



2nd International Yoga & mind-body practice conference

Book of abstracts

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Introduction

On behalf of the conference organising team, it is with great pleasure that we present this compilation of abstracts from the Yoga Conference 2024 held at the University of Central Lancashire. This conference has brought together a diverse group of scholars, practitioners, and enthusiasts from around the globe, all united by a shared passion for yoga and its multifaceted benefits.

The abstracts contained within this book reflect the breadth and depth of contemporary yoga studies. From exploring the physiological impacts of yoga on the human body to examining its psychological and spiritual dimensions, these abstracts offer a glimpse into the innovative and rigorous work being conducted in this field. Each contribution is a testament to the dedication and expertise of the authors, who have generously shared their insights and findings with the broader community.

As we navigate the complexities of modern life, the relevance of yoga as a tool for holistic well-being has never been more apparent. The studies presented here not only advance our understanding of yoga but also highlight its potential to foster resilience, peace, and harmony in our daily lives. We hope that this collection will inspire further research, practice, and dialogue, contributing to the ongoing evolution of yoga as both a science and an art.

I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Sam Pywell, Ambreen Chohan, and the University of Central Lancashire for their support, enthusiasm, and leadership in making this event a resounding success. Your commitment to excellence and your unwavering enthusiasm have been instrumental in bringing this conference to fruition. May the diffusion of knowledge shared within these pages serve as a foundation for future discoveries and a source of inspiration for all who seek to deepen their engagement with yoga.

Yoga is for all. And for everyone's Health, wellbeing and success.

Namaste,

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi

Director of Public Health, Lancashire.

Conference overview

2nd International Yoga and mind-body practice conference 21st June 2024

Theme: Humanity		
9.30 AM	Westleigh conference centre, ground floor Registration, refreshments and networking Sign up to workshops (choose one at 10am, one at 11am)	
10am Session 1		
10:00 – 11am	Dr. Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health (Lancashire)	Yoga Protocol (143) Common Yoga Protocol English Full Version International Day of Yoga-CC - YouTube
	Saba Iftikhar Pennine Oaks,	Ecotherapy & healing through nature
	Deb Whipp, The Loft Wellbeing	'Spotlight on the Spine' Yoga flow for all
	Hannah Yu-Pearson from Eatdrinkhui	Chinese Tea Meditation: Chinese body-mind practice for wellbeing
11am Session 2		
11:00 – 12:00	Saba Iftikhar Pennine Oaks,	Ecotherapy & healing through nature
	Deb Whipp, The Loft Wellbeing	'Spotlight on the Spine' Yoga flow for all
	Hannah Yu-Pearson from Eatdrinkhui	Chinese Tea Meditation: Chinese body-mind practice for wellbeing
	Lisa Clughen (practical & theory)	Using Mindful Movement for Educational Purposes
12:00 Lunch		
12.00 – 1.30pm	Networking lunch (sponsored by The Confucius Institute, UCLan) Poster gallery Stalls	
1.30pm	Afternoon chair Introduction: Dr. Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health, Lancashire Speaker: Vice Consul. India in Birmingham	
2pm	Keynotes	
2.30pm	Abstract submissions Chair: Sam Pywell, Social Prescribing Unit & Mental Health research & knowledge exchange lead, UCLan	
4pm	Close - Dr Sakthi Karunanithi	



Practical sessions (10am – 12:00)



Yoga protocol

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi

Director of Public Health, Lancashire United Kingdom

Abstract

This workshop, delivered by Dr Karunanithi, will explore the international yoga protocol. As a yoga teacher and experienced clinician, Dr Karunanithi will support delegates with an exploration of yoga.

Ecotherapy for mind-body practice: nature connection for restoration

Saba Iftikhar

Pennine Oaks, Pendle, United Kingdom

Abstract

This workshop, delivered by Pennine Oaks, will explore aspects of ecotherapy used in community social prescribing to connect people with nature for restoration and health creation. Nature has an incredible ability to heal and restore us, both physically and mentally. The concept of utilising nature as a healer is often referred to as eco-therapy or nature therapy and is grounded in the understanding of the profound connection between humans and the natural world. This approach recognises that our well-being is intimately intertwined with the health of the environment and seeks to harness the therapeutic benefits of nature to promote holistic mind-body healing. This workshop provides a taster session on what is ecotherapy, what activities can be used and how to grow the mind-body connection for positive mental wellbeing.

