



YOGA A way to decrease stress in life

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Abstract: Yoga is a very important therapy to treat stress. Stress has become a common problem in everyone's life - it may be a child or a grown up person. Everyone has problem of stress due to some reason or other. The only solution to treat the problem of stress is yoga and meditation. There are different types of yoga and meditation to treat stress - Vipassana meditation, Kundalini meditation, breathing exercises and many other relaxative asanas. A survey was also held which clearly indicates that a person practicing yoga daily is more stress free than others. Stress is also a key problem for many diseases like hypertension, diabetes which in turn leads to obesity. Thus, whole cycle of diseases revolves around a common problem that is stress. There are different types of stressors that are seen in everyone's daily life - financial crisis, exam fear, health related problems and many more. All these stressors weakens a person physically, emotionally, socially and behaviourally. There can be many stark results due to stress. It can lead to cognitive, emotional and many other problems. It is widely seen all over the world that even teenagers are taking a very harsh step - Suicide. It is because family members cannot understand stress among their child. It can also make a person drug addict. Thus to escape from all these consequences it is clear that only yoga and meditation is a way to stay away from stress and lead a healthy and a peaceful life.

Key Words: Therapy, Stress, Problem, Vipassana meditation, Kunditation, Emotionally, Emotional

The state of the mind and that of the body are intimately related. If the mind is relaxed, the muscles in the body will also be relaxed. Stress produces a state of physical and mental tension. Yoga, developed thousands of years ago, is recognized as a form of mind-body medicine. In yoga, physical postures and breathing exercises improve muscle strength, flexibility, blood circulation and oxygen uptake as well as hormone function. In addition, the relaxation induced by meditation helps to stabilize the autonomic nervous system with a tendency towards parasympathetic dominance. Physiological benefits which follow, help yoga practitioners become more resilient to stressful conditions and reduce a variety of important risk factors for various diseases, especially cardio-respiratory diseases.

In recent years, these studies have increasingly involved the use of modern scientific techniques and instruments, such as fMRI and EEG which are able to directly observe brain physiology

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and neural activity in living subjects, either during the act of meditation itself, or before and after a meditation effort, thus allowing linkages to be established between meditative practice and changes in brain structure or function.

Since the 1950s hundreds of studies on meditation have been conducted, but many of the early studies were flawed and thus yielded unreliable results. Contemporary studies have attempted to address many of these flaws with the hope of guiding current research into a more fruitful path. In 2013, researchers at Johns Hopkins, publishing in the Journal of the American Medical Association, identified 47 studies that qualify as well-designed and therefore reliable. Based on these studies, they concluded that there is moderate evidence that meditation reduces anxiety, depression, and pain, but no evidence that meditation is more effective than active treatment (drugs, exercise, other behavioral therapies). A 2017 commentary was similarly mixed.



The process of meditation, as well as its effects, is a growing subfield of neurological research. Modern scientific techniques and instruments, such as fMRI and EEG, have been used to study how regular meditation affects individuals by measuring brain and bodily changes.

Yoga as a stress management therapy :

Yoga as therapy is the use of yoga as exercise, consisting mainly of postures called asanas, as a gentle form of exercise and relaxation applied specifically with the intention of improving health. This form of yoga is widely practised in classes, and may involve meditation, imagery, breath work (pranayama) and music.

At least three types of health claim have been made for yoga: magical claims for medieval ha?ha yoga, including the power of healing; unsupported claims of benefits to organ systems from the practice of asanas; and more or less well supported claims of specific medical and psychological benefits from studies of differing sizes using a wide variety of methodologies.

Systematic reviews have found beneficial effects of yoga on low back pain and depression but despite much investigation little or no evidence for benefit for specific medical conditions. Study of trauma-sensitive yoga has been hampered by weak methodology Yoga - a mind-body practice - is considered one of many types of complementary and integrative health approaches. Yoga brings together physical and mental disciplines that may help you achieve peacefulness of body and mind. This can help you relax and manage stress and anxiety.

Yoga has many styles, forms and intensities. Hatha yoga, in particular, may be a good choice for stress management. Hatha is one of the most common styles of yoga, and beginners may like its slower pace and easier movements. But most people can benefit from any style of yoga - it's all about your personal preferences.

