

CHAIR YOGA FOR OLDER ADULTS

Integrated Movement Therapy Interventions

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1 Addressing Health Challenges

After heart disease and respiratory diseases, many common challenges faced by older adults are a result of our living longer lives. Arthritis, decreased bone density, and the degeneration of vertebral discs and bursae all cause pain, impaired function, and mobility challenges. Additionally, older adults are more likely to experience anxiety and depression in relation to living with chronic illness, grief & loss, and social isolation.



"Impatiently Waiting" by Jason Parks

2 Integrated Movement Therapy (IMT)

No part of the mind / body / spirit system works alone.

Guided by six core principles:

- Structure & Continuity
- Language Stimulation
- Physical Stimulation
- Self-Calming
- Social Interaction
- Direct Self-Esteem Building

Core principles move classes beyond physical exercise to promote health and integrate the whole body, mind, and spirit.

Students seen as competent, valued, and whole!



Yoga Movement and Community

3 How IMT is Applied

IMT Informed Chair Yoga goes further than movement, incorporating meditation, social interaction, and chanting to offer a practice for the whole person. These practices are included in every class, providing ongoing structure and continuity.

Celebrations & Gratitudes

Begins each class with social engagement, building community among the participants and, cultivating emotional wellness.

Chanting Game

Students chant simply, call-and-response style, while passing yoga blocks in a circle. This game promotes health on multiple levels. It stimulates cognitive, pulmonary, and parasympathetic nervous system function and also maintains hand-eye coordination. Additionally, students enjoy social interaction and improve emotional resiliency; everyone makes mistakes, fixes them together, and laughs as a community at errors.

Breath Practice

Techniques particularly beneficial for COPD and other pulmonary diseases are included to provide students tools to help when they experience shortness of breath. Breath is explored with movement and during meditation.

Guided Meditation

Given at the end to develop self-compassion, gratitude, and loving-kindness with the goal of cultivating a friendly relationship with the body.



Sharing Gratitude

Passing Blocks

Chair Postures



Chanting Game

Savasana & Meditation

4 Connection & Community

As expected, students consistently report improvements to their physical health, including returning to activities they'd previously ceased.

As opposed to a typical yoga class, the social interactions in the IMT-informed classes have created space for genuine community to form. For example, students attend cultural events together and regularly go to a coffee shop after class to connect. One student created a contact list for the class. Students in IMT-informed classes stay connected.

Students report that they feel heard, that they matter, that their needs are important, and that they feel validated. The class provides a place where it is not only okay to make mistakes, but that laughing at mistakes with your community is healing. They share that they are growing self-compassion, gratitude, and finding renewed hope for their own capacity to heal.



Trees of All Kinds (top)
Meditation and Savasana (bottom)