The benefits of using nature as a healer and the practice of eco-therapy are multifaceted and far-reaching. From reducing stress and promoting relaxation to improving mental and physical health connecting with the natural world has a profound impact on overall well-being by recognising and embracing our deep connection with nature, we can harness its healing power to lead happier, healthier lives while also contributing to the health and sustainability of the planet.

'Spotlight on the Spine' Yoga flow for all

Deborah Whipp

The Loft Wellbeing / Member of Yoga Alliance Professionals, Bolton, United Kingdom

Abstract

A practice that safely guides participants through familiar yoga flow (Warm up, Sun salutations, Warrior flows) bringing attention to "spotlighting" the spine, its healthy movement, what's good for the spine, what might not be so good, encouraging good functional all-round spine / functional body movement to our present selves that our future selves will thank us for.

Many individuals experience back pain in their life, movement becomes painful, dysfunctional, and limited, and that often results in movement compensations elsewhere in the body. This practice is simply a fun way to bring spinal awareness to the student "educating them on healthy spinal movement" and for the teacher inviting them to consider "what can I introduce into my practice to promote better spinal movement for my students and what should I consider removing".

Using Mindful Movement for Educational Purposes

Lisa Clughen

Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, United Kingdom

[ORCID iD](#)

Abstract

In this workshop, I will introduce some of the ideas behind my forthcoming course for the international teaching development organisation, OneHE, called 'Using Mindful Movement for Educational Purposes.' The course has been produced in collaboration with internationally renowned somatic movement expert from the US, Dr Martha Eddy. Situated within an embodiment framing, the workshop will briefly introduce delegates to some of the benefits that body mind practices hold for HE educators, colleagues and students. Embodied movement practices, it argues, provide an elegant response to central concerns in HE learning and teaching such as general physical health; cognitive health; and mental health and wellbeing. The workshop will briefly contextualise these concerns and participants will be invited to experience movements adapted from the Chinese practice of Tai-Chi Qigong Shibashi in order to address them. We will do movements that can be used to promote focus and attentional skills, sociality and openness to experience, and joy and positive affect. Delegates will also be invited to trial what I call my 'Monday morning move' to stimulate purpose and motivation, to engage with the renowned martial artist Bruce Lee, and learn why neuroscientists think that 'rest is not idleness.'

The overarching objective is to discuss and experience how body mind movement practices can offer a wonderful form of support for anybody, staff and students, involved with higher education.

Food and Tea as a Vehicle for Healing: Mindful Eating and Drinking in Sync with Seasonally Changes – A Chinese Perspective

Hannah Yu-Pearson

Eat Drink Hui

Abstract

慧 HUI is a space to practise conscious embodiment through tea and food. Intimate and meditative supper clubs and tea experiences are facilitated with the teachings of Traditional Chinese Medicine(s).

This is medicine in the form of gathering to eat and drink in the tender presence of others and yourself. An opportunity to gently return to your body through eating, drinking, listening, holding, sharing and resonating. Each gathering features facilitated movement practices, meditative exercises, conversation prompts and optional sharing.

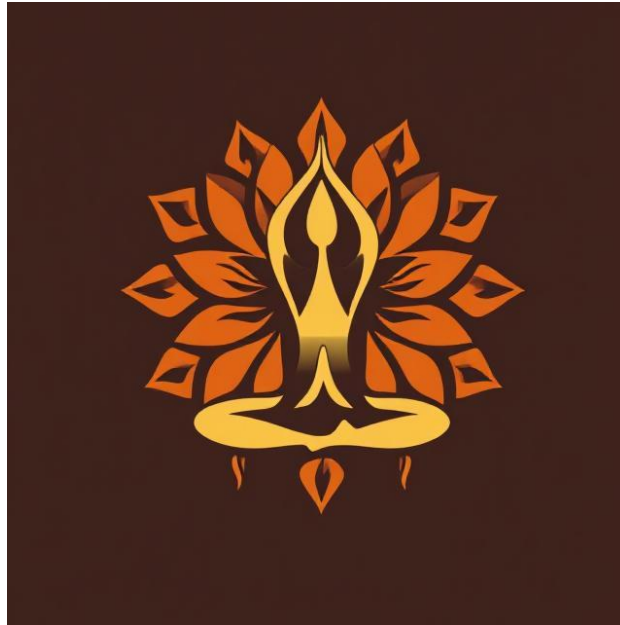
Each gathering is themed using the 24 solar terms, the five elements and zangfu organs. For example, a supper club hosted during autumn equinox is themed on lung health, grief and the metal element. All the food, tea, movement exercises, meditations and prompts are built upon this theme.

