



Yoga Fitness Module

Teaching for a Practice Across the Lifespan

**British Columbia Recreation & Parks Association (BCRPA)
Performance Standards**

**Plus an exploration of accessibility, adaptability,
and ageing in the yoga classroom.**

40 hours

Stacey Buss

E-RYT® 500 • YACEP®

BCRPA TFL - Yoga Specialty • Older Adults Fitness Leader

CFES Instructors Skills Assessment Evaluator - Yoga • Active Ageing & Yoga Fitness Instructor

Certified Chair Yoga Instructor • Bone Fit™ Trained

yogaonly@telus.net yogaonly.ca 604-836-0424

Contents at a Glance

Teaching Yoga Across the Lifespan	5	Health Conditions & Teaching Considerations	29
Shaped by Time, Shaped by Practice	6	Series Sequencing — Planning with Purpose	31
Many Paths, Shared Roots	7	Āsana— From Principles to Practice	33
Scope & Duty of Care	8	Category Pose List	34
Registration & Ongoing Learning	9	S1 — Welcome & Awareness	35
From Philosophy to Practice	10	S2 — Warmup & Mobility	39
The Art of Being Present	11	S3 — ROM, Breath, Agility & Coordination	54
Setting the Stage for Practice	12	Exploring Salutations	65
Understanding Poses in Practice	13	A Guided Pathway	66
Screening & Observation	14	From Pathway to Practice	66
Framing Poses with Clarity & Positive Cueing	16	S4 — Strength, Flexibility & Stamina	67
Conscious Breathing & Prāṇāyāma	17	S5 — Balance, Stability & Confidence	74
Anatomy of Breathing	18	S6 — Stretch & Cooldown	83
Prāṇāyāma — Breathing Techniques	19	S7 — Relax, Reflect & Renew	100
Breath in Practice	20	Cultural Awareness	100
Skeletal Structure & Support	21	Being Classroom Ready Self-Study & Teaching Practice	103
Joint Function	22	Alphabetical Pose List	104
Major Muscles Groups	23	Reference Materials	105
Anatomy for Movement	24	Continuing Education	105
Alignment & Support	25	Graphic Resources - Tumree Images	106
Inversions: More Than Upside Down	26		
Creating Access with Guidance	27		
Risk Management In The Classroom	28		

Teaching Yoga Across the Lifespan

Exploring movement, teaching and adaption across a broad range of participants.

Rooted in BCRPA's Yoga Fitness Performance Standards, Scope of Practice, and related documentation, this training prepares teachers to lead safe and effective Yoga Fitness classes appropriate for a general group setting with participants able to provide a healthy self-report.

Over the course of the workshop, participants will develop a classroom-ready, cohesive, and well-planned 60-minute Yoga Fitness class through self-study and practice. Being Classroom Ready (pg 103) means bringing together the principles, practices, cueing, adaptations, and teaching skills explored throughout the training.

Upon successful completion of the training, participants will be prepared to undertake the Yoga ICE — Instructor Competency Evaluation.

ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Lifespan refers to the full span of a person's life, from birth through older adulthood, and beyond. It describes the continuous process of growth, change, and adaptation that occurs over time.

"Across the Lifespan" segments are included in many topics to highlight how movement, ability, and adaptation may shift across different stages of life, with a particular focus on creating appropriate space for older adults within a general Yoga Fitness context. For Yoga Fitness, understanding ageing in movement involves recognizing three related but distinct concepts:

- **Chronological ageing** refers to age in years based on date of birth.
- **Biological ageing** relates to physiological changes that may influence strength, mobility, recovery, and overall physical capacity. These factors can vary widely and are influenced by lifestyle and health.
- **Functional ageing** describes how a person moves in practice and in daily life, including balance, coordination, strength, and mobility. This will differ significantly between individuals — a 65-year-old may run marathons, and a 35-year-old is winded walking up two flights of stairs.

— Yoga —

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, meaning to yoke, join, or unite. Often described as the union of body, breath, mind, and awareness, yoga reflects the idea of connection and balance — effort and ease, movement and stillness, sun and moon.

Today's yoga is often experienced through physical movement and fitness. It may also be meaningful as a mindful, philosophical, or spiritual practice. How yoga is approached is a personal choice, shaped by individual perspective, intention, and openness.

These distinctions help Yoga Fitness Leaders avoid assumptions based on age alone and focus on what is actually present in movement.

A NOTE ABOUT REPETITION

Some ideas in this manual will appear more than once. This is intentional. Key concepts are revisited in different contexts to strengthen understanding and support practical application.

