

Management of Psycho-Yogic Lifestyle to Maintain Physical and Mental Health

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Abstract

Physical health involves having a sound, disease free-body with good cardiovascular performance, sharp senses, a vital immune system, and the ability to withstand physical injury. Lifestyle factors enhance physical and mental health. Lifestyle factors include eating nutritious diet according to energy expenditure, exercising daily, sleeping well, and avoiding use of illicit drugs. In the present article, we discuss five lifestyle features that may be helpful in maintaining physical and mental health. Maintenance of healthy and fit body is central to good mental health. Lifestyle factors, namely, physical workout and fitness, dietary habits, exercise, healthy lifestyle, good habits, and yoga are discussed in this article. Authors also suggest the ways how one can achieve the physical or bodily state.

Keywords: Lifestyle, physical and mental health, yoga.

Introduction

“Strengthening of body is required in Islam.” Prophet Muhamma. “To keep the body in good health is a duty...otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.” Buddha And according to Swami Ram Krishan Paramhans-“Physical health is must for the mental health.” Physical health involves having a sound, disease free-body with good cardiovascular performance, sharp senses, a vital immune system, and the ability to withstand physical injury. Lifestyle factors enhance physical health. Lifestyle includes eating nutritious diet, exercising regularly, sleeping well, doing yoga, and avoiding use of illicit drugs. Unhealthy eating, lack of physical activity, excessive alcohol use, obesity, smoking are seen as the most important health threats. The body is the temple of God and the means by which we worship Him through service. Hindu scriptures mention five ways to serve God, through service to the gods, the sages, the manes, human beings and animals. This is the underlying philosophy of holistic health.

A healthy lifestyle is ensured by four modes:

1. Diet and Drinks (Ahar)
2. Exercise (Vihar),
3. Thoughts and Perception (Vichar),

4. Attitude and Behaviour (Vayawahar).

Diet and exercise can be easily managed by a set routine and habit formation. Maintenance of thoughts and perception, and attitude are solely depends on individual's behaviour. Physical and mental healths are the main components of holistic health. We cannot feel well without giving the rest to our body, get active, active healthy and paying attention to healthy lifestyle choices. Health means complete physical, mental, and social welfare but these aspects of health do not have any meaning if one loses his/her inner strength. A substantial number of studies have been generated reporting that university students engage in unhealthy lifestyle behaviours such as substance abuse. Dale, Brassington, and King (2014) [3] examined the effect of healthy lifestyle interventions on mental well-being. Authors reviewed 95 full papers. In total, 29 papers met inclusion criteria, representing a range of interventions spanning physical activity, diet, alcohol intake, drug use and smoking. There are five lifestyle features that can help an individual in maintaining physical and mental health. These are: Yoga, healthy dietary habits, exercise, good habits & positive thinking, and physical workout. Each of these features with supportive evidence will be discussed here.

1. Yoga

Yoga as a discipline originated in India. The word Yoga means 'union or manager'. Yoga is an ancient path to spiritual growth. It is a mind-body technique which involves relaxation, meditation and a set of physical exercises performed in sync with breathing. Being holistic, it is the best means for maintaining physical, mental, and spiritual health. Hatha yoga emphasizes the most on exercise of physical body. It has been commonly used to describe the practice of asana (postures). The syllable 'ha' denotes the pranic (vital) force governing the physical body and 'tha' denotes the chitta (mental) force thus making Hatha Yoga a catalyst to awakening of the energies that govern our lives. More importantly, hatha yoga purifies the body systems and focuses the mind in preparation for more advanced chakra.

