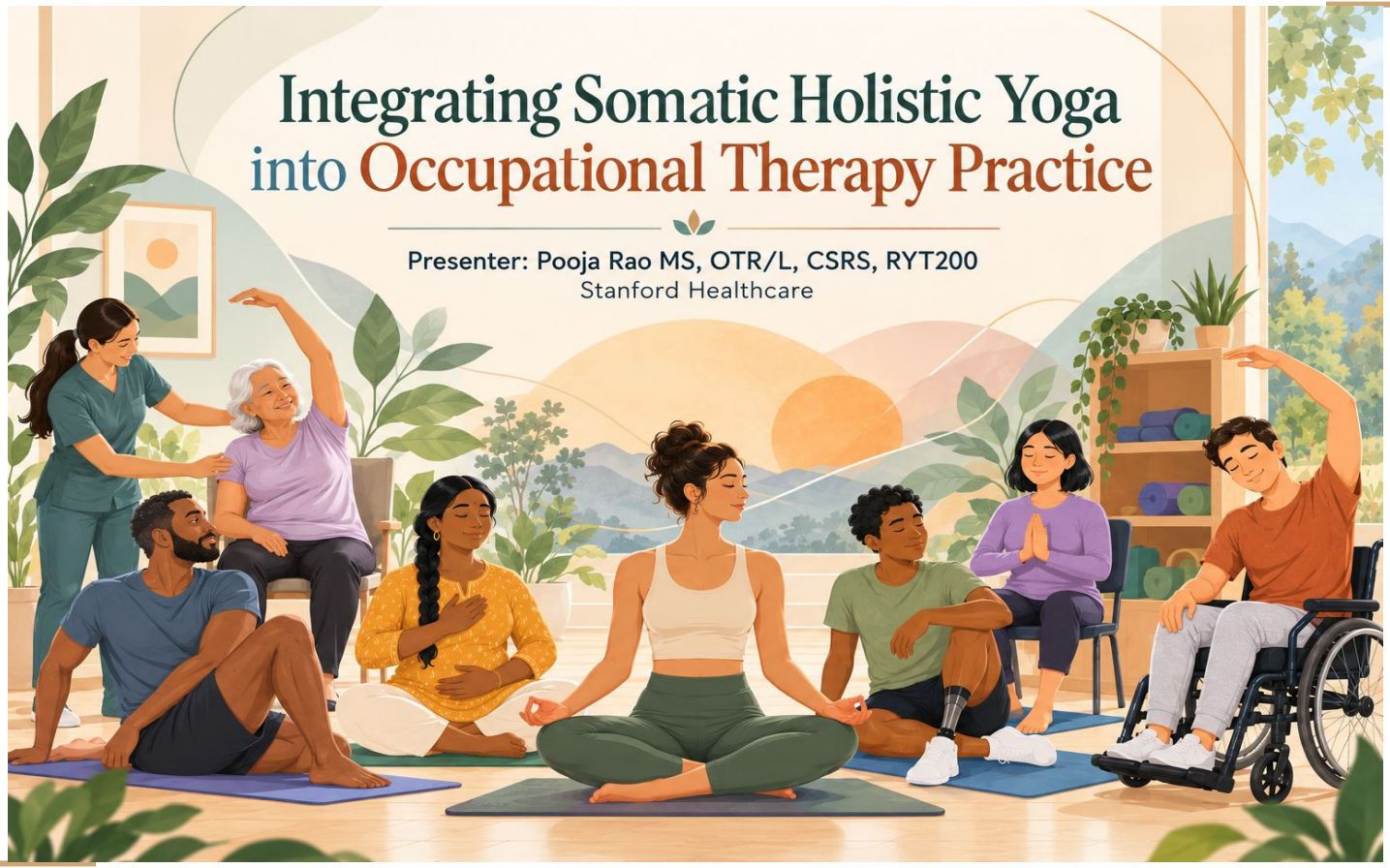

Integrating Somatic Holistic Yoga
into Occupational Therapy Practice
Presenter: Pooja Rao MS, OTR/L, CSRS, RYT200
Stanford Healthcare

Learning objectives

1. Differentiate between top-down and bottom-up approaches to stress and anxiety management
2. Explain how yoga based practices influence physiological and psychological regulation
3. Understand and apply yoga-based somatic informed techniques(breathwork, movement, awareness practices) in occupational therapy practice to support nervous system regulation in clinical populations
4. Describe the role of occupational therapy in integrating yoga-based somatic informed approaches to support physical, emotional and cognitive outcomes across rehabilitation settings

Disclosure statement

This presenter has no relevant financial relationships or conflict of interest to disclose. This presentation is free of commercial bias.

What is anxiety?

According to the American psychological (APA):

An emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune. The body often mobilizes itself to meet the perceived threat: Muscles become tense, breathing is faster, and the heart beats more rapidly (APA, 2026)

Anxiety significantly impacts quality of life through reduced engagement in meaningful occupations (Gunnarsson et al, 2023)

What is stress?

- Stress is the body's physiological and psychological response to internal and external demands or stressors.
- Stress can affect nearly every body system and influence how people think, feel, and behave.
- Common signs of stress include muscle tension, heart palpitations, sweating, dry mouth, shortness of breath, fidgeting and accelerated speech.
- Chronic or prolonged stress may intensify emotional distress, contribute to fatigue and interfere with participation in meaningful occupations.

