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Article Received on 05/07/2023

Article Revised on 25/07/2023

Article Accepted on 15/08/2023

ABSTRACT

Stress is defined as the emotional and physical strain caused by a person responses to pressure from the outside world. It occurs when there is a mismatch between what the people aspire to do, what they are capable to doing. Sometime stress can damage the immune system and it also seems to affect headache and irritable bowel syndrome. Sometimes stress act as a positive force and sometimes as a negative force. If anyone exposes to stress over a period of time, it affects him or her badly. Worldwide About 450-500 million people were suffering from stress and psychological problems like anxiety, depression, insomnia and stress related medical illnesses. Although in small quantities, stress is good, it can motivate us and help us become more productive. However, too much stress, or a strong response to stress can be harmful. Yoga and Ayurveda educate people to take care of own welfare and make changes in their life style to improve health by developing personal awareness. The uses of herbs, physical postures (Yogasana) and meditation are intrinsic parts of this process. This abstract shows how we can manage stress through Yoga and Ayurveda.

KEYWORDS: Stress, psychological Problems, Ayurveda & yoga.**INTRODUCTION**

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress has become significant due to dynamic social factor and changing needs of life style. Stress is a fairly universal element of the modern human experience, and while some stress is appropriate, even productive, we now know that too much stress can be quite harmful, and can compromise our health physically, mentally, and emotionally. Ayurveda offers a beautiful perspective on stress management, but in order to better understand it, we will first explore the potential consequences of excess stress and establish a contextual understanding of the human stress response. When we are suffering excess stress, many systems in the body can be negatively affected: the digestive system and metabolic function (including imbalances in body weight), the cardiovascular system, the musculoskeletal system, the nervous system, the reproductive system, and the immune system. Excess stress can also impact our mental and emotional states, our relationships, as well as the health of our bones (and related tissues such as the teeth, hair, and nails). Stress tends to wear us down on a systemic level, so even though it is a contributing factor in a countless variety of ailments, its influence is easily overlooked. The bottom line is that, if we know that we're stressed (even

occasionally), there is a good chance that making some supportive adjustments could benefit immensely. A substantial number of Indian suffer from common mental disorder (CMD) which are characterized by symptoms such as fatigue, forgetfulness, insomnia, irritability, headache & psychosomatic complaints. Although in small quantities, stress is good, it can motivate and help us become more productive. However, too much stress, or a strong response to stress can be harmful.

Causes of stress - A lot of things can cause stress. We may feel stress when we go on a job interview, take a test, or run a race. These kinds of short-term stress are normal. Long-term (chronic) stress is caused by stressful situations or events that last over a long period of time, like problems at work or conflicts in our family. Over time, chronic stress can lead to severe health problems. The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion.

Of course, not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be internal or self-generated, when you

worry excessively about something that may or may not happen, or have irrational, pessimistic thoughts about life.

Finally, what causes stress depends, at least in part, on our perception of it. Something that's stressful to we may not faze someone else; they may even enjoy it. For example, morning commute may make us anxious and tense because we worry that traffic will make us late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more than enough time and enjoy listening to music while they drive.

Common external causes of stress

- Major life changes
- Work or school
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial problems
- Being too busy
- Children and family

Common internal causes of stress

- Pessimism
- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations / perfectionism
- All-or-nothing attitude

Effect of stress - Feeling stressed can have a multiplying effect. For example, losing patience with friends or family members, when what's really stressing us is something at work. When we live with stress over time it can begin to feel normal. We may raise our tolerance, but eventually it will take its toll. If you recognize any of the following physical or mental symptoms of stress, try to identify their cause. Tight Muscles—usually in the neck, shoulders, or jaw; or other nervous habits. Headache—or gastrointestinal upset. Somber Mood—humourless, difficulty smiling, laughing or lightening up. Tiredness—lack of energy or enthusiasm. Sleep—difficulty sleeping, or difficultly going back to sleep. Temperament—irritable, easily angered, anti-social behaviour. Emotional—inappropriate outbursts. Anxiety—excessive, unable to move on. Appetite—some research indicates appetite increases in response to short term stress and decreases in response to stress over a long period. Skin conditions—chronic conditions like eczema and alopecia are exacerbated by stress. Excess—increased use of caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, pain relievers or other drugs. Long term stress will eventually affect attitude, attendance and attrition at work. Unchecked, it can lead to an impaired immune system or other, even more serious health condition.

