



Joanne Spence

*Founder and Executive Director
Yoga in Schools*

United Kingdom

Joanne has been fearlessly teaching mindfulness and yoga full time for 20 years. Yoga has helped calm her overly busy mind, soothe her nervous system, and heal her body after a debilitating car accident. She is a certified yoga therapist and has many additional hours of training in yoga therapy with Amy Weintraub (Life Force Yoga), Susi Hately (Functional Synergy), Kristine Weber (Subtle Yoga) and Jill Miller (Yoga Tune-Up). Joanne is a Life Force Practitioner II and serves as a mentor. This style of yoga focuses on managing depression and anxiety with mindful movement, breathing, and sound. Joanne has combined these credentials with her clinical social work background and worked as the first yoga instructor at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, one of the largest inpatient psychiatric hospitals in the US. Joanne is also member of the International Association of Yoga Therapists and the Yoga Service Council. All of Joanne's work is trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive.

As a serial entrepreneur, Joanne has founded and directed three yoga studios since 2003. She is currently seeing clients one-on-one and in groups at Urban Oasis Pittsburgh. Her specialty areas are adults and children with trauma, chronic pain, insomnia, depression, and anxiety. She also works with veterans with acute mental illnesses. Joanne has seen the transforming effects of gentle, slow, and restorative yoga in her own life and in the thousands of people she has had the privilege of teaching. It is the power of this work that gets her out of bed in the morning. She believes if you can breathe, you can do yoga.

In 2005, Joanne founded Yoga in Schools (YIS), a non-profit organization, as a way to reach school children and teachers to help them nurture their own well-being through yoga. Since then, YIS has become a leader in the field of school yoga, reaching over 20,000 children and 1,000 teachers with sustainable wellness programs. She has contributed to several journals and books on the topic of school yoga. Some of these publications can be accessed at www.yogainschools.org.

Joanne teaches and presents across the US at conferences and retreat centers including Kripalu, Omega, and the Graymoor Spiritual Center. She considers it a great perk to combine her love of travel with her love of yoga. She has had opportunities to teach workshops and classes in many countries including China, Canada, UK (the country of her birth), Jamaica, Mexico, and Australia (the country she was raised in). Joanne recently graduated with her M.A. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Currently, she is studying at the Pneuma Institute in a 2.5 year program to become a spiritual director and spiritual leader. Joanne has been married for 30 years and has 2 adult children and one teen – all of whom practice yoga! When she is not teaching, Joanne loves to read, write, hike, travel, cook and even dance a little – just not all at the same time.