



Theresa Conroy

YOGA THERAPY

Private and Small Group Classes

PAIN IS ALL IN YOUR . . . BRAIN

Here's the crucial understanding to have about pain: The nerves close to the paper cut, the broken bone, and the new incision don't really send pain signals to the brain. They send *danger* signals.

Those nerves warn us about trouble, that something's wrong. They don't decide what needs to be done next, they just act as the sentinel for serious news.

Pain—the actual unpleasant physical sensation or emotional experience—is created by the brain. Yup: Pain is, indeed, all in your head!

This explains the mystery of “phantom pain,” when a missing limb still hurts or itches or tingles. It also explains that bruise on the shin that we don't remember getting. And it brings sense to the pain in the lower back pain that has continued years after the injury has healed.

It's the brain that makes the amputated leg ache, not the nerves which, obviously are no longer there. The brain decides not to send a pain signal when we banged into the coffee table because our control room decided to prioritize something else—like getting out of the house in time for that appointment. And the brain, habituated to the chronic cycle of discomfort, can't seem to let go of that back ache.

This understanding reminds us that pain—especially chronic pain—isn't always the most accurate reflection of what's happening in our body. And it should reassure us that we can have a significant influence over our own experience of pain by working with our Central Nervous System.

This is where Yoga Therapy comes in.

Yoga is one of the most powerful methods of regulating the CNS. The practice does this in a number of ways: By using movement linked with breath to retrain our brain around pain, by consciously creating a safe atmosphere to explore movement and sensation, and using meditation and relaxation techniques to bring us into a state where our own natural pain relievers can work.

A Yoga Therapist trained to apply the most recent studies in the science of pain, can create a personalized Yoga practice that enables chronic pain sufferers

to begin managing their own symptoms. This practice switches on the Parasympathetic Nervous System, a safe atmosphere to explore movement and sensation. It teaches pain sufferers how to use that calm, controlled approach to reprogram the brain, allowing it to let go of any movements it has mislabeled as dangerous.

With repetition, clients who practice this science-based approach to Yoga often regain movement that had been restricted by pain, and succeed in reducing unpleasant sensations in their body—or at least moving the starting line further away.

To find a Yoga Therapist near you who specializes in pain relief, visit www.IAYT.org.

Theresa Conroy, C-IAYT, is a Certified Yoga Therapist with a practice in Philadelphia, PA. She specializes in pain relief, Parkinson's Disease, Neurological Disorders, anxiety and depression. For more information, visit her websites at www.TheresaConroy.com and www.YogaForParkinsons.com