

## Managing Stress through Yoga

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### Abstract

Stress is the part and parcel of life. No one can lead a life in this world without experiencing stress in their everyday life. Stress plays the role of both the motivator and destroyer, it's we who decide which role does the stress wants to play. There are a number of methods and techniques to manage and overcome the stress that we experience in our daily life and these techniques are called stress management techniques. Of the stress management techniques, yoga is one of that. Yoga is a group of mental, physical and spiritual practices which originated in ancient India. Yoga brings harmony between mind and body. Yoga helps the individual to cope with stress and it improves overall health and well-being. This paper gives a bird's eye view of yoga as a technique for managing the stress.

**KEYWORDS:** Stress, Stress Management, Yoga

### Introduction

The demands and challenges of modern world is increasing day by day. These demands and challenges induce a state of emotion called stress in the individual. The factors that cause stress is increasing every. It's the individual who have to take necessary steps to manage stress in their life. Like two sides of a coin, stress also have both advantages and disadvantages. The experts in the field of stress management suggested a number of methods and techniques. Yoga is the one of the stress management technique which is widely practicing all over the world. Numerous research studies which shows that the practice of yoga helps the individual to manage stress in effective and positive manner. Researches also shows that practice of yoga vital role in bringing mental being and holistic health.

### Stress and Stress Management

We all are familiar with the term stress but the meaning and definition of the term is contextual as it varies from discipline to discipline and area under which the term is studied. Inpsychological context, stress is the body's response of individual to any demand or threat in his environment. It can be called as the body's self defense mechanism which prepares the individual to face the problems. When an individual face problems or challenges, his/ her body releases the chemicals such as cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline to help the individual either to stay and fight or to get away from the situation as soon as possible.

Stress plays the role of both the motivator and destroyer. Up to a certain level stress is necessary for an individual to lead a successful life and sometimes stress helps the individual to meet the challenges of the daily life and to reach the goal. It's up to the individual who decides what role does the stress wants to play in his life. If the stress is above the certain level, its effect is negative and it will affect the individual's health, achievement, personal, social, and professional life, relationship with family, society and individual itself.

The factors or conditions that induces stress in an individual are termed as stressors. Some of the stressors in the life of the individual are: job issues, lack of money and time, high expectations and goals, illness, family problems, death of loved ones etc.

According to Naima Khatoon (2012), stress management is “a programme for dealing with stress in which people learn how they appraise stressful events, develop skills for coping with stress, and practice putting these skills into effect”. Stress management program involves three phases, namely,

Phase 1: in this phase, the individual learns what is stress and how to identify stressors in their own life.

Phase 2: in this phase, they learn and practice effective skills in coping with stress.

Phase 3: in this phase, individual’s practice learned stress management techniques in the targeted stressful situations and monitor their effectiveness.

### **Techniques of stress management**

Experts in the field of stress management have proposed several stress management techniques. Some of the techniques of stress management are:

- Relaxation training
- Bio feedback
- Cognitive-behaviour therapy
- Balanced diet
- Proper sleep
- Regular exercise
- Mediation
- Yoga
- Social support
- Developing new philosophy of life
- Time management
- Role management
- Humour
- Mindfulness
- Proper use of leisure time

### **Yoga as a method of stress management**

Yoga is one of the stress management technique which is followed people in modern world in recent time yoga is considered as a form of mind-body exercise which is widely accepted all over the world as a technique to bring wellness in all the aspects of the human body and as a tool to fight against stress, anxiety, depression, frustration.

The art and science of yoga is originated in ancient India and its evidences trace back to the Vedic period. The systematic reference of yoga is found in Yogadarshna - a work of Patanjali. After Patanjali, contribution of different sages and yogis lead to the spread of yoga in the modern world. On 11 December, 2015 the united nations General Assembly declared to celebrate ‘June 21’ as the “International Yoga Day’. The word yoga, lies its root in Sanskrit word ‘Yuj’ which means ‘join’ or ‘unite’. Yoga is the process of union between body, mind and soul. Yoga involves various forms of body postures, stretching movements, breathing exercises which varies from progressive relaxation, guided imaginary and meditation. The basis of yoga is search for happiness within the individual and it can be defined as the process of elevating oneself through calming of mind.

Our nervous system can be divided into several divisions as follows: first of all, it can be divided into central nervous system (which consists brain and spinal cord) and peripheral nervous system. The latter is again classified into somatic nervous system and autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system is the conjunction of sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. The functions of heart, blood

vessels, breathing, digestive system are controlled by the autonomic nervous system and its smooth functioning depends on the state of mind of the individual. Autonomic nervous system plays a direct role in responding to stress. When an individual experiences stress, the sympathetic nervous system switches on 'fight or flight' mode, as a result, the body shifts its energy either to fight with the situation or to escape from the situation. The sympathetic nervous system signals the adrenal gland to release hormones called adrenalin and cortisol. This results in increased heartbeat, respiration rate and glucose level, change in digestive process and dilation of blood vessels. When the individual overcome the stress, the body comes back to the original state. But the prolonged stress damages the nervous system of the individual. In order to cope up with stress positively, the individual's sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system should work simultaneously. There are so many yogic practices that activates the parasympathetic nervous system. The activation of parasympathetic nervous system reduces the heartbeat, blood pressure, glucose level, breathing rates. The practice of yoga encourages the individual to focus on the sensations that cause stress and the reactions of the body when they are experiencing stress. The practice of yoga helps the individual to activate the parasympathetic nervous system when they are experiencing stress. At the same time there are so many yogic postures that will activates the sympathetic nervous system. The regular and proper practice of yoga helps the individual to maintain a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system and thereby it helps the individual to manage the stress which they experience in their daily life. For the purpose of stress management, the yogic postures that strengthens our parasympathetic system should be practiced. Some asanas, pranayamas, kriya which helps for stress management are:

Hastottanasana, Padahastasana, Trikonasana, Shashankasana, Ushtrasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Bhujangasana, Makarasana, Sarvangasana, Matsyasana, Shavasana, Kapalabhati, Anuloma – viloma pranayama, Bhastrika pranayama, Bhramari pranayama, Sheetali pranayama, Yoganidra etc.

Researches shows that yoga plays an important role in reducing stress. Some of the studies are:

The study conducted by Masoumeh Shohani and et.al (2018) on the effect of yoga on stress, anxiety and depression in women shows that yoga plays an effective role in reducing stress, anxiety and depression.

DerehaliGururaja and et.al (2011) conducted a study on the effect of yoga on mental health: a comparative study between young and senior subjects in Japan concluded that the mental health can be improved by reducing stress with the help of yoga.

Huang, Fu-Jung and et.al (2013) conducted a study on the Effects of hatha yoga on stress in middle-aged women. The study concluded that the regular practice of hatha yoga reduces the stress.

### **Conclusion**

Yoga is an art as well as science for mental and physical wellbeing and it is originated in ancient India. In the modern world, yoga is considered as a medicine and it can be concluded that yoga plays an important role in developing the mental, physical, social and spiritual health of an individual in a socially acceptable manner and it is a best tool to overcome the stress. Therefore, it should be adopted as a lifestyle for promoting holistic health. If the yogic way of life is adopted in its true sense, it helps the individual to deal with stress and promote physical and mental health. The components of yogic way of life are: Ahara (Food), Vihara (Relaxation), Achara (Conduct), Vichara (Thinking) and Vyavahara (Behaviour or actions).

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