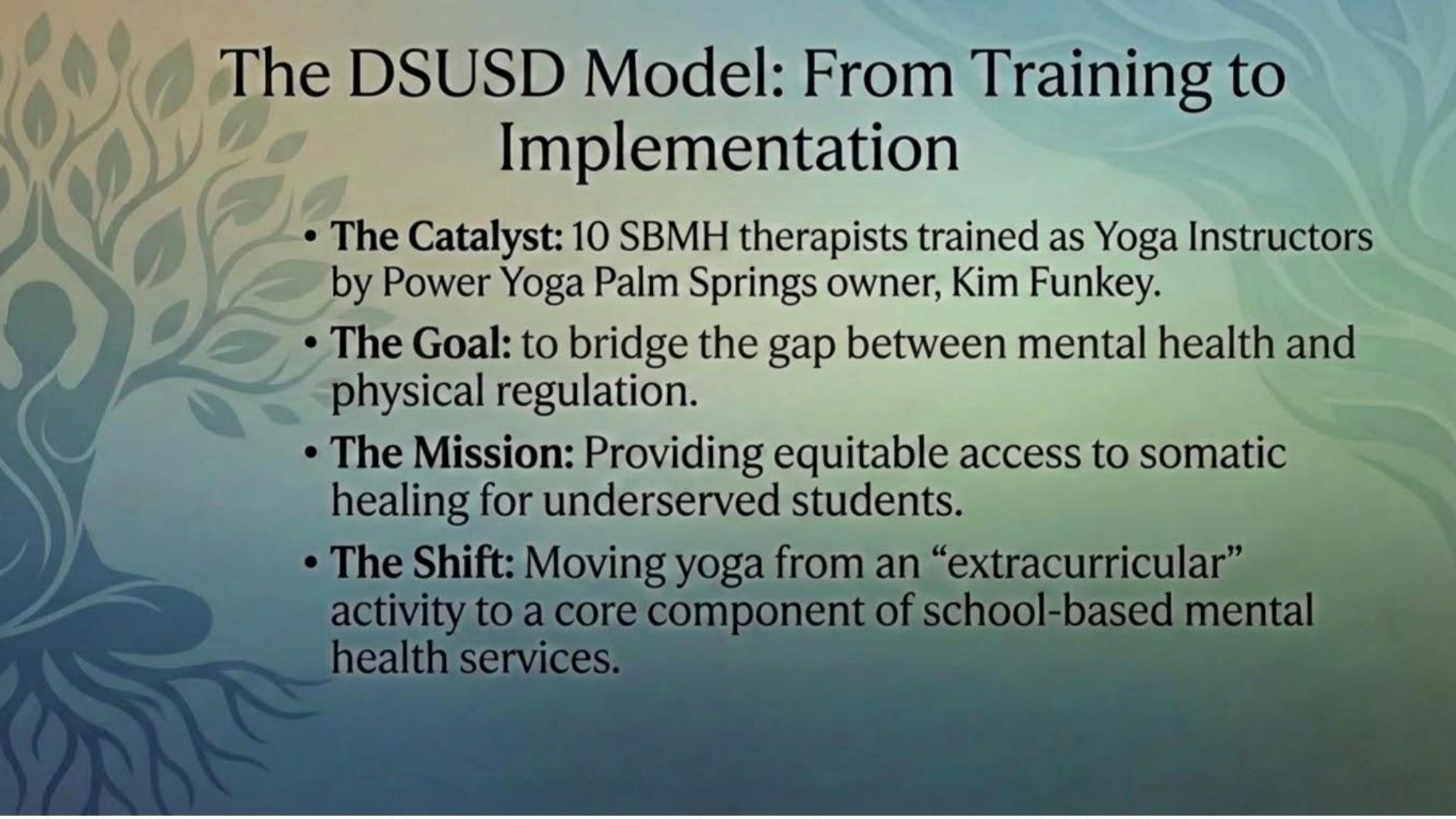


Beyond the Mat: An Approach to Yoga, Trauma, and Resilience

Integrating Somatic Practices within the
DSUSD School Ecosystem

Desert Sands Unified School District
School Based Mental Health Therapists and 200 Hour RYT

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The DSUSD Model: From Training to Implementation

- **The Catalyst:** 10 SBMH therapists trained as Yoga Instructors by Power Yoga Palm Springs owner, Kim Funkey.
- **The Goal:** to bridge the gap between mental health and physical regulation.
- **The Mission:** Providing equitable access to somatic healing for underserved students.
- **The Shift:** Moving yoga from an “extracurricular” activity to a core component of school-based mental health services.

Our Commitment as Teachers

- We acknowledge the difference between appropriation and appreciation.
- We attempt to weave concepts of the Sanskrit root to yoke or unite body, mind, and spirit.

Navigating the School System: Multi-Tiered Support



Tier 3 (Intensive)

1:1 clinical sessions utilizing yoga as a primary therapeutic modality for trauma and dysregulation.



Tier 2 (Targeted)

Small group sessions for students with shared trauma histories or behavioral challenges.



Tier 1 (Universal)

Whole-class 'Mindful Movement' breaks to lower the collective stress of the classroom.



Collaborative Integration: Working with Staff



The 'Consultant' Role

Empowering teachers to use 2-minute 'Regulation Stations' rather than sending students to the office.



Reducing Compassion Fatigue

Providing brief movement sessions for school staff to manage secondary traumatic stress.



