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“Management of Psychosomatic disorders through Yoga”

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ABSTRACT

Psychosomatic disorders are conditions that involve both physical and psychological components. These disorders can manifest as physical illnesses worsened by mental health issues, mental health issues exacerbated by physical illnesses, or mental health issues experienced with physical symptoms. In today's fast-paced and demanding world, stress has become a common experience for individuals due to various factors such as responsibilities, social status, and family status. This stress takes a toll on our overall well-being, leading to health problems like obesity, hypertension, and cardiac issues. Despite advanced medical facilities, many people lead stressful, unhealthy, and unstable lives. In such a scenario, practicing yoga can bring peace to the body, mind, and soul, enhancing our quality of life. Stress is an unpleasant state of emotional and psychological arousal that arises when individuals perceive certain situations as dangerous or threatening to their well-being.

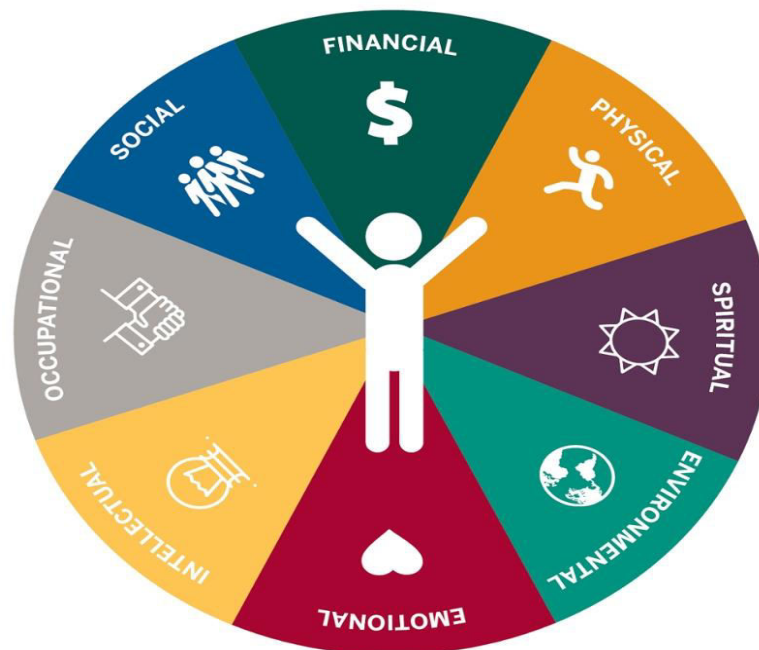
Introduction:

Psychosomatic disorders, including conversion disorder, involve both physical and psychological aspects. These disorders often have a genetic predisposition and can be triggered by stressful life events. However, the term "psychosomatic" is frequently misused and misunderstood in popular culture, often referring to mental disorders that manifest with seemingly unrelated physical symptoms.

Description:

In today's world, it is challenging for individuals to remain stress-free due to numerous responsibilities, opportunities, and societal pressures. The term "psychosomatic disorders" previously referred to specific disorders where stress and psychological distress caused physical ailments like peptic ulcers, arthritis, and dermatitis. However, it is now recognized that all diseases can have psychological, social, and behavioral aspects alongside organic features.

The field of psychosomatic medicine studies the interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors in health and disease.



A prime example illustrating the interconnectedness of these factors is heart disease. Biological factors like age, sex, and genetics, as well as physiological factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, alcohol consumption, and elevated cholesterol levels, contribute to the development of heart disease. Additionally, psychological and social factors like depression, anxiety, and stress increase the risk of heart attacks and subsequent mortality. Stress can lead to anxiety or depression, resulting in an increased heart rate and irregular heartbeats, which can be fatal after a heart attack. Lack of social support also contributes to a higher risk of recurrent heart attacks.

In Ayurveda, psychosomatic disorders are described as diseases involving both the mind (psyche) and body (soma). Mental factors such as stress and anxiety can exacerbate physical diseases, highlighting the interconnectedness of the mind and body. Thus, a bidirectional approach that considers both aspects is crucial for the proper diagnosis and management of psychosomatic disorders. Ayurveda provides detailed descriptions and treatment approaches for psychic (Manasic), somatic (Shariric), and psychosomatic disorders (Manodahic Vyadhiyan), which can complement modern perspectives on these conditions.

Psychosomatic disorders are conditions that involve both the mind and body, where psychological factors can contribute to physical symptoms without any clear medical explanation. These disorders can affect various parts of the body, and individuals with psychosomatic disorders often seek medical attention repeatedly, feeling frustrated by the lack of a diagnosis. Behavioral therapy and stress reduction techniques are often recommended to help manage these conditions.

It's important to note that to some extent, most diseases involve a combination of both mind and body. There is a mental aspect to every physical disease, as our reactions and coping mechanisms can vary greatly from person to person. For example, individuals with psoriasis may have different emotional responses to the skin rash associated with the condition, impacting their overall well-being differently.

