

Excerpt from Harp and Yoga: Reaching new Depths in Integrative Holistic Wellness Practices

Written by Nicole E. Anderson and submitted to the Harp Therapy Journal

Published in the Harp Therapy Journal, Summer 2019 edition ([Order back issue here](#))

I write my story as a practitioner of therapeutic music, but the most striking effects occur on the receiving end of the practice. Listeners of healing harp music reap enormous benefits on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels. Just as with yoga, harp therapy deepens breathing, soothes the body, calms the mind, and strengthens our connection with ourselves, others, and the Universe. The harp is an innately introspective instrument. Its calming essence and resonant vibrations encourage us to sit with our thoughts and feelings, not unlike a meditative state resulting from some styles of yoga. Both therapeutic harp and yoga enter a realm of holism where the main goal is to achieve connection of the mind, body, and soul. We feel permitted to live in the moment, letting the cares of the external world melt away even just for a short time. *This*, I thought, is the crux of harp and yoga integration. The two seemed like a perfect match.

My foray into harp-accompanied yoga began prior to receiving my Clinical Musician Certification. The organization that funded the hospice house where I interned also oversaw a cancer support center. I offered to accompany yoga and guided meditation there as a way to work on two main pillars of therapeutic harping: reading the energy of the listener(s) and adjusting the music accordingly. Back then I had little knowledge of the different styles of yoga, but the energy shift from the beginning of class to the end was palpable. Some patients would enter with pain and leave with a bounce in their step. Others would enter, faces furrowed from stress, and leave with a smile.

For many years I have watched the advent of holistic therapies supplementing Western Medicine, and as time progresses, these healing techniques are integrating into the Western World in a powerful way. Harpists are popping up in clinics and hospitals all over the country. Therapeutic Musicians are being trained to adapt their playing depending on the listener's age, disposition, and ailment. Yogis have done the same by creating practices tailored to specific sets of individuals: those with chronic pain or illness; those with mental health struggles; seniors; expectant mothers; and special needs children, to name a few. These already integrative therapies *then* integrate with one another, allowing for the wholest holistic approach to healing. From the day I picked up *Yoga for Beginners* to now, I have had a dramatic shift in my own perspective. I was always a proponent of holistic therapies, but now I embody them to my core. Shortly after I attained my Clinical Musician Certification, I began offering my harp therapy services to local yoga studios and wellness centers, welcoming others to experience all the remarkable similarities I have noted during my few years of yogic and therapeutic music practice. The responses from instructors and students alike have been further proof that the benefits of combining yoga and harp music are very real. The word "transformative" has been used by many. We often discuss the depths that occur when we take the ancient practice of yoga, add the ancient instrument of the harp, and bring both into modern society where people are so desperately in need of simplicity and centeredness in a stimulus-filled world. This multifaceted approach to wellness is a true example of a sum being greater than its parts.