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Role of mind in positive health of ancient yoga literature

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Abstract

In all Indian scriptures, the mind is described as an unstable entity as because it is influenced by stimuli which by nature are unstable and actively oriented. The mind will be active or disturbed in varying degrees upon the natures of the object. Mind has an important role for achieving a good health more generally, positive health of all human beings through yoga activities. Yoga is a spiritual science emphasizing integrated or holistic development of physical, mental, and moral aspects of human being. In this paper we discuss how mind can influence in the motion of our positive health under the consideration of ancient yogic literature. Some practical examples are cited to establish stress and tension free life through yoga exercise.

Keywords: spiritual mind, good health, stress and tension free

Introduction

The art of practicing yoga helps in controlling an individual's mind, body and soul. It brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve a peaceful body and mind, helps manages stress and anxiety and keeps you relaxed. It also helps in increasing flexibility, muscle strength and body. The Importance of a Positive Mind for Good Health Studies have shown that optimists are healthier and happier and they enjoy life at a much higher level than pessimists do. Learning to be optimistic means getting in the habit of thinking with a positive attitude.

The conceptual background of yoga has its origins in ancient Indian philosophy. There are numerous modern schools or types of yoga (i.e., Iyengar, Viniyoga, Sivananda, etc.), each having its own distinct emphasis regarding the relative content of physical postures and exercises (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), deep relaxation, and meditation practices that cultivate awareness and ultimately more profound states of consciousness. The application of yoga as a therapeutic intervention, which began early in the twentieth century, takes advantage of the various psychophysiological benefits of the component practices. The physical exercises (asanas) may increase patient's physical flexibility, coordination, and strength, while the breathing practices and meditation may calm and focus the mind to develop greater awareness and diminish anxiety, and thus result in higher quality of life. Other beneficial effects might involve a reduction of distress, blood pressure, and improvements in resilience, mood, and metabolic regulation.

Khalsa stated that a majority of the research on yoga as a therapeutic intervention was conducted in India and a significant fraction of these were published in Indian journals, some of which are difficult to acquire for Western clinicians and researchers. In their bibliometric analysis from 2004, they found that 48% of the enrolled studies were uncontrolled, while 40% were randomized clinical trials (RCT), and 12% non-RCT (N-RCT). Main categories which were addressed were psychiatric, cardiovascular, and respiratory disorders. Despite a growing body of clinical research studies and some systematic reviews on the therapeutic effects of yoga, there is still a lack of solid evidence regarding its clinical relevance for many symptoms and medical conditions. For many specific indications and conditions, there is inconsistent evidence with several studies reporting positive effects of the yoga interventions, but other studies are less conclusive. In some instances, these discrepancies may result from differences between the study populations (e.g., age, gender, and health status), the details of the yoga interventions, and follow-up rates.

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We found four relevant publications, including two reviews on the effects of yoga on depression, a description of studies on yogic breathing for depression, and one “summary”. The reviewing authors have reported that the studies reviewed showed a large variety of diagnoses ranging from “major depression or some other type of diagnosed depression” to “elevated depressive symptoms”. Although several randomized controlled trials (RCTs) reported beneficial effects of yoga interventions for treating depressive symptoms, the quality and quantity of the data from these studies appear insufficient to conclude whether there is substantial clinical justification to consider yoga as a treatment of depression. Compared to passive controls, the yoga interventions seem to be effective; when compared with active controls, not surprisingly, the effects are less conclusive. The study results are so far not sufficient in quantity and quality to determine whether studies with a focus on the asanas are more effective as compared to studies with meditation-focussed or pranayama-focussed styles. Thus, there is a strong need to conduct more conclusive studies with high methodological quality and larger patient samples. Whether motivation of depressed patients could be a problem or not remains to be clarified. There has been an attempt to explore mechanisms of action and to understand the complete picture of the effects of yoga in depression looking at electrophysiological markers of attention, and neurotransmitters which were found to change with yoga.

We found one systematic review/meta-analysis evaluating the effects of yoga on fatigue in a variety of medical conditions. The review included 19 RCTs and included healthy persons as well as patients with cancer, multiple sclerosis, dialysis, chronic pancreatitis, fibromyalgia, and asthma. Overall, a small positive effect with an SMD of 0.28 [0.24–0.33] was found. This standardized mean difference (SMD) describes the difference in the group mean values divided by the respective standard deviation; a value between 0.3 and 0.5 can be regarded as small, SMD between 0.5 and 0.8 as moderate, and SMD >0.8 as large. For those studies that included cancer patients ($n = 10$), the treatment effect of yoga was 0.20 (0.15–0.24); for all other studies that did not include cancer patients ($n = 9$), the effect was 0.46 (0.24–0.67) [9]. Nevertheless, there are some studies on cancer-related fatigue which indicate that treatment effects of yoga could be improved in well-designed future studies.

There is one systematic review examining the effects of yoga on anxiety and anxiety disorders, a Cochrane review on meditation therapy for anxiety disorders (citing one yoga study, a description of studies on yogic breathing (which are also addressed in the systematic review), and one summary.

