



pranaYOGA
INSTITUTE OF YOGA AND HOLISTIC HEALTH



EMPOWERING ENGAGEMENT

Yoga Psychology

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EMPOWERING ENGAGEMENT

Yoga Psychology: Regulating the Nervous System, Repatterning the Mind

The Yoga Psychology Pillar reveals how yoga therapy becomes truly transformative when we understand the mind not as a problem to fix, but as a system to study, soften, and retrain. Rooted in classical yoga philosophy and supported by modern therapeutic insight, this pillar helps us see how thought patterns, emotional states, and nervous system responses shape the way we experience our lives — and how yoga becomes a pathway for sustainable change.

Psychology is the scientific field of mind and behavior that encompasses biological influences, social pressures, and environmental factors that influence the way people think, act, and feel. Yoga Psychology is the therapeutic application of traditional yoga to understand behaviors and transform negative habits — rooted in the yogic models of human experience from the Upanishads and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and grounded in the experiential knowledge of nervous system regulation through breath-centered movement, breathing practices, and vocal toning.

Three primary areas guide this pillar: mood management (depression and anxiety), trauma-aware practice, and addictive behavior modification. Drawing from the lived experience and teachings of Dani McGuire, this program is complemented by reflective practices from *The Path of Joyful Living* and foundational perspectives on energy medicine through the work of Heidi Light.

A Note on Krama — This pillar follows a krama (graduated, sequential) approach. Each course builds skillfully upon the last: the Anxiety & Depression lens deepens your Trauma work; trauma-informed awareness supports your Addiction practice; and all three streams converge in the Capstone on Therapeutic Relationships. Projects are cumulative — each one prepares the ground for the next.

EMPOWERING ENGAGEMENT

Yoga Psychology: Regulating the Nervous System, Repatterning the Mind

Clinical Framework: The Guna Lens In yogic understanding, the three gunas — tamas (inertia, heaviness), rajas (activity, agitation), and sattva (clarity, balance) — offer a non-pathologizing lens for observing and working with mood states. Rather than diagnosing, a yoga therapist learns to recognize tamasic presentations (withdrawal, low energy, foggy thinking) and rajasic presentations (restlessness, looping worry, hyperactivation, sleeplessness). Most care-seekers present with a complex mixture of both.

The art of yoga therapy lies in knowing when to apply solar/brahmana practices (energizing, expanding, prana vayu emphasis) that lift tamas, and when to apply lunar/langhana practices (cooling, quieting, apana vayu emphasis) that reduce rajas. Sattva is both the state of the therapist through discernment and the deep inquiry of the care-seeker.

Vocabulary Map — You will encounter overlapping terms across yoga therapy lineages, IAYT materials, and Ayurvedic study. IAYT uses brahmana and langhana as standard terminology. This curriculum pairs solar/brahmana and lunar/langhana so both vocabulary sets are always learned in relationship. On the IAYT exam, use brahmana/langhana confidently. In session with clients, plain language — energizing, activating / settling, cooling — works best.

Upon Completing This Pillar, You Will Have Gained:

