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YOGA

Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice, it is a combination of breathing exercises, physical postures, and meditation, practiced for over 5,000 years. A thousand years before the birth of Christ and for five subsequent centuries. Khalsa, Cohen, McCall and Telles (2016) described yoga as a meditative discipline and a way of gaining insight into the nature of the mind and reality. Yoga is ultimately freedom or liberation, and its benefit is much more than simply good health. According to the researchers, yoga is the undoing of the harm people do to their bodies as a result of modern living. They states that “we often hold the body or posture the body based on past experiences. Yoga is a tool that can deepen and benefit anyone, of any religion. It does not conflict with personal beliefs; it is simply a vehicle to help one transform oneself by promoting conscious connection with oneself, the world, and the highest truth. There are many traditional paths of yoga, including tantra, mantra, kundalini, bhakti, jnana, karma, raja yoga, and others, all of which have their own techniques to awaken these connections.



According to the classic text of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, “yoga” is the complete “inhibition of the modifications of the mind” or quieting of the constant chatter in one’s mind so that our True Selves can manifest, rest in our own true nature and be free of suffering. Disease, as described in the sutras, is said to be an impediment to spiritual practice, growth and freedom from suffering. Traditional yogic practices include breath control and techniques (pranayama), meditation (including mindfulness), the adoption of specific bodily postures (asanas) and self-reflection (scriptural or self-study) (Posadzki, and Parekh, 2018). As a mindfulness practice, yoga requires one to be fully aware in the present moment. This practice helps to diffuse anxiety (which largely

concerns the future), and sadness (which largely concerns the past). All the yogic practices use present moment, non-judgmental awareness as the foundation. Of course, such presence benefits the healthcare provider as much as the patient: if one can learn to pay attention to oneself, one can really pay attention to one's patients.

Yoga Principles

As all beings evolve, so has the practice of Yoga. In recent times, Yoga has grown to encompass newer principles that form the base of its practices. These four basic principles underline the holistic approach of Yoga in modern times.



1st principle: Human body is a holistic entity comprised of various interrelated dimensions inseparable from one another and the health or illness of any one dimension affects the other dimensions.

2nd Principle: Individuals and their needs are unique and therefore must be approached in a way that acknowledges this individuality and their practice must be tailored accordingly.

3rd Principle: Self-empowering; the student is his or her own healer. Yoga engages the student in the healing process; by playing an active role in their journey toward health, the healing comes from within, instead of from an outside source and a greater sense of autonomy is achieved.

4th Principle: The quality and state of an individual's mind is crucial to healing. When the individual has a positive mind-state healing happens more quickly, whereas if the mind-state is negative, healing may be prolonged.

Along with being a way of life, it is also considered a practical science with five principles forming its core:

Asanas/ Beneficial exercise: This is the first principle of yoga philosophy; it talks about the proper asanas and the importance of asanas. This principle says that proper exercise is the need of your body. The proper asanas of yoga not only help strengthen your body and make it flexible, but they are also helpful to influence the positive energy in your mind and soul.

Pranayama/ Correct breathing: The Pranayama is all about breathing properly. Yoga places great importance on the breath as it is considered to be a bridge between the mind and physical body. Breathing correctly in yoga requires you to breathe fully and rhythmically, actively employing your entire lung capacity in order to maximise your intake of oxygen.

Sava Sana/ Complete relaxation: Sava Sana means taking rest, or relaxing your body, mind, and soul. This principle of Yoga philosophy dictates how you should relax your body, mind, and soul and how this relaxation is important to influence the positivity and suppressing the negativity inside you. Yoga defines a state of true relaxation as existing when the body consumes the minimum amount of energy required to exist.

Balanced diet: This fourth principle is about your diet. According to the yoga philosophy, you cannot get any benefits of yoga, if you do not eat what is healthy, green, and vegetarian. The yogic approach to food and diet has much in common with modern ideas about healthy eating. The general rules are to eat in moderation only when hungry, taking time to chew food properly, eating at set times each day, minimising fluid intake at meals, and generally having a positive attitude to food and its preparation.

Positive thinking and meditation: Yoga places great importance on positive thinking for sustaining mental wellbeing. Yoga uses meditation and relaxation techniques to consciously clear

the mind of negative thoughts and emotions, and employs positive affirmations to bolster self-esteem. Having put your negative thinking and emotions to one side, you will be able to see your strengths and weaknesses more realistically.

Yoga and other traditional treatments

Yoga has proved to be an important adjunct to the physiotherapeutic practices practiced world over for a variety of conditions. The ideal medical yoga prescription includes the yogic practices of breathing techniques, bodily postures, meditation techniques and self-reflection; a healthy, nourishing diet; reducing substances such as caffeine, tobacco, drugs and alcohol; healthy sleep hygiene and appropriate support, which may include family, spouse, children, friends and/or support groups, with or without psychotherapy. Also, Yoga is an adjunctive therapy which promotes and maintains wellness offering an excellent mind-body connection. It has been suggested that it has diverse clinical and non-clinical applications.



Theoretical underpinning

One particular psychological theory, the Attentional Behavioral Cognitive Relaxation Theory, was developed by Jonathan C. Smith at the Roosevelt University Stress Institute. This theory postulates that relaxation is a cycle of self-renewal. During this cycle, the body heals and strengthens itself from the pressures of the day. To assist in the healing, practitioners use the relaxation techniques of “sustaining passive, simple focus”. The theory suggests that relaxation techniques that appear somatically similar may actually differ psychologically (Clark, and Dirkx, 2000).

Yoga and its effectiveness

Yoga has convincingly been found as an effective practice. A survey released in May 2018 by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine focused on who used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). According to this survey, Yoga was the 5th most commonly used CAM therapy (2.8%) in the United States during 2018. Yoga is considered a mind-body intervention that is used to reduce the health effects of generalized stress. Yoga is believed to calm the nervous system and balance the body, mind, and spirit. It is thought by its practitioners to prevent specific diseases and maladies by keeping the energy meridians open and life energy (Prana) flowing.



Also, a 2017 study evaluated whether school based yoga practice could help children experiencing anxiety. Practicing yoga at the beginning of the school day for 8 weeks improved their well-being and emotional health compared with the control group. A 2017 analysis linked yoga practice with lower back pain relief and an improvement in back-related function. Military veterans and active duty military personnel often experience higher rates of chronic pain than the general population, especially in the lower back. One study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* showed that a 12 week yoga program improved scores for disability and pain intensity and reduced opioid use among military veterans (Gard, Noggle, Park, Vago and Wilson, 2018).

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