

YOGA AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: THE MOST DESIRED PRODUCTS IN TODAY'S STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Reetika Jain

Hansraj College, DU
reetikajain29@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The fast changing and the stressful world of today has made the mankind more sad than happy, more unsatisfied than satiated, more tensed than relaxed, more occupied than free. This is the scenario, despite the fact, people having more money, more knowledge, more possessions and more power and recognition in the society. We need to, therefore, think how to make this life more blissful not only for ourselves but also for the people attached to us. Yoga and healthy lifestyle are the only solution to this problem. They are not an 'either-or' solution but a package. On the one hand, yoga enlightens one and makes her aware of the inner self, thereby bestowing emotional health to an individual. On the other hand, healthy lifestyle enables one to lead a disease-free and longer life by adopting modifications in the eating habits and increasing physical activity. Acceptance of such changes in the lifestyle pattern can be possible only when there is control over the self. Yoga helps in having this self-control.

The factual data reveals that world over there is a growing consciousness among people towards adopting yoga and healthy lifestyle habits viz. replacing processed food for fresh and natural food, spending time in gym or indulging in brisk walking. Moreover such people are also willing to pay premium for these products. Survey results also reveals that it is not only the adults and the oldies that are increasingly practising yoga and adopting healthy lifestyle, the trend is gaining more popularity among young millennial.

Keywords : *Factual Data, Meditation, Stress, Medical Literature, Yoga*

1. INTRODUCTION

To live in harmony with oneself and the environment is the wish of every human. However, in modern times greater physical and emotional demands are constantly placed upon many areas of life. The result: more and more people suffer from physical and mental tension such as stress, anxiety, insomnia, and there is an imbalance in physical activity and proper exercise. Only when the body is physically healthy, the mind will be focused and stress will be under control. This in turn, allows maintaining socially healthy relationships.

1.1 YOGA

Since long, meditation and other stress related techniques have been studied as possible treatment for depression and anxiety. One such practice, yoga, has received less attention in the medical literature, though it has become increasingly popular in the recent decades. Yoga is an effective method of controlling the mind and bodily activities. Available review of a wide range of yoga practices suggest that they can reduce the impact of exaggerated stress response and is helpful in coping with both anxiety and depression. In this respect yoga functions like other self soothing techniques such as meditation, relaxation, exercise,

socialising with friends. By reducing perceived stress and anxiety, yoga appears to modulate stress response systems. This in turn reduces physiological arousal- for example, reducing heart rate, lowering blood pressure and easing respiration. Indeed the scientific study of yoga demonstrates that physical and mental health are not just closely allied but essentially equivalent. The evidence is growing that yoga practice is relatively low risk, high-yield approach to improving overall health.

Yoga teaches how to focus on breathing while holding the poses. This attention to breath is calming as it dissolves the hidden stress and anxiety. Yoga can help cure insomnia, as regular yoga practice leads to better and deeper sleep. Yoga can help fight fatigue and maintain ones energy throughout the day. Yoga is an effective treatment for a variety of autoimmune diseases because it can reduce the symptoms these diseases often cause, such as stiffness, malaise, fatigue, and weakness. Even children can benefit from yoga. Those with attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity can learn to relax and get control by using yoga breathing and yoga asanas. The main goal of Yoga is to ensure overall health of the being by embracing five dimensions viz. physical health, mental health, social health, spiritual health, self-realization.

1.2 LIFESTYLE

According to World Health Organisation, *health* is optimal well-being that contributes to quality of life. It is more than freedom from disease and illness, though freedom from disease is important to good health. Optimal health includes high-level mental, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness within the limits of one's heredity and personal abilities. Death, disease, illness, and debilitating conditions are negative components that detract from optimal health. Healthy lifestyle has been recognized as the positive component of optimal health as evidenced by a sense of well-being reflected in optimal functioning, a good quality of life, meaningful work, and a contribution to society. The dimensions of health and lifestyle therefore, include the emotional (mental), intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual. A positive total outlook on life is essential for a healthy lifestyle and each of its dimensions.

A "healthy" person is satisfied in his/her work, is spiritually fulfilled, enjoys leisure time, is physically fit, is socially involved, and has a positive emotional- mental outlook. This person is happy and fulfilled. Many experts believe that a positive total outlook is a key to healthy lifestyle. Its components are:

- Emotional health—A person with emotional health is (1) free from emotional-mental illnesses or debilitating conditions such as clinical depression and (2) possesses emotional wellness.
- Intellectual health—A person with intellectual health is free from illnesses that invade the brain and other systems that allow learning.
- Physical health—A person with physical health is free from illnesses that affect the physiological systems of the body such as the heart, the nervous system, etc.
- Social health—A person with social health is free from illnesses or conditions that severely limit functioning in society, including antisocial pathologies.

