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## Stress management through yoga and meditation

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### Abstract

Medical experiments and research have shown that negative mental attitudes are dangerous and lead to illness. They may be either directly or indirectly in the form of psychological problems such as stress, depression etc., that often results in various cardiac problems. So there is a need to educate people, the ways to manage stress. The method of yoga is a valid and most suitable both for curative and preventive measure. As a preventive therapy it has proved to be helpful even in those physical ailments that have reached a critical stage. Yoga teaches how to live a healthy, natural and normal life.

**Keywords:** yoga, stress, yogasanas, yoga nidra, pranayam, meditation

### Introduction

In present scenario, life has become very fast, hard and hectic. People are preoccupied with many things. There are different tasks to be performed and the time is less. It is quite likely that people experience symptoms associated with stress. So it is the need of hour to step forward for managing stress. And what else except yoga; is easiest way to overcome stress. Stress is the body's automatic response to any physical or mental demand placed on it. It is subjective and unpleasant feeling of distress. Every one of us irrespective of our age, sex, education, occupation, socio-economic status, whether live in rural or urban area face stress. Stress effect body, mind, behavior in many ways and everyone experiences stress differently. It adversely effect a wide range of health condition and yoga is the most comprehensive approach to fighting stress.

When we are in stress our nervous system respond by releasing a flood of stress hormone. This hormone stimulates the body for emergency action by "fight-flight or freeze" reaction also known as stress response. The agent which causes stress is known as 'stressors'. Stress causes many harmful effect on the body such as, Physical impact - Weight gain/loss, Unexpected hair loss, Heart palpitations, High blood pressure, Digestive symptoms (such as dryness of mouth, flatulence, nausea, butterfly stomach)etc. Emotional negative effect includes Mood swing, Anxiety, Can lead to depression & unhealthy coping strategies (i.e. alcohol, drugs)

### Yoga

Yoga *originated* in India. From Sanskrit word "yuj" meaning union between mind, body and spirit. Include ethical discipline, postures, breathing control and meditation. There are 8 limbs of yoga-Yama, Niyam, Asan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Physical postures called "Asana" are just one of the eight limbs of yoga. Majority of types are more concerned with mental and spiritual well being.

### Clinical Significance of yoga

1. Reduced stress
2. Spiritual growth
3. Sense of well being
4. Reduced anxiety and muscle tension
5. increased flexibility
6. Slowed aging
7. Sound sleep
8. Improve many medical conditions:

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9. Lower heart rate.
10. Lower blood pressure
11. Allergy and asthma symptom relief
12. Smoking cessation help

### Stress

Stress may be defined as "a state of psychological and / or physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability *and/or* motivation to meet those demands."

### Causes of stress

#### Personal problems that can cause stress include

- Your health, especially if you have a chronic illness such as heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis.
- Emotional problems, such as anger you can't express, depression, grief, guilt, or low self-esteem.
- Your relationships, such as having problems with your relationships or feeling a lack of friendships or support in your life.
- Major life changes, such as dealing with the death of a parent or spouse, losing your job, getting married, or moving to a new city.
- Stress in your family, such as having a child, teen, or other family member who is under stress, or being a caregiver to a family member who is elderly or who has health problems. For more information, see the topic Quick Tips: Reducing the Stress of Care giving.
- Conflicts with your beliefs and values. For example, you may value family life, but you may not be able to spend as much time with your family as you want.

#### Social and job issues that can cause stress include

- Your surroundings. Living in an area where overcrowding, crime, pollution, or noise is a problem can create chronic stress.
- Your social situation. Being poor, feeling lonely, or facing discrimination based on your race, gender, age, or sexual orientation can add stress to your life.
- Your job. Being unhappy with your work or finding your job too demanding can lead to chronic stress. Learn how to manage job stress.
- Unemployment. Losing your job or not being able to find work can also add to your stress level.

### Stress warning signs and symptoms

#### Cognitive Symptoms

▪ Memory problems	▪ Moodiness
▪ Inability to concentrate	▪ Irritability or short temper
▪ Poor judgment	▪ Agitation, inability to relax
▪ Seeing only the negative	▪ Feeling overwhelmed
▪ Anxious or racing thoughts	▪ Sense of loneliness and isolation
▪ Constant worrying	▪ Depression or general unhappiness

### Yoga for managing stress

- Yoga Nidra
- Yogasana
- Pranayama
- Meditation

### Yoga Nidra

The Sanskrit word Yoga means 'union' or 'one pointed awareness' and Nidra means 'sleep'. In Yoga Nidra, the body, mind and intellect are completely relaxed and one appears to

be sleeping but the consciousness is functioning at a deeper level, and the subconscious and unconscious realms of mind get opened up. So yoga nidra is 'dynamic sleep' or in other words 'psychic sleep' in which you learn to relax consciously.

