Stress Management

Through Yoga and Meditation

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Through Yoga and Meditation

Dr. Arpita Mishra

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Stress Management
Through Yoga and Meditation

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This book is dedicated to

My Maa and Papa for their motivation, support, assistance and their love and blessings, which carry me always forward.

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I. Foreword

It is a matter of great pleasure to write a foreword to the book titled "**Stress Management: through Yoga and Meditation"** written by Dr. Arpita Mishra, an enthusiastic teacher of physical education. She put very hard work to carry out this very informative book.

This book deals with all comprehensive aspects of Stress Management: through Yoga and Meditation.

The Bibliography provides further impetus to its claim as an exhaustive piece of work. The Author has done an incredible job.

I happily congratulate the author and give my best wishes for her bright future, for the work she did.

Dr. Ram Ashray Sharma
Retired Associate Professor
Physical Education
Shri Durga Ji PG College Chandeshwar,
Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh)

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II. Foreword

I have the pleasure in writing a foreword for a new work on stress management. Today technology and fast life has permeated every spear of human life, which has tremendous stress on every human being. Human being need quality of healthy life and wellness, to cope up with these stress on every step. Every individual has to face a lots of stress due to competitiveness on every step of life. There is a tremendous need of stress management to overcome these obstacles in life.

Stress is adaptive physiological response of human organism to internal and external forces and events, which disturbs the homeostatic balance of individual. The imbalance may caused by psychic physical and social agents or conditions.

The Author has discussed the current issues in stress management at length. This book in my opinion is textbook for students in general players and community will find it as a useful guide to be relied upon in practice. I have found that this sound theoretical orientation has been artistically related to the practice of human life. I am sure this book will be of eminence value for the students and communities. This will go a long way in managing, reducing and controlling the stress. I recommend both, the Author and her work to you most highly.

Dr. D.K. Dureha
Professor Physical Eduction, BHU
Ex- Vice Chancellor LNUPE, Gwalior

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Preface

The new millennium has ushered in a lot of hope and enthusiasm for creation of a new life order where, besides a longer life span, human beings would be interested in quality and fullness in their lives. This would mean stress management, which is both effective and holistic.

Yoga is generally considered safe for most healthy people when practiced under the guidance of a trained instructor. But there are some situations in which yoga might pose a risk.

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the ever-increasing demands of life. Surveys show that many Americans experience challenges with stress at some point during the year. In looking at the causes of stress, remember that your brain comes hard-wired with an alarm system for your protection. When your brain perceives a threat, it signals your body to release a burst of hormones to fuel your capacity for a response. This has been labeled the "fight-or-flight" response. Once the threat is gone, your body is meant to return to a normal relaxed state. Unfortunately, the non-stop stress of modern life means that your alarm system rarely shuts off. That's why stress management is so important. Stress management gives you a range of tools to reset your alarm system.

Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. Stress can also be positive. You need a certain amount of stress to perform your best at work. Stress can cause physical, emotional, and behavioral problems which can affect your health, energy, well-being, mental alertness, and personal and professional relationships.

The practice of yoga involves stretching the body and forming different poses while keeping breathing slow and controlled. The

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body becomes relaxed and energized at the same time. There are various styles of yoga, some moving through the poses more quickly, almost like an aerobic workout, and other styles relaxing deeply into each pose. Some have a more spiritual angle, while others are used purely as a form of exercise.

As yoga combines several techniques used for stress reduction, it can be said to provide the combined benefits of breathing exercises, stretching exercises, fitness programs, meditation practice, and guided imagery, in one technique. However, for those with great physical limitations, simple breathing exercises, meditation, or guided imagery might be a preferable option and provide similar benefits.

The book offers an effective, lasting and holistic solution to the problem of stress through Yoga-Vedanta's integrated approach to life which bestows three-fold benefits, viz. obliterating past stress, precluding future stress and taking you beyond stress.

Dr. Arpita Mishra
Associate Professor,
Physical Education,
Shri Agrasen Mahila Mahavidhyalay,
Azamgarh

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Acknowledgements

This book would not have been completed without encouragement and support of my professional colleagues. I sincerely acknowledge their efforts in this pursuit. There are numerous people, who contribute and whom I should recognize.

