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Diane Friel
wellnessbyfriel@gmail.com

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Yoga and Reiki as Self-Care Interventions for Professional Nurses: A Weekend Retreat

Diane Friel

Mindfulness Studies, Lesley University

Dr. Melissa Jean & Dr. Andrew Olendzki

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Abstract

Nurses provide compassionate care to their patients and often fail to turn that compassion inwards. Nurses are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress in the workplace related to the COVID-19 pandemic and research shows that workplace stress has a negative impact on both nurses and the patients they care for. The wellness of the nursing force is a public health priority. This paper describes the workplace challenges facing nurses today, and the associated impact on nurses and patients is supported with research. Research is offered supporting self-care and self-compassion as vital components to wellness, enhanced emotional resilience, and prevention of burnout and compassion fatigue among nurses. The research examined in this paper investigates the impact and efficacy of yoga and Reiki as self-care interventions to help nurses cope with the demands of the current health care environment and foster self-compassion. The research shows a need for nurses to engage in self-care for all the reasons stated. What was missing from the literature reviewed was how to engage nurses to invest in their self-care. A creative thesis follows the rationale paper and offers a yoga and Reiki retreat for nurses as a vehicle to engage nurses in self-care. The retreat creates a space for cultivating self-compassion and offers nurses an immersion into yoga and Reiki on an experiential level.

Keywords: Reiki, nurse, yoga, compassion, self-care, resilience, retreat

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Nurses are an integral component of the health care system. Nursing is a caring profession; nurses spend their day working to alleviate the suffering of patients using compassionate care as a fundamental element of nursing practice (Hofmeyer et al., 2016). The link between compassion and nursing is not new. Evidence confirms the benefits of compassion for quality patient outcomes, for clinicians, and for healthcare organizations (Hofmeyer et al., 2016). Compassion is at the heart of nursing. Nurses routinely prioritize their patients' care over their own self-care, failing to turn that compassion inwards, something that is of more importance than ever as nurses are required to function under unprecedented levels of pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Davies, 2020). As a nurse liaison, I observe the toll the stress, unrelenting pace, and overwhelming demands take on the bedside nurses. The promotion of self-care for wellness, enhanced emotional resilience, and the prevention of burnout and compassion fatigue among nurses is vital and a public health priority (Alexander & Rollins, 2015).

Research suggests that the development of mindfulness and self-compassion may help to improve the well-being and resilience of professionals in the health care setting and enhance compassionate care (Barratt, 2017). This paper will review quantitative and qualitative research that evaluates the impact of yoga or Reiki interventions on nurses' wellness, self-compassion, emotional resilience, mental and psychological health, burnout, and compassion fatigue (Barratt, 2017; Brathovde, 2017; Gustin 2013; Hilcove, 2021; Trent, 2018). From the space of my positionality as a nurse, the research examined in this paper supports the efficacy of yoga and Reiki as self-care interventions to help nurses cope with the demands of the current health care environment and foster self-compassion.

This paper will start with a look at the current workplace challenges faced by nurses, including a section about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the foundation for the need

for interventions to promote nurse wellness. The implications and value of self-care and self-compassion for nurse wellness are depicted. A description of yoga and Reiki is offered with an investigation of the benefits these practices could offer nurses. The embodiment of mindfulness through yoga practice and what this offers to nurses is described. The role of compassion in nursing, and the importance for nurses to practice self-compassion is discussed. The research on the impact and efficacy of yoga and Reiki interventions for nurses to cultivate self-care and self-compassion is reviewed. Limitations to the studies and suggestions for future study are offered. There is a discussion of the gaps identified in the literature leading to the weekend retreat for nurses to address those gaps.

Literature Review

Nurses' Work Environment

Nurses, as front-line health care providers, work under immense levels of stress that can lead to negative consequences that include job dissatisfaction and burnout, increased anxiety, patient dissatisfaction with care, increased levels of negative patient outcomes, and decreased patient safety (Alexander & Rollins, 2015). Healthcare reform changes have decreased hospitals' reimbursements, creating organizational restructuring and cost-cutting measures that result in higher nurse to patient ratios, and mandatory overtime (Alexander et al., 2015; Deible et al., 2015; Divya et al., 2021). The harsh work environment and day to day work stress lead to burnout, the leading cause of nurses leaving the bedside; nurse retention has been a problem for many years (Deible et al., 2015). Stress and burnout are reported by one-quarter to one-third of nurses and have been linked to many nurses leaving the bedside (Mehrabi et al., 2012). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the level of stress on nurses. I see this at my hospital with nurses carrying patient loads of 6 or more as well as having to do double duty as nursing aides.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has created enormous, diverse, and unprecedented challenges globally that are highlighted in healthcare as providers find themselves at risk for virus exposure and transmission to their loved ones, longer work hours, staffing shortages, cross over of responsibilities, and shortage of personal protective equipment (Divya et al., 2021). Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses are leaving the bedside at an alarming rate: the culmination of extra and shifting job responsibilities, greater nurse-to-patient staffing ratios, additional infection control practices, and concerns for reduced standards of care were all cited by nurses as reason for leaving the profession during the pandemic (George et al., 2021). Because so many nurses have quit during the COVID-19 pandemic, my hospital has required nurses in non-patient facing roles to sign up for patient care shifts.

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a tremendous emotional toll on nurses with anxiety, depression, and exhaustion due to the increased workload, the fears of catching the virus, and the witnessing of so many deaths (Divya et al., 2021). Shortages of ICU beds are creating the expectation for nurses to make ethically challenging decisions around resource allocation (Divya et al., 2021). Making clinical decisions in the face of limited resources such as choosing which patient will get the only remaining ICU bed, realizing the other patient will likely die, is not how nurses were trained and educated to care for patients and subjects the nurses to moral injury and trauma (Nickitas, 2021). This demonstrates an increased need to support the well-being of the nursing workforce.

Self-Care Techniques for Nurses

The workplace stressors previously discussed can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout and are directly related to the health and safety of both nurses and the patients under their care

(Alexander et al., 2015; Cocchiara et al., 2019; Divya, 2021; Mehrabi et al., 2012; Parujuli et al., 2021). Self-care is a potential proactive intervention providing a positive influence on burnout, attrition, and nursing satisfaction (Vitale, 2009). A stable nursing workforce is vital in the provision of quality patient care in hospitals, and the rapid turnover and lack of staff retention is a vicious cycle that continues to have a detrimental effect on nurses' satisfaction and contributes to work stress and burnout (Raingruber & Robinson, 2007). Nurses who participated in a study evaluating the influence of a 3-month self-care program consisting of yoga, Tai Chi, and meditation reported becoming aware of enhanced problem-solving ability and increased ability to focus on patient needs suggesting that investing in the health of nurses by offering self-care classes may help hospitals retain registered nurses and improve nurse provided patient care (Raingruber & Robinson, 2007). Nurses may stay employed longer in a hospital where they believe management finds value in investing in nurses' wellness (Raingruber & Robinson, 2007).

This demonstrates a need for self-care interventions for nurses. The next section will describe yoga, embodied mindfulness in yoga, and Reiki, and review research on the impact and efficacy of yoga and Reiki self-care interventions for nurses. The potential benefits these practices offer to nurses and their patients will be discussed.

Yoga

Yoga is a 3,000-year-old discipline that originated in India, and regular yoga practice reduces stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, and improves sleep patterns (Woodyard, 2011). The Sanskrit word yoga means "yoke" or "union" of mind, body, and spirit (Salmon et al., 2009). Yoga is an eight-limbed program designed to deconstruct the habits of the human mind that cause suffering, replace those habits with a dynamic of learning and action, and foster the power of non-reaction (Gates, 2015). Yoga philosophy and practice are a form of mind-body

practice that help integrate the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects within an individual (Jain & Hauswirth-Jain, 2017).

Mindfulness Embodied in Yoga. Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention with openness and curiosity to both internal experiences such as thoughts, emotions, and body sensations, and external experiences, and to accept them in a non-judgmental way (Dragon, 2015). Mindfulness allows for greater emotional regulation and acceptance and decreased emotional reactivity (Dragon, 2015). Mindfulness for health professionals helps create more awareness of their own body and more compassion toward themselves, increasing their self-care which is important when caring for others (Dragon, 2015). The practice of yoga encourages this mindful awareness; the moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, and ongoing practice is reported by practitioners to promote psychological well-being and physical benefits (Salmon et al., 2009). “Asana is ultimately a container for our awareness” (Gates, 2015). Training of the mind and body on the yoga mat to realign with the present moment by using the body and the breath, gives the nurse, in her workday, the ability to repeatedly take a breath and realign with whatever is going on in the moment with focused attention.

