

StressAce Yoga

# THE NEW TREND IN NATURAL STRESS CONTROL



*Anca Ramsden & Dr Ella MacDonald*

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## **The New Trend in Natural Stress Control**

**by Anca Ramsden & Dr Ella MacDonald**

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**Dedicated to our clients and students for allowing  
us to learn more every day.**

# Preface

The aim of this book is to give yoga instructors and practitioners an understanding of StressAce Yoga, so they may appreciate how this new form of yoga differs from other yoga methods. The book examines the value of a yoga for stress, historically how the method evolved, main concepts underpinning StressAce Yoga, the philosophy, special advantages, benefits, practical application and practitioner testimonials.

Education is an important aspect of StressAce Yoga and this book assists practitioners to set their goals and expectation for personal improvement, gauge their progress and be more confident in their StressAce Yoga practice.

# Introduction

In 2013 Anca Ramsden (MA Clinical Psychology) and Dr Ella MacDonald (Phd Psychology) jointly developed StressAce Yoga.

Anca and Ella share a longstanding interest in health, wellbeing and personal development psychology and particularly in body and mind psychotherapies. Respectively they have three and two decades' experience in clinical mental health and in applying psychotherapy techniques that include body movement and sensory integration. Their respective careers evolved in parallel and they have been friends, colleagues and both have been students of each other's clinical work. They are authors of books in the field of personal development and body and mind psychology.

They developed StressAce Yoga with the intention to create an efficient system for reducing emotional and physical stress levels and for honing natural stress control. They achieved this by combining two techniques known to be effective in this area - StressAce, a body and mind stress reduction method, and traditional yoga practice.

To create the new yoga they drew on their experience in general practice psychology and in the treatment of stress and trauma with body and mind psychotherapies, their knowledge in the field of personal development and performance psychology, as well as their own experiences in their personal journeys of self development. Each contributed an area of individual expertise -. Ella shared her knowledge of the health benefits of yoga practice and Anca the StressAce self help and psychotherapy method she had developed.

Since inception StressAce Yoga has been applied in practice in yoga classes and the specific benefits and advantages have been recorded. StressAce Yoga instructors have been trained and have been able to replicate the benefits with their students. The self care StressAce Yoga DVD, 'The Body Clock Harmoniser', has been shown to be effective in lowering stress levels when used at home.

# Statement of Intent

The intent of StressAce Yoga is to build natural stress control. StressAce Yoga provides body and mind with a program for releasing stress and building resilience towards future stress.

This is a unique form of yoga based on the ancient wisdom of traditional yoga and the neuroscience of brain development. It uses breathing patterns, physical movements, stretching, sensory activities for the five senses and meditation.

By revisiting early childhood developmental reflex responses with specific movements and postures, accumulated stress is released from the nervous system and this creates natural stress control, i.e. stress intelligence.

Self care, an important aspect of StressAce Yoga, is encouraged through education, inspiration and practice.

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# Why

## we need a yoga for stress

Stress is a natural part of life and we need challenges to learn and grow. However there are times when stress can also be to our detriment. When we face sudden hurdles, a crisis, or feel too challenged by financial, relationship, career or family demands, life can appear overwhelming. Or having spent all our energies on a project, we may be exhausted and burnt out, and feel like we can no longer go on.

These are times when too much stress has caused harmful changes in our nervous system, affecting our health. This can lead to symptoms such as tension, pain, irritability, insomnia, low immunity causing coughs and colds, headaches, depression and addictions, as well as more serious chronic diseases.

Because we need our stress reflexes for survival and learning our survival lessons from experience is so vital, our nervous system stores all our stress experiences as memory. This memory accumulates and becomes our total stress load - over a lifetime it builds up. For this reason we need ways of reducing stress and yoga can help.

StressAce Yoga is a specialized yoga designed to solve the problem of stress - it brings immediate relief from current stress and tension, and also builds resilience so we learn to handle stress better in future.

# A powerful

## new antidote to stress

StressAce Yoga is a combination of two effective stress control techniques, traditional yoga and StressAce, a body and mind stress release method.

Traditional yoga has many effective activities for lowering stress and promoting relaxation, such as slow breathing, movement, sound and meditation. StressAce lowers stress with special movements based on brain development. These trigger a healing process arising from stress release, and a growth process fired by brain maturation. These processes build a natural ability to control stress.

