

## Effect of Mindful Breathing on Stressed Students

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### Abstract:

Background: Stress is a major issue for college students as they cope with a variety of academic, social, and personal challenges.<sup>1</sup> Stress is one of the main reasons for the development of various pathological conditions. These include psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety<sup>33</sup>. Mindfulness is an open and non-judgmental attitude nourished by genuine interest and care for the situation given, rather than dwelling on rigid ideas and concepts about what should be and how it should be. It is the faculty of knowing what is happening in this particular moment and of feeling it as well, a precisely and softly as possible.<sup>34</sup>

When we start talking about mental well being, it is our prime duties to assess the efficacy of breathe meditation (Mindfulness on Breathing) on stress.

Objective: -The aim of this study was to assess the effect of Breath meditation (Mindfulness on breathing) on stress of college going students.

Methods and procedures:- For this 40 female subjects were drawn from Dev sanskriti vishvavidyalaya, Gayatrikunj, Haridwar by using method of purposive sampling. Meditation was conducted for 25 days about 45 minute every day in evening. Pre-post data of Breath meditation is collected by using stress scale (Prepared by Dr M. Singh).

Result: - Calculated t-value 8.27 for stress level is significant at 0.01 level of significance for df 39 respectively.

Conclusion: -It is concluded that Breath meditation plays a positive and significant role to decrease stress level of the subjects.

**Key word:** - Breath meditation, Anapansati, Mindfulness, Stress.

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### Introduction:

Stress is a major issue for college students as they cope with a variety of academic, social, and personal challenges.<sup>1</sup> Continuing stress may lead students into unproductive rumination that consumes energy and compounds the experience of stress<sup>2</sup>. Although a certain level of stress may result

in improved performance, too much stress can adversely affect physical and mental health.<sup>3-4</sup>

Among college students, high levels of distress have been linked with multiple adverse outcomes, including anxiety and depression,<sup>5</sup> suicidal ideation and hopelessness,<sup>6</sup> poor health behaviors,<sup>7,8</sup>

increases in headaches,<sup>9</sup> sleep disturbances,<sup>10</sup> increased rates of athletic injury,<sup>11</sup> and the common cold.<sup>12</sup> Some studies have reported reductions in stress and other psychological<sup>13,14,15,16</sup> and in the risk of relapse and recurrence of major depression<sup>17</sup> after yoga and meditation interventions.

Mindful meditation has been resulting in reduction of the symptoms of stress as well as anxiety in particular researches<sup>18,19</sup> depression<sup>20,21</sup> and stress.<sup>22,16</sup> In this study, we are going to evaluate the effectiveness of meditation-based intervention for reducing the stress among college going undergraduate students.

#### **What is stress? :-**

Stress can be considered as “any factor, acting internally or externally, which makes adaptation to environment difficult and which induces increased effort on the part of an individual to maintain a state of equilibrium between him and her and the external environment.”<sup>23</sup> Stress relates to an individual’s perception of the demands being made on them as well as of their perception of their capabilities to meet those demands. A mismatch will mean that an individual’s stress threshold is exceeded, triggering the stress response.<sup>24</sup>

Stress as a construct can refer to various physiological and cognitive states, including irritability, excessive worry or over-arousal<sup>25</sup>. Chronic stress may also be associated with occupations<sup>26</sup>, terminal illness<sup>27</sup>, or the presence of psychological disorders.<sup>28</sup> Where stress enhances function

(physical or mental, such as through strength training or challenging work), it is considered as eustress. Persistent stress that is not resolved through coping or adaptation leading to anxiety, withdrawal behavior and depression is considered as distress.<sup>37</sup>

A person's response towards stress depends on whether an event is appraised as a challenge or a threat.<sup>38</sup> Stress symptoms commonly include a state of alarm and adrenaline production, short-term resistance as a coping mechanism, and exhaustion, as well as irritability, muscular tension, inability to concentrate and a variety of physiological reactions such as headache and elevated heart rate. Stress is widely accepted to have two opposite effects on individuals – good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress). Han Selye noted that eustress provides challenges that motivate individuals to work hard and meet their goals; meanwhile distress results from the stressful situations that persist over time and produces negative health outcomes<sup>39</sup>. Finally, it can be concluded that the acceptable levels of stress help to improve the individuals performance while excessive amounts of stress can lead to a decreased performance. Stress has become an important topic in academic circle as well as in our society.

#### **Mindfulness on Breathing (Breath Meditation):-**

Meditation (Dhyan):

*“tatra pratyayaika-tānatā dhyānam” (Yog Sutra 3/2)*

Means: - In meditative absorption, the entire perceptual flow is aligned with that object. The recent popularity of mindfulness in the West is generally considered to have been initiated by Jon Kabat-Zinn.<sup>41</sup> Mindfulness with Breathing is the system of meditation or mental cultivation (Chitta-bhavana) often practiced and most often taught by the Buddha Gautama. For more than 2500 years, this practice has been preserved and passed along. The term "mindfulness" is a translation of the Pali-term *sati*.<sup>40</sup> The term *sati* means "to remember." In the Pali language of the Buddhist scriptures this practice called "**Anapanasati**" which means "**mindfulness with in-breaths and out-breaths.**" In *Anapanasati*, through the breathing, we become sensitive to our bodies and their nature. We ground ourselves in this basic reality of human existence, which provides the stability we need to cope wisely with feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories, and all the rest of our inner conditioning.

