

Effect of Meditation in Prevention of Suicidal Deaths

K. Ravimuni¹, K. Usha Rani²

¹Professor, Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, NIMRA Medical College & Hospital, Ibrahimpatnam, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, ²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Koneru Lakshmiiah Educational Foundation, Vaddeswaram, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. The period between childhood and adulthood is viewed as Adolescence. It is the period, where physiological and psychological maturity takes place. By nature, adolescents are sensitive, emotional, and temperamental and pass through a major transformation from childhood to adulthood involving a great physical, mental and emotional evolutionary process. Most of the students are stressful during the times of exams. Stress occurs while preparing and clearing the exams as one struggles to achieve the expected grade and mastering the content in a defined time. Raja Yoga meditation eases physiological and psychological stress and restores mental harmony if practiced on a regular basis; it is a compliment for promoting and maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual health. Heartfulness meditation used in this investigation is a simplified form of Raja Yoga where a practitioner meditates on the heart.

Keywords: emotional, frustrated, nervous, raja yoga, cure

Introduction

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. **Stress** is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, **stress** can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline.

Stress has become inevitable in current lifestyles. Stress manifestations include emotional reactions like panic state, frustration, low self-esteem, a temporary hindrance in coping, debilitation, peevishness, nervousness, a state of dissemination, etc and physical symptoms like low energy, headaches, stomach upsets, tachycardia, pain, insomnia, profuse sweating, muscle spasms, frequent respiratory infections, etc²

Stress at Various Levels

The period between childhood and adulthood is viewed as Adolescence (13yrs to 18 yrs). It is the period, where physiological and psychological maturity takes place⁸

By nature, adolescents are sensitive, emotional and temperamental and pass through a major transformation from childhood to adulthood involving a great physical, mental and emotional evolutionary process.⁷Lifestyles have made adolescence a stressful period for the children. Emotional stress in adolescents can result from multiple factors like sensitive feelings or relationships with opposite sex, peer influences, social networking, parental pressures, academic pressures such as excessive assignments, poor academic performance and failure, poor relationship with teachers and friends etc¹¹

Most of the students are stressful during the times of exams. Stress occurs while preparing and clearing the exams as one struggles to achieve the expected grade and mastering the content in a defined time.¹Stress is self-imposed and inversely affects student's health, time management and academic performances.¹

Stress in Adulthood

The period between 19 yrs to 25 yrs is considered as young adulthood. Young adults are highly sensitive and prompted by their emotions, feelings and take decisions

according to their instincts and peer influences. As they have less experience to make proper judgments, they are highly stressful compared with older adults. At the same time, they are open to alternative and complimentary therapies.¹³

In general, young adults respond to stress with unhealthy behaviors such as irritability, anger, sleep deprivation, overeating or eating unhealthy food, substance abuse and stress headaches. Chronic stress in young adults can have lasting repercussions on their psychological and physical health in their future life.

Stress as Per Gender

In general, females are more sensitive to emotions and feel more stressed than males in any given adverse circumstances. Females go through many psychological and physiological changes during puberty, adolescence, and adulthood. Stress related to body image issues, eating disorders and peer relationships is common in this age group. They are expected to multitask in daily activities, face greater burden, demands and restrictions in the family compared to their opposite sex.⁹ Furthermore, females may experience gender specific violence and discrimination in the society adding to their stress⁵

The main aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of Heartfulness Meditation on stress management in college students.

Methods

Yoga and Meditation techniques have been in use for centuries in learning environments and clinical settings as methods to reduce pain and to mitigate stress. During meditation, the mind is trained to ignore thoughts and become still. Regular practice clears away the information workload that builds up every day in the mind contributing to stress.

The practice of meditation produces a relaxation response even in subjects who had never practiced meditation before. It results in the physiological stress responses without taking away the beneficial effect of stress, the namely improved performance of cognitive tasks and memory; In fact, it can reverse our stress response, deterring the progress to a chronic stress

condition.

Raja Yoga meditation eases physiological and psychological stress and restores mental harmony if practiced on a regular basis; it is a compliment for promoting and maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual health¹¹.

Heartfulness meditation used in this investigation is a simplified form of Raja Yoga where a practitioner meditates on the heart. This technique involves regulation of mind by ignoring unwanted thoughts during meditation. There is no concentration involved during meditation. When one tunes the mind to the heart, sensitivity improves, and one goes from just 'thinking to feeling' resulting in becoming more intuitive, more sensitive, and hence more compassionate. This is a very important aspect for caregivers such as nurses, facilitating the development of heart-based qualities such as compassion, love, tolerance, sense of timing and intuition. Heartfulness meditation brings a double benefit which is regulation of mind and enabling one to perceive and engage with the heart.

