UNIT 5 : YOGA THERAPY FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to –

- state the causes of common Mental illness
- discuss the symptoms of Mental illnesses
- suggest Yoga therapy for Anxiety, stress and depression.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Modern life offers all possible phenomenal benefits to man, catering to his mental and bodily needs. Despite great strides in technology related comforts, man seems to have lost his quality of life. So also, modern interventions, based on principles of modern physiology, have proved to be largely ineffective in case of psychic and psychosomatic disorders.

Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions-disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behaviour. The common mental illness includes- anxiety disorders, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviours. You should know that many people have mental health concerns from time to time. But, a mental health concern becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affects ones' ability to function. If someone if facing

mental illness, it can make him or her miserable and can cause problems in his or her daily life. Mental illness is common and it can begin at any age, from childhood through later adult years. The effects of mental illness can be temporary or long lasting. Untreated mental illness can cause severe emotional, behavioural and physical health problems.

Yoga has long been seen as a tool for improving mental health. A correction, on the level of Prana, results in a correction on the psycho-physiological level. Psycho- physiological practices of Yoga help perceive objects, concepts and persons far more objectively.

Dr. H. R. Nagendra has explained the five ways by which Yogic practices help the person with mental illness-

1. Calming effect-

The more agitated a person is, the more difficult they find it to practice yoga and to relax. However, with more physical practices as Asanas, Pranayamas and Kriyas (cleansing techniques as Kapalabhati, Trataka, Neti etc.) most patients with mental illness will be able to benefit by reducing the agitation they feel.

2. Increasing Awareness-

Yoga practice increases awareness of oneself and of one's' surroundings. As a patient beings to be aware of the most basic physical sensations as heartbeat, pulse etc., it becomes easier to suggest increasing the scope of awareness to include awareness of the surroundings and of the other people.

3. Increasing the attention span-

One of the reasons why it is very difficult for a mentally ill- patient to return to work even after the acute phase is because of the markedly reduced attention spa and easy distractibility. A short attention span and the tendency to be easily distracted, make it very difficult for a schizophrenia patient to see any task through to completion, successfully. By practising Yoga, a patient may be able to maintain a state of focused attention with greater ease and for longer periods.

4. Acceptance and adaptability-

One of the challenges for rehabilitation of persons with mental illness

is that even if they are adequately rehabilitated in their homes, the environment there is often so unhealthy that they get a relapse. Certain ideas of acceptance and adaptability, which are part of Yoga counselling, help the subjects to make a good transition from the therapy centre to the world outside.

5. A sense of Security-

Bhakti Yoga or indeed any form of devotion and surrender to a supreme entity or a role model of a person will be of great source of strength to a "recovered" patient (i.e., a person who, through meditation, no longer has symptoms such as hallucination, delusions, or bizarre behaviour, in general). Very often, during the course of a long and difficult illness a patient may lose contact with his family. For a recovered patient this lack of support may give rise to feelings of insecurity, reduce the chances of further improvement and even bring about a relapse. This is where a sense of Bhakti or devotion and surrender to a supreme or ideal being may give the person an anchor with a feeling of reassurance and of security.

Importance of Yogic Life Style for Mental Illness

- Yoga holds the bodily existence and its life span as a means to Self-realization. This type of thinking gives a sense of purpose to one's life and living.
- Psychological ego defence mechanisms like suppression and repression have a close relevance to Stress, Anxiety and Depression. Yogic practices provide easy ways of unveiling one's own ego defences. This facilitates mental catharsis.
- Person with mental illness (Anxiety and depression), individual looks like a slave of impulses and emotions. Yoga believes that, this condition can be healed through exploring and knowing one's inner being.
- Yogic practices produce a feeling of self- worth and meaningfulness in one's life. It positively affects one's personal and social endeavours. This in turn, minimizes the responses of Stress, Anxiety and Depression.
- Yamas and Niyamas are capable to break the fixities and automatism

at the physical level, as well as, it offers certain spiritual exercises to free the mind from conscious and unconscious impulsions, reactivities and conditionings.

