

YOGA FOR ME/CFS TAPE, CD, DVD AND BOOK REVIEW

By Cazzaw

Index

- Yoga Tapes/CDs/DVDs designed for people with ME or CFS
- Other Yoga Tapes/CDs/DVDs
- Yoga Books

Yoga tapes/CDs/DVDs designed for people with ME or CFS

The tapes/CDs/DVDs in this section have all been designed for people with ME or CFS. Each gives a complete yoga sessions comprising of gentle yoga postures, relaxation and breathing exercises. The sessions are more gentle than a normal hatha yoga class and you would be unlikely to find the sequences from a book. Many of the tapes/CDs and the remedial section of the DVD contain remedial variations of yoga postures, with most of the postures done lying down, with no standing and only a little sitting.

In the yoga for ME class which I attend my teacher tells me to do only half of what I think I can do so I don't push myself too much and relapse, so when there is a posture I cannot do on a tape I just relax and visualise the posture. Initially, I only did one or two postures on a tape, rather than all of them as a full tape was too much for me. When I was able, I gradually incorporated more postures into my session until eventually I could do a whole tape.

When I was too unwell to do any movements I still found just doing the relaxation and breathing exercises on their own invaluable. In fact, I always do a relaxation tape at least once or twice a day in addition to meditation. There is a separate review of guided visualisation and yoga relaxation tapes/CDs.

My teacher also told me that anyone with additional medical conditions on top of ME/CFS, such as high blood pressure, epilepsy, heart disease or anyone who is pregnant should consult their yoga teacher, doctor or practitioner before doing any yoga as there may be a posture they should not do.

Beat Fatigue with Yoga DVD (110 + 26 + 16 min), by Fiona Agombar and Sue Delf

Fiona Agombar, is a qualified yoga teacher who has had CFS herself. She takes classes and runs residential workshops for those with ME/CFS and also for those with general fatigue. Sue Delf is a qualified yoga teacher. The DVD is divided into 3 sections. Section 1 consists of a main yoga practice with Sue Delf (110 min), divided into an introduction and 3 parts: (a) lying down and on all fours, (b) standing postures, and (c) lying, relaxation and seated. Section 2 consists of a more gentle session (26 min) with Fiona Agombar divided into an introduction (1.5 min) and 2 parts

(a) warm up, breathing and relaxation (11 min, a few minutes of which includes arm movements) and (b) remedial therapy (consisting of adapted yoga postures (13.5 min)). And section 3 comprises of 3 interviews (16 min), one with Fiona Agombar, one with Tanya Roche and one with Alex Howard. I have found the gentle section with Fiona Agombar very useful, the first part of which is a good starting point for anyone who has not done yoga before or does not know how much they are able to do. The two parts can be done individually or can be combined together to form a longer gentle practice. Many of the postures in this remedial session are adapted forms of yoga postures to make them less strenuous and easier to do and the activity level is probably similar to that of my local yoga for ME class. Most postures are done lying on the floor but a few can be done sitting. While Fiona talks through the session there are 2 different people demonstrating the postures in different ways. This is useful as I know from the yoga for ME classes I attend that everyone with ME/CFS is different regarding what they can and can't do. There is no relaxation at the end of Fiona's remedial session, so I need to have my CD player at the ready with a relaxation CD in it and I play it immediately afterwards. The main session with Sue Delf is more physically demanding than the session we do in my yoga for ME class, and is too strenuous for me to do as a whole, however, there are some useful things in it which I can do on their own or as part of a more gentle session. The UK format is PAL and is region free. Cost: £12.69 from www.amazon.co.uk incl p&p, or £11.99 plus £0.99 p&p from www.theoptimumhealthclinic.com (RRP is £12.99). It is also possible to buy this DVD in NTSC format, Region 1, for those in the USA and Canada.

Yoga for ME, by Joy Frame (formerly Mankoo) (30 + 30 min CD)

Joy Frame (formerly Mankoo) was a yoga teacher at the Yoga for Health Foundation before it closed. Side 1 of this useful yoga CD consists of relaxation and breathing (4 min), breathing with arm movements (7 min), gentle postures (11 min) and relaxation (8 min). Side 2 consists of relaxation and breathing (2 min), gentle postures (20 min, of which 7 min is sitting) and relaxation (8 min). Side 1 is a little more gentle than side 2. Cost £5.00 + £1.50 UK p&p (for worldwide p&p contact Joy), from Joy Frame, 54 Winston Crescent, Biggleswade, Beds, SG18 0EZ. Tel: 01767 222154. Email joy.frame@googlemail.com.

Yoga the Gentle Way, by Angela Stevens (35 + 15 min tape/CD)

Angela Stevens is a remedial yoga teacher who takes a yoga for ME class in the South and runs training courses for yoga teachers to teach yoga for people with ME. This yoga tape/CD is designed for people moderately affected by ME. Side 1 consists of a quick relaxation and breathing (6 min), breathing with arm movements (2 min), gentle postures (18 min of which 3 are sitting) and relaxation (9 min). Side 2 contains a pleasant 15 min visualisation. Cost £11.50 (online including UK p&p) or £9.50 (by cheque including UK p&p) from Angela Stevens, Laminga, Southview Road, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 6TL, UK. Email: info@angela-stevens.co.uk. Web: www.angela-stevens.co.uk.

