



## **Yoga's Positive Benefits on Mental Health**

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### **ABSTRACT**

According to the World Health Organization one in four people around the world will suffer from mental disorders at some point in their lives. Stressful life situations, experiencing traumatic events and the use of illegal drugs are regarded as important risk factors for mental illness. In the last few decades, increasing scientific evidence indicates that yoga can be useful in managing mental health disorders. Yoga has been shown to be beneficial in managing stress, depression, anxiety and reducing symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The benefits of yoga provide both instant gratification and lasting transformation. Yoga can change your physical and mental capacity quickly, while preparing the mind and body for long-term health. Yoga's added benefit is that it improves physical fitness and encourages self-reliance. Yoga helps to improve the mental health of both the young and senior people by reducing stress. Yoga can be wisely applied in welfare programs to improve the Quality of Life in all age groups (Gururaja, et al. 2011). Yoga increases body awareness, relieves stress, reduces muscle tension, strain, and inflammation, sharpens attention and concentration, and calms and centres the nervous system. Yoga's positive benefits on mental health have made it an important practice tool of psychotherapy. It has been shown to enhance social well being through a sense of belonging to others, improve the symptoms of depression, attention deficit and hyperactivity, and sleep disorders. Also, yoga can improve symptoms of schizophrenia when it is done alongside drug therapy.

**Keywords : Stress, Mental Health, Yoga, Depression.**

**Introduction**

According to the World Health Organization one in four people around the world will suffer from mental disorders at some point in their lives. Stressful life situations, experiencing traumatic events and the use of illegal drugs are regarded as important risk factors for mental illness. In the last few decades, increasing scientific evidence indicates that yoga can be useful in managing mental health disorders.

Yoga has been shown to be beneficial in managing stress, anxiety and reducing symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The origins of yoga are shrouded in the mists of time. The ancient wisdom known as "the supreme science of life" is believed to have been revealed to the great sages of India several thousand years ago. Yoga is an ancient system of physical and mental practices that originated during the Indus Valley civilization in South Asia.

The fundamental purpose of yoga is to foster harmony in the body, mind, and environment. The first written records of the practice of yoga appeared around 200 BC in *Yogasutra* of Patanjali. The system consisted of the eightfold path or *Asthangayoga*.

In the West, several schools of yoga are popular and use some or all limbs of *Asthangayoga* described by Patanjali. The eight limbs are as follows:

1. *Yama*: Rules for successful living in society.
2. *Niyama*: Techniques for managing and purifying self.
3. *Asana*: Posture techniques for physical and mental balance (what most people think of as yoga).
4. *Pranayama*: Breathing techniques for physical and mental balance.
5. *Pratihara*: Techniques for detaching the mind from the senses for mental balance and calm.
6. *Dharana*: Concentration techniques for mental balance and calm.
7. *Dhyana*: Meditation techniques for mental balance and calm.
8. *Samadhi*: Ultimate advanced meditation techniques and psychic procedures attained after regular practice for universal consciousness.

**Yoga encourages overall health and wellness**

Yoga is not just about working out; it is about a healthy lifestyle. Peace and tranquility achieved through focused training appeals to everyone. Yoga's deep breathing and meditation practices help foster an inner shift from to-do lists, kids and spouse's needs, financial concerns, and relationship struggles to something a little bit bigger than the issues you face. Yoga helps relieve stress and declutters the mind, helping you to become more focused. Yoga increases body awareness, relieves stress, reduces muscle tension, strain, and inflammation, sharpens attention and concentration, and calms and centers the nervous system.

Yoga's positive benefits on mental health have made it an important practice tool of psychotherapy (American Psychological Association, 2009). It has been shown to enhance social well being through a sense of belonging to others, improve the symptoms of depression, attention deficit and hyperactivity, and sleep disorders. In addition, yoga can improve symptoms of schizophrenia when it is done alongside drug therapy (Yoga and Mental Health, Huffington Post 2013).

One of the best benefits of yoga is how it helps a person manage stress, which is known to have devastating effects on the body and mind. "Stress can reveal itself in many ways, including back or neck pain, sleeping problems, headaches, drug abuse, and an inability to concentrate,"(Nevins, 2019). Nevins states "Yoga can be very effective in developing coping skills and reaching a more positive outlook on life." Yoga's incorporation of meditation and breathing can help improve a person's mental well-being. "Regular yoga practice creates mental clarity and calmness; increases body awareness; relieves chronic stress patterns; relaxes the mind; centers attention; and sharpens concentration," says Dr. Nevins. "Body- and self-awareness are particularly beneficial because they can help with early detection of physical problems and allow for early preventive action." (Nevins, 2019).

In the 2012 National Health Interview Survey reported that around 94% Trusted Source of people who practice yoga in the U.S. do so for wellness reasons. Respondents said that yoga benefits their health by:

- Encouraging them to exercise more.
- Inspiring them to eat more healthfully.
- Improving their sleep quality.
- Reducing their stress levels.
- Motivating them to reduce alcohol use and smoking.

Yoga can be wisely applied in welfare programs to improve the Quality of Life in all age groups (Gururaja, D. et al. 2011). Yoga emphasizes the importance of regular meditation because of the way that it helps a person to keep their thoughts positive. Any time that a negative thought comes through during meditation, it is gently pushed away by refocusing on breathing and relaxation of the body. This is very important to maintaining emotional health, since many cases of stress, anxiety, and depression are caused by the inability to see all of the good things in life. Therefore, by learning to guide one's thoughts back to the present moment, these negative feelings will subside.

It is concluded that yoga is a safe way to increase physical activity and health benefits. Yoga is a popular exercise that focuses on breathing, strength, and flexibility. Practicing yoga provides mental health benefits. Yoga helps to improve the mental health of both the young and senior people by reducing stress.

According to scientific research, yoga may:

1. Reduce stress
2. Relieve anxiety
3. Help manage depression
4. Decrease lower back pain
5. Improve quality of life in those with chronic conditions or acute illnesses
6. Stimulate brain function
7. Help prevent heart disease

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