

THE HEALTH Q

INTELLIGENT BODY MIND SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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HOW YOGA HELPS IN CANCER

By Parmjit Singh, PhD

With cancer striking an alarmingly high percentage of population and preventive remedies/vaccine still in the realm of speculation and making, yoga may promise some alleviation from the terrible physical and psychological consequences that follow its diagnosis and treatment process.

Some studies in the recent past have held out such hope. In one of the studies, yoga practice has been shown to have improved a general sense of well-being and easing out discomfort in breast cancer patients. Participants registered 12% increase in their well-being as compared to the control group. In another study, scientists found that lymphoma patients who practiced Tibetan yoga for seven weeks went to sleep faster, slept longer, had better overall well being and used less sleep medication as compared to the control group which did not practice yoga.

Ordinarily yogic exercises may just seem a bunch of slow-motioned twist or turns practiced to a mellow music but they are based on century-old model of health and wellness, something which science is beginning to unravel now.

For one, yogic exercises are passive but mindful. One pays attention to the progress of a posture through carefully directed attention. That is what, apart from other things, may be helpful in helping people regain their sense of well-being and comfort. This directed attention on the body and emotions redefine personal relationships with one's own body and helps to ease out fear of death and desperation associated with the feeling of 'why me'. When faced by personal mortality, as cancer tends to drive one to that realization, people recoil into fear and despondency which complicates the physical pain and horror related to the disease.

Ancient Indian texts describe five sources of distress (Kleshas) which disturb mental quietude and well-being (Telles & Visweswariah, 2006*). These five factors are: (i) lack of knowledge (avidya), (ii) a sense of 'I-ness', (iii) strong preferences, (iv) strong dislikes and (v) fear of death and to lesser degree of anything which appears threatening.

As you can see, the sense of 'I-ness' or 'why me' is considered one source of distress in ancient philosophy. This might be, as

OUR OBSESSION WITH COMFORT

We live in a culture where comfort or tendency to be comfortable rules the roost. We need quick-fixes and a painless way of doing things. Possibilities hyped by ever-expanding frontier of science and technology has brought us to a passé where we simply want to sit back and let everything be done to us—even the most essential things which make us alive.

Being comfortable or seeking comfort is not bad in itself. It becomes bad when it comes at the cost of something even more important. Comfort should really make our life easier and enhance the joy of living. But this does not seem to be the case.

The one point in contention is our health and the manner in which our lifestyle is geared toward hunting for quick-fixes. In order to find short alternative to lengthy meal preparations, we came up with fast-foods and at what cost. Think of all the negative consequences of eating at the go. It is practically making people mindless of what they put into stomach, thus binging on all the unhealthy stuff, in the name of comfort and productivity.

Gibran also lamented the dark side of comfort when he said, "Verily the lust for comfort murders the passion of the soul, and then walks grinning in the funeral." It is this dark side that I am talking about. People hop into a car rather than walking to a nearby grocery store but then pay to work-out in a gym. They try to pinch pennies by buying cheap unhealthy food but would not hesitate shelling out on expansive materialistic paraphernalia. Examples are countless, but the running theme is the same—avoid making hard choices, settle for comfortable solutions even if it costs you the very thing you are trying to save.

Our tendency to find a comfortable alternative to everything has done a lot of damage to our society. E.g. instead of working on relationships, people walk out of their marriages. Instead of settling for less-tasty-yet-healthy-food, people eat junk food. By doing so, we are settling for short-term gains at the heavy cost of long-term losses.

Is there any way through which this mistake can be avoided? One way is to ask, "How much am I willing to lose in the end?" The answer to this question will likely steer you in a positive direction by balancing the world of quick-fixes and hard choices.

If you end up losing more in the end, it is not any worth! [HQ]

—Parmjit Singh, PhD

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MISSION STATEMENT

'The Health Q' envisions to present factual information for the promotion of wholesome mental, physical and emotional/spiritual living. Synthesizing diverse sources spanning from scientifically valid physical/mental/emotional therapeutic techniques with latest research in mind-body medicine/sciences, cognitive & positive psychology, sport psychology, yoga, meditation, health sciences and other evidence-based integrative/alternative therapies, we intend to make 'The Health Q' an authentic vehicle for dissemination of reliable information for practical and healthy living.

'The Health Q' is not a replacement of a medical advice or treatment.

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HEALTHY EATING

CORN POTATO SALAD

By Manjit Handa, PhD

Ingredients

2 Cups frozen corn
3 boiled potatoes, diced
One red/3-4 spring onions, diced
1-2 tomatoes, diced
Cilantro/Parsley
1 lime/lemon juice
One table spoon olive oil
Salt and Pepper as per taste

Method

Boil the corn in salted water for about 7-8 minutes and drain. In a bowl, mix it with the rest of the ingredients and garnish with fresh cut lime or anything of your choice. You could make it ahead of time, if expecting guests and leave it in the fridge for about 1-2 hours. Serve chilled.

Bon Appetite! [HQ]

IS YOUR DIGESTION SLUGGISH?