Yoga benefits

- Anti-Aging benefits due to yoga
- Yoga for beauty and love
- Yoga for weight reduction
- Yoga for improving personal and social values
- Yoga can also reduce mental stress and frustration
- Yoga develops balance and flexibility

Physical work out and Fitness

Physical workout is defined as 'any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that require energy expenditure' (Department of Health, P.A. Health Improvement and Protection, 2011) [4]. Physical inactivity has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (6% of deaths globally). This follows high blood pressure (13%), tobacco use (9%) and high blood glucose (6%). Overweight and

obesity are responsible for 5% of global mortality. Physical workout significantly reduces the risk of heart diseases, diabetes, high and low blood pressure, and cancer. Physical workout can be defined by its duration, intensity, and frequency. Duration is the total amount of time period spent participating in a physical activity session. Intensity is known as the rate of energy expenditure. Frequency is the number of repetition of physical activity sessions during a specific time period (e.g. one week)

Types of Physical Activity

Aerobic: It is long duration physical activity that requires more oxygen to improve cardiovascular fitness and other health benefits (e.g., jumping rope, biking, swimming, running, playing soccer, basketball, or volleyball).

Anaerobic: Intense physical activity that is short in duration and requires a breakdown of energy sources in the absence of sufficient oxygen. Energy sources are replenished as an individual recover from the activity. Anaerobic activity (e.g., sprinting during running, swimming, or biking) requires maximal performance during the brief period. Lifestyle physical activity typically performed on a routine basis (e.g., walking, climbing stairs, mowing or raking the yard), which is usually light to moderate in intensity. Physical activity play is a type of activity that requires substantial energy expenditure (e.g., playing tag, jumping rope). Play – activity with flexible rules, usually self-selected, for the purpose of having fun.

‘Physical activity helps people feel better, as reflected in improved mood and decreased state and trait anxiety. It helps people feel better about themselves through improved physical self-perceptions, improved self-esteem, decreased physiological reactions to stress, [and] improved sleep’. Physical activity can positively affect both physical and psychological well-being (Scully, Kremer, Meade, Graham, & Dudgeon, 1999) [10]. Physical activity promotes psychological well-being and reduces feelings of mild to moderate depression and anxiety (US DHHS, 2004) [11]. There is a strong relationship exists between physical activity and mental health. The evidence indicates that physical activity can make positive contributions to our health, help us recover from pre-existing stresses or problems, have an ‘immunising’ effect by protecting us from future stresses, and help us to concentrate and think more clearly.

Fitness

Participating in physical activity is beneficial to people of all ages. Physical activity contributes to fitness, a state in which people’s health characteristics and behaviours enhance the quality of their lives. Types of Fitness

1. Physical fitness: A set of physical traits related to a person’s ability to perform physical activity successfully, without undue strain and with a margin of safety.
2. Health-related physical fitness: A physiological state of individual that reduces the risk of hypo kinetic disease; a basis for participation in sports; and vigor for the tasks of daily living. Components include cardio-respiratory endurance, muscle strength endurance, flexibility, and body composition.

3. Skill-related physical fitness: Common components of physical fitness (e.g., agility, balance, coordination, speed, power, reaction time) that enable participation in sports and other physical activities; also called performance or motor fitness.

Healthy Eating habits

. Eating is an important habit for optimal health. Healthy dietary habits refer to avoiding eating fat and eating more fruits and vegetables. A healthy diet emphasizes having the appropriate portions of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free milk products and should include lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts. Fats and sugars should be limited. People experiencing mental health problems in particular should aim for a diet low in refined sugar as research has shown that a diet high in refined sugar is associated with worsening symptoms. Human nature, according to the Bhagwad Gita, is controlled by three qualities: Sattva, rajas and tamas signifying goodness, passion and illusion. The soul, which is invisible and incomprehensible to materials nature, apparently manifests through these qualities. By nature, a saatvik person is active, a rajasik person is good and tamasic is an ignorant person. Ancient Indian literature has discussed in detail the type of food according to the gunas. There is Sattvic food, Rajasic food and the Tamasic food. So also, there are three kinds of company, three kinds of actions, three kinds of rituals, etc. The kinds of environment are greatly affecting the origin and the modification of the motives which ultimately are instrumental in shaping the personality (Gita 8). The factors associated with poor eating habits among college students include a high perception of stress (Cartwright, Wardle, Steggle, Simon, Croker, & Jarvis, 2003) [2] and low self-esteem (Hustinger & Luecken, 2004) [5]. Studies by Oliver, Wardle, and Gibson (2000) [9] and Zucker (2000) [12] indicated the relationship between high stress levels and lower self-esteem and unhealthy eating behaviours.