When we combine yoga with StressAce we have a powerful new antidote to stress. StressAce Yoga can immediately bring relief - this means students leave class deeply relaxed and with a renewed sense of wellbeing. And because the effects are lasting, they report a natural new resilience they never had before.

# The

## StressAce Yoga story

In 1981 I qualified as a clinical psychologist and my experience in helping children with mental health issues over the subsequent thirty years gave me the practical knowledge to develop StressAce - a body and mind technique is designed to lower stress levels. Based on developmental psychology, StressAce was initially used for children and later adapted for adults.

When psychologists help children, we have three goals in mind - we want children to be happy, to understand the world they live in and be able to move around in it, so they can play and learn. For this reason child psychologists follow a holistic approach to mental health. We help children

develop their emotions, minds and bodies. When I noticed the similarities between the methods we use to help children with their physical development and traditional yoga practice, I was intrigued.

As a Hatha yoga practitioner I had been exposed to a variety of yoga postures and I had already discovered for myself just how effective yoga can be in lowering stress. I was struck by the fact that my knowledge of developmental psychology was helping me understand the effects of yoga on the nervous system. This synergy between StressAce, a developmental therapy method, and traditional yoga practice, planted a seed in my mind. Could my clients benefit from a yoga based on StressAce?

Could these two complementary methods be combined, thereby each enhancing the other? Would yoga be more effective if it includes StressAce, which is already proven in practice to lower stress and build natural stress control? And vice versa - could the results we get from using StressAce be enhanced with yoga?

I could see many uses for such a form of yoga in mental health, in self care and performance enhancement. My clients could also use a yoga based on StressAce to self manage their stress levels. This could help them when they don't have access to a therapist. What about people who had never experienced StressAce as a personal therapy, how would it help them? Many possibilities and questions sprang to mind.

In 2013 I invited Dr Ella MacDonald, psychologist and yoga teacher, to create a yoga that incorporates the StressAce method. Ella already had 20 years experience in using body and mind psychotherapy to treat stress and trauma. She also had experience in applying yoga in health care programs for clients with eating disorders. She had been studying various forms of yoga and had developed and conducted specialized yoga classes for over a decade. This meant she was already familiar with the concept I was proposing.

Excited about the potential benefits of a yoga based on developmental psychology, she immediately incorporated StressAce into her yoga classes. She educated her students about StressAce concepts, explaining to them why they did certain exercises.

The outcomes were encouraging. She considered the results from the new StressAce Yoga exceptional compared with the benefits of traditional yoga. Yoga is always effective in lowering stress, but this was different. Her students could identify a myriad of changes in how they functioned and they were very specific in describing these. They reported improvements in mood, emotional balance, mental focus, physical relaxation and resilience, as well as lowered stress levels and a natural ability to control their stress levels. These positive changes were achieved rapidly and were sustainable.

Their comments illustrated these results. "StressAce Yoga gives me peace of mind, calms me after a stressful work day and I stay in that peaceful place.", "StressAce Yoga has helped me release old patterns of depression and low back pain.", "It is very relaxing, my stress level in my body is now very low and I feel just wonderful." and "It clears my mind and makes me feel like I can survive whatever comes my way".



These outcomes are consistent with the standard results StressAce delivers. StressAce rapidly and observably lowers stress levels, improves mood, and builds lasting natural stress control. Usually clients can get these outcomes when they use StressAce as a personal psychotherapy with a therapist, and also when they use StressAce as a self help technique. Now it was confirmed they could get the same result from StressAce Yoga.

In my own clinical psychology practice my clients were using the fifteen minute self help 'Body Clock Harmoniser' StressAce Yoga DVD to control their stress levels when they were struggling with mood states during a change of medication, or recovering from shock after surgery, or coping with stressful family events. They reported that Stressace Yoga was helping them cope better day to day.

Once we started using StressAce Yoga in practice, it quickly became apparent that this method has specific advantages. It is easy to use, since strenuous postures are not required. This is helpful for newcomers to yoga and for those carrying body weight. Practitioners also reported their new resilience to stress was permanent, rather than transient - this progress in personal development lifted their confidence.

Rather than being based on mysticism, religion, or spiritual practice, StressAce Yoga has an humanistic philosophy. It is based on the premise that, given the opportunity, choice and right conditions, we all want to reach our full potential and improve ourselves. Practitioners set their own personal goals and choose the pace at which they wish to develop. They are educated about stress and how to self manage stress and understand the neuroscience underpinning the method.

