



## Head and Heart: Yoga Therapy and Art Therapy Interventions for Mental Health

By Ellen G. Horovitz

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Reviewed by Karen Gibbons

Being a therapist who integrates yoga and art therapy myself, *Head and Heart: Yoga Therapy and Art Therapy Interventions for Mental Health*, by Ellen G. Horovitz, ATR-BC, LCAT, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, tackles a subject near and dear to my head and heart: mental health treatment. I was eager to learn more about her approach, and her book did not disappoint.

Anyone who already has mental health treatment as the focus of their yoga therapy practice—or who integrates art therapy with yoga therapy—will find *Head and Heart* appealing and informative. If you have an interest in expanding your knowledge of mental health treatment, it will be a great resource. The author is clear about the training required to practice in this manner and careful to remind the reader about ethical considerations, confidentiality, and the privacy and data security rules of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Horovitz packs this volume with useful information for mental health practitioners. We get the sense that the author is a person who lives her passion. Amy Weintraub, MFA, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, notes in her introduction that the most important aspect of the treatment provided is the “love in the room”—in other words, the authenticity of the therapeutic alliance. As the book unfolds we see that the author shares as much of her personal approach to ensuring a strong client-therapist alliance as she shares about the nuts and bolts of assessment, progress tracking, appropriate interventions, and best practices. This makes for a warm, personal portrayal of her rigorously professional integrative practice.

Horovitz begins with the basics, explaining how she has developed her own technique through the healing process intrinsic to her personal yoga and art-making practices. She suggests, “Let yourself be your laboratory. Do yoga! Make art!” Horovitz uses intention as a “ritual of invitation,” and sees this ritual as the first step in creating a safe space for therapeutic work.

Later, the reader gets a peek into the author’s powerful box of assessment tools and her use of genograms. She makes a case for utilizing standardized psychological tests to help track treatment efficacy. She details art therapy assessments and outlines physiological assessments. Horovitz also includes case study examples and copious resources for useful apps, further reading, and related research.

One of the book’s greatest strengths lies in the author’s therapeutic approach. In tandem with her objective, documentation-oriented approach, Horovitz introduces a practical and compassionate idea—that the spiritual needs of a person should be a primary consideration in the therapeutic process. The therapist’s orientation, Horovitz believes, must be geared toward exploring the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—and respecting the patient’s lead. In support of this, she outlines the traditional framework of yoga,

specifically how it applies to psychology. To help the reader to more deeply absorb this information, she also sprinkles helpful “reflection exercises” throughout the book.

Yoga therapists will appreciate learning more about the nuances of using some of these tools through a variety of case studies. This presentation demonstrates exactly how the author responds as a therapist. Images show readers how to use asana with different populations and situations. Horovitz speaks of “meeting the mood” with a combination of psychological, artistic, and yogic concepts. She emphasizes the importance of weighing the factors in each case rather than providing a one-size-fits-all approach. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Horovitz notes the strengths and limitations of each therapeutic choice and gives her rationale for the sequencing and use of different modalities.

Yoga therapy and art therapy encourage change through self-awareness. Horovitz notes that change is what is needed for therapeutic benefit. She points out that the human tendency toward homeostasis may show up as an impediment in mental health treatment. Practitioners may find a formula that works and stick with it, closing ourselves off to trying new approaches. Horovitz consistently opposes this kind of homeostasis in favor of keeping abreast of digital innovations and current research.

As a practitioner, I found the case studies fascinating, the references helpful, and the digital tools suggested intriguing. As a reader, the organization was uneven, moving back and forth from research-oriented text to a more anecdotal style. The book is probably most clear and comprehensible for established mental health practitioners who already integrate yoga and art. However, the volume as a whole is a real trove of knowledge. I recommend it to anyone with aspirations to deepen their involvement with mental health treatment. Careful reading will reward you with the history of yoga therapy, as well as the history of art therapy, and a deep dive into how these might appear in a present-day mental health practice.

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