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Medical Sciences 4300F: Therapeutic Benefits of Yoga for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery

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Community Engagement Learning (CEL) Project in Partnership with Evonne Sullivan:

Promoting Awareness of the Therapeutic Benefits of Yoga for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery

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Executive Summary

This report outlines our Community Engagement Learning (CEL) project, which aimed to promote awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga for mental health and addiction recovery. We worked closely with our community partner, Evonne Sullivan, a registered yoga instructor based in London, Ontario who teaches yoga for mental health and addiction recovery.

Our group conducted two literature reviews. The first investigated the prevalence of addiction, addiction recovery, and challenges that individuals living with addiction face in London, specifically. The second literature review investigated the therapeutic benefits of yoga to aid our group in providing evidence-based claims to support Evonne’s practice.

To understand attitudes and perspectives around yoga, we conducted interviews with Western University community members. To promote awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga, the interviews were compiled into a video that was shared in a social media campaign.

We updated our community partner’s website to include benefits of yoga tailored to specific audiences, synthesizing information from the literature review to support claims. An infographic was created to convey information in the website in a more accessible format. Additionally, we enhanced Evonne’s slideshow presentation that she presents at conferences and her pitch she sends to recruit businesses and organizations. Within these projects, our greatest focus was effectively communicating valid and well-supported evidence to promote the benefits of yoga, expand Evonne’s platform, and reduce stigma around mental health and addiction.

This report supports yoga as an adjunct therapy for addiction recovery as well as general wellness and mental health. We have included further description of our completed project, course concept integration, and future direction for our project. We recommend continued review of primary literature surrounding yoga as an adjunct therapy as further advancements are made.
Introduction

Prevalence of Addiction in Canada

Addiction is a widespread issue that poses a substantial burden on the Canadian healthcare system. The latest decennial Canadian Community Health Survey found that 21.6% of Canadians met the criteria for a substance use disorder during their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 2012). Addiction is difficult to manage due to both psychological and neurobiological factors. Drugs operate at the brain’s reward centers to induce a sense of pleasure. After repeated substance abuse, neuronal adaptation can occur via receptor desensitization and altered synaptic structures, leading to increased tolerance and dependence (Koob & Volkow, 2010). Past this point, addiction recovery, inclusive of abstinence and harm reduction efforts, is particularly difficult because altered brain structures induce symptoms of withdrawal and can cause subsequent relapse.

Prevalence of Addiction in London, ON

In the case of London, Ontario, an HIV epidemic was reported in 2016 by the Middlesex-London Health Unit (Butler, 2017). The London community is especially vulnerable to HIV, Hepatitis C, and other infections due to the high rate of injections among drug users compared to other Canadian cities. The HIV epidemic, along with high rates of opioid drug use and rising rates of HydromorphContin use, are clear indications of the addiction and drug crisis the London community faces. Thus, improving addiction rates and recovery should be a priority. This would potentially mitigate some of London’s financial burdens of substance abuse, allowing more money to be invested into preventative measures and improving social services in London. Furthermore, less police, fire, and emergency medical service (EMS) time spent on substance abuse cases may improve emergency response times. Fewer addiction-related hospitalizations
would also potentially shorten hospital wait times and allow healthcare funds to be allocated elsewhere. Ultimately, improving addiction recovery not only helps individuals, it also leads to better health outcomes for everyone in the greater London community.

**Current Practices for Managing Addiction**

Current practices for managing addiction vary between pharmacological, behavioral, and psychological treatments depending on the type, severity, and range of issues caused by the substance use disorder. In most cases, the primary focus is abstinence, or at the very least, a clinically significant reduction in substance use (McGovern & Carroll, 2013). Pharmacotherapy is any treatment involving the administration of drugs, whether the addiction is alcohol dependence (e.g.: disulfiram, naltrexone, acamprosate), opioid dependence (e.g.: methadone, buprenorphine), or tobacco dependence (e.g.: bupropion, varenicline) (NIDA, 2012). Behavioral therapy is a general category for any treatment that relies on the principle of learning, including modifying attitudes and behaviors related to drug abuse. Behavioral therapies include cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), based on principles of operant conditioning; contingency management, which reinforces positive behaviors such as abstinence through tangible rewards; and motivational interviewing, client-centered counselling that changes behavior through resolving ambivalence of engaging in treatment and stopping drug use (NIDA, 2012). Lastly, psychotherapeutic strategies, such as confrontational interventions and individual insight-oriented psychotherapy, refer to therapies that give clients insights into their behaviors. This may allow clients to resolve conflicts that arose from childhood traumas (Scaturo, 2010).