StressAce Yoga brings together two worlds – neuroscience and psychology with the ancient tradition of yoga. Both make a valuable contribution to the field of personal development. Neuroscience and modern psychology have been developed in the last 200 years and historic evidence indicates yoga has been practiced for 10,000 years. StressAce Yoga offers practitioners the best of these two worlds by practicing a yoga informed by science.

## The synergy between StressAce and yoga

The origins of traditional yoga and StressAce differ. Yoga originates in a spiritual practice and aims to achieve spiritual enlightenment. StressAce is a stress management technique based on neuroscience and psychology. But though the origins of these two approaches differ, both share many common features in practice and deliver similar results.

Both StressAce and yoga have a uniquely holistic approach to personal development – both use a combination of body and mind activities to enhance body and mind performance, health and wellbeing.

For example, my client Betty attends StressAce sessions because she wants to have a more harmonious relationship with her husband. When she comes in for her one hour StressAce session she may spend some time talking about how her relationship with her husband has been progressing in the past week - have they been more caring and friendly, have they spent time together and did they have a spat. The session will focus on how she handles her emotions in this relationship - is she anxious or confident, tense or relaxed, annoyed or forgiving. And typically she will also spend at least forty minutes of session on relaxation training and sensory exercises for vision, hearing and balance. Her StressAce session is a holistic mix of psychological issues, working on emotions triggered in her relationship, physical relaxation training and sensory exercises. Both mind and body are used to help her achieve her goal of a happier marriage.



When Betty attends her yoga class she also has a body and mind experience - she spends most of her time on stretching exercises and physical postures, as well as some

time at the end of her class on meditation and quiet body and mind relaxation.

Importantly both StressAce and yoga focus on stress reduction and stress control as essential for enhancing performance. And similar activities are used - both methods lower stress with controlled breathing and stretch and movement exercises.

This holistic approach of combining body and mind techniques and lowering stress delivers a unique and very specific result – it builds intelligence. Both methods build intelligence in several areas: for example resilience to stress is an emotional intelligence skill, physical coordination and control are body intelligence skills, and focus and concentration are mental intelligence skills.

The commonality between StressAce and yoga lends itself to a synergistic blend of the two methods. Both are effective techniques for stress release and stress control and each can enhance the other. The value is that when you attend yoga, you now also get the benefit of StressAce.

Understanding the theory, practice and aims of these two methods helps us better appreciate the valuable contribution each makes to our wellbeing and potential development as human beings.

## How psychology develops your mind

Today we have over 300 recognised forms of psychotherapy to choose from if we wish to enhance our personality and improve our quality of life. These therapies are designed to help us face life's challenges - cope with change and loss, achieve our goals, get along better with others, handle conflict, overcome rage and fear, be more motivated, assertive, honest and organised, overcome



bad habits and forget traumatic experiences, to mention a few! For those of us who are challenged by mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression or ADHD, learning these life skills is often essential.

To help people change how they behave, how they think and feel, or what they believe psychologists need to know what motivates them and for this they rely on theories. Theories give guidelines for how our personality develops, why we behave in a certain way and how we grow and change.

StressAce is a technique that aims to reduce the negative effects of stress on our health and optimize how we respond to stressful events. To help people get rid of old stress and be resilient in the future, StressAce uses evidence based techniques from three personality development theories – behavioural, psychodynamic and developmental psychology.

## We learn through repetition and conditioning

To reduce a stress response like anxiety, StressAce uses relaxation training and controlled breathing. This approach originates in behavioural psychology and the principle behind it is that we can change how we react by learning new behavior. Practically it means every time I notice my fear and anxiety levels escalating, I consciously slow down my breathing to calm myself down, and I focus my attention on relaxing my body. I can also stop my 'worry' thoughts, by asking myself, 'Is this a real and serious threat, or am I over-reacting?'

The principle used here is conditioning. I can condition, or train myself to control my own stress levels by repeatedly learning that I get a pleasant feeling from relaxation. This is a reward experience. In the same way a parent teaches a child through conditioning, by punishing the child to stop

behavior or rewarding it to continue with behavior, we can be conditioned or trained for certain behaviours.

## Why bonding with mom and dad shapes us

Psychodynamic psychology offers a different approach to managing stress and an emotion like fear. Originating in psychoanalysis, this theory explains behavior by looking at the stages of emotional development we all go through, as we grow up from birth up to adulthood.

The early childhood relationships between the mother, father and child are considered vital building blocks for how we respond to stress later in life. If we have had good experiences of being parented as infants, then we build the ability to control our stress levels. Psychotherapy is seen as a re-parenting process, helping us to develop better control over stress.