Beyond Traditional Chinese Medicine and healing movement practices, HUI has drawn from integrative somatic trauma therapy and politicised somatics. The intention of each gathering is to guide participants into a parasympathetic state and allow them to move and connect from their ventral vagal system. Food and tea are simply vehicles for a consciously embodied experience when movement alone is inaccessible. In this context the body is seen as a process as well as a site of transformation. To date, participants have been able to use the space to practise authentic sharing, deep listening, mindful eating and drinking, as well as community.

The purpose behind HUI is to facilitate conscious embodiment. We are all embodying something, and oftentimes what we are embodying is not aligned to our values or longings. HUI momentarily takes participants out of activated, dissociated, numb or overly intellectualised states into a softer, more curious state to listen to the language and innate healing wisdom of the body.

Contact: www.eatdrinkhui.com

Presentations (2.30pm – 4pm)



1. **Ascend – Transcend – Renew: On the reproduction of (public) self through rituals of fire.** [Jonathon Prasad](#), GRaCE, University of Central Lancashire, UK.
2. **Self-management of Chronic Pain Clinics: A feasibility study.** [Ann Tordoff](#), NHS, Blackpool, UK.
3. **Embodied Communication for Wellbeing: an overview of how the Laban-Bartenieff Movement System offers support for Self and Other in facilitation and leadership contexts.** [Lucy Nicholson](#), University of Central Lancashire, UK.
4. **Yoga and Peacebuilding on the island of Cyprus.** [Maria Tatsiou](#) (online), University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus.
5. **Embodied Learning: The Body as Site of Knowing.** Philomena Free, SOAS University of London, UK.

Ascend – Transcend – Renew: On the reproduction of (public) self through rituals of fire.

Jonathon Prasad

Global Race Centre for Quality (GRaCE) University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

Abstract

The transformative potential of embodied religious rituals for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of participants is widely recognised (Mitchell 2009; Wojtkowiak 2018); whilst the renewal and rehabilitation of the physical / public self may be a secondary motivation (Danforth 2008; Xygalatas 2012).

This paper explores the transformation experienced by participants during the 11-day ‘Theemithi’ firewalking ritual at the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Suva, Fiji. By entering the temple (ascendence) the firewalkers enter ritual space and time which emphasises renunciation, mindful-devotion and ritual purity (Douglas 2005). This leads the firewalkers on a personal journey to transcend the material and mundane through a series of embodied performative rituals. This culminates with them crossing hot coals on the final day before a large audience who act as witness. The successful completion of the firewalk then becomes a public declaration of faith and transformation – an act through which they are renewed.

This paper is based upon participant research and interviews conducted between 2007 - 11 and 2015, during which time the author lived in the temple and participated in firewalking rituals. The interviews were interpreted using an interpretative phenomenological approach and draws upon an experimental framework of Tamil poetics, Tolkāppiyam’s grammatological classifications of Akam (private) / Puram (public) to understand the firewalk as a broad ordering of both ritual and secular space.

References

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Self-management of Chronic Pain Clinics: A feasibility study.

Ann Tordoff¹, Brenda Ward², Sarah Smith-Sergeant³, Christine Allen⁴

¹NHS, Blackpool, United Kingdom. ²BrendaYoga, St Annes, United Kingdom. ³NHS, Preston, United Kingdom. ⁴Citizens advice, blackpool, United Kingdom

Abstract

It is evident prescribing potent and addictive medications for chronic pain often causes our patients both physical and mental health problems⁽¹⁾. The current medical model has limited resource and the new mind-body science and emerging evidence for treating chronic pain is not integrated into national pathways of care⁽²⁾. Aims: Our clinic targeted behaviour and attitude change whilst focussing on what patients can do for themselves. Method: We developed a course for small groups, drawing on the body of evidence that chronic pain experience can be improved through various techniques⁽³⁾, rather than focussing on an acceptance-based model. We used a bespoke model integrating key components of evidenced techniques for improving patients experience of pain. The course, delivered to four participants in six sessions which were 2.5 hours long with a psychological tools, education and Yoga. Participants completed a feedback questionnaire and a health questionnaire. Outcome: All participants reported a higher overall health score at the end of the course. They found the Yoga, breath work and mindfulness tools particularly useful and education about chronic pain. Conclusions: The study demonstrated that participants began to change their behaviour as they began to understand more about how pain works and as they were given opportunity to practise pain management techniques in the classroom. A larger pilot study is warranted and will be organised with the same components.