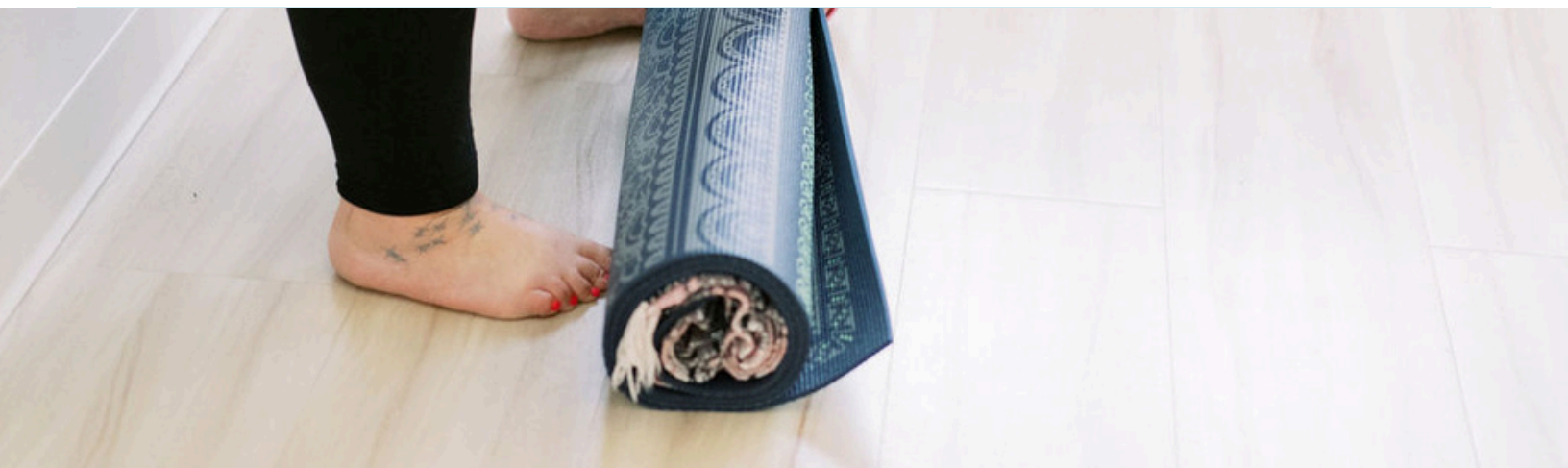
Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered Care: Comprehensive, trauma-informed yoga therapy support through nervous system-aware pacing, safe relational presence, client empowerment, and practices that promote regulation and integration

Therapeutic Integration: Skill in designing embodied yoga therapy practices using asana, pranayama, mantra, mudra, and visualization. Capacity to support care-seekers navigating anxiety, depression, trauma, addictive patterns, and ingrained belief structures

Foundational Knowledge: Yoga as a system for mind training, habit transformation, and sustainable behavior change via the Yoga Sutras. The guna framework (tamas/rajas/sattva) as the primary clinical assessment language for mood and energy states. The solar/brahmana and lunar/langhana vocabulary — fully fluent in both yoga therapy and Ayurvedic usage

Clinical Competency: Understanding of the physiology, psychology, and behavioral patterns involved in mental health and recovery. Competence in ethical clinical reasoning, scope, contraindications, and referral practice aligned with the IAYT Code of Ethics

Empowerment & Ethics: Commitment to ethical, healing-centered care that honors lived experience while building resilience and self-responsibility



Foundations: Sadhana

Sadhana: Pillar Foundations: On Demand

PHIL300: Tantra & Somatic Movement

CHAK300: Chakraology: The Subtle Body Anatomy

Principles: Aligned Intention Pillar

PSYCH400: Yoga Therapy and Anxiety/Depression

PSYCH401: Yoga Therapy and Trauma

PSYCH402: Yoga Therapy and Addiction

ASMT400: Effective Practices for Therapeutic Relationships

Textbooks:

- Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers — Robert Sapolsky
- Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga — David Emerson & Elizabeth Hopper
- In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts — Gabor Maté
- The Path of Joyful Living — Dani McGuire
- Ethics in Energy Medicine — Heidi Light

Recommended Textbook (Other Resources, Not Required):

- The Yoga of the Nine Emotions by Peter Marchand

Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1128934782692897>

Project Uploads and Completion Requirements Checklist

All projects due by 8/1/26 at midnight

Tantra & Somatic Movement (PHIL300)

Course Completion Requirements:

- Watching all Sessions
- Completing the Quiz
- Project Completion:
 - Design a Mandala or Somatic Movement Protocol to balance your energy-emotions (asana, sound/mantra, and meditation)
 - Practice and Adapt: Practice daily for 10 days, making personal adaptations as needed.
 - Journal Daily: Record observations and experiences daily.
 - Summarize the Experience: Reflect on the overall impact of the practice after 10 days, analyzing changes.

