

Management of Anxiety conditions : Therapeutic perspective of Yoga



Medical Science

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at understanding manifestation and discusses scientific aspects of anxiety conditions and its management through yoga therapy.

Anxiety is a condition, a response to a physical threat or psychological distress that generates a host of chemical and hormonal reactions in the body. The anxiety reaction generally has two components, one physiological and the other psychological, and both are mediated largely by the adrenergic neurotransmitter system.

Yoga therapy is skillful methodological way to calm down the mind. A general feature of yoga practices is their capability of inducing a coordinated psycho physiological response, which is the antithesis of the anxiety response. Yoga practices are parasympathetic in nature. In anxiety sympathetic activities are increased. Practice of yoga develops the personality physically, mentally, emotionally from a holistic perspective offers a total and comprehensive approach to the challenges posed by anxiety conditions.

Introduction

The current mechanistic world view, the matter based approach the increased dependence on science and technology and associated life style have to under go basic changes towards embracing a more holistic world view and a healthier and more harmonious life style. (Nagendra & Nagaratna, 2003) Yoga is a science to calm the mind and steady the emotions by overcoming anxiety conditions and attaining relaxation.

Fear is a basic human emotion that has been crucial for survival both as an individual and as a species. Anxiety is the normal reaction of an organism to a stressor, which may be external or internal. The anxiety reaction generally has two components, one physiological and the other psychological, and both are mediated largely by the adrenergic neurotransmitter system (Crow, 1998)

Anxiety is a condition, a response to a physical threat or psychological distress that generates a host of chemical and hormonal reactions in the body. The feeling of anxiety is a combination of our perception of events or situations and our body's physiological reaction. In essence, the body prepares to fight or flee, pumping more blood to the heart and muscles and shutting down all non-essential functions. This condition gives rise to more anxiety which manifests in the form of psychosomatic symptoms or anxiety disorders.

People suffer from conditions like examination anxiety, executive anxiety, health anxiety, death anxiety, menopausal anxiety, marital anxiety, snake anxiety, social anxiety, and performance anxiety so on. These anxiety conditions if not treated properly, can cause anxiety disorders such as, generalized anxiety disorders, panic disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, social phobias and also headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, eating disorder, allergies, insomnia, backaches, frequent cold and fatigue to diseases such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes, heart ailments and even cancer.

Yoga therapy and anxiety conditions

Yoga Therapy is a practical discipline incorporating a wide variety of practices whose goal is the development of a state of mental and physical health, well being, inner harmony and ultimately a union of the human individual with the universal. (Arabindo 1999). A general feature of yoga practices is their capability of inducing a coordinated psycho physiological response,

which is the antithesis of the anxiety response. This relaxation response consists of a generalized reduction in both cognitive and somatic arousal as observed in the modified activity of the hypothalamic pituitary axis and the autonomic nervous system. (Benson, 1976) Yoga research study, wrote "physiologically meditation represents deep relaxation of the autonomic nervous system without drowsiness or sleep and a type of cerebral activity without highly accelerated electrophysiological manifestation but probably with more or less insensibility to some outside stimuli for a short or long times". Both short term and long-term practice of yoga techniques are associated with reductions of basal cortisol and catecholamine secretion, a decrease in sympathetic activity, reductions in metabolic rate and oxygen consumption and salutary effects on cognitive activity and cerebral neurophysiology.

All yoga practices are parasympathetic in nature. In anxiety conditions sympathetic activities are increased. Thus practice of yoga balances the functions of autonomic nervous system and endocrine system by reducing and preventing accumulation of anxiety conditions.

Concepts and practicing methods of Yoga therapy for anxiety management

According to Sage Patanjali the term kleshah is cause of afflictions which describes stress and anxiety. In original state mind is anxiety and stress free, blissful and perfect which is called as original state of mind. When this state gets disturbed there is imbalance in subtle level.

Yoga therapy offers a good tool for anxiety management and relaxation. The components of yoga therapy are: Life style, Yogic diet, Asana, Pranayama, Dhyana, Relaxation techniques. These components should be practiced for longer time, continuous and with devotion to overcome anxiety and attain one pointedness of mind.

Practice of life style: Adequate moral foundations are known as yama, also called as self restraints. Practice of disciplines are known as niyama, Practicing Yama and Niyama regularly, mental purity is achieved. The main object is to eliminate completely all mental and emotional disturbances to attain calmness of the mind. When the mind is disturbed by improper thoughts constant pondering over the opposites is the remedy. An undesirable mental habit can be changed only by a mental habit of

an exactly opposite kind, hatred by love, dishonesty by uprightness.

Practice of Diet: Diet according to yoga is explained as Satvika ahara . Yoga advocates to have proper intake of food quantitatively and qualitatively which improves quality of mind and results in calmness of mind by removing worries. Yogic diet do not agitate the mind. They are easy to digest and assist in the production of mental peace. It is much evident that much of the mental anxiety and anger can be eliminated by eating satvika ahara.