5.3 YOGA FOR ANXIETY

Introduction

Anxiety is an unpleasant state that involves a complex combination of emotions that include fear, worry and apprehension. Everyone has feeling of anxiety at some point of their life- for example; you may feel worried and anxious about sitting an exam, or going to a job interview, or giving a speech, or the first day of school or having a medical test. During times like these, feeling anxious is normal. Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. Certain amount of anxiety is normal that motivates the individual for planning and execution of the systematic work. It helps one deal with a tense situation in the office, study harder for an exam, and keep focused on an important speech. But, some people find it hard to control their worries. Excessive anxiety interferes with the normal efficiency of a person. Chronic anxiety is a major contributory factor to many other psychosomatic disorders like hypertension, ischemic heart disease, obesity, asthma and diabetes.

Anxiety has three components. Firstly, there is a psycho-physiological component which produces anxiety symptoms such as palpitation (racing heart), breathlessness, dizziness and sweating. Secondly, there is psychological component which produces anxiety symptoms such as irritability, lack of concentration, obsessions, deep feeling of fear. Thirdly, there may be inter- personal component featuring an inclination to cling to other people for reassurance.

Causes

The exact cause of anxiety is not fully understood. Researches done suggest that it may be due to a combination of several factors. These may include-

- Heredity
- History of stressful or traumatic experiences, such as domestic violence, child abuse

- Fright in especially neglected or overprotected children and youngsters, disappointment on failure in one's career.
- Over-activity in areas of the brain responsible for emotions and behaviour
- An imbalance of the brain chemicals such as serotonin and noradrenalin, which are involved in the control and regulation of mood



Signs and Symptoms

- Common symptoms of anxiety are-
- There is a feeling of tightness in the chest
- Difficulty in swallowing or breathing
- Tachycardia with mental agitation
- Pain in the chest
- Pain or numbness in the head, face, neck or shoulders
- Excessive perspiration (sweating)
- Frequent urination
- Shaking or shivering (visibly or internally)
- Indigestion, heartburn, constipation or diarrhoea
- Sexual dysfunction
- Insomnia, nightmares

Yogic Management

The line of treatment should be to retard the hyperactive state of

mind. Shifting of awareness consciously from thoracic breathing to the abdominal breathing helps a lot in reducing anxiety.

Shat- Karma

Jala Neti, Trataka, Kapalabhati (mild)

Asanas

Surya Namaskara, Tadasana, Tiryak- Tadasana, Kati- Chakrasana, Vrikshasana, Vakrasana, Gomukhasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana, Ushtrasana, Sashankasana, Paschimottanasana, Pawan Muktasana, Ardha Halasana, Vipreet karani asana, Makarasana, Bhujangasana, Ardha Shalabhasana, Shavasana.

Pranayama

Nadi Shodhan, Ujjayi, Shitali/ Seetkari, Bhramari Pranayama

Mudra- Bandha

Uddiyana Bandha

Meditation

Breath awareness, Om chanting

Others

- Yoga Nidra will be beneficial as Yoga Nidra is believed to act on the subconscious level to bring about a state of homeostasis in the body and mind.
- Avoid cold drinks. Drink warm water instead of frequent tea or coffee.
- Have light and easily digestible diet.
- Remain engaged in some constructive work.

5.4 YOGA FOR STRESS

Introduction

Stress is the primary and immediate response of our nervous system when it thinks our body is under immediate threat or in danger. Stress is body's involuntary reaction. It describes our physical or emotional response to demands or pressures that we may experience from time to time. Stress is associated with all types of activity. Stress can be a positive thing, helping an individual to grow, develop, be stimulated and take action. However, if stress exceeds a person's ability to cope it can impact on their mental and

physical health in a range of ways. The roots of stress are in the mind but its flowers and fruits are in the body. Action and reaction of stress goes from mind to body and vice- versa.

People deal with stress in life in different ways and the capacity to deal with stress changes throughout life. Those who have developed effective strategies to deal with day to day stressors are less likely to develop physical and psychological symptoms.