- Spiritual health—Spiritual health is the one component of health that is totally comprised of the wellness dimension; for this reason, spiritual health is considered to be synonymous with spiritual wellness.

Table 1 : The Dimensions Of Healthy Lifestyle

-	<i>Healthy Lifestyle Dimensions</i>	+
Depressed	Emotional-mental	Happy
Ignorant	Intellectual	Informed
Unfit	Physical	Fit
Lonely	Social	Involved
Unfulfilled	Spiritual	Fulfilled
Negative	Total outlook	Positive

Just as unhealthy lifestyles are the principal causes of modern-day illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, healthy lifestyles can result in an improved feeling of wellness that is critical to optimal health. Unhealthy lifestyle is contributing to more than one-half of all early deaths in today's world. Regular physical activity, sound nutrition, and stress management are therefore, considered to be priority for a healthy lifestyles. Building a healthy lifestyle regardless of age will have numerous health benefits such as reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, malignancy, psychiatric disorder, cognitive dysfunction and decreases the incidence of obesity, overweight and diabetes.

2. SURVEY RESULTS

Despite the incredible attention being devoted to health and wellness over past 30 years, the percentage of people worldwide considered overweight (BMI \geq 25 to <30) or obese (BMI \geq 30) increased 28% in adults and 47% in children according to the 2013 Global Burden Disease Study. The study reported that an estimated 2.1 billion people- nearly 30% of the global population were overweight to obese.

According to Nielsen Global Health and Wellness Survey, 2015 results:

- Half (49%) of global respondents believe they are overweight and half (50%) are trying to lose weight.
- Consumers are increasingly seeking fresh, natural and minimally processed food. They are looking for beneficial ingredients that help fight disease and promote good health.
- Health attributes are most important to emerging market respondents, who are also willing to pay premium for health benefits (Table 2).
- Young consumers are more willing to pay premium for health attributes (Table 3).
- Health categories are growing faster than indulgent categories (Table 4).
- Majority of consumers rely on diet and exercise to lose weight (Table 5).

Table 2 : Willingness to pay premium for health attributes

REGION	ALL NATURAL	ORGANIC	HIGH FIBRE	LOW/NO CARBO-HYDRTE	LOW/NO FAT	LOW SODIUM
GLOBAL AVERAGE	39%	33%	29%	23%	28%	26%
ASIA-PACIFIC	43%	37%	32%	26%	29%	28%
EUROPE	31%	24%	17%	14%	20%	16%
AFRICA	52%	35%	40%	30%	39%	32%
LATIN AMERICA	51%	40%	46%	32%	46%	44%
NORTH AMERICA	24%	25%	22%	20%	20%	22%

Table 3: Respondent categorisation according to importance for health attribute and willingness to pay premium

RESPONDENT CATEGORY	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO HEALTH ATTRIBUTE	RELATIVE WILLINGNESS TO PAY PREMIUM
GENERATION Z (UNDER 20)	30%	31%
MILLENNIALS (21-34)	33%	29%
GENERATION X(35-49)	32%	26%
BABY BOOMER (50-64)	32%	23%
SILENT GENERATION (>65)	24%	15%

Table 4: Sales growth (2012-2014) for healty, semi-healthy and indulgent categories

FOOD CATEGORIES	% GROWTH
HEALTHY	5%
SEMI-HEALTHY	-1%
INDULGENT	2%

Table 5: Percentage taking each action to lose weight

ACTION TAKEN TO REDUCE WEIGHT	GLOBAL %	ASIA-PACIFIC %
CHANGING DIET	75%	71%
DOING PHYSICAL EXERCISE	72%	77%
TAKING DIET PILLS ETC.	11%	14%
TAKING MEDICINES PRESCRIBED BY DOCTOR	7%	7%

With increase in urbanisation and mushrooming of start-ups, lifestyle has become stressed. For those seeking physical and mental fitness in the limited time at disposal, yoga is a way out. According to the Times Job Survey, 80% of employees in Indian companies are stressed. Therefore, practicing yoga can relieve them from stress and help them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Yog asanas particularly have a positive effect on fitness and physical flexibility with a secondary effect on the mental state. Pranayama practice and relaxation/meditation techniques may result in greater awareness and less stress and higher well being and quality of life. Practicing yoga has shown positive effect on physical and mental health and overall quality of life in those who are new to yoga and are not typically physically active in life (Figure 1 & 2). Nearly 50% of yoga practitioners also reported that they devote time for the community.

