

REVIEW ARTICLE

Effect of Yoga on Body and Mind Healing – A Systematic Review

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received on: 12-03-2025

Accepted on: 14-04-2025

Available online: 30-04-2025

Key words:

Emotional Well-Being,
Mental Health,
Mind Healing,
Stress Reduction,
Yoga

ABSTRACT

Yoga is an ancient holistic practice that integrates physical movement, breath control, meditation, and ethical principles to promote overall well-being. In recent years, yoga has gained significant recognition for its therapeutic benefits on mental health. This paper explores the role of yoga in mind healing, emphasizing its ability to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional imbalances. Scientific studies demonstrate that yoga stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, increases levels of neurotransmitters such as GABA and serotonin, and enhances mindfulness and self-awareness. Key components such as asanas (postures), breathing techniques, and meditation contribute to emotional regulation, improved sleep, and cognitive clarity. Yoga also supports trauma recovery and resilience by fostering a safe, introspective space for healing.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the hustle of modern life, mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional burnout have become widespread. While therapy, medication, and lifestyle changes are essential tools in managing mental health, an ancient practice – yoga – offers a unique, holistic path to mental and emotional healing. Far more than physical exercise, yoga integrates the mind, body, and spirit to promote deep healing and inner peace.^[1]

Rooted in Indian philosophy, yoga is a spiritual discipline involving physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), meditation (dhyana), and ethical living. It has been practiced for thousands of years and is now globally recognized for its profound effects on mental health.^[2]

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1.1. Aim

To explore and evaluate the impact of yoga practices on mental health and emotional well-being, highlighting their effectiveness in mind healing and stress management.

1.2. Objectives

1. To examine the role of yoga in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression
2. To understand the psychological and physiological mechanisms through which yoga promotes mental healing
3. To identify key yoga practices (asanas, pranayama, and meditation) that contribute to emotional balance and inner peace
4. To analyze scientific research supporting yoga as a complementary therapy for mental health conditions
5. To promote awareness of yoga as a holistic and accessible approach to maintaining mental well-being.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Relevant Ayurvedic and Yoga literature were used to gather data on the subject. The following data were selected from *Charaka Samhita*,

Sushruta Samhita, Patanjali Yoga Sutra, and other relevant textbooks of Swasthavritta and yoga.

2.1. Method – Systematic Review

2.1.1. Yoga helps in mind healing

2.1.1.1. Reduces stress and anxiety

Yoga activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps the body relax. A review in *Frontiers in Psychiatry* found that yoga-based interventions were effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety disorders.^[3] Poses such as Child's Pose (Balasana) and Corpse Pose (Savasana) help calm the nervous system, reducing stress and anxiety.

2.1.1.2. Enhances emotional balance

Yoga improves emotional regulation by increasing mindfulness. A study in *Mindfulness Journal* reported that practicing yoga leads to greater emotional stability and reduced symptoms of depression.^[4] Through consistent practice, individuals become more aware of their thoughts and emotions, allowing them to respond to situations with greater clarity and patience.

2.1.1.3. Improves concentration and memory

Meditation and breathing exercises in yoga increase oxygen flow to the brain, improving focus and memory. Research from *Cognitive Processing* found that yoga practitioners performed better on cognitive tasks than non-practitioners.^[5] Techniques such as Trataka (focused gazing) and Bhramari Pranayama (humming breath) enhance cognitive function and mental clarity.

2.1.1.4. Encourages self-awareness and positive thinking

Yoga fosters self-reflection, helping individuals understand their thoughts and emotions better. This awareness leads to a positive mindset, reducing negative thinking patterns and increasing self-confidence. A study in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* found that yoga increases self-compassion and emotional resilience.^[6]

2.1.1.5. Boosts sleep quality

Yoga promotes relaxation, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep. A study published in *Sleep Health* found that yoga improves sleep quality, particularly in individuals suffering from insomnia.^[7] Practices such as Yoga Nidra (yogic sleep) and breathing techniques such as Anulom Vilom (alternate nostril breathing) help combat insomnia and improve sleep patterns.^[8]

2.1.2. Effective yoga techniques for mind healing

2.1.2.1. Pranayama (breathing exercises)

- *Nadi Shodhana* (Alternate Nostril Breathing): Balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain, reducing stress and improving mental clarity.^[9,10]
- *Ujjayi Breath* (Ocean Breath): Calms the mind, enhances focus, and increases oxygen flow to the brain.^[11,12]
- *Bhramari Pranayama* (Humming Bee Breath): Helps relieve anxiety, tension, and restlessness.^[13,14]

