

Vijai Sharma, PhD, RYT-500, CYT

*Educator, Research Consultant, Faculty - American Viniyoga™
Institute, LLC Viniyoga Therapist Training*

"When I started doing informal research work on yoga and COPD, no one was really talking about the anxiety and depression that surface as a result of the condition. Anyone whose life has been so considerably affected by these conditions—how would they not be anxious or depressed? I'm happy to say that in the last 10 years there's been a sea change around this for COPD and for lung cancer, too."

—Vijai Sharma

Vijai Sharma, PhD, RYT–500, CYT, has had a lifelong relationship with both Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and yoga. He lived with untreated asthma and chronic bronchitis since childhood and was diagnosed with emphysema in 1994. Dr. Sharma follows the medical treatment for COPD strictly along with a program of wide-ranging exercise, nutrition and self-care. He has been practicing yoga since childhood, but more regularly for the past 30 years and believes yoga has helped him psychologically and physically in his battle with emphysema. Dr. Sharma discovered for himself how using the tools of yoga, particularly pranayama, led to less reliance on his inhaler and other medications, brought greater ease and comfort in his breathing, and helped him cope more effectively with the anxiety, depression, and life stress that accompanied his chronic illness.

A retired clinical psychologist, Dr. Sharma received extensive clinical training in India, the United Kingdom, and Sweden and was licensed as a clinical psychologist in Tennessee in 1981. A long-time student of Gary Kraftsow, Dr. Sharma completed his 500-hour yoga teacher training with Gary in 2004 through the AVI Viniyoga Teacher Training and pursued his training as a yoga therapist with Gary in the AVI Viniyoga Therapist Training, completing that program in 2008.

Dr. Sharma is interested in demonstrating that the full complement of yoga, inclusive of hatha yoga, pranayama, meditation, mindfulness, and life philosophy can be an effective intervention for people with COPD, not just for the physiological benefits but also for the psycho-emotional benefits, such as alleviation of anxiety and depression that often accompany the disease. He has presented a similar intervention model at the International Association of Yoga Therapists Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research. The primary driver for his work is to help others with COPD by not only sharing his experience, but by demonstrating through research studies the beneficial effects of yoga for these conditions.

Dr. Sharma recently served as a consultant along with Gary Kraftsow to the research team at the College of Nursing, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, which focused on yoga as an intervention for people with non-small cell lung cancer. He has collaborated with a research team at the University of California/San Francisco in constructing and proposing a full-complement yoga protocol for people with COPD that makes innovative use of interactive, web-based technology to deliver yoga classes for dyspnea self-management directly to study participants in their homes.



"When I started doing informal research work on yoga and COPD, no one was really talking about the anxiety and depression that surface as a result of the condition. Anyone whose life has been so considerably affected by these conditions—how would they not be anxious or depressed? I'm happy to say that in the last 10 years there's been a sea change around this for COPD and for lung cancer, too."

-Vijai Sharma, PhD,
RYT–500, CYT



americanviniyogainstitute