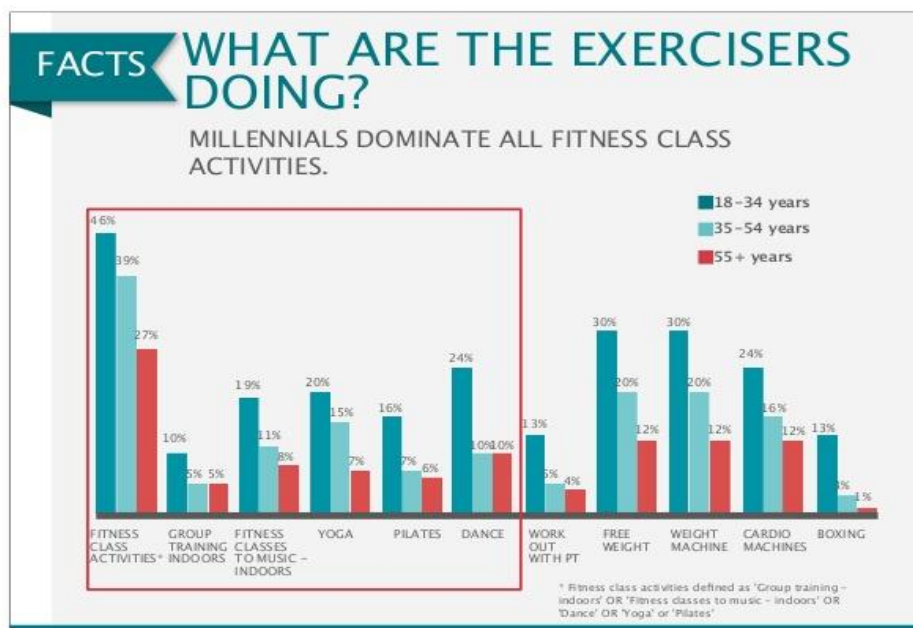


Figure 1 Nielsen Global Consumer Fitness Survey 2013

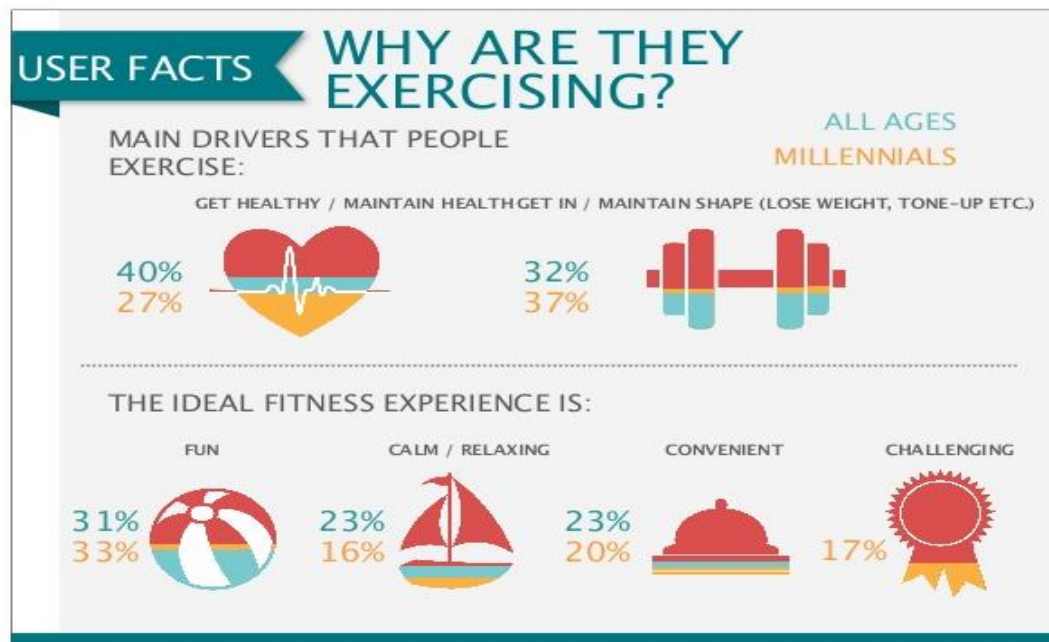


Figure 2. Nielsen Global Consumer Fitness Survey 2013

3. CONCLUSION

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