

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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CONTACT: BK Bose
510-336-7060

STUDY SHOWS YOGA IMPROVES SELF-CONTROL AND LOWERS STRESS OF YOUTH IN ALAMEDA COUNTY JUVENILE HALL FACILITY

Through the regular practice of Yoga, breath work, and meditation, Niroga is teaching Bay Area youth essential life skills. Jointly funded by Alameda County's Probation Department and Health Care Services Agency, Niroga began a program at Juvenile Justice Center, bringing Yoga to incarcerated youth five days a week, and to their staff once a week. The five days/week and year-long duration of this program makes it unique across the country. Several Probation Departments in Alameda and neighboring Counties are awaiting the results of an intervention of this nature and magnitude. These powerful tools for self-transformation will lead to potential reduction of crime and violence in our communities and affecting broad social change.

Using two psychometric tools for evaluation, PSS10 (a 10-point Perceived Stress Scale) and Niroga's IHS30 (30-point Integral Health Scale), statistically significant decline in stress (and anxiety and depression) and improvement in self-awareness (and self-control, self-esteem, and subjective happiness) have been noted within only 3 months into the year-long program. The results echo similar effects observed by several Centers of Integrative Medicine nationwide, studying the effects of Yoga and Meditation on stress in cancer patients, people with addiction, and patients with early-onset HIV. Niroga's Healing Yoga protocol is extending integral health practices to include a wide range of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Program response from youth and staff has been overwhelmingly positive. When asked what they have learned, incarcerated youth respond, “I’ve learned to go to Yoga instead of flashing on people,” and “I learned how to relax and how to breathe; when staff put me on ‘special program’, instead of banging and kicking, I breathe,” and “I learned a lot from it whenever I get mad! Just start breathing, and I actually like Yoga.” Senior Staff Psychologist Janice Thomas describes how the youth are benefiting from the program: “They are really starting to internalize the practices and beginning to understand how they can use it to increase self-control. It’s really true. When someone is having difficulty in group, I’ve heard girls spontaneously say to the troubled person, ‘now breathe...’ It’s so cool!” Senior Psychiatric Social Worker Yahru Baruti, a 19-year veteran of the Hall said, “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.”

Niroga Institute (www.niroga.org), a Berkeley based non-profit organization dedicated to healing and transforming underserved lives, is bringing Yoga to those who need it most— seniors, cancer patients, people in rehab and recovery, as well as at-risk youth who are homeless, abused, exploited, delinquent, or incarcerated.

For additional information about how Niroga is transforming the social landscape one breath at a time, watch their 8-minute video, at <http://www.niroga.org/media.html>.

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