**Recent Advances in Managing Addiction**

Recently, there has been an interest among healthcare providers and researchers in exploring the benefits of yoga in prevention and treatment of medical conditions, predominantly
non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease and substance abuse. This has been termed medical yoga, or medical yoga therapy. This holistic approach takes into account not only the patient’s mind, body and spirit, but also their support network, social connectivity, and spirituality (Stephens, 2017). Although yoga as a therapy is not fully recognized in the medical community, certain advances have been made to discover its potential benefits. The practice of yoga has been found to alter the structure and function of the brain, thus eliciting neurological effects. Yoga also influences physiological systems, specifically the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. In addition to the biological benefits of yoga, the incorporation of mindfulness-based techniques helps achieve a peaceful mindset and relaxation. Thus, it is a promising adjunct therapy for addiction recovery and further research is needed to help understand the benefits of incorporating yogic practices in the treatment for addiction and relapse prevention.

**CEL Project Goals and Objectives**

Our CEL project was completed in collaboration with Evonne Sullivan, a wellness and recovery advocate and yoga instructor. The purpose of our CEL project was to investigate the therapeutic benefits of yoga for addiction recovery in the context of the London, Ontario community. Our aim was to engage the London community and promote awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga, ultimately promoting integration of yoga as a lifestyle.

**Description of the Community Served**

Through promoting awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga, we provided evidence of yoga as a potential adjunct to conventional addiction treatment to healthcare professionals, workplaces and organizations, individuals in recovery, and the general public. We tailored information to healthcare professionals to provide peer-reviewed articles that studied the benefits
of yoga. This ultimately supported healthcare providers in recommending yoga as a therapy to their clients and patients. Information was also tailored to workplaces and organizations to promote incorporating yoga sessions during the work day to decrease stress while improving productivity for employees. As Evonne specializes in addiction recovery, information was tailored for individuals facing addiction to aid in their recovery. We also aimed to reduce stigma around addiction through promoting integration of individuals in recovery into society, providing them a possible support network through Evonne’s group classes. In particular, Evonne’s Sunday yoga classes comprise of 45 minutes of group therapy, which provides a space for individuals with lived experiences with addiction, followed by an hour of yoga. Finally, information was provided to the general public on how integrating yoga into one’s lifestyle is beneficial for one’s mental health and general wellness.

**CEL Project Outcomes**

Throughout the process of our project, we kept in constant communication with Evonne to ensure that her needs were being met. In our first meeting with Evonne, we decided on the deliverables that we would complete, including the additional literature review, website expansion, slideshow enhancement, and pitch enhancement. However, as the project progressed, we realized that we could gauge more interest in our project through conducting interviews with the Western University community, sharing the interviews through a video, and simplifying website information into an infographic.

Furthermore, we attended Evonne’s Sunday yoga class as a group to experience her services firsthand. We found that the group talk therapy, which went on for the first 45 minutes, was incredibly personal, emotional, and open. Hearing about participants’ lived experiences with
alcohol addiction opened our eyes to the fact that addiction does not discriminate. The group session also allowed us to share our project with participants and establish a sense of support and camaraderie that set the precedent for the hour-long yoga session that followed.