Results

We are collectively being faced with more external pressures in the modern world. The pace of work is increasing, and we are asked to do more work in less time. If we are not careful in living an orderly life, our stress levels can skyrocket and leave us rattled with anxiety, anger, frustration, and other negative emotions. Luckily, there are many ways to deal with stress constructively. While we may not have full control over the external environment, we can slowly gain mastery over the internal environment, or the mind.

There are many ways to train the mind, and all of them have to do with regulating our thoughts. Here are two practical ways to train your mind and regulate your thoughts at work to lower stress and anxiety.

Give others the benefit of the doubt: People might say rude or insensitive things to you while also placing heavy work demands on you. Instead of getting angry, remain aware that they probably had no intention to be mean to you. That may be how they communicate, they may also be under a lot of pressure, and they might

not be aware of what your schedule is like. Give others the benefit of the doubt with respect to their intentions, while also being clear and firm about your needs and capacity to take on work.

Actively generate positive emotions: Positive emotions such as gratitude, love, joy, etc. harmonize the mind, which can help you manage and complete your work more effectively. We can actively generate positive emotions from within ourselves. Think of all the things in your life you are grateful for. Think of those things

that make you feel love, happiness, joy, etc. and really feel those positive emotions and let them wash over you. Make a habit of remaining in a positive emotional state even when there is chaos around you.

The mind is efficiency obsessed, and therefore, it is difficult to re-orient it from patterns of negative thinking. It is useful to take up an effective meditation system to work on reconstructing our minds into dynamos of positive energy.

