

Mind body spirit
meditation yoga and
spirituality psychology
essay



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Holistic healthcare understands that physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual lives cannot be taken apart. It emphasizes that there is a connection of mind, body, and spirit. People feel the need to create a healthy environment where they feel nurtured, supported, and safe as an individual discovers new truths about himself or herself and the surrounding world. Everyone wants to lead a healthy, satisfying, and meaningful life. Meditation, yoga, and spirituality are three complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practices that help to improve a person's mind, body and spiritual well-being.

Meditation is a mind-body practice in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). There are several techniques of meditation, which originated in ancient religious and spiritual traditions. According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (“[NCCAM]”), (2009), the definition of meditation means “ a group of techniques, such as mantra meditation, relaxation response, mindfulness meditation, and Zen Buddhist meditation” (p. 1). These techniques have been used for centuries in several different cultures worldwide.

Mindfulness meditation and Transcendental meditation, also referred to as TM, are two common forms of meditation practiced in the United States. Mindfulness meditation is a component of Buddhism. The meditator is instructed to bring attention to the sensation of the flow of the breath when inhaling and exhaling. The individual will focus all attention on the experience without reacting to the experience. In an article written by Ludwig and Kabat-Zinn (2008), they stated that “ mindfulness refers to a meditation practice that cultivates present moment awareness” (para. 1). On <https://assignbuster.com/mind-body-spirit-meditation-yoga-and-spirituality-psychology-essay/>

the other hand, transcendental meditation originated from Hindu traditions using mantra, such as a word, sound, or a phrase repeated silently to inhibit distracting thoughts from entering the mind (“ Transcendental Meditation”, 2009). The TM method is simple, natural, no effort process practiced for 15-20 minutes, twice daily while in a comfortable sitting position. “ The TM method allows a person’s mind to settle inward beyond thought, to experience the silent reservoir of energy, creativity and intelligence found within everyone-a natural state of restful alertness” (“ Transcendental Meditation”, 2009, p. 1)

Meditation consists of four common elements: a quiet location; a specific comfortable posture; a focused attention; and an open attitude. When a person practices meditation, he or she will learn how to focus attention. It will allow him or her to become mindful of thoughts, feeling, and sensations, and allow these thoughts to be observed in a non-bias way (NCAMM, 2009). This CAM practice is believed to bring a greater calmness and physical relaxation, and psychological balance. In addition, the ways in which emotion, mental, social, spiritual, and behavioral factors can directly affect health.

Meditation is practiced by more than 20 million people, and is used for different health conditions, such as anxiety, pain, depression, stress, insomnia, physical or emotional symptoms that may be associated with chronic conditions; ADHD, diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, and cancer are some health conditions that are integrated with conventional medical treatments (NCCAM, 2009). Transcendental meditation has been shown to be the most effective health and wellness CAM program. TM is effective for <https://assignbuster.com/mind-body-spirit-meditation-yoga-and-spirituality-psychology-essay/>

promoting health and reducing healthcare use and medical expenses associated with a medical condition. Meditation is considered to be a safe mind-body practice, excepts for those whose activities are limited due to a physical medical condition or a mental health condition. In much the same way meditation benefits health and wellness, so does yoga.

Yoga is designed to create a mind-body-spirit balance, heal and strengthen the body, liberate an individual's true self, and improve fitness. Yoga began in India. Cook states, " initially, the sole purpose of practicing yoga was to experience spiritual enlightenment" (2009, p. 1). The meaning of yoga in Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, " yoke" or " union", which integrates the mind and body to create a larger connection with an individual's pure, essential nature. According to Dr. Vaena Gandhi, who has been practicing yoga since a child in India, defines " yoga is about balancing life physically and mentally through controlled breathing techniques, meditation, diet, and the postures" (Davis, 2009). There are many styles of yoga that are practiced globally, but the most common form practiced in the United States is Hatha yoga. Hatha yoga involves specific movements of postures (asana), different breathing methods (pranayama), and meditation (dhyana), and combines two or more styles of yoga.