Yoga is a coherent set of practices which help the practitioner to live mindfully, by design, on purpose (Gates, 2015). Yoga teaches the ability to be present with whatever is going on, experience it with curiosity and without reaction or judgement, a beneficial skill for the nurse and an aide to critical thinking and wise decision making. Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind; as the yogi finds alignment in the present moment the mind becomes quiet and reactivity is reduced (Gates, 2015). While the physical effects of yoga will go away if the practice is topped, the deeper level of yoga retrains the CNS in ways which will stay with the

practitioner (Gates, 2015). “Yoga is not merely touching your toes, or standing on your head, or folding yourself into a lotus pretzel. It’s about how you do what you do, and how you live your daily life on a moment-to-moment basis” (Schiffmann, 1996, p. xxiv). In this way, yoga becomes an expression of embodied mindfulness. The next section explores the benefits yoga practice can offer nurses and research supporting the positive impact of yoga practice for nurses.

“Yoga is the most ancient action-discipline system known in the world whose exercises help people to cope with stress” (Mehrabi et al., 2012, p. 422). Yoga is a practice that can re-establish healthy breathing practices and aid in early recognition of the signs of stress (Jain & Hauswirth-Jain, 2017). The practice of yoga asanas is highly beneficial for physical well-being, making the body strong and healthy (Jain & Hauswirth-Jain, 2017). Yoga asana practice can be a powerful tool for holistic well-being (Jain & Hauswirth-Jain, 2017).

Nurses reported benefits from yoga practice include increased self-awareness, enhanced problem-solving and decision-making capability, increased ability to focus on patient needs, improved stress coping strategies, decreased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and better sleep quality (Motley, 2017). Apryl Motley, a professional writer, interviewed several nurses who reported yoga’s positive effects in self-awareness, improved stress coping strategies, decreased emotional exhaustion, and better sleep quality (Motley, 2017). The nurses in these interviews noticed ripple effects toward a significant difference in better health in just 10-15 minutes of yoga a day, an important, even critical, factor for nurses who routinely prioritize their time to the care of others (Motley, 2017).

Nurses who invest time in self-care including yoga, Reiki, and meditation improve their overall well-being and may provide higher quality patient care (Deible et al., 2015). An eight-week program was held at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center for Integrative Medicine

in which nurses attended weekly session of yoga, Reiki, and meditation. The participants completed surveys before and after the study, and one month after the last session. Findings included: improved focus, increased positive feelings about nursing, feeling more peaceful/relaxed, improved well-being, feeling less reactive, and less anxious (Deible et al., 2015). This study supports the need for nurses to invest time in self-care and the effectiveness of yoga, Reiki, and meditation as interventions for self-care.

Improving employee well-being and resilience to stress are key issues facing many organizations (Hartfiel, 2011). Resilience is the capacity to maintain mental and emotional health despite experiencing adversity (Trent et al., 2018). Nurses as frontline professionals with high levels of stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue in the workplace could benefit from techniques and skills to regulate stress and improve resilience. Resilience to stress provides the nurse with the capacity to respond productively when faced with significant pressure (Hartfiel, 2011). A study of university employees by Hartfiel (2011), showed that even a short program of yoga is effective for enhancing emotional well-being and resilience to stress in the workplace. Studies by Alexander et al., (2015), and Trent et al. (2018), suggest that yoga is a therapeutic mind-body practice that could foster self-care and enhance resilience. Improved resilience was also reported in a study of 32 healthcare professionals in India after using a 2-hour yogic breathing intervention for four days (Divya et al., 2021). These three studies will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Sydarshan Kriya Yoga, a yogic breathing technique, was used as a mind-body intervention in a study in India (Divya et al., 2021). This study reported improved resilience in addition to significant reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as improved quality of sleep (Divya et al., 2021). This study is impactful because it offers a form of yoga intervention

that could be used during the workday. Nurses often work 12-hour shifts and may not take the time to engage in self-care practices because it feels challenging to commit to a long yoga practice after work. The participants were also given a 35-minute home practice that included pranayama, bhastrika, and Sydarshan Kriya Yoga breathing; this eliminates the need to travel to a gym or yoga studio making it easier to fit self-care into a busy schedule (Divya et al., 2021). Another important value of this study was that the positive results were found at the end of the study and on day 40 after the practice, suggesting these benefits are long term (Divya et al., 2021). The next study also found a long-term benefit from integrating yoga into daily life.

A study by Trent et al. (2018), suggests that the integration of yoga-based practices, skills and concepts into daily life and work could help mitigate or prevent the impact of chronic stress on nurses' psychological health and well-being. The study used a 5-day, residential yoga-based immersion program delivered at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, MA (2018). The program included 5 hours of daily Hatha style yoga sessions, meditation, breathing techniques, and education about mindful communication, mindful sleep preparation, and mindful eating (Trent et al., 2018). The study found significant improvement in the participants' self-reported stress, resilience, positive and negative affect, mindfulness, empowerment, vitality, sleep quality, and exercise, and the improvements, except for duration of exercise, were still present at the 2-month follow-up (Trent et al., 2018).

Alexander et al. (2015), reported that the promotion of self-care and the prevention of nurse burnout is a public health priority, and their 8-week study examined the efficacy of yoga as a self-care tool to manage and reduce stress. Their yoga intervention included teaching awareness of the breath, basic postural alignment, deep breathing, and monitoring of the mind with simple meditations which were increased as the series progressed (Alexander et al., 2015).

Compared to controls, the 40 yoga participants in their study reported significantly higher capacity to engage in self-care, and less emotional exhaustion, corroborating the value and efficacy of yoga to improve nurses' self-care and reduce burnout (Alexander et al., 2015).

Nurses are subject to immense stress related to making critical decisions regarding patient care with constant interruptions from call bells, aides, and doctors, while striving to maintain patient satisfaction and safety. Stress can impact the nurse's ability to deliver optimum patient care and has been linked to poorer patient outcomes and on the job injuries (Mehrabi et al., 2012). Mehrabi et al. (2012) studied the effect of yoga on the stress-coping strategies of ICU nurses using one hour Hatha style yoga classes, for eight weeks, including breathing exercises (pranayama), physical movement (asana), and deep relaxation (savasana). The results of their study showed that yoga could significantly promote stress coping strategies, specifically yoga could lower stress through increased emotion and focus strategy and increased problem focus strategies (Mehrabie et al., 2012).

Stress and sleep are closely linked; stress can adversely affect sleep quality and duration and lack of sleep can increase stress. Even slight sleep deprivation can adversely affect memory, concentration, attention, judgement, and mood, causing anxiety, depression, fatigue, and confusion (Parajuli et al., 2021). High levels of stress and poor sleep quality are also correlated with physical health issues like hypertension, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases (Parajuli et al., 2021). Nurses work in 8- or 12-hour shifts, as day, evening, or night shifts (Fang, & Li, 2015), or a combination of these, which can wreak havoc with the sleep quality of nurses and put both nurses and their patients at risk for the negative consequences associated with sleep deprivation.

Fang and Li (2015) did a study to determine the impact of yoga on the quality of sleep and work stress of staff nurses at a general hospital in China. The study found that 58% of the

105 nurses in their study had sleep disorders (Fang and Li, 2015). The Fang and Li (2015) study investigated whether yoga could improve sleep quality and work stress in 120 female staff nurses, aged 25-51 years old. The participants were divided into a yoga group (YG) and a non-yoga group (NG). The YG performed yoga regularly in a hospital yoga workshop that included physical postures, loosening exercises, breathing exercises, and meditation. Sleep quality and perceived work pressure/stress levels were assessed using self-reported questionnaires at baseline and at six months after the yoga intervention (Fang & Li, 2015). The results of this study found no difference in stress levels at baseline between the YG and the NG, but there was a significant statistical difference after six months of follow-up (Fang & Li, 2015). The YG had better sleep quality compared to the NG, suggesting that yoga can improve sleep quality in staff nurses (Fang & Li, 2015). This is an important concept for the nurses' wellbeing and the safety and quality outcomes for patients in their care, especially in the setting of shiftwork that is prevalent in nursing. Self-care for nurses includes getting enough sleep.