With a greater understanding of Evonne’s services, we set out to achieve the goals and objectives of our CEL project through the completion of project deliverables. First, a literature review of the therapeutic benefits of yoga and mindfulness as an adjunct to addiction recovery and mental health problems served as a body of knowledge that provided the foundation for all other deliverables. Second, an interview video assessed the general opinion and understanding of the Western community toward yoga and its use as an effective adjunct therapy for mental health. Interview questions were: “What do you think of when you hear the word ‘yoga’?”, “Have you ever practiced yoga?”, “How do you feel after a yoga session?”, and “Do you think yoga would be an effective adjunct therapy for mental health? Why or why not?”. The video was shared in a social media campaign on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to promote awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga and to provide exposure for Evonne’s business. We specifically interviewed community members at Western University because one of Evonne’s business objectives was to increase her presence at the university. Third, we expanded EvonneSullivan.com using information and research from the initial literature review to provide scientific evidence on the benefits of yoga for the specific audiences: healthcare professionals, workplaces and organizations, individuals in recovery, and the general public. Fourth, we enhanced Evonne’s slideshow presentation that she uses at conferences and workshops with evidence-based claims regarding yoga as an adjunct for addiction recovery. Fifth, we enhanced Evonne’s email pitches that she sends to recruit conference organizers and workplaces, again with scientific evidence to support her claims about the therapeutic benefits of yoga. Finally, we
created an infographic containing information from EvonneSullivan.com to convey scientific evidence behind the benefits of yoga for the different targeted audiences in an accessible and visually-engaging format. The infographic can be shared on social media and printed into a poster.

Our completed deliverables have effectively contributed to the achievement of our initial goals and objectives. Through creating a video and sharing it on social media, we were able to engage not only students at Western but a wide audience who came across the video in the pages that we shared it in. These pages include Evonne’s Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook; each group member’s personal Facebook; clubs at Western that focus on mental health and wellness; and organizations in London that focus on mental health and addiction. The social media campaign linked Evonne’s website, where information was separated into different tabs that tailored different audiences. Moreover, the infographic we created presented information in the website in a succinct, visually appealing, and accessible format. The infographic directed individuals who were interested in learning more to EvonneSullivan.com, where they could access more information and reference relevant peer-reviewed articles.

Expansion of EvonneSullivan.com was critical in promoting awareness and understanding of yoga because it is the primary way that Evonne communicates with both existing and potential clients. While Evonne’s practice focuses largely on teaching yoga to individuals in recovery, she also is expanding her platform to teach yoga for mental health and general wellness. Evonne also teaches yoga to businesses seeking to reduce stress and improve productivity of employees. She also speaks at conferences and workshops that focus on wellness, mindfulness and yoga. Thus, it was important to promote awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga to a wider audience while maintaining her current client base.
It was also critical to enhance the slideshow presentation that Evonne uses as an educator at a variety of organizations, businesses, schools, treatment centers, conferences, and special events. We made the slideshow more aesthetically-pleasing so audiences would be more engaged. Furthermore, we supported claims used in her slideshow with scientific evidence of the therapeutic benefits of yoga and mindfulness. Similarly, we enhanced Evonne’s email pitches that she sends to recruit organizations and businesses with scientific evidence to support her claims. Overall, enhancing Evonne’s slideshow presentation and email pitch promoted awareness of the therapeutic benefits of yoga through validating her claims with scientific evidence from our literature review.

**Integrating Course Concepts**

Our project on the therapeutic benefits of yoga integrates a number of course concepts. We found some major concepts that the project intersects with, including health literacy, addiction, and leadership and teamwork. We also identified some overlapping concepts with chance, bias, and confounding; marijuana and psychosis; infertility and PCOS; and poverty and access to healthcare.

**Health Literacy**

Although Canadians are on average highly educated compared to the rest of the world, we still fall short on health literacy (Shepherd, 2010). As we learned in class from Dr. Donelle, health literacy is a concept that refers to the ability of an individual to interpret, understand, and process health-related information so that they can make informed decisions regarding their health. Health literacy also involves being able to communicate health-related concerns and appropriate questions to health practitioners. The importance of health literacy is evident in its
impact on the health and socioeconomic well-being of individuals. Individuals with higher health literacy can have improved health outcomes because they are able to make informed decisions regarding their health. Furthermore, these improved health outcomes can improve the socioeconomic well-being of individuals as they are able to peruse financial and career opportunities without the detrimental effects of certain diseases such as diabetes. Despite its importance, many Canadians still do not have adequate health literacy. Consequently, many Canadians do not have access to healthcare in the sense that they are unable to understand and interpret health-related information, and are therefore unable to make well-informed decisions regarding their health.