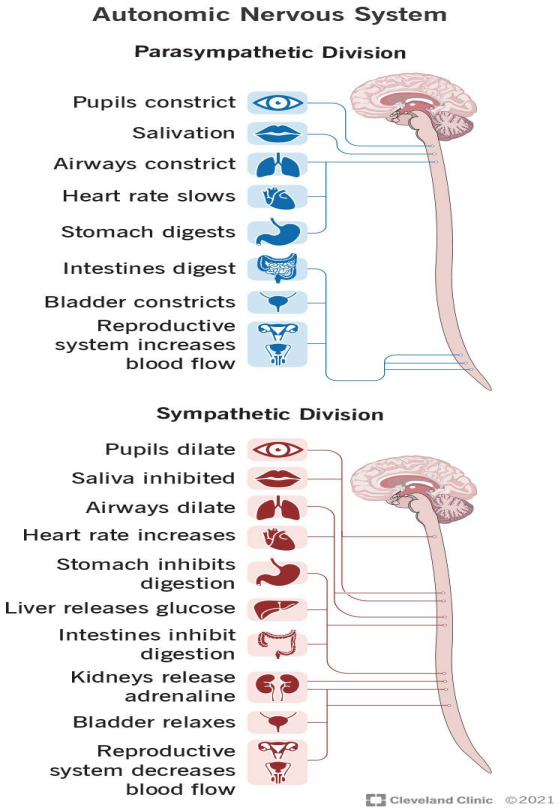
(APA, 2026)

Occupational therapy relevance

- Anxiety and stress can limit engagement in meaningful occupations
- Symptoms may interfere with ADLs, IADLs, sleep quality, emotional regulation, attention, concentration, social participation, and rehabilitation outcomes.
- Occupational therapists promote participation and quality of life through interventions that support self-regulation, coping and occupational engagement.

(Gunnarsson et al, 2023; American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020)

Autonomic nervous system and rehabilitation

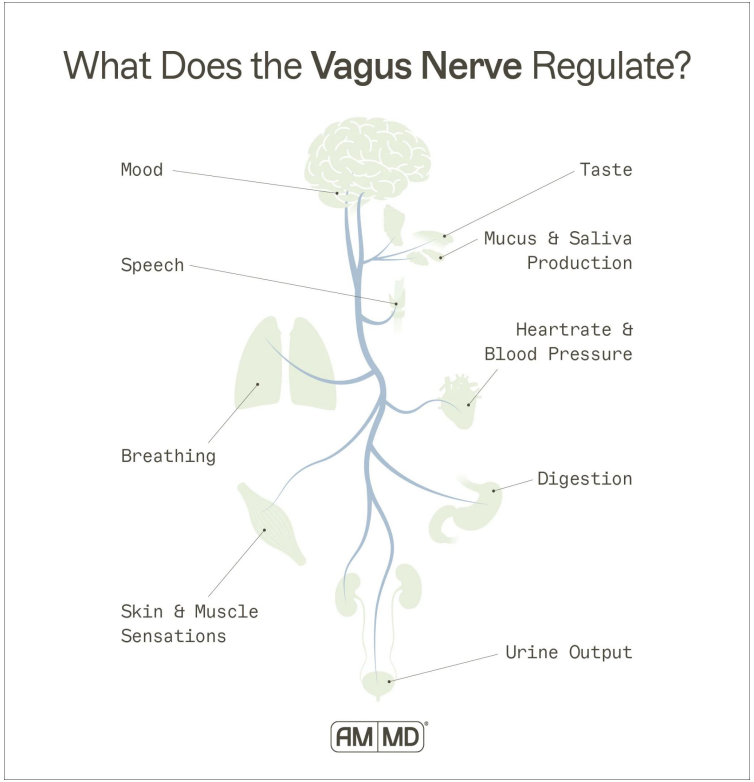


(Cleveland clinic, 2022)

The vagus nerve

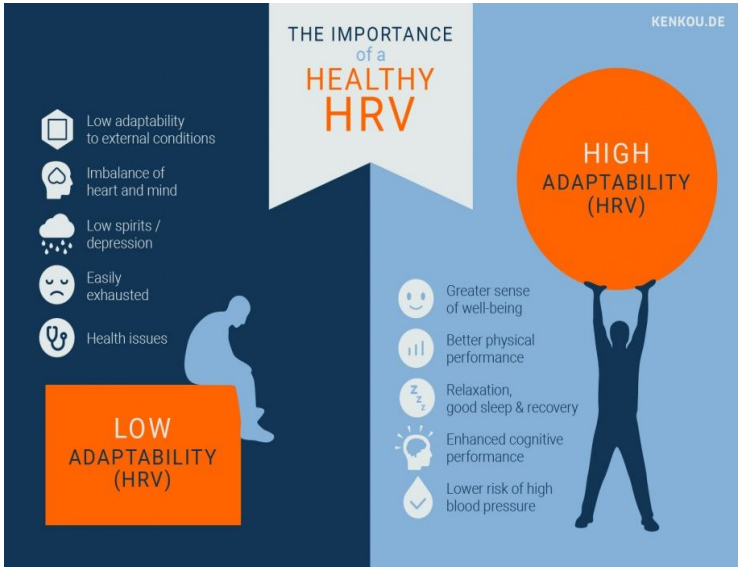
- The vagus nerve is the primary nerve of the parasympathetic nervous system
- It helps regulate involuntary body functions including heart rate, digestion, breathing and immune system responses
- Plays an important role in stress regulation and the body's relaxation response
- Mind body practices, including yoga and breathwork, may support vagal tone and parasympathetic activation

(Cleveland clinic, 2022)



Heart rate variability (HRV)

- Heart rate variability (HRV) refers to the natural variation in time between consecutive heartbeats
- HRV reflects the autonomic nervous systems ability to adapt to internal and external demands
- Higher HRV is generally associated with greater physiological flexibility, resilience and stress regulation
- Lower HRV may be associated with chronic stress, anxiety, depression and reduced adaptability
- Slow-paced breathing and other mind body practices may improve HRV and support autonomic regulation



(King, 2026; Cleveland Clinic, 2021, Zaccaro et al., 2018)

Occupational therapy relevance

- Nervous system regulation influences occupational performance, participation and engagement
- Supports trauma-informed, client-centered practice
- Helps explain barriers to participation and functional performance
- Improves therapeutic engagement and treatment readiness
- Promotes self-regulation during meaningful daily occupations

Polyvagal theory and the gunas (ancient yoga philosophy)

