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## Emotional balance through yoga

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### Abstract

In psychology, emotion is often defined as a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behaviour. Emotionality is associated with a range of psychological phenomena, including temperament, personality, mood, and motivation. “The major theories of motivation can be grouped into three main categories: physiological, neurological, and cognitive. Physiological theories suggest that responses within the body are responsible for emotions. Neurological theories propose that activity within the brain leads to emotional responses. Finally, cognitive theories argue that thoughts and other mental activity play an essential role in forming emotions. Emotion as a conscious and subjective mental reaction toward a particular event and is usually accompanied by changes in the physiologic and behavioural aspects of a person. From this definition, we can deduce that an emotion has four components, namely: cognitive reactions, physiological reactions, behavioural reactions and affect. Cognitive reactions refer to a person’s memory, thinking and perception of an event. Physiological reactions are primarily caused by changes in the hormonal levels in the body. On the other hand, behavioural reactions comprise the active expression of the emotion. Lastly, affect includes the positive or negative state of the emotion and is what makes an emotion a conscious and subjective experience. Asanas are one path to blissful contentment, working to bring us closer by focusing our minds and releasing any emotional or inner tension in our bodies. When we practice yoga, we’re not only working on our physical body. We’re also working on our energy and our mind. As we grow in our yoga practice, we can see the results of all this work in our life: we feel more comfortable in our bodies, we have more energy, our emotions become more stable and our minds more focused.

**Keywords:** emotion, reactions, adrenaline, amygdala, yoga, asanas (poses)

### Introduction

Emotions are lower level responses occurring in the subcortical regions of the brain, the amygdala, and the ventromedial prefrontal cortices, creating biochemical reactions in your body altering our physical state. They originally helped our species survive by producing quick reactions to threat, reward, and everything in between in their environments. Emotional reactions are coded in our genes and while they do vary slightly individually and depending on circumstances, are generally universally similar across all humans and even other species. For example, you smile and your dog wags its tail.

The amygdala plays a role in emotional arousal and regulate the release of neurotransmitters essential for memory consolidation which is why emotional memories can be so much stronger and longer-lasting. Emotions precede feelings, are physical, and instinctual. Because they are physical, they can be objectively measured by blood flow, brain activity, facial micro-expressions, and body language.

The nervous system, central as well as peripheral, plays a vital role in the regulation of emotion. Thalamus: It is composed of a group of nerve cells and acts as a relay center of sensory nerves. Stimulation of thalamus produces fear, anxiety, and autonomic reactions. Hypothalamus: It is considered the primary center for regulation of emotion. It also regulates the homeostatic balance, controls autonomic activity and secretion of endocrine glands, and organises the somatic pattern of emotional behaviour. Limbic System: Along with thalamus and hypothalamus the limbic system plays a vital role in regulation of emotion. Amygdala is a part of limbic system, responsible for emotional control and involves formation of emotional memories. Cortex: Cortex is intimately involved in emotions. However, its hemispheres have a contrasting role to play. The left frontal cortex is associated with positive feelings whereas the right frontal cortex with negative feelings.

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**Components of Emotions:** There are three components of emotions.

**a. Cognition:** This component serves primarily to influence an evaluation of given situation, prompting us to become emotional in one way or another, or not at all.

**b. Feeling:** In daily life we think of feelings. The feelings are most readily evident changes in an aroused person. Feelings have immediate motivational significance.

They give rise to many physiological processes in the cardiovascular system and produce increased blood pressure. They also stimulate nervous system and prompt widespread electrochemical activities.

**c. Behaviour:** The behavioural component involves facial, postural, gestures and vocal responses.

Mood swings can be caused by many factors – external and internal. The primary ones are: Hormonal imbalances, Vata (air element in body) imbalance, Sleeplessness, Stress at work, Sedentary lifestyle, Overuse of gadgets. There are three simple ways which can help us bring the shift in our mind, from being an emotional pendulum to being focused and calm. From small alterations in our lifestyle, diet and addition of yoga and pranayama can do wonders to settle down our wandering mind and fluctuating emotions. Studies show that yoga, pranayama, and meditation calm the mind and reduce stress, which is the main factor in aggravating mood swings. Studies also show that meditation increases the gray matter that is related to emotional regulation.

When we practice yoga, we're not only working on our physical body. We're also working on our energy and our mind. As we grow in our yoga practice, we can see the results of all this work in our life: we feel more comfortable in our bodies, we have more energy, our emotions become more stable and our minds more focused. The most important aspect of yoga is that it will help us still our mind. As we practice asanas (poses), our focus should always be inward: feeling our body in the pose, noticing what different poses do to different parts of our body, how our breath changes through the practice. As we draw our attention inward, our practice one of the 8 limbs of yoga called Pratyahara. Disconnecting from our surroundings is the first step that will lead us into concentration (focusing our mind on one thing at a time). This will slow down the impulses of our mind and will bring us closer to meditation, which is the complete stillness of the mind.

### The body-mind connection

In yogic terms, however, there is no separation between mind, body, and spirit. The three exist as a union (one definition of the word yoga); what happens to the mind also happens to the body and spirit, and so on. In other words, if something is bothering us spiritually, emotionally, or mentally, it is likely to show up in our body. And as we work deeply with our body in yoga, emotional issues will likely come to the fore. In the yogic view, we all hold within our bodies emotions and misguided thoughts that keep us from reaching Samadhi, defined by some as "conscious enlightenment." Any sense of unease or dis-ease in the body keeps us from reaching and experiencing this state. Asanas are one path to blissful contentment, working to bring us closer by focusing our minds and releasing any emotional or inner tension in our bodies.