Canada has a diverse population of individuals from a variety of backgrounds including different educational levels. This diversity is reflected in the local London community and therefore it is essential to consider this diversity in health literacy when conveying a message to the general public. One of the primary goals of our project was the convey the health benefits of yoga as an adjunct therapy to addiction recovery, as well as convey its benefits for mental health and general wellness. When designing our strategy to accomplish this goal, we kept in mind the variation in health literacy among the general population and consequently worked with our community partner to target our information to specific audiences. The initial component of our project involved conducting a literature review to assess the therapeutic benefits of yoga. As fourth year medical science students, we have developed the critical thinking tools to assess the validity of literature and the knowledge to interpret scientific literature. After conducting this literature review, it was important to translate our research in a manner that the general public could understand.
The website tab we created had tabs specific to different audiences who might have a vested interest in the benefits of yoga. These audiences included individuals in addictions recovery, healthcare professions, organizations and workplaces, and the general population (individuals not in recovery). Creating these separate tabs allowed us to convey the same information in a way that would resonate better with each group. For example, our section tailored to healthcare professionals utilized more scientific language and included references for further reading. Contrastingly, the tab for the general population included general wellness benefits of yoga including improved ability to manage stress and anxiety. This section contained less scientific jargon so that people of different health literacy backgrounds could still understand the information. Furthermore, all the website tab sections had information presented in bullet points. These bullet points allowed for a more appealing visual layout and also presented the information in a more digestible manner, as opposed to a paragraph of text, increasing the likelihood of individuals reading the section.

The infographic was also another component of our project that allowed us to convey the benefits of yoga in a more digestible manner. Some individuals may not want to read a lot of text, however by pairing the information in a more concise manner in conjunction with visuals, individuals may be more likely to read the infographic. Similarly, the conference presentation update added improved visuals that would capture the audiences’ attention, thus enabling Evonne to better promote her message. Lastly, the pitch enhancement was written in a language that even someone with little scientific background could still understand. Any scientific terminology that some individuals may not understand was well-defined and scientific claims were supported with literature without using excessive scientific language. Overall, the
deliverables for this project were designed with sensitivity to health literacy so that our message could be better conveyed to a larger audience and hopefully impact more individuals.

**Addiction**

Addiction and the related opioid crisis are prevalent issues in the local London community. As mentioned, Londoners are more likely to inject opioid drugs and there are more opioid-related emergency department visits in London compared with the provincial average. Furthermore, Londoners are also more likely to borrow and lend needles contributing to the high prevalence of HIV and Hepatitis C in London. Consequently, any method of dealing with this opioid crisis or reducing addiction in the community would be extremely impactful in the London community.

Our project focused on promoting yoga as an adjunct therapy to addictions recovery and promoting its benefits for improving mental health and general wellbeing. Individuals in recovery often have difficulty managing their withdrawal symptoms in conjunction with the stress of their daily lives, thus causing them to relapse. Yoga can give individuals the tools they need to cope with and manage withdrawal symptoms to hopefully decrease their chances of relapse. Furthermore, many individuals turn to alcohol and recreational drugs because of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues. By promoting yoga, we hoped to give these individuals an alternative outlet to manage these issues, while also improving their mental health.

Current addiction therapy has shown to sometimes be insufficient; however, a combinatorial approach with yoga may further decrease the chances of individuals relapsing. Decreasing relapse rates can not only help reduce the prevalence of addiction in the community, but can also lead to numerous benefits in the community. Some of these benefits include fewer emergency department visits, thus reducing wait times. Furthermore, fewer relapses can also
help alleviate some of the social costs associated with substance abuse including healthcare costs, law enforcement costs, and productivity losses. These additional funds can be reinvested back into addiction management programs, thus helping even more individuals manage their addiction.

**Leadership and Teamwork**

In Dr. Cheadle’s presentation, we learned about the important of professionalism, authenticity, and initiative to becoming a successful leader. He also clarified that the concept of professionalism is often used with respect to those in a particular occupation with special training. However, he noted that the four pillars of professionalism (service, scholarship, integrity, and autonomy) did not target a certain profession. Thus, everyone in their own right has potential for professionalism, including us as CEL group members.

The first element of professionalism is service, which notes the importance of working towards the greater good. The basis of CEL projects is to learn more about issues affecting our community and serve the community through innovative solutions. Our project focused on addressing a public health issue, addiction, that is prevalent in our community. Through our deliverables, we were able to promote an alternative therapy, yoga, for mental health and addiction recovery because we noticed that current practices that focus largely on drug prescriptions and counselling are insufficient. Our solution to mitigating the social and economic costs of mental health and addiction was recommending integration of yoga into one’s lifestyle. As supported by our literature review, yoga provides a social support system, has beneficial effects on neuroplasticity, and is an effective exercise.