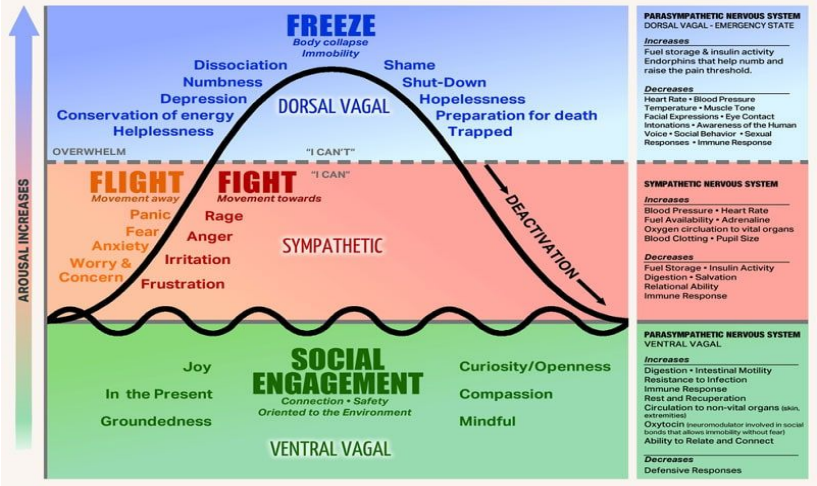
Gunas: fundamental qualities or expressions of nature

Polyvagal theory: the physiology of safety

Tamas → Dorsal vagal State

Rajas → Sympathetic State

Sattva → Ventral Vagal State



(Brehms, 2023)

Dorsal vagal or tamasic state

Clinical presentation of challenging manifestations of the dorsal vagal state:

Shutdown, collapse, freeze, emotional numbness, mental spaciness, depression, dissociation, derealization, lethargy, withdrawal from activities and relationships, indecisiveness, difficulty initiating tasks or making decisions, couch potato syndrome, hopelessness, low motivation, shrinking back from life, associated with trauma events or complex trauma experiences



(Brehms, 2023)

Dorsal vagal or tamasic state

Occupational therapy implications:

- Reduced participation in meaningful occupations
- Decreased engagement in therapy and rehabilitation activities
- Challenges with self care, productivity and social participation
- Difficulty initiating or sustaining daily routines
- Increased support for co-regulation, safety and therapeutic rapport

Sympathetic or rajasic state

Clinical presentation of challenging manifestations of the sympathetic state:

Hyperarousal and heightened alertness, fight or flight response, phobia, anxiety, worry, mania, addiction, expecting danger, difficulty relaxing or feeling safe, constant anticipation of danger, isolation, physiological overload or breakdown, irritability, impulsivity or risk taking behaviors, leads to burnout when activation becomes prolonged



(Brehms, 2023)

Sympathetic or rajasic state

Occupational therapy implications:

- Difficulty sustaining attention and task performance
- Reduced participation in meaningful occupations
- Challenges with emotional regulation and stress management
- Increased avoidance of activities perceived as threatening
- Interference with rest, sleep, and daily routines

Ventral vagal or the sattvic state

Clinical presentations:

Relaxed and calm, socially engaged and connected, maintained sense of security and safety, ability to grow, evolve, restore and adapt, engage in easy conservation, relax in the presence of others, enjoy connection to the community, open hearted, open to communication and relationships, flexible, adaptive, resilient, able to rest, restore and recover, non-defensive and emotionally balanced, engaged in learning, growth, and meaningful activities



Pure sattva is a desirable operating system but rare

Connected to the parasympathetic state (rest and digest), a state of homeostasis

(Brehms, 2023)

Ventral vagal or the sattva state

Occupational Therapy implications:

- Increased participation in meaningful occupations
- Improved engagement in therapy and daily activities
- Enhanced emotional regulation and coping
- Greater social participation and connection
- Supports learning, adaptation, and occupational performance

Bottom-up approach: What is somatics?

- Bottom up processing can be defined as directing the client's attention to internal sensations both visceral (interoception) and musculoskeletal (proprioception and kinesthesis), rather than primary cognitive and emotional experiences (Payne et al, 2015)
- Somatic therapies emphasize interoception, proprioception, and kinesthesia (Payne et al., 2015, Kufub et al, 2021)
- Interoception is the perception of the body's internal physiological state (Craig, 2003)
- Interoceptive processing is central to emotional experience and regulation (Khalsa et. al, 2018)
- Somatic approaches (e.g. Somatic experiencing) engage awareness of body sensations and body-based processing (Payne et al, 2015)

Similarly, yoga-based practices engage these same physiological and regulatory mechanisms through breath, movement, and awareness, supporting yoga as an evidence-informed somatic approach for nervous system regulation

Interoception and emotional regulation

Awareness of internal body sensations

Relationship to emotional processing and self-regulation

Influences stress responses and nervous system regulation

Top-down approaches

Vs.

Bottom up

Cognitive reframing

Education

CBT based strategies

Guided imagery and visualization

Meditation

Reframing

Breath awareness/breathwork

Movement

Sensory awareness

Body based regulation

Occupational therapy relevance

OT integrates physical, emotional, cognitive,and sensory approaches

Somatic informed interventions support self-regulation and participation in meaningful occupations

Aligns with trauma-informed and client centered occupational therapy practice

Uses body awareness, movement and sensory experiences to support engagement in meaningful occupations

Yoga-based concepts as a somatic informed intervention

- Engaging body-based, bottom up mechanisms to regulate the nervous system

- Breathwork (pranayama)
- Movement (asana)
- Interoception (internal body awareness)

- Yoga can be defined as the union of the mind, body and spirit or contemporarily a mind body practice involving breath, movement and attention to regulate physiological and psychological states and support self-regulation and well-being

(Sullivan et al, 2018)

