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## YOGIC PRACTICES TO COPE WITH STRESS OF TWENTY FIRST CENTURY STUDENTS



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### ABSTRACT

**A**t the present era of globalisation, universalisation and privatisation, the global scientific development put a lot of pressure to student community especially at the school and college level to compete with knowledge explosion that happens at day-today life. This put a lot of exposures and experiences which create more stress due to high competitive world among the students which direct every student to fulfil the expected desire and goal in a tough manner. Along with the improvements of the technology era which leads to overloaded curricula and the rapid development of information, competitiveness among person has

become more and more intense leads to stress which is considered causative factor of natural consequence. Appropriate stress is a need for self-growth and it is a motivation factor for individual to progress actively. More and more stress not only affects thoughts and feelings but it affects individual behavioural outcomes. The condition of stressful situation and overstress causes problems and discomfort, and can have serious effects among the person result in stress, anxiety, depression, social dysfunction and even suicidal intention. Yoga plays a significant role in reducing stress and enhancing individual mental health, which is conducive for their effective performance in all walks of life. Keeping in mind, the efficacy of yogic practices in decreasing stress and in enhancing wellbeing, the present article highlight the need of yogic practices for school students to help them in managing their academic stress.

**KEYWORDS :** *Yogic Practices Stress , globalisation, universalisation .*

### INTRODUCTION

Society is a place in which the students should learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will in turn make them to contribute positively to the development of the nation. It is important for the social institutions that maintain well balanced academic environment conducive for better learning with the focus on the students' personal and societal needs. The students have different expectations, goals, and values that they want to fulfil and it should be integrated with that of the institution. As the present education is an important medium that facilitates improvement of

overall character development and leadership qualities, the students who entering into the education needs to face many challenges. The pressure to satisfy the parents' expectations, peer group competitiveness, earning good academic grades and to earn a professional degree is very high. There is a need to more emphasis on the physical and mental wellbeing of students especially at the age of adolescent period to promote overall development in society. Because of modernization, the present student community has become highly competitive, and face this competition at every phase of their life. Today a student is overloaded with daily living stressors, and lives a tight rope existence trying to cope up with the tremendous pressures from all socialised institutions, whether, it is school, family or society. These are resulting in various stress related ailments, physiological and psychological problems which pose threat and challenges for the physical as well as mental well being of the students to this twenty first century students.

### NATURE OF STRESS

Stress is a physical body's natural response to stimulus arises due to challenge threat or excitement. Stress is a necessary and unavoidable thing for daily living activities. A person's response towards stress depends on whether an event is appraised as a challenge or a threat. Stress is one of the most pervasive phenomena in the modern world and it affects people from all walks of life. It is starting from the time of birth and continues till the life end. An individual is invariably exposed the various stressful situations throughout the life. In the past the term 'stress' designated both a stimulus and a response.

Stress means pressure, tension or worry resulting from problems in one's life. All illness, injuries and intense emotional experiences demand that the body make certain specific responses by activating the sympathetic nervous system they all produce certain non-specific effects as well. Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. According to Hans Selye(1979), stress is an individual's psycho-physical response, mediated largely by the autonomic nervous system and endocrine glands to any demand made on the individual. The stress response is aroused when the demand is perceived as exceeding one's normal capacity to deal with it. Challenging stimulus can lead to positive outcomes such as motivation and improved task performance while threatening ones or distress can result in stress, anxiety, depression, social dysfunction and even suicidal intention.

### STRESSERS

Stress itself must be distinguished from stressors or things, which cause stress. These may be environmental events, interpersonal conflicts or personal deficiencies, which trigger off the problem. Secondly, stress is distinguished from stress reactions, the responses to stress, which can be, and it controlled usually are, disruptive and maladaptive. Stressors affect each individual variedly. In particular situation, one may remain quite calm while another may display many signs of stress. It is due to the control of the situation. Stress set off an alarm reaction in the body. During the reaction certain chemical substances called hormones are released into blood stream in increased amounts which in turn increases the mental as well as physical activities.

### SOURCES OF STRESS

Stress is a body condition that occurs in response to actual or anticipated difficulties in life. Individual often experience it as a result of major events in life. Stress may occur when a person who feels unable to cope effectively with a change. Generally, there are two types of the sources of stress. They are psychological sources such as adaptation, frustration, overload, self - perception, behaviour,

anxiety, and lack of control and physiological sources such as nutrition and vitamin deficiency, over-eating and under-eating, and smoking, noise and techno stress, etc.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

It is state of psychological upset or disequilibrium in the human beings caused by frustrations, conflicts and other internal as well as external strains and pressures. In a more serious condition of the stress, the individual reaches a point where the physical processes are seriously affected, the mental processes are confused and the emotional state is chaotic. In that stressed situation, psychological stress affects physiological changes such as increased heart beat, higher blood pressure, muscle tension, mental depression, inability to concentrate etc., can be found.