LOOKING AHEAD

Throughout this training, the emphasis remains on observing movement, supporting participation, and developing understanding of principles such as breath awareness, coordination, balance, and focused attention.

Alongside supporting general health and the movements of daily life, these qualities can also support participation in recreational activities and sports. Coordination, balance, strength, mobility, and adaptability all contribute to how we move, respond, and participate across different activities and settings.

The invitation is to remain curious about how these patterns of movement carry into different areas of life, and how we can be part of that journey.

Understanding Poses in Practice

For many participants, yoga is most easily recognized through its poses. Whether standing, seated, balancing, reclining, or resting, poses provide opportunities to develop strength, mobility, balance, body awareness, coordination and connection with the breath.

In Yoga Fitness, poses are taught to support safe and effective movement while encouraging participants to become more aware of how their bodies move, respond, and adapt.

Through the integration of movement and breath, the practice becomes more than physical shapes; it is an opportunity to explore challenge and stability while cultivating focus, ease, and self-awareness. Progress may be reflected in deeper stretches, longer holds, or more complex poses, while also appearing through improved balance, confidence, smoother transitions, or simply maintaining mobility and participation over time

READING MOVEMENT IN POSES

It can be tempting to view a pose as something to achieve or perfect. In practice, however, the value lies in the experience rather than the appearance.

Our role is to help participants explore movement safely, effectively, and with greater awareness rather than focus on perfection.

The way a pose is experienced can also play a role in how movement is organized in the body.

For example, a hip hinge such as Half Forward Fold (*Ardha Uttānāsana*) creates a different structural and muscular experience through the spine compared to spinal flexion in Forward Fold (*Uttānāsana*), although both may appear similar.



Likewise, changing arm position can increase or decrease load through the body, as in Chair Pose (*Utkāṭāsana*). Arms held close to the body reduce effort compared to arms extended away from the body.

Longer lever positions create greater demand than movements performed closer to the centre.



Joint positioning also plays a role in how movement is experienced within the body. For instance, sweeping the arms out sideways and up, rather than lifting forward and up, helps maintain shoulder joint integrity by creating more space within the joint. Similarly, limiting excessive forward (tuck) or backward movement (lift) of the head reduces unnecessary strain.

See *Alignment & Support/Movement patterns* — page 25.

These are subtle factors, but they contribute to how a pose is experienced and supported.

GUIDING (FITNESS) YOGA PRINCIPLES

- **Acceptance** — encourage everyone to work with the body they bring to practice rather than comparing themselves to others or previous experiences.
- **Breathing** — support awareness of breath as a foundation for movement, and ease in practice.
- **Concentration** — guide attention toward specific movement cues, sensations, or actions to support learning and stability.
- **Focus** — direct attention toward the present moment and the overall experience of practice.
- **Alignment** — support safe, efficient movement while recognizing that bodies differ.
- **Flowing Movement** — coordinate movement patterns, including symmetrical (homologous) movements where both sides of the body move together, as well as alternating and asymmetrical patterns. A variety of movement patterns reflects the demands of daily life and supports coordination, adaptability, and body awareness.
- **Playing the Edge** — explore an appropriate level of challenge without forcing or straining. Growth often occurs when effort and ease work together.

ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

A pose can be experienced in many ways. Older adults may bring years of movement experience, changing abilities, and personal goals to their practice. Teaching the experience of the pose rather than a specific shape allows practice to remain meaningful and adaptable.

CORPSE

CONSTRUCTIVE REST

Śavāsana

Before movement begins, there is an opportunity to pause and observe. Breath, physical sensations, and awareness become the focus, helping establish the connection between attention and action that carries throughout the practice.

FORM

- Supine on the mat
- Legs extended or knees bent
- Arms resting alongside the body
- Palms facing up or down
- Gaze — neutral, aligned with chest

TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

- Lower back discomfort in supine position
- Shoulder tension affecting arm placement
- Restlessness or sensitivity to prolonged lying down
- Trauma awareness

MODIFICATIONS

S1, S2, S6, S7

- Blocks under knees to reduce lower back strain
- Support under head or neck
- Side-lying for comfort
- Blanket for warmth and comfort

MAJOR MUSCLE GROUP/S

- No major muscle group

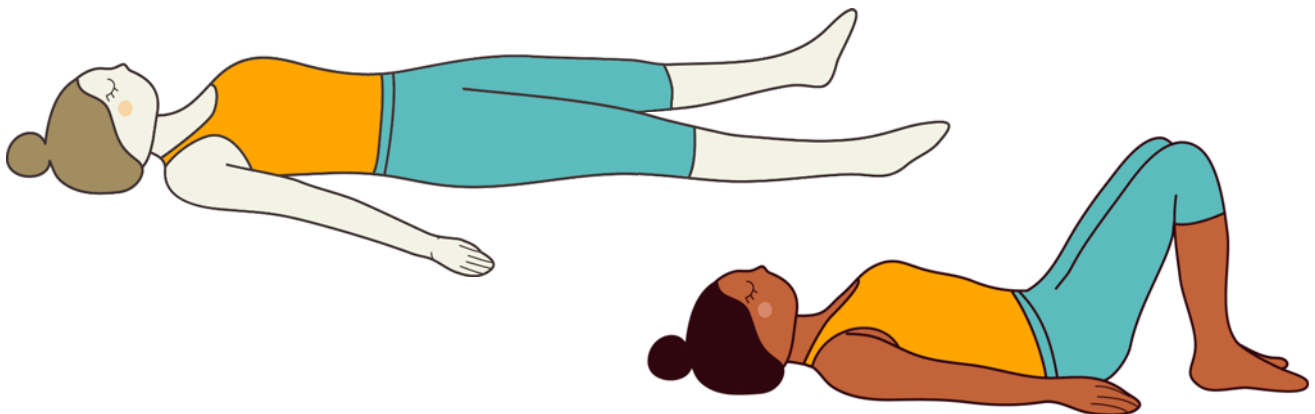
ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Settling into rest is an experience that may change with age, mobility, and previous movement experiences. For some older adults, moving to the floor and finding a comfortable position may require additional time before attention can shift toward breath and awareness.

REMINDER

Honouring life experience and personal perspectives, reframing this pose as Relaxation or Śavāsana offers a kinder approach for all ages.

(See *Inclusive & Respectful Language* — pg 16)



Note: Pose images are representational. Some may reflect variations from best practice across the lifespan. Use cueing suggestions and apply core principles of safety, accessibility, and success to guide informed choices around inclusion, form, and sequencing.

EXTENDED TRIANGLE

S4

Utthita Trikoṇāsana

A posture of length and rotation that creates space through the torso while maintaining grounding through both feet. The shape explores coordinated strength and openness through the legs, torso, and ribcage while maintaining steady balance.

FORM

- Mountain (*Tāḍāsana*)
- Stance rooted in basic 'warrior' positioning
- Front leg lengthened; micro-bend in knee
- Rear hip lifted and rotated outward
- Lateral hinge over front leg
- Chest and upper shoulder opened and rotated
- Arms reaching into a comfortable T-shape
- Lower hand resting inside of thigh or calf
- Head follows movement of spine
- Gaze — head turned, chin toward shoulder

TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

- Spinal twisting forward/downward while hinged
- Dropping head

MODIFICATIONS

- Adjusted lateral hinge
- Hand on block; upper arm wrapped around back
- Wider or shorter stance

MAJOR MUSCLE GROUP/S

- Hamstrings; Gastrocnemius and Soleus; Obliques; Deltoids

ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

The lateral hinge and rotation create a shape where small changes in mobility may alter how the body organizes around the grounded base. With ageing, noticing individual patterns can help guide depth while preserving the pose's sense of length and openness.



Note: Pose images are representational. Some may not fully reflect best practice; use cueing suggestions and apply core principles of safety, accessibility and success to guide informed choices around inclusion, form and sequencing.

MARICHI'S III

Marīcyāsana III

The extended leg creates a clear foundation as the torso turns toward the bent knee. The pose explores length through the spine while maintaining connection through the pelvis.

FORM

- Staff (*Daṇḍāsana*)
- One knee bent and drawn to inside of thigh
- Torso lengthened then rotated toward bent knee
- Back hand braced for support
- Front hand wrapped around bent leg
- Gaze — head turned, chin toward shoulder

TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

- Over rotation of lower/cervical spine
- Extended leg collapsing
- Leaning away from neutral

MODIFICATIONS

- Reduced rotation
- Support arm wrapped around back
- Sitting on a blanket or block
- See Half Lord of the Fishes (*Ardha Matsyendrāsana*) for arm options

S6

MAJOR MUSCLE GROUP/S

- Obliques; Rectus abdominis; Hamstrings

ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

With ageing, differences between sides may become more apparent through the hips, pelvis, and spine. The extended leg offers a useful reference for noticing how each side settles into the pose.



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