The core components of hatha yoga and most general yoga classes are:

1. Poses. Yoga poses, also called postures, are

a series of movements designed to increase strength and flexibility. Poses range from lying on the floor while completely relaxed to difficult postures that may have you stretching your physical limits.

2. Breathing. Controlling your breathing is an important part of yoga. Yoga teaches that controlling your breathing can help you control your body and quiet your mind.

3. Meditation or relaxation. In yoga, you may incorporate meditation or relaxation. Meditation may help you learn to be more mindful and aware of the present moment without judgment

Meditation : Meditation is a practice where an individual uses a technique - such as mindfulness, or focusing the mind on a particular object, thought, or activity - to train attention and awareness, and achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable state.

Scholars have found meditation difficult to define, as practices vary both between traditions and within them.

Meditation has been practiced since antiquity in numerous religious traditions, often as part of the path towards enlightenment and self realization. Some of the earliest written records of meditation (Dhyana), come from the Hindu traditions of Vedantism. Since the 19th century, Asian meditative techniques have spread to other cultures where they have also found application in non-spiritual contexts, such as business and health.

Meditation may be used with the aim of reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and pain, and increasing peace, perception self-concept, and well-being. Meditation is under research to define its possible health (psychological, neurological, and cardiovascular) and other effects

Insight (Vipassana) meditation : Vipassana meditation is a component of Buddhist practice. PhraTawepongInwongsakul and Sampath Kumar from the University of Mysore have been studying the effects of this meditation on 120 students by measuring the associated increase of 2. cortical thickness in the brain. The results of this



study are inconclusive.

Sahaja yoga and mental silence : Sahaja yoga meditation is regarded as a mental silence meditation, and has been shown to correlate with particular brain and brain wave characteristics. One study has led to suggestions that Sahaja meditation involves 'switching off' irrelevant brain networks for the maintenance of focused internalized attention and inhibition of inappropriate information Sahaja meditators appear to benefit from lower depression and scored above control group for emotional well-being and mental health measures on SF-36 ratings.

A study comparing practitioners of Sahaja Yoga meditation with a group of non meditators doing a simple relaxation exercise, measured a drop in skin temperature in the meditators compared to a rise in skin temperature in the non meditators as they relaxed. The researchers noted that all other meditation studies that have observed skin temperature have recorded increases and none have recorded a decrease in skin temperature. This suggests that Sahaja Yoga meditation, being a mental silence approach, may differ both experientially and physiologically from simple relaxation Kundalini yoga has proved to increase the prevention of cognitive decline and evaluate the response of biomarkers to treatment, thereby shedding light on the underlying mechanisms of the link between Kundalini Yoga and cognitive impairment. For the study, 81 participants aged 55 and older who had subjective memory complaints and met criteria for mild cognitive impairment, indicated by a total score of 0.5 on the Clinical Dementia Rating Scale. The results showed that at 12 weeks, both the yoga group showed significant improvements in recall memory and visual memory and showed significant sustained improvement in memory up to the 24-week follow-up, the yoga group showed significant improvement in verbal fluency and sustained significant improvements in executive functioning at week 24. In addition, the yoga cohort showed significant improvement in depressive symptoms, apathy, and resilience from emotional

stress. This research was provided by Helen Lavretsky, M.D. and colleagues In another study, Kundalini Yoga did not show significant effectiveness in treating obsessive-compulsive disorders compared with Relaxation/Meditation Transcendental Meditation The first (TM) research studies were conducted at UCLA and Harvard University and published in Science and the American Journal of Physiology in 1970 and 1971 However, much research has been of poor quality, including a high risk for bias due to the connection of researchers to the TM organization and the selection of subjects with a favorable opinion of TM. Independent systematic reviews have not found health benefits for TM exceeding those of relaxation and health education. A 2013 statement from the American Heart Association described the evidence supporting TM as a treatment for hypertension as Level IIB, meaning that TM "may be considered in clinical practice" but that its effectiveness is "unknown/unclear/uncertain or not well-established". [In another study, TM proved comparable with other kinds of relaxation therapies in reducing anxiety.

Stress management : Stress is an inescapable fact of life. We're bombarded daily with challenges ranging from traffic to bills -- from deadlines to last minute changes. We're also faced with a variety of personal problems such as health concerns, poor nutrition, and aging. And we have to deal with our thoughts, which often make us question the wisdom of our decisions, performance, and worth. The answer to why some people manage much better than others with these universal problems has to do with how stress works.