PROJECT TEMPLATE

Chakraology: The Subtle Body Anatomy (CHAK300)

Course Completion Requirements:

- Watching all Sessions
- Completing the Quiz
- Project Completion:
 - Create a chakra balancing protocol including asana, yantra meditation, pranayama, and bija mantra. Practice protocol 10 days and journal about it (turn in 1 page reflection paper on protocol experience).
 - Discuss protocol in lab with cohort before practicing for 10 days.

PROJECT TEMPLATE



PILLAR PROJECT TEMPLATE FORMS HERE

Project Uploads and Completion Requirements Checklist

All projects due by 8/1/26 at midnight

Important Note:

If you attend all retreat labs and project labs (all skills labs for the course) live in this pillar, you will only need to submit the Capstone Project to your Luminary for Review.

If you attend any or all of the retreat labs and project labs (mentor huddle after retreat) asynchronously or you are not participating (i.e. camera off, unable to engage), you will need to submit the corresponding project for that course to your Luminary/Mentor as usual.

All Students - Pillar Completion Requirements for Each Course

- Attend and participate in all sessions (live or asynchronous)
- Complete a submit Capstone Project
- Complete all Facebook/Mentor Huddle shares as outlined in your project template
- Complete End of Pillar Quiz
- Synchronous Students (Live):
 - Will complete projects in retreat and project skills labs
 - Do NOT have to submit projects for the courses they've actively participated in live
- Asynchronous Students:
 - Complete the project/s for course/s you attended all/partially asynchronous and submit to your Luminary/Mentor by the Project Deadline



PSYCH400: Yoga Therapy and Anxiety/Depression

Course Overview

Using the Yoga Sutras and the ancient tools of yoga, this course explores the complex relationship between body and mind through a trauma-informed, spiritually rooted approach to mental health. Students gain practical skills in adapting yoga therapy for individuals experiencing anxiety or depression, with emphasis on nervous system regulation, pranic balance, and care-seeker empowerment.

Yoga Psychology is understood here as the 'bottom-up' experiential knowledge of regulation — working at the somatic level where emotion is constructed moment to moment from interoceptive signals, memory, and context (Feldman Barrett, 2017). This is why yoga's cultivation of interoceptive awareness works at the very level where emotion is made.

Students learn to assess care-seekers through the guna lens — recognizing tamasic presentations (low energy, withdrawal, foggy thinking, anhedonia) and rajasic presentations (restlessness, looping worry, hyperactivation, insomnia) — and to select solar/brahmana or lunar/langhana practices accordingly. Both anxiety and depression may involve a complex mixture of both guna patterns.

Asynchronous Students — Project Instructions

Using the case studies provided in class or a composite profile (no identifying information), complete the following:

1. Complete the Yoga Therapy Assessment & Planning Form for one case. Include:
 - A brief summary of the client's presentation, history, and stated goals
 - Observed or inferred guna patterns — tamasic, rajasic, or mixed — and how these present across physical, energetic, breath, and emotional layers
 - Your solar/brahmana or lunar/langhana approach and rationale, using the vocabulary map from the manual
2. Design a 30–45 minute yoga therapy session plan. Include:
 - At least 4 practices (asana, pranayama, meditation, relaxation) with specific rationale for each using the guna framework
 - Language and cueing considerations given the client's mental health presentation
 - Any contraindications or modifications, and referral considerations if applicable
3. Write a 1–2 page clinical reflection that addresses:
 - Your rationale for practice selection and how they support the guna pattern you identified
 - How you would monitor for over- or under-stimulation during the session
 - One area of uncertainty or growth you identified through this exercise
4. Upload your completed Assessment & Planning Form and reflection via the Pillar Project Template Form link.

PSYCH401: Yoga Therapy and Trauma

Course Overview

This course explores the psychological foundations and trauma-informed practices essential for working with care-seekers who have experienced mental distress or trauma. Students learn trauma-sensitive communication, nervous system responses to trauma — including hyperarousal, dissociation, and chronic stress — and how to safely integrate yoga therapy tools while staying within professional scope.