Scholarship, the second element of professionalism, highlights the importance of advanced education and curiosity. As fourth year medical sciences students, we became
increasingly cognizant how privileged we are to pursue a higher education degree. Increased education generally correlates with increased health literacy and greater exposure to issues that face our community. Utilizing the opportunity that we have, we integrated course concepts such as health literacy to improve deliverables so that they were more accessible to the London community. Additionally, as potential future healthcare providers, we conducted comprehensive literature reviews to further our understanding of addiction, as it most likely will be an issue that we will come across in our profession considering its prevalence in London and Canada.

Integrity, the third element of professionalism, implies ethical and moral responsibilities. Throughout the course of our project, we became enlightened about the issue of addiction, including the stigma surrounding it. We learned about biases that different individuals may have towards safe injection sites and the importance of providing care and supervision to those with addiction. As a group, we were also fortunate enough to hear firsthand about the impacts of addiction during Evonne’s yoga class. Hearing about personal accounts from individuals in addiction recovery made our CEL project more personal.

Finally, the fourth element of professionalism is autonomy. Although we kept in constant communication with Evonne throughout our project, a lot of our work was self-regulated and self-guided. Evonne gave us substantial freedom to work on the deliverables, and in the process, we brainstormed new ideas to incorporate in deliverables (such as the interview video and infographic, as mentioned).

Dr. Cheadle also taught us the importance of effective leadership in teamwork. In class, we discussed both the challenges of both having every group member wanting to dominate as the leader and the contrary, which leads to a “pathology of democracy”. Through forming our groups, we became acquainted with each other as group members and learned about each
individual’s strengths and weaknesses. Using this knowledge, we were able to divide roles and responsibilities optimally to reflect our strengths. We were able to avoid a storming period, in which disagreements arise, because none of our personalities were too dominating nor too passive. Thus, our group did not struggle with the pathology of democracy because we were able to make decisions effectively through direct communication and compromise. As we became more familiar with each other’s work, we eased into the norming stage, which facilitated productivity and cohesion. Finally, our work culminated in the performing stage during the poster presentation where we were able to successfully present the outcomes of our project.

We found that our group worked effectively because we held regularly in-person meetings, divided responsibilities fairly and according to individual strengths, and ensured that we had a personal relationship with each other outside our group identity. Additionally, we all aimed towards a common goal of improving therapies for addiction recovery united by our passion for yoga and research.

**Chance, Bias, and Confounding**

In the process of compiling peer-reviewed articles for our literature review, we noticed some challenges associated with studying therapeutic benefits of yoga. For instance, it is difficult to isolate the benefits of certain aspects of yoga, such as meditation and breathing exercises, because yoga is a holistic practice that encompasses a wide range of activities. Furthermore, some responder bias may have limited the conclusiveness of results because respondents who were placed in treatment groups may have been optimistic about the effects of yoga, which may have influenced self-reports. Confounding variables were also a challenge because individuals who were assigned into the treatment yoga group may have improved other aspects of their lifestyle, including diet, in accordance with the holistic approach that yoga takes towards health.
Marijuana and Psychosis

In the lecture on marijuana and psychosis, we learned that individuals who struggle with mental illness have higher comorbidity with addiction and vice versa. In the course of working with Evonne, she also told us about how widespread multi-drug use is. She noted that her alcohol addiction, which was isolated from other forms of addiction, was rare. Among her friends and acquaintances struggling with addiction, multi-drug use was more common and more difficult to recover from. Evidence about the benefits of yoga on neuroplasticity hint to its potential as therapy for addiction recovery and mental health, as it rewire the brain to elicit a reward response much like that in addiction.