As previously stated, negative consequences of stress and poor sleep quality impact the health and wellness of the nurse and include anxiety, fatigue, depression, and physical health issues such as hypertension, obesity, and cardiovascular disease (Parajuli et al., 2021). Poor sleep and stress impact the nurse's ability to function at work including problems with attention, memory, and concentration which have been correlated with an increase in patient care errors (Parajuli et al., 2021). A pilot study using 33 female nurses at a tertiary care hospital in India assessed the effectiveness of a four-week yoga intervention (Raingruber & Robinson, 2007). The yoga intervention included Sukshma Vyayama (joints loosening) breathing exercise, asana (postures), pranayama, and deep relaxation techniques and was done for 45 minutes per day, 5 days per week (Raingruber & Robinson, 2007). Perceived stress and sleep quality were measured

using self-reported questionnaires; both were completed at baseline and after the 4-week yoga intervention (Rainbruber & Robinson, 2007). This study found that yoga reduced nurses' perceived stress by 27.01% and improved nurses' sleep quality by 38.68% from pre-to post-scores (Raingruber & Robinson, 2007). This study supports increased overall well-being and enhanced patient care for nurses and their patients through an integrated yoga program.

The previous studies looked at nurses' perceived stress through self-reported scale questionnaires. A study by Hilcove et al. (2021) used biological markers of stress such as levels of cortisol, known as the stress hormone, and blood pressure, in addition to qualitative data collected on perceived stress. Qualitative data was collected from journals completed by the intervention participants which detailed the number of minutes per week they completed home yoga practice, and any personal observations that resulted from practicing yoga as part of their self-care practice (Hilcove et al., 2021). The trial included 80 direct care hospital employees and was not limited to nurses. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a six-week, mindfulness-based yoga intervention on perceived stress and its impact. It did not show significant changes in the cortisol or blood pressure the biological markers of stress. The mindfulness-based yoga intervention group had a statistically significant improvement in stress and burnout, vitality, sleep quality, serenity, and mindfulness compared to the control group (Hilcove et al., 2021). This demonstrated a positive effect on the health and well-being of nurses and that a mindfulness-based yoga intervention is an effective self-care modality for nurses to manage or alleviate the negative effects of stress and burnout (Hilcove et al., 2021).

Reiki

This section will describe Reiki and the benefits it may offer to nurses and their patients. Research on the impact of Reiki practice on nurses' wellness, including self-care and self-compassion, will be explored, including limitations and future research suggestions.

Reiki is composed of two Japanese words: "Rei," meaning spirit or soul, and "ki," meaning universal life force energy (Whelan & Whelan, 2003). Reiki is an energy healing practice in which there is a transmission of energy through the practitioner's hands to help restore the body to homeostasis (Whelan & Wishnia, 2003). Reiki is a non-invasive energy therapy that is done with a fully clothed recipient either seated in a chair, or lying on a treatment table, lasting between 30-60 minutes as the Reiki practitioner places their hands, either slightly above the body or lightly touching, in a series of hand positions on the head, front, and back of the torso (Brathovde, 2017). As it is channeled to the recipient from the practitioner, Reiki energy flows to the area in the recipient's body where it is needed for healing (Whelan & Wishnia, 2003).

Reiki by nurses offers multiple benefits to patients including decreased pain, anxiety, muscle tension, blood pressure, increased immune response, and accelerated healing and improved sleep patterns (Brathovede, 2017; Vitale, 2009; Watson Natale, 2010). In a Reiki session, the practitioner, who has been trained and attuned by a Master Reiki practitioner to receive universal healing energy, acts as a channel or conduit for the healing energy to pass to the patient whose body then heals itself using Reiki energy (Whelan & Wishnia, 2003).

Recent literature suggests that the practice of Reiki has relevance for the practitioner as well as the receiver (Vitale, 2009). Nurses who are Reiki practitioners also receive the benefits of Reiki as they give their patients a session. Nurses report clinical observations that the practice of

Reiki promotes relaxation, lessens pain, and stimulates inner healing, also suggesting a benefit of self-care Reiki for the nurse (Vitale, 2009). Reiki can provide a heightened sense of spiritual awareness to both the practitioner and the client and practicing Reiki can offer self-restoration and spiritual growth to the nurse (Watson Natale, 2010). Nurses who use Reiki report increases in self-caring behaviors and personal awareness and an intensification of healing presence and personal spirituality, and in this way, Reiki may be a valuable tool for restoration and empowerment (Watson Natale, 2010).

Reiki offers a tool for self-care that is a compassionate, soothing, nurturing practice that could help nurses connect with their sense of compassion and caring and restore their energy reserves (Brathovde, 2017; Vitale, 2009; Whelan, 2003). As previously discussed, nurses are subject to workplace stress, and this may lead to compassion fatigue (Watson Natale, 2010). Nurses can benefit from cultivating their ability to have compassion for themselves, and their self-compassion enhances their ability to provide compassionate care to their patients (Wiklund Gustin & Wagner, 2013).

Optimal physical and emotional health is crucial to preventing burnout among nurses, and stress management strategies, including energy work, are recommended for nurses and other healthcare providers (Vitale, 2009). The practice of Reiki energy therapy may provide a self-care technique to help support the nurse manage stress. A study by Cuneo et al., assessed the impact of Reiki education, training, and practice on the work-related stress of 26 registered nurses from a large metropolitan hospital. The nurses participated in a 21-day Reiki class which consisted of Reiki attunement, individual Reiki practice performed daily at home, and practice giving and receiving Reiki treatments to each other in the class (2011). Qualitative data were collected using perceived stress scales at baseline, after 21 days of self-Reiki practice, and from participants'

self-care Reiki diaries (Cuneo et al., 2011). The data showed a 5.9-point decrease in the perceived stress scales, supporting Reiki practice as a way for the nurse to decrease work-related stress; the self-diary comments demonstrated clinically significant changes supporting the decrease in the PSS scores, the most common findings included better sleep, and feeling relaxed, calm, and peaceful (Cuneo et al., 2011).

Healing touch and energy work practices are not new to nursing; healing touch and therapeutic touch therapies that have been developed within the discipline of nursing have been used by nurses for more than 30 years for stress management, relaxation, and healing (Vitale, 2009). “Reiki has a unique difference from other subtle energy touch therapies, that is, the practitioner’s ability to share life force energy via self-treatment or the self as recipient” (Vitale, 2009, p.130). A phenomenological study, by Vitale (2009) investigated the lived experience of 11 U.S. registered nurses who self-identified as being trained in Reiki level I, II, or III, and who practice Reiki for self-care. The nurses in this study report that Reiki for self-care is useful for daily and workday stress management of hectic healthcare environments (Vitale, 2009). Vitale (2009) suggests that an implication from this study is for nursing school curriculum to include a focus on the healing art of nursing in basic nursing education content which should include the value of caring for the self.

The research supports the importance of nurses engaging in self-care and the benefit of Reiki for self-care. In 2017 Angela Brathovde MSN, did a study of 25 nurses at a 400-bed suburban medical center to determine if nurses’ perception of their own caring behaviors change if they are taught Reiki Level I as a self-care practice (Brathovde, 2017). The nurses were taught Reiki in a one-day class which included a didactic portion, a Reiki attunement, and continued practice of Reiki for 3-months, three to five times per week (Brathovde, 2017). This study used a

self-reported questionnaire before, and at 3 months after, Reiki training, a post-study survey, and an interview to report nurses' experiences learning Reiki as a self-care practice, and their perceptions of any changes in their ability to care for themselves and their clients since the training (Brathovde, 2017). The nurses reported they felt able to handle stressful events more calmly than before learning and practicing self-Reiki; they felt Reiki enhanced their own spirituality and enabled them to connect to their patients spiritually in very intimate ways, and reported that, "taking care of yourself helps you to take care of others" (Brathovde, 2017, p. 23). This demonstrated that nurses' perception of caring for others benefits, and maintains the benefit over time, from practicing Reiki for self-care (Brathovde, 2006).

Limitations and Future Research. The research reviewed in this paper supports a positive impact and efficacy of Reiki as a self-care intervention for nurses' wellness and the cultivation of self-compassion and resilience. There are several limitations repeated throughout the studies that will be summarized here, with suggestions for future research. The small sample sizes and lack of diversity suggest a need for larger, randomized studies with a broader sample of participants. There were no control groups in these studies so any observed effects may not be because of Reiki alone, future research would benefit from using a randomized, placebo-controlled efficacy study. The studies were conducted at single sites and results may not be generalizable to other institutions or hospitals. The participants in two of the studies were Reiki Masters, so the results may not be representative of other levels of Reiki attunement. Further research using larger, more diverse samples, across multiple sites, with controls, will contribute to data assurance of the efficacy of Reiki for nurse self-care and patient care.

