

# STRESS MANAGEMENT THROUGH YOGA

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Published by :

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# **STRESS MANAGEMENT THROUGH YOGA**

**Ponmani Avinashilingam**

## **WHAT IS STRESS?**

Stress is a reflex. It is a reaction to a demanding situation. Our system is designed to cope up with a demanding situation for a limited time only. After that there should be relaxation. After rest and restitution our body will again be ready to face a demanding situation.

Unfortunately, in modern life, the demanding situation is continuous. There is no time to relax and rejuvenate. This leads to stress.

Financial tensions, emotional upheavals, environmental pollution, speed of events have all increased the stress in daily life.

Stress is an unavoidable consequence of life. The only stress-less state is death.

Stress is perceived to be a state of disturbed harmony caused by a stressor. The disturbance caused by the stressor is generally unpleasant or painful. This is known as distress.

Sometimes however it is pleasant or exciting. This is known as eustress. Examples are winning a lottery prize, going on a date, securing unexpected first class in the examination, etc.

Distress is not always condemnable. Sometimes it is advantageous and socially desirable. For instance, competition and rivalry in studies or sports motivate the individual to excel. Stress among industrial workers is necessary for production. This is true only up to a point. Stress beyond that point becomes counter productive.

The impact of given a stressor is not the same on all individuals. It varies from overwhelming to moderate to mild to insignificant. This variability is due to the differences in the heredity, age, physiological parameters, attitude, skill, emotional make up, financial status, child-hood experiences, cultural conditioning and extent of family and social support for the individuals.

## **TYPES OF STRESS:**

1. **EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL STRESS:** Stressors are frequently external. But sometimes internal. An animal bite or a heavy down-pour are examples of external stressors. Tooth-ache and guilt associated with lying or stealing are examples of internal stressors.
2. **PHYSICAL AND NON PHYSICAL STRESS:** Some physical stressors are unbearable sound, constant ringing of phone and uncomfortable weather. Non-physical stressors are fear of not doing well in the examination or of losing in a match or high debts, etc.
3. **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS:** This is the intense stress that the survivors exhibit after a natural calamity like earth-quake, floods, etc.
4. **BACK-GROUND STRESS:** This is the stress associated with factors like the social progress, industrialisation and technological advancement. Man is subject to them, whether he knows it or not. For the present generation, it is many times more than for the previous generations.
5. **IMAGINATIVE STRESS:** Imaginative stress occurs while visualising future misfortunes.
6. **VICARIOUS STRESS:** Vicarious stress is the stress one experiences with a person actually undergoing stress.

## **CAUSES OF STRESS**

1. Personal stress arises when an individual tries to do too much in too little time without help from others.
2. Family or domestic stress arises due to enforcement of likes and dislikes by the parents on their grown up children, or by the spouses or family members on one another.
3. Traffic stress arises due to traffic moving at snail's pace and stopping frequently at traffic signals.

4. Educational stress arises due to inability to comprehend/ cope with a demanding curriculum/ high expectation of Parents/ Teachers
5. Job/ Occupational stress arises due to high targets or over ambition.

### **CAUSES OF EDUCATIONAL STRESS**

1. Studying for long hours
2. Carrying heavy loads of books
3. Pressure of doing unending home-work
4. Not able to understand the subject
5. Working long hours at the office or outstation duty, preventing attendance at tuition or coaching class
6. Anxiety about examination result
7. Failure in an examination

### **CAUSES OF JOB/ OCCUPATIONAL STRESS**

1. Work overload
2. Work under tight deadlines
3. Routine, monotonous work
4. Unpleasant physical conditions at place of work like inadequate light, excessive heat, noise, etc.
5. Job insecurity
6. Inadequate salary and perquisites
7. Lack of interaction among co-workers
8. Uncomfortable outdoor work or outstation duty
9. Denial of adequate leave

## **EFFECT OF STRESS- POSITIVE STRESS**

Positive stress triggers the motivation to create and achieve. It can be productive and creative.

Whenever a person is subjected to stress, his entire physiology tries to help him by making the required adjustments. The person is made fit to fight or fly away from a frightening situation.

## **EFFECT OF STRESS- NEGATIVE STRESS**

Negative Stress leads to the inability to adjust to illness or feelings of uncertainty.

There are many bad effects on the emotional and physical health.

## **WHAT HAPPENS DURING STRESS**

Normal requirement of the brain is 20% of the blood in circulation. Under stress brain needs extra blood which it takes from the stomach and the spine muscles.

Thus stomach and spine get less blood resulting in certain disorders.

- Stomach – Acidity/ Ulcer
- Spine – Spondylitis
- Blood – High sugar/Pressure
- Heart – Rate fluctuates/diseases

Unfortunately migraine, headache, asthma, psychic problems nervous break down, etc occur.