Benefits of yoga

Physical Benefits of Yoga	
Improved General Physical Wellbeing:	Amelioration and/or Evidence Based Treatment for Physical Illness
Strength and Muscle Tone	*Pain-Related Disorders and Symptoms*
Joint Range of Motion	Low Back Pain
Flexibility and Mobility	Neck Pain
Postural Improvement	Musculoskeletal Pain
Balance and Coordination	Arthritis
Injury prevention	Chronic Pain
Insomnia	Headaches
Fatigue	*Chronic and Life-Threatening Illnesses*
Immunity	Cardiovascular Disease
Restless Legs	Cancer
Inflammation	Diabetes
Telomere length and healthy aging	Digestive/Metabolic Disorders

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(Brehms, 2023)

Benefits of yoga

Breathing and Vitality-Related Benefits of Yoga
Enhanced General Energetic Wellbeing:
Respiratory Efficiency
Stress Reduction and Relaxation
Transformation of Hypo- or Hyperarousal (into grounded, resilient, and open social engagement)
Energy and Vitality
Affective Reactivity
Amelioration and/or Evidence Based Treatment for Respiratory Illness
Respiratory Illness
Improved Lung Health

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Benefits of yoga

Mental, Cognitive, and Emotional Benefits of Yoga	
Improvements in Mental Wellbeing:	Improvements in Psychological Wellbeing:
Coping Skills and Resilience	Emotional Wellbeing and Balance
→ Davidson et al Meta-Analysis	Enhanced Mood
Memory	Optimistic outlook on life without toxic positivity
Mental Focus and Concentration	New mental, behavioral, and relational habits and grooves
Attention Span and Distractibility	Interconnection, interdependence, and co-regulation
Stress Perception	Compassion, lovingkindness, and appreciative joy

Amelioration and/or EBT for Psychological Illness:	
Anger	
Anxiety	All without • Spiritual bypassing • Toxic positivity
Attention Deficit	
Eating Disorders	
Trauma Spectrum	
Depression	

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(Brehms, 2023)

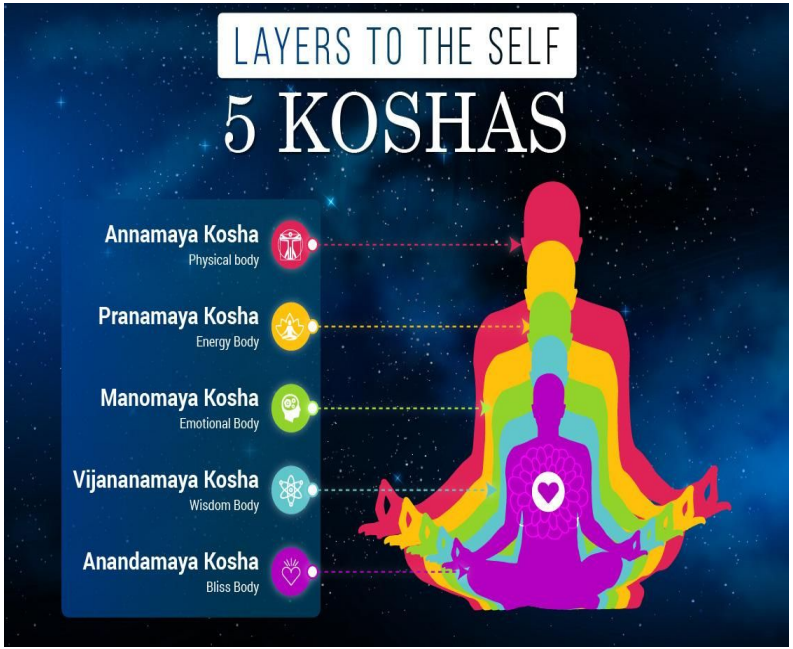
Occupational therapy relevance

- Adaptable across inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation settings
- Supports self-regulation and nervous system regulation
- Enhances coping, resilience, and stress management
- Promotes participation in meaningful occupations
- Supports occupational performance and engagement in daily life

(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020)

Yoga philosophy: Koshas framework

- **Annamaya** (physical body): structure, movement, physiology
- **Pranamaya** (energy/breath body): breath, autonomic regulation
- **Manomaya** (mental/emotional body): thoughts, emotions, perception
- **Vijnamaya** (wisdom/observer): insight, self awareness, meaning
- **Anandamaya** (bliss/integration): connection, ease, well-being



(Brehms, 2023)

Yoga philosophy: Koshas framework

Occupational therapy relevance:

- Reflects OT's holistic, whole-person framework
- Addresses physical, emotional, cognitive and psychosocial functioning
- Supports client-centered assessment and intervention across multiple dimensions of function
- Promotes participation in meaningful occupations and overall well-being

Key Message:

The Koshas framework aligns with occupational therapy's holistic approach by recognizing the interconnected nature of health, function and participation

Types of breathwork (pranayama)

Equal breathing

Alternate nostril breathing

Four part breathing

Extended exhalation breathing

Brahmari (bumble bee) breathing

Natural mindful breathing

Optimal functional breathing

Clinical application: breathwork can be selected based on the client's nervous system state and therapeutically guided through a trauma informed approach to support safety, self-regulation and engagement

Therapeutic effects of the breath

- Calming and grounding the nervous system
- Balancing and stabilizing emotional and physiological states
- Energizing and enhancing alertness
- Improving autonomic nervous system regulation
- Improving focus, awareness, and self-regulation

Key message:

Different breath practices can calm, balance, or energize nervous system depending on the individual's needs and current state.