The research reviewed has supported the importance of nurse self-care and the integral importance compassion has for both self-care and patient care. The next section will describe

compassion as it relates to nursing. It will explore compassion, self-compassion, and compassion fatigue in nursing and the associated implications for nurses and their patients. Research related to the role of compassion in nursing care, self-compassion, and compassion fatigue will be reviewed.

Compassion and Nursing

It is difficult to find a single, exact definition of compassion; the term is often used interchangeably with empathy, caring, and sympathy, and patients and nurses have their own personal definitions, indicating that compassion may be a value and an emotion that is culturally and contextually specific (Aagard et al., 2018). Qualitative data from an international survey with 1,323 completed questionnaires showed that in the United States, compassionate care is defined as caring with listening, developing a relationship, alleviating suffering, touch, and going beyond the normal role of the nurse (Aagard et al., 2018). According to Schantz (2007), the concept of compassion in the United States is not clearly defined and often used interchangeably with the word caring. A phenomenological study by Graber and Mitcham (2004) that tried to identify clinical actions, interventions, and interpersonal relationships that exhibit compassion by nurses, also found that compassion and caring were used interchangeably among clinicians.

Regardless of the definition of compassion, compassionate care matters to patients, and “patients and their families say the manner in which they are listened to and cared for with compassion matters just as much as the quality of health care itself” (Hofmeyer et al., 2016, p. 202). A study by Van der Cingel (2014), using 61 in-depth interviews and six group interviews with patients and nurses, found that compassion is perceived by the participants as an indispensable aspect of care. It is essential to identify ways to enable and support the nurse to deliver compassionate care and avoid compassion fatigue.

Workplace stress may lead to compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is defined as the physical and mental exhaustion, and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Unlike burnout, which is caused by everyday work stresses (dealing with insurance companies, making treatment choices), compassion fatigue results from taking on the emotional burden of a patient (Merriam-Webster, 2022). As healing professionals, nurses work to promote health in complex patients, within health care systems with increasingly demanding workloads, and increasing staff and resource shortages that lead to compassion fatigue and burnout (Watson Natale, 2010). As previously stated, the COVID-10 pandemic has created unprecedented levels of stress in nurses' environments; now more than ever there is a need for interventions to prevent compassion fatigue (Davies, 2020). The next section looks at the role of self-compassion in compassionate care and avoidance of compassion fatigue.

Self-compassion is a vital component to enhance compassionate care and avoid compassion fatigue (Davies, 2020). Self-compassion is the process of turning compassion inwards and being kind to yourself and can be beneficial for both the caregiver and the individual needing care (Davies, 2020). Nurses often give so much in their role as healers that they fail to practice self-care and fail to offer compassion to themselves. Just as nurses assess their patients, meeting their patients' needs, they need to do self-checks for areas that need attention and meet themselves with compassion (Motley, 2017). The American Nurses Association has a provision that states, "The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others" (Watson Natale, 2020, p. 173). This underscores the need for interventions that help cultivate and foster self-compassion and self-care in nurses for their own benefit and that of the patients under their care.

Wiklund Gustin et al., state that compassionate care is not only something the caregiver does, but also an intentional way of becoming and belonging together with another person in a process that honors the caregiver both as a giver of compassion, and as an active recipient of compassion (2013). Their study, using reflexive writing to explore study participants' understanding of compassionate caring and self-compassion as a source to compassionate care, found that compassion for others can be taught, and that developing a compassionate self with the ability to be sensitive, nonjudgmental, and respectful towards oneself promotes compassion towards others (Wiklund Gustin et al., 2013). In this way both the caregiver and the patient benefit from the compassionate care. Their study also shows that if nursing students develop a compassionate self through an experiential and reflective learning process it will promote their compassion towards others, and perhaps this reflexive work is something that could be added to nursing school curriculum giving new nurses baseline skills that can be built upon as they build their nursing practice (Wiklund Gustin et al., 2013). Compassion is the heart of nursing, the research supports that nurses and their patients benefit from compassionate care. As a student of mindfulness, and a nurse, the idea of compassionate care as an intentional way of becoming and being with patients in a process that honors the nurse as giver of compassion and a recipient of compassion, resonates deeply.

Discussion

The literature review demonstrates that nurses often prioritize the care of others over their own care, to the detriment of their wellbeing and the care provided to their patients. It is clear from the literature that there is a need for, and benefits from, nurses' engagement in self-care practices, and the cultivation of self-compassion. What is lacking from the literature is how to engage nurses to invest in self-care, to turn the compassion they give to their patients inward, to

foster resilience, and to alleviate compassion fatigue that results from never replenishing their emotional reservoirs. The creative thesis which follows addresses this gap by tapping the multitasking nature of the nurse and offering CEU credits for attending a self-care retreat. The yoga and Reiki retreat will provide nurturing to the nurturer while simultaneously crossing something off the long to-do list.

The research suggests that yoga and Reiki are two self-care interventions with positive outcomes for nurses and their patients. This experiential retreat is created with the intention of providing a space for nurses to engage in yoga for self-care and self-compassion, and to experience Reiki for self-nurturing, healing, and cultivating self-compassion. The practices in this weekend retreat offer immediate stress-relief benefits to the participants, and they will leave with resources to continue practices of their choice.

As a nurse finding little time to nurture my own self-care, and feeling guilty when I take that time, I believe that the addition of eligibility to earn CEU credits, that must be earned anyway, provides an incentive that will attract nurses. In my experience, the requirement to attain CEU credits is one more thing on a long list of demands on my time, and CEU course offerings are often repetitive and dull variations of articles with tests at the end. This retreat will be enticing to nurses because it is like a spa weekend, full of opportunities to relax, restore, and rejuvenate, while obtaining mandatory CEU's for the nursing license.

This retreat is an opportunity to immerse in a supportive, nurturing environment, during which all the activities provided are also healing interventions. Nurses educate and promote health care but often fail to lead by example. I believe, from my years of yoga, Reiki and meditation practice, Buddhism study and practice, and the Lesley Master's in Mindfulness Studies curriculum, that the best teacher is experience. I experience yoga as an embodiment of

mindfulness that I carry with me off the mat into my life. This retreat is intended as an opportunity to delve into the experience of self-care and self-compassion through yoga and Reiki practices, with the hope that the felt experience of the practice benefits will foster continuing practice. The yoga practices engage participants in embodied mindfulness. The take-home materials will provide nurses with resources for continued practice after the retreat environment. Participants engage in this experiential work with their peers and can exchange contact information for the creation of a continuing community sangha of nurses.

Conclusion

Nurses work in stressful environments striving to provide compassionate care, often failing to offer compassion to themselves, and neglecting self-care, to the detriment of nurses' well-being, and the quality of care given to their patients. The research reviewed supports the need for self-care interventions to help nurses cope with demands of the current health care environment, prevent burnout, manage stress and anxiety, build emotional resilience, and cultivate self-compassion. The research studies support the efficacy of yoga and Reiki as interventions for nurses that have a positive impact on the overall wellbeing of the nurse, and patient care and outcomes. Future research would benefit from utilizing larger, more diverse populations and use of control groups. While the research shows that nurses often fail to take time for self-care, there is a gap in the research on how to engage nurses to invest in their self-care. There is little research assessing the impact of yoga and Reiki together as interventions. Using yoga and Reiki together, the yoga and Reiki retreat will engage nurses to participate in self-care practices and cultivate self-compassion. Yoga sequences and a pranayama practice are included in the appendices to support post-retreat self-care for participants. The yoga and Reiki retreat has been created to support nurses' self-care and self-compassion.

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[international-classification-of -diseases](https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases)

Yoga and Reiki Weekend Retreat

For Participants

Audience: This retreat has been created for nurses and nurse managers

Retreat Description: This retreat is a weekend immersion of self-care using yoga practice and Reiki sessions to nurture body, mind, and spirit. Learn to cultivate self-compassion through Hatha, Yin, or restorative yoga practices each day of the retreat. A guided yoga nidra rejuvenates the body and refreshes the mind and spirit. Reiki sessions offered throughout the weekend cleanse the chakras and facilitate the body's natural healing. The gentle, non-invasive art of channeling Reiki healing energy is the ultimate gift of self-compassion and self-care. Gassho meditation, and Pranayama breathing exercises help calm the mind and balance the nervous system. The yoga practices prepare the body for meditation and cultivate embodied mindfulness. Mind, body, and emotional wellness are cultivated through the experiences of yoga and Reiki this weekend.

