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A Stress Management Approach: An Insight into Yoga

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Abstract: ***Stress, a global public health problem, is a widely prevalent phenomenon in modern society and may account for deprived quality of life, lower mental health, reduced work efficiency, greater suffering and increased physical problems. In an age of a highly dynamic and competitive world, man is exposed to all kinds of stresses that can affect him in all realms of life. To manage or reduce stress, several popular approaches are there and Yoga is one such approach which now a days is considered to be the best and most effective method/technique to reduce stress levels in the people of all age groups. Yoga brings together physical and mental disciplines that may help one achieve peacefulness of body and mind. It can help one relax and manage stress and anxiety. This paper attempts to highlight the psychological health benefits of yoga and also intends to analyse the various poses, postures included in yoga exercises that are helpful in managing different levels of stress in the people of all age groups.***

Keywords: Stress, Yoga, Psychological distress;

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is defined as a state of mental or emotional strain caused by adverse circumstances. Circumstances may be external or internal. External circumstances may include work or school problems, relationship difficulties, financial problems, children and family; and internal causes may include pessimism, inability to accept uncertainty, rigid thinking and unrealistic expectations (perfectionism). These circumstances leading to stress eventually exacerbates certain psychological and health problems viz depression and anxiety, sleep problems, autoimmune diseases, heart diseases, digestive problems, weight problems, reproductive issues, thinking and memory problems, inability to concentrate and constant worrying.

In today's fast-paced world, stress is common, but mind and body have to pay a high price. Hence this stress needs to be managed in time and stress management is not an easy process. It is, in fact, a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning though life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle. The present paper, however, does not deal with clinical psychotherapies involved in stress-reduction. It intends to highlight the most popular and now-a-days considered to be one of the most effective approaches for stress management, and that approach is 'Yoga'. Yoga, which derives its name from the term 'yoke' (to bring together), – does just that, bringing together mind, body and soul.

Yoga exercises provide number of ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall well-being. Yoga helps us to ignite our parasympathetic nervous system, a system which relaxes and calms the body and mind. It has many styles, forms and intensities. Hatha yoga, in particular may be a good choice for stress management. Hatha is one of the most common styles of yoga and beginners may like its slower pace and easier movements. The practice of Hatha yoga involves forming various body postures, slow stretching movements, breathing exercises leading to progressive relaxation; and also meditation. All these specific techniques are meant for a specific purpose and they culminate into a higher awareness of what is happening to oneself during stress – emotionally, physically, mentally and energetically.

1) The core components of Hatha yoga are
a) Poses [which range from simple to difficult poses];
b) Breathing [controlled breathing];
c) Meditation and relaxation [helps you learn to be more mindful and focused.

2) Types of poses for stress-reduction
a) Child Pose (Balasana): It helps in calming the mind and rejuvenating the body with energy.
b) Standing Forward Bend Pose (Uttanasana): It is an ideal yoga pose for relieving stress, depression symptoms and fatigue.
c) Down Dog (Adho Mukha Savasana): it is a stress-relieving pose that helps in waking up the senses and reduces fatigue and tiredness.
d) Extended Triangle pose (Utthita Trikonasana): it is an ideal pose to reduce stress and helps in full body stretching.

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e) Eagle Pose (Garudasana): It reduces stress and increases concentration.
f) Corpse Pose (Savasana): It is an ultimate yoga pose for stress relief. No yoga session is complete without the Corpse Pose.
g) Bridge Pose: It reduces anxiety, insomnia, stress and headaches.
h) Cat Pose
i) Cow Pose (Bitilasana)
j) Eagle Pose (Garudasana)
k) Legs up the Wall Pose
l) Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana)
m) Plow Pose (Halasana)
n) Head to Knee Forward Bend Pose

II. BREATHING EXERCISES FOR STRESS REDUCTION

Concentration on your breath is the key to yoga for stress management, as it helps one let go of external thoughts and anxiety. Following are the various kinds of breathing exercises that have uncountable benefits on the people of all age groups:

A. Pursed Lip Breathing
B. Diaphragmatic Breathing
C. Lion's Breath
D. Alternate Nostril Breathing
E. Equal Breathing
F. Resonant Breathing
G. Sitali Breath
H. Deep Breathing
I. Humming Bee Breath

These breathing exercises offer an extremely simple and effective way to relieve stress and reverse one's stress response, reducing negative effects of chronic stress.

III. MEDITATION (RELAXATION)

One of the essential things expected during stress management is the ease of mind. Yoga, with meditation, balances the alpha waves that are needed to relax one's mind. Yoga provides a unique way of managing stress through Pranayama (a birthing technique). In this technique an individual do slow and steady breathing, that is, inhaling through one nostril and exhaling through the other. Besides, there are fast breathing movements like intake of air through nostrils and exhaling through mouth at fast pace. This way air is passed properly through blood capillaries and the person feels himself/herself in light mode, that is, he/she feels there is no burden on his/her mind and soul. Meditation gives an individual the freshness of the present and makes him forget the bad moments of the past. It is the best stress buster. A twenty-minute mindful meditation releases all the stress up to that minute. When one meditates one may clear the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to stress.

