



# Exploring Inner well-being and Peace in the Realm of the Methods of Yoga Philosophy

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the profound teachings of the Yoga Sutras and their application in modern psychological and therapeutic contexts. Yoga, as defined by Patanjali, aims to tranquil the fluctuations of the mind and achieve spiritual liberation through the integration of conscious and unconscious processes. The critique of Western dualism (more specifically Cartesian' dualism) in favor of a unified perspective with Samkhya philosophy is discussed, emphasizing the role of the intellect, karma, and self-awareness in achieving mental calm and freedom from suffering. Modern challenges such as social media's impact on identity and the rise of mental as well as psychological disorders are examined through the lens of the methods of Yoga Philosophy, highlighting the efficacy of mindfulness and yoga therapies in promoting self-regulation, inner well-being, and peace.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Self-regulation, Spiritual Liberation, Mental Health, Non-Attachment.

## Introduction

According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, yoga is the suppression of the modifications of the mind.<sup>1</sup> In Yoga, the mind integrates conscious and unconscious processes and is illuminated by Pure Consciousness which can lead to either spiritual liberation or bondage. In the philosophy of Yoga, there is a critique of the Western dualistic separation of subject and object, proposing instead the Samkhya perspective where both psyche and external reality are forms of prakriti. The mind assimilates sensory impressions, and the intellect plays a crucial role in discernment and liberation. Karma and latent impressions shape future experiences and perpetuate the cycle of rebirth unless countered by disciplined practice and self-awareness. The philosophical perspective of Yoga has been looked upon as excessively "spiritual" to the point of being a world-denying philosophy, indifferent to moral endeavor, but Witcher presents the view that Yoga is not exclusively focused on spirituality and ascetism, but rather the Yoga Philosophy can be seen as a responsible engagement of the Self (Pure Consciousness) and matter, which includes mind, body and nature, resulting in a highly developed, transformed and participatory human nature and identity, an embodied state of liberated selfhood.<sup>2</sup> Till the time there is an interplay of desire and aversion in our psyche due to the ignorance about the real nature of the objects, till that time psychological suffering will continue to take place and our minds will keep swinging between the polarities of like and dislike which will perpetuate the cycle of suffering. Spiritual Freedom is a state of the mind which neither clings to pleasant objects of experience nor grasps onto the unpleasant objects of experience. Most of the psychological problems in our life arise only because we try to forcefully hold onto pleasant experiences and trying to fight unpleasant experiences instead of allowing the experiences to flow naturally without grasping, clinging, fighting or holding onto any object at the level of the mind.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. Horovitz and Staffan Elgelid, *Yoga Therapy: Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2015), 40

<sup>2</sup> Ian Whicher, "Yoga and Freedom: A Reconsideration of Patanjali's Classical Yoga," *Philosophy East and West* 48, no. 2 (1998), 1.

## Rediscovering Happiness Through Self-Regulation and Yoga Therapy

In our modern life the primary focus of finding happiness and fulfilment has been directed outwards towards the objects of experience which cannot be relied on for the happiness that we want. There are two ways of discovering happiness through the sense-object contact in certain respect. On the one hand, though the contact with an object of experience may give us temporary satisfaction but as soon as that object of experience is taken away from us or our senses lose contact with that object, so we start to feel uneasy. On the other hand, there is a type of happiness which relies on the fulfilment of an internal self in which there is a regulation of the intellect, emotions and the behavior and this regulated state of the self produces happiness and calmness in the mind. Mindfulness and yoga-based approaches have been found to be effective in helping individuals find a steady, regulated experience of the self.<sup>3</sup> The International Association of Yoga Therapists have defined yoga therapy as follows – “Yoga therapy is the process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and wellbeing through the application of the teachings and practices of Yoga. It is the appropriate application of these teachings and practices in a therapeutic context to support a consistent yoga practice that will increase self-awareness and engage the client/student’s energy in the direction of desired goals. The mind and body, when working together, can develop enhanced abilities that lead to liberation from limitations and problems. With the light of wisdom, freed from inner conflict, comes a tremendous feeling of release.<sup>4</sup> The goals of yoga therapy include eliminating, reducing, or managing symptoms that cause suffering; improving function; helping to prevent the occurrence or re-occurrence of underlying causes of illness; and moving toward improved health and wellbeing. Yoga therapy also helps clients/students change their relationship to and identification with their condition”.<sup>5</sup> The primary focus on the external media and the search to find security of identity or the self in the outer objects of life have created a sense of a pseudo-security for the self in which it feels safe, but on a deeper level that security is flawed and hollow. A stable sense of security in the self can only arise when there is connection of the self with the real and concrete emotions, aspirations, desires and morality of a human being.