Learning Objectives: The goals of this retreat are as follows:

- To engage in an experiential practice of self-care through yoga and Reiki
- To nurture self-compassion through an experiential practice of yoga and Reiki
- To experience embodied mindfulness through the practice of yoga

Continuing Education Credits: This retreat is eligible for 20 continuing education credits. To receive the credits, participants must attend the full retreat and fill out the survey at the end. CEU certificates will be distributed at the end of the retreat.

Retreat Schedule:

DAY 1

4:00 p.m.	Arrive and check-in
5:00 p.m.	Welcome
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	Restorative yoga with Reiki

DAY 2

7:00 a.m.	Hatha yoga and Pranayama
8:45 a.m.	Breakfast and break
9:45 a.m.	Reiki introduction, Gassho meditation and Reiki share

- 10:30 a.m. Yoga nidra and opportunity for individual Reiki sessions; break
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch and break
- 1:30 p.m. Yin yoga introduction and practice and pranayama
- 5:00 p.m. Exchange and journaling of experiences
- 5:30 p.m. Break and opportunity for individual Reiki sessions
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Restorative Yin yoga with Reiki
- 9:00 p.m. Exchange sharing of experiences

DAY 3

- 8:00 a.m. Gentle yoga and pranayama
- 9:30 a.m. Breakfast and break; opportunity for individual Reiki sessions
- 10:30 a.m. Exchange and journaling of experiences
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch
- 12:15 p.m. Final gathering, Gassho meditation and Reiki share; Q&A

END OF RETREAT

Option to stay after retreat for individual Reiki sessions

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Retreat Description: This retreat provides an immersive experience of yoga and Reiki for nurses. The CEU credits are offered as incentive to draw the nurses to engage in self-care, something they often put as a low or last priority. Yoga offers mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits, and Reiki offers physical and emotional healing. The yoga practices will offer nurses the opportunity to experience restorative, yin and hatha yoga. The yin sequences have been developed to target areas that will be particularly beneficial to nurses such as hips and low back. Every activity has been designed to nurture the nurturer. Nurses spend their days caring for patients with compassion and during this retreat it is their turn to experience compassion within these practices to foster their personal development of self-compassion, something that they often neglect. Reiki sessions will be offered throughout the retreat to channel healing energy to the nurses both in groups, as Reiki shares, and individually. As Reiki masters and yoga teachers, the instructors of this retreat know first-hand all the benefits of both yoga and Reiki and will seek to create a nurturing retreat space for the nurses to engage in self-care, cultivate self-compassion and experience embodied mindfulness through yoga practices.

Retreat Goals:

- Provide an inclusive, nurturing environment, yoga instruction, and Reiki sessions for participants to engage in an experiential practice of self-care and cultivation of self-compassion through yoga and Reiki
- Introduce yoga and Reiki concepts and explain their benefits for nurses
- Provide the opportunity to experience embodied mindfulness through yoga practices
- Provide post-retreat resources including yoga sequences for personal use, local yoga studios, Reiki practitioner contact information, and information for receiving Reiki Level 1 training and attunement

DAY 1

4:00 p.m.
CHECK-IN

NOTES:

- Have main meeting room set up before guests arrive, see room set up notes under welcome section
- Participants check-in for retreat at table outside main meeting room. Greet and welcome guests as they sign-in
- Things to have ready for check-in to hand out to participants
 - Name tags
 - Room assignment for their stay with map of retreat center if available/necessary
 - Printed copy of the retreat schedule
 - Take-home packet of yoga practices, list of yoga studios and Reiki practitioners
 - Bottled water, coffee, and tea available for participants and instructors
- Once they check in, invite them to bring their things to their assigned room and then return to the meeting room for the meet and greet with other guests. Suggest they may like to set up yoga mat in the main room and leave it there. Otherwise, ask them to please bring their yoga mat and be present for the welcome session at 5 p.m.

5:00 p.m.
WELCOME

NOTES:

- Have table along one wall set up with bottled water, or water cooler for refilling personal water bottles (environmentally friendly), coffee, and tea available for participants and instructors
- If you are decorating, simple is best. A few strategically placed vases of fresh flowers and/or live potted plants can make a wonderful ambience
- If you are using music, have that prepared and know how to use the facility's sound system. Japanese flute music is a nice background music
- After everyone has checked in, are all together, make sure everyone is seated on their yoga mats
- Make sure to have good eye contact, smile, speak at a slow and reassuring pace and tone
- Weave in a personal story about yourself into the introductory remarks

Introductory Suggested Remarks:

“Good evening & welcome! Thank you so very much for taking the time to be with us this weekend. This weekend is a time for you to decompress, a time to nurture yourselves with yoga

and Reiki, and a time to cultivate self-compassion. I am so grateful that we are able to share in these moments together, taking care of ourselves and exploring our self-care journey. That can be such a hard thing to do, to leave our busy lives and place importance on ourselves. Let's pause for a moment in silence and recognize this commitment we have all made to be in this space together." *pause for 10 seconds, closing eyes, deep cleansing breaths*

Welcome Session Highlights:

- Yoga
- Yoga sequences will be available to take home
- Pranayama practices
- Reiki and Gassho meditation
- Mantras
- Meditation
- Whether new to yoga or an experienced yogi, this weekend has been structured to nurture the nurturer
- Compassion and self-compassion
- Weekend schedule overview

Housekeeping Items:

- Remember, this retreat is eligible for CEU credits; your CEU certificate will be handed out at the end of the retreat
- This retreat is meant to be an oasis of calm, away from the busy demands of your everyday life and work. We request that you leave your cell phones in your rooms except for designated break times to avoid interruptions during the practices
- The goals of this retreat are to cultivate self-compassion as we practice self-care. Both yoga and Reiki can bring up emotions and things that have been buried in our subconscious; this is good for allowing us to release them, but it can be a difficult experience if/when it happens. The instructors are all trauma-informed trained and strive to offer the safest space for your experience. If at any time you become uncomfortable, please feel free to leave the session and return to your room. An instructor will be available to work with you one-on-one if desired

6:00 p.m.
DINNER

7:00 p.m.
YOGA - RESTORATIVE YOGA WITH REIKI

NOTES:

- Have everyone collect props for the yoga session: 2 blocks, 2 blankets, bolster
- Have everyone sit on their mats in a half circle

- For Reiki share portion, have everyone move mats close enough together that they can reach out and touch the person next to them

Yoga Introductory Concepts:

- Yoga is a 3,000-year-old discipline
- Yoga means to yoke: the union of body and mind
- Yoga helps to foster mind-body awareness
- Yoga prepares the body for meditation
- Embodiment of mindfulness - take the yoga practice off the mat into daily life
- Yoga has many benefits – including helps to reduce stress and anxiety, increase physical fitness, restore homeostasis
- There are many types of yoga. Tonight, is a restorative practice which holds poses for long periods in comfort and ease which helps turn on the parasympathetic nervous system, rest, and digest mode – leading to relaxation
- Offer instructor personal yoga experience: In my yoga teacher training I was asked to describe what yoga means to me, and I offer my answer to that question as my experience of yoga:

“Yoga is being present in your body, meeting it where it is at this moment in time, and trusting it to guide you. Yoga means feeling the edge, not fearing it, but leaning into it, knowing it will strengthen and enlighten you. Yoga is more than the asana on the mat, it is the mind set you take with you as you leave the mat. It is the beauty that radiates within and from you after you have cleansed your mind, detoxified, and strengthened your body, and set your intention for the day. The meaning of yoga is not something that can be defined by the written word, which is too limiting to describe the awesomeness. Yoga must be experienced, and in the experiencing, the meaning will come to you, for you, in your way. My wish for you is that your experience this weekend echoes my words and stimulates a desire to continue a yoga practice in whatever way meets your needs.” ~ Diane Friel

Restorative Yoga Introductory Concepts:

- A suggested sequence is provided below. Instructors may substitute personal choice
- This practice is done with props including blocks, blankets, bolsters, and pillows
- Instruct that the goal is to find their most comfortable, effortless position, and the props to make that happen will be unique to each person
- Make sure everyone has props 1 bolster, 2 blocks, 2 blankets, 1 or 2 pillows
- Restorative yoga offers benefits that include:
 - connect with your body
 - release tension
 - find relaxation
- While you are nurturing your mind and body in these poses, the instructors will be coming around and channeling individual Reiki healing energy to each of you

RESTORATIVE YOGA POSE SEQUENCE	CUES
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Centering, set intention	Suggestions: open to receive gratitude, release negativity
Pranayama Chandra Bhedana calms and brings a state of relaxation and receptivity Repeat 10 rounds	Bend right index and middle fingers to palm Deep breath through both nostrils, block right nostril with right thumb, exhale through left nostril, inhale through left nostril, block left nostril with right ring finger, exhale through right nostril
Child's pose Head to one side and then repeat with head to other side	Bolster between legs, resting torso on bolster, hands wherever comfortable,
Reclined– cobbler's pose	Support under knees with blocks or blankets
Reclined Spinal twist to right Reclined Spinal twist to left	Support between knees and under bottom Knee with block, blanket, or pillow
Supported bridge pose	Use block under low back, adjust height and position for comfort
Supported fish pose	One block sideways on either the long narrow edge upright, or if this is too much of a back bend, lay block flat on its side under shoulder blades, and one block under back of head adjusting height of block and/or add blanket to find comfortable position
Savasana	Bolster under knees, blanket over feet, legs, and torso
End of practice	Chant Om three times

9:00 p.m.