I especially thanks to Professor D.K. Dureha Sir, former Vice Chancellor LNUPE, Gwalior for writing an inspiring foreword to the book.

I am very grateful to Dr. Ram Ashray Sharma Sir, Retired Associate Professor, Shri Durga Ji PG College, Chandeshwar Azamgarh, who continuously encourages me and giving me professional advice on various matters.

And at last, I especially appreciate the great effort of my husband, Mr. Amit Yadav and my younger brother, Mr. Anshuman Mishra for their continuous encouragement and motivation, which really contributed directly and also indirectly to the completion of this book.

I sincerly thanks all of them.

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Physical Education,
Shri Agrasen Mahila Mahavidhyalay,
Azamgarh

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1

Introduction

YOGA FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

Yoga is a great tool for stress management no matter what. However, there are many different styles of yoga and a great variety of approaches. Which ones work best?

There are really two fundamentally different approaches to practicing yoga. The "pure physical approach" is what most people think of when the word yoga comes to mind. It involves a routine ofyoga postures practiced either fast or slow with a focus on the what to do with your body in each, and stretching to a maximum stretch which is held for anything from a few seconds to a few minutes.

This will generally get your blood flowing, heart beating, and breath deepening. It will be physically good for you and will help relieve stress.

The other approach is the "mind-body" approach to yoga. Here the physical part of the practice is primarily a tool for creating an inner experience. This experience includes both a meditative and open ended focus of your awareness. It works not only with the body but also the mind. If practiced well, it is a highly effective tool for stress reduction and stress management.

In a study reported in Yoga Journal, participants in groups using an approach based on Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, effectively reduced stress related sympotoms by 55 per cent over an eight week period.

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Here are some tips to help you incorporate this approach into at least a part of your yoga practice.

- WarmUp – Spend a few minutes with vigorous movement and breath. You can just jump around if you want, or shake your body, do random movements or whatever just plain feels good to wake up your body. This part of the practice can be purely physical.
- Select A Sequence – Choose at least four postures. A backbend, a forward bend, a side bend to each side and a twist. Select postures you've done before and that are relatively easy for you. In this type of approach there is nothing to achieve physically. The postures are simply your vehicle.
- Breathing – Once you begin your yoga practice pay as much attention to your breath as you do to your body. Long, slow, deep, inhalations followed by relaxed full exhalations that are coordinated with you body movements work best. Be still on the inhale and then slowly move further into the stretch as you exhale.
- Play The Edge – Remove all force, strain, and trying from your practice. Instead come gently to your edge in each posture using your breath to help you slowly get there. Think of your yoga practice as "effortless effort".
- Focus Awareness – Once you arrive at your edge, practice being present physically and emotionally to whatever you might be experiencing right in the moment – Think NOW! – what is happening NOW?.
- Accept – Whatever you notice, accept it. This is what is happening now and all that needs to happen.
- Choose – Decide in the moment how to be present to what is happening. You might feel an urge to move into a harder edge or a desire to back off a little. Do you really want to do this? Choose. Practice making different choices and see what happens as a result.
- Pause And Reflect – After each posture and again at the end of your practice take a few moments to reflect on your

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experience and what you noticed. What did you notice in your yoga practice that carries over into your daily life? What can you learn from it?

A good way for new yoga students to learn how to work with yoga this way, as a tool for stress management, is to find a yoga teacher or yoga therapist who can personally coach them in a privatesession. Choose one who is trained in a style of yoga that incorporates a mind-body approach.

YOGA FOR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Since the 1970s, meditation and other stress-reduction techniques have been studied as possible treatments for depression and anxiety. One such practice, yoga, has received less attention in the medical literature, though it has become increasingly popular in recent decades. One national survey estimated, for example, that about 7.5 per cent of U.S. adults had tried yoga at least once, and that nearly 4 per cent practiced yoga in the previous year. Yoga classes can vary from gentle and accommodating to strenuous and challenging; the choice of style tends to be based on physical ability and personal preference. Hatha yoga, the most common type of yoga practiced in the United States, combines three elements: physical poses, called *asanas*; controlled breathing practiced in conjunction with asanas; and a short period of deep relaxation or meditation.

Many of the studies evaluating yoga's therapeutic benefits have been small and poorly designed. However, a 2004 analysis found that, in recent decades, an increasing number have been randomised controlled trials — the most rigorous standard for proving efficacy. 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 socialising with friends.

