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Contribution of practices yoga and meditation in promoting health and well-being

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Abstract

The main objective of this research paper is to acquire an efficient understanding of the practices of yoga and meditation in promoting health and well-being. Yoga contributes efficiently in the development of stamina, strength, endurance and high energy at the physical level. It allows the individuals to lead to increase inattention, calm, peacefulness and contentment at the mental level. In this manner, the individuals are able to promote physical and psychological well-being. Meditation is the practice which helps in leading to an increase in the concentration of the body and mind. In meditation, concentration is focused upon for a long time. It may be on a particular object or other things. The practices of yoga and meditation are beneficial for the individuals belonging to all age groups. When they practice these techniques, they are able to enrich their lives. Therefore, medical practitioners, health care specialists and professional counselors also recommend the practice of yoga and meditation on regular basis. The important benefits of meditation are, it develops a sense of well-being and decision making capabilities among individuals. The main areas that are taken into account in this research paper are significance of yoga, benefits of yoga, significance of meditation and benefits of meditation.

Keywords: Health, meditation, practice, techniques, well-being, yoga

Introduction

Yoga is a healthy way of life. It originated in India. It is a practice that renders a significant contribution in promoting good health and well-being of the individuals, physically, mentally and spiritually. In the present existence, it is recognized as the form of science and is recognized throughout the world. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word, yuj, which means join or unite. This is regarded as the union of body, mind and soul. It is used in literature, both as an end as well as means. As an end, yoga signifies integration of personality at the highest level. As means, yoga includes various practices and techniques, which are put into operation to achieve the development of such integration. These practices and techniques are the means in the yogic literature and are also referred to as yoga. The main aim of yoga is to encourage a positive and healthy lifestyle for physical, mental and emotional health of the individuals. Yoga helps in the development of stamina, strength, endurance and high energy at the physical level. It allows oneself with increasing concentration calm, peace and contentment at the mental level, leading to inner and outer harmony (Yoga, 2015).

Meditation is the practice which helps in concentration of the body and mind. In meditation, concentration is focused upon for a long time. It may be on a particular object or other things. The important benefits of meditation are, it develops a sense of well-being and decision making power among individuals. In practicing meditation, there are certain guidelines, which need to be followed. These are, if asana and pranayama is performed before meditation, the individuals will develop the abilities to sit in one position for long time, peaceful and calm place is required for practicing of meditation, eyes need to be closed gently to get into inner awareness, a meditative practice leads to emergence of thoughts and emotions, after some time, one may feel abstract and non-specific awareness of the whole body and in the beginning, it is usually difficult to observe the breath, when mind wanders slowly and firmly attention needs to be brought to the breath (Yoga, 2015). Therefore, these techniques are regarded as effectual in practicing meditation.

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Significance of Yoga

Over the past few decades, there has been an upsurge in the prevalence of yoga. Medical professionals and individuals, belonging to other professions are adopting as well as recommending the practice of yoga on a regular basis. Some individuals regard yoga as one of the techniques that is prevalent within the country since ancient times. Whereas, some individuals regard it as the form of exercise. Yoga is not a religion it is a way of living that aims towards a healthy body and a healthy mind. Yoga renders a significant contribution in developing a balance between all the three forms, i.e. mental, physical and spiritual as stated in the Ayurveda in India. Other forms of exercises, such as, running, aerobics etc. help in promoting physical health. But they contribute to a lesser extent in promoting spiritual well-being (Importance and Benefits of Yoga, n.d.). The individuals belonging to all age groups from children till older adults practice yoga. They realize that practicing yoga will help them to remain physically as well as psychologically healthy and promote spiritual well-being.

Yoga is not only twisting and bending the body and holding breath, it is a technique of bringing the individuals into the state, where one is able to see and witness reality simply the way it is. When the individuals enable their energies to become exuberant and ecstatic, there is expansion in the sensory body. This enables the individuals to experience whole universe as part of oneself. Making everything one is an important strategy that is created by yoga. It focuses on idealizing concordance between the mind, body and soul. When the individuals are able to make out that their body is functioning well, they are able to make the best of their skills and capabilities (Importance and Benefits of Yoga,). All individuals aim to make the best of their skills and abilities to carry out their job duties well. Therefore, through the practice of yoga, the individuals are able to augment their skills and abilities to put into operation their job duties and responsibilities in a well-organized manner and enrich their quality of lives.