Poverty and Access to Healthcare

In class, we learned about the link between socioeconomic status and health outcomes. As demonstrated through the Macaque monkey study, individuals with chronic stress displayed higher cortisol levels and increased atherosclerotic plaques. Interestingly, a study we came across in our literature review found that regularly practicing yoga yielded decreased plasma cortisol levels over time (Cramer, Lauche, Langhorst, & Dobos, 2013). This study focused on the benefits of yoga for decreased cortisol levels and alleviation of depression, but decreased cortisol levels can also lead to overall better health outcomes. For our website expansion, we tailored information to healthcare professionals because yoga is not fully recognized as a therapy among the medical community. While services such as acupuncture, massage, and counselling are covered by one’s insurance in Canada, yoga is not. Nonetheless, peer-reviewed articles provide concrete evidence of the therapeutic benefits of yoga. This information is key in promoting integration of yoga into insurance plans, which can increase access through reducing possible financial burdens.
Future Directions

Based on our completed project our group has identified three possible future directions to pursue in the field of yoga as a therapy for addiction recovery: research of local health outcomes of those currently using yoga as a means for addiction recovery, further assessment of community needs through measurement of addiction and relapse rates in London, and a critical comparison between our community partner’s yoga sessions with other yoga practices intended as a therapy for addiction recovery.

The first recommendation to research local health outcomes of Evonne’s yoga sessions should include objective measures such as blood pressure, heart rate, cortisol levels, but also qualitative measures like reports of withdrawal symptoms, sense of support, sense of empowerment, and sense of control over each participant’s time attending yoga sessions. Ideally data points would be charted every time a participant attends a yoga. There are some challenges associated with this direction. The research group will have to get permission for this study, and should look to measure outcomes over a significant period of time up to six months. Secondly, those who practice yoga with Evonne may not attend sessions regularly and there is a large chance of loss to follow up. The benefits of such a study would largely confirm what is seen in the literature concerning yoga and addiction and it could potentially assess areas of improvement for Evonne’s practice.

The second recommendation of further community assessment would include interviews within the London community, analysis of addiction hospitalizations, and analysis of participation at detoxification centers. Interviews within the London community will provide anecdotal evidence of addiction awareness and yoga health benefits awareness. This will help our community partner in addressing the perspectives of the community. Analysis of addiction
hospitalizations and participation at detoxification centers allows for a greater understanding of the magnitude of the issue in London and may even offer valuable data as comparison of relapse rates between yoga therapy and those who do not participate in yoga. Perhaps connections with these traditional resources can lead to referrals to yoga for those actively going through addiction recovery. In any case, a deeper understanding of addiction in London is required to adequately address the needs of those in recovery. There are many challenges that are inherent to this potential direction. Access to hospital records and cooperation of detoxification centers are not guaranteed. Strong considerations of privacy and confidentiality must also be taken into consideration when evaluating the community’s perspective and experiences. Lastly, incomplete sample information may make it difficult to critically analyze and to truly elucidate the significance of the number of those facing addiction, going through recovery, and relapsing.

The third recommendation is to critically compare Evonne’s yoga practice with other similar services, preferably in London, Ontario, or Canada. A critical comparison will provide Evonne with a relative evaluation of her service and may highlight areas to improve care for those in addiction recovery. Reaching out to those with similar certifications (Yoga of Recovery, Yoga for 12 step recovery, Yoga for Anxiety and Depression, Recovery 2.0, Yoga for PTSD, and Mental Health First Aid) as Evonne may lead to the discovery of similar practices. Developing a network amongst these services may not only allow for sharing of practice strengths, but may also unite the service providers and lead them to becoming a legitimized referral for family medicine practice. The challenges one must consider when pursuing this direction is the transparency of other practices and Evonne’s willingness to share and critically compare her practice to others.
We hope that these suggestions will provide future students with a foundation to improve the landscape for those going through mental health and addiction recovery.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Infographic

BENEFITS OF YOGA
YOGA AS A LIFESTYLE
FOR INDIVIDUALS, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, WORKPLACES, AND INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY

INDIVIDUALS & RECOVERY
YOGA IS A LIFESTYLE. YOGA IS ALSO A GREAT ADJUNCT TO CONVENTIONAL ADDICTION RECOVERY. HERE’S WHY:
• YOGA HAS HEALTH BENEFITS
• YOGA ALLOWS YOU TO JOIN FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ON THEIR JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

SERVICE & HEALTHCARE
YOGA CAN BENEFIT BOTH YOU AND YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT:
• YOGA IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CONVENTIONAL EXERCISES
• YOGA IS A GREAT ADJUNCT TO TREATMENTS/SERVICES

