

## INTRODUCTION TO YOGA AND MEDITATION FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Yoga, which developed in India, is an ancient tradition of bringing together the physical, emotional,

mental and spiritual aspects of our being. The goal of yoga is to recognize our true nature and the inherent wisdom. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root “yuj” which means “to yoke”. It has a wide array of meanings which range from “union” to “spiritual endeavour”. Essentially, yoga means union; union within yourself, union with the divine spirit within and harmony between you and all that is within your world. The practice of yoga

- Makes the body strong and flexible; it also improves the functioning of the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, and hormonal systems.
- Yoga brings about emotional stability and clarity of mind.
- In the practice of Yoga the ultimate aim is one of self-development and self-realization.

The practice of yoga involves stretching the body and forming different poses, while keeping breathing slow and controlled. The body becomes relaxed and energized at the same time. There are various styles of yoga, some moving through the poses more quickly, almost like an aerobic workout and other styles relaxing deeply into each pose. Some have a more spiritual angle, while others are used purely as a form of exercise.

### Self Realization

Yoga is a powerful, internal experience, which integrates the body, the senses, the mind, and the intelligence, with the self. Yoga is a system where every person can realize his or her full potential.

#### Four Ways to Self-Realization

- **The path to knowledge (jnana marg)**

when the practitioner learns to difference between the real and the unreal

- **The path of selflessness (karma marg)**

service without thought of reward

- **The path of love and devotion (bhakti marg)**

- **The path of self control (yoga marg)**

The mind and its actions are brought under total control.

*All these paths lead to the same goal of total oneness.*

Yoga offers an effective method of managing and reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, and numerous studies demonstrate the efficacy of yoga on mood-related disorders. Currently, treatment for anxiety and depression involves mostly psychological and pharmacological interventions; however, mind-body interventions are becoming increasingly popular as a means to reduce stress. Yoga, a form of mind-body exercise, has become an increasingly widespread therapy used to maintain wellness, and alleviate a range of health problems and ailments.

Meditation is a practice in which an individual trains the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or for the mind to simply acknowledge its content without becoming identified with that content or as an end in it.

- In simple words, meditation seeks to intentionally remove the distraction of the external world to let us observe what our mind will naturally produce on its own, allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of our own thought process.
- The term meditation refers to a broad variety of practices that includes techniques designed to promote relaxation, build internal energy or life force and develop compassion, love, patience, generosity and forgiveness.
- Meditation aims at effortlessly sustained single-pointed concentration meant to enable its practitioner to enjoy an indestructible sense of well-being and practice human values while in any life activity.
- Meditation originally was meant to help deepen understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life.

These days, meditation is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction. It is considered as a type of mind-body complementary medicine. Meditation produces a deep state of relaxation and eases many health concerns, such as high blood pressure, depression and anxiety by repeating a mantra and closing the eyes.

## Yoga and Meditation together helps an individual to

- Achieve professional excellence and manage stress because of the work pressure and other factors in the organization.
- Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress and insomnia are among the most common reasons that lack individuals from performing their best.
- It encourages one to relax, slow the breath and focus on the present, shifting the balance from the sympathetic nervous system and the flight-or-fight response to the parasympathetic system and the relaxation response.
- It generates balanced energy which is vital to the function of the immune system. This practice optimizes the body's sympathetic responses to stressful stimuli and restores autonomic regulatory reflex mechanisms associated with stress.

Stress has a negative impact on the immune system and prolonged exposure increases susceptibility to disease and leads to physical and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Practicing yoga and meditation has no side effect, yoga based interventions is an alternative option for the treatment of mood disorders. Yoga and meditation are rapidly emerging in the Western world as a discipline for integrating the mind and body into union and harmony, when adopted as a way of life, yoga improves physical, mental, intellectual and Spiritual health.

Researchers are only beginning to understand how disciplines such as yoga promote personal growth, health and well-being. By acknowledging the unity of mind, body and spirit, mind-body fitness programs can assist people in their pursuit of peace, calmness and greater wholeness and integration in their lives. Health care professionals, health educators, etc. need to be aware of the potential of yoga asana important component of a personal wellness plan