Yoga as a practice has numerous benefits that have positive effects upon the individuals, physically as well as psychologically. The significance of yoga is comprehensively recognized as it promotes good health physically and psychologically. The important ways in which yoga has proven to be beneficial to the individuals is, it enhances circulation, improves posture, uplifts ones mood, lowers blood pressure, keeps control on premature aging, reduces stress, increases strength, promotes better cardiovascular endurance, lowers respiratory rate and promotes stimulation of organs (Importance and Benefits of Yoga,). From the stage of early childhood, the parents as well as the teachers make provision of knowledge and understanding to the individuals in terms of measures to promote good health. One of the indispensable measures is yoga. In schools, students are taught the techniques of yoga in the physical training session. Therefore, it is widely understood that yoga is a practice that contributes effectively in promoting good health and well-being and in bringing about improvements in one's overall quality of lives.

Benefits of Yoga

The benefits of yoga have been stated as follows:

1. Causes Reduction in Stress and Anxiety

Stress and anxiety are regarded as negative feelings that have detrimental effects upon the physical and psychological health of the individuals. Through practicing yoga, the

individuals will be able to cause a reduction in stress and anxiety. Yoga is known for its ability to cause reduction in stress and anxiety and promote relaxation. When the individuals are stressed regarding some problem or concern and they practice yoga, they will be able to carry out their job duties well and promote well-being. The effect of yoga on stress and anxiety is recognized to cause reduction in them. It can be used solely or it can be combined with other techniques such as meditation. In this manner, one of the major benefits of yoga is to cause reduction in stress and anxiety.

2. Reduce Inflammation

Practicing yoga may cause a reduction in inflammation. Inflammation is referred to as the normal immune response. But chronic inflammation can lead to the development of heart diseases and diabetes. When the individuals practice yoga, they are able to protect themselves from the spread of diseases caused due to chronic inflammation. One of the major benefits of yoga may cause a reduction in the inflammatory markers in the body to help prevent pro-inflammatory diseases. Therefore, it can be stated, one of the important benefits of yoga is to cause reduction in inflammation. In this manner, the individuals can protect themselves from diseases, which may even prove to be fatal (Link, 2017).

3. Improve Health of Heart

To promote good health, the individuals need to improve the health of heart. From pumping blood throughout the body to supplying important nutrients to the tissues, the health of the heart is regarded as indispensable in promoting overall health. Research studies have indicated that yoga is regarded to render a significant contribution in promoting the overall health of the individuals. Through practicing yoga, the individuals may have lower blood pressure as well as pulse rate. Furthermore, through practicing yoga, the individuals will also generate awareness in terms diet and nutrition and control their body weight. Therefore, yoga renders an important contribution improving health of heart.

4. Improves Quality of Lives

Yoga helps in bringing about improvements in the overall quality of lives of the individuals. Through practicing yoga, the individuals can bring about improvements in spiritual well-being, improves social functions and causes reduction in the symptoms of anxiety and depression. In order to bring about improvements in the quality of lives, maintaining good mood and normal mind-sets are also regarded as indispensable factors. When they learn to exercise control on the psychological problems of depression, anger, anxiety and stress and prevent them from assuming a major form, they will be able to bring about improvements in their overall lives. Therefore, improving quality of lives is an important benefit of yoga.

5. Helps in Coping with Depression

At some point of time in their lives all individuals experience depression. Depression can influence the overall lives of the individuals in an unfavorable manner, particularly when it is not checked. Through practicing yoga, the individuals will be able to cope with depression and prevent it from assuming a major form. Through yoga, one is able to decrease the levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that has an influence on the levels of serotonin, the neurotransmitter that is associated

with depression. In some cases, it helps in coping with depression alone or along with traditional methods of treatment. Therefore, it can be stated, helps in coping with depression is an important benefit of yoga.

