



# NIROGA™ NEWS

*Support Niroga and Invest in the Future ~ It's for all of us!*

Niroga™ Institute is a non-profit Center for Integral Health dedicated to providing affordable, high quality Yoga instruction and Yoga therapy to hundreds of at-risk and under-served individuals and families. Niroga's supporters are making a world of difference by funding programs that improve, enhance, and enrich our communities.

## Director's Corner

Welcome to our first issue of Niroga News, a quarterly newsletter of Integral Health and Development! Niroga Institute is bringing Yoga to those that need it most - vulnerable youth who are homeless, delinquent, or incarcerated, as well as seniors, cancer patients, people in rehab and recovery, and others.

Let me introduce Darnell, one of our students at Rock La Fleche, a school for high-risk, delinquent youth. His glowing face and confident bearing belies a challenging upbringing. Says Miguel, the Principal of the school, "They come to us with very low self-esteem." Week by week, month by month, as we worked with him, Darnell grew in self-esteem, self-control, and self-confidence, and he and his teachers can't stop telling us what an amazing impact Niroga Yoga has had on him!

In our rush to teach our at-risk children the three R's, we often forget that without teaching them *how* to learn, how to increase their focus and attention, how to manage their anger and reduce stress, much of the traditional approach to education becomes an exercise in futility. Sierra, who just graduated from Rock and is preparing for college, said, "There was a time when I was upset, and I came to Yoga, and I began to inhale and exhale, and it really worked! Just letting some of it out of me - it really helped." Thomas, another student at the same school, says, "Yoga is not as easy as it seems - you need focus, you need to concentrate!" At a time when we are seeing an exponential increase in the prescription of antipsychotics for children labeled with ADD and ADHD, let us remember with a hint of humility that there may be other approaches to integral development that not only complement and enhance, but are powerful and essential enablers of, traditional academics.



Jasper Johal – jasperphoto.com

*"Yoga is fun! My favorites are Warrior and Tree!"* says Darnell, a vivacious participant in Niroga's Yoga class, at Rock La Fleche Community Day School in Oakland, California.

*Twelve million Americans are practicing Yoga, reaping its healing benefits. Yet, millions more need Yoga, but cannot afford it. If you, or anyone you know, has benefited from Yoga, please help us reach out to others!*

# Niroga Yoga

## Rhythmic Breathing in motion

(Bhramana Pranayama)

You have probably noticed how your breathing changes when you are sad or angry or agitated. People realized thousands of years ago that the relationship is bi-directional - just as your breathing changes with your emotional state, you can use your breathing to affect your nervous system and your mental state.

Breathing with a rhythm, exhaling twice as slowly as inhaling with chest and abdomen relaxed, can help you breathe more consciously and deliberately, and can be deeply relaxing and rejuvenating. You can easily incorporate a form of rhythmic breathing into your walks - short and long. Try breathing in to 4 steps and breathe out to 8 steps. Set a pace that is comfortable, and keep the ratio 1:2 (inhale:exhale). With a bit of regular practice, you will find it extremely relaxing, with the added advantage of increased awareness and mindfulness.

## Reaching Out

One of our latest partnerships is with Alameda County's Juvenile Justice Center. Our Yoga Corps™, a team of over 40 Certified Yoga Teachers, is bringing yoga, breathwork, and meditation to incarcerated youth in their Mental Health Unit five days a week, and to their staff twice a week.

The response from the youth and staff has been overwhelmingly positive. Says David Brown, Staff Psychiatric Social Worker, of the effect of our program on a particularly challenged young woman: "The yoga instruction you provided to her each day obviously offered her both a way of being an agent in her own care and a means of building her own spiritual foundation. I am convinced that having the opportunity to engage in the practice of yoga with you was a gift

that she will carry with her for life." Yahru Baruti, a senior psychiatric social worker and a 19-year veteran at the Hall, is now asking if Niroga is available to train staff to work with the youth on anchoring the breathing techniques and balance poses."My goal is to get more staff to use the 'yoga' language throughout the day and evening. I'm noticing so many opportunities to redirect kids by having them come back to their breath. If more staff use this, it will be better for all of us."

The 5 days/week frequency and year-long duration of this program makes it unique across the country, and several Probation Departments in neighboring counties are eagerly awaiting the results of an intervention of this nature and magnitude. Our comprehensive evaluation plan includes exit surveys, staff evaluations, and psychometric tools designed to assess changes in general health, stress (and anxiety and depression) and self-awareness (and self-control, self-esteem, and subjective happiness). Stay tuned!

## We need your help

Niroga depends on your contributions to sustain and develop our community outreach programs, as well as continue our efforts in education and research. If you have benefited from yoga, perhaps you will help us bring hope to the lives of kids like Darnell and his friends. We have 501(c)(3) or tax-exempt status, and so your donations are tax-deductible, and every dollar you donate will go towards Niroga programs.

Please join our garland of sustainable donors, and consider a monthly or quarterly donation. However small your gift, it will be significant for us to know that we are in this together, thankful for the privilege and opportunity to serve: \$25/month will allow us to serve one child every week for 6 months, while \$50/month ensures that we can provide one child an entire year of interaction, and the opportunity to remember these personal transformative practices for the rest of her/his life. Your donation, and perhaps your employer's matching contribution, is just a click away!

**YES! I want to help Niroga provide integral development programs to under-served communities.**

Enclosed is my gift:

- I pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ monthly for 12 months
- \$ 50 Improves the health and well-being of 15 at-risk youth
- \$ 100 Gives 30 at-risk youth increased self-esteem and self-awareness
- \$ 250 Helps Niroga forge new partnerships for community outreach
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (use your imagination!)

*Every dollar donated will go to support programs.*

Donation Method:  VISA  MC  CHECK

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Niroga Institute | [www.niroga.org](http://www.niroga.org)  
3101 Arizona Street - Oakland, California 94602  
PH 510.336.7060 FX 510.225.2428 [info@niroga.org](mailto:info@niroga.org)