The emotional benefits of meditation are:

1) Provides a new perspective on stressful situation.
2) Builds skills to manage stress
3) Increases self-awareness
4) Helps one to focus on the present
5) Reduces negative emotions
6) Increases imagination and creativity
7) Increases patience and tolerance

IV. CONCLUSION

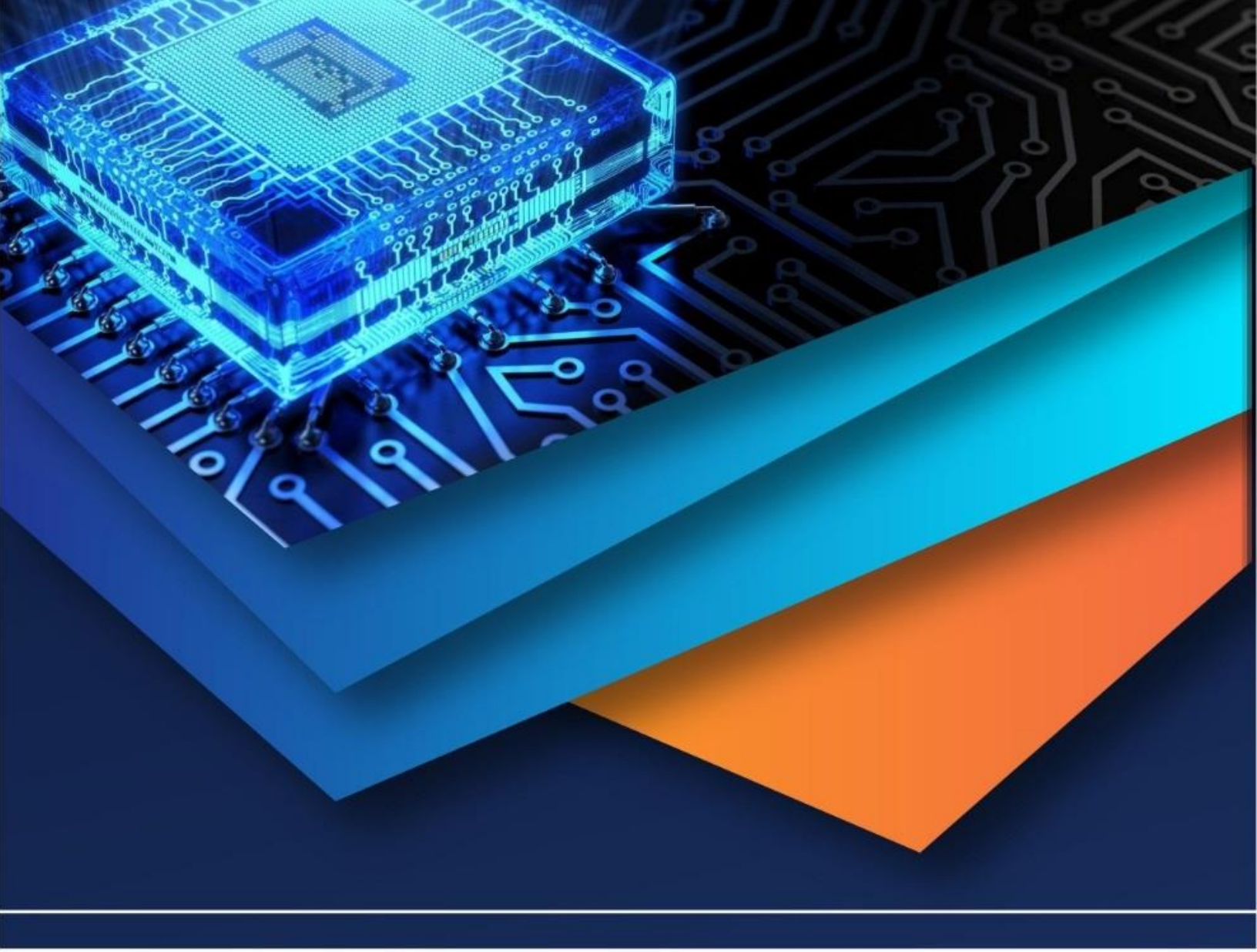
Yoga entails an effective approach for the management of stress. Although predominantly employed in ancient India to induce stamina, its capacity to reduce stress in individuals makes it find applications in therapeutic interventions in medical settings to treat ailments associated with stress, and reduce risk factors for ailments whose symptoms are marked by anxiety and aches, which are also indicators of stress. Hence I suggest all the people to practice yoga to attain the related benefits as espoused in the paper.

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