In psychodynamic psychology the psychologist is interested in the client's perspective, and may ask, 'How do you feel about this? What do you make of your reactions to this situation? Do your feelings towards your husband resemble your feelings towards your father?' The psychologist looks at underlying causes of stress, which may not be obvious at first glance. For example, my client had chronic anxiety, because he was not permitted to express anger as a child. Once he could express his anger, the chronic anxiety and fearfulness cleared up and he could manage his stress levels effectively.

StressAce improves our resilience to stress by repeating the childhood developmental phases and maturing the personality. This builds confidence and self esteem.

## Why wiring up the brain makes us more resilient

Developmental psychology is the study of child development – how the body and the mind grow. Development in childhood is dependent on our brains growing to full maturity. As infants we are totally dependent on our parents to take care of us. We have very limited capabilities, because our brains are still immature. At birth the brain is fully formed with all its parts, but these are not yet wired up for use. It is like an electrical system in a house, each section must be linked to the main board and then the switch must be flicked on. As different parts of the brain are wired up, we go from being helpless and dependent as infants, to being able to walk and talk as toddlers, read and write and fend for ourselves in the school yard as six year olds and pass our final school exam at 18 years.



This process of brain wiring up takes 25 years to complete. At 25 years of age we have reached full neurological maturity and we are able to control our stress levels effectively, solve most problems life throws at us, and plan for our future. We are fully equipped for life from the point of view of brain development. This is when most of us in Western culture feel ready for marriage, starting a family and pursuing a career path.

We are already learning how to control and express our emotions in childhood. As the brain wires up more sections, our ability to control our stress emotions improves. A toddler will throw a tantrum, but by four years of age a young child can negotiate with mom how to get the sweet or the toy with clever arguments. This ability to know how mom thinks, how to please mom and how to get mom to do things is the result of brain wiring up new areas ,such as the frontal lobes.

StressAce uses physical exercises to stimulate the brain to wire up its different parts. This wiring up process is a natural growth process in childhood, but can also be reactivated at any stage in life. In fact it is thought to continue throughout our life span. Wiring up improves communication between different parts of the brain, for example the frontal lobes help us plan and control emotions, especially stress emotions.

## Conclusion

StressAce uses interventions based on psychological principles to improve stress management and natural stress control. Stress emotions, such as anger, fear and apathy are lowered with relaxation training and gentle, comfortable stress release. At the same time StressAce builds natural stress control by triggering the brain to grow and mature.

# How

## yoga develops your mind

Texts describing yoga and giving recommendations on healthy living, behaving and thinking date back 10,000 years, making yoga one of the oldest forms of personal development known to man. Yoga is most recognized as a technique for achieving spiritual enlightenment, often described as a state of nirvana, or bliss. It is the promise of achieving this lofty goal that attracts many Western and ethnic practitioners to still flock to ashrams in India today.

The word 'yoga' comes from Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language, which has only recently been recorded in written form. The word 'yoga' has many definitions and can be used in various ways. When referring to yoga practice, the definition of the word yoga comes from the root Sanskrit word 'Yuj' which means to join, to yoke or work. People would join or yoke two oxen together to work as a team to pull a plough. This yoking is a metaphor for the practice of yoga – it is an activity that helps our body and mind focus and work together to achieve peace, the first step to spiritual enlightenment.

The philosophy behind yoga practice originates in the religious beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism and Daoism. These religious or spiritual practices hold the view that our purpose and duty is to evolve spiritually and unless we do so, we will repeatedly be born into a life of suffering in this physical world. Through re-incarnation we return to the wheel of life, an endless cycle with a promise only of suffering.

In order to escape this fate, we need to find a way to overcome earthly desires and aspirations which originate in the body and the mind. Suffering comes from desires we struggle to fulfill. Desiring physical beauty, love, attachment, admiration, wealth, power, position in life, recognition and fame can only lead to pain and disappointment. Letting go of such aspirations is a first step to enlightenment.



Once enlightened we no longer experience the loneliness of feelings of separation from the world, others, or the cosmos. Instead we feel at one with the universe, or with God. Having achieved this state we are released from needing to re-incarnate into this physical world. This is a state of spiritual enlightenment. But until we overcome the desires of body and mind and achieve enlightenment, we are trapped by body and mind and remain in this physical world.