6. Helps in Alleviating Anger

Anger is a negative feeling that has unfavorable effects upon the overall lives of the individuals as well as it impedes terms and relationships of the individuals with each other. Hence, it is comprehensively understood that individuals need to control anger, prevent it from assuming a major form and imposing negative effects upon their well-being. Through practicing yoga, the individuals are able to develop the abilities to control anger and prevent it from assuming a major form. Furthermore, the individuals are able to realise that they need to deal with various situations as well as other individuals in a calm and composed manner. This is necessary to achieve personal and professional goals. Therefore, it can be stated, an important benefit of yoga is it helps in alleviating anger.

7. Cause Reduction in Chronic Pain

The chronic pain is observed by individuals belonging to all age groups. In accordance to the research studies, the chronic pain is normally observed by elderly individuals in their body. Through practicing yoga, one can lead to reduction in chronic pain. When one is observing chronic pain, it is apparent that they will acquire medical treatment, but along with medication and consulting medical practitioners and health care specialists, practicing yoga is also rendering a significant contribution in causing reduction in chronic pain. The individuals need to take out some time from their daily routine to practice yoga. Therefore, it can be stated, an important benefit of yoga is, it causes reduction in chronic pain.

8. Curb Sleeping Disorders

When the individuals experience sleeping disorders, they undergo number of problems, such as, depression, obesity, stress, high blood pressure, lack of concentration and so forth. These problems are regarded as major barriers and individuals are usually focused upon alleviating these problems. Through practicing of yoga, the individuals are able to curb sleeping disorders. The individuals need to obtain sound sleep in a day, according to their age. For an adult, it is normally recommended to obtain six to seven hours of sleep and for a child, normally eight to ten hours. Curbing sleeping disorders is regarded to be of utmost significance in promoting good health and well-being. Therefore, one of the major benefits of yoga is, it helps in curbing sleeping disorders.

9. Improves Flexibility and Balance

In accordance to the research studies, when the individuals are above 70 years of age, in some cases, they tend to lose their balance even while walking and in the implementation of various tasks and activities. In some cases, they become apprehensive, and things fall frequently from their hands. Hence, through practicing yoga, they are able to bring about improvements in flexibility and balance. The individuals belonging to various age groups need to be flexible and maintain balance, when they are getting engaged in any task or activity or even when they are walking within as well as outside their homes. Therefore, it can be stated, one of the major benefits of yoga is it brings about improvements in flexibility and balance.

10. Helps in Improving Breathing

Pranayama or yogic breathing is the practice of yoga that puts emphasis on controlling breathing through breathing exercises and techniques. When the individuals are able to bring about improvements in breathing, they will be able to help build endurance, optimize performance and keep heart and lungs healthy. Vital capacity is a measure of the maximum amount of air that can be expelled from the lungs. This is particularly important for the individuals with lung diseases, heart problems and asthma. Therefore, when the individuals practice yoga on a regular basis, they will be able to bring about improvements in breathing and promote good health and well-being (Link, 2017).

Significance of Meditation

Meditation is regarded as one of the important things that is of utmost significance in life. The individuals need to understand the significance of meditation, before putting it into practice. When the concept of mindfulness comes up, the individuals still imagine that meditation is the domain of free spirits. But the fact is, there is not anything wrong regarding mindfulness and awareness meditation. Meditation has its roots in the religion of Buddhism. When the individuals are practicing Buddhism, they are required to meditate. In some cases, one may meditate for one hour, whereas, in other cases, the individuals may meditate for seven to eight hours as well. One of the important aspects of meditation is, it helps the individuals to relax their minds. All the individuals are overwhelmed by the psychological problems of anger, stress, anxiety, depression and trauma at some point of time in lives. Hence, when they practice meditation, they are able to alleviate these problems from having major influences upon their lives. For instance, when an individual is stressed in terms of the implementation of a task, and practice meditation, he or she will be able to alleviate stress and perform well in the task. Therefore, the significance of meditation is recognized in relaxing one's mind and promoting well-being.

The benefits of meditation are immediate. The numbers of health benefits that result from meditation are another major reason to adopt in practice. There are certain benefits that can start making themselves felt on a rapid basis, after the individuals have initiated this practice. A sense of calmness and peace of mind are common experiences (Why is Meditation Important? 2020). In some cases, the individuals practice meditation to a lesser extent. In some cases, the individuals worry that meditation will have opposite effects upon their lives. The reason being, the mind-sets of the individuals seem to be busier than ever. The individuals in some cases have busy schedules. They are occupied with their schedules to such an extent that they are unable to take out time for meditation. In such cases, they may take out either very less time or no time. But educated individuals are well aware of the fact that practicing meditation will lead to enrichment in their overall quality of lives and promote good health and well-being.