Most studies described beneficial effects in favour of the yoga interventions, particularly when compared with passive controls (i.e., examination anxiety), but also compared with active controls such as relaxation response or compared to standard drugs. However, there are currently no meta-analyses available which would clearly differentiate this important issue. At least the AHRQ report stated that “yoga was no better than Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction at reducing anxiety in patients with cardiovascular diseases”.

One systematic review describes the effects of yoga on stress-associated symptoms. Chong *et al.* identified 8 controlled trials, 4 of which were randomized, which fulfilled their selection criteria. Most studies described beneficial effects of yoga interventions. Although not all studies used adequate and/or consistent instruments to measure stress, they nevertheless indicate that yoga may reduce perceived stress as

effective as other active control interventions such as relaxation, cognitive behavioural therapy, or dance.

Also the AHRQ report stated that “yoga helped reduce stress”. Here, the two included studies showed a significant reduction of stress scores in favour of the yoga group (SMD = -1.10 [CI: -1.61 to -0.58]).

Practicing Yoga can positively affect your mood, behaviour and overall mental health in various ways. For students or working professionals, daily Yoga practice brings increased concentration, relaxation and peace of mind, helps to relieve symptoms of anxiety, stress, and so on. One can get amazing levels of mental clarity and calmness only by doing a combination of meditation and Yoga consistently. In the long run, Yoga can even aid anyone to fight depression, maintain a positive self-image and positive outlook towards life in general, and help in developing high willpower and tolerance (towards self and others). Gratitude and well-being. Besides, Yoga is becoming increasingly accepted as an adjacent therapy to improve quality of life for individuals, as it offers an excellent opportunity to enter into the ‘flow state’. Doing regular yoga helps people in achieving mindfulness, develops greater self-awareness and tranquility, and catapults our ability to focus and remain happy throughout the day. Needless to say, Yoga is the gateway to better spiritual and emotional health as well!

As a beginner in the world of Yoga, do not get overwhelmed by the plethora of poses, asanas and breathing techniques. And, do not let anyone tell you that not everyone can do Yoga (because that’s a myth or an outright lie)! The practice of Yoga is beyond any particular religion (or Yogic mysticism), and should be seen as a way of life.

When you lift weights, your muscles get stronger and bigger. When you do yoga, your brain cells develop new connections, and changes occur in brain structure as well as function, resulting in improved cognitive skills, such as learning and memory. Yoga strengthens parts of the brain that play a key role in memory, attention, awareness, thought, and language. Think of it as weightlifting for the brain.

Studies using MRI scans and other brain imaging technology have shown that people who regularly did yoga had a thicker cerebral cortex (the area of the brain responsible for information processing) and hippocampus (the area of the brain involved in learning and memory) compared with nonpractitioners. These areas of the brain typically shrink as you age, but the older yoga practitioners showed less shrinkage than those who did no yoga. This suggests that yoga may counteract age-related declines in memory and other cognitive skills.

All exercise can boost your mood by lowering levels of stress hormones, increasing the production of feel-good chemicals known as endorphins, and bringing more oxygenated blood to your brain. But yoga may have additional benefits. It can affect mood by elevating levels of a brain chemical called gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), which is associated with better mood and decreased anxiety.

Meditation also reduces activity in the limbic system—the part of the brain dedicated to emotions. As your emotional reactivity diminishes, you have a more tempered response when faced with stressful situations.

Drugs and talk therapy have traditionally been the go-to remedies for depression and anxiety. But complementary approaches, such as yoga, also helps, and yoga stacks up well when compared with other complementary therapies.

A review of 15 studies, published in the journal *Ageing and Mental Health*, looked at the effect of a variety of relaxation

techniques on depression and anxiety in older adults. In addition to yoga, interventions included massage therapy, progressive muscle relaxation, stress management, and listening to music. While all the techniques provided some benefit, yoga and music were the most effective for both depression and anxiety. And yoga appeared to provide the longest-lasting effect.

A number of small studies have found that yoga can help with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is not used by itself, but as an add-on treatment to help reduce intrusive memories and emotional arousal and to produce calmer, steadier breathing. Deep, slow breathing is associated with calmer states because it helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

Conclusion

As per the observation and findings of the results following conclusions were made.

“The observation of discipline for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being “Yoga is a form of complementary and alternative medicine with an evidence base as a treatment for patients with mental health disorders including depression, relaxation, interventions and aerobic exercises.

The mind is a set of cognitive faculties including consciousness, perception, thinking, judgment and memory. It is usually defined as the faculty of an entity’s thought consciousness. It holds the power of imagination, recognition and appreciation and is responsible for processing feelings and emotion, resulting, in attitudes and action. There is a lengthy tradition is philosophy, religion, psychology and cognitive science about what constitutes a mind and what are its distinguishing properties.

One open questing the nature of the mind is mind-body problem which investigable the relation of the mind to the physical brain and nervous system. Modern views centre on physicalism and functionalism, which hold that the mind is roughly identical with the brain or reducible to physical phenomena such as neuronal activity. The mind is that which enable being to have subjective awareness and intentionally toward their environment, to perceive and respond to stimuli with some kind of agency and to have consciousness, including thinking and feeling.

The evidence for the efficacy of yoga as a treatment for individuals with was similarly limited by between study heterogeneity however three of low methodological quality suggest that patients with substance abuse improve on some symptoms, including general well-being, anxiety and mood states, with the practice of yoga.

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