Safety and contraindications

- Use caution with breath retention
- Monitor for hyperventilation, dizziness, or distress
- Modify or stop if symptoms increase
- Apply practices through a trauma-informed, client-centered lens
- Emphasize choice, safety and self-awareness

Key Message:

Breath practices should be individualized, paced appropriately, and adapted to each person’s physiological and emotional responses

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

- Balancing or stabilizing breath (can be adjusted to be more or less calming or activating)
  - Optimal functional breathing
  - Natural mindful breathing - awareness and observation
  - Equal breathing
  - Alternate nostril breathing
  - Four part breathing
- Occupational Therapy Application:
  - Supports self regulation during daily activities
  - Enhances attention, focus and task engagement
  - Promotes stress management
  - Can be integrated into ADLs, IADLs, and therapeutic activities



(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020; Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

- Calming or grounding breathing practices (re-grounds the nervous system and shifting arousal from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system)
  - Optimal functional breathing via subtle breathing
  - Natural breath awareness and observation
  - Brahmari (bumble bee breath)
  - Breathing with extended exhalation
- Occupational therapy application:
  - Supports self regulation during daily activities
  - Reduces stress and anxiety that interfere with participation
  - Enhances focus and therapeutic engagement
  - Can be incorporated into ADLs, IADLs and rehabilitation sessions



(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020; Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

- Vitalizing or expansive breathing practices (activates the nervous system system and shifts arousal from the dorsal vagal parasympathetic to the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system, with an ultimate goal of achieving a ventral vagal state)
  - Breathing with extended inhalation
- Occupational therapy application
  - Increases alertness and readiness for participation
  - Supports initiation of tasks and daily routines
  - Enhances engagement in therapy and meaningful occupations
  - May help clients transition from states of shutdown or low energy



(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020; Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

- Optimal functional breathing: Invitation to come to a balanced or sattvic state; most sustainable breath pattern

  First awareness; First benefit

  - Nasal: Silent breathing in and out the nose at all times. Mouth breathing is only for emergency
  - Diaphragmatic: Breathing is diaphragmatic in the sense that the primary movements are notably in the abdomen and lower rib aspect
  - Slow: ~5.5 to 10 breaths per minute. What is a slow breath for you?
  - Silent: inhalation is neither shallow nor forced, exhalation is easeful and quiet, can you invite silence into the breath?
  - Rhythmic: Rooted in your unique experience. What's your unique rhythm of breath? Breath oscillates with a soft texture and rhythm that is neither too rigid or relaxed, there is a balance of ease and effort

(Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

Natural mindful breathing: awareness and observation

- Pay mindful attention to the breath as it naturally flows in and out
- Do not seek to alter the breath - watch and observe with curiosity and openness of heart and mind
- The breath may change simply from observation or awareness - this is natural
- Cue observation or awareness of the inhalation
- Cue observation or awareness of the exhalation
- Cue awareness of breathing rhythm, length, volume, rest breaks
- Cue awareness of breathing texture
- Cue awareness of body locations where the breath may be felt –e.g at the nostrils, in the throat, the abdomen, the rib cage, could invite hands on the belly, at the bottom of the rib basket, the back of the rib basket, the sides of the rib basket, the side waist
- Cue ways to tune into the breath physically, emotionally, mentally
- Invite witnessing, observation without judgement
- Invite curiosity and open mindedness

(Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

Equal breathing

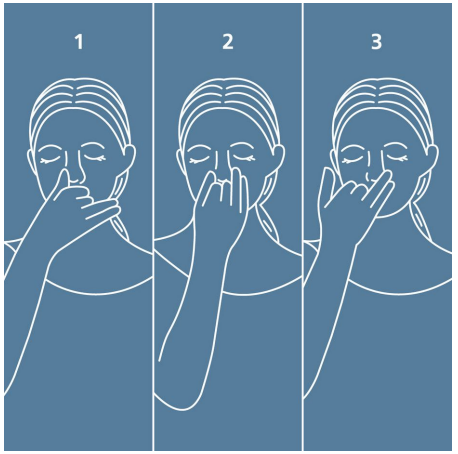
- Begin to sense the length of inhalations and exhalations, perhaps by consciously counting and then calculating the average length of each aspect of the breath.
- Start with equalizing rate of breath, instructing either to lengthen the shorter part of the breath or shorten the longer part or a little of both.
- Cue comfort in the breath as the guiding principle for how to equalize length

(Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

Alternate nostril breathing

- Sit in a comfortable position
- Place left hand on left knee
- Lift right hand up toward nose, exhale completely and then use right thumb to close the right nostril
- Inhale through left nostril and then close left nostril with your fingers
- Open right nostril and exhale through this side
- Inhale through right nostril and then close this nostril
- Open left nostril and exhale through left side
- This is one cycle (you can perform 2-5 cycles as appropriate)
- Always complete the practice by finishing with an exhale on the left side



(Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

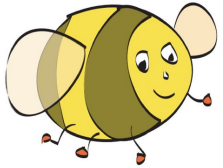
Four part breathing

- Four square (aka box) breathing - all phases of the breath, including the pauses, are of the same length
- Inhale slowly through your nose while counting to four, hold your breath for a count of four, then exhale slowly through your mouth while counting to four, and finally hold your breath again for a count of four.



Brahmari (Bumble bee) breath

- Inhale deeply through your nose
- Exhale with lips gently sealed while producing low to medium pitched humming sound in the throat for the entire length of the exhalation



(Brehms, 2023)

Breathwork (pranayama) interventions in rehabilitation

Breathing with extended exhalation (calming or grounding breathing)

- Start with natural breath observation
- Then invite measuring the length of the inhalation and exhalation and subsequent adjustment to support equal breathing
- Then invite a conscious and deliberate lengthening in the exhalation - work to the point of comfort - the inhalation should not be desperate or grasping

Breathing with extended inhalation (energizing or expansive breathing)

- Start with natural breath observation
- Then invite measuring the length of inhalation and exhalation and subsequent adjustment to support equal breathing
- Then invite a conscious and deliberate lengthening in the inhalation - work to the point of comfort - the exhalation should not be desperate or gasping

(Brehms, 2023)

Occupational therapy applications

Anxiety management

Pain management

Emotional regulation

Relaxed and sleep support

Improved participation in therapy

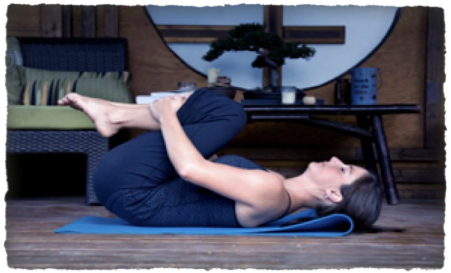
(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020)

Movement postures (asanas)

Breathing with movement is always integrated

Supine examples: Bring attention to mind, body, emotion and breath











Movement postures (asanas)