Views on how one can achieve enlightenment have varied, and with it the actual practice of yoga. Some of this history can be gleaned from ancient texts such as the Upanishads, Mahabharata, the Vedas, and the Tantra scriptures. Some yoga traditions required extreme self sacrifice, such as selfless service to others, non-attachment to loving relationships with family and friends, devotional worship and practitioners were often required to live under extremely harsh conditions, coping with

starvation and squalor. Such life defying practices were meant to help one overcome the needs of the physical body, denounce pleasure and emotional needs.

In contrast the practice of Tantra yoga focused on achieving enlightenment through celebration of the body and mind. The aim was to fully experience the body and mind. Rather than abstinence, asceticism and self sacrifice, the focus was on relishing all experiences and sensations the body and mind could offer.

Most well known in the West is Hatha yoga, an offshoot of Tantra yoga. Hatha Yoga still maintained some strict living practices, but did not require extreme asceticism, such as punishing physical regimes and starvation. The focus was on enhancing health and strengthening the body. The original forms of Hatha Yoga were characterized by intense activity and movement requiring muscular strength. Hatha Yoga practice included physical postures, breathing in very specific ways, chanting, meditation, as well as a healthy life style. The goal was still enlightenment, but the method for achieving this goal had changed.

## Modern Yoga

Although an ancient practice, yoga is also continually evolving. Hatha Yoga for example has been modernised to suit Western customs and needs. In the West we practice yoga for the many benefits it has to offer. We may not be aiming for enlightenment, but we still want to better ourselves. Yoga can help us – it is an excellent tool to build physical, mental and emotional strength.

Modern yoga bears little resemblance to ancient forms, when a student sat at the feet of a master or guru to be guided to enlightenment. These days yoga is taught in classes to groups and each person decides for themselves why they are there and what they wish to achieve in their class. Every time we attend a class we can design our own goals and outcomes to suit ourselves.

We may attend a class simply for the companionship and social opportunity it offers. Many people are drawn to yoga to help reduce the effects of stress in their lives. For them the value of yoga lies in being calmer and having peace of mind. Some aspire to spiritual progress, such as being more loving and kind and may be being less selfish and competitive. Yoga is also a mental practice and benefits the mind - and many use yoga for the mental clarity it offers, to deepen their meditation practices or simply to become more present in their daily lives.

Yoga is also particularly valued for its' physical health benefits and for building strength, flexibility, fitness and endurance. These skills are important for everyone, but are essential for athletes and yoga has now become part of professional sport training, where it is used to prevent injury and enhance performance in sports such as rugby, gymnastics and wrestling.

The benefits of yoga practices are being recognized in Western medicine. Meditation is now been adopted as a valuable addition to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, a form of therapy that works by conditioning the mind to control thought processes. This helps to calm anxious or 'worry' type thoughts. Yoga practice is being touted by leaders in the field of trauma treatment as being an essential tool for recovery. The reduction of physical stress is seen as helpful to reduce chronic high physical and mental stress levels after a trauma. Health insurance companies will pay for yoga as a treatment and in corporate work environments yoga classes are popular as a quick 'pick me up' during the lunch break. In the West being a yoga teacher has become a legitimate profession.

Yoga has grown in popularity in the West and is particularly valued for reducing stress and tension. When our bodies are exhausted from long hours at work, and for many of us these are spent in front of a computer screen, yoga can alleviate pain that results from tension and lack of movement.

In our highly stressful life styles yoga has become very sought after as a way to re-connect with body and mind, to find a peaceful, quiet and harmonious space within and to escape from a loud, busy and chaotic world.

# What

## makes StressAce Yoga different?

StressAce Yoga is a combination of StressAce and traditional yoga, making it a unique form of yoga. The purpose of StressAce Yoga is to lower stress and to improve natural stress control. By combining two methods known to be effective in this area, a superior approach is created.

On a practical level StressAce Yoga uses the basics of traditional Hatha yoga practice, but with changes in delivery and with additional activities from StressAce. For example, more emphasis is placed on certain activities. In StressAce activating the sense of gravity and balance is vital for stabilising the nervous system and therefore StressAce Yoga includes more balance exercises. The sequence and timing of activities and the number of repetitions are selected on the basis of what has been proven to be effective interventions with StressAce.

An important addition are the physical movements based on child development principles. These are offered in a specific sequence to mature nervous system control over stress reactions. This aspect gives practitioners the lasting results they comment on.