Furthermore, mental illness can also have physical effects on the body. For instance, some mental illnesses can lead to poor self-care and inadequate nutrition, resulting in physical health problems.

Certain physical diseases are believed to be particularly susceptible to being worsened by mental factors such as stress and anxiety. Examples of such conditions include psoriasis, eczema, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

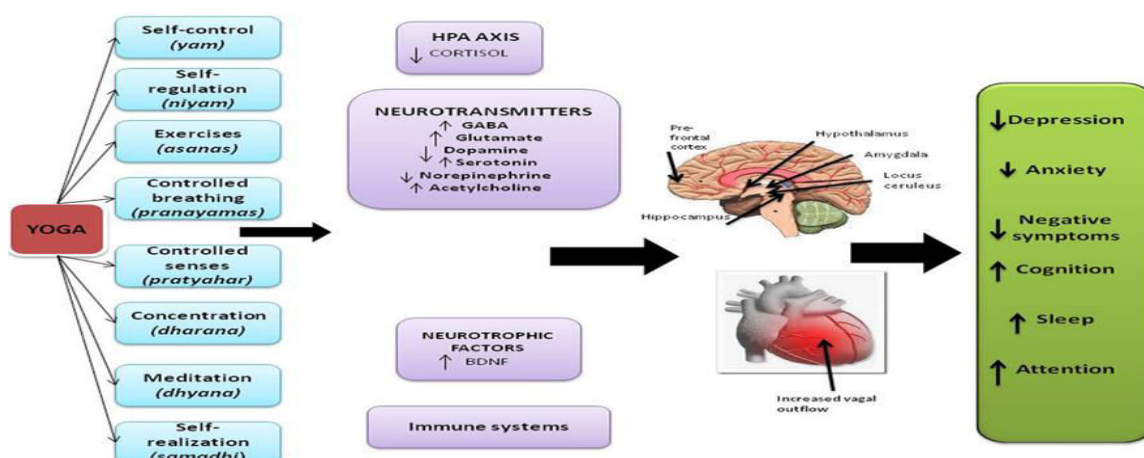
It's essential to approach psychosomatic disorders with a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the mind and body, and to consider both psychological and physical factors when diagnosing and treating these conditions.

Types of Psychosomatic Disorders:

Psychosomatic disorders are conditions that involve physical symptoms or illnesses that are influenced or caused by emotional factors. Here are some common types of psychosomatic disorders:

- Somatization Disorder:** This disorder is characterized by a history of multiple, recurring physical symptoms over a period of several years, with no apparent medical cause. These symptoms may include pain, gastrointestinal issues, sexual problems, neurological symptoms, fatigue, and menstrual problems.
- Symptoms may include paralysis, blindness, difficulty speaking, seizures, and movement disorders.
- Illness Anxiety Disorder (Hypochondriasis):** Individuals with illness anxiety disorder have an intense fear of having a serious medical condition, despite having little or no medical evidence to support their belief. They often experience excessive worry and engage in frequent medical check-ups and tests.
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder:** This disorder involves a preoccupation with a perceived defect in one's physical appearance, which may not be noticeable to others. People with body dysmorphic disorder often engage in repetitive behaviours or seek cosmetic treatments in an attempt to fix their perceived flaws.
- Pain Disorder:** Pain disorder is characterized by the presence of persistent pain that cannot be fully explained by a physical condition. The pain may be localized in a specific area or more generalized throughout the body.
- Somatoform Disorders Not Otherwise Specified:** This category includes disorders that do not fit into specific diagnostic criteria but involve physical symptoms without a known medical cause. Examples include undifferentiated somatoform disorder and unspecified somatoform disorder.

DISORDERS & YOGA-



Yoga is a way of life, an experimental science of human nature to enable us to realize ourselves. "Yoga is a timeless knowledge about the "essence".

Treatment for Psychosomatic Disorders:

The treatment of psychosomatic disorders typically involves a combination of physical and emotional approaches. Here are some commonly used treatment options:

1. **Psychotherapy:** Various forms of therapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), can help individuals understand and manage the emotional factors contributing to their symptoms. Therapy can also address any underlying psychological issues or stressors.
2. **Stress Management:** Learning stress management techniques, such as relaxation exercises, mindfulness meditation, and breathing techniques, can help individuals reduce the impact of stress on their physical health.

3. Support Groups: Joining support groups or seeking social support can provide individuals with a sense of understanding and connection with others who are going through similar experiences.

It's important to note that treatment plans may vary depending on individual needs, and it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment recommendations.

Yoga is a holistic science that encompasses various aspects of human philosophy, psychology, and functionality. It is a comprehensive system of knowledge that has been passed down from master to student for centuries. Yoga can be effective in reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors for overall health and well-being.