EXCHANGE: Use this time for participants to exchange thoughts and questions about their experience during the restorative yoga / Reiki session

DAY 2

7:00 a.m.

YOGA - HATHA YOGA PRACTICE

NOTES:

- A suggested practice is provided below. Instructors may substitute personal choice
- If using music, have sound system set up, play list ready and use soft mediation-type music in the background while everyone is arriving and getting settled. Turn off music before centering. Turn play list on when starting the asana practice
- Have everyone set up their mats and make sure they have any desired props; suggest they have at minimum 2 blocks and a blanket, optional bolster
- Allow 2-3 minutes for everyone to gather and get settled on their mats with their props within reach
- Begin with everyone in a seated position, offer a brief description of the class: Hatha yoga can include vinyasa style yoga and uses slow movement through active poses while staying mindfully connected with prana or the breath. This sort of yoga strengthens the muscles and cultivates mind-body connection and awareness
- Yoga is a practice of meeting all parts of yourself with sweetness and love, and in this way, it helps cultivate self-compassion
- Remind students that the shape of their pose is not as important as what and where they are feeling it, make sure to maintain correct alignment to avoid injury

HATHA YOGA POSE SEQUENCE	CUES
Center & set intention for practice	Suggestions: Release self-judgement during practice Have compassion for self during practice
Pranayama Ujjayi breath Calms the mind Practice for 1-2 minutes	Take deep breath and as exhale open mouth and breath like trying to defog a mirror; continue to inhale and exhale this way with mouth closed
Hip circles to left / right	Instruct movement with breath for poses
Side body and arm stretch to right and left	
Fold forward reaching arms to center/ to right / to left	Pause between each direction for several breaths
Cat/cow (from table)	Add hip circles both directions while back is rounded
Quarter dog left and right	
Thread the needle right Thread the needle left	Option to stretch the supporting (left) hand forward; option to lift left knee, keeping

	toes on the ground; option to reach left arm around toward right hip. Repeat above options on the left side
Elbow to knee 5 times right	Hold in extension last time for a few breaths
Side plank Right-> gate pose right	Offer option of full plank or knee down
Elbow to knee 5 times left	Hold in extension last time for a few breaths
Side plank left -> gate pose left	Offer full plank or knee down
Down dog	Pedal the feet, explore the feel of the first down dog, settle in and hold for a few breaths
Right leg up, bend knee, open hip	Rotate ankle one way, then the other
Right leg forward, drop back knee	Open into anjaneyasana (arms out and up)
Hands to prayer -> twist to right ->	Palms pressing together, open chest, gaze up, hold for several breaths then return to anjaneyasana
Knees -> chest-> chin ->cobra	Explore cobra and repeat cobra a few times
Down dog, repeat sequence with left leg, return to Down dog after cobra	
Child's pose	Explain they can return to this anytime the practice feels like too much, or anytime they want to.
Mountain pose at front of mat	Bring hands to prayer and take a moment to remember their intention for the practice
Tree ->warrior2->reverse warrior-> warrior2->side-angle->triangle -> warrior 2	Offer option for bind in side-angle pose Vinyasa in between left and right sides, and after second side, ending in down dog Offer choice of cobra or upward-facing dog in Vinyasas
Chair at front of mat	Hands to prayer, Twist to left and right
Mountain pose -> crescent stretch->right Mountain pose -> crescent stretch -> left	Hold top wrist with opposite hand, or make crescent shape with arms Pause for a few breaths after both sides are completed
Mountain pose hands in prayer	
Forward fold	Catch elbows, shake head yes and no, sway side to side dangling holding elbows
Mountain Pose	
Star pose in center of mat	

Goddess pose	Extend arms straight & bend and straighten knees with inhale and exhale 5 times
Wide legged forward fold (standing)	Hold in center several breaths, then twist to right and left, return to center
Frog	Opens hips, chest, shoulders, inner thighs can be intense, encourage focus on the breath and compassion for themselves
Yogi squat	Not something we do much in the West Great hip opener, stretches ankles, calves, knees, groin, and glutes, Strengthens feet and ankles Can help alleviate lower back pain
Crow	If in their practice, maintain yogi squat if not
Seated forward fold	Option to sit on blanket to tilt hips forward
Locust	Release to right cheek first then repeat and release to left cheek
Bow	If in their practice, crocodile if not
Pigeon left-> half lord of the fishes pose> fire log->	Repeat this sequence to the right side
Bridge	Options for hands flat by side of torso, clasped together on mat behind back Option to raise one leg, release and raise the other leg Repeat 2-3 x with option for wheel
Happy baby	Explore bending and straightening legs, massage of the lower back as they roll around
Reclined twist to right and left	Suggest props – blanket under bottom leg or between legs
Hug knees to chest and make circles	Both ways – right and left – massaging the low back/sacral area
Reclined cobbler pose	Right hand on the belly, left hand over the heart. Hold for several minutes
Savasana	Suggest props – bolster under knees, blanket covering body
End of practice	Close with mantra Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti; Shanti means peace
Sit in silent meditation for 5-10 minutes	

8:45 a.m.

BREAKFAST AND BREAK

10:00 a.m.

REIKI INTRODUCTION

NOTES:

- Have participants seated in ½ circle on their yoga mats. Tell them to make sure they are comfortable, use props

Introductory Reiki Concepts:

- Dr Mikao Usui founder of the lineage used in this retreat
- Reiki is a Japanese word for a particularly high, fast, and beneficial frequency of Universal Life Energy found through the Universe. Rei = spirit/soul; Ki = life energy, like pranayama in yoga
- Reiki therapy treatment is the transferring of this energy through a practitioner to a recipient
- Reiki can also be transferred during a Reiki share
- It is gentle, non-manipulative, non-invasive. Recipient is fully clothed during sessions
- Free will – Reiki will not violate anyone’s free will
- Can be used alone or in conjunction with medical treatment
- Reiki is for everybody and for all stages of life
- Reiki helps the body to return to homeostasis and promotes a holistic balancing of body, mind, and spirit
- The Reiki practitioner does not diagnose medical conditions or direct the Reiki energy to treat specific areas or conditions
- Reiki uses a “hands on, or slightly above the body without touching” pattern that helps stimulate the body’s own innate wisdom to heal the cause of the problem, the recipient only needs to be open to receive the Reiki healing energy
- Reiki as a spiritual path to self- healing. The teachings are universal – open to anyone regardless of religious beliefs. It is not a religion
- Reiki helps manage, reduce and /or eliminate pain, it helps speed up recovery from trauma, major and minor surgery
- Reiki can be used in all areas of healing: physical, mental, and emotional
- What to expect during a Reiki session
 - Most people feel a sense of relaxation and peace
 - Might fall asleep
 - May see colors
 - May feel tingling
 - May not feel anything at all. Note: Reiki is working whether any sensations are felt or not

- Dr Mikao started every Reiki session with Gassho meditation
- Reiki 5 precepts (codes to live by); use them along with Gassho meditation practice daily. Can double as mantras. A mantra is a technique to move the mind into stillness. Through the power of word, sound, and energy the mind is transported to a higher place. They can be used at any time as powerful energy vibrations.
 - Just for today, I will be grateful for my many blessings
 - Just for today, I will not worry
 - Just for today, I will not be angry
 - Just for today I will do my work honestly
 - Just for today I will be compassionate toward myself and others

GASSHO MEDITATION

- A healing, mind-clearing, heart opening meditation
- Enables a clearer connection to the universal energy all around us
- Begin in comfortable seated position with hands in prayer at heart, eyes closed
- Focus attention on the place where two middle fingertips meet
- When mind wanders, bring attention back to the point where middle fingertips meet
- Practice for 5-10 minutes or longer if desired

REIKI SHARE

- Adjust yoga mats close enough to be able to touch your neighbor
- Put left hand out palm up – receiving
- Touch right fingertips with person sitting next to you
- Close the eyes
- Set intention to accept Reiki energy
- As Reiki flows, may feel warmth, tingling, see colors beneath eyelids
- Reiki is flowing even if you don't feel anything
- Continue Reiki share for 5-10 minutes

10:30 a.m.