Exercise

According to Husain (2015) [6, 7], with the physical exercises, the soul or spirit becomes strong and healthy. Exercise helps people to feel better physically and mentally. There has been an emerging body of literature by researchers and practitioners on why to promote exercise participation and adherence by adopting behavioural techniques. We need to encourage continued exercise participation among people of different age groups. We follow routines to get us through the day. There is a far greater likelihood of exercising if it is planned in advance. The more specific that plan, the better chance it will happen. Choose the time of day that an exercise session is most available and when it feels best – physically, mentally, and emotionally – to do. Exercise consists of activities that are planned and structured, and that maintain or improve one or more of the components of physical fitness. Exercise is often associated with fitness maintenance or improvement only.

Types of Exercise

Calisthenics Isotonic muscle-fitness exercise that overloads muscles by forcing the muscles to work at a higher level than usual.

Flexibility (Stretching) Exercise designed to stretch muscles and tendons to increase joint flexibility or range of motion. Specific flexibility exercises need to be done for each part of the body.

Isokinetic

Muscle-fitness exercise in which the amount of force equals the amount of resistance, so that no movement occurs.

Isotonic

Muscle-fitness exercise in which the amount of force exerted is constant throughout the range of motion, including muscle shortening (concentric contractions), and muscle lengthening (eccentric contractions).

Good Habits

Forming good habits can help us to maintain our physique in the most positive way. Swami Kriyananda said: “Psychologically, what happens in any struggle between high aspirations in oneself and one’s worldly tendencies is that habit sides with worldliness. Our need is to replace our bad habits with good ones. Good habits, however, yield to a higher power, which is what gives us our true strength. Good habits, to become strongly established, require the use of awareness, energy, and will power.” Once we adopt good habits such as eating well, exercising in our daily routine then it became as easy. Focus on at least one good habit i.e. habit of eating healthier foods, keep active and take proper rest also.

How one can achieve the physical or bodily state

First, commit yourself to being happy in every circumstance. As soon as you experience or perceive negative feelings, strongly affirm your decision to be happy.

Second, you may not be able to change your circumstances, but you can control how to respond to those conditions. This simple ability will change your life.

Third, positive reactions develop positive health. For attaining physical health, adopt the lifestyle habits and learn to be grateful for your challenges.

Fourth, learn to think less of yourself, and more of others and their needs.

Fifth, do not dwell on past events or future plans. If you can stay in the here and now, expanding your heart to all, you will realize that you can be happy and physically fit. And, always try to live in a peaceful, calm, and joyful state. Release all attachments, all desires, and all regrets.

Conclusion

Today’s era every individual talk about his health and make an effort to maintain it through different ways. Lifestyle features are definitely changing. Existing research showed positive relation of the above mentioned or practices with maintenance of physical and mental health. Physical workout suggests a

wide variety of activities that promote health and well-being. Yoga causes stability of mind and cures physical diseases. Maintenance of physical as well as mental health has an important impact on individual personality. It also provides an opportunity for young people to learn how to maintain health and how to get rid from stress. The body must work regularly, tirelessly, energetically, and enthusiastically to maintain physical health. More research is needed on exercise attitudes and adherence. Will scheduling enhance exercise adherence? Research is needed to answer this question. It is important to investigate psychological factors associated with physical activity and fitness, healthy dietary habits, exercise, healthy lifestyle, good habits, and yoga. Health education in general and yoga education in particular should stress the importance of cultivating healthy habits in improving or maintaining health. In order to improve health-related quality of life of people, psycho-educational interventions must be implemented. For effective interventions, groundwork on eating healthy diet, physical activity and fitness, and type of exercise must be prepared with respect to age and gender wise. Interventions may cover the topics related to knowledge of healthy diet, physical activity, exercise and their positive impact on physical and mental health. Message Choose the best lifestyle to maintain physical and mental health.

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