Sitting examples:

















Movement postures (asanas)

Standing examples:











Occupational therapy relevance

Body awareness

Posture control

Activity tolerance

Movement confidence

Relaxation

Practical methods to cultivate interoception

- Breath awareness
  - Noticing rate, volume, texture, sound, and rests at the top and bottom of the breath
- Mindful movement (incorporated into asana or posture practice)
  - Bring awareness to sensations during movement or yoga postures
- Sensory tracking (somatic-based)
  - Noticing sensations such as tightness, warmth or coolness,, tingling, heaviness, pulsing, ease or discomfort, numbness
- Body scan
  - Systematically notice sensations throughout the body

Occupational therapy application:

- Enhances body awareness and self-regulation, supports emotional awareness and stress management and improves engagement in meaningful occupations

(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020; Payne et al, 2015)

Occupational therapy relevance

Supports emotional awareness and self regulation

Enhances mind body connection

Supports engagement in meaningful occupations

Improves engagement, coping and overall well-being

Key message: Interoceptive awareness supports occupational performance by helping individuals recognize, interpret, and respond to internal body signals

(American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020)

Bottom up approach to address stress and anxiety

- Stress and anxiety don't just live in the "mind"—they show up across multiple layers (Koshas): body, breath, emotion, and cognition
- Yoga uses a bottom-up approach, working through the body and physiology to influence emotional and cognitive states
- In stress and anxiety, top-down approaches used alone can be limited when the nervous system is highly activated. Bottom-up approaches provide a direct entry point through the body to restore regulation and safety. (Davidson, 2020; Gerbarg & Brown, 2016)

Occupational therapy relevance:

- Supports emotional regulation and coping
- Enhances participation in meaningful occupations
- Provides body based strategies for stress and anxiety management

Bottom up approaches to address stress and anxiety

Annamaya Kosha (Body)

- How stress shows up: muscle tension, restlessness, pain and fatigue
- Intervention: Gentle asana, restorative, slow rhythmic movements

Pranamaya Kosha (Breath/Autonomic regulation)

- How stress shows up: shallow, rapid breathing, sympathetic activation
- Interventions: slow breath awareness, extended exhale, equal/coherent breathing

Integration of bottom up and top down processes

In states of high anxiety, top-down approaches alone may be less effective. Bottom-up regulation can create the physiological conditions necessary for cognitive processing to be effective (Gerbarg & Brown, 2016; Sullivan et al, 2018)

Manomaya Kosha (emotional/mental layer)

- How stress shows up: racing thoughts, emotional reactivity, anxiety loops
- Intervention: Breathwork/asana practiced with present moment awareness, body scan, noticing sensations (interoception), mindfulness, compassion focused meditations

Vijnanamaya Kosha (Insight/cognitive layer)

- How stress shows up: Negative beliefs, overidentification of thoughts
- Intervention: breathwork/asana to create space between stimulus and response, reflective practices, cognitive reframing, motivational interviewing

Anandamaya Kosha (integration/well being)

- How stress resolves: Sense of calm, feeling grounded and connected
- Intervention: deep relaxation, meaning and connection

Importance of bottom up regulation

Physiological regulation may support cognitive processing

Body based approaches create conditions for top down strategies to be more effective

Occupational therapy integration

Combining breathwork, movement, mindfulness, cognitive strategies, motivational interviewing, and functional rehabilitation

Yoga based techniques can help improve overall patient outcomes

- The incorporation of deliberate, measured movements, conscious breathing, and mindfulness strategies in yoga exercises facilitates the stimulation of the PNS nervous system, resulting in a state of relaxation
- Yoga has the potential to reshape habitual stress responses, cultivating resilience and emotional balance over time
- Ongoing research into the effects of yoga on brain plasticity and resilience may reveal how consistent practice can remodel neural pathways, enhancing our ability to cope with stress and emotional challenges. (Khajuria et al, 2023)

- Breathwork has also been shown to help reduce stress, anxiety rather than just CBT alone (Fincham et al, 2023)

- Integration of top down and bottom up approaches have been shown rapidly reduce symptoms of anxiety and stressor related disorders in numerous studies
- The tide of distress and dysfunction, which is overwhelming health care systems, will not be stopped by medications alone, nor by one-on-one therapies
- Mind-body interventions that are less costly and low-risk can provide long-term symptomatic relief to large populations (Gerbarg & Brown, 2016)

Application across rehabilitation settings

Inpatient rehabilitation

- Stress related to hospitalization
- Pain and anxiety management
- Supporting therapy participation

Outpatient rehabilitation

- Chronic stress and pain
- Lifestyle management
- Community reintegration

Rehabilitation populations

Neurologic, orthopedic, oncology, chronic pain, chronic long stay and general medical populations

Key takeaways

- Nervous system regulation influences rehabilitation outcomes
- Yoga-based somatic-informed approaches support emotional and physiological regulation
- Occupational therapists are uniquely positioned to integrate mind body interventions into rehabilitative care

Final reflection

OT’s can serve as the bridge between the mind and the body

Holistic rehabilitation approaches may improve occupational participation and quality of life

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Questions, comments or reflections?