To the unpracticed eye StressAce Yoga may not appear that different to a traditional yoga class, as the special movements are interwoven with standard yoga practices, and effectiveness is based on the number of repetitions and combination of activities. Sessions are carefully structured so as to not over-stimulate and keep practitioners in a comfort zone.

# Why

## do we need StressAce Yoga?

Having a range of effective tools to manage stress is valuable, because stress is an important contributing factor in physical and mental health.

Not managing stress can be costly, as shown by statistics on health. For example, stress is one of the causes of mental health problems, such as depression. In Australia mental health is the third leading cause of disease, the leading disease for women, and suicide the tenth leading cause of death for men. Australian businesses lose over \$6.5bn each year by failing to provide early intervention and treatment for employees with mental health conditions. These statistics are relevant internationally. The International Labour Organisation estimates the cost of mental ill health at 3% to 4% of gross domestic product in the European Union

Stressace Yoga aims to be an effective stress management method with the combination of two synergistic stress management systems, traditional yoga practice and StressAce. It reduces current stress levels and builds a higher tolerance to stress in the future. These results make it a valuable tool in preventative health care.

# What

## are the benefits of natural stress control?

StressAce Yoga gives us stress intelligence, i.e. natural stress control. After using the method people notice they have automatically acquired a range of new natural stress control skills.



They find they are responding rather than reacting to situations, they can think their responses through, they are not overwhelmed by emotion, they are measured in their responses, they get a better outcome in situations of conflict with others, they have the language to express their emotions, they can think and feel at the same time, and they have a natural sense of what is appropriate to any situation they are in. They feel more mature, take more responsibility, are accountable and care about others. Importantly, they feel happier and more content.

These are all typical features of healthy and well developed natural stress control. Psychologists consider natural stress control to be a vital foundation skill in our personality. It is considered the most important psychological skills we need in life and it is thought we learn most of it before we are eighteen months old

StressAce Yoga can build this skill in adults, helping them be more adaptable, no matter what challenges they need to face.

# Ten reasons

## practitioners like StressAce Yoga

(To protect identity no actual names are used)

### Not strenuous

“StressAce Yoga is different to other yoga I have experienced, because it starts you at the level where your body feels safe. I am not stressing about doing the postures.” Mary Brown

“I never thought I could do yoga and yet here I am doing it and I feel great.” Jenny

“StressAce Yoga has helped with my strength and flexibility. I don’t have any pain in my shoulder anymore. It’s also helped with reducing my stress. And I like it, because StressAce Yoga is not as strenuous and stressful as the yoga I have done before” Connie Sims

### Relaxing

“I like the focus on meditation and breath. Since starting these classes I feel more relaxed, flexible and confident.” Mandy Jones

### Educational

“I enjoy learning about StressAce Yoga. It is all explained very simply and it is easy to understand. There is no mystery about how and why it works.” Brenda Kelley

“StressAce Yoga takes the best of yoga and makes it accessible for everyone, by explaining why we do the movements and how they work with the body and mind.” Trevor Maine

### Releases stress

“StressAce Yoga has helped me to release old patterns of depression and I have less low back pain. It is also a practice I can put to use in my daily life.” Julie Ames

### Lasting natural stress control

“I have practiced yoga most of my adult life and also meditation, and they all are good, but if I stop practicing the stress comes back. With StressAce Yoga I stay in that peaceful place, it is like I build up a savings account and I’m always able to draw on my reserves for life’s daily struggles.” Fiona Kris

“My experience with StressAce Yoga class has been enlightening. I feel free, strong and energized after class. I see the difference in my facial appearance after every class. It clears my mind and makes me feel like I can survive whatever comes my way. It is nurturing to my whole spirit, it is a great experience and I am thankful for this class.” Jill Bailey

“My friends and boyfriend have commented how I do not get stressed about work like I used to before I started StressAce Yoga. Also I feel energized after class and relaxed at the same time. My life seems to be getting better every time I go to class.” Ingrid Mayle

## Enjoyable and fun

“StressAce Yoga is fun. It is easy to remember the movements.” Diane Sutton

## Sound sleep and good mental focus

“This is my first time to practice yoga and I have to say I have found StressAce Yoga to be a really satisfying experience. I feel extremely relaxed after StressAce Yoga and I can sleep the whole night. Before I suffered from insomnia. And in the past it was hard for me to sit quietly for meditation, but now I can.” Ivy Mouton

## Peace of mind

“Stress Ace Yoga gives me peace of mind and calms me after being in a stressful work environment.” Allison Smith