If so, these tips can help
By Parmjit Singh, PhD

Does it take a long time for you to digest any food you eat? If so, a simple yet highly effective breathing technique might come handy. The technique is called 'complete breathing' or yogi breathing. For best results, perform this exercise half an hour before eating. Follow these instructions:

1. Sit, lie down or stand erect with your body comfortably in a straight line. Be comfortable in your posture.
2. Take a deep breath and let the air flow into the lowest portion of your stomach. You should feel the lower part of the stomach bulging out a bit.
3. Then expand your chest to allow the air to fill the middle portion.
4. Finally, pull your shoulders towards ear to allow air into the upper lobes of the lungs.
5. Once you have taken the in-breath, bring your shoulders down, collapse chest and finally squeeze abdominal muscles to push air from lungs to complete exhalation. Let your exhalation be twice the length of inhalation, if possible.
6. This completes one breath. Let it be a seamless process with in-breath and out-breath flowing like a wave. You can count numbers to make this process easier. E.g. count 1-4 to breathe in and do the twice (2-8) to breathe out. Repeat this exercise at least one minute initially and gradually increase its duration according to your comfort. [HQ]



FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER BEFORE YOU JUMP INTO POOL THIS SUMMER

By Joanne Malar, Olympian Swimmer

If you and your kids are heading out to swimming pools and lakes this summer, practicing the following five tips can help you ward off any avoidable accident and maximize the pleasure of your adventure:

- 1 HYDRATION:** During the summer months of hot temperatures and humid weather, protect your self against heat exhaustion and sunstroke. If you are going for an afternoon swim, make sure that you pack enough water with you. Do not rely on looking for a water fountain somewhere to quench your thirst. Often times, people forget that they are sweating even while in the water. As they cannot feel the perspiration, they might begin to experience dehydration. Be prepared and stay hydrated.
- 2 PROPER Supervision:** Ensure your child's safety at all times. Know where your children are and do not let them in the water without you being close by. Also know your child's ability in water. If they are not strong swimmers, do not let them out of your reaching distance. Do not rely solely on lifeguards for their safety. Lastly, know where your older children are venturing during the day. If there is no supervision where they are heading, you may want to guide them elsewhere.
- 3 CHECK** out the depth of pool, lakes etc. Oftentimes children and adults are risking their lives diving into pools when they are not aware of the shape and depth of the bottom. Every pool is not the same. Especially smaller pools may have the ledge of the shallow end quite close to the deep end. This can cause serious injury if someone dives off the diving board and end up in the shallow end. Again, play safe and know your pool.
- 4 CONFIDENCE** and swimming lessons are essential. Do not venture out far into lakes, especially if you are not a skilled swimmer. Also with water equipment such as windsurfers, kayaks or canoes always stay a safe close distance to the shore when learning. Outside you are also exposed to the vicissitudes of the environment. With strong winds, forceful currents and undertows, even the strongest of swimmer, canoer/kayaker/windsurfer can be pulled into dangerous waters. People forget that even though they may feel good swimming away from the shore, fatigue and cramps can quickly take hold of them and can drastically minimize strength. Be reminded that even strong swimmers have drowned due to environmental hazards like currents, undertows and poor planning. When lifejackets, flotation devices or lifeguard help is not easily accessible, you are taking your life into your own hands. It is always best to play it safe and stay close to the shore. More so, know your beaches and swim in the designated safe swimming areas.
- 5 FIRST** Aid Kits should always be packed in your car and should be brought to beaches, lakes, camping and hiking site. It is best to be prepared in the case of an accident. You may also want to include sunscreen, extra towels, snacks and fluids in the case of an emergency.

Following these preventive measures not only add safety to your adventure but also maximize enjoyment. [HQ]

FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF

July 8, 9AM-1PM

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HOW YOGA HELPS IN CANCER

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it seems, one source of cognitive distortion that complicates the pain, coping and the recovery process. As people do not have accurate knowledge of the real nature of physical body (which they consider a solid and a sophisticated machine), they get trapped into a false sense of 'self' conveyed through sensory perceptions.

One major problem with that perception is that when we come to consider personal wellness solely on the basis of lack of illness in physical body, any threat to it from an illness devastates our feeling of well-being. Furthermore, this ego-identification with perishable physical body tends to distort our sense of self—and we are consumed with terror of disease and mortality. This is the first time we face death or its possibility and because we have never known our self beyond the body-identification, disease means the end of everything. That is what scares people even more than the disease itself—the fear of death.

In yogic philosophy, wellness is not related as much to the soundness of physical body or lack of disease as to the integrity of the mind-body-spirit axis. It reminds people that material things are perishable; that physical body is inherently subject to disease and decay.

This line of understanding helps to reshape personal perception about physical body and its pain process and bring people out of their catastrophic sense of failure and pessimism, thus

giving the immune system a breather to initiate healing process. This emotional relief might be able to induce relaxation and deepen the quality of sleep. Previous research has also confirmed that a better quality sleep can beat cancer.

Yoga, through its passively directed attention and movements, could be helping participants in redefining their relationship with their own physical and mental body, thus opening the possibility of experiencing well-being while being struck with a terrible disease such as cancer.

*Telles, S, & Visweswariah, NK (2006). Comments to: Health Realization/Innate Health: Can a quiet mind and a positive feeling state be accessible over the lifespan without stress-relief techniques? *Med Sci Monit.*, 12(6)

If you would like to try some simple postures, visit our website at www.TheHQ.ca. Remember to follow instructions and practice under specialist supervision.

See the Event Calendar of our upcoming health and programs at the website.