Benefits of Meditation

The benefits of meditation are stated as follows:

1. Causes Reduction in Psychological Problems

The psychological problems that are experienced by the individuals are, anger, stress, anxiety, depression, frustration and trauma. These problems impose detrimental effects upon the overall well-being of the individuals. In addition, they give rise to barriers within the course of implementation of

their tasks and activities in a well-ordered manner. Hence, when the individuals practice meditation, they are able to bring about reduction in the psychological problems. One of the critical aspects of psychological problems is, the psychological well-being of the individuals get affected in an unfavorable manner. Through practicing of meditation, the individuals are able to lead to a reduction in psychological problems and prevent them from assuming a major form. In accordance to the research studies, meditation may bring about improvements in the symptoms of stress-related conditions, including irritable bowel syndrome, post-traumatic stress disorder and fibromyalgia. Therefore, it can be stated, meditation causes reduction in psychological problems.

2. Helps in bringing about Improvements in Decision Making Skills

Decision making is an integral part of the lives of the individuals. They are required to make decisions as part of their daily routine activities. The individuals need to make decisions on daily basis. In some cases, they are minor, whereas, in other cases, they are major. When they are made, it needs to be ensured that they prove to be beneficial to the individuals as well as their overall living conditions. Through practicing meditation, the individuals are able to bring about improvements in making wise and productive decisions. In making of productive decisions, the individuals need to conduct an analysis of the alternatives. When they practice meditation on a regular basis, they are able to conduct an analysis of the alternatives and make effectual decisions. Therefore, it can be stated, meditation contributes effectively in bringing about improvements in decision making skills.

3. Promotes Emotional Health

The individuals need to pay attention towards emotional health in order to enrich their lives. Through practicing meditation, the individuals generate awareness in terms of measures to promote emotional health. To promote emotional health, there are two important factors that need to be taken into consideration. These include, positive thinking and optimism. Through meditation, the individuals are able to lead to an increase in positive thinking and optimism. In this manner, they are able to generate awareness in terms of the factors to promote emotional health. Therefore, through practicing meditation, the individuals are able to promote emotional health and enrich their overall lives (Thorpe, 2017).

4. Enhances Self-Awareness

Some forms of meditation helps the individuals to lead to an increase in self-awareness. They are able to develop a stronger understanding of themselves and how one relates to those around them. To identify the limitations in one, bring about improvements and form pleasant and amiable terms and relationships with each other, the individuals need to enhance self-awareness. Apart from enhancing self-awareness, the individuals need to augment their skills and abilities to promote the development of analytical, critical thinking and problem solving skills. Therefore, it can be stated, through meditation, the individuals are able to benefit in number of ways. These include enhancement of self-awareness and development of analytical, critical thinking and problem solving skills.

5. Leads to Improvements in Concentration

When the individuals are carrying out a particular task or

activity, it is apparent that they need to concentrate well. In accordance to the research studies, to bring about improvements in concentration, the individuals usually practice meditation. Through meditation, the individuals generate awareness in terms of the techniques necessary to bring about improvements in concentration. Hence, when they are engaged in any particular task or activity within as well as outside the homes, they need to bring about improvements in concentration. When the individuals are working in the kitchen or when they are making use of technologies in the implementation of tasks and activities, they need to concentrate. Therefore, it can be stated, practicing meditation leads to improvements in concentration.

6. Causes Reduction in Age-Related Memory Loss

Through practicing of meditation, the individuals require improvements in attention and clarity of thinking may help keep the mind young. Kirtan Kriya is the method of meditation that combines the mantra or chant with repetitive motion of the fingers to focus upon thoughts. It helped in bringing about improvements in the abilities of the participants to perform the memory tasks in multiple studies of age-related memory loss. In addition to fighting the age-related memory loss, meditation can bring about improvements in the memory in the patients, suffering from dementia. It can help in controlling stress and bring about improvements in caring for the family members with dementia. Therefore, it is understood that one of the benefits of meditation is, it brings about improvements in the memory of the individuals and causes reduction in age-related memory loss.