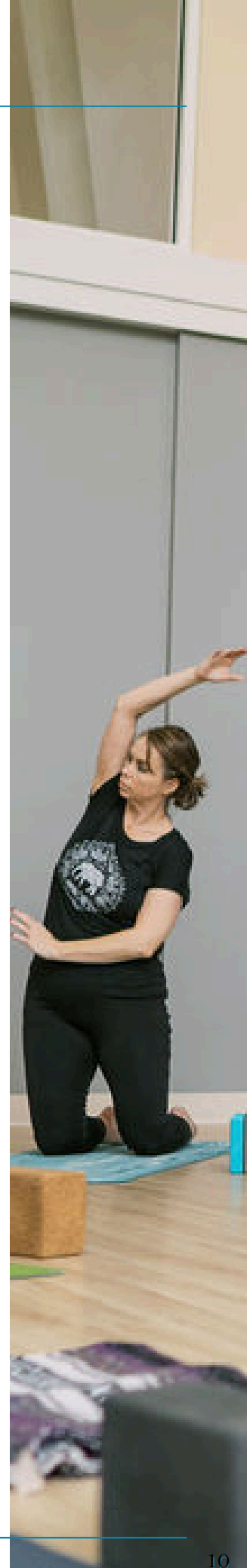
Grounded in the research of van der Kolk, Emerson, Levine, and the landmark ACE Study (Felitti et al., 1998), students understand why trauma is 'beyond words' and why body-based interventions are uniquely positioned to access traumatic material. Invitational language, interoceptive focus, and choice-making are understood as active therapeutic mechanisms — not stylistic preferences.

Emphasis is placed on pacing, consent, co-regulation, relational boundaries, and appropriate referral practices, preparing students to serve with competence, compassion, and ethical clarity across a wide range of mental health presentations.

Asynchronous Students — Project Instructions

Option A: Complete the written protocol below. Option B: Record a 15–20 minute trauma-sensitive class using invitational language, then upload to the Facebook group for peer and mentor feedback.

1. Select a trauma-related case study from class, or create a composite profile (no identifying information).
2. Complete the Yoga Therapy Assessment & Planning Form. Include:
 - Summary of intake and observed patterns — physical, breath, and emotional regulation — including any nervous system state indicators (hyperarousal, freeze, dissociation)
 - Client's stated goals and your therapeutic priorities, including short-term safety and long-term integration objectives
 - Practices selected (asana, pranayama, meditation, mantra, relaxation) with rationale for each
 - Specific language and structural adaptations that create choice, safety, and agency at each point in the session
3. Submit a 1–2 page clinical reflection addressing:
 - How you applied trauma-informed principles — invitational language, pacing, environmental considerations, consent
 - Ethical considerations or challenges that arose in the design process
 - How you would monitor for signs of dysregulation during practice, and what you would do if you noticed them
 - One moment in the session where you would pause to check in, and what you would say
4. Upload your completed form and reflection via the Pillar Project Template Form link.