Though the ancient yogis understood that emotional turmoil is carried in the mind, the body, and the spirit, Western medicine has been slow to accept this. But new research has verified empirically that mental and emotional condition can affect the state of the physical body, and that the mind-body connection is real.

### Yoga for relaxation

The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS): Our autonomic (or involuntary) nervous system has two branches: the sympathetic and the parasympathetic. The sympathetic nervous system (fight-flight-freeze) increases heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol levels, and muscle tension, while the parasympathetic nervous system (rest-digest and reflect-redirect) lowers heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol and blood sugar levels, and muscle tension.

Yoga attempts to elicit the relaxation response by calming the body, quieting the mind, regulating the breath, and reducing sensory stimulation (light, sound, etc.). Relaxation then allows for the opportunity to address stress rather than react to it. This process can initiate a gateway to change. It can also lessen the symptoms of anxiety and depression, which are also linked to the autonomic nervous system.

The issues of emotional imbalance leading to anger and sadness gradually lead to further larger issues like blood pressure, cardiac arrest, hypertension, stress, etc. However, regular practice of yoga and breathing techniques can indeed solve these. Given below are some of the best yoga poses that can help you in having control over your own emotions, anger, sadness, etc.

**1. Anulom Vilom pranayama** (Alternate Nostril Breathing): Breathe in from right nostril closing left nostril with the middle finger and ring finger and breathe out from left nostril closing right nostril with the thumb. Do it continuously and it is known as Anulom Vilom (Alternate Nostril Breathing). It is also Known as Nadi Shodhan (Alternate Nostril Breathing). The left nostril is Ida (moon principle or mind), Right nostril represents Pingala Nadi (Sun principle or body). In alternate nostril breathing, once inhale through Left and exhale through Right then inhale through Right and exhale through Left Nostril. This purifies the Ida and Pingala Nadis.



### 2. Sukhasana

Sukhasana is the easiest of all yoga forms to control emotions and anger. It's a good recommendation for the beginners, prior starting meditation. There is nothing much to do here. You simply have to sit in crossed leg state, keeping the back straight. Fingers should be in proper mudra and on the thigh. Close the eye and put your entire focus on the breathing process.



### 3. Balasana

Balasana is another most practiced yoga for emotional release. People having issues of hypertension and stress can also find it equally effective. The pose is very simple. First sit in Vajrasana (sitting on your calf, so that the buttocks remain on the heel), exhale and bend down to make the forehead touch the ground. Both the hands should remain at the either side of the body. You can breathe easy and stay to the extent you can.



of blood. Not just the brain, the pose helps in keeping the blood flow rate perfect for each part of the body. To start with, first, lie down on the ground keeping the legs straight. Now lift both the legs jointly, keeping them straight, gradually at 30 degrees, then 60, 90, and ultimately erect the entire body making it perpendicular to the ground with the support of your hand on the back. It means the entire body has to stand on the shoulder. The vision should be on the toes. Stay as per your limit at this state and gradually come back to the initial state.

### 6. Savasana

Savasana is another best yoga emotional release. It is one of the simplest options you can practice. Here the practitioner simply has to lie down on a flat surface, completely relaxing the body. Close the eyes and breathe without effort. Shift your entire focus on the breathing process. The pose relaxes the body and mind, keeping the blood pressure level under control. Use a bolster or cushion under knees (if lower back arches or knees hyperextend)



### 4. Uttanasana



Uttanasana can be a nice yoga to control emotions. It's quite an easy pose that can be tried by people of every age group. Uttanasana also helps in improving the flexibility of the body. It enhances the blood flow to the brain and all another part of the body. To start with, stand straight, exhale and raise both the hand up. Now bend the upper body down gradually keeping the legs straight, without bending the knee, and hold the heel portion of your leg. Try to make the nose touch the knee.

### Conclusion

Nowadays, emotional imbalance creates many problems in the society. Especially youngsters. They can't able to control their emotions and they loss their tolerance, patience, adjustment, give and take, sympathy, empathy etc... The best part about yoga is that it helps us discover more about our mind, body, and emotions. Yoga can help us become more balanced, calm, focused, and relaxed as we go through life's usual ups and downs. If we give our self a half hour each day to do a few yoga poses, after a couple of weeks we should start noticing a subtle change. Keep going longer and yoga will become a natural part of your daily routine, ready to help you manage life's stresses well into the future. Yoga is not just about physical exercise. It includes art of living, wisdom, health of mind and elevated prana. Yoga activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) that helps one to dissociate from the event and the associated pain. It teaches us that we are much more than the mind-body complex.

So, yoga is not only about asanas but also about healthy diet, correct postures, emotional balance and proper sleep. Once you reach the gateway of this proper stability, then with yoga you are sure to attain a healthy body, mind and soul.

Also note that pregnant woman and people suffering from any kind of ailment have to take advice from their doctors before starting the practice. Those who are suffering from fibroids or other hormonal imbalance may face heavy bleeding if the poses are practiced during menstruation. Thus expert's advice should be taken to know whether these poses can be continued during periods.

### 5. Sarvangasana



Sarvangasana is a very good physical yoga for anger release. The pose rejuvenates the brain cells through the proper supply

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