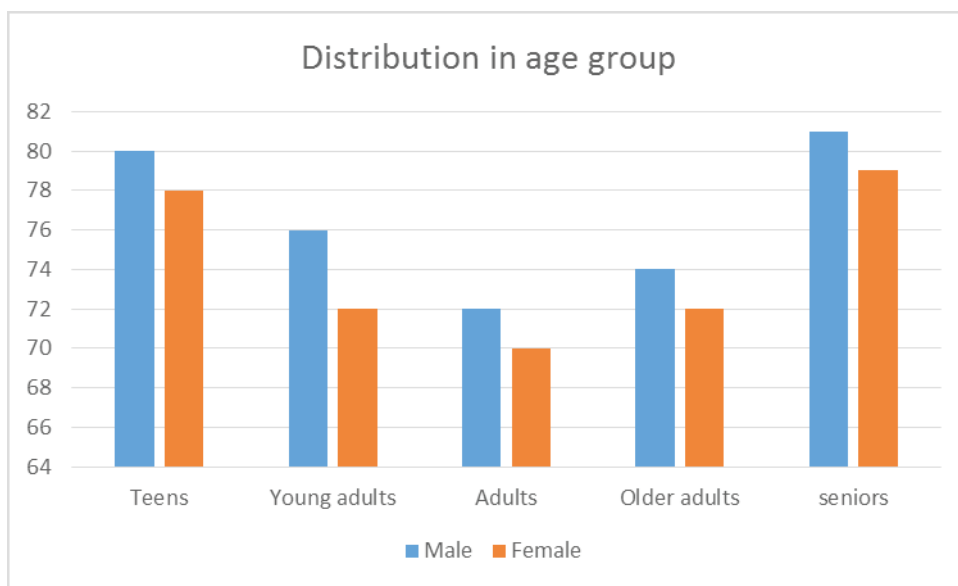


Figure1: Distribution in age group

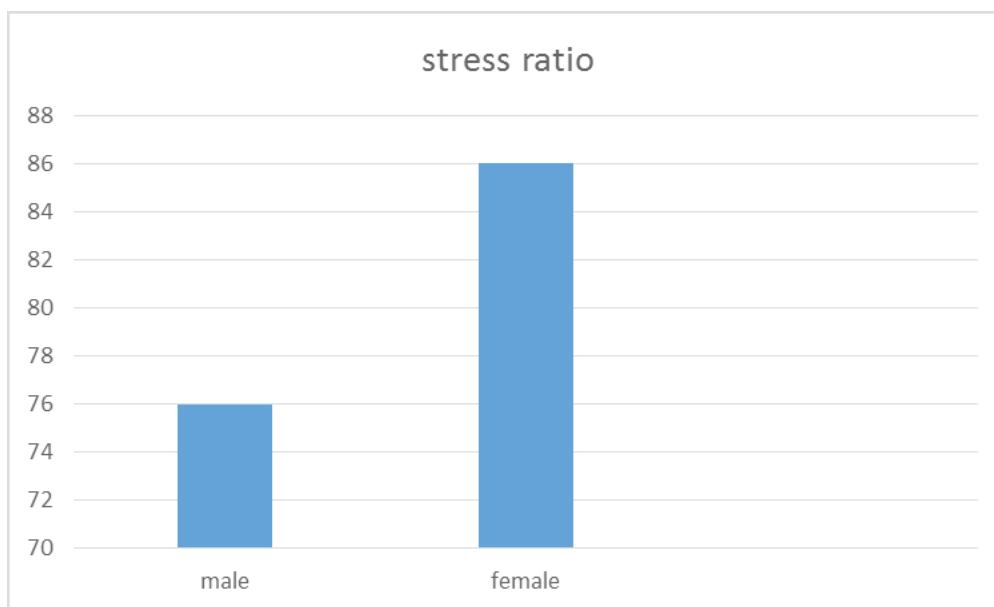


Figure 2: Stress in gender

Discussion

At the baseline, female participants had more stress than males in all types of stress across all age groups. It is consistent with the results found in previous studies that, in general, women experience more stress than men. Common causes of this increased perception of stress in females is due to physiological, psychological and cultural factors, gender based discrimination etc³

By nature, girls are tender, caring and empathetic towards their loved ones, filled with expectations. They are multi-tasking and culture oriented compared to males. In general, males are fun-loving; tend to have a swift fight or flight response and escaping tendency by relaxing and distractions.⁴ After the Meditation Masterclass, there is a significant decrease in stress due to overload, worries, tension and harassment in females and a significant increase in the levels of joy. In the case of male participants, the scores of stress due to overload, worries, tension and harassment are less at the baseline. Stress related to these has reduced after the Meditation and the levels of joy have significantly increased after participation in meditation.

In general, adolescence is a stressful period filled with pressures related to behavior, peers, psychosexual problems, academic demands, parental expectations, relationships etc. Teenagers are more sensitive to emotions than young adults.⁵

Adolescents had greater stress related to work overload, worries, tension and harassment at the baseline compared to young adults. As expected, they also had more levels of joy than their older counterparts. This indicates the labile nature of emotions in adolescents, explaining their mood swings.

There is a significant reduction in the stress levels related to work overload, worries, tension and harassment and a significant increase in joy among adolescents after Meditation Masterclass. These changes in all parameters except work overload have achieved statistical significance.

In Adults, there is a statistically significant reduction in stress related to worries and a significant rise in joy after the meditation Masterclass. Stress levels related

to overload, tension and harassment also have reduced though not to the extent of statistical significance.

Feeling of stress due to 'Overload' is generally related to the burden of work, in this age group- it is mostly academic, like home works, exams, etc- which is an external factor.

As expected, external factors do not change significantly over a period of three days explaining the reason why there was no significant reduction in the stress related to overload.

Compared to adolescents, adults are more mature, more decisive, less aggressive, well oriented of future plans and better treated by their teachers and parents.⁶ Hence, adults might not have felt greater tension and harassment compared to adolescents.

Meditation changes the attitude of a person, the way how he/she perceives things. Worries and tension occur when a person perceives the circumstances as a source of an unwanted or unpleasant outcome. Meditation removes such self-generated false perceptions and enhances courage by promoting dependency on the higher self and prepares the person to face the future with a positive attitude. Our study endorses the same as there is a significant reduction in the stress related to worries and tension in all the participants after the Heartfulness Meditation Masterclass.

Harassment is generally related to one's feeling of how he or she is treated by others. 'Feeling of being harassed'- in college students, is generally due to their misunderstanding of the demands made by the parents and teachers, which are meant to correct them -for their better future.

Meditation promotes introspection and matured thinking. When we do self-examination as to "why someone is behaving with me like this?"- before judging that behavior as entirely unreasonable, uneasiness of being ill-treated by others subsides. The same is confirmed by the results of this study, showing a significant reduction in stress due to harassment in Adolescents and females- the subgroups that are more vulnerable to this kind of stress.

Overall, Heartfulness Meditation promotes a feeling of joy. This could be related to the removal of disturbing thoughts and creation of a sense of calmness and inner peace.

