the study over a three-year period using several small cohorts.
- * 2014: Published the results in a peer-reviewed psychiatric journal ("Yoga as an Adjunctive Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 75(6).)
- * 2017: Listed by SAMHSA as an evidence-based practice (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/treatment#evidence-based-treatments>)

Key Research Findings

- * 10 weeks of TCTSY one hour per week reduced PTSD symptoms by 33% in women 18-59 years old with chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD resulting from childhood physical and sexual abuse (index trauma prior to age 12).
- * Two months post-treatment, 52% of the women no longer qualified for the PTSD diagnosis on the CAPS (Clinician Administered PTSD Scale).
- * 20 weeks of TCTSY reduced PTSD symptoms by 45% in the same cohort
- * 20 weeks of TCTSY reduced dissociative symptomatology by 59 %.

- Resources:*
- * www.traumasensitiveyoga.com
 - * *Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga, David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2011)*
 - * *Trauma Sensitive Yoga in Therapy – Bringing the Body Into Treatment, David Emerson (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2015)*
 - * *The Body Keeps the Score, Bessel van der Kolk, M.D. (New York: Viking, 2014)*

FOUNDATIONS OF TCTSY

TCTSY is designed to be an adjunctive clinical treatment for survivors of complex (relational) trauma and the PTSD that may result from it. The foundations of TCTSY are trauma theory, attachment theory, and neuroscience.

Trauma Theory: Trauma involves an extreme lack of choice over one's own bodily experience, and frequently an abuse of power. TCTSY continuously offers survivors choices of when and how they wish to move and interact with sensations in their bodies, affording them control over their experience. TCTSY never commands survivors to act, but rather invites them to participate in whatever ways they feel are appropriate for them in the moment.

Attachment Theory: TCTSY facilitators provide consistent, predictable and reliable support and a client-centered approach that values the survivor's experience; this in turn can help survivors develop greater trust in themselves and in their relationships, and a feeling that they are indeed worthy of care.

Neuroscience: Research has shown that a part of the brain responsible for expressive language (Broca's area) is underactive in trauma survivors, pointing to the need for nonverbal interventions. Research also shows that the anterior insula, that part of the brain that knows we are present via *interoception* (felt sensation in the body) is also underactive in survivors. TCTSY practice focuses on interoception and present-moment experience, potentially increasing survivors' ability to live in the present.

TCTSY METHODOLOGY

1. Invitational Language: We never command but rather always invite people to participate if and when they are ready. In this way, we share power and avoid hierarchy.
2. Interoception: Concrete, visceral sensation in the body is called interoception; all TCTSY forms and movements are connected to interoceptive experience.
3. Choice Making: We always offer choices – whether or not someone wants to do a particular form or movement, or different ways they might do the form/movement. There's never a right or wrong way.
4. Shared Authentic Experience: We practice with our students and don't position ourselves as experts on their bodies or what is right for them. We make choices right alongside them.
5. Non-Abandonment and Non-Coercion: No matter what choices a student makes, they are welcome in our sessions, and there is no pressure to push their "edges," to please us or to do anything in any particular way.

TCTSY avoids: Hands-on assists; potentially triggering breathing exercises; prolonged meditation