### Navigating Identity and Relationships in the Age of Social Media

People nowadays try to make friends online on social networking sites instead of making friends in real life by meeting them in person. This creates a sense of misunderstanding in our relationships as when we are online all the time our authentic selves get sucked into the algorithm of the social networking sites and when we communicate with someone online it’s as if a dust of inauthenticity has been put as an interface between the two persons who are communicating. But there can be an open engagement and flow in a conversation when there is a real face-to-face contact between the persons when they meet each other, this creates a sense of stability in the self instead of the false sense of stability which we think we are getting by posting messages and things on social networking sites. This is not to say that social media and the internet in general have only negative aspects, but it is only throwing light on the influence of media and consumeristic culture on the development of identity crisis, anxiety about the sense of self in today’s youth. The consequence of the consumption culture is that the prevalence of mood, anxiety, substance, and eating disorders continues to rise. Within many individuals, there is a neglected inner self that needs healthy alignment and care.<sup>6</sup> Till the time there will be an assumption that the inner sense of fulfilment can be found just like the fulfilment of physical hunger when we feel hungry, until then the sense of self will be forever unfulfilled and happy.

### Cultivating Authenticity for Balanced Living and Society

Each of us has a self, or a sense of self, that is constructed from the roots of our internal, physiologically based predispositions, needs, and drives as well as from the demands and influences manifest in our environments. Accordingly, knowing who we are and functioning effectively requires mindfulness of each of the aspects of self-regulation.<sup>7</sup> It is only when we know and become mindful of our authentic self or the real self that functions in line with our natural inclinations and desires, it is only then that we will be able to function effectively in our society and we will be able to integrate our inclinations with the inclinations and intentions of the people in the society. Whenever any individual is not able to be aware and be mindful of his real inclination, motives and intention, then it creates a conflict between him

<sup>3</sup> Catherine P. Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2015), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Simpkins and Simpkins, *Meditation and Yoga in Psychotherapy: Techniques for Clinical Practice*, 256.

<sup>5</sup> Horovitz and Elgelid, *Yoga Therapy: Theory and Practice*, 38.

<sup>6</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 29.

and the society. So, it is the responsibility of everyone to know the working and the deep-rooted inclinations and motives of his or her own mind so that we can create a society which is mentally and emotionally healthy as well, instead of just being healthy physically. Health is the constant balance of interplay between the emotional, psychical, bodily and the spiritual aspects of an individual.

### Self-Regulation Through Mindfulness and Yoga

The process of self-regulation plays a vital role in maintaining our overall well-being and good emotional and mental health. An individual who is good at self-regulation will be able to manage his thoughts, emotions and feelings in a much better way rather than a person who doesn't have the skill of self-regulating his or her behavior, thoughts, emotions and feelings. Self-regulation can be roughly seen as a process whereby an individual is able to manage his or her thoughts and behavior through voluntary use of specific mindfulness skills and yoga processes. The mindful and yogic path to self-regulation provides an embodied (i.e., lived experience) and cognitive framework for both knowing and regulating the whole, integrated self within the context of life experiences.<sup>8</sup> The self-regulation of yogic and the mindfulness path does not consider the self as a detached something which is standing apart from the world, but rather it views the self as an embodied part of the whole experience or the lived experience of the body-world-mind. When the conception of the knowing of our self is well known and developed, then from that emerges a greater sense of connection with other people and the surroundings because when we know the nature of the self that is embodied within our structure, then we can as an individual navigate through the world and the environment with which our embodied self has a constant interaction. To illustrate an example of a self-regulated and a person who has most of the knowledge of her embodied self can be given as follows: "Mathilde is happy and healthy. She is walking from the yoga studio to her apartment a few blocks away in Buffalo, New York. She thinks, "That was an awesome yoga practice. I feel alive." It's late spring and she smells the intermingled scents of the bakery up the street, the bouquet of fresh-cut grass, and the aroma of the coffee that she's holding in her hand. The sun is warm on her cheeks. It's a Saturday. Notably, a lot of things in her life are not quite on track. She is going out later to sit by a close friend who is terminally ill. Her boyfriend recently left for a new job in New York City and there is no knowing, for sure, if they are going to make it. She's 24 and in the second year of a career-path position with a not-so-great boss. She knows it is important to put in one's time, make a commitment, and then move on. She has lots of reasons to be ruminating, sad, overeating, drinking, and even shopping for her happiness. Yet, she is not doing any of those things. As she walks today, she embodies happiness, strength, and self-love."<sup>9</sup> Here, Mathilde is an example of a self-regulated person who despite facing the tough challenge of her friend being ill, does not back track from enjoying the experiences of the present moment like smelling the scents of the flower in the street. A self-regulated person has a much better chance of moving on from a traumatic experience than a person who is dysregulated.

