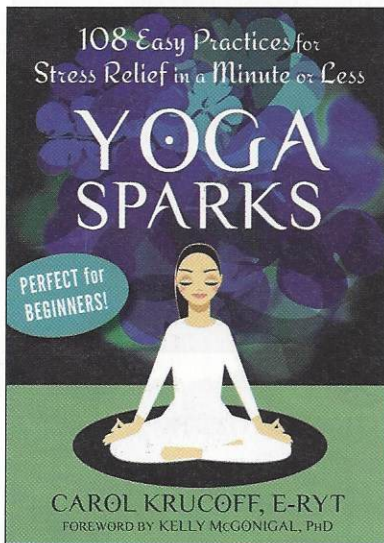


Yoga Sparks: 108 Easy Practices for Stress Relief in a Minute or Less

By Carol Krucoff, E-RYT

Oakland: New Harbinger Publications (2013)

Review by Matt Taylor



Yoga Sparks: 108 Easy Practices for Stress Relief in a Minute or Less is a simple, powerful tool for students and teachers to move from the popular concept of "doing" yoga to a deeper realization of "being" yoga. For too long in the West, practitioners have separated yoga from their lives into something that has to be added to a "to-do" list. In the introduction to this book, Krucoff suggests that by practicing Sparks—quick and simple yoga practices that can be easily interwoven into any busy

day—readers will discover that yoga is in fact who they are, moment to moment.

Keeping with the style of her earlier works, organization and clarity are hallmarks for *Yoga Sparks*. The concise, brief foreword by Kelly McGonigal, PhD, immediately grounds the concept in the extensive body of literature that undergirds Sparks. The introduction that follows orients readers of all experience levels as to how the book is organized and its rationale and offers clear suggestions for the many ways to utilize the book.

The chapters are based on the embodied principle of where the reader is right now, arranged in chapters entitled Anywhere Practices, Around The House Practices, At Work Practices, On The Go Practices, and Practices with Others. In the car? Try Posture Spark 81: Driving Asana. Meeting with an annoying co-worker? Turn to Meditation Spark 104: Honor a difficult person. By linking location and setting to which Sparks to choose, Krucoff saves the reader the frustration experienced with so many books of having to comb through a long list of options in which only a few are applicable to the moment.

The second pearl of organization is revealed in the sub-headings for each chapter. For example, in Chapter 3: At Work Practices, the Sparks are arranged in four useful categories: Postures, Breathing, Meditation, and Principle Sparks. If the reader is alone, then perhaps one of the first three practices will fit, but if he or she has a meeting with a group, that won't work, so how about one of the Principle Sparks practices? Those would be Sparks 78-80, Sympathetic Joy, Concentration, or Integrity, each grounded in classic yoga literature and texts but cleverly condensed to remember "being" yoga in that particular moment of a busy day. Most Sparks are one to one-and-a-half pages in this small 5" x 7" guidebook, so they take only a few moments to read. The directions follow a brief grounding statement of the yoga behind the Spark. For Integrity, Krucoff ties the ethical and moral challenges of doing business to a succinct statement regarding *arjava* and how it might be considered at

such times as making decisions regarding résumés, borrowing office supplies, or taking credit for work that has been accomplished. These simple reminders can transform each experience to a deeper level of awareness and a remembering of who the reader is in the bigger picture of his or her life.

An unexpected surprise I discovered after sharing this book with my students is that they immediately "got" the design and principles, and began to offer their own Sparks. I think in the long run this will be what readers cherish most about the book: practicing Sparks ignites new insights into the many unique ways students and clients can then generate their personal Sparks to fit the varied circumstances of their lives. The great power of *Yoga Sparks* is that it creates an inspirational structure to help our students and ourselves ignite the ongoing fires of change and transformation that are so sorely needed to heal ourselves and our planet. *Yoga Sparks* is an important tool in yoga therapy because it truly does "empower individuals to progress toward improved health and well being" by remembering moment to moment their true identity.

I believe you will soon be creating your own Sparks as you delight in your realization that 108 is just the beginning! Let your fire burn brighter with *Yoga Sparks!* **YTT**

Matthew J. Taylor, PT, PhD, owns a yoga therapy-based rehabilitation clinic in Scottsdale, AZ. He's past president of IAYT and chaired the first research meeting of SYTAR in 2007. He's passionate about safety and practicality in yoga therapy. Contact matt@yogatherapy.com.