Providing Yoga Breaks & Sessions

Offering dedicated yoga breaks and sessions for staff well-being.

Clinical Application in the School Setting



Individual Sessions

Using asanas to process specific triggers in a safe, school-based clinical environment.



Group Sessions (‘Bravery Spaces’)

Creating “Bravery Spaces” where students learn that their peers are also struggling, reducing the stigma of ‘the counselor’s office.’



The Results

Observable reduction in “negative behaviors” as students gain the vocabulary of bodily sensations.

The Four Pillars of Practice: A Framework for Regulation

I. Focus (Dharana)



- **Clinical Need:** Addressing fragmented attention spans in students with ADHD and trauma-related dissociation.
- **Yoga Application:** Using Drishti (gazing points) and balancing poses to train the brain to return to a single point of concentration.
- **School Outcome:** Increased "Time on Task" and ability to filter out classroom distractions.

II. Discipline (Tapas)



- **Clinical Need:** Building "internal locus of control" for students feeling chaotic or unpredictable.
- **Yoga Application:** Showing up for practice even when challenging; holding a pose through physical "heat" to build emotional stamina.
- **School Outcome:** Shifting from external punishment to internal accountability; building "grit" to persist through difficult academic tasks.

III. Respect (Ahimsa & Satya)



- **Clinical Need:** Healing fractured relationships with self and others in underserved youth.
- **Yoga Application:** Respect for **Body:** Listening to physical limits (non-harming). **Respect for Space:** Honoring personal boundaries of peers on mats.
- **School Outcome:** Reduction in interpersonal conflict, surge in self-compassion, replacing "I can't" with "I am practicing."

IV. Mindfulness



- **Clinical Need:** Moving students out of "Auto-Pilot" or "Survival Mode" (Hyper-arousal).
- **Yoga Application:** Observation of thoughts and sensations without judgment during movement and stillness.
- **School Outcome:** Creating a "buffer" between impulse and action; giving students the split second to choose a regulated response over a "negative behavior."

The Resonance of Recovery: Sound & Meditation

Beyond Silence: Why Sound Healing?

Beyond Silence: Why Sound Healing?



The Science of Entrainment: Using rhythmic frequencies (Singing bowls, chimes, binaural beats) to synchronize brain waves into an Alpha or Theta state—promoting deep relaxation and healing.



A Tool for Accessibility: Sound provides a “point of focus” for students with ADHD or high-arousal trauma who struggle with the “quiet” of traditional meditation.



Vibrational Regulation: How sound can physically bypass the cognitive brain to soothe the vagus nerve.

Implementation for Students (K-12)



The “Listening Lab”: Short, 3-5 minute sound immersions to transition from a chaotic recess/hallway back into the classroom.



Mindfulness with External Anchors: Shifting from “watching thoughts” to “tracking sounds,” which may feel safer for students with intrusive trauma memories.



Elementary (K-5): “Sound Scavenger Hunts” – using singing bowls to teach focused listening and impulse control.



Secondary (6-12): Soundscapes for anxiety reduction during testing or high-stress academic periods.

Staff Sanctuary: Preventing Burnout



The “3-Minute Sound Bath”: Utilizing sound healing in the staff lounge or during PD to reset the nervous system of educators.



Co-Regulation: Reminding staff that a resonant, calm teacher creates a resonant, calm classroom.



Clinical Grounding: Using singing bowls at the start/end of a therapy session to “clear the space” and mark a transition for the student.

Overcoming Systemic Barriers

Space Constraints



Learning to practice between desks, in hallways, or in small therapy offices.

Time Constraints







Shifting the mindset that “10 minutes of movement saves 40 minutes of behavioral disruption.”

Cultural Competency



Ensuring yoga is presented as a secular, science-based tool for wellness to respect all backgrounds in our underserved communities.

Conclusion: Yoga's Impact in Schools

-  Overcoming Barriers: Addressing space, time, and cultural concerns.
-  Therapist-Yogi as Change Agent: Advocating for movement-based tools.
-  Clinician's Reset: Using somatic self-care for mental health professionals.
-  Overall Goal: Creating a "Somatic Toolkit" for every student.

Chair Yoga for Relief & Flexibility

Sitting Figure Four



- **How to:** Sit upright with feet flat. Cross right ankle over left thigh. Gently hinge forward at hips, keeping spine straight. Hold for 5-10 breaths. Repeat on other side.
- **Benefits:** Opens hips and glutes, relieves lower back tension.

Sitting Spinal Twist



- **How to:** Sit tall with feet flat. Inhale to lengthen spine. Exhale and twist gently to the right, using the chair for support. Keep hips square. Hold for 5-10 breaths. Switch sides.
- **Benefits:** Increases spinal mobility, aids digestion, releases back tension.

Sitting Neck Stretches



- **How to:** Sit with a tall spine. Slowly tilt right ear towards right shoulder. Apply gentle pressure with right hand if comfortable. Hold for 5-10 breaths. Repeat on the left side.
- **Benefits:** Relieves neck and shoulder tension, improves range of motion.

A photograph of two women sitting in a yoga pose (Padmasana) on mats, facing away from the camera towards a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The women are in a prayer position (Anjali Mudra) with their hands pressed together in front of their chests. The background shows a calm body of water and distant mountains under a hazy sky.

NAMASTE

The light in me honors
the light in you.