

Relaxation and Wellness through Yoga Practice

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DESCRIPTION

Psychosocial stress and related pain or illnesses are increasing and many relaxation techniques for reducing this impact are becoming correspondingly popular. One of the commonly used practices is various forms of yoga and yogic breathing exercises. SK&P is a form of yoga that emphasizes breathing practices (pranayama) in addition to the physical positions (asanas). This study was setup to further investigate promising results from previous studies of SK&P that were too small or non-systematic to be fully generalizable. The goal was to investigate if SK&P can lead to increased sense of wellness and to develop a protocol that could be adopted for a future full-scale trial. During 6 weeks 103 healthy adult participants were studied: 48 persons (yoga group) partook in a beginner's course in a SK&P program, and 55 persons in the control group relaxed in an armchair for the same duration of time. Before and after this period, assessments were made for variables such as; depression, anxiety, stress, optimism, and bodily pains. There were no significant differences between the two groups at baseline regarding age, gender, occupation, education; sleeping quality, nicotine or alcohol use, but the control group had a lower degree of anxiety and higher degree of optimism before the trial. The subjects were assessed with validated clinical scales such as HAD (Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale), LOT (Life Orientation Test), and SE (Stress and Energy Scale). HAD measured the degree of anxiety and depression, LOT measured dispositional optimism, SE measured individual's degree of experienced energy and stress. Another scale, EDN (Experienced Deviation from Normal State) was also used to assess the degree of altered states of consciousness during yoga or relaxation. The study also included written reports about the participant's.

Criteria for inclusion in the study were: an interest in yoga and relaxation exercises and a willingness to exercise such practice daily for 6 weeks. Participants with an on-going pregnancy, psychiatric disease or being younger than 18 years were excluded. The yoga group took part in a six-day introduction course in SK&P and for the rest of the 5 weeks did solitary home practice for about 1 hour a day. The participants in the control group meet with the experimenter for the first six days where they received instructions to relax in an armchair in a dimly lighted and silent room, which they performed daily by themselves for the remaining 5 weeks. The results suggested increased wellbeing for all the variables measured; the participants in the SK&P program had, at comparisons before/after the 6 weeks, significant decreased level of depression, anxiety and stress, as well as significant increased optimism. The verbal reports from the SK&P yoga group consisted of descriptions about, for example, a more optimistic and new outlook on life, feelings of peace and balance, and increased joy after learning this program. Furthermore, they experienced that yoga decreased tensions, unpleasant sensations, as well as the experience of better control over their emotions. They also described that SK&P gave them tools to make it easier to relax and to handle stressful situations and to live more in the present moment. These subjective qualitative reports generally correlated with the findings from the quantitative instruments. Both studies suggested that adult participants of normal health can improve their overall wellness and quality of life by learning and applying a yoga program. Easily learned, effective and affordable, these yogic practices can be offered to the adult population at large to relieve psychosocial stress and its related conditions, which may also result in the prevention of both physical and mental disorders.

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