This is consistent with the ancient literature, that the true inner nature of the Soul is 'Joy'. It is the coverings around it, made by one's thoughts and actions, separate the person from it (Chandra R). Meditation takes the person deep within and gives the taste of his or her inner self which reveals its true nature, that is 'Joy'.¹²

Most important of all is the process itself, which is not just another traditional meditation teaching. It consists of a bundle of different processes like relaxation, heart-based meditation, Yogic transmission and Heartfulness cleaning. These processes worked synergistically complimenting the effects of one another.

In this meditation participants were guided through heart-based meditation, not just explaining the method. So far, in the previous studies, participants were guided in yoga exercises, breathing exercises etc guiding the participants during meditation and taking them deep inside was first of its kind.

An extraordinary technique called 'yogic transmission' was used by the guide which is— said to be a unique feature of Heartfulness method. This process is claimed to take the meditators to deeper levels of meditation in a short time.

Heartfulness Relaxation- helped them to relax entire body before beginning meditation, so that the participants could get settled in Meditation, faster.

Finally, the Heartfulness Cleaning, a process of simple commands given by the guide that enabled the participant to mentally clean unnecessary thoughts in his/her mind and rejuvenate it. This made the meditation more peaceful and tranquil (Naidoo P).

Conclusion

Meditation significantly reduced stress levels in college students. Higher the stress level at the baseline, greater was the reduction of stress after the Heartfulness Meditation. We observed a markedly increased feeling of joy uniformly among all the participants after the

Masterclass.

It is an irrefutable fact that meditation is effective in reducing stress. But making a person to get settled in meditation is the real challenge. In general, greater the disturbance in mind, longer will be the time required to feel calmness through meditation.

This Heartfulness Masterclass offered a bundle of simple strategies to help the participants get settled in deeper states of meditation faster. These worked in perfect synergy. 'Heartfulness Relaxation' - prepared the person for meditation, 'Heartfulness Cleaning' removed disturbing thoughts, the unique concept of 'Yogic Transmission'-facilitated to go deeper in meditation within a short time and 'Heartfulness Prayer'-helped to connect deep within, thus gaining the guidance and confidence from within.

This multipronged systematic approach, provided as practical walkthrough sessions with real time guidance, appears to be the most important reason for such a significant reduction in stress in such a short time.

Ethical Clearance: This study has been carried out in the year 2013, after from the ethical committee of NRI Medical College/ General Hospital, Chinakakani, Guntur.

Source of Funding: Self

Conflict of Interest: Nil

References

1. Abouserie R. Sources and levels of stress in relation to locus of control and self esteem in university students. *Educational psychology* 1994;14(3):323-30.
2. Asberg KK, Bowers C, Renk K, McKinney C. A structural equation modeling approach to the study of stress and psychological adjustment in emerging adults. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development* 2008; 39(4):481-501.
3. Calderon KS, Thompson WW. Biofeedback relaxation training: A rediscovered mind-body tool in public health. *American Journal of Health Studies* 2004; 19(4):185.
4. del Valle JF, Bravo A, López M. Parents and peers as providers of support in adolescents' social

- network: a developmental perspective. *Journal of Community Psychology* 2010;38(1):16-27.
5. Heim C, Newport DJ, Heit S, Graham YP, Wilcox M, Bonsall R, Miller AH, Nemeroff CB. Pituitary-adrenal and autonomic responses to stress in women after sexual
 6. Isaacowitz DM. Correlates of well-being in adulthood and old age: A tale of two optimism. *Journal of Research in Personality* 2005;39(2):224-44.
 7. Kai-Wen C. A study of stress sources among college students in Taiwan. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics* 2009;2:1.
 8. Liou SR, Cheng CY. Organisational climate, organisational commitment and intention to leave amongst hospital nurses in Taiwan. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 2010; 19(11-12):1635-44.
 9. Matthews S, Hertzman C, Ostry A, Power C. Gender, work roles and psychosocial work characteristics as determinants of health. *Social science & medicine* 1998; 46(11):1417-24.
 10. Naidoo P. Yogic transmission in Sahaj Marg of the Shri Ram Chandra mission: a religio-historical study (Doctoral dissertation).
 11. Sharma MS, Sinha S. Psycho-Analytical Investigation of Stress among Students of Higher Technical Education in India: A Case Study.
 12. Vivekananda S. The complete works of Swami Vivekananda. Manonmani Publishers; 2015 Aug 24.
 13. Zimmerman C. A pilot study to assess students' perceptions, familiarity, and knowledge in the use of complementary and alternative herbal supplements in health promotion. *Alternative therapies in health and medicine* 2012;18(5):28.