INDIVIDUAL REIKI SESSIONS

Allow a minimum of 30 minutes per session

Students not receiving individual Reiki will have yoga nidra

YOGA NIDRA

NOTES:

- Have them lay on their yoga mats and do whatever they need to be comfortable, such as bolster under knees, pillow under head, covered with blanket
- Explain what yoga nidra is, and its benefits
- Speak slowly and pause between each instruction
- End with savasana

Break before lunch; Individual Reiki sessions continue until a few minutes before lunch

NOON

LUNCH

1:30 p.m.

YIN YOGA HEART AND HIP OPENING PRACTICE

NOTES:

- A suggested practice is provided below. Instructors may substitute personal choice
- Have music set up with playlist ready to go if using music
- Ask participants about injuries
- Have participants gather props they'll need: blocks, blankets, bolster
- Have everyone seated or kneeling on yoga mats, in ½ circle.
- Introduce yin yoga
- Throughout teaching encourage the participants to look for the spaces: the space between the inhale and exhale, the space between the poses while lying in the rebound pose.

Introductory Yin Yoga Concepts:

- Yin yoga consists of passive poses primarily done on the floor, while in a relaxed state, held for longer periods of time, usually 2-5 minutes or longer
- Yin yoga postures target deep fascia, ligaments, and joints, the parts of the body that are not as flexible, as opposed to the big superficial muscles that are targeted in movement yoga like Vinyasa and Hatha
- The theory behind yin yoga is that staying in the poses for long periods provides an appropriate amount of stress on the targeted fascia, ligaments or joints leading to mobility, circulation, creating suppleness, resiliency, and strength in these areas
- Yin has a grounded, slow, quiet, quality- can create some discomfort holding poses for an extended period of time
- Uses body weight and gravity to get to those deeper physical areas of the body and the mental and energy bodies as well
- Helps heal the body from the inside out
- Release all muscular engagement – allows access to the fascia and deeper tissues
- Yin can feel nurturing because the practice is a time when you can create some space in your life, provides a time of quietness and contemplation

YIN POSE SEQUENCE	CUES
Center, set intention Start with Gassho meditation	Suggestions: letting go, being present in the moment,

Pranayama Ujjayi breath Practice for 1 -2 minutes	
Heart bench 5 minutes Counter pose: sit upright in comfortable position for several breaths	Heart opener – emotional vulnerability. Stretches muscles in chest and shoulders.
Banasana to the right for five minutes Counter pose: hug knees to chest and circle the knees to massage the sacrum and lumbar region Banasana to the left for five minutes Counter pose: hug knees to chest and circle them	Stretches side body and IT band
Sphinx, building up to Seal if doable, for 5 minutes Counter pose: Relax on stomach, turn head to one side, and draw that knee up beside you for one minute; switch head to other side with other leg drawn up for one minute	Strengthens gluteus and back muscle can help relieve back pain
Butterfly for 5 minutes Counterpose sitting up with gentle backbend	Stretches lower back without requiring loose hamstrings, hip opener. Spine, inner thigh, and hamstring stretch, increases hip mobility Suggested props: block or blanket under knees
Caterpillar for 5 minutes	Straight-legged forward fold legs and feet relaxed lengthens ligaments along spine, activates hamstrings, stimulates digestion by compressing the stomach
Half Butterfly: fold over right leg for 3-5 minutes Counterpose: Windshield Wipers for one minute Half Butterfly: fold over left leg for 3-5 minutes Counterpose: Windshield Wipers for one minute	Left foot pulled into groin, like seated tree pose but right foot is relaxed not engaged. Repeat to left side with right foot pulled into groin, left foot relaxed Hip opener

Dragonfly for 5 minutes Counterpose: Table or Windshield Wipers for 1 minute	Seated wide-legged forward fold feet are relaxed may like to have bolster to support torso and/or head Opens hips and groin, backs of thighs
Sleeping Swan right and left for 3-5 minutes each side Counterpose: Down dog to Child's pose	Hip opener. Front leg is bent over and in front of bolster. Fold torso over leg, may wish to have block and blanket to support head.
Toe Squat for 3-5 minutes Counterpose child's pose for 1 minute	opens the toes and feet and strengthening the ankles; remind not to stay in pose if in pain – this pose can become intense quickly
Reclined Butterfly for 5 minutes	Externally rotates hips, stretches groin, adductors, knees, hamstrings, chest shoulders Can help alleviate upper and lower back pain
Savasana for fifteen minutes	Final relaxation. Optional bolster under knees and cover self with blanket
End of practice	Seated in cross-legged position or Close with 3 deep breaths

5:00 p.m.

EXCHANGE: Sharing time for experiences and questions

5:30 p.m.

BREAK Individual Reiki sessions available

6:00 p.m.

DINNER

7:00 p.m.

RESTORATIVE YIN YOGA WITH REIKI PRACTICE

NOTES:

- A suggested practice is provided below. Instructors may substitute personal choice
- Tell everyone to have props: 2 blocks, 2 blankets, bolster
- Have everyone seated on their yoga mat in comfortable position with props nearby
- Instructor will go around and Reiki individuals, switching people with each pose change

YIN POSE SEQUENCE	CUES
Center, set intention Start with Gassho meditation	Seated cross-legged or kneeling with block between knees Suggestions: Let go, surrender, find peace within
Pranayama Nadi Shodhana Single nostril breathing Practice for 1-2 minutes or 15 – 30 rounds	Bend right index and middle finger to palm, close right nostril with right thumb, inhale through left nostril and then close left nostril with right ring finger, lift thumb and exhale out of right nostril, breathe in through right nostril, close right nostril with thumb and exhale out of left nostril. This is one round
Shoelace for 5 minutes each side	Option for straight bottom leg Option to sit on blanket to tilt hips forward Option to fold forward
Child's pose for 5 minutes each side	Supported on bolster; turn head and do 5 minutes with head to other side
Supported Fish for 5 minutes	Torso supported on bolster
Supported Bridge for 5 minutes	Use block under sacrum, explore flattest, medium, or highest edge of block to find comfort
Reclined supported butterfly for 5 minutes	Explore blocks under knees
Legs up the wall for 10 minutes	Options to use block under sacrum, sandbag weight on feet
Savasana for 15 minutes	Options to use bolster under knees, cover self with blanket
End of practice	Close with 3 deep breaths
Sit in silent meditation for 5- 10 minutes	

9:00 p.m.

EXCHANGE: Use this time for participants to exchange thoughts and questions about their experience during the restorative yin and Reiki practice

DAY 3

8:00 a.m.