### ACADEMIC STRESS

Academic stress among students are due to many assignments, competitions with other students, studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time, failures and poor relationships with other students or teachers. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students experience physical and psychological impairment. Continuous stressful academic environment is likely to affect the social relations of the students both within the institution and outside which affects the life in terms of commitment to achieving the goals. Knowing the causes of students stress will make the educational administrator know how to monitor and control the stress factors that are responsible for the students' stress.

### SOURCES OF ACADEMIC STRESS

The situation that a student being away from home, new situation, unfamiliarity with the situation, living with a roommate in hostel, meeting new people, handling personal problems without others help, having less structure in life with no one to guide, meeting family demands, meeting expectations of parents, teachers and friends, disappointment in love, loss of comfort and stability, facing complicated situation, lack of personality traits, feeling of loneliness, rejection by parents and peer groups, lack of mental health, loss of valuable items, and death of parents, close relatives or friends are many factors that are responsible for more stress. Other potential sources of stress include excessive homework, more assignments, and uncomfortable classrooms. In addition to that academic requirements, relations with faculty members and time pressures may also be sources of stress.

### SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

The severity of the stress leads to different type of symptoms. Cognitive symptoms include memory problems, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, negative decision, anxious or racing thoughts and constant worrying. Emotional symptoms include moodiness, irritability or short temper, agitation, inability to relax, feeling overwhelmed, sense of loneliness and isolation, and depression or general unhappiness. Physical symptoms include aches and pains, diarrhoea or constipation, nausea, dizziness, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, loss of sex drive, and frequent colds. Behavioural symptoms include eating disorders, sleeping disorders, isolating oneself from others, procrastination, neglecting responsibilities and using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax and nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

### UNHEALTHY PRACTICES TO COPE WITH STRESS

Generally, the present society is feared with the student community deviation from the societal

goal. In such stressful situations, some may prefer alcohol or drug to avoid the feeling of helplessness. In order to overcome and manage the stressful life, they prefer unhealthy practices by escaping through alcohol, drugs, frequent illness, oversleep, overeating, or starving. These strategies suggest permanent withdrawal and avoidance principle of psychology rather than to face the problem. If selecting strategies to avoid failures some students closely link their identities to excellence and achievement doesn't cause problems. By selecting impossible goals, students can escape having their lack of effort will be questioned. Over-scheduling daily life with school work and extra curricular activities selecting impossible demanding course loads or fussing endlessly over assignments make attempt to create more stress.

### HEALTHY PRACTICES TO COPING STRESS

Strategies to reduce stress by students often include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal, and engagement in leisure time activities such as hobbies, yoga and meditation. The short term strategies like taking a deep breathing exercises, relaxing body by stretching muscles, and use positive coping mental strategies like to do better next time. Practicing long term strategies like learning time management skills, learning to get organized, learning good studies skills, exercising, getting enough rest and sleep, eating well and nutritiously, having a good support from social network, avoiding drug and alcohol abuse, setting goals properly giving by them, give up always to be perfect, not trying to please others and live up to their expectations, learning to think rationally and optimistically, and practising yoga and meditations leads to better cope with stress and stressors.

### NEED OF YOGIC PRACTICES FOR THE PRESENT CONTEXT

Yoga is an ancient discipline and recognised as the most important valuable of Indian Rishi culture which is a science and art to evoke the hidden potentialities of man to become develop his physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, moral, spiritual aspects in a harmonious and integrated fashion to meet all round challenges in this modern technological era. Yoga in which the yogic practices are the different systematic and scientific postures among the most widely used in assessment and treatment efforts with students and their popularity has increased on now-a-days because of mounting pressures to provide service to youth more rapidly and efficiently. It is mainly focused on modifying "inner-characteristics" of the individual such as changing 'irrational' thought, and many other involving a combination of strategies focused on overt and covert behaviour.

Indian yogic practices aim at reducing the physical as well as psychological effects of stress and making the individual subject comfortable with increased sense of control, self efficacy, self-esteem and adopting coping. This ultimately leads to reduction in stress, anxiety, depression, neurotic tendency, and social isolation and improvement in the quality of life and sense of well being. Interest and performance in academic area get improved and efforts toward satisfaction of achievement needs get accelerated, student start functioning to full potential and energy. Yogic practices or techniques included a combination of various asanas (postures), mudras and pranayamas. Asanas like suptavajrasan, ardha-matsyendrasan, dhanurasan, pashchimottasan, pavanmuktasan, tadasan, bhujangasan and shavasana, mudras(symbols) like yogamudra, gyanmudra, bhairavmudra, hridayamudra and pranayams(breathing exercises) like bhasrika, anulom-vilom and bhrumry pranayam are the certain yogic practices that reduces the stress, anxiety and mental distress among the stress students.