Taming the stress response

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.

A small but intriguing study further characterises the effect of yoga on the stress response. In 2008, researchers at the University of Utah presented preliminary results from a study of varied participants' responses to pain. They note that people who have a poorly regulated response to stress are also more sensitive to pain. Their subjects were 12 experienced yoga practitioners, 14 people with fibromyalgia (a condition many researchers consider a stress-related illness that is characterised by hypersensitivity to pain), and 16 healthy volunteers.

When the three groups were subjected to more or less painful thumbnail pressure, the participants with fibromyalgia — as expected — perceived pain at lower pressure levels compared with the other subjects. Functional MRIs showed they also had the greatest activity in areas of the brain associated with the pain response. In contrast, the yoga practitioners had the highest pain tolerance and lowest pain-related brain activity during the MRI. The study underscores the value of techniques, such as yoga, that can help a person regulate their stress and, therefore, pain responses.

Improved Mood And Functioning

Questions remain about exactly how yoga works to improve mood, but preliminary evidence suggests its benefit is similar to that of exercise and relaxation techniques.

In a German study published in 2005, 24 women who described themselves as "emotionally distressed" took two 90-minute yoga classes a week for three months. Women in a control group maintained their normal activities and were asked not to begin an exercise or stress-reduction programme during the study period.

Though not formally diagnosed with depression, all participants had experienced emotional distress for at least half of the previous 90 days. They were also one standard deviation above the population norm in scores for perceived stress (measured

by the Cohen Perceived Stress Scale), anxiety (measured using the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory), and depression (scored with the Profile of Mood States and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, or CES-D).

At the end of three months, women in the yoga group reported improvements in perceived stress, depression, anxiety, energy, fatigue, and well-being. Depression scores improved by 50 per cent, anxiety scores by 30 per cent, and overall well-being scores by 65 per cent. Initial complaints of headaches, back pain, and poor sleep quality also resolved much more often in the yoga group than in the control group.

One uncontrolled, descriptive 2005 study examined the effects of a single yoga class for inpatients at a New Hampshire psychiatric hospital. The 113 participants included patients with bipolar disorder, major depression, and schizophrenia. After the class, average levels of tension, anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, and fatigue dropped significantly, as measured by the Profile of Mood States, a standard 65-item questionnaire that participants answered on their own before and after the class. Patients who chose to participate in additional classes experienced similar short-term positive effects.

Further controlled trials of yoga practice have demonstrated improvements in mood and quality of life for the elderly, people caring for patients with dementia, breast cancer survivors, and patients with epilepsy.

Benefits of Controlled Breathing

A type of controlled breathing with roots in traditional yoga shows promise in providing relief for depression. The programme, called Sudarshan Kriya yoga (SKY), involves several types of cyclical breathing patterns, ranging from slow and calming to rapid and stimulating.One study compared 30 minutes of SKY breathing, done six days a week, to bilateral electroconvulsive therapy and the tricyclic antidepressant imipramine in 45 people hospitalised for depression. After four weeks of treatment, 93 per cent of those receiving electroconvulsive therapy, 73 per cent of those taking imipramine, and 67 per cent of those using the

breathing technique had achieved remission.Another study examined the effects of SKY on depressive symptoms in 60 alcohol-dependent men. After a week of a standard detoxification programme at a mental health center in Bangalore, India, participants were randomly assigned to two weeks of SKY or a standard alcoholism treatment control. After the full three weeks, scores on a standard depression inventory dropped 75 per cent in the SKY group, as compared with 60 per cent in the standard treatment group. Levels of two stress hormones, cortisol and corticotropin, also dropped in the SKY group, but not in the control group. The authors suggest that SKY might be a beneficial treatment for depression in the early stages of recovery from alcoholism.

PANACEAS OF STRESS

For most of her adult life, Terri Shifrin was crippled by a peculiar kind of agoraphobia - the fear of being trapped. Airplanes and elevators petrified her. She stopped driving on freeways, worried she'd get caught in a traffic jam and not be able to get out.

Over the years Shifrin went to one therapist after another, trying biofeedback, talk therapy, and desensitisation therapy. Nothing relieved her anxiety. So she learned to work around it. For 20 years she never traveled more than10 miles from her Palo Alto, Calif., home. "I wanted to go out and do things but I just felt stuck," says Shifrin, 51, a former kindergarten teacher.