References

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Embodied Communication for Wellbeing: an overview of how the Laban-Bartenieff Movement System offers support for Self and Other in facilitation and leadership contexts.

Lucy Nicholson

University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

Abstract

Lucy Nicholson reflects on her training as a movement analyst using the comprehensive Laban - Bartenieff Movement System to make the body feel accessible to those that might not normally acknowledge its role in their day to day communication. This presentation aims to offer a brief overview of how a greater awareness of our Body/Mind connection can support us to use the body as a positive resource particularly in challenging professional situations that are often linked to interactions with colleagues, management, participants and peers. As Studd & Cox remind us, 'Conscious awareness of movement is vital to experiencing the Wholeness of life.' (2020: 4) It is this awareness of our whole selves within our communication that Nicholson is interested in highlighting and offers her perspective through the fundamental principles of movement analysis and somatic practice. The presentation will guide delegates through the basic concepts of embodiment and uses the overarching Themes of Duality from the Laban - Bartenieff Movement System to illustrate the intricate harmony at play within our facilitation, leadership and professional communication. As a University lecturer, dance artist and somatic coach, Nicholson will use real life examples of this work in practice, drawing on her experiences of working in numerous contexts and with a particular interest in working with vulnerable or challenging communities.

References

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Yoga and Peacebuilding on the island of Cyprus

Maria Tatsiou, Stephanie Laulhe-Shaelou

UCLan Cyprus, Larnaka, Cyprus

Abstract

At UCLan Cyprus, yoga has been incorporated on several occasions, pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic, to alleviate stress and pressure and forge bonds across groups and communities. This is founded on our understanding that yoga is essential on one's psychosynthesis as well as physical wellbeing. On November 17th 2023, the School of Law of UCLan Cyprus and CRoLEV hosted the Citizen Festival aimed at visualizing the rule of law and fundamental rights and bringing communities closer. UCLan Cyprus' location in the UN-administered buffer zone in the mixed village of Pyla has often meant that the University is called upon to play an important role in peacebuilding projects. Via its social mediation programme shared with ICLAIM, the University has enhanced the use of social mediation across societal issues and communities with a view to de-escalate and provide advancement in potential conflicts. The Citizen Festival's focus was to bring together several CSOs promoting peacebuilding and give back to the local community. Thus, the local community was invited to participate to a focus group in a social mediation context allowing the participants to express their concerns with the social mediator facilitating the brainstorming of ideas and assisting in bringing those to life.

The timing of the yoga session, delivered by a yoga instructor from the Indian High Commission, was essential following an energy demanding or potentially triggering focus group. The yoga session would allow to ease tension accumulated during the focus group and remind participants that yoga can bring us together.

Embodied Learning: The Body as Site of Knowing

Philomena Free

SOAS University of London, London, United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper will explore the use of movement in the learning process.

Jungian psychological approaches have opened up the symbolic realm of the body, this paper will explore how this symbolic language can be applied in an academic context. The approach presented here will draw on very simple movement practices that guide participants to connect to their bodies and uncover the hidden shapes, symbols and ideas that animate their movements. Various academic applications of this will then be explored, making explicit the connection between the embodied and cognitive processes.

Embodied approaches offer up radical potential, first in their capacity to connect us to our inner sources of knowing and being, and therefore supporting authentic cognition; and second in their ability to offer up innovative ways of approaching theoretical challenges. Developed drawing on a range of psychological and pedagogical approaches, this paper aims to demonstrate the creative potential of the body in informing academic practice. It will also make explicit the importance of embodied approaches to learning and teaching in addressing the wider global crises we are tasked with addressing, by engaging previously marginalised sites of knowing.

Embodied learning offers up vital tools in decolonising HE institutions and the theories they produce. It also offers up transformative practices that are free, accessible to everyone regardless of educational background, and therefore contributes to breaking down barriers between the academy and the community.

Examples of this in practice will be drawn from workshops for staff and students at SOAS, and staff training activities.

