

YOGA IN THE Field of Mental Health

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As we experience life and all that it involves we start to realise that our actions and reaction make a difference to our experience. The system of Yoga practices tested over thousands of years is an efficient skills set for support and clarity The mind being highly complex is more easily maintained within a body which is balanced and the philosophy of Yoga is to unite our many aspects and in so doing we become more whole and happy.

OUTLINE LEARNING PLAN

Postures (called Asana)

For

- development of concentration
- alleviation of nervous tension
- development of strength
- ability to focus calmly

REVIEW OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Effects of Postures with application for wellbeing.
 - Management of stress.
 - Maintenance of Health: Physical, Mental and Emotional.
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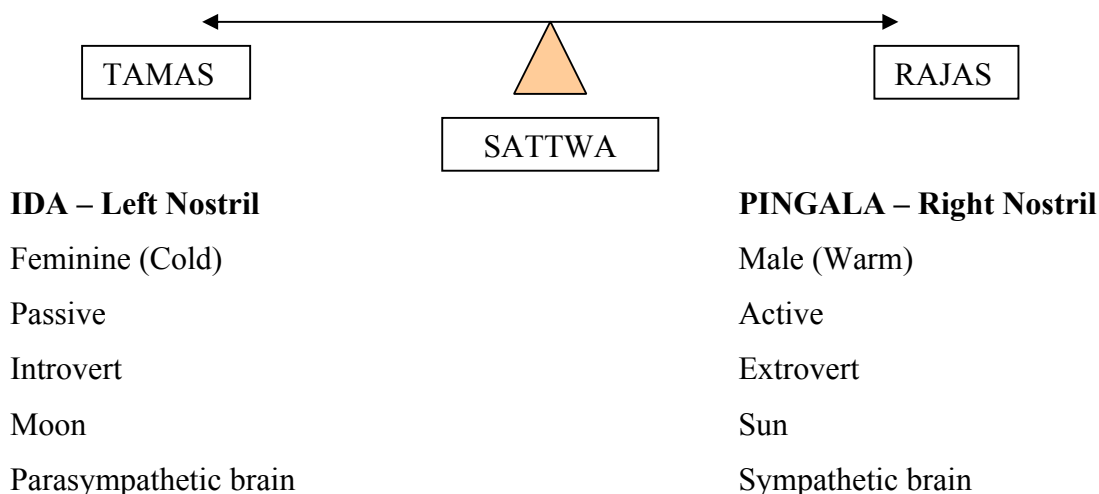
YOGIC VIEW AND APPROACH

Stress is necessary, *how we cope with it is the key*. The Central Nervous System is divided into two, the Sympathetic and the Parasympathetic. In **anxiety disorders**, the Sympathetic System is dominant the body is in almost constant stress. The Yogic approach to this is calming and cooling practices and parasympathetic arousal. In **depression**, sympathetic arousal is applied and dynamic practices are used. Both these approaches lead to balance and greater harmony. With practice we learn to know ourselves and where we are and also which practices we need to do.

Asana : Asana has a direct effect on the Endocrine System and the Central Nervous System, balancing and toning both. Asana relaxes the body, making it light supple and feeling confident **Practices for depression** are designed to alleviate compression of the joints. These include Sura Namaskara, Dynamic postures, backbends, standing and twisting; breathing techniques include Nadi Shodhana, Bhastrika, Kapalhati and abdominal breathing. **Practices for anxiety** include Pawanmuktasana, Sura Namaskara, Bhujangasana, Halasana and breathing techniques include Nadi Shodhana, Kapalhati, Bhastrika, Bhramari and Yoga Nidra.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY.

The Yogic approach to Depression will not immediately look for the cause but will address the energetic state of the person. They may be caught up in their mind – thinking too much and not doing any form of physical exercise. In doing so the Ida and Pingala are brought towards balance and neither the physical or mental faculty predominates.



Hatha Yoga aims to balance the flow of energy to ensure that neither predominates.

PRACTICES FOR DEPRESSION

Hip exercises are an excellent start to a practice as insecurities are in the sacrum. Movements in the hip area gradually free fears and insecurities.

Standing poses help grounding, elevate mood and build confidence. Dynamic standing postures and the sequence of Surya Namaskar are suggested. Tadasana is suggested to bring about lightness and clearing of the mind, tension, depression and dullness. Trikonasana to ground stabilise and stimulate the Muladhara Chakra which **psychologically** is supportive of feeling more comfortable in our bodies.

Backbends invigorate and give a feeling of optimism as they open the chest and the body. **Physiologically**, Bhujangasana, Ustrasana and Dhanurasana are very good because of their direct effect upon the adrenal glands and the thyroid gland.

Psychologically backbends can bring up old fears especially lack of trust in ourselves and others. Backbends open the heart for release and gives vitality and lightness to the body.

Gentle Twists - improve the ability to concentrate.

Inversions

Inverted postures such as shoulder stand or headstand are useful as they alter the flow of blood, lymphatic drainage and cranio sacral fluid. This increases the availability of oxygen and glucose in the brain required for the creation of the 'feel-good' neurotransmitters of norepinephrine, dopamine and serotonin.

Pranayama

It is intimately connected with every cell in our body. To establish regular rhythmic patterns breaks down negative thinking patterns. Pranayama practices contribute to well-being by giving skills and confidence to control physiological responses to stress.

The Breath is often described in yoga as the bridge between the body and mind. The practice of yogic breathing, can have a powerful effect on the mind and body of a depressed person - elevating mood and consciousness by directly increasing the flow of *prana*, life force, through the entire system.

A depressed person often breathes shallow, short breaths into the tops of the lungs. Donna Farhi suggests that this upper-chest breathing is indicative of people being out of their body and more 'in the head'.

Alexander Lowen observed that many of his depressed patients had actually immobilised their diaphragm, unconsciously trying to control powerful feelings

According to Ciara Cronin an experienced Yoga and Mental Health teacher simply teaching a depressed person how to breathe evenly and deeply can have a profound effect on their mental state

Bandhas are very important;-Uddiyana Bandha, Jalandara Bandha

Relaxation Short Progressive Relaxation, Yoga Nidra – a most effective means to join the mind/body.

Yoga practiced in a mindful way creates clarity.