

YOGA-MEDITATION AND POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Mental peace and stability are the major attributes of sound mental health. When one becomes mentally disturbed, the heart over functions. Stress and strain are the number one risk factor for emotional disturbances. Worry of modern life directly affects man's mental health. Sound and positive mental health are possible only in the absence of tension, stress and strain of life. Positive mental health is a treasure. It is characterized by calmness, cheerfulness, and happiness. Most of us do not qualify in all attributes of total positive mental health. The practice of yoga-meditation is the strongest foundation for building the base of one's positive mental health.

Keywords: Yoga, mental.

YOGA-MEDITATION

The 20th century is observed as the age of stress and anxiety. Scientific studies have shown that there are many factors which predispose to many physical and mental diseases. Furthermore, there are definite factors for the formation of negative attitudes and health. The report of an expert committee convened by WHO indicated lifestyle and behavior as important catalysts in causing and preventing mental and heart disorders. Stress and strain of life is one of the chief mental factors for poor mental health and happiness. Anxiety, unwanted tensions, and negative thoughts are also major factors for the development of negative mental health. Many factors are man-made factors which are preventable, mental tension, emotional disturbances, and anxiety are risk factors for so many heart disorders as well as mental disorders.

Yoga-meditation is the latest technique to ensure a healthy mind. The practice of yoga discards waste thought leads to harmony between mind, intellect and desires. The experience of this peaceful state brings a natural power of concentration.

Yoga is the art and science of living. The evolution of the human mind and body is its concern, and therefore, incorporates a system of disciplines for furthering an integrated development of all aspects of a human individual. Due to modern education productivity, creativity and resources are increasing, but on the other hand, the man is on the verge of losing moral, religious, cultural and social values which are the most important integral parts of education system. Due to modernization, man is not getting peace of mind, becoming violent, aggressive as well as physical and mental disorders are increasing. The reason behind these events is the man's disturbed awareness created due to the disintegration of physique, mind, intellect and spirit. In this context yoga is to be integrated in modern education because yoga has the complete message for humanity, human body, human mind and for human spirit. The meaning of integration of yoga in modern education is the harmonization of aims and objectives of traditional and spiritual values with the values of science and technology to recognize man as a "whole man," gives the power of self-expression and self-realization.

Since time honored the lore of the yoga was developed and refined by the Indian sages in search of the real state of human nature. In course of time the traditionally evolved system of yoga has been a science of consciousness development and finally in modern time yoga was seen as the science of possibilities, latent within oneself and helpful in dealing with crucial problems of human life. After the popularization of health

promotion potentials of yoga practices among masses, certain other applied aspects of the yoga system, concerned with human resource development, have remained to be substantiated scientifically. That's why modern educationists are taking interest in improving the quality of education with the help of yoga system. The education system, not only in India but the modern globalizing world also really is in great need of taking the help of yoga system. It is seriously being felt that besides the development of national strength and scientific mentality among the students, the aim of education should be the liberation of mind and soul as well. Yoga education has been referred to as the training and teaching process of yoga, though it should also be seen as the application of yoga techniques to bestow better support to the education process. The target of both the disciplines is the same and that is an enhancement of socially useful potentials of human personality. To achieve this target, the system of yoga lays foundation stones whereupon the education system may flourish in all areas. Modern educationists are taking interest in improving the quality of education with the help of the yoga system. Therefore, it is a high time to think seriously on inclusion of yoga and yogic values in the education system. Yoga in education should lead to the development of harmonious personality and behavior at all the levels.

Studies have shown that yoga can have positive benefits for people with several types of mental health conditions including depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety and schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The rapid yoga breathing in more strenuous types of yoga may affect people with bipolar disorder, psychosis or anxiety. Extra caution is advised in people with these symptoms.

Like all exercise programs, yoga can cause people to have asthma attacks, pull muscles or exacerbate existing medical conditions. People with chronic medical conditions and those who are pregnant should talk with a doctor before taking up a yoga program. In fact, anyone looking to start an exercise program for the first time should talk to a professional.

Stretching, breathing, relaxation, and exercise are good for almost everyone. Yoga can benefit people who have mental health conditions, as well as those who do not.

Available reviews of a wide range of yoga practices suggest they can reduce the impact of exaggerated stress responses and may be helpful

for both anxiety and depression. In this respect, yoga functions like other self-soothing techniques such as meditation, relaxation, exercise, or even socializing with friends.

By reducing perceived stress and anxiety, yoga appears to modulate stress response systems. This, in turn, decreases physiological arousal, for example, reducing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and easing respiration. There is also evidence that yoga practices help increase heart rate variability, an indicator of the body's ability to respond to stress more flexibly.

Many patients dealing with depression, anxiety, or stress, yoga may be a very appealing way to better manage symptoms. Indeed, the scientific study of yoga demonstrates that mental and physical health are not just closely allied, but are essentially equivalent. The evidence is growing that yoga practice is a relatively low-risk, high-yield approach to improving overall health.

Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice. The purpose of yoga is to create strength, awareness and harmony in both the mind and body. While there are more than 100 different types or schools of yoga. Most sessions are typically comprised breathing exercise, meditation and assuming postures (some time called asana or poses) that stretch and flex various muscle groups.

BENEFITS OF YOGA

At the physical level, yoga and its cleansing practices have proven to be extremely effective for various disorders.

More importantly, yoga is extremely effective in:

- Increasing flexibility
- Increasing lubrication of the joints, ligaments and tendons, weight reduction
- Massaging of all organs of the body
- The maintenance of balanced metabolism
- Complete detoxification
- Cardio and circulatory health
- Excellent toning of the muscles
- Improved respiration, energy and vitality protection from injury
- Yoga through meditation works remarkably to achieve this harmony and helps the mind work in sync with the body.

In fact yoga-meditation, because both work together in achieving the common goal of unity of mind, body and spirit a state of external bliss.

The meditative practices through yoga help in achieving an emotional balance through detachment. What it means is that meditation creates conditions where you are not affected by the happenings around you. This, in turn, creates a remarkable calmness and a positive outlook, which also has tremendous benefits on the physical health of the body.

Having seen this, it is educative to note why the ancient yogis performed yoga and the interdependence of yoga-meditation. The ultimate goal of the yoga of the yogis was "self-realization" or enlightenment, a concept which perhaps is quite esoteric. But what is interesting is that of this they had to meditate for extensive spells of time days, weeks and much more. This required tremendous physical fitness, energy and the capacity to subsist on next to nothing. Yoga positions or asanas provided them the fullest fitness. With the least metabolism or stress and meditation to turn provided them the strength and will be perform these asanas effectively a virtuous cycle of cause and effect. The mutually symbolic relationship helped them in their path. Aside from the array of physical benefits, one of the best benefits of yoga is how it helps a person manage stress, which has been known to have devastating effects on the body and mind. Stress can reveal itself in many ways including back or neck pain, sleeping problems headaches, drug abuse, and an inability to concentrate. Says Dr. Nevins "yoga can be very effective in developing coping skills and reaching a more positive outlook on life."

Unlike more traditional forms of exercise, yoga incorporation of meditation and breathing help a person improve his/her mental well-being.

Dating back to ancient times, the meditation has long been used as a method of tackling stress, achieving clarity and improving health. The Buddha is one of the most popular meditative icons and the practice helps people to achieve balance physically, mentally, and emotionally.

There is a huge amount of evidence to show that meditation has wide-ranging benefits and it is regularly used as a tool to treat depression, anxiety and stress. When things are getting on top of you, spending a few minutes meditating can calm you down ease headaches and also boost your immune system.

Researchers at Harvard Medical School recently discovered is that for more "disease fighting genes" were active in long-term practitioners of relaxation methods such as yoga and meditation. They found genes that protect from disorders such as pain, infertility, high blood pressure, and rheumatoid arthritis were induced by "the relaxation effect," a phenomenon that could allegedly be just as powerful as any medical drug but without the side effects.

Meditation can seem quite daunting to beginning without rather than being a complicated process, it is simply matter of taking some time away from the demands of everyday life and clearing your mind. There are many different ways to approach meditation but the "quiet mind" method is a good place to start.

- Find a quiet space; one of the best things about meditation is that you can do it anywhere, whether it's a 5 minute session before a big work meeting or a confidence boost ahead of a big date. It can also be used when trying to make an important decision as it clears the mind and helps achieve clarity.
- Relax into a comfortable position; again this is down to personal preference. Sitting cross-legged on the floor is a popular choice as it is said that by aligning the spine and opening the channels that run through the center of the body, upright sitting encourages an unimpeded circulation of energy. Once you have found your position, let the tension leave your body and try to clear the noise in your head. It is easy to get distracted at the beginning but if thoughts start creeping in, just concentrate on your breathing and start again. Some may find it easier to focus on something while they meditate. If this is the case, try looking at a candle or repeating a mantra to calm the mind and drown out the surrounding sounds.
- Focus; once you have found a relaxed, meditative state, take some time to enjoy the peace, and let your mind subconsciously work through the issues that may be bothering you. Meditation can help to put problems and worries into perspective and give you an inner calm.

It appears that scientific evidence of meditation's powers continues to add up. Meditation, in a way, is like exercise for our brains: It's been shown to assist in mental health maintenance, improve our memory, empathy, and sense of self-similar to how exercise boosts our residence, muscle strength, cardiovascular health, and blood pressure/cholesterol.

"Although the practice of meditation is associated with a sense of peacefulness and physical relaxation, practitioners have long claimed that meditation also provides cognitive and psychological benefits that persist throughout the day." Dr. Britta Halzel reported that it was fascinating to see the brains plasticity and that, by practicing meditation we can play an active role in changing the brain and can increase our well-being and quality of life.

Another recent study examining the health benefits of positive thinking found that mindfulness exercises like meditation or yoga actually changed the length of telomeres in breast cancer patients which works to prevent chromosomes from declining. And in the past, researchers have found that people who practiced meditation or yoga actually had different brain structures than people who didn't.