### Technique

1. Lie flat on your back, with your arms stretched out by your sides, palms up.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Form a clear intention.
4. Take a couple of deep breaths, emphasizing exhalation.
5. Starting with your right side, rotate your awareness through all parts of the body — limb by limb — in fairly quick succession

### Become aware of each part of your body

6. Be aware of your body as a whole.
7. Repeat the rotation one or more times until adequate depth of relaxation is achieved, always ending with whole-body awareness.
8. Be aware of the whole body and the space surrounding it. Feel the stillness and peace.
9. Reaffirm your initial intention.
10. Mentally prepare to return to ordinary consciousness.
11. Gently move your fingers for a few moments, take a deep breath, and then open your eyes.

No time limit applies to your Yoga Nidra performance, unless you impose one. Expect to come out of Yogic Sleep naturally, whether you return after only 15 minutes or a whole hour. Or you may just fall asleep.

### Meditation

The English meditation is derived from the Latin *meditatio*, from a verb *meditari*, meaning "to think, contemplate, devise, and ponder".

### Technique

- Sit quietly and comfortably,
  - Close your eyes.
  - Start by relaxing the muscles of your feet and work up your body relaxing muscles
  - Focus your attention on your breathing.
  - Breathe in deeply and then let your breath out. Count your breaths, and say the number of the breath as you let it out (this gives you something to do with your mind, helping you to avoid distraction).
- Other techniques are.

#### ▪ Focusing on an object

Here, you completely focus attention on examination of an object. Look at it in immense detail for the entire meditation. Examine the shape, color differences, texture, temperature and movement of the object. Objects often used are flowers, candle flames or flowing designs, but you can use other objects equally effectively

#### ▪ Focus on a sound

Some people like to focus on sounds they make. The classic example is the Sanskrit word "Om", meaning "perfection". Whether or not this is practical depends on your lifestyle.

#### ▪ Using Imagery

This can be a very refreshing and pleasant way of meditating. Here, you create a mental image of a pleasant and relaxing

place in your mind.

## Yogasanas

### Naukasana

Lie down on your back. Take a deep breath. Lift up your legs and trunk a foot above the ground with your arms extended before you. Your head, arms and feet should be at the same level. Hold the posture for as long as you can. Exhaling, return to the ground. Repeat the asana after a short rest.

### Eka Pada Pranamasana

Stand on your left leg with your hands folded in front and the right foot on the left thigh, just above the knee. Look straight ahead and breathe deeply twenty times. Now perform the asana with your right leg.

### Natarajasana

Stand straight. Lift the right leg and cross it over the left. Hold the right arm above the right leg with the hand hanging down. Hold the left hand in gyan mudra above the right wrist. Look straight ahead and breathe deeply twenty times. Repeat the same on the opposite side.

### Virasana

This asana gives you the power needed during a time of stress. It opens up your lower body and strengthens your arms. Stand up straight with arms at your sides and feet together. With an exhale, jump your right leg a few feet forward into a lunge almost and pivot your left foot sideways and flatten it. Make sure your front leg is bent at a 90 degree angle and your back leg is completely straight. Turn your upper body leftwards and lift your arms to be parallel to the ground. Turn your head to look at your right finger tips. Hold for a few slow breaths. Try again with the other foot,

### Balāsana

This is a restful pose that will relax your body and mind. The comfort will warm you and allow you to ease your mind, Kneel down with your knees hip width apart and your big toes together. Slowly lower your upper body down until your forehead reaches the mat. Place your arms comfortably beside you or straight above your head on the mat. Try to hold this pose for a few minutes.

### Trikonāsana

This asana stretches your entire body which is helpful when feeling stressed. Anywhere your body tends to be tight when you are tense will be targeted during this pose. Standing straight with your arms beside you and feet together, step your right foot forward straightening it. Pivot your left foot sideways and flatten it. Turn your upper body leftwards and place your right hand on your right shin or on your mat to the right of your right foot. Lift your left hand straight up towards the ceiling and look up at your fingertips. Hold this pose for a few breaths and focus on your breath. Do the other side as well.