When it comes to yoga practice for psychosomatic disorders (PSDs), it is essential to address the three gunas or qualities of nature: Tamas, Rajas, and Satva. The stages of yoga practice for PSDs incorporate elements from all three gunas:

Stage 1: Breaking up Tamas

- Engage in active or stimulating postures to remove tiredness and dullness.
- Detoxify the body and eliminate toxins.
- Bring attention to the physical body to overcome inertia.
- Recognize and confront suffering, learning from it.

Stage 2: Calming the Rajas

- Practice calm and relaxing asanas (postures).
- Incorporate pranayama techniques (breathing exercises).
- Shift attention from the physical body to the mind and heart.
- Use internal mantras and affirmations.
- Surrender to pain and let go of individual hurts and sorrow.

Stage 3: Nourishing Satva

- Engage in calm and focused meditation.
- Allow the body to rest, as in Savasana (corpse pose).
- Transcend the limitations of the human condition

Mental disorders can disrupt the flow of prana, the vital life force that governs the mind. This disturbance often manifests as somatic symptoms. Understanding the five subtypes of prana, known as Vayus, is crucial in addressing psychological disorders.

Each Vayu has specific actions on the physical structure and body functions, triggers certain emotions, and represents certain mental stages. Psychological disorders begin with the disturbance of Prana Vayu through negative thoughts and emotions. Digestive functions are also affected by disturbed Samana Vayu due to poor discrimination in dietary choices.

By incorporating these principles and practices into yoga for psychosomatic disorders, individuals can work towards restoring balance and promoting overall well-being.

Furthermore, Streeter et al. hypothesized that yoga-based practices can correct the underactivity of the parasympathetic nervous system and GABA systems by stimulating the vagus nerves, which are the main peripheral pathway of the parasympathetic nervous system. They also suggested that yoga practices reduce allostatic load.

Yoga is considered an integrated mind-body medicine, as it recognizes the influence of the mind on the body and vice versa. Yogic concepts and techniques aim to develop the right attitudes towards life and correct imbalances caused by lifestyle factors or genetic potential. Some of the mechanisms through which yoga is believed to work as a mind-body medicine include:

1. **Cleansing the body:** Yoga incorporates practices such as shuddhi kriyas (cleansing techniques) to eliminate toxins and promote a sense of relaxed lightness. These practices help maintain free flow in bodily passages and prevent infections.
2. **Yogic lifestyle and nourishing diet:** Adopting a yogic lifestyle, including a proper nourishing diet, can enhance antioxidant activity, neutralize free radicals, and provide essential nutrients for anabolic, reparative, and healing processes.
3. **Control over autonomic respiratory mechanisms:** Breathing patterns in yoga influence autonomic functioning, metabolic processes, and emotional responses. Slowing down the breathing process can help stabilize emotions and enhance emotional stability.
5. **Calm internal environment:** Contemplative practices in yoga help create a calm internal environment, enabling the normalization of homeostatic mechanisms. Yoga emphasizes balance at all levels of being, promoting mental and physical equilibrium.
6. **Restoration of normalcy and promotion of positive health:** It has both preventive and restorative capabilities and promotes positive health to overcome health challenges throughout life. Yoga can be integrated with other systems of medicine and is cost-effective.

In summary, the article suggests that yoga practices have various psychosomatic mechanisms that contribute to their

Beneficial effects on health and well-being. These mechanisms include balancing the autonomic nervous system, enhancing GABA activity, reducing allostatic load, and promoting overall mind-body harmony.

CONCLUSION

Yoga promotes mental equanimity, where we become unaffected by the ups and downs of life. This shift allows us to move from a state of illness and disease to one of well-being and health. Ultimately, it enables us to transcend our lower animal nature and embrace our higher human nature and the highest Divine Nature that is our birthright.

Yoga is a complementary health approach that can be practiced by anyone. It is suitable for individuals with disabilities or symptoms that prevent them from engaging in vigorous forms of exercise. Yoga encompasses physical postures, rhythmic breathing, and meditation exercises. It unifies the mind, body, and spirit.

Yogic practices have been shown to improve conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular health, musculoskeletal issues, and mental health. Yoga's modifiable nature makes it an ideal choice for

individuals with movement limitations or clinical diagnoses. It is also suitable for the aging population.

As scientific evidence for the physical and mental health benefits of yoga continues to grow, it has piqued the interest of neuroscientists. The combination of metacognitive thought and bodily proprioception during yoga practice is believed to extend to conventionally assessed cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and higher-order executive functions. Previous studies have demonstrated that yoga has the potential to improve anxiety, depression, stress, and overall mental well-being.

Yoga also serves as a therapy to combat the alarming rise in age-related neurodegenerative disorders. It has shown positive effects on various brain structures and functions, including the hippocampus (associated with learning and memory), amygdala (involved in emotions and motivation), prefrontal cortex (responsible for cognitive functions and impulse control), cingulate cortex (involved in emotion processing and behaviour regulation), and brain networks including the default mode network (DMN).

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