PSYCH402: Yoga Therapy and Addiction

Course Overview

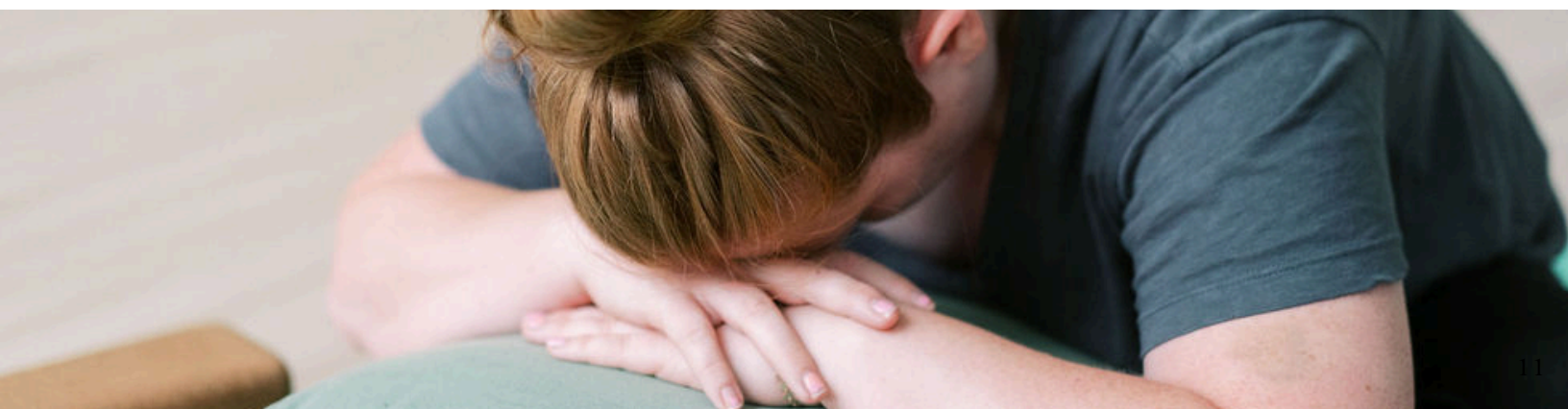
This course offers yoga therapists the foundational and applied knowledge to understand, assess, and support individuals navigating addiction and recovery. Through the lens of yoga, Ayurveda, neuroscience, and mental health principles, students learn how to offer trauma-informed support in both individual and group environments.

*Gabor Maté's work in *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* frames addiction not as a moral failing but as a response to pain — and yoga therapy's role is to offer an alternative pathway to the same states (regulation, belonging, relief) that the addictive substance or behavior temporarily provides. Students learn how cravings and trauma imprints affect physiology and behavior, and how practices can reduce compulsive patterns, support mood regulation, and restore agency.*

Complementary tools — CBT-informed strategies, journaling including Pratipaksha Bhavana (Yoga Sutra 2.33), sangha (community), and 12-step referral literacy — support long-term planning, relapse prevention, and stigma-reducing care.

Asynchronous Students — Project Instructions

1. Select a case study from class or create a composite profile of an individual in recovery (no identifying information).
2. Complete the Yoga Therapy Assessment & Planning Form. Include:
 - Addiction history, current stage of recovery, and any co-occurring conditions (including trauma, mood disorder)
 - Client goals and your therapeutic priorities
 - Yogic and Ayurvedic rationale — guna assessment, ojas considerations, dosha patterns — for your overall approach
 - Practices selected (asana, pranayama, meditation, relaxation, lifestyle) with short-term and long-term focus, including Pratipaksha Bhavana as a journaling tool
 - Lunar/langhana practices chosen for the grounding and down-regulating emphasis appropriate to recovery
3. Submit a 1–2 page clinical reflection. Include:
 - How your plan supports recovery across body, breath, mind, and behavior
 - Specific considerations for relapse prevention, including how sangha and 12-step referral literacy factor into your long-term planning
 - Observations from your simulated or actual practice delivery, including what felt steady and what felt uncertain
 - How you would coordinate care or refer when needs exceed your scope
4. Upload your completed form and reflection via the Pillar Project Template Form link.