Two years ago, anticipating her son's graduations form college 400 miles away in Southern California, she decided to try something new: hypnosis. Shifrin went to the Stanford Center for Integrative Medicine, where she met with psychiatrist David Spiegel, M.D., co-author with his father, Herbert Spiegel, M.D., of the 1978 book Trance and Treatment (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2004), which remains a standard textbook on the clinical uses of hypnosis. Using a combination of directed hypnosis and self-hypnosis, Spiegel helped Shifrin regain a sense of control. Once she was in a hypnotic state, he would have her imagine a place that made her feel relaxed - she chose a waterfall in Hawaii she had visited as a teenager. Then he would have her imagine a situation that

frightened her, such as driving on a congested freeway at rush hour. He directed her to look back and forth between the two scenes as they were projected side by side on a movie screen. Over time, she came to use the calming waterfall as an emotional touchstone in moments of panic.

After more than a dozen appointments with Spiegel and countless self-hypnosis sessions on her own at home, Shifrin and her parents climbed into her car for the drive to the graduation. The first hour and a half of the ride were tough, her knuckles white as she gripped the steering wheel. But eventually she began to relax. "I got to the pint where I could look at the scenery and enjoy the conversation with my parents." The next day, as her son walked across the stage to accept his diploma, Shifrin beamed with pride - in her son and in herself.

How it Works

Hypnosis, or hypnotherapy, is becoming more common in medical clinics like the one at Stanford and in hospitals, where doctors are using it to sedate patients before surgery, ease the pain of burn victims, and prepare women for childbirth. Evidence is mounting that hypnosis is useful in treating not only psychological conditions like anxiety, addiction, and phobias but also distinctly physical ailments like broken bones and surgical wounds.

When it works, hypnosis can be surprisingly effective, taking a person form physical agony, for example, to a pain-free state in minutes. But it doesn't work for everyone. "About two-thirds of adults can be hypnotised," Spiegel says. But even those who cant' be hypnotised may benefit form hypnosis sessions, which generally induce relaxation and ease stress, if nothing else. Whether hypnosis is successful may depend on the skill and training of the person who is directing it as well as the recipient's motivation, readiness, and rapport with the therapist.

Comfort and Control

Spiegel and other experts are quick to point out that hypnosis is not about therapists exerting power over their clients: it's about people taking control of their own minds and bodies. Practitioners

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achieve this by putting you into a hypnotic trance, which Spiegel describes as a state of focused concentration. "This helps put other concerns out of your consciousness." Practitioners have several ways to induce hypnosis. Most begin by making you comfortable, often in a plush recliner, and directing you to close your eyes and relax. The hypnotherapist will then guide you into a trance, usually by counting backwards and directing you to feel parts of your body become heavy. Once you're in a hypnotic state, the therapist may offer gentle suggestions ("imagine your body floating somewhere safe and comfortable, like a warm bath") or visualisation techniques that help you imagine malfunctioning organs working properly or pained areas going numb. Practitioners typically teach these skills to you and sometimes provide audiotapes or CDs so directed sessions can be reinforced with self-hypnosis.

Numbing the Pain

Not long after David Patterson, Ph.D., started working as a psychologist at the Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, he met with a 60-year-old burn patient who complained of excruciating pain. "He was taking morphine, Valium, and laughing gas and still said he'd rather die than go through his next dressing change," Patterson recalls. The doctor consulted a colleague, who suggested hypnosis.

Patterson had studied hypnosis in school and was familiar with the basic technique. After hypnotising the patient, he suggested that when a nurse touched him on the shoulder he would become relaxed and free of pain. The doctor left the ward for a couple of hours. When he returned, the floor was abuzz: A nurse, he learned, had come to change the man's dressing; when she touched his shoulder, he instantly fell asleep.

Hypnosis seldom works that dramatically, admits Patterson. And yet for many sufferers, it offers significant relief from both chronic and acute pain. In a 2003 review of clinical trials on hypnosis for pain, Patterson and colleague Mark Jensen, Ph.D., found that hypnosis was associated with significant reductions in ratings of pain, the need or painkillers or sedation, nausea and