Stress is not unexpected bills, a traffic accident, a canceled flight, or getting laid off from your job. Rather, stress results from interpreting those events as dangerous, difficult, painful, or "unfair," and/or feeling that you don't have the resources to cope with them. The fact that stress is the result of how we interpret events explains why some people fall apart during a crisis, while others, facing exactly



the same situation, rise to the occasion and perform admirably. As Shakespeare wrote: "Things aren't good or bad, it's thinking makes them so."

Reacting to various events as threats triggers the "fight or flight" response, which speeds up the heart rate, breathing rate, raises blood pressure, metabolism, and muscle tension. In addition, various chemicals are released that slow down digestion, growth, reproduction, and tissue repair. In other words, chronic stress can be very harmful to your health.

The good news in all this is that if stress is the result of how we interpret and react to events, by being more conscious of those events that trouble and upset us and changing the way we interpret and react to them, we can change our levels of stress.

What is Stress Reduction and Relaxation?

Simply put, stress management and stress reduction methods include a variety of coping tools used to recognize and assess stress and interpret it in a more positive way. They are tools that are used to release stress and reduce its negative effects on our lives. In general, stress management consists of examining the five steps of the stress process shown below, and then altering your response in order to interrupt the process and reduce the effects.

The stress response pattern looks like this:

Life Situation: caught in traffic jam; late for work
Perceived as Stress: I'm incompetent; boss will be angry; lose promotion

Emotional Arousal: irritable, paranoid; poor concentration; overly sensitive

Physiological Arousal: elevated heart rate and breathing; sweating

Consequences: loss of tranquility, poor performance; stinky

Problems arise because people often respond to these emotional stressors with the physical responses mentioned earlier -- increased heart and breathing rate, muscle tension and lots of adrenaline -- instead of using productive and useable emotional responses. In the process, they usually end up creating both physical and emotional

problems. The solution begins with a close examination and keeping track of those situations that cause you stress. Once various situations are identified, knowing exactly how you react and what the consequences are enable you to alter your response in order to maintain a more even keel. In almost every case, effective stress management involves slowing down and staying in the moment, rather than worrying and jumping into the future or remembering and falling back into the past. Many find it useful to determine exactly why certain situations cause them stress, as their assumptions may be ill-founded. But knowing why isn't always enough. The following methods can help with coping.

Common and Popular Stress Management Tools Meditation : Meditation consists of attempting to focus attention on one thing -- a word, an image, simply counting slowly, or focusing solely on the flow of breath in and out of the body -- to the exclusion of all other thoughts. By focusing on only one thing, it's much more difficult to worry, be afraid, hateful, or angry. This type of focus is also helpful in choosing what thoughts to focus on, as well as insight into persistent patterns of thinking.

Yoga: Yoga can be done from a chair and not only involves the same level of concentration and focus as meditation, but also improves flexibility -- a plus for people with SCI.

Visualization and guided imagery : This uses the power of the mind to achieve overall physical relaxation, often by visualizing very detailed peaceful and relaxing scenes. Several studies have documented increased athletic performance with the regular use of visualization. Actors regularly visualize themselves performing before they ever take the stage. More importantly, visualization has been practiced, studied and used with success in people with cancer, chronic pain, and those with headaches, muscle spasms and general or specific anxieties.

Progressive relaxation : This is the



process of methodically tensing and relaxing specific muscle groups throughout the body, beginning with the head and working down, or with the feet and working up. The tensing phase normally lasts five to ten seconds, followed by 20 to 30 seconds of conscious and focused relaxation of the same muscle group.

Controlled breathing : Controlled breathing focuses on the process of breathing - the full inhalation, the expansion of the belly and the lungs, exhalation, the contraction of the midsection, and all the various physical sensations and sounds that accompany breathing that we normally ignore. Improper or shallow breathing can lead to higher levels of anxiety, depression, muscle tension, fatigue, and headaches. Deep, controlled breathing increases the amount of oxygen taken into the lungs, as well as the amount of carbon dioxide expelled from them, helping the body and mind to work more efficiently and effectively. Various controlled breathing methods are often used for one to five minutes, three to five times a day, or as needed to relieve symptoms or stress. Spinal cord injury may affect full and complete breathing capacity, either directly or as a result of poor posture. Practicing deep, controlled breathing may require reclining or lying down for some, but the benefits of managing stress, calming the body and the mind, and increasing oxygen flow are well worth the effort.