**It is said that the root cause of 80% of illness is the mind.**

## **EFFECT OF STRESS ON EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

1. Fits of rage
2. Unreasonable fears, worries, anxieties, nervousness
3. Irritability
4. Dizziness, giddiness
5. Lack of adequate sleep
6. Lack of concentration
7. Depression

## **EFFECT OF STRESS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH**

1. Tiredness
2. Headache
3. Muscle pain
4. Loss of appetite
5. High blood pressure
6. Breathing problem
7. Peptic ulcer
8. Diabetes
9. Allergy
10. Inflammation of joints

## **SOLUTION TO STRESS:**

**Living is to relate to the world.** When one interacts with the world, stress is to be expected. To live a stress free life, one has to learn to live in harmony. Also one should have enough space within to protect oneself from others' disturbing action and behaviour.

**The main solution is to keep the external world external.** If one can keep the external things external, then one can relate to them, respond to them objectively.

## TEN WAYS TO BEAT STRESS

1. Acknowledgement of stress: Recognise the presence of stress in your life. This is the first step towards prevention.
2. Minor change in life style: Analyse your life style pattern and make small changes in your work situation or family situation or your routine.
3. Effective Time Management: Do important work first. Prioritise the rest of the work.
4. Proper diet: Take balanced diet containing fruits, vegetables, whole grains and food containing high proteins and low fat. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, sugar and fat items.
5. Rest: Get enough rest and sleep to recharge your batteries
6. Self renewal: Make time for self rejuvenation, sports, dance, music, painting, hobby or vacation.
7. Cordial relationships: Maintain good relationships with office colleagues, other students and family members.
8. Fun and Laughing: Make your surroundings fun. Find little things that make you smile and keep them around your home and office. Have some laugh and be with people you enjoy.
9. Exercise every day: Go for brisk walk daily and do Yoga asanas and pranayama daily.
10. Use relaxation techniques: Yoga asanas, pranayama and dhyanam are recommended techniques.

**PROFESSIONAL HELP:** If stress becomes a chronic pattern, one should consult a Doctor or Mental Health Professional.

## WHAT IS YOGA

The word yoga originates from Sanskrit. Yuj is the root word. The word yuj means to join or to merge or to integrate. It is joining the individual self with the universal self.

The basis of yoga is the search for happiness. We search for happiness outside without knowing that happiness is inside us.

Yoga is a conscious process of gaining mastery over the mind.

Yoga is becoming popular in all parts of the world.

Sri Aurobindo emphasised an all round personality development at the physical , mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels.

Yoga makes the body strong and flexible. Yoga calms down the mind and relaxes the mind.

Yoga improves the respiratory, circulatory, digestive and hormonal systems.

Yoga brings emotional stability and clarity of mind.

At what ever level one practices yoga, for that level the benefits are manifold for the efforts put forth.

Yoga helps one to control the mind without being victimised by the evil and wicked thoughts and desires.

We should balance our body and mind with will power. Yoga practise is not merely to give vitality and beauty. The body is a temple. So it has to be kept clean untouched by diseases with the help of yoga.

Age and physical strength never hinder the path of yoga. It has to be practised in accordance to one's age and strength. It could be practised anywhere by anyone.

Here for mental purity pranayama has been brought into focus. Meditation plays a greater role in keeping the mind calm and relaxed.

Almost every yoga technique has spinal cord as its base. The reason is that the functioning of the spinal cord acts as an instrument in controlling all parts of the body. As we are continuously engaged in one or more activities in our routine life, as all nerves are directly in touch with spinal cord, it is stressed and gets worn out soon. We understand how significant is our spinal cord.

Science says a man's mental and physical health is determined by his spinal cord and his proper functioning of excretory glands.

Each and every asana is directed in such a way that spinal cord and excretory glands get kindled, increasing the power of immunity to fight diseases.

Endocrine glands are remarkable for enriching the intellectual power as well as personality development. The glands work like centralised ministry.



## HOW ARE ENDOCRINE GLANDS AND CHAKRAS CONNECTED?

ENDOCRINE GLANDS	YOGA CHAKRAS
Pineal gland	Agna charka
Pituitary gland	Crown charka
Thyroid and para thyroids	Throat charka
Thymus gland	Heart charka
Adrenal gland	Sacral charka
Pancreas gland	Solar plexus
Gonad gland	Base chakra

## WHY SHOULD YOGA BE PRACTISED?

Mere knowledge of yogic exercises is not sufficient. It should be put into regular practice.

When body and mind function properly one could achieve his target quickly and dedicatedly compared to others.

Yogasana is essential for life as that of food, water, sleep, rest, dress, work, good habit, etc.

A yoga therapy centre has to be established in every nook and corner of the country. Only then patients would seek yoga therapist. Even western countries recognise yoga is for healthy life.