2.1.2.2. Asanas (yoga postures)

- *Balasana* (Child's Pose): Soothes the nervous system and provides emotional comfort.^[15]
- *Viparita Karani* (Legs-Up-The-Wall Pose): Relieves anxiety, fatigue, and insomnia.^[16,17]
- *Padmasana* (Lotus Pose): Enhances concentration and promotes inner peace.^[18]

2.1.2.3. Meditation and mindfulness

- *Guided Meditation*: Helps in calming the mind and reducing stress.^[19,20]
- *Chanting (Mantras)*: Repeating positive affirmations or mantras such as "Om" can bring mental stability.^[21]
- *Yoga Nidra* (Yogic Sleep): A deep relaxation technique that heals the mind and body.^[22]

Yoga is a profound and natural system of mind healing. It works not only through the body, but also through breath, awareness, and ethical living. Unlike quick fixes or temporary solutions, yoga invites a deeper transformation – helping individuals face their thoughts, process emotions, and cultivate inner peace.^[23]

Whether you are battling anxiety, emotional fatigue, or simply seeking balance in life, yoga offers a gentle yet powerful path forward. With consistent practice, yoga can become not just a way to heal the mind, but a way to live with greater joy, resilience, and purpose.^[24]

2.1.3. Yoga and specific mental health conditions

Yoga can be adapted for therapeutic use in various mental health challenges:^[25]

2.1.3.1. Anxiety disorders

Gentle yoga, especially with slow breathing, calms the hyperactive mind. Research shows improvement in generalized anxiety disorder symptoms after regular practice of restorative yoga.

2.1.3.2. Depression

Dynamic yoga styles (such as Vinyasa or Hatha) combined with meditation help increase serotonin and improve mood. Studies show yoga rivals cognitive-behavioral therapy in mild-to-moderate depression.

2.1.3.3. PTSD and trauma recovery

Trauma-sensitive yoga, focused on grounding and breath awareness, can help survivors reconnect with their bodies in a safe, empowering way.

2.1.3.4. Insomnia

Yoga Nidra and slow evening yoga sequences improve melatonin production and sleep quality.

3. DISCUSSION

In ancient *Vedic* and *Upanishad* traditions, *yoga* has become a popular mind–body treatment. To improve well-being and proper function of body and mind, breathing techniques, meditation, and postures are incorporated. Through enhancing the range of motion, lowering tenderness, and easing depressed symptoms, therapeutic *yoga* tackles the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. *Yoga*, a mind–body therapy, combines postures, breathing, and meditation to enhance well-being. It aligns with national guidelines for muscle strengthening, flexibility, and balance, indirectly reducing pain perception in older adults. *Yoga* is increasingly recognized as a primary therapeutic approach for chronic pain due to its ability to alleviate physical, mechanical, and functional impairments.

In Ashtanga yoga, Maharishi Patanjali also stated that pranayama means regulation of breath after attaining the stability of asana or posture. "Pranayama" includes three aspects: Inhalation, retention, and exhalation of air. Bhramari and Nadi Shodhan Pranayama both are very effective in reducing stress, anxiety, and anger. Bhramari Pranayama is helpful in "instantly cooling down the brain" and also helps in reducing agitation, frustration, anxiety, and anger. Practicing

Pranayama would have beneficial effects on anger, stress, and quality of life, among college-going students.

4. CONCLUSION

Yoga is a profound and natural system of mind healing. It works not only through the body, but also through breath, awareness, and ethical living. Unlike quick fixes or temporary solutions, yoga invites a deeper transformation – helping individuals face their thoughts, process emotions, and cultivate inner peace.

Whether you are battling anxiety, emotional fatigue, or simply seeking balance in life, yoga offers a gentle yet powerful path forward. With consistent practice, yoga can become not just a way to heal the mind, but a way to live with greater joy, resilience, and purpose.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nil.

6. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All the authors contributed equally to the design and execution of the article.

7. FUNDING

Nil.

8. ETHICAL APPROVALS

This study does not require ethical clearance as it is a review study.

9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

10. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

11. PUBLISHERS NOTE

This journal remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published institutional affiliation.

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How to cite this article:

Khan PA, Chugh K, Kumari R, Bhambu SK. Effect of Yoga on Body and Mind Healing – A Systemic Review. *IRJAY*. [online] 2025;8(4):12-14.

Available from: <https://irjay.com>

DOI link- <https://doi.org/10.48165/IRJAY.2025.80403>