Energise and Relax with Yoga, by Angela Stevens (42 + 36 min tape/CD)

This yoga tape/CD is designed for people with ME who spend much of the time in bed or have very low energy levels, but is also suitable for others who just want a very gentle tape, and can be practised lying on a bed or on the floor. Side 1 consists of an introduction, breathing and visualisation of the emotional centres (14 min), very gentle movements (17 min) and a visualisation/relaxation on the energy centres (chakras) using colour (11 min). Side 2 consists of a positive visualisation (4 min), very gentle movements (21 min), breathing and relaxation using

sound (11 min). Angela suggests that the movements should be done separately initially and only put together when strong enough. She also suggests just visualising any movement you cannot do. This tape was unavailable when I was bedridden, but I think it would have been very useful. In some parts of the tape you are asked to tense your muscles then relax them to achieve greater muscle relaxation, and although I know of several people with ME who really like this common yoga technique, when I was bedridden my muscles went into spasms when I tried this so I just visualised relaxing the muscles instead and that worked really well. Includes an information sheet. Cost £11.50 (on-line including UK p&p) or £9.50 (by cheque including UK p&p) from Angela Stevens, address above.

Breath to Live (for ME), by Angela Stevens (tape/CD)

This tape/CD is designed specifically for ME and starts off with an introduction and advice on correct breathing. The breathing exercises are divided into small sections which should be mastered individually. Some of the techniques can be performed lying down, while others are performed sitting or standing and some require arm movements. There is advice on correct sitting posture, some passive neck and shoulder exercises to help the breathing muscles and a meditation on the breath. Includes an information sheet. Cost £11.50 (on-line including UK p&p) or £9.50 (by cheque including UK p&p) from Angela Stevens, address above.

Gentle Yoga, by Jo Webb (64 min CD)

Jo Webb is a yoga teacher who takes regular Yoga for ME/CFS classes and has a daughter with ME/CFS. This yoga CD is designed for those with ME/CFS and consists of an introduction (3 min), relaxation and breathing (10 min), breathing with arm movements (5 min), gentle postures (17 min), a choice of relaxations (11 + 4 + 5 + 9 min). One can do just one of the relaxations or do several of them at the end of the session. Cost £10.50 (including p&p for UK) (for worldwide p&p contact Jo) from Jo Webb, 12 Compton Road, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5QR. Tel: 01749 342035. Mobile: 0773 039 7396. Email: jo.webb@mbzonline.net . Web: www.gentleyoga.co.uk .

Gentle Yoga Exercises for ME, by Diana Lampen (65 min tape/CD)

Diana Lampen is a yoga teacher experienced in remedial yoga. This yoga tape/CD consists of a quick relaxation and breathing (7 min), gentle postures (36 min of which 9 are sitting), breathing and relaxation (20 min). I found this tape slightly more demanding than most of the others. The relaxation is immediately followed by music. Includes an information sheet. Cost £6.50 for tape or £8.50 for CD (including p&p in UK) (add £1.00 for worldwide p&p) from Diana Lampen, Diana's Tapes, 21 Heathfield Gardens, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 3YD, UK. E-mail: yoga@hopeproject.co.uk. Web: www.hopeproject.co.uk.

ME – Follow up tape/CD, by Diana Lampen (45 + 35 min tape/CD)

This is a follow up ME tape/CD for people who have practiced Diana Lampen's yoga for ME tape for a while and have increased energy. Side 1 starts off with the Savitri breath (in an 8:4:8:4 ratio) which is a calming and tranquilising breath and some visualisations. This breathing technique is then applied to a selection of postures. The exercises can all be mastered separately. Side 2 starts off with some forward /backward bending postures which can be done in your own time followed by a polarity practice. The polarity practice, which is like a relaxation exercise, uses the Savitri breathing and visualisation techniques to balance energy. I have only listened to

the tape/CD once and I found the breathing very energising. Cost £6.50 for tape or £8.50 for CD (including p&p in UK) (add £1.00 for p&p worldwide) from Diana Lampen, address above.

Gentle Yoga, by Linda Su Arnold (formerly Sole) (44 + 20 + 23 min tape)

Linda Su Arnold (formerly Sole) was a residential remedial yoga teacher at the former Yoga for Health Foundation and used to take classes for Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS. Side 1 is a 44 min session consisting of relaxation and breathing (5 min), breathing with arm movements (6 min), gentle postures (25 min) and relaxation (8 min). Side 2 consists of breathing exercises (20 min) and a long relaxation (23 min). Cost £5.00 plus £1.50 p&p from Linda Su Arnold, 16 Mount Pleasant, Riddings, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE55 4BL, UK. Tel: 01773 528264.