## BENEFITS OF YOGA:

1. Wavering mind gets calmed down
2. Body weight decreases
3. Lengthens life
4. Improves immunity power of the body
5. Anger, jealousy and negative emotions can be controlled
6. It sharpens thinking power
7. It reduces fatigue

8. It purifies blood
9. Blood circulation gets regulated
10. Overall health improves

## **WHAT IS KARMA YOGA?**

We offer flower, tulasi leaf, etc with devotion to Iswara. Like that we can offer all our activities as offering to Iswara. What ever we receive from the altar of the temple like vibuthi, kumkum, laddu, etc we gracefully accept as prasada from Iswara. Like that what-ever karma phala we get for all our actions, we can gracefully accept as prasada from Iswara. This attitude is called karma yoga in Bhagawad Gita.

## **ASTANGA YOGA OR 8 STEPS IN YOGA**

Patanjali deals with the entire span of life by beginning with a code of conduct and ending with the ultimate goal.

The 8 steps are:

1. Yama
2. Niyama
3. Asana
4. Prnayama
5. Pratyahara
6. Dharana
7. Dhyana and
8. Samadhi

Each step must be understood and followed to attain the ultimate goal of Astanga yoga.

**YAMA:** General ethical principles. Yama has 5 principles. These are

1. Ahimsa or non violence
2. Satya or truthfulness
3. Asteya or free from stealing
4. Brahmacharya or chastity
5. Aparigraha or freedom from too much possession

**NIYAMA:** Self restraint. Code of conduct that prescribe morality and behaviour. Niyama is the positive current that brings discipline.

1. Saucha or cleanliness

2. Santosha or contentment
3. Tapas or Austerity
4. Swadyaya or study of one's one veda
5. Iswara Pranidana or devotion to God

**ASANA:** Yogic poses. When practising an asana, one must focus attention on the inner body. Drawing the mind inward to sharpen the intelligence. In the practice of asanas, the body, mind and soul unite.

**PRANAYAMA:** Breath control practices. Prana is vital energy. Pranayama is the actual process of directing energy inward making the mind fit for pratyahara.

**PRATYAHARA:** Detachment from the external world. It is freeing from the senses.

**DHARANA:** Concentration or attention on a single thought.

**DHYANA:** Prolonged concentration

**SAMADHI:** Oneness with Iswara

### ***YOGA IS A MIRACLE CURE.***

*In our body there are 5 layers. Doctors treat only the first external layer. Yoga can treat all the five layers. The five layers are annamaya kosa, pranamaya kosa, manomaya kosa, vigyanamaya kosa and anandamaya kosa.*

Yoga helps to reduce stress significantly.

The practice of

*Yoga Asanas*

*Pranayama and*

*Dhyanam*

help to minimise stress

Let us analyse them one by one

## **YOGA ASANAS**

Yoga asanas cover the basic positions of standing, sitting, forward bends, twists, inversions, back bends and lying down.

Yoga asanas appear to deal with the physical body alone. At the gross level, it is true that it is an exemplary physical exercise. But at the subtle level, it the best exercise to relax the nerves and calm the mind.

A few asanas which specifically reduce stress are:

1. Tadasana
2. Ardha Kati Cakrasana
3. Vajrasana
4. Sasankasana
5. Ustrasana
6. Savasana or Shanti Asana

## **PRANAYAMA**

Our yoga sastra has given wonderful breathing exercises called Pranayama. These exercises unite the breath with the mind. There is total absorption during inhalation, exhalation and breath retention. Through out the practice, we should concentrate on the breathing only.

Two pranyama practices, specifically for reduction of stress.

1. KAPALAPATHI and
2. NADI SUDDHI

## **DHYANAM**

Dhyanam or meditation is repeated thinking about a pre determined object . When ever the mind moves away, it should be brought back again to think about the pre determined object. This is a wonderful spiritual practice to relax the mind and reduce stress.

There are many types of meditation. Let us see two practices which are very helpful to reduce stress.

**DHYANAM ON A NATURAL SCENE:** We can begin the day with this practice. Visualise range of mountains, blue sky, ocean and like things for which I have no demand. I am in harmony with them as they are. I have no agenda for the range of mountains, sky and ocean. With reference to people in general, I am a non demanding person. The truth is that nobody can change another person. When I am a non demanding person with respect to nature, I am not stressed. Like that if I am a non demanding person with respect to members in my office and family, I will not be stressed.

**DHYANAM ON BREATH:** This is called prana viksanam. Close your eyes. Watch the inhalation. Watch the exhalation. If your mind moves away gently bring it back. Watch the inhalation. Watch the exhalation. Open your eyes. Relax.

## **LOW STRESS LIFE STYLE**

1. Negotiates low stress relationships of mutual respect
2. Selects friends carefully and establishes relationship that are nourishing
3. Maintains a well balanced work load
4. Maintains high level of physical fitness, eats well
5. Life activities are balanced and varied
6. Engages in social activities, recreation and cultural activities
7. Enjoys life as a whole; can laugh at himself; has a sense of humour
8. Acts assertively to re-engineer pressure situations whenever possible; renegotiates impossible dealings;
9. Avoids placing himself in unnecessary pressure situations; manages time effectively.

**WISH YOU A HAPPY STRESS FREE LIFE.**

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