“I find StressAce Yoga comfortable. It allows me to keep my intent in mind and helps me to think about movement and stress release in daily life. It allows me to go through my day with a greater sense of calm.” Frieda Pittel

## A holistic experience

“StressAce Yoga connects the mind, the body and the spirit. It feels like a journey of self-discovery. The emphasis is on the interior journey through the postures, meditation and self-reflection. The more I practice it, the more I understand it. It feels like going to church therapy and walking a labyrinth of self awareness.” Mary Jane

“StressAce Yoga class is very relaxing and my inner body and mind is more focused. My stress level in my body is now very low and I feel just wonderful. A very good experience for me and I am always eager to attend my classes.” Glenda Jones

# Everyone

can benefit from StressAce Yoga

## Staying fit

Physical exercise is recommended as an essential part of a healthy lifestyle - StressAce Yoga is a form of physical exercise and benefits anyone who can participate in it. For people who are healthy and fit and want to stay that way, and who simply enjoy feeling good, StressAce Yoga is an ideal way to maintain optimum health and fitness.

## Get on top of stress

The aim of StressAce Yoga is to lower stress and it is helpful for anyone who is feeling stressed, irrespective of the reason. Those who are in a taxing and stressful situation, such as caring for an elderly parent, or a sick child, or coping with changes in the workplace can benefit. If you want to relax after a hectic week, or you feel burnt out and are struggling to find the energy to go on, StressAce Yoga can offer a quicker recovery and recharge the batteries.



The reality is that stress has many negative effects on our health, wellbeing and performance and when we lower our stress levels it can feel like we suddenly have a clean slate, or we have 'turned a corner' - our whole situation seems to have changed around - we feel happier, more energetic, motivated to get things done, we feel mentally clear, we are more active, sleep better, relax more deeply, - and we have more fun! So there is a very concrete value in lowering stress levels. It is not just a 'nice to have', rather, learning to lower stress is an essential life skill.

## Make your goals come true

At the beginning of every new year, just after our Christmas holidays, we like to dream new dreams about what is possible and we set new goals for the next year with a fresh attitude and renewed vigour: 'I want to clear my paperwork.', 'I want to be more sociable and meet new friends.' or 'I am taking a computer course this year.' StressAce Yoga can support us and help us turn our personal development goals into a reality, because it helps us maintain the energy and focus we need. Otherwise some goals have to stand over for another year.

## Perform under pressure

For achievers in sport, art, business and academics, and especially for those who must perform under pressure and in competitive environments, StressAce Yoga can reduce stress and help build more resilience. This is a valuable skill as stress can cost a victory and success, or damage health by causing burnout. Demanding careers require consistently high energy levels and use more reserves. For some giving it all up and going to live in the country is one way to survive, but using StressAce Yoga can be an insurance against 'hitting the wall' with burnout and overload.

## Recover from an unhappy childhood

Not everyone has had the good fortune of a happy childhood, and for those who have suffered loss of a parent, or possibly neglect, ill health or unhappy family circumstances in childhood, StressAce Yoga can bring relief from the chronic stress resulting from trauma in the early years of life.

## Calm and happy children

StressAce Yoga is easy to use and even children can benefit. Children as young as six can quickly learn the techniques and when they stress about school or friends, it can come in handy as a way to get to sleep and to feel more confident to face the day.

## Fighting mental health problems?

Stress in some form is part of everyone's life and this is especially true for those who experience problems with mental health. Anyone who has a mental health condition such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, Asperger's Disorder or addiction can benefit from lowering their stress levels. Some mental health conditions can make us more prone to experiencing high levels of stress and more sensitive

to the stresses of life. Examples would be not being able to cope under pressure, or with many responsibilities. StressAce Yoga can improve the tolerance for such challenges.

## Let go of those aches and pains

StressAce Yoga is an excellent way to reduce the aches and pains we get from tension in our bodies. The tight neck, stiff back, sore muscles and headaches we get from stress can be alleviated, because StressAce Yoga is a physical practice that works directly on the tensions in our muscles, ligaments and tendons.

# How

## you can access StressAce Yoga

### Classes

StressAce Yoga can be learnt in classes and in personal training sessions with StressAce Yoga instructors. Classes are usually offered in a series of six and ten sessions and practitioners are taken through a progression of exercises to build natural stress control. For those who are keen to explore the many benefits stress intelligence holds for their personal development, longer term programmes are also available.