#### **The procedures of Breath Meditation (Anapansati):-**

Sit upright, comfortable and relaxed, with your hands on your knees or thighs, palms up or palms down or resting, one on the other, in your lap. Turn your eyes slightly downward and close them gently. Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply three or four times, feeling the inhaling and exhaling breath moving in and out through your nostrils. Now breathe naturally and easefully, keeping your awareness on the tip of your nose, feeling the breath as it flows in and out of your nostrils. Keeping your

awareness on the tip of your nose, breathe naturally and calmly, easefully observing the sensation of the breath moving there throughout all your inhalations and exhalations. Let the breath be as it will. If the breath is naturally long, let it be so. If it is short, let it be so. If the inhalations and exhalations are of unequal length, that is just fine. Let the breath be natural and unforced, and just observe and experience it. If during the meditation mind wanders bring it back to the breath.

**Objective:** - To study the effect of Breath Meditation on stress of college going students.

**Research design:** - In the present study single group pretest- posttest research design was used.

**Tools:** Stress level was measured by stress scale developed by Dr. M. Singh (2002) (Pub. by Institute of research and test development, Andheri East, Mumbai).

**Sample:** The study is conducted on forty graduate level girl's studying in dev sanskriti vishvavidyalaya, Haridwar. They all are in between age group of 16 to 20 yrs. And all are non practioners of meditation before this intervention. Purposive sampling was used for this study.

#### **Criteria for selection of sample:-**

In order to study the effect of breath meditation (Anapansati) on Stress of college level Students, the **Primary criteria** for the selection of the subjects are, subjects are

suffering with these symptoms as mention below:

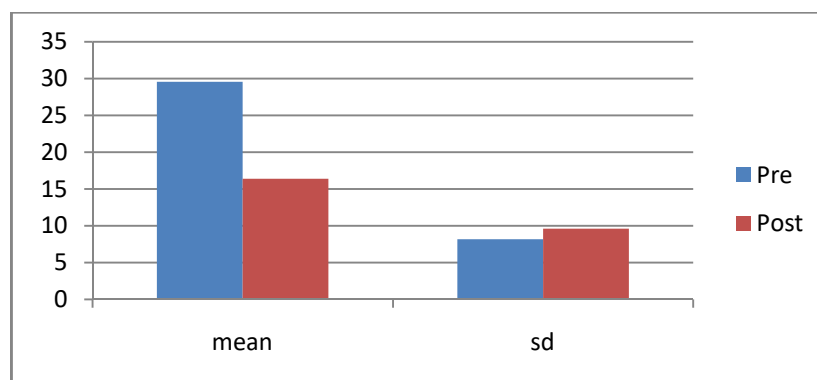
1. Stressed from some physical or mental reasons
2. Insomnia, nightmares, disturbing dreams
3. Lack of concentration
4. Frequent headaches, jaw clenching or pain
5. Forgetfulness, disorganization, confusion
6. Cold or sweaty hands, feet
7. Nervousness

And the **secondary criteria** to participate in this study was participants who willing to participate in meditation practice and also

**Result table and graph:**

Group	Mean	SD	SED	N	r	df	t-value	Level of significant
Pre	29.55	8.18	1.59	40	0.705	39	8.27	0.01
Post	16.4	9.61						

**Graph:-**



**Interpretation: -**

From the table it is found that pre test mean and post test mean of stress level is 29.55 and 16.4 respectively. Standard deviation SD for both mean is 8.18 and 9.61 and coefficient of correlation r is 0.705. Standard

being physically fit and not taking any kind of medicines.<sup>33</sup>

**Procedure applied for the collection of data:**

Sample was selected thorough Purposive sampling. To measure their stress level, stress scale (Prepared by Dr M. Singh) has been applied on the subjects. The pre data has been taken by the researcher on 0<sup>th</sup> day of the study. The practice is going on for 25 days the post data has been taken by the researcher on 25<sup>th</sup> day. Breath meditation was administered for 25 days about 45 minute every day in evening.

error of the difference  $S_{ED}$  is 1.59 and t-ratio is 8.27 as well. Obtained t-value is 8.27 which are statistically significant at 0.01 significance level of confidence. This shows that the significant change in stress level after the practicing of Breath meditation.

**Discussion: -**

Hypothesis is rejected and is significant at 0.01 levels which show that Breath meditation is helpful in significantly decreasing the level of stress.

In the present research work “the effect of **Breath meditation (Mindfulness on breathing) on stress of college graduate students**” the researcher attempt to determine the Breath meditation can make a significant difference on stress level of college going graduate students. Kabat-Zinn stat on the topic of mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”<sup>35</sup>

This practice is thought to develop a deep experimental understanding of the impermanence of all phenomena and also bring to the surface and dissolve deep seated complex and tensions. This technique fosters development of insight thus help in the development of qualities like confidence.

**Conclusion:**

A student’s life is subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academics with an obligation of success, uncertain future and difficulties envisaged for integration into the college system. These students face social, emotional and

physical and family problems which may affect their learning ability and academic performance .<sup>30, 31</sup> Stress levels among college students are higher than those of people at any other stage of life.

“The practice of Yoga not only helps to keep the body young, strong and supple but also incorporate mental activities, disciplines that help to develop attention and concentration and stimulate the creative ability that are latent within human body”.<sup>32</sup>

A Study conducted by Aasra ([www.aasra.info/articlesandstatistics.html](http://www.aasra.info/articlesandstatistics.html)) reported that depression among youth has increased from 2 to 12% in the last five years. Mindful Breathing and sitting (meditation) help to relax and focus the mind. Just 5 minute a day can make you feel more refreshed and energetic.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, it can be concluded that the acceptable levels of eustress help to improve the individual’s performance, while excessive amounts of distress can lead to a decreased performance. Now a day’s distress has become an important topic in academic circle as well as in our society. But though this breath meditation practice distress can be convert into eustress. And people will become mentally fit and healthier.

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