Poster presentations



Project Mandala: National Lottery Funded Community 18-week yoga for stress relief

Emma Lowther-Wright¹, [Sam pywell ORCID iD](#)², Sitara Lydiani Lewis², Che McGarvey-Gill², Anna Kenyon², Hayley Bamber [ORCID iD](#)²

¹The Mandala, Preston, United Kingdom. ²University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

Abstract

Yoga for stress relief classes were delivered free to the local community as 18-week courses funded by the National Lottery community fund from 2023 in a 3-year project. This empowerment focused class shares the science of the body and mind as well as giving participants the opportunity to experience how the techniques work.

Participants learned about the autonomic nervous system and how to work with it, how body, breath and mind are linked and influence each other, and we learn techniques to notice how we are feeling in all the elements of our being, to interrogate why and to bring ease where it would be welcomed. These techniques are then used to help us to feel more at ease in the areas of our being that each individual feels needs that ease.

Shorter courses were also delivered with specific groups including those who have experienced domestic violence, Muslim women experiencing mental and physical health challenges and refugees.

These person-centred discussions with participants and peers showed being asked to complete questionnaires that highlighted negative feelings at the start of a course brought up feelings of negativity and were contrary to a person centred, trust and progress-based approach that is non-medicalised and community focused.

Participants were asked 1: the nature of the health condition upon joining the programme, 2: at 6- or 8-week asked for verbal group sharing of how they are feeling & benefits gained. These are to prompt a reflection and to help guide the facilitator in designing the rest of the programme and to support deeper individual integration/learning and 3: At 18 weeks had another group sharing in-person and send a SurveyMonkey with key metrics and an opportunity for participants to share their story.

This submission illustrates this project, and the next steps in a current research project with the Social Prescribing Unit team, University of Central Lancashire.

Connections & connectedness: yoga and mind-body practice for connected communities

Sam Pywell [ORCID iD](#)

Social Prescribing Unit, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

Abstract

Yoga and mind-body practice achieve healthfulness through creating and empowering positive connections and connectedness. Whether through physical, mental, spiritual, social or environmental connections, collectively yoga and mind-body practice contribute through neuroplasticity - the growth and change of the brain & thoughts. Contemporary evidence supports this premise, and through developments in epigenetics, the potential for future connections creating wellness, reducing inflammation, and progressing the potential of the persons capacity for health. This poster illustrates the mechanisms of connections & connectiveness harnessed by yoga & mind-body practice for connected communities utilising a social prescribing lens.

Community TaiChi & QiGong in a museum: Art Council England funded mind-body practice for wellbeing

Feixia Yu

Confucius Institute, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom. Yu TaiChi & QiGong Ltd., Preston, United Kingdom

Abstract

Community TaiChi & QiGong in a museum: Art Council England funded mind-body practice for wellbeing

Arts Council England funded free sessions of Taiichi & QiGong delivered by Yu TaiChi & QiGong Ltd. in 2023 & 2024 for people attending Manchester Museum. People joined in person either on the day, through word of mouth or booking via Eventbrite following advertising. The programme occurred over 6 weeks and then repeated for new members. This was based in a heritage section of the library where we could discuss Chinese culture and where some of the moves within these practices both originated from, were used and how they can be used in the future for wellbeing. This was an open group and grew following positive feedback of its members. The Museum is both a place of interest, culture and education but can act as a sanctuary for community wellbeing given its warm space, open to the public (accepts donations) and provides a social community space for those who seek it for wellbeing. Feedback included the positive impact on wellbeing despite short space in time, sense of community and ability to take learnings into daily life. A research project commenced in 2024 to evaluate the feedback in more depth and build the case for future commissioning.

Conclusion

Since the 2023 conference, we have continued to contribute to the evidence base supporting yoga and mind-body practice. The 2023 book of abstracts was published illustrating the richness and diversity of yoga and mind-body practice for health creation, alongside xyz.

We are currently working on research projects behind the scenes in this area and hope to share more in 2025.

We hope you will join us online for our CPDme session “Yoga on Social Prescription”, 4th February 2025, and at the next International Yoga & mind-body practice conference.

Thank you to our sponsors: The Confucius Institute, Active Lancashire, and to the Vice Consul. Of India in Birmingham.

Sam Pywell

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Sarah Cotton, ODP Apprenticeship Work Based Learning Educator, University of Central Lancashire, UK.

Lisa Clughen, Nottingham Trent University, UK.

Sarah Jane-Sargent Smith, Independent Yoga Therapist and Trainee Associate Psychological Practitioner with the NHS, UK.