ASMT400: Effective Practices for Therapeutic Relationships — Capstone

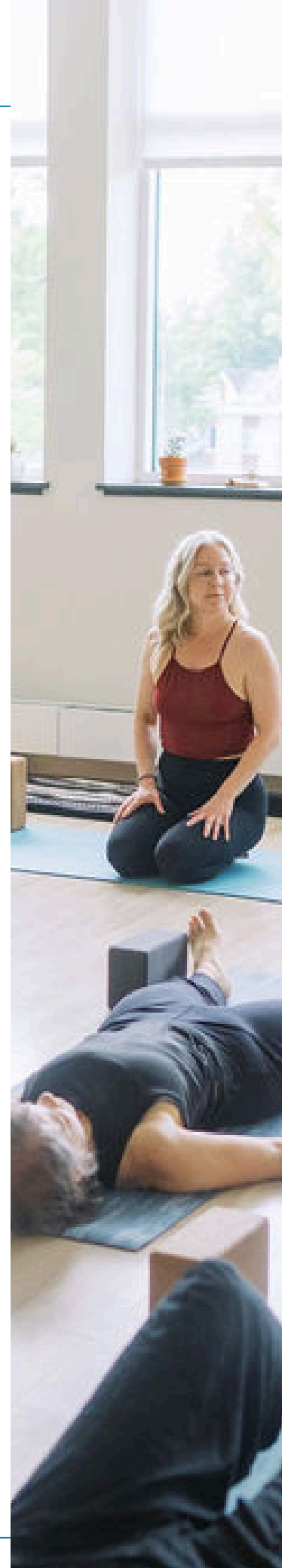
Course Overview

This course defines and strengthens the foundational skills of the therapeutic relationship — how to observe, adapt, and support the care-seeker's process and progress. Students learn to recognize and navigate the obstacles that arise in healing relationships while building competency in ethical scope, referrals, and professional communication.

Grounded in the principle of Sva Acharya — leading by the example of the self — this course holds that our effectiveness as yoga therapists is inseparable from the quality of our own inner life. We do not take care-seekers farther than we ourselves have been willing to go. Svadhyaya (self-study) is not preparation for the work. It is the work.

ALL STUDENTS - CAPSTONE PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a real or hypothetical client scenario in which ethical considerations are clearly present. This may draw from your PSYCH400–402 work or be a new scenario.
2. Outline a 20–30 minute yoga therapy session plan demonstrating:
 - Clear, maintained boundaries throughout — what does professional integrity look like in the room?
 - Explicit consent procedures — verbal, non-verbal, and written where appropriate — integrated naturally, not as a checklist
 - Inclusive and culturally respectful language — following the principles from Chapter 4 of the Effective Practices manual
 - Practices that reflect your integration across the full pillar — guna assessment, trauma sensitivity, recovery awareness
3. Write a 1–2 page reflection covering:
 - The ethical issues present in your scenario — named specifically, not generally
 - How you addressed each issue in your session design and delivery
 - How you would adapt if the situation evolved, boundaries were challenged, or the care-seeker's needs shifted unexpectedly — demonstrating the 'D' (Dealing) dimension of the HOLD framework
 - At least one area of ongoing ethical learning you intend to pursue, grounded in your Svadhyaya self-study from the opening of the course
4. Upload your completed session plan and reflection via the Pillar Project Template Form link.



Student Template — Yoga Therapy Assessment & Planning Form

Use this form for your PSYCH400, PSYCH401, PSYCH402, and ASMT400 projects. Complete all sections relevant to your case. Protect all client confidentiality — use a pseudonym or composite profile. This form mirrors the clinical documentation you will use in practice. USE THE “Student Template” [TEMPLATE HERE](#)

Community & Collaboration — Facebook Group Post

About Our Community Space

Our Facebook group is a living part of this program — a space for reflection, peer learning, and the kind of honest conversation that deepens clinical skill. As you move through each course, use the group to share insights, ask questions, and offer specific, generous feedback to peers. Your voice matters here.

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1128934782692897>

Ongoing Sharing Throughout the Pillar (Choose 2 shares to complete the pillar requirements)

- PSYCH400: Share one practice you selected for a tamasic or rajasic presentation and what you noticed. What did the case study reveal about your own assessment instincts? Where did the guna lens feel clear — and where did it feel uncertain?
- PSYCH401: Post a 1–2 minute voice note or video sharing one invitational language shift you practiced. What felt different in your body when you offered a choice instead of a direction? What came up for you in the ACE discussion?
- PSYCH402: Share a reflection on Pratipaksha Bhavana — the practice of cultivating the opposite. How does this sutra live in your own life? How did studying addiction change the way you think about craving, habit, or human suffering?
- Asynchronous Option (PSYCH401): Upload your recorded trauma-sensitive class for peer feedback. In your response to peers, be specific — what language, pacing, or sequencing choices stood out? What would you adjust?
- Capstone Reflection: Before submitting your final project, share one ethical principle that has shifted or deepened for you across this pillar. Which of the Yamas or Niyamas showed up most unexpectedly in your clinical work?





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