Actually, stress is designed to make us act swiftly to protect ourselves in situations of life or death. But, when our body, more precisely our nervous system become unable to differentiate between real life threatening situation and daily struggles and challenges. When our nervous system is unable to differentiate between actual life threatening situations and daily challenges, it gets used to triggering stress quickly and very frequently. The stress then becomes very difficult to switch off. The body thus remains in a heightened state of stress continuously that can cause serious health problems. Numbers of diseases are caused by the stress as, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, heart attack, stomach ulcer, sleeplessness, headache etc.

Causes

Stress may be caused by a variety of factors both outside the body and within.

- Over straining of nerves, senses, organs, glands and muscles.
- Obstacles in basic need e.g. hunger, thirst, love and affection, social status, rest, sex etc.
- Sudden unpleasant news, loss in business, lack of self control, poor physical and mental health.
- Changing situation, failure, fear, limit for success.
- Poverty, lack of family adjustment for harmony and employment.
- Feeling of superiority, hatred, resentment etc.

Sign and Symptoms

Physical symptoms of stress can include:

- Low energy
- Headache

- Decreased sexual function
- Muscle tension and pain
- Muscle spasm
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Psychological symptoms of stress can include:

- Irritability or upset mood
- Difficulty concentration
- Difficulty with decision making
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty relaxing or restlessness
- Nervousness
- Uneasiness



Yogic Management

Yoga is effective on the level of Nervous system and Endocrine system. And thus, we found it helpful in balancing the activities of nervous system and hormones in the body. Following Yogic practices are suggested for the management of Stress.

Shat- Karma

Neti, Kunjal and Trataka

Asana-

Tadasana, Tiryak- tadasana, Kati- Chakrasana, Trikonasana, Padmasana, Paschimottanasana, Vajrasana, Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, halasana, Sarvangasana and Shavasana.

Pranayama-

Nadi Shodhan and Bhramari pranayama

Mudra Bandha-

Gyan Mudra,

Meditation-

Om chanting, Breath awareness

Diet

Avoid coffee, soft drinks, salt, cigarettes and alcohol.

5.5 YOGA FOR DEPRESSION

Introduction

Depression is a common mental disorder. It negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Depression can result in a grave complication- suicide. Depression causes depressed mood, feelings of sadness, low self esteem and/or a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home. The person may have trouble doing normal day to day activities, and sometimes he or she may feel as if life isn't worth living.

Causes

Several factors can play a role in depression. It likely results from a combination of genetic, biochemical, environmental and psychological factors.

- Genetics- Depression can run in families from generation.
- Biochemistry- Certain neuro-transmitters namely serotonin, dopamine, acetylcholine and nor- adrenaline chemicals that brain cells use to communicate appear to be out of balance in depression.

  Changes in the balance of hormones may be involved in causing or triggering depression. Hormone changes can result with pregnancy, during the weeks or months after delivery. It can also result with thyroid problems, menopause or other conditions.
- Personality- People who are generally pessimistic, who are with low self-esteem or who are easily overwhelmed by stress, being too

dependent, self critical appear to be more likely to experience depression.

- Environmental- External factors like continuous exposure to violence, neglect, abuse (physical or sexual) or poverty and other factors like trauma, loss of near and dear ones, medical illnesses or any stressful situation may make some people more vulnerable to depression.
- An excess of carbohydrates like cereals, white sugar, coffee, tea, chocolates and comparatively less quantities of vegetables and fruits in the diet may result indigestion. Due to indigestion gases are produced in the digestive tract, causing compression over the diaphragm in the region of the heart and lungs. This in turn, reduces the supply of oxygen to the tissues which raises the carbon dioxide level, causing general depression.
- The excessive and indiscriminate use of drugs also leads to faulty assimilation of vitamins and minerals of the body and ultimately causes depression.

