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Yoga As A Tool For Personal Transformation

yoga

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is a form of physical exercise originated in India before 5000 years. In India yoga is considered as a holistic practice which include mind, body and spirit. Daily practice of yoga has many health benefits. The profound benefits include increased flexibilty,better metabolism, weight reduction and cardiovascular health. Yoga in Sanskrit takes many meanings such as "connection", "zeal" or "dilegence".This paper discusses how yoga can be used as a tool for personal transformation. This paper mainly discusses the transformational effects of yoga in alleviating stress, acting as source of rejuvenation, as a critical factor in weight loss and promoter of physical and mental well being. The psychological aspects of yoga in transforming character and behavior is also discussed

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a way of life that originated from India. It is characterized by harmony, bliss, health, and balance. One is supposed to reach mental equanimity during yoga exercises. At this state, a person can control his or her responses to both favorable and unfavorable events. Yoga as a science is regarded as a powerful source of knowledge with the ability to assist participants in the achievement of a serene mind, continual spiritual uplift, radiant physical health, as well as harmonious social life. It can transform an individual both physically, emotionally, psychologically as well as socially. This paper is set to analyze the use of yoga as a personal transformation tool.

YOGA FOR WEIGHT LOSS

For body fat to be lost, a deficiency of calories must be created. The ability to burn more calories than the amount that is consumed results into weight loss (Rockefeller, 2015). 3500 calories that are burned during yoga is approximately equal to one pound of fat. To lose body fat, you have to create a deficit of calories (Fowler, 2013). In most cases, yoga classes take approximately 60-90 minutes. According to American Council on Exercise, an individual can burn approximately 3-6 calories every minute when practicing yoga. This translates to about 180 -360 calories burned during yoga class (Waller, 2011). Contrastingly, kettle bell exercises burn approximately 13-17 calories every minute. That means in one hour; the kettle bell exercise burns around 800 calories in an hour (Brooks, 2012). This is significantly lower than the yoga exercises regarding calorie expenditure.

Weight loss depends on the intensity and type of yoga class. Some yoga classes are intensive and very rigorous while others are slow paced and gentle (Nygren, 2013). Vinyasa, power yoga as well as hot yoga are rigorous and are therefore recommended for quick weight loses. Yin yoga, hatha yoga, as well as restorative yoga, are slower and gentle (Norberg, 2013). However, when one uses circuit training in yoga classes, the intensity is not considered. Circuit training is regarded as the most superior method of calorie burn and metabolic boosts in yoga (Hailey, 2011). In addition to the calorie difference, yoga has additional benefits that can assist in body weight reduction. There is an association between regular yoga practice and healthy eating habits. Individuals who regularly practice yoga tend to be mindful of their health more than the non-participants. Yoga is also linked to effective stress management, which may cause stressful eating habits. Managing stress has an equal impact on weight loss (Olpin and Heson, 2012).

YOGA FOR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Every person suffers from anxiety from time to time. Mild or chronic anxiety can seriously affect both emotional as well as the physical well-being of an individual (Orsillo and Roemer, 2011). Anxiety has a potential to drain the body of its energy resources. The body can also be kept in a static state of stress by emotional disturbances. Without exercise, these emotional and physical effects can be magnified (Lanham, Stear, Sheriffs and Collins, 2011). This leads to tension building in the muscles, constriction in breathing as well unrest of the mind. When all these are combined, the body gets tired both physically and emotionally. Regular yoga exercises have the potential to enable an individual to face frustrations, challenges, and fears of everyday life (Paul and Lawrence, 2014).

The daily exercises help in the regulation of breathing and relaxation of the body by a gentle release of tension from muscle groups. Additionally, they also assist in flushing the brain and other body parts with fresh nutrients and blood (Toovey, 2014). This increases the feeling of well-being both physically and emotionally. Yoga can also help in the release of emotional toxicity that is hidden in the body. When the muscles are stretched, they release toxins therefore reducing emotional disturbances (Butera, 2012).

YOGA AS A SOURCE OF REJUVENATION

In Ayurveda, a digestive system is healthy is considered the mainstream of an individual's health. Inefficient digestion is the main cause of all diseases (Kshirsagar and Magno, 2012). Yoga can rejuvenate a person's digestive system thereby relieving them from most diseases. 'Agni', which is the metabolic energy in the digestion process, helps in the elimination of body toxins as well as wastes (Butera, 2012). It also breaks down the food that is needed by the body to produce clear mind and internal warmth. Weaknesses in 'Agni' result into the accumulation of toxins in the body as well as inadequate energy for digestion. The best way to rejuvenate this energy is through the use of yoga exercises. Rhythmic body breathing is synchronized with the yoga exercises to bring about rejuvenation.

Toxic materials in the body are cleansed by proper breathing. This also reduces the bad energy that affects digestion within the body. Agni is also improved by proper breathing leading to proper digestion (Podder, 2011). A functional digestive system is a core to healthy body functioning. Introducing radical changes in an individual's lifestyle may be challenging. However, yoga does not make wholesale changes, but it is rather integrated into a person's lifestyle. Yoga exercises can rejuvenate as well as strengthen the di-

gestive system (Frawley, 2012). It has the potential to restore the body to its optimum condition. This is executed or done in a natural manner without the introduction of chemicals into the body.

YOGA AS A STRESS RELIVER

During episodes of stress, there is a rise in the levels of cortisol hormone. The release of this hormone makes individuals continue worrying thereby increasing stress levels (Sault, 2013). The continued rise in cortisol levels stimulates excessive eating which leads to increase in body weight. It also stimulates the conversion of excess calories to fats. Fats converted due to rise in cortisol are always deposited in the abdominal region. This results in individuals with big bellies, which are linked to insulin resistance. When yoga exercises are used, the level of cortisol goes down thereby reducing stress as well as other disorders such as insulin resistance (Bacall, 2014). The exercises help reduce stress through relaxation which is the opposite of stress. Stress affects the body breathing and mind. All these can be restored through exercise. Yoga builds a balanced, focused, calmed, as well as relaxed individual.

YOGA FOR HAPPINESS

Yoga is regarded as a path to happiness. Being happy involves relaxing and focusing on happiness for a few minutes. Practicing intentional intervention of relaxation reduces one's perception of stress and wound healing (Butera, 2012). While relaxing, an individual can focus on his or her ways to happiness. This would brighten up everything leading to a happy lifestyle. Recalling a happy memory also has the potential to infuse happiness in an individual practicing yoga (Schiffmann, 2013). Many people do not like meditation since they believe it is time-consuming. It also requires clearing of an individual's mind to enjoy the benefits (Carey, 2015).Yoga is a good alternative for those people.Yoga is a route to happiness that needs to be adopted by individuals seeking happy lives. The surge of cortisol during stress also results into unhappiness. When yoga is used, the body relaxes allowing the level of cortisol hormone to drop. This reduces stress and improves happiness (Schiffmann, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The yoga can be life changing and transformational. It is, therefore, important for individuals to adopt these chemical free exercises in the reduction of weight, stress, mental disorders, emotional disturbances, as well as rejuvenation of body systems (Schiffmann, 2013).Yoga is one of them. However, they should be properly used and learned from a good teacher for maximum benefits.

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