### Trauma Recovery: Mindfulness and Yoga as Pathways to Healing

Writing in 1912, Sigmund Freud noted that the trauma acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must be regarded as an agent that is still at work. Van Der Kolk writes that whether the trauma had occurred ten years in the past or more than forty, his patients could not bridge the gap between their wartime experiences and their current lives. Somehow the very event that caused them so much pain had also become their sole source of meaning. They felt fully alive only when they were revisiting their traumatic past.<sup>10</sup> Trauma is not the story of something awful that happened in the past, but the residue of imprints left behind in people's sensory and hormonal patterns. Most of the times the trauma gets repressed in the body during the actual incident to increase survival or minimize the threat of trauma. Most of the times the trauma gets repressed in the body during the actual incident to increase survival or minimize the threat of trauma. Yoga and mindfulness practices can allow us to process the traumatic experience by lowering the charge of the sympathetic nervous system (the flight-fight-freeze response) and by activating the parasympathetic nervous system (the rest and the digest response). All yoga shares an emphasis on generating mindfulness. Correlations in brain imaging point to the strong possibility that engaging in exactly this type of "mindful observing" can stimulate areas of the brain typically dulled by trauma.<sup>11</sup> Mindfulness and meditative

<sup>8</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 31-32.

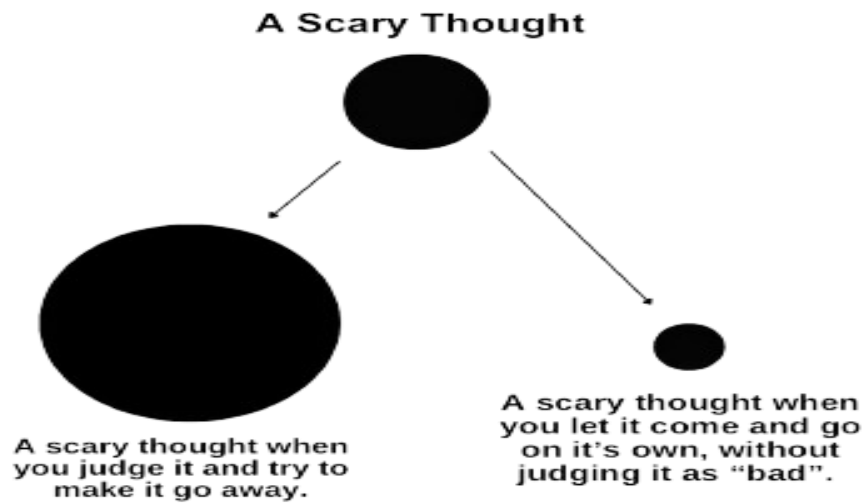
<sup>9</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 32-33.

<sup>10</sup> Bessel V. Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (London: Penguin UK, 2014), 63-64.

<sup>11</sup> Horovitz and Elgelid, *Yoga Therapy: Theory and Practice*, 89.

practices of different sorts teaches us that the sensations, memories and the thoughts about the traumatic experiences are transitory, and we can cope with them even if initially the memories, sensations and the thoughts associated with a traumatic experience might be challenging for us to bear. Mindfulness gives us a clue that the healthiest response to an uncomfortable sensation is to just observe it without judging it and allow it to pass on its own accord.

## F1



## Integration of the Self and the World

From an integrated self and a self that is regulated, a person can take decisions and make choices which are in line and attuned to the environment in which he or she lives, whereas a person in which there is no integration and knowledge of the different aspects of his or her own psyche, then that person will operate through the fabricated lens of a misinterpreted world formed through his or her own lack of regulation of his own thoughts, emotions, feelings and behaviors. In some individuals the sense of the integration between the psychological aspects of the psyche and the societal community happens naturally as a gradual unfoldment and maturation of the cognitive, intellectual and affective aspects of the self, but in some other individuals this integration doesn't develