

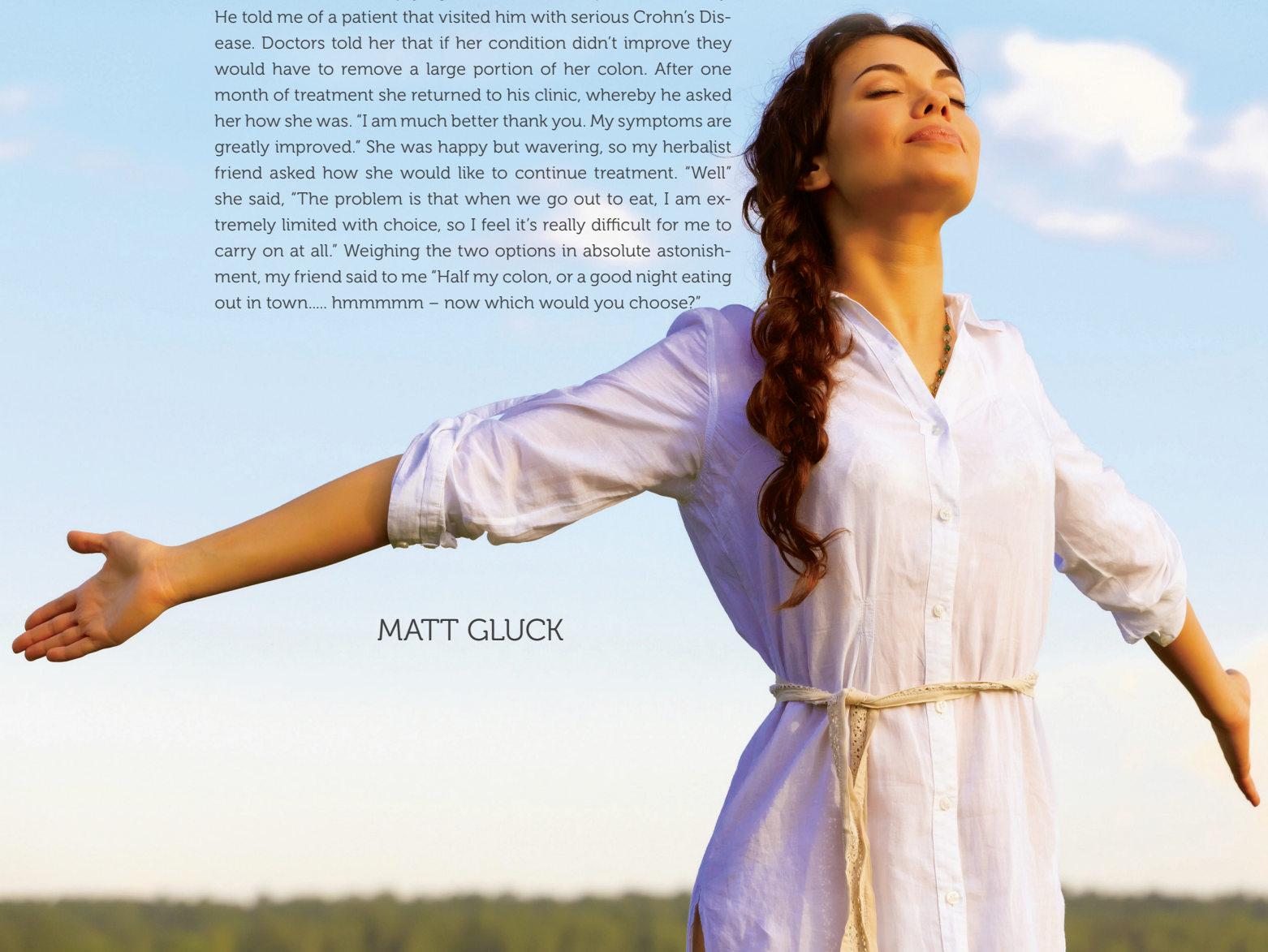
YOGA
WELLNESS

YOGA FOR CROHN'S DISEASE

RECOMMENDED REMEDIAL PRACTICES.

I'd like to start this article by relaying a story a health store owner told me earlier this week. He was a Crohn's patient who after "unsuccessful surgery" decided to use herbs and food to cure himself. Ten years later he is disease free and comes to our yoga classes to continue enjoying his health and improve his vitality. He told me of a patient that visited him with serious Crohn's Disease. Doctors told her that if her condition didn't improve they would have to remove a large portion of her colon. After one month of treatment she returned to his clinic, whereby he asked her how she was. "I am much better thank you. My symptoms are greatly improved." She was happy but wavering, so my herbalist friend asked how she would like to continue treatment. "Well" she said, "The problem is that when we go out to eat, I am extremely limited with choice, so I feel it's really difficult for me to carry on at all." Weighing the two options in absolute astonishment, my friend said to me "Half my colon, or a good night eating out in town..... hmmmmm – now which would you choose?"

MATT GLUCK



Crohn's disease requires that we utilise methods which inspire awareness to reduce internal aggravation, by stimulating a calming and balancing climate. Yoga asanas combined with pranayama, create internal locks that isolate regional toxins which are then flushed away when the lock is released. This allows fresh oxygenated blood to rinse in, alleviating and possibly removing symptoms to give way for new patterns of generation.

SOME PRACTICES

These vary from person to person with different practices according to symptoms. Most especially, practices to encourage a strong downward flow for constipation are to be avoided if one has diarrhoea. We seek to promote healthy peristalsis, the wavelike movement down through the gastrointestinal tract, which is assisted by regular and complete breathing. We aim to reduce the inflammatory response by reducing stress, also targeted by corrective breathing practices. Choose a gentle style of yoga which gradually increases the digestive power without creating too much internal heat and acid, such as yin or vini yoga.

POSTURES

Forward Bends are peaceful 'pitta' (bile) asanas which trigger the relaxation response. Try standing forward bend, seated forward bend and seated head to knee pose. If you are constipated you will find these help stimulate motion. If you have excess movement, reduce or avoid these bends and the twists and try the other options.

Twisting Poses can be performed standing, seated or reclining, depending upon your energy levels and mood. Twists encourage deep abdominal breathing and diaphragmatic internal organ massage. This stimulates peristalsis, digestion, absorption, elimination and detoxification.

YOGA BREATHING EXERCISES, SUCH AS HUMMING BEE BREATH, HELP CALM YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AND INCREASE OXYGEN LEVELS AND BLOOD SUPPLY TO THE INTERNAL ORGANS. THIS PROMOTES DEEP CALM AND BALANCE. LEARNING HOW TO BREATHE CORRECTLY IS A WONDERFUL SKILL TO USE ANYTIME DURING A FLARE-UP OR WHEN IN REMISSION, TO HELP MAINTAIN AN EVEN KEEL.

Inversions where your hips are higher than your heart, (like wide legged forward bend, plough and shoulder stand) release the effects of gravity and therefore tension in the belly, promoting physical and mental rest.

If anything you do triggers unpleasant symptoms, stop, rest and review. Yoga teaches 'less is more'. In learning this, deeper peace and health emerge as we let go of constricting self beliefs in exchange for less personal and more expansive ideals.

Standing Postures

Try Warrior 1, 2, Side Angle Pose, Half Moon Balance and Crescent Moon poses when you are feeling energised and wish to stretch and tone the connective tissues. All these poses open the breathing spaces and apply varying pressures within the joints and organs, promoting improved circulation and increasing joy.

Seated Postures

When you are tired try these asanas: Hero (and reclining), cobbles (and reclining) poses – open the abdomen, promoting tensile release via pelvic, abdominal and thoracic breathing.

Wind relieving pose, Pigeon both release stresses of the back and joints and calm the mind.

Childs pose opens the breathing spaces and calms overtaxed the kidneys and adrenals.

Swan and bridge open the belly and stimulate the kidneys for energy is very low. If you still need rest that's okay.

CAMEL
POSE





When you have a little more energy try a few supine leg raises, Camel pose (standing on the knees, hip width apart, tuck tail bone and lift heart to the sky; this opens the abdomen and chest and strengthens the legs, arms and back.

PRANAYAMA

Yoga breathing exercises, such as Humming Bee Breath, help calm your nervous system and increase oxygen levels and blood supply to the internal organs. This promotes deep calm and balance. Learning how to breathe correctly is a wonderful skill to use anytime during a flare-up or when in remission, to help maintain an even keel.

Ujjayi – is the foundation breath which supports all others. It is vocal diaphragmatic breathing which activates a symphony with the thoracic and pelvic diaphragms. Breathing diaphragmatically ensures maximum oxygen uptake with minimum effort. The body discharges 70% of its toxic waste through exhalation and receives 50% of its energy base through inhalation - correct breathing ensures the greatest opportunity for efficiency. The base of the lungs house the majority of lung blood cells, absorbing more oxygen than above as a result. When you breathe diaphragmatically you draw air into the lowest lungs, (as well as the middle and top) easily. The load on the heart reduces and the nervous system maintains parasympathetic status, which means cellular regeneration.

Lengthen your exhale with a 'haaaaaaaa', pause and then inhale mentally and physically below and behind the navel. Being the centre of gravity, this allows the deepest absorption and greatest expansion of energy throughout the body's mass. Try Alternate Nostril Breathing and Chandra Bhedana (breathe out right nostril, in left) to further to calm the mind and nerves.

Sitali pranayama - Cooling breath to reduce inflammation.

Vaman Dhauti - for a more intense practice which requires the aid of an experienced teacher, this is drinking and regurgitating water to flush the stomach and reduce acidity.

Compression – When constipated, inhale into the belly and chest, gently press the belly down as if to break wind, hold the breath a few seconds, (not with heart condition or pregnancy), then relax and exhale.

Bhastrika – or Bellows Breath purifies the blood, oxygenates the system and stimulates digestive fire. Moves blood in and out of the digestive organs, increases lubrication, tones the liver and kidneys to promote toxic discharge. Calms the mind and eliminates excess bile and mucous to balance the three doshas, giving rise to excellent health. Note: When you start Bhastrika acidity may increase, so do very little (1 or 2 rounds of 10) and counteract with the Cooling Breath and Natural Yoghurt.

MEDITATION

Practice yoga nidra or yogic sleep as regularly as possible. Be aware of your breathing and focus it in to any pain. With every exhale, learn to let go. If you are practicing postures and breathing, let them culminate in yogic sleep. This is a superior practice with amazing physical and spiritual benefits.

Knowing the body is like a river, changing cells each moment, reminds us that if we alter the 'programme' the image alters respectively. Mind shapes matter and so feelings and beliefs of self love and compassion enable us to grow to see the lessons sickness comes to remind us of.