Practice of Asana : Asana is steady and comfortable should be practiced with gentle stretching of muscles, easily with proper relaxation of muscles, without efforts, without any tension in joints, without jerky and sudden movements, attention should be always focused on breathing, mind should remain engaged in breathing. As mind remains engaged in breathing one can observe these changes. They are absence of thought process, absence of voluntary efforts, cortical activity is reduced, emotional activity reduced, release in muscular tension, normal muscle tone; tranquilizing effect on the nerves, cardio respiratory centers calmed, more relaxation of body and mind , dominant of parasympathetic nervous system

Practice of pranayama : Practice of Pranayama results in eliminating impurities, also illuminating intelligence. Also mind becomes pure and one is able to attain concentration. If the practice of rhythmic breathing is done with gradual, conscious, and equal prolongation of inhalations and exhalations, then body will experience a sense of deep relaxation. When breathing is regulated thoughts are controlled, when breath is held mind attains stability, and one can observe these changes. They are reduction in respiratory rate, heart rate, blood pressure, induces trance like awareness, inward projection of mind, soothing effect on higher nerve centre, no thought process in the mind, balanced autonomic functions.

Practice of Dhyana: One has to adapt any method of meditation which serves to make the mind steady and one pointed. Practice of repetition of similar objective thoughts in the mind is meditation. When one focuses mind in concentration on an object the mind is transformed into the shape of the object. When mind becomes one with the object, it silences the surface activity of the mind, thereby allowing to look deeper with in. Meditation procedures involve diaphragmatic breathing. As one pointedness of mind is developed one can observe these changes. They are improvement in mental clarity and perception, increase in alpha waves in the brain, lower heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure, reduces metabolism, increases parasympathetic stimulations.

Practice of Relaxation Techniques: The practice of shavasana removes physical exertion and provides mental calmness. Horizontal and relaxed position of the body on the ground facilitates efficient and easy blood circulation. Breathing should be slower, slightly deeper, rhythmic and mostly abdominal in nature as one progresses in relaxation. Diaphragm moves slowly, which has got a soothing effect on the higher brain centers. One realizes the reduction in the number of thoughts entering in to the mind. The whole body loosens, resolves tensions in the nervous system, making more peaceful, and takes one to deeper level of relaxation. One can observe these changes. They are total relaxation to body and mind, hormonal imbalance normalizes, reduces heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, reduces

physical, mental stress and fatigue of all kinds, cures Insomnia, anxiety and phobias, and anxiety related disorders. (Bijalani ,2004), (Shankara Devananda Saraswathi ,1984), (Gore ,1991)

Discussion

Effect of practice of yoga was investigated in various anxious conditions and results found to be positive in these studies.

Students under optimal anxiety do bring out their best, because extremes of anxiety can result in stress induced disorders and deteriorating performance. In a study on medical students conducted to determine the benefit of yogic practices on anxiety status during routine activities and prior to examination. Results indicated the beneficial role of yoga in not only causing reduction in baseline anxiety level but also attenuating the increase in anxiety score in stressful state such as examinations (Malathi & Damodaran, 1999)

Job stress is a major occupational health problem in many sectors of industries. In a study to examine the effects of short duration stress management training on self perceived depression, anxiety and stress in male automotive assembly workers. The findings are indicated that anxiety symptoms were significantly decreased, respectively, after the intervention program in the experimental group as compared to the control group. (Edimansyah et al, 2008)

In a study compared the anxiolytic effects of a yoga and supportive therapy in breast cancer patients undergoing conventional treatment. The results suggest that yoga can be used for managing treatment-related symptoms and anxiety in breast cancer patients. (Rao et al ,2008)

In a study of female subjects, the findings suggest that patients with menstrual irregularities having psychological anxiety problems improved significantly in the areas of their wellbeing, anxiety and depression by learning and applying a program based on Yogic intervention.(Rani, 2011). In a study participants reported a decrease in menopausal distress symptoms and an increase in quality of life following the yoga program. (Mastrangelo, at al , 2007)

(Pedrode ,1987) conducted a study on role of yoga therapy in anxiety neurosis and depression, patients of anxiety neurosis and depression opted for yoga therapy along with routine medical treatment and at the end of one year patients showed very good improvement, yoga therapy was very useful for anxiety states.

These results suggest that yoga therapy can be used for the management of anxiety related symptoms and anxious conditions.

Conclusion

Sage Patanjali explains practice of life style for the prevention of anxiety conditions. The mind becomes purified by cultivating attitudes of friendliness, compassion, gladness and indifference respectively towards happiness, misery, virtue and vice. (Hari-harananda ,1981)

Yoga is the process of elevating one self through the process of calming the mind .Thus the practice of Yoga develops the personality physically, mentally, emotionally from a holistic perspective offers a total and comprehensive approach to the challenges posed by stress and anxiety conditions, anxiety disorders.

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