Sign and Symptoms

It is not always easy to diagnose depression clinically. The most common symptoms of the depression can include:

- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Diminished ability to think, concentrate and make decision
- Feeling of worthlessness, tearfulness, emptiness, inappropriate guilt or regret, helplessness, hopelessness and self hatred
- Loss of interest or pleasure, inability to enjoy the activities
- Feeling sad or having a very low mood or depressed mood
- Diminished memory
- Weight loss/ gain and constipation
- Sleep disturbances including Insomnia or Hypersomnia (sleeping too much)
- Decreased sexual desire/ functioning
- Impairment in social and occupational functioning
- Irritability or frustration, even over small matters.

Yogic Management

Both medication and psychological treatments are effective in the treatment of depression. Most of the anti- depressants drugs provide temporary relief but have some serious side effects like gross liver damage, hypersensitivity, insomnia etc.

The line of treatment should be to activate the person. The Yogic practices should focus on to develop positive thoughts and to infuse energy into the person.

Shat- Karma

Neti, Kapalabhati

Asana

Surya Namaskara, Tadasana, Tiryak Tadasana, Kati Chakrasana, Vakrasana, Gomukhasana, Ushtrasana, Shashankasana, Pawan-muktasana, Setubandhasana, Sarvangasana, Makarasana, Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, Shavasana.

Pranayama

Nadi Shodhana Pranayama, Suryabhedan Pranayama, Ujjayi Pranayama, Bhramari Pranayama, Bhastrika Pranayama

Meditation

Breathe awareness, Om Chanting

Diet:

The diet of persons suffering from depression should completely exclude tea, coffee, alcohol, chocolate, all white flour products, sugar, food colourings, and chemical additives.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Fill in the blanks:

A. Yoga practice ..... (increases/ decreases) ..... awareness of oneself and of one's surroundings.

B. Repression is a type of ..... defence mechanism.

C. Anxiety is an unpleasant state that involves a complex combination of ..... that includes fear, worry and

apprehension.

D. Stress is the primary and immediate response of our ..... system when it thinks our body is under immediate threat or in danger.

E. Depression ..... (positively/negatively) ..... affects how one feel, the way one think and how one act.

F. For the management of depression, Yogic practices should focus on to develop .....



5.6 LET US SUM UP

Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions-disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behaviour. The common mental illness includes- anxiety disorders, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviours. Untreated mental illness can cause severe emotional, behavioural and physical health problems. Yogic practices and Yogic life style is helpful in managing mental illnesses by their calming effect, increasing awareness of oneself and of one's' surroundings, increasing the attention span, increasing acceptance and adaptability in one's nature and by developing a feeling of reassurance and of security. Shat- Karma, Yogasanas, Pranayamas, Meditation techniques along with Yama and Niyamas are helpful in managing Anxiety, Stress and Depression. By regular practice of Yogic techniques along with living the Yogic life style under the supervision of expert, person can get free from these problems and capable to live a healthy and happy life.



5.7 FURTHER READING

1) *Yoga Therapy For Selected Diseases*- Dr. M. M. Gore, Dr. D. R. Vaze, Dr. S. A. Kulkarni, Dr. J. P. Oak, Kaivalyadhama: Lonavla, Pune.

2) *Yoga Therapy-* Suman K K and Ahluwalia V K, Lotus Press Publishers and Distributors : New Delhi.

3) *Diet Cure For Common Ailments-* Dr. H. K. Bakhru, Jaico Publishing House: Mumbai.

4) *Integrated Yoga Therapy for mental illness-* Dr. H. R. Nagendra, Indian Journal of Psychiatry (2013)

5) *Yoga and Mental Health and Beyond-* R. S. Bhogal, Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla : Pune.

6) *Stress and its management by Yoga-* K. N. Udupa, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.: Delhi.

5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: A. Increases

B. Ego

C. Emotions

D. Nervous

E. Negatively

F. Positive thoughts

5.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the causes and symptoms of Anxiety. Also suggest some Yogic practices for the management of it.

Q 2: Write in brief the importance of Yogic life style for the management of Mental illness.

Q 3: State the causes and symptoms of Stress. Also suggest some Yogic practices for its management.

Q 4: What do you understand by depression? State its causes, symptoms and Yogic management.

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