## YOGIC PRACTICES

A yogic practice helps one individual to stay calm and relaxed in daily life and give the strength to face events and reduces the stress. Yogic practices includes the several type of asanas (body postures), mudras (symbols), pranayamas (breathing techniques), and meditation (mind control). The following are the different yogic practices or techniques can help calm an unsettled mind and reduces the stress.

- Asanas: These yoga postures can help achieve a happy and healthy mind and body. Asanas help release tension and negativity from the system. 1.Dhanurasana (Bow Pose), 2.Matsyasana (Fish Pose), 3.Janu Shirshasana (One-Legged Forward Bend), 4.Setubandhasana (Bridge Pose), 5.Marjariasana (Cat Stretch), 6.Paschimottanasana (Two-Legged Forward Bend), 7.Hastapadasana (Standing Forward Bend), 8.Adhomukha Shwanasana (Downward Facing Dog), 9.Shirshasana (Headstand), and 10.Shavasana (Corpse Pose).
- Mudras: Mudras like yoga mudra, gyanmudra, bhairavmudra and hridayamudra calm the mind and reduces the stress.
- Pranayamas: More attention to the breath can help free the mind with unnecessary thoughts that increases stress. Breathing practices like Kapal Bhati Pranayama (Skull-Shining Breathing Technique), Bhastrika Pranayama Nadi Shodhan Pranayama (Alternate Nostril Breathing) – effective in releasing stress from the system (where the exhalation is longer than the inhalation) and Bhramari Pranayama (Bee Breath) reduces the stresses.
- Meditation: Meditation can be an excellent technique to relax a distracted mind, give a sense of calm and peace, and also observe with daily practice. The stressful environment increases the level of adrenalin hormone which in turn increases heart to beat faster, making the muscles tense and body sweat profusely. Scientific research has shown that regular meditation practice can help significantly reduce the level of this stress hormone.
- Yoga philosophy: Knowing and applying the ancient yoga knowledge in daily life like (yamas and niyamas) of yoga, are the secrets to happy and healthy living. The santosha principle (niyama) teaches the value of contentment. The Aprigraha principle can help us overcome greediness or the desire to keep possessing more, which can be a reason for stress. Also, the Shaucha principle talks about cleanliness of the mind and body. The yamas and niyamas of yoga will also help us eat nutritious food and live a healthy lifestyle which greatly helps to overcome anxiety and stress.
- Prayer: Prayer is the best form of reassurance and support to keep you anxiety-free. Developing habits of daily prayer, chanting or singing bhajans (devotional songs) fill with positive energy and also help still the mind.

## CONCLUSION

Academic stress is becoming increasingly common and widespread among school going students and adolescents in worldwide. The pressure of education on the child starts at a very early age right from the time a child is enrolled into nursery school and it increases in terms of competition in the secondary, higher secondary schools and college levels. Consequences of the increasing pressures on the children show-up as a rise in school drop outs, under-performance, teenage violence, suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse, disaffection, demoralization, disillusionment, depression and social deviants. Academic stress emerges as a significant mental problem in recent years.

It has been estimated that 10 to 30 percent students especially at the adolescent age experience related stress that affect their academic performance, psychosocial adjustment along with their overall emotional and physical well being. Information load, high expectation, academic burden or pressure, unrealistic ambitions, limited opportunities, high competitiveness are some of the

important sources of stress which create tension, fear and anxiety. Poor academic performance, less peer popularity, attention difficulties, depression, somatic complaints, substance abuse are commonly problems among the victims of academic stress without being aware of how to cope with them. The physical effect of academic stress is pale faces, sunken cheeks, and dishevelled hair. Psychological effects are still more serious in nature. They include anxiety, aggression, apathy, boredom, depression, fatigue, frustration, guilt, shame, low-self esteem, nervousness and often feeling suicidal. Epidemiological research in developing countries including India shows prevalence rate of 7-12% of emotional and behavioural problem in children. As one third of our hundred and twenty crore populations are children and adolescents their mental health needs to be improved.

Practising yoga or yogic practices concern with the rational of scientific empiricism and collaborative atmosphere which states that thinking can be evaluated, analyzed understood explained and carried forward on truly based scientific paradigms. The behavioural pattern of student is well combined with yoga become the modern approach of life was well understood in yoga psychology. Yoga is not merely a system of treatment but has potential to develop all around health-physical, social, mental, and spiritual. Practice of yoga has become increasingly popular in India as well as in western countries as a method for coping with stress and improving quality of life. Yoga is one of the best methods by which a goal of positive health can be achieved.

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