Mechanics of Stress - The human stress response is an evolutionary adaptation that has helped humans cope with moments of crisis through the ages. It occurs in response to danger in any form—whether a natural

disaster, war, devastating emotional loss, or an encounter with a powerful predator. In the face of a perceived threat, the sympathetic nervous system floods the body with stress hormones (cortisol being the primary player), and initiates a complex cascade of events known as the “fight-or-flight response.” Hormones can travel anywhere in the body, so the effects of cortisol are felt virtually everywhere in the body.

Cortisol reallocates the body's resources; it makes more energy available to the brain and large muscle groups in order to accelerate speed and response times, but it simultaneously decreases urine production, inhibits inflammation, slows the digestive capacity, and stifles the immune response.⁵ These physiological changes are meant to support us in navigating (and hopefully surviving) the crisis at hand. Truth be told, the system serves us beautifully, as long as the crisis is followed by a period of rest, recovery, and recuperation, which has generally been the case throughout evolutionary history.

Stress Management Ayurvedic Treatments

- **Abyanga:** A 60 minute full-body massage with medicated herbal oils to release tension from muscles and joints.
- **Pizchil:** A 15 minute head massage and deep tissue oil pouring massage to strengthen hormonal secretions.
- **Sirodhara:** A head massage followed by the continuous pouring of warm herbal oil/milk/buttermilk on the forehead for 45 minutes to cool the nervous system.
- **Sirovasthi:** Warm herbal oils are put on the head and kept for 45 minutes to cool the cerebral and nervous systems.
- **Talam:** Special powder mixed with medicated herbal oil is applied on the head.
- **Thalapothichil:** Special herbal pastes are applied to the entire body.
- A steam bath is given after most of these treatments.
- Ayurvedic diet is given to counteract the stress releasing chemicals.

The above mentioned treatment plan is the general Stress Management Therapy for a normal healthy person. However, our ajarya will have to check your past medical history and diagnose your present health condition before finalizing the treatment plan that is right for you.

Yoga for Stress Management - In today's era of globalization where there is a lot of competition, innovation and change, executives in all organizations cannot avoid tension, stress and anxiety in their day-to-day work. Only hardworking, disciplined, punctual and mentally alert executives can survive the work pressures and strike a balance between work life and personal life. They are exposed to stress and tension for long periods which may manifest in the form of many ailments like

hypertension, high/low blood pressure, insomnia, depression, backaches, migraine, spondylitis, etc. This in turn results in overall decrease in the executive's efficiency and productivity; consequently, there is a deterioration of human capital in the organization. Yoga is the answer for healing stress among working men and women. This all-in-one formula acts as a soothing agent for the burned-out Indian corporate and is fast growing on the popularity charts. It serves as reviver of mind, body and soul. The techniques of yoga comprise of physical postures (asanas), breath expansion and enhancement (pranayama), relaxation and meditation techniques (dhyaan), coupled with philosophy of simple and natural lifestyle management. It enhances energy of the person and develops a positive attitude. It has been attested by many as a complete all-in-one holistic formula for stress management.

Asana

When we are in a constant state of stress, our minds are tense, our bodies are tense and our sympathetic nervous system is heightened. Specific yoga poses can induce the relaxation response in the body. Calming and restorative poses along with controlled breathing activate the parasympathetic nervous system, bringing the mind and body to a calm and relaxed state.

Some Asanas that help in stress management

1. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

It helps you improve your concentration levels by increasing your focus level.

- Stand straight with your feet flat on the mat with the heels slightly spaced out and big toes touching each other. Keep your spine straight while hands straight on either side, with palms facing the thighs.
- Slowly stretch your hands and bring your palms together.
- Inhale deeply and stretch your spine while taking the folded hands up above your head. Stretch as much as possible.
- Slowly lift your ankle and stand on your toes, with eyes facing the ceiling.
- Hold the position for a minimum of 30 seconds, while breathing normally.
- Slowly relax your body and bring your feet back to the floor.

2. Balasana (Child Pose)

This helps you to relax completely, like a child. In this pose, you curl up like a foetus.

- Sit on your knees with your palms facing the floor on either side of the body.
- As you inhale, bring your whole body forward in such a way that only the forehead touches the floor.
- Stay in the position for a minimum of 30 seconds, while breathing normally. The longer you stay, the more relaxed you will feel.
- Slowly lift your forehead and stretch your body back to Vajrasana (Diamond pose).

Repeat thrice.