These are all very brief descriptions of rather complicated and involved stress management techniques. If you want to learn more it's recommended that you take a course, or at least read a book or two on a specific technique in order to gain any significant results.

Are Stress Management and Stress Reduction Widely Used? : The various stress management tools outlined in this brochure - yoga, meditation, controlled breathing, visualization, guided imagery - are used by millions throughout the world as they have been for thousands of years. Some have their origins in the Middle East or Asia, and some are associated with various religions,

even though they are now commonly practiced by people of all faiths.

What are the Benefits? : There are numerous benefits to be had from reducing and managing stress, beginning with an increase in concentration, a decrease in anxiety, and a reduction in pain. Effectively managing stress often leads to improved health. Stress management programs are drug-free. Most importantly, stress management programs put you in charge and give you a sense of control, which leads to enhanced self-esteem, less likelihood of depression, and an overall improvement in quality of life. The primary cost consideration is an investment of your time.

Importance of stress management : Stress - the mere word can cause anyone to cringe and feel on-edge. Stress is how the body reacts to any kind of demand, threat or change being experienced. It is usually associated with a feeling of being overwhelmed. It is important to note that stress is not a "one size fits all" concept. What stresses one person out may not faze the next person based on the way in which they perceive the stressor. This is why it is important to understand the causes and effects of stress, as well as how to identify your own stressors and ways to properly manage your stress.

A wide variety of conditions, situations and pressures can cause stress to any one person at any given moment. These stress-causing situations and pressures are known as "stressors." Stressors can come from external and/or internal factors, such as the ones below:

Common Internal Stressors:

1. - Chronic worry
2. - Pessimism
3. - Negative self-talk
4. - Unrealistic expectations/Perfectionism
5. - Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility
5. - All-or-nothing attitude

Common External Stressors:

1. - Major life changes
2. - Work or school



3. - Relationship difficulties
4. - Financial problems
5. - Children and family

The common public misconception is to label stress as a bad thing, but in reality, stress can actually be very healthy. When the body experiences a stressor, its fight-or-flight response kicks in as a way to protect itself by staying focused, energetic, and alert. Studies have shown that a healthy amount of manageable stress can lead to increased brain functioning, a boosted immune system and better preparation for future stressful situations, which can positively affect emotional health with your work and home life.

When chronic stress is not properly managed, however, it can cause serious health effects including; increased blood pressure, suppressed immune system, greater risk of heart attacks and strokes and an increased chance of experiencing some form of mental or emotional health issues. The symptoms of stress can be experienced mentally, physically, emotionally and behaviorally. Do a quick stress assessment by looking at the chart below. The more symptoms you are able to identify, the more at risk you are for experiencing a potential stress overload.

Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms	
Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory problems • Inability to concentrate • Poor judgment • Seeing only the negative • Anxious or racing thoughts • Constant worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability • Irritability or short temper • Agitation, inability to relax • Feeling overwhelmed • Sense of loneliness and isolation • Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aches and pains • Diarrhea or constipation • Headaches, dizziness • Chest pain, rapid heartbeat • Loss of sex drive • Frequent colds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating more or less • Sleeping too much or too little • Isolating yourself from others • procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities • Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax • Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

If you find yourself experiencing several of the above symptoms and feel as if the stress in your life is overwhelming, it is time to take back control. The first step in managing your stress is recognizing any warning signs and identifying the stressors in your life. Taking full control of your stress management will require you to change the stressful situation when you can and influence your reaction to the situation when you cannot.

At Verve Health, we promote integrative stress management techniques that coincide with techniques identified by the National Institute of

Mental Health. These include:

1. - Exercising regularly and adopting a healthy lifestyle
2. - Exploring stress coping programs, which may incorporate meditation, yoga, tai chi, or other gentle exercises.
3. - Engaging socially
4. - Avoiding unnecessary stressors by setting priorities and learning to say "no" to tasks
5. - Changing the situations, adapting or accepting the things you cannot change
6. - Making time for things you enjoy and helping you relax

Please seek help from a qualified mental health care provider if you are overwhelmed, feel you cannot cope, have suicidal thoughts, or are using drugs or alcohol to cope