



PATIENT STORY

# Experiencing Is Believing

ANJALI GHANEKAR, PHD



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An apt way to describe my first meeting with diabetes is “shock and awe.”

“What” asked my husband, “a 660 sugar level? Oh, no! People can go into a coma at that level. She has absolutely no symptoms! Are you reading someone else’s report? It’s unbelievable!”

The hospital staff respectfully insisted on my immediate hospitalization. I went through rigorous treatment to bring down my sugar level. When I was finally released, they put me on an oral hypoglycemic medication. Though we tried several brands, I experienced unique side effects.

After a brutal 6 months of going nowhere with oral medication to treat my diabetes, I found a new ray of hope in yoga. Fortunately my doctor agreed with my choice and under his close supervision I began experimenting with the “yoga-way of life” and what is called the Integrated Approach of Yoga Therapy (IAYT). Surprisingly, I started getting results.

One small step led to bigger ones and soon I was amazed at the efficacy of the seemingly simple yoga techniques. My fasting blood sugar level almost got settled at 120. Within the next 5 months my A1C came down from 9.3 to 7.2.

While the “patient” in me remained hopeful, the “scientist” in me kept on questioning and looking for wider evidence. Propelled by hope, desire, and curiosity, I decided to make the most of the situation.

I landed at Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhan Samsthan—Yoga Research Foundation (S-VYASA) in India. This is a unique place where research insights go hand-in-hand with clinical

practice, ancient wisdom, and inspired teaching. It has a worldwide reputation for scientific research on yoga.

At S-VYASA, I participated in a pilot project called the Stop Diabetes Movement. I witnessed the clinical utility of yoga for dealing with the physical and psychological effects of diabetes and obesity. I also completed the S-VYASA’s Stop Diabetes Movement teacher training.

Today, I am happily keeping my diabetes in control. Touch wood! The daily lifestyle practices and special yoga techniques have had a positive impact on both my health and my quality of life.

As living proof, I am genuinely motivated to pass on the benefits of yoga to other people with diabetes, especially in Western countries where the rate of stress-induced conditions like diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease is escalating.

I have deeply experienced how the mind-body intervention of IAYT activates self-corrective processes to restore balance at all levels, through lifestyle change by mind mastery, deep stimulation, and rest. I sincerely hope that my experience generates awareness about the broader options and choices available to people with diabetes.

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*Editor’s Note: See the article “Evidence for Yoga in the Management and Prevention of Diabetes” in this issue for more information about the yoga program Dr Ghanekar participated in and the research behind yoga as a therapy for chronic conditions.*