People suffering from knee injuries are advised not to try this pose.

2. Padmasana (Lotus Pose)

This pose is commonly used during meditation and helps to increase the self-awareness levels. The pose helps you to calm down and soothes your mind.

- Sit cross legged. The left feet should be on right thigh and vice versa, while the soles face up.
- Keep the spine erect.
- Keep the hands in Gyan mudra.
- Close your eyes and while inhaling and exhaling deeply, maintain the pose for a minimum of 30 seconds.

People suffering from knee injuries are advised not to try this pose.

3. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose)

This is one of the 12 phases of Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation). Along with energizing the body and offering relief from indigestion problems, the pose is known to relax your body. Thus, it is an ideal asana for obtaining relief from stress.

- Stand straight with your feet flat on the mat. Keep your spine straight while hands straight on either side, with palms facing the thighs.
- While breathing normally, bend forward, and place the palms in front of you on the mat. The head should face down.
- Slowly stretch your legs backwards, one at a time, while maintaining the balance, in such a way that the feet and hands are in line with each other.
- Make sure that the elbows are straight and fingers are spread out.
- Inhale deeply and tuck in your stomach completely.
- Hold the position, while breathing normally, with tummy tucked in for about 30 seconds to 60 seconds.
- Exhaling slowly, come back to the standing pose.

Repeat three to five times.

4. Savasana (Corpse Pose)

Relax yourself completely with this pose. If you do not have time for any other yoga asanas, you can practice this. It brings your breathing to normal levels, and thus, helps to soothe down stress levels.

- Lie down in supine position.
- Close your eyes.
- Slump your body in such a way that it looks lifeless.
- Let go of everything and experience the serenity as your body weight shifts away from you completely.
- Maintain the position until you feel light and relaxed.

This pose helps you do away with fatigue and fills your mind with an amazingly intense calmness.

Pranayam

With our busy life schedules, we often ignore our breathing. It tends to be fast and shallow. We use only a little of our lung power while inhaling and exhaling. This shallow breathing leads to less oxygen supply and the negative emotions get stuck inside the body. Due to the lack of prana (oxygenated breath) we suffer restlessness, stress, anxiety, etc. This leads to different complications like sleep disorders, fatigue, etc.

Pranayama encourages slow and rhythmic breathing practices that help us take sufficient amount of oxygen that re-energizes our body. In the process, we tend to let go of our negative emotions, thus, making ourselves free from negative emotions.

Yoga offers a number of breathing techniques for stress relief. These breathing techniques are called pranayama. Pranayama comprises of various ways of inhaling, exhaling and breath retention. This breath is inter-linked with consciousness, both at the cosmic and individual levels. Pranayama creates a synergy between the self-energizing life force and individual mind-body-spirit by scientific regulation of prana.

Perhaps the simplest form of pranayama is Anuloma-Viloma or Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing). Nadis are subtle nerve channels through which prana, 'life-force' flows. In addition, Dirga Pranayama, Ujjayi and Brahmari also help reduce stress.

Some Pranayamas that help in stress management

1. Anulom Vilom Pranayama

To practice the Anuloma viloma pranayama just follow these simple *steps*:

1. Sit in a position, close the eyes and settle down.
2. With the right thumb close the right nostril.
3. Inhale slowly through the left nostril until the maximum capacity.
4. Hold your breath (Not for beginners, hypertension and asthma people).
5. With the right hand's middle and ring fingers close the left nostril.
6. Release the right thumb and exhale slowly.
7. Now inhale through right nostril.
8. Hold the breath.
9. Exhale through left nostril.

Benefits

- It induces calmness of mind by regulating the flow of prana in the body.
- The whole body is nourished with an extra supply of pure oxygen, and the carbon dioxide is more efficiently eliminated.
- This pranayama purifies the whole blood system and is helpful to increase the overall health of the body.
- Very good to increase the resistance power of the body.

- Very useful for all respiratory disorders like asthma and bronchitis.
- Good to increase concentration, to get sound sleep.

Due to its overall benefit, this pranayama is considered as fundamental pranayama, so one has to do this regularly for maintaining good physical and mental health.

Sheetali Pranayama (cooling breath)

To practice Sheetali Pranayama just follow these simple *steps*:

1. Sit in any comfortable meditation posture.
2. Close the eyes and relax the whole body.
3. Extend the tongue outside the mouth as far as possible without strain. Roll the sides of the tongue up so that it forms a tube. Practise a long, smooth and controlled inhalation through the rolled tongue.
4. At the end of inhalation, draw the tongue in, close the mouth and exhale through the nose.
5. Practise yogic breathing throughout.
6. The breath should produce a sucking sound.
7. A feeling of icy coldness will be experienced on the tongue and the roof of the mouth. This is one round.