ME Yoga Class at the Yoga for Health Foundation, by the late Renee East (75 min tape)

This is a tape recording of a live ME yoga session at the former Yoga for Health Foundation a few years ago by the late Renee East who was once a residential teacher there. It comprises quick relaxation and breathing (7 min), breathing with arm movements (10 min), gentle postures (35 min, of which 2 are sitting), colour breathing, relaxation and rainbow visualisation (25 min). This tape has more breathing exercises than some of the other tapes. This tape is no longer available for sale but may be available in some ME libraries.

Other Yoga Tapes/CDs

I had practised yoga before I was ill. Sometimes, when I'm having a better patch, I do some of the normal hatha yoga postures I'd learnt previously rather than do the more gentle remedial yoga for ME tapes. The tapes reviewed in this section a good stepping-stone from the remedial tapes to doing normal yoga as they are short. There are plenty of other beginners' hatha yoga tapes and videos advertised in yoga magazines, but most are longer. Please note that these tapes are not designed for people with ME, contain standing postures and are not as gentle.

Four Short Yoga Practices, series one, two, three, four, five and six, by Diane Lampen

Six tapes/CDs each with four 15 - 20 min yoga sessions. Can be bought separately. I've only used the first one, but I think the others are similar. The tapes pre-suppose some previous yoga experience. Cost £6.50 for tape or £8.50 for CD (including p&p in UK) (add £1.00 for p&p worldwide) from Diana Lampen, address above.

Yoga Books

Beat Fatigue with Yoga, by Fiona Agambar:

The author, Fiona Agambar, has had ME herself. The book is aimed both at people with general types of fatigue and those with chronic fatigue syndrome. It includes a summary of possible causes and chapters on energy and your energy centres, breathing, meditation, traditional yoga postures and Fiona Agambar's story. The revised 2002 edition contains two new chapters on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). These include information on what CFS is, why yoga helps CFS, advice on pacing and setting limits, suggestions for postures for different levels of CFS (from mild to very severe) and someone's story of how yoga helped her CFS. I think this is an

excellent book with some very useful things in it. Most of the yoga postures can be found in many yoga books but there is some good advice about balancing your energy centres (chakras) and some breathing exercises which I haven't seen anywhere else. It does not include the more gentle remedial variations of some of the postures which are used in specialist yoga for ME or CFS classes and tapes/CDs (however, some of these are on Fiona's DVD (see above)). These remedial variations are very useful for those with moderate and severe ME or CFS.

Cost: £5.99 including p&p from www.amazon.co.uk or £9.99 + £2.00 p&p from www.theoptimumhealthclinic.com (RRP is £9.99).

ISBN-10: 1901447456, ISBN-13: 978-1901447453, Cherry Red Books, 200 pages.

The Healing Power of Yoga, by Julie Friedeberger:

Julie Friedeberger is an experienced yoga teacher who has been teaching yoga and training yoga teachers for many years. Julie has recovered from breast cancer and yoga played an important part of her healing journey. This very useful book contains chapters on yoga and healing, the breathing process, breathing exercises, gentle movements, relaxation and meditation. There is a sequence of breathing exercises that are performed lying down. There are also some standing breathing exercises, some of which may be adapted for lying down or sitting but she does not describe how to adapt them. The gentle movements section includes a group of asanas (yoga postures) known as Pawanmuktasana. This group of movements are used to loosen up the joints, help the removal of toxins, help regulate the metabolism and clear the energy pathways. There are some simple movements for the joints which can be done sitting on a chair. They can also be adapted for lying down but she does not describe how to adapt them. There are some gentle postures which can be performed lying on the floor similar to the type of postures we do in my yoga for ME class. Cost £8.99 including p&p from www.amazon.co.uk (RRP is £9.99).

ISBN-10: 8178221810, ISBN-13: 978-8178221816, New Age Books, 160 pages.

Yoga for Common Ailments, by Dr R Nagarathna, Dr H R Nagendra and Dr R Munro:

An earlier edition of this book has also been called **Yoga for a Healthy Lifestyle**. One of the authors is from the Yoga Biomedical Trust. It covers traditional yoga postures, breathing and several relaxation techniques at the start of the book. The rest of the book gives details of which yoga exercises should be emphasised or avoided for specific ailments such as digestive disorders, back pain, asthma, sinusitis, diabetes, stress, headaches and arthritis. There is no section on ME or CFS but there are some useful things in the book. It does not detail the remedial variations of the postures which are useful for those with severe or moderate ME or CFS. This book is out of print but may be available second hand on www.amazon.co.uk under both names.

ISBN-10: 1856750108, ISBN-13: 978-1856750103, Gaii books, 96 pages.

**The author has ME/CFS/borreliosis and practices remedial yoga regularly.
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Disclaimer

The information in this review does not imply a recommendation or guarantee of accuracy. You are advised to consult your practitioner or doctor before trying anything new.