7. Generate Kindness and Thoughtfulness

It is essential for the individuals to inculcate the traits of kindness and thoughtfulness. Through inculcating these traits, they are able to benefit in number of ways. These include, maintaining an effective social circle, carrying out ones tasks and activities in a well-organized manner, generating the feelings of pleasure and contentment, and promoting well-being of others. Through practicing of meditation, the individuals are able to augment their knowledge and understanding in terms of the traits of kindness and thoughtfulness. It is crucial for the individuals to generate kindness and thoughtfulness particularly for the individuals, who are poverty stricken and belong to deprived, marginalized and economically backward sections of the society and the ones, who are suffering from health problems and illnesses. Therefore, it can be stated, generation of kindness and thoughtfulness is regarded as significant benefits of meditation.

8. Helping in Coping with Addictions

In some cases, the individuals get addicted to various things, such as, alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes and so forth. When they get addicted to these things, they are unable to realise that they will cause health problems and illnesses, which would even prove to be fatal. Through practicing the technique of meditation, the individuals are able to bring about improvements in not only their overall health conditions and well-being, but they are able to cope with addictions. Meditation may also help the individuals to control food cravings. They consume food, only that is needed. In this manner, they are able to curb obesity. Mindfulness meditation renders a significant contribution in causing a reduction in emotional and binge eating. Therefore, it can be stated, one of

the important benefits of meditation is it helps in coping with addictions.

9. Helps in Controlling Pain

The perception of pain is connected to the minds of the individuals and it gets elevated in tense and stressful situations. When the individuals experience pain, they seek medical treatment from medical practitioners and health care specialists. When these individuals impart information to the patients in terms of controlling pain, they in some cases also convey to them to practice meditation. Through practicing of meditation, the individuals are able to control pain. When the patients with terminal diseases are practicing meditation, they have found that meditation may help in alleviating chronic pain at the end of the life. In such cases, mediators as well as non-mediators experience the same causes of pain. But the mediators showed the greater ability to cope with pain and even experienced a reduced sensation of pain. Therefore, it can be stated, helps in controlling pain is an important benefit of meditation.

10. Helps in Implementation of Daily Routine Well

It is apparent that individuals belonging to various age groups, categories and backgrounds aspire to carry out their job duties well. They aspire to achieve success in the implementation of their job duties. Apart from the implementation of their job duties in a well-ordered manner, the individuals need to carry out their daily routine well. Through practicing of meditation, the individuals are able to generate awareness in terms of ways and approaches that are necessary to implement daily routine well. It is comprehensively understood that to carry out daily routine well, the individuals need to remain calm, exercise control on the feelings of anger and frustration, make productive and wise decisions and inculcate the traits of morality and ethics. Through practicing the technique of meditation, the individuals are able to implement all these ways and approaches to carry out daily routine well. Therefore, it can be stated, a vital benefit of meditation is, it helps in the implementation of daily routine well.

Conclusion

Yoga and meditation are the practices that aim at promoting healthy lifestyle of the individuals and their concentration in various areas. These techniques are regarded to render a significant contribution in promoting good health and well-being of the individuals. The individuals, who aim to promote physical, psychological and spiritual well-being, need to recognize the benefits of yoga and meditation. The benefits of yoga are, causes reduction in stress and anxiety, reduce inflammation, improve health of heart, improves quality of lives, helps in coping with depression, helps in alleviating anger, cause reduction in chronic pain, curb sleeping disorders, improves flexibility and balance and helps in improving breathing. The benefits of meditation are, causes reduction in psychological problems, helps in bringing about improvements in decision making skills, promotes emotional health, enhances self-awareness, leads to improvements in concentration, causes reduction in age-related memory loss, generate kindness and thoughtfulness, helping in coping with addictions, helps in controlling pain and helps in implementation of daily routine well. Finally, it can be stated, when the individuals practice the techniques of yoga and meditation on regular basis, they will be able to Render a significant contribution in enriching their overall quality of lives and in promoting good health and well-being.

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