### Savasana

Savasana is a pose to completely relax your body however what makes this pose difficult is staying still. Being able to hold it for 5-10 minutes will give your body and mind the calmness they deserve. Lie on your back with your legs comfortable apart and your arms out beside you. Breathe deeply into each part of your body, relaxing it with each breath to remove tension.

## Yoga breathing exercises/pranayama

- 1. Cleansing Breath:** sit in a comfortable position and relax. Breathe normally. Now exhale forcefully AMI then begin to inhale deeply. When the lungs are really full, exhale through your nose. This is done rather quickly. Assist this exhalation by contracting your stomach muscles. Let the stomach relax completely as the air begins to come back in through your nose. Fill lungs again, exhale through nose quickly once again with the aid of those stomach muscles Do this inhale-exhale pattern four to six times.
- 2. One Nostril Breathing:** Close one nostril with a finger. Breathe in slowly through the other nostril, and exhale through this same nostril. Continue breathing thus through one nostril for five breaths. Then switch sides.
- 3. Alternate Nostril Breathing:** Using your right hand, close the right nostril with your thumb, and breathe in through the left. Having inhaled thus, now close the left nostril with the pinky and ring finger of the same hand, and breathe out through the right nostril. Immediately breathe in again through that same (right) nostril, and exhale through the left. This pattern: in left, out right, in right, out left, is one unit. Repeating this unit four times makes one round.
- 4. Complete Yoga Breath:** Sitting straight, standing, or lying flat when possible, begin by expanding the abdomen and breathing into the lower lungs. Continue filling the middle lungs, expanding your lower ribs, and then the middle ribs, then lifting the upper ribs, expand the upper chest. Finally, to get that air into the lungs highest areas, contract the abdomen just a bit. Hold your breath for just five seconds, no more. Finally, exhale through your nose, slowly, again contracting your stomach muscles. Now, relax all over. Breathe normally for a breath or two,

## Discussion

Rapidly emerging in the Western world as a discipline for integrating the mind and body into union and harmony, when adopted as a way of life, yoga improves physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual health. Yoga offers an effective method of managing and reducing stress, anxiety and depression and numerous studies demonstrate the efficacy of yoga on mood related disorders.

Currently, treatment for anxiety and depression involves mostly psychological and pharmacological interventions; however, mind-body interventions are becoming increasingly popular as a means to reduce stress in individuals. Yoga, a form of mind-body exercise, has become an increasingly widespread therapy used to maintain wellness, and alleviate a range of health problems and ailments. Yoga should be considered as a complementary therapy or alternative method for medical therapy in the treatment of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders as it has been shown to create a greater sense of well-being, increase feelings of relaxation, improve self-confidence and body image, improve efficiency, better interpersonal relationships, increase attentiveness, lower irritability, and encourage an optimistic outlook on life.

Researchers are only beginning to understand how disciplines such as yoga promote personal growth, health and well-being. By acknowledging the unity of mind, body and spirit, mind-body fitness programs (i.e. yoga) can assist people in their pursuit of peace, calmness, and greater wholeness and integration in their lives. Health care professionals, health

educators and the like, need to be aware of the potential of yoga as an important component of a personal wellness plan.

While no concrete guidelines exist regarding the frequency of practice, the more you practice the more you benefit. Yoga is a personalized practice and as such, frequency and duration are personal questions with individual answers. Practice should happen with wisdom and should be modified to meet individual needs and goals. Individuals should practice as often as possible, especially in the beginning. The length of the induction phase will vary depending on an individual's initial level of fitness and health status; the more difficult yoga is for someone in the beginning the more their body needs it.

While modern medicine has the ability in many cases to heal physical diseases and alleviate psychological disorders, it is argued that a purely medical approach is far less effective in healing the emotional, intellectual, and personality layers of the human entity. The discipline of yoga offers individuals a timeless and holistic model of health and healing and although it may not result in the complete elimination of physical diseases and/ or adverse conditions from the body it offers a holistic path of healing. There exists an indisputable connection between a person's overall physical and mental health and the inner peace and well-being yoga is designed to achieve. Yoga suspends the fluctuations of the mind and by acting consciously, we live better and suffer less.

### **Conclusion**

- Stress is manageable -It needs efforts
- Engage truthful thinking
- Modulate your behavioural pattern
- Lead a well balanced life of satisfaction.
- Assert control on self in terms of thinking & action

Adaptability is the "Mother Key" To Convert Distress to eustress

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