

Barriers to Yoga and Yoga-Based Therapy for Black and Brown Individuals in the United States: Implications for Social Work Practice

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Abstract : Yoga has been accepted in the majority of communities in the United States as a method of assisting individuals with improving their physical health. Both community yoga classes and yoga-based therapy have been shown to be highly useful for individual's mental health. Yoga-based therapy has been supported by research to be an evidence-based practice for individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, and disordered eating and for those experiencing post traumatic stress disorder in the wake of trauma. Many individuals who have experienced trauma, as well as other mental health diagnoses, are either very disconnected from their physical bodies or feel unsafe in their bodies. Yoga can be a method of creating safety and control in the body. This is recommended by some of the leading researchers in trauma therapy as a beginning step towards finding safety in the body in order to begin to work on the additional mental health challenges before addressing other long-term challenges. Unfortunately, yoga for physical and mental health is underutilized in black and brown communities despite the research regarding the benefits. Very few studies have examined the barriers to access to yoga for black, brown, and indigenous individuals. This study interviewed 15 yoga practitioners who identified as black or brown and explored the barriers they see in their communities related to accessing yoga and yoga-based services. Several of the themes reported include not feeling welcome, cost of services, time, and cultural/ religious components. Methods for reducing barriers will also be discussed.

Keywords : yoga, sport, barrier, black

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