WORKPLACE WELLNESS
WORK CAN BE STRESSFUL. YOUR EMPLOYEES WILL BENEFIT FROM A YOGA SESSION. HERE’S HOW:
YOGA IMPROVES WORK PRODUCTIVITY
YOGA IMPROVES ABILITY OF EMPLOYEES TO MANAGE STRESS IN WORK ENVIRONMENT
Appendix B: Website Expansion of EvonneSullivan.com

Link: https://www.evonnesullivan.com/services/

Evonne specializes in yoga, mindfulness and speaking for mental health, addiction recovery and organizational wellness. Her expertise is diverse, working in varying environments with a wide variety of clients including, individual, group, business, healthcare, educational institutions, treatment centres, workshops, conferences and events.

Please select your area of interest to learn more about available services and benefits.

- INDIVIDUALS & RECOVERY
- SERVICE & HEALTHCARE
- WORKPLACE WELLNESS
- CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Individuals & Recovery

Evonne specializes in yoga and mindfulness for mental health and addiction recovery. Teachings, services and experience include:

- Yoga Sessions (mental and physical benefits)
- Mindfulness and Pranayama (breath) Sessions
- Certified Yoga of Recovery Counsellor
- Yoga of 12 Step Recovery Group Facilitator
- Customizable based on participants, environment and goals
- Sessions and teachings incorporate:
  - Mental, Physical and Emotional Wellness
  - Addressing the Mind-Body Connection
  - Mood Management and Mood Balancing Techniques
  - Tools for Stress, Anxiety, Low Moods, Depression
  - Relapse Prevention Techniques (if applicable)
  - Modifications for All Levels
  - Movement, Music

Looking additional information on services available for yourself or a loved one?
Appendix C: Slideshow Presentation Enhancement

Uploaded on Chalk & Wire.

Appendix D: Interview Video

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXU_7W2FyVE&t=12s
Appendix E: Pitch Enhancement

Yoga Session Description

Part I – Interactive Presentation: Through theory and demonstration, participants will learn about yoga, mindfulness and meditation for mental health and addiction recovery. Participants will be taught techniques for mood-management and relapse prevention in line with their personal mind-body connection to achieve a positive, well-rounded and sustainable health plan. Participants will be empowered to share and discuss topics within wellness and recovery. Tying together specialized trainings and lived-experience, Evonne will provide takeaway tools and share her personal journey. For more information please visit evonnesullivan.com

Part II - Yoga for Wellness & Recovery: Focusing on the relationship between mood management and the mind-body connection, sessions offer a combination of breathing, mindfulness, movement, music and meditation. The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual benefits of a yoga practice will be explored for participants of any experience level. Improving the mental, psychological and cognitive well-being in both adults and adolescents, yoga is gaining popularity and support as part of an effective treatment plan for various conditions and disorders, including stress, anxiety, depression, trauma and addiction.

A Note From Evonne:

The community aspect of yoga encourages cohesion and camaraderie. Yoga practice that incorporates aspects of group therapy, including reflecting and sharing experiences, allows participants to feel that they are not alone by providing a support system. Yoga is a beneficial therapy that can be incorporated into a lifestyle and continued by individuals even after years of sobriety. Yoga is associated with improved mental health in those undergoing detoxification treatment and aiming to uphold abstinence as determined in a recent study measuring social
functioning, body pains through withdrawal, and mental health status in a cohort of those
struggling with substance abuse.¹ Our yoga group session aims to provide participants with a
safe and engaging outlet for problem sharing and group interactions. We believe our sessions
provide participants with an effective adjunct to facilitate social sharing, promote positive
behavioral changes, and empower peer groups to develop valuable coping strategies.

Nursing Research, 62(4), 260-268. doi:10.1097/nnr.0b013e318292379b
Email to conferences

Re: Yoga/Mindfulness at the Canadian Positive Psychology Conference

Dear Mr. Greenway and Dr. Evans,

I teach yoga and mindfulness for mental health, wellness and recovery. I believe that providing the option of yoga and mindfulness is a positive wellness initiative for delegates and a great addition to conference programs. More than that, I believe my specialization in yoga for mental wellness and recovery offers valuable insight for delegates. By combining specialized trainings and lived-experience, I provide wellness tools to delegates. I have incorporated this through offering stand-alone sessions in which individuals are able to register or I have provided short mindfulness and yoga stretch breaks between keynote speakers or to start the day. This past week I hosted a mindfulness practice for the closing session of HealthAchieve for all attendees at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Some other health conferences I work with include: CMHA's National Conference, the National Youth and Justice Congress, Workplace Mental Heath and Recovery Week London.