Yoga is not a cure for any disease or condition: however, it can be a great complementary therapy for several conditions, such as cancer, heart disease, arthritis, asthma, diabetes, fibromyalgia, depression, migraines, in addition to several other health conditions. A person in good health can benefit from yoga to improve strength, flexibility, coordination, and range of motion. Since yoga promotes relaxation, improves circulation, and reduces
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stress and anxiety, it will improve the cardiovascular, respiratory, and nervous systems' health. Also, because of the relaxation benefits, an individual will improve his or her digestion system function and will aid in getting a good night's sleep.

When a person is receiving treatment for a medical condition, yoga should be considered as a complementary therapy, and not an alternative therapy, to his or her conventional treatment therapy. A person should discuss with a healthcare professional before beginning a yoga class, especially if diagnosed with arthritis, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, and other serious medical conditions. Many yoga studios offer specialized classes for individuals with these conditions. If a person has high blood pressure, glaucoma, or a history of retinal detachment or heart disease, they should not perform certain positions that requires a person to be upside down, such as in a handstand position. There are no negative side effects from yoga, but as with any exercise program, a person can injure himself or herself if trying advance positions before being ready (Fields, 2008). When practicing yoga, always listen and respond to what the body is saying. The fundamental yoga concept is nonviolence (ahimsa), and it all begins with self. This brings us to the third connection of the mind and body, which is the spirit or spirituality.

Religious and spiritual values are important to individuals diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. The terms spirituality and religion are regularly used interchangeably, but for many individuals the terms have different meanings. Religion is defined as a belief or practice within an organized group, such as a place of worship. However, spirituality can be defined as an

individual's sense of peace, purpose, and connection to others, and beliefs about the meaning of life (National Cancer Institute, [NCI], 2009).

Many individuals might question what does spirituality have to do with complementary and alternative medicine? Many patients who are diagnosed with cancer will rely on spiritual healing or religious beliefs and practices to help them cope with their illness. This is referred to as spiritual coping. Physicians are now supporting and understanding spiritual well-being in terminally ill patients because it allows them to enjoy a quality of life.

It is not really known how spirituality and religion are related to health. There are studies to show that spiritual or religious beliefs and practices can create a mental attitude that is positive, may assist a patient in feeling better, and improve the well-being of family caretakers. The health benefits of spirituality are: it helps to relieve anxiety, depression, anger, and discomfort. According to the NCI, (2009), spirituality or religious beliefs will “ help the patient adjust to the effects of cancer and its treatment; increase the ability to enjoy life during cancer treatment; and give a feeling of personal growth as a result of living with cancer.” In addition, “ spirituality will increase positive feelings, such as hope and optimism, freedom from regret, satisfaction with life, and a sense of inner peace” (p. 2). Spirituality and religious well-being may help the patient live a longer quality of life.

In an article written by Christine Larson, (2008), she interviewed Dr. Harold Koenig, a physician and co-director of the Duke Center for Spirituality and Health. Dr. Koenig states, “ in the past eight years, there has probably been more research and discussion on the topic of religion and spirituality and

health than was conducted from 1800 through the year 2000.” Because of the ongoing research, many medical schools across the United States have begun requiring medical students to take courses in spirituality and health. Physicians are now more willing to talk about spirituality with their patients.

Individuals will use meditation, yoga, and spiritual practices to increase calmness and physical relaxation, to improve balance, cope with illness, or to enhance overall well-being. An individual may notice after participating in any of these three CAM practices an improvement in his or her health. Do not replace meditation, yoga, or spiritual healing as an alternative to conventional medical treatment or postpone seeing a physician about a medical condition. These CAM practices, as with all CAM practices, should be used as a complement to any conventional medical treatments. Do research regarding meditation and yoga practices for the health condition an individual is experiencing. Always tell the healthcare professional about any complementary and alternative medicine practices that is being considered; as well as the meditation and yoga instructors about his or her health condition. Following this recommended advice, will allow individuals to achieve holistic well-being without medical side effects.