In the Western world, rehabilitation has traditionally been the domain of therapies such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapy. It is time to start thinking about how Yoga therapy can take its place among the therapies that traditionally are found in rehabilitation departments at hospitals and other facilities. In this perspective, I will outline one way in which Yoga therapy might be incorporated throughout all phases of the rehabilitation process.

Phase 1: Acute Injury

During Phase 1 (acute injury), rehabilitation is focused on limiting the damage and pain caused by the injury. During this phase, there is swelling present and movement is usually painful. The client might be on medication, and the physical therapist might use ice and compression to decrease inflammation. Movement is restricted to allow for healing of the injured tissues.

During this phase, Yoga therapy could be applied in the form of \textit{prânâyâma}, \textit{pratyâhâra}, and \textit{dhyâna}. \textit{Prânâyâma} will help to deliver oxygen to the tissues and create a healing internal environment. \textit{Pratyâhâra} and \textit{dhyâna} can teach clients to decrease their reactivity to pain, as well as any fear-avoidance behavior that they might develop because of the pain. The combination of \textit{prânâyâma}, \textit{pratyâhâra}, and \textit{dhyâna} brings awareness and presence to the body, preparing the client to move with awareness during the repair and remodeling phase of rehabilitation. The client may also practice \textit{bhâvana} in the form of guided/visual imagery, to promote healing.

Phase 2: Repair

During phase 2 (repair), the body initiates the healing process, collagen fibers are laid down, and there is decreased swelling and pain. During this phase, the physical therapist will now start to focus on maintaining or improving movement, strength, and cardiovascular fitness. A client who has been introduced to Yoga (as suggested above) in phase 1 is now ready to add movement to the awareness and presence that he or she developed in that phase. The Yoga paths that will be introduced during phase 2 are the \textit{yamas}, \textit{niyamas}, \textit{dhâranâ}, and \textit{âsanas}.

The non-harming aspects of the \textit{yamas} are important at this stage to make sure the client limits his or her activities, to allow maximum healing of the tissues. If the client is too eager and does not pay attention to the signals from his or her body, then the client will do harm to the body. Ignoring the body’s signals can also increase the nervous system’s sensitivity to pain during the rehabilitation and beyond. The \textit{niyamas} and \textit{dhâranâ} can be introduced as a way to make the client aware of the importance of compliance, including committing to rehabilitation and a lifestyle that supports health and healing.

The client is also introduced to \textit{âsanas} in phase 2. Because the tissues are still healing and the injured area needs to be protected, the \textit{âsanas} will be limited in scope. While the physical therapist might target specific areas of the body for more traditional stretching and strengthening,
the Yoga therapist will focus on teaching the client how to move with awareness and alignment.

Phase 3: Remodeling

During phase 3 (remodeling), the collagen fibers will be laid down according to the stresses that are put on them. The goal of this phase is to return the client to full function. Phase 3 may be brief or very long, depending on the severity of the injury, comorbidities, and complications during the healing process.

Physical therapy in phase 3 focuses on functional training and progressive exercises. By now, the client should be able to perform physical therapy exercises with awareness, and with an idea of what is healing and nourishing. During this phase, the Yoga therapist can introduce more challenging asanas. This will help to incorporate the exercises taught by the physical therapist into full-body movements. The full-body movements will not only strengthen the body in a functional manner, but will also stretch the deeper fascia and stress the new collagen tissues so that they are laid down in an optimal manner. The asanas will also teach the client to move in non-habitual ways, breaking movement habits that might have caused the injury in the first place. During phase 3, the Yoga therapist will continue to lay the foundation for post-rehabilitation Yoga practice by the client.

A Call to Action

Far too often, clients who are discharged from rehabilitation are doing well physically, but very little has been done to guide them toward total well-being. As a physical therapist, I can see a future where the Yoga therapist works together with other rehabilitation professionals throughout the entire rehabilitation process. It is my hope that everyone can swallow their egos, drop their fears, and see what is best for the client. By incorporating Yoga therapy into rehabilitation, the client will have a personal practice that not only supports physical rehabilitation, but will continue to support his or her physical, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Rehabilitation</th>
<th>Physical Therapy</th>
<th>Yoga Therapy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Focus: Create an environment conducive to healing. Tools: Medication, ice, and compression to decrease pain, inflammation, and swelling.</td>
<td>A combination of pranayama, pratyahara, bhavana, and dhyana to bring awareness and presence to the body in preparation for moving with awareness during the repair and remodeling phase of the rehabilitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repair</td>
<td>Focus: Laying down of collagen fibers during initial healing. Tools: Gentle range-of-motion and strengthening exercises.</td>
<td>As above, plus yamas, niyamas, dhyan, and asanas. Focus: Teaching the client to move with awareness and in correct alignment without harming him/herself, and to have the client commit to the rehabilitation and post-rehabilitation phases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding</td>
<td>Focus: Stressing the collagen fibers to promote functional healing. Tools: Functional training and exercises.</td>
<td>As above, plus full-body asanas for strength and stretching. Laying the foundation for continued Yoga practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discharge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continued Yoga practice that will include all the different Yoga paths.</td>
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Table 1. Integrating Physical Therapy and Yoga Therapy in All Phases of Rehabilitation