YOGA – GENTLE MORNING PRACTICE

NOTES:

- A suggested practice is provided below. Instructors may substitute personal choice
- Have everyone on their yoga mats in ½ circle or rows
- Make sure they have props – blanket, blocks, strap
- Introduce class – gentle movement with focus on stretching

GENTLE YOGA POSE SEQUENCE	CUES
Center; set intention Start with Gassho meditation	Seated cross-legged or kneeling with block between knees Suggestions: Be fully present on the mat; release expectations
Pranayama Lion's breath	Seated on heels Energizing Helps release emotional negativity
Child's pose	Relax the neck and shoulders, feel the side body expand with the breath, find a place of inner stillness
Cat / Cow	Moving with the breath, letting the head be the last to move
Right elbow to knee 5 times -> Dancer	Catch right foot or ankle with right hand after last time – Dancer pose
Anjaneyasana right -> twist -> Pyramid ->table	Release, extend right leg straight, fold over right leg
Left elbow to knee 5 times -Dancer	Catch left foot or ankle with left hand after last time – Dancer pose
Anjaneyasana left -> twist -> Pyramid->table	Release, extend left leg straight, fold over right leg
Puppy	Options: arms resting on floor; forehead or chin on floor Helps open the chest and release tension in neck and shoulders
Crocodile	Rest head on folded arms
Cobra repeat a few times moving with the breath	Don't use hands to push up, this may change how high they are rising

	Heart opening backbend, good for low back pain
Eagle arms right under left	Come to cross-legged seated position Inhale raise arms, exhale lower; repeat 4-5 times Stretches shoulders and upper back
Eagle arms left under right	Inhale raise arms, exhale lower; repeat 4-5 times
Reverse table	
Hero pose	May sit on a blanket or block if not comfortable with buttocks on floor
Head to knee pose right -> falling star	May sit on edge of blanket to tilt hips forward. Bend from hip crease, keep back straight
Cow face pose right	Option to have bottom leg straight May use yoga strap if hands don't reach
Head to knee pose left -> falling star	May sit on blanket to tilt hips forward Stretches hamstrings, strengthens back muscles
Cow face pose left	Option to have bottom leg straight Stretches hips, gluteal muscles, shoulders, outer legs
Cobbler pose	May like to sit on edge of blanket. Soles of the feet together, adjust distance of feet from body
Cat / Cow from Cobbler pose	Inhale round back, exhale arch back
Wide legged seated forward fold	Stretches hamstrings, calves, hips, low back, lengthens spine
Reclined pigeon left	Hands clasped behind left thigh, press left knee outwards with left elbow for greater stretch
Reclined twist left	Option to keep legs crossed as legs drop to the left
Reclined pigeon right	Hands clasped behind right thigh, press right knee outward with right elbow for greater stretch
Reclined twist right	Option to keep legs crossed as legs drop to the right
Happy baby	Releases spine from the twists
Apanasana	Helps low back and sciatic pain

Supported bridge	Find the sweet spot with block under sacrum
Reclined cobbler's pose	One hand on belly, one hand on heart
Savasana	Settle in, let go, become empty. Soften jaw – make sure not clenching teeth and smooth the brow if scowling
End of practice	Close by chanting OM three times
Sit in silent meditation for 5-10 minutes	

9:30 a.m.

BREAKFAST followed by break. Individual Reiki sessions available

10:30 a.m.

JOURNAL

NOTES:

- Have participants spend 10-15 minutes journaling about their experiences
- Remind them no one will read this except them unless they want to
- May use prompt questions or anything that comes up for them:
 - How did your experience differ with the Hatha class and the yin class
 - How did you experience Reiki
 - How do you feel after Reiki / yoga
 - How do you experience meditation after yoga practice
 - How can you take any of these practices and use them during your work day
 - How does this practice make you a better/different/more compassionate caregiver for your patients
- Allow time for questions and an exchange between participants

11:30 a.m.

LUNCH

12:15 p.m.

FINAL GATHERING

NOTES:

- Go over handouts –the post retreat survey, home yoga practices, sign-up paper for participants to receive emails from instructors, sign-up paper for optional sharing contact information with all participants at the retreat
- Retreat experience survey questionnaire - both teachers and participants will have a survey questionnaire. The data from these surveys can be used for fine-tuning future retreats to better meet the needs of participants

- Hand out CEU certificates
- Have everyone seated on their yoga mat in comfortable position in ½ circle in preparation for final meditation and Reiki share
- Closing remarks to include gratitude for attendance, explanation of survey, summary of retreat purpose and anything else retreat leader feels drawn to include
- Option for participants to stay after the end for individual Reiki sessions

FINAL GASSHO MEDITATION and REIKI SHARE

EXCHANGE: final opportunity for Q&A, exchange of thoughts and experiences

END OF RETREAT

Appendix A
Home Practice
Sun Salutation A Sequence

Sun Salutation A	
 Tadasana Mountain	Center of front of mat Mountain pose - hands in prayer Set an intention for practice Begin practice with 3 deep breaths
 Utthitta Tadasana Extended Mountain	Inhale hands over head
 Uttanasana Standing Forward Bend	Exhale into forward fold
 Ardha Uttanasana Standing Half Forward Bend	Inhale come up ½ way to flat back
 Chaturanga Dandasana Four Limbed Staff	Exhale to plank, lower down in plank or lower knees to floor and lower down chest-chin
 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Upward Facing Dog	Inhale to cobra or upward-facing dog
 Adho Mukha Svanasana Downward Facing Dog	Exhale to downward-facing dog Take 3 breaths

 <p>Uttanasana Standing Forward Bend</p>	<p>Inhale step to front of mat Exhale forward fold</p>
 <p>Ardha Uttanasana Standing Half Forward Bend</p>	<p>Inhale flat back</p>
 <p>Uttanasana Standing Forward Bend</p>	<p>Exhale forward fold</p>
 <p>Utthitta Tadasana Extended Mountain</p>	<p>Inhale arms overhead</p>
 <p>Tadasana Mountain</p>	<p>Exhale hands to heart – mountain pose Repeat as many times as desired End practice with 3 deep breaths</p>

Original Artwork Credit: Yoga Stick-figures by Charlotte Bradley
<https://www.yogaflavoredlife.com>

Appendix B
Home Practice
Sun Salutation B Sequence

Sun Salutation B	
 Tadasana Mountain	Center of front of mat Mountain pose - hands in prayer Set an intention for practice Begin practice with 3 deep breaths
 Utkatasana Chair	Inhale chair pose
 Uttanasana Standing Forward Bend	Exhale forward fold
 Ardha Uttanasana Standing Half Forward Bend	Inhale flat back
 Chaturanga Dandasana Four Limbed Staff	Exhale lower down to plank.
 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Upward Facing Dog	Inhale upward facing dog (cobra)
 Adho Mukha Svanasana Downward Facing Dog	Exhale downward facing dog

 <p>Virabhadrasana I Warrior I</p>	Inhale Warrior 1 or high lunge right leg
 <p>Chaturanga Dandasana Four Limbed Staff</p>	Exhale lower down to plank
 <p>Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Upward Facing Dog</p>	Inhale upward facing dog (or cobra)
 <p>Adho Mukha Svanasana Downward Facing Dog</p>	Exhale downward facing dog
 <p>Virabhadrasana I Warrior I</p>	Inhale Warrior 1 or high lunge left leg
 <p>Chaturanga Dandasana Four Limbed Staff</p>	Exhale lower down to plank
 <p>Urdhva Mukha Svanasana Upward Facing Dog</p>	Inhale upward facing dog
 <p>Adho Mukha Svanasana Downward Facing Dog</p>	Exhale downward facing dog. Take 5 breaths in downward facing dog After last breath inhale

 <p>Uttanasana Standing Forward Bend</p>	Exhale step to front of mat into forward fold
 <p>Utkatasana Chair</p>	Inhale chair pose
 <p>Tadasana Mountain</p>	<p>Exhale hands in prayer</p> <p>End practice with 3 deep breaths</p>

Original Artwork Credit: Yoga Stick-figures by Charlotte Bradley
<https://www.yogaflavoredlife.com>

Appendix C
Home Practice
Pranayama Practice

Nadi Shodhana Pranayama ~ Alternate Nostril Breathing



Find a comfortable seated position either cross-legged or sitting with block or cushion between the knees

Place right thumb over right nostril to close the airway

Inhale through the left nostril, and then use ring finger to close off the left nostril

Lift thumb, exhale out of the right nostril

Breathe in through the right nostril

Close right nostril with right thumb

Exhale out of the left nostril.

This is one round, try to do 5-10 rounds per sitting.

Benefits:

- Calms the nervous system

- Balances the sushumna nadi, an energy channel that quiets and steadies the mind

- Helps transition from activity to stillness

- Great cleansing breath practice for seasonal allergies

Appendix D

Yoga and Reiki Resources

Reiki Level 1 Training Local

- Diane Friel Reiki III Master Teacher wellnessbyfriel@gmail.com
- Kristin Williams Reiki III Master teacher parallelhealing@gmail.com
- Rainbows of Healing rainbowsofhealing.com

Yoga Studios Local

- Shanteel Yoga Sanctuary Shanteelyogasanctuary.com
- Dragonfly Yoga Studio Dragonflyyogastudio.com
- Shine Yoga Center Shineyogaperkasie.com
- Sun Dog Yoga Center Sundogyogastudio.com

Organizations – find yoga teachers, yoga teacher training, Reiki practitioners, Reiki training

- Yoga alliance www.yogaalliance.org
- International Association of Reiki Practitioners <https://iarp.org>
- Reiki Healing Association <http://reikihealingassociation.com>