

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Multiple Sclerosis is an autoimmune dysfunction. Deterioration/inflammation of myelin sheath surrounding axon of nerve cells.

I. MANIFESTATION IN 5 KOSHAS

A. Anamaya Kosha:

1. Skeletal system: misalignment,
2. Muscular system: spasticity, slurred speech, loss of coordination, weakness, fatigue
3. Digestive system: incontinence, constipation, hesitancy
4. Circulatory: poor due to limited mobility
5. Nervous: inhibited transmission of nerve impulse, numbness, distortion or loss of senses, vision impairment or loss.

MS may be progressive, recurrent/remissive, or recurrent/progressive. Persons with MS may have any number and any variety of symptoms, and symptoms may vary from attack to attack in recurrent type. Stress, fatigue, trauma, heat may trigger attacks.

B. Pranamaya Kosha: Breathing typically shallow, no connection. Energy seems to get stuck in 3rd chakra, the will center. Upper chakras deficient.

C. Manomaya Kosha: anxiety, frustration, depression, holding in emotions, loss of emotional balance, inability to slow down.

Stress Response: Personality type is driven, maintaining the body in a perpetual state of stress. Adrenals (associated with 3rd chakra) probably working overtime to push body beyond natural limits.

D. Vijnanamaya Kosha: unable to perceive natural limits, natural balance. Disconnected from physical body, sensations. Disconnected from subtle body.

E. Anandamaya Kosha: Generally disconnected. Perpetual discontent. Unaccepting of Self. Auto immune dysfunction. Perceives self as other.

II. AYURVEDIC: Vatta imbalance of Vatta and Pitta personalities. Driven personalities, overachievers, inability to slow down.

III. WELLNESS PLAN FOR MS

A. Anamaya Kosha: Relax tightened contracted muscles, strengthen weak, lax muscles. Increase mobility (to affect circulation and digestion, and joint/skeletal mobility and alignment). Improve balance; increase body awareness, proprioception, and coordination. Cooling, easy, flowing asana practice. Somatics. Avoiding neck flexion, which may aggravate dizziness; avoid load-bearing inversions. Eye exercises indicated, coordination exercises, (i.e. coordinating leg movements with arm movements.)

B. Pranamaya Kosha: Cooling, langhana pranayama. Emphasis on vinyasa vayu, long exhalation bringing energy to extremities. Attention to chakras, especially upper centers; experiencing heart center, opening up, expressing feelings (5th chakra), getting in touch with intuition/witness (6th chakra).

C. Manomaya Kosha: Relaxation meditations on surrender, contentment, releasing control. Create space where feelings of anger, frustration can be expressed. Sharing, journaling.

D. Vijnanamaya Kosha: bring awareness to patterns of control, discontentment, pushing past limitations, not slowing down. Observe both emotional and sensory impressions with compassion and gratitude. Forgiveness.

E. Anandamaya Kosha: Bring awareness to Self at all levels. Integration (there is no "other"). Meditative practice based on surrender and graciousness. Surrender to life. Surrender to the easy natural progression of events.

- F. Ayurvedic: Vata suppressing diet and routine. Reduce the level of toxins within the body. Emphasis on cooling practice.

IV. CLASS PLAN FOR MS

Check in. Very important, as every individual manifests MS in distinctly different ways, and any individual may manifest completely different symptoms at different times. Find out about medications, current conditions, current symptoms, and individual needs.

Pranayama. Cooling, relaxing with emphasis on exhalation. Shitali or sitkari. Straw breathing. Deep belly breathing. 3 part breathing. Attention to Viyana Vayu. In supported, restorative postures, pacifying.

Body Scan. Again in supported restorative posture, guide the attention within, noticing the state and condition of the physical (and subtle bodies) without judgement or expectation. Witness the state of the self. Setting the stage for a non-goal oriented asana practice.

Asana. Beginning in restorative pose, move into gentle, easy-flowing vinyasa style practice. Strengthening poses, like warrior variations, goddess perhaps with qi gong style arm gestures/movements. Forward folding, like standing head to knee. Emphasis, however, on floor poses, gentle twists. Eye exercises. Avoid over-heating. Asana practice might be no more than 15-30 minutes. The needs of every client will be distinctly individual.

Meditation. Attention to viyana vayu, awareness and energy to the extremities; and to the physical and subtle bodies at all levels. Emphasis process oriented, discovery of experience, rather than goal oriented project of healing or self-correction. Emphasis on experience of connection with others, with the natural world. Unity, wholeness, contentedness. Compassion. "Not doing. Just being." No judgement. No attachment.

Visualization. Perhaps flowing directly from meditative practice. Again self-exploration, self-discovery. Combining images of individual wholeness/wellness with an idea of integration within a greater system. For example, after relaxing body scan, bring attention to the brain, feeling its weight within the skull pan, thinking of the spinal chord reaching down the back, all of its branches reaching throughout the body. Smaller and smaller tributaries reaching into the extremities. Looking at a single nerve cell, long tail-like axon with damaged myelin sheath. Imagine a new coating of myelin wrapping itself around the axon, protecting, insulating and lubricating the cell. Imagine nerve cells throughout the body repairing themselves this way. Imagine the brain healing itself.

Then imagine yourself lying on the floor, looking down upon yourself, rising up over yourself. Pass through the ceiling, look down upon the roof. Rising up over the town. Rising up over the state, etc. Perhaps rising up to look down upon the universe and finding it looks like a nerve cell with damaged myelin. Returning to the body, again via the cells/nerve system. **

Sharing. Brief closure, providing space for expressing experiences of feelings whether with others in a group class or with the therapist in a one-on-one setting. Also journaling or mandala/body mapping as appropriate. Encourage regular journaling as a means of exercising witness/discovery body on a regular, daily basis.

**NOTE: Modern medicine claims the effects of multiple sclerosis are unalterable. Nerve cells do not regenerate myelin tissue. However, if indeed the physical body is just an illusory manifestation of consciousness, this medical fact is of little importance.