Breathwork

- Optimal functional breathing (Balancing/stabilizing or calming/grounding or activating)
  - Nasal: Silent breathing in and out the nose at all times. Mouth breathing is only for emergency
  - Diaphragmatic: Breathing is diaphragmatic in the sense that the primary movements are notably in the abdomen and lower rib aspect
  - Slow: ~5.5 to 10 breaths per minute. What is a slow breath for you?
  - Silent: inhalation is neither shallow nor forced, exhalation is easeful and quiet, can you invite silence into the breath?
  - Rhythmic: Rooted in your unique experience. What's your unique rhythm of breath? Breath oscillates with a soft texture and rhythm that is neither too rigid or relaxed, there is a balance of ease and effort
- Natural mindful breathing (Calming/grounding)
  - Pay mindful attention to the breath as it naturally flows in and out
  - Do not seek to alter the breath - watch and observe with curiosity and openness of heart and mind
  - The breath may change simply from observation or awareness - this is natural
  - Cue observation or awareness of the inhalation
  - Cue observation or awareness of the exhalation
  - Cue awareness of breathing rhythm, length, volume, rest breaks
  - Cue awareness of breathing texture
  - Cue awareness of body locations where the breath may be felt –e.g at the nostrils, in the throat, the abdomen, the rib cage, could invite hands on the belly, at the bottom of the rib basket, the back of the rib basket, the sides of the rib basket, the side waist
  - Cue ways to tune into the breath physically, emotionally, mentally
  - Invite witnessing, observation without judgement
  - Invite curiosity and open mindedness
- Equal breathing (balancing/stabilizing)
  - Begin to sense the length of inhalations and exhalations, perhaps by consciously counting and then calculating the average length of each aspect of the breath.
  - Start with equalizing rate of breath, instructing either to lengthen the shorter part of the breath or shorten the longer part or a little of both.
  - Cue comfort in the breath as the guiding principle for how to equalize length
- Alternate nostril breathing (balancing/stabilizing, calming or activating)
  - Sit in a comfortable position
  - Place left hand on left knee
  - Lift right hand up toward nose, exhale completely and then use right thumb to close the right nostril
  - Inhale through left nostril and then close left nostril with your fingers
  - Open right nostril and exhale through this side
  - Inhale through right nostril and then close this nostril

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    - Open left nostril and exhale through left side
    - This is one cycle (you can perform 2-5 cycles as appropriate)
    - Always complete the practice by finishing with an exhale on the left side
- Four part breathing (balancing/stabilizing, calming or activating)
    - Four square (aka box) breathing - all phases of the breath, including the pauses, are of the same length
    - Inhale slowly through your nose while counting to four, hold your breath for a count of four, then exhale slowly through your mouth while counting to four, and finally hold your breath again for a count of four.
- Extended exhalation breathing (calming/grounding)
    - Start with natural breath observation
    - Then invite measuring the length of the inhalation and exhalation and subsequent adjustment to support equal breathing
    - Then invite a conscious and deliberate lengthening in the exhalation - work to the point of comfort - the inhalation should not be desperate or grasping
- Brahmari (bumble bee) breathing (calming/grounding)
    - Inhale deeply through your nose
    - Exhale with lips gently sealed while producing low to medium pitched humming sound in the throat for the entire length of the exhalation
- Natural mindful breathing (calming/grounding)
    - Pay mindful attention to the breath as it naturally flows in and out
    - Do not seek to alter the breath - watch and observe with curiosity and openness of heart and mind
    - The breath may change simply from observation or awareness - this is natural
    - Cue observation or awareness of the inhalation
    - Cue observation or awareness of the exhalation
    - Cue awareness of breathing rhythm, length, volume, rest breaks
    - Cue awareness of breathing texture
    - Cue awareness of body locations where the breath may be felt –e.g at the nostrils, in the throat, the abdomen, the rib cage, could invite hands on the belly, at the bottom of the rib basket, the back of the rib basket, the sides of the rib basket, the side waist
    - Cue ways to tune into the breath physically, emotionally, mentally
    - Invite witnessing, observation without judgement
    - Invite curiosity and open mindedness
- Extended Inhalation breathing (vitalizing or expanding)
    - Start with natural breath observation
    - Then invite measuring the length of inhalation and exhalation and subsequent adjustment to support equal breathing
    - Then invite a conscious and deliberate lengthening in the inhalation - work to the point of comfort - the exhalation should not be desperate or gasping

Asanas/Postures

Yoga postures paired with breathing and movement is a practice that brings attention to your mind, body, emotions, and breath all at once. By moving your body with your breath, you become more aware of how you feel physically and emotionally. This helps calm the mind, reduce anxiety, stress and create a sense of balance and relaxation. Here are some yoga postures to consider, grouped into supine (lying down), sitting, and standing postures. Each posture can be paired with mindful breathing and gentle movement to help promote relaxation and increased connection to body and breath:

Supine positions:

- Bridge Pose
  - Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the bed, hip-width apart. As you press your feet into the floor, gently lift your hips toward the ceiling. Clasp your hands underneath your back, rolling your shoulders slightly under to open your chest. With each inhale, feel your chest expand and your body lengthen. With each exhale, notice any release of tension or tightness. Pay attention to how your body feels and any emotions that arise. Allow your breath to guide your movement, creating a sense of calm and openness.

Easier Option: If clasping your hands feels too intense, keep your arms resting by your sides, palms down. Lift your hips gently with your feet grounding you, and focus on slow, steady breaths. Notice how your body responds and any emotions that come up, welcoming them with kindness and curiosity.



- Knees to chest pose
  - Lie on your back and gently draw your knees toward your chest. Wrap your arms around your shins, hold the backs of your thighs, or simply place your hands on your knees as they are bent—whatever feels most comfortable. With each **inhale**, feel your belly rise into your thighs. With each **exhale**, gently hug your knees a little closer and allow your body to soften into the bed. As you hold the pose, notice the gentle compression in your belly and the sense of being held. Pay attention to any sensations in your lower back or hips, and observe how your breath moves through your body. Emotionally, this pose can feel calming and nurturing—an opportunity to turn inward and rest. Allow yourself to feel supported by the bed beneath you, letting go of any tension with each breath out.



- Supine figure 4 pose
  - Lie on your back with both knees bent and feet flat on the bed. Cross your right ankle over your left thigh, just above the knee, forming a "figure 4" shape. Gently draw your left knee toward your chest, threading your right hand through the space between your legs and clasping behind your left thigh (or shin, if accessible). Keep your shoulders relaxed and your head resting on the pillow. As you **inhale**, feel the breath expand through your chest and belly. As you **exhale**, notice the stretch in your right hip and any areas of resistance. Breathe into those sensations without forcing—just observe. Allow any feelings that arise—comfort, tightness, ease, or resistance—to simply be there, supported by your breath.

