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Finding Inner Peace: My Journey to Relieve Stress and Anxiety

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Finding Inner Peace Through Yoga: My Journey to Relieve Stress and Anxiety
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Introduction
The goal of this project was to find out if yoga can help relieve stress and anxiety and overall help one find inner peace.

- Modern life can create the conditions for increased levels of stress and anxiety.
- This is particularly true for college students who experience a lot of changes and pressures regarding academics, romantic relationships, friendships, and career plans.
- Yoga is a Hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline that focuses on breath control, meditation, and specific body postures, and is widely practiced for physical and spiritual health, as well as relaxation.
- A review of the history of yoga and literature reviews regarding yoga’s benefits to reducing stress and anxiety were done. In addition, a single subject case study approach was employed using a participant observer method.

Methods
- A review of the history and development of yoga was completed. This was done in order to gain a better understanding of yoga.
- Research regarding meditation and mindfulness was conducted as well to understand the relationship they have to yoga.
- A literature review was done on the benefits of yoga, specifically related to reducing stress and anxiety.
- Interviews of two different yoga instructors were conducted about their experience with yoga.
- I took yoga classes at the studio All That Matters in Wakefield, Rhode Island to verify these benefits first hand.
- Before and after self-assessments were recorded to help document the results of these experiences. A Likert scale was used to measure how stressed and anxious I felt before and after I took yoga classes:
  
  0=Not stressed/anxious 1=Slightly stressed/anxious 2=Moderately stressed/anxious 3=Very stressed/anxious 4=Extremely stressed/anxious

Results
- Yoga reduces stress and anxiety levels and can help one find inner peace.
- Research studies show yoga, especially yoga breathing (pranayama), is an effective treatment for anxiety.
- Yoga reduced stress levels and improved well-being in college and adolescent students.
- Yoga lowered my stress and anxiety levels, and it may lower yours too. The charts below show data from five classes, using the Likert scale I developed.
- Overall, I felt more relaxed after yoga, less stressed, and less anxious.

Discussion
- The goal of my project was to find out if yoga can help relieve stress and anxiety and overall help one find inner peace.
- Many people struggle with stress and anxiety. Yoga may be an alternative, inexpensive way to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Both the literature review results and single-subject case study results show that yoga can be used to help relieve stress and anxiety.
- Meta-analysis and systematic reviews show that yoga decreases stress and anxious symptoms.
- I was expecting to find that yoga could help reduce stress and anxiety, and the results match this.
- As for inner peace, I believe that I have been able to find some inner peace. I have found lots of joy and happiness in yoga.
- My stress and anxiety levels were reduced, and I believe if I were to continue my journey with yoga and integrate yoga into my daily life, my stress and anxiety might be able to decrease almost completely.

Implications:
- There is a continuing need for further research, particularly for college students.
- Results were one case-study only. More case-studies are needed.

Future research:
- Reliable and valid measures for both stress and anxiety and ways to assess inner peace are needed in yoga research studies.

How to be Mindful:
- Be fully present
- Be aware of where you are and what you are doing
- Have a non-judgmental attitude

Interviews
- Interview 1: Yoga instructor, Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health.
  - Yoga has wonderful benefits on the body and mind.
  - “When the body starts to unwind, the mind will follow.”
- Interview 2: Yoga instructor at All That Matters.
  - Started practicing for the physical benefits, but then realized how much of an impact yoga had on her mental health.
  - Yoga has helped reduce her anxiety.
  - Yoga breathing (pranayama) helps her reduce stress and anxiety.

Literature Cited

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