Benefits

This practice cools the body and affects the important brain centres associated with biological drives and temperature regulation. It cools and reduces mental and emotional excitation, and encourages the free flow of prana throughout the body. It induces muscular relaxation, mental tranquillity and may be used as a tranquillizer before sleep. It gives control over hunger and thirst, and generates a feeling of satisfaction.

Bhramari Pranayama (humming bee breath)

To practice the Bhramari Pranayama just follow these simple *steps*:

1. Sit in a comfortable meditation asana, preferably padmasana or siddha/siddha yoni asana with hands resting on the knees in joana or chin mudra.
2. Close the eyes and relax the whole body.
3. The lips should remain gently closed with the teeth slightly separated throughout the practice. This allows the sound vibration to be heard and felt more distinctly.
4. Raise the arms sideways and bend the elbows, bringing the hands to the ears. Use the index or middle finger to plug the ears or the flaps of the ears may be pressed without inserting the fingers.
5. Bring awareness to the centre of the head, where ajna chakra is located, and keep the body absolutely still. Inhale through the nose.
6. Exhale slowly and in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound like that of the black bee. The humming should be smooth, even and continuous for the duration of the exhalation. The sound should be soft and mellow, making the front of the skull reverberate. At the end of

exhalation, the hands can be kept steady or returned to the knee and then raised again for the next round.

7. The inhalation and exhalation should be smooth and controlled. This is one round.

Benefits

Bhramari relieves stress and cerebral tension, so helps in alleviating anger, anxiety and insomnia, increasing the healing capacity of the body. It strengthens and improves the voice. Bhramari induces a meditative state by harmonizing the mind and directing the awareness inward. The vibration of the humming sound creates a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system.

Meditation

Meditation has proven extremely beneficial in reducing stress and anxiety, lowering blood pressure, improving concentration and creativity besides bringing relief from stress-induced ailments. In the modern age, various meditation techniques are increasingly being used for relaxation as well as therapeutic benefits. Among them are Mantra Japa, Vipassana, Transcendental Meditation made popular during the 1970s by Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Sudarshan Kriya of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and many more.

All these practised together are bound to give you tremendous results in combating stress at all levels, physical, mental and emotional.

Practicing postures with steady relaxed breathing can alleviate the physical effects of stress and accumulated tension as well. Some quick, but effective yoga exercises that can be practiced are neck movements and shoulder socket rotation which relax the neck and upper back. Several stretches including palm and feet, double angle, and triangle stretch can improve your circulation. Having good circulation is extremely important because our life fluids are blood and oxygen. By encouraging a good supply of both, it revitalizes the body and allows you to be more focused and concentrate clearly.

Other factors that also cause stress are suppressing emotions and worrying needlessly. Instead of suppressing your feelings, try to gain a better understanding of them, by meditating and focusing on your breath. It is also very crucial to understand that worrying about the future does not produce a favourable outcome and in fact detracts from your performance. Worrying causes shortness of breath, creating stress and tension which are both harmful to your mind as well as body. It is important to focus on the present moment, utilizing it to plan the future and to do what you can, to the best of your ability.

Stress and tension impact our entire being; our body, mind, and spirit. However, we can overcome the effects of stress and manage them by utilizing the beneficial breathing techniques and postures that yoga provides. These techniques can not only alleviate the problems we

encounter daily, but can revitalize and nourish the mind, body, and spirit over a prolonged period of time, enabling all of us to have long and healthy lives.. Yoga and Ayurveda educate people to take care of their own welfare and take charge of their health by developing personal awareness. The use of herbs, massage, physical postures, relaxation and meditation are intrinsic parts of this process in Yoga and Ayurveda.

CONCLUSIONS

Stress can't be completely avoided. It is part of life and is even beneficial in small doses to keep the body ready to respond to environmental demands. To avoid or diminish the effects of stress, however, several ways to combat it need to be known. Stress is a normal part of life & therefore unavoidable. But every effort should be done to reduce it. Reducing stress levels can not only make us feel better right now. But may also protect our health long-term, by understanding stress ourselves & our reaction to stress-provoking situation, we can learn to handle stress more effectively.

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