Indeed, the notion that meditation can foster improved sense of self, compassion, happiness and focus is thousands of years old, but it's only now that science has begun backing it.

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

Meditation is an exercise with numerous benefits. It is proven to be an effective way of enhancing quality of life by improving physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Meditation techniques are constantly undergoing scientific scrutiny. Research often provides new insights about the effects of meditation on the mind/body. It's not just one particular method that has proven to be helpful either-benefits have been shown through the practice of a variety of techniques.

Meditation benefits your brain

- Improved mood and working memory - even under stress
- Alleviate mental distractions
- Increase the size of your brain.

Meditation benefits your body

- Enhance the strength of your immune response
- Alleviate symptoms caused by sickness
- Decrease fatigue
- Meditation can help reduce the impact of physical and emotional pain.

Meditation benefits your spirit

- Getting into a state of flow
- Improve your powers of empathy
- Attain enlightenment.

Calm mind healthy body with meditation

Mediation is an ancient practice that has been and still is being-used in many ways. There are physical, mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual reasons for practicing meditation. In the recent years, meditation started drawing more serious attention in the scientific field and a lot of research has been conducted into its benefits, showing the significance of meditation on the human mind and body.

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

While there are many different techniques of meditation that spreads across several traditions they all could generally be classified as belonging one of five types.

1. Concentration meditation
2. Mindfulness meditation
3. Reflective meditation
4. Creative meditation
5. Heart- centered meditation.

Concentration meditation

These meditation techniques are the foundations of all other forms of meditations, as it is about the using the power of concentration to reach your full capacity. When your mind is concentrated you can effectively enhance and deepen your insight into other kind of meditative techniques.

Mindfulness meditation

These techniques are not about ignoring distracting thoughts and feelings but to acknowledge and observe them in a nonjudgmental way. This will create detachment from those thoughts and emotions and will allow you to gain insight on them. When have a separate article on the effects of mindfulness meditation.

Reflective meditation

The premise of this type of meditation is simple enough. Choose a topic that you wish to contemplate on and focus your analysis on it the trick is to push away irrelevant thoughts and keep your attention on your topic of choice. Besides gaining insight on this topic, these techniques will also result in solutions to your problems and may help you understand conflicts more holistically.

Creative meditation

There are certain attributes that will cultivate your strength and creativity compassion, fearless ness, humility, Joy, divinity, appreciation, etc. Nurture these qualities by meditating on them as if they are fully alive within yourself.

Heart-centered meditation

These techniques will help awaken you to your inner loving and compassionate side such as the techniques used in loving kindness meditation. This type of meditation will help you become more empathic, more forgivable and will teach you to live life in kinder way. This is a combination from concentration meditation, deep listening from mindfulness meditation, insight from reflective meditation, and cultivated traits from creative meditation.

Yogic practices for physical and mental health: When any type of asana is done the body becomes flexible and the vital organs function in proper working order. With the help of asanas, memory, concentration, learning power, curiosity to learn, and the way of thinking are improved. Any type of sitting asana provides greatest blood circulation in parts above the waist thus the vital organs will be energized giving increased stimulus to brain functioning. It is well known that language and intelligence are highly correlated only when a person learns to use a language is the able to think, and it may be true that the mentally retarded cannot think without training in language. Simhasana improves stammering and stuttering are some ear, nose and throat defects of the children.

Meditation is a scientific technique to elicit relaxation response to transform lifestyle. Hence, it plays a significant role in the management of positive mental health [1-3] claim that meditation is useful to everyone in all situations. It helps to overcome anxiety and strain. It also lowers the respiratory rate, heart rate, and blood pressure. Its practice lowers the over activity of the sympathetic nervous system. As over function of the sympathetic nervous system is reduced, one is able to maintain positive mental health.

A positive healthy mind rests on a healthy body. So before we go in for meditation, the body too should be made to practice simple yogic kriyas (such as some asanas and pranayam) so that a good and sound physical state induces yoga-meditation (a mental kriya). Just as the yogic kriyas (such as asanas, pranayam, and suryanamaskar) are useful in curing physical ailments like spinal problem, diabetes, etc., meditation is also useful for mental health [4].

Numerous scientific studies have proved that psychological stress can have disastrous effect on the physical and mental health. There is also evidence that one can control stress and reestablish mental harmony when one practices yogic-meditation regularly.

People who practice meditation express happiness and calmness. They never feel conflicts within self. They show accommodative intellect. They understand the emotional needs of others. They are considerate and courteous in all dealings. These are the chief characteristics of a mentally healthy person. Thus, yoga-meditation practices are helpful for the management of perfect mental health.

The value of meditation has been documented medically and psychologically. A neuropsychiatrist of California Dr. Fink wrote in this connection - Relaxation stops the emotions that prod the interbrain and forebrain into misbehavior. Good mental health depends on relaxation. Relaxation is a major stage of yoga practice. It has been reported that stability on mind to a great extent depends on yoga practice. Yoga practice destroys physical attachments, allows the cortex to remain in its inherent rhythm.

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