### Self care with the 'Body Clock Harmoniser' DVD

It is not always possible to attend classes and that is why StressAce Yoga can be learnt as a self help technique at home. 'Body Clock Harmoniser' is a video of basic postures. The exercises are designed to harmonise our body clock, so we feel rejuvenated and energized in the mornings, active and focused throughout the day and then are able relax into a peaceful sleep at night. It can be used as a short fifteen minute session for those who are time poor, or used twice as thirty minute session when one does have the time to complete a full session. The aim is to offer a simple and easy to follow a group of exercises that will release the stress we pick up just from daily living.

### Self care with 'Deep Peace Yogi Sleep' meditation audio

'Deep Yogi Sleep' is a voice recording of a StressAce Yoga meditation that helps one to unwind from a busy day. It has soothing instructions to calm the over-active mind and promotes peaceful meditation. It is ideal as a relaxant before going to bed at night and is especially helpful for those who struggle to fall asleep.

### 'Discover StressAce Yoga' at a short workshop

Short 2 to 4 hour 'Discover StressAce Yoga' workshops focus on the practice of StressAce Yoga, allowing participants to experience the benefits of deep relaxation, and also to learn the underlying principles. The benefits are immediate and they can practice their new skills at home.

# Become

## a licensed StressAce Yoga Instructor

StressAce Yoga classes are conducted by qualified yoga instructors, who have completed three levels of training. Visit [www.stressaceyoga.com](http://www.stressaceyoga.com) to join our team of instructors.

# About

## the Founders

**Anca Ramsden**, Clinical Psychologist (MA Clin Psych, HED, AIT ), is in fulltime private practice in Sydney, Australia. She has 30 years' experience in clinical psychology practice and has worked with adults and children with emotional, behavioural, social, learning and career performance issues. Her special interest is the promotion of personality development through psycho-social and neuro-physiological maturation and family therapy.

She spent 12 years working in child and family clinics, school clinics and psychiatric inpatient and outpatient units. She has experience in treating stress, trauma, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, learning difficulties, anxiety and mood disorders in children and adults; in clinical mental state and psychometric assessments; in treating victims of violence, including family, political, active combat, and criminal violence, and has provided services to people working in stressful environments, such as police officers and criminal law attorneys.



She developed Affect Regulation Therapy (A.R.T.) and StressAce to address the endemic problem clients with mental health disorders have with regulating stress and managing emotions, and has successfully used this approach in her practice for two decades. Based on developmental, psychodynamic and behavioural psychology, A.R.T. and StressAce incorporate standard psychotherapy interventions. Since 2010 she has trained psychologists internationally to apply and

also to train others in A.R.T. Her book 'How Your Mind Heals Itself', is a layperson guide to this method.

**Dr Ella MacDonald**, is co-founder of StressAce Yoga and lead trainer for StressAce Yoga. She has been a yoga instructor in Hatha, Kundalini and Yin yoga since 2000 and currently teaches StressAce Yoga at the University of Memphis and Focus Healthcare of Tennessee, an eating disorders clinic. She holds degrees in medicine, psychology and business from the University of Arkansas Medical Centre and University of California. She has also trained in African traditional healing and qualified as a sangoma in South Africa. Her experience is documented in her book, 'Mists of the Ancestors.'



She holds a doctorate in psychology and in 1994 her interest in bodywork in the field of psychology culminated in the development of a psychotherapy, which she called Eye Movement Technology, or EMT. She has trained practitioners in EMT in the USA and in South Africa. Her publications include, 'Are You Too Emotional? Are You Emotional enough?' a client guide describing the EMT therapy process.

She has a special interest in traditional healing practices within indigenous cultures and has visited communities in Africa, India and Tibet and studied their practices. She discovered three essential components to traditional healing practices, namely breathing exercises, listening to and producing sound, and physical movement.

She has applied her broad professional knowledge and her personal experiences of healing to develop specialized yoga for stress management, culminating in the development of StressAce Yoga. She likes photography, traveling and writing.

## StressAce Yoga Resources

**Classes:** Caring for Body and Mind, Workshops,webinars:'Discover StressAce Yoga'

**Self Care:** 'Body Clock Harmoniser' DVD, Youtube , 'Deep Peace Yogi Sleep' meditation audio

**Instructor Training:** Offer immediate stress relief with StressAce Yoga

**Visit us at:** [www.stressace.com](http://www.stressace.com) and [www.stressaceyoga.com](http://www.stressaceyoga.com)

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