If you are interested in having me at your upcoming conference, Bridging Canadian Wellbeing, I would be delighted to provide my service. Below is my website for more information and I have attached my bio. Thank you for your time and hope to connect soon.

Sincerely,

Evonne
Email to conferences

Re: Yoga/Mindfulness at the Canadian Positive Psychology Conference

Dear Mr. Greenway and Dr. Evans,

I teach yoga and mindfulness for mental health, wellness and recovery. I believe that providing the option of yoga and mindfulness is a positive wellness initiative for delegates and a great addition to conference programs. More than that, I believe my specialization in yoga for mental wellness and recovery offers valuable insight for delegates. By combining specialized trainings and lived-experience, I provide wellness tools to delegates. I have incorporated this through offering stand-alone sessions in which individuals are able to register or I have provided short mindfulness and yoga stretch breaks between keynote speakers or to start the day. This past week I hosted a mindfulness practice for the closing session of HealthAchieve for all attendees at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Some other health conferences I work with include: CMHA's National Conference, the National Youth and Justice Congress, Workplace Mental Heath and Recovery Week London.

I noticed that the Canadian Positive Psychology Conference, Bridging Canadian Wellbeing, is coming up in May and I wanted to extend my interest in providing yoga and mindfulness for mental health, wellness and recovery for your delegates.

Below is my website for more information and I have attached my bio. Thank you for your time and hope to connect soon.

Kind regards,

Evonne
Email to workplaces

Re: Yoga/Mindfulness at the Canadian Positive Psychology Conference

Dear Mr. Greenway and Dr. Evans,

I teach yoga and mindfulness for mental health, wellness and recovery. I believe that providing the option of yoga and mindfulness is a positive wellness initiative for workplaces striving towards a progressive and productive work environment. More than that, I believe my specialization in yoga for mental wellness offers valuable insight for employees that may face high stress. I provide wellness tools, develop mindfulness coping strategies, and teach breathing strategies that workers can use throughout their workweek to refocus or alleviate stress. [Insert experience or interesting story that highlights how yoga has been effective in the workplace or how previous employers have benefitted from your work]

Below is my website for more information and I have attached my bio. Thank you for your time and hope to connect soon.

Kind regards,

Evonne
Appendix F: Literature Reviews

Uploaded on Chalk & Wire.

INVESTIGATING CURRENT PRACTICES AND RECENT ADVANCES IN IMPROVING ADDICTION RECOVERY

Managing Addiction

The National Institute on Drug Abuse defines addiction as “a chronic relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences” (2014). Addiction is a widespread issue that poses a substantial burden on the Canadian healthcare system. The latest decennial Canadian Community Health Survey found that 21.6% of Canadians met the criteria for a substance use disorder during their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 2012). Alcohol was found to be the most common substance of abuse, responsible for 54% of the $267 million spent on substance abuse-related hospitalizations in 2011 (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2014). Issues arising from addiction are further compounded by comorbidity with mental disorders, including depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder (Swendsen et al, 2010). Addiction is difficult to manage due to both psychological and neurobiological factors.

THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF YOGA

Introduction

From the practices of the Northern Indian Indus-Sarasvati civilization in the fifth century BCE to its current practice in the 21st century, yoga has been adopted as a lifestyle by many due to its extensive physical and mental benefits. The age-old practice of yoga promotes the harmony of the body, mind, and spirit, the discovery of a conscious connection with oneself and one’s environment, and an awareness of the present moment. Traditionally, yoga incorporates three basic elements in its practice: breath control and techniques, meditation and mindfulness, and the performance of specific poses and bodily postures. These three elements are referred to as pranayama (breath control), pratyahara, dharana, and dhyana (mindfulness), and asana (postures), in yogic terms (Stephens, 2017). Yoga is stereotypically perceived as a low impact