  To switch sides: Gently release and place both feet back on the bed before repeating on the other side.



- Supine spinal twist pose
  - Lie on your back with your legs extended. Bend your right knee and gently draw it across your body to the left, letting it rest on the bed as your torso stays facing upward. Extend your right arm out to the side and turn your head to the right, if comfortable. Your left hand can rest on your right knee or beside you. As you **inhale**, feel your spine lengthen and your chest expand. As you **exhale**, gently soften into the twist, allowing the weight of your body to release into the ground. Notice the sensations in your back, shoulders, and belly. Twists can help release physical tension and emotional holding—observe if any feelings surface, and stay present with them through your breath.

To switch sides: Return to center slowly and repeat on the other side when you're ready.



- Resting pose with option for pillow under knees
  - Lie flat on your back with your legs extended and arms resting by your sides, palms facing up. For added comfort, place a pillow or rolled blanket under your knees to ease tension in your lower back. Gently close your eyes and allow your body to settle. Let your breath flow naturally. With each **inhale**, invite in a sense of ease. With each **exhale**, feel your body melt a little more into the support beneath you. Scan your body slowly, noticing areas of softness or tension. Welcome any emotions or thoughts that arise without judgment—just observe, breathe, and let them pass through like clouds in the sky. This pose is a time for complete rest. Stay here for several minutes, allowing your body, mind, and heart to integrate with a sense of calm and stillness.

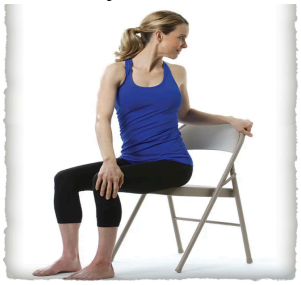


Sitting positions

- Seated Cat and Cow Pose
  - Sit comfortably with your hands resting on your knees, feet flat on the floor. As you **breathe in**, gently lift your chest and look slightly up—feel your body opening. As you **breathe out**, round your back and bring your chin toward your chest—feel your body curling in.Keep moving slowly with your breath. Notice how your spine feels as it moves. Notice your breath as it flows in and out. And gently notice how you feel—physically and emotionally—without needing to change anything. This simple movement can help release tension, calm the mind, and bring you into the present moment.



- Seated spinal twist pose
  - Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine tall. As you **breathe in**, lengthen your spine, sitting up tall. As you **breathe out**, gently twist your upper body to one side, using your hands to help you turn a little, but only as far as feels comfortable. Keep your movement slow and gentle, moving with your breath. Notice how your back and shoulders feel as you twist. Pay attention to your breath flowing in and out. And notice any emotions or feelings that come up—just observe them without trying to change anything. This twist can help release tightness in your back and calm your mind.



- Seated forward fold
  - As you **breathe in**, lengthen your spine, sitting tall. As you **breathe out**, gently bend forward from your hips, reaching toward your feet—only go as far as feels comfortable. Move slowly with your breath. Notice how your back and hamstrings feel as you fold forward. Pay attention to your breath flowing in and out. And notice any feelings or emotions that come up—just observe them without trying to change anything. This pose can help release tension in your back and calm your mind.



- Seated forward fold
  - Sit comfortably with your back straight and shoulders relaxed. As you **breathe in**, lengthen your neck, sitting tall. As you **breathe out**, gently tilt your head to one side, bringing your ear toward your shoulder—only go as far as feels comfortable. You can rest your hand lightly on the side of your head to support the stretch if you like. Move slowly with your breath, noticing the stretch along the side of your neck. Pay attention to your breath flowing in and out. Notice how your neck and shoulders feel. And be aware of any emotions or tension you might be holding—just observe without judgment. This stretch can help release neck tension and bring a sense of calm.

Repeat on the other side when ready



- Hands above head side body stretch pose
  - Sit or stand comfortably with your arms resting by your sides. As you **breathe in**, slowly raise both arms above your head, reaching toward the sky.As you **breathe out**, gently lean to one side, feeling a stretch along the side of your body—only go as far as feels comfortable. Keep your movements slow and connected to your breath. Notice how the side of your body feels as it stretches.Pay attention to your breath flowing in and out.
    And notice any feelings or emotions that arise—just observe them without trying to change anything. This stretch can help open up your sides, release tension, and create a sense of length and calm.

Repeat to other side when ready




Standing positions

- Neutral standing pose
  - Stand with your feet about hip-width apart, weight even on both feet. Keep your knees soft and your back straight.Let your arms rest by your sides.Breathe naturally and notice how your body feels.Pay attention to your breath going in and out. Notice any thoughts or feelings and just let them be.



- Modified tree pose
  - Stand tall and put your weight on one foot.Place your other foot with toes touching floor and heel elevated, or on your ankle or lower leg, or knee or inner thigh if able to tolerate.You can keep your hands in front of your chest or by your sides.**Breathe in** and feel yourself grow tall. **Breathe out** and try to stay steady.Notice how your foot and leg feel. Feel your breath going in and out. Notice how you feel—body and emotions—and just be with it. Hold for a few breaths, then switch sides.



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- Standing side body stretch with chair support pose
  - Stand next to a chair and hold onto the back of it for support.Raise one arm above your head as you **breathe in**.As you **breathe out**, gently lean to one side, feeling a stretch along the side of your body while keeping the other arm on the chair for support.Only go as far as feels comfortable.Keep your feet flat on the floor and your body supported by the chair.
    Notice how the side of your body feels.Pay attention to your breath going in and out.
    And notice any feelings or emotions without trying to change them.Hold for a few breaths, then come back to center and switch sides.



- Chair pose
  - Stand with your feet about hip-width apart.**Breathe in** and raise your arms straight up overhead.As you **breathe out**, bend your knees gently and lower your hips as if you're sitting back into an imaginary chair. Keep your chest lifted and your back straight. Feel the strength in your legs as they support your body. Notice your breath flowing in and out.
    Pay attention to how your body feels and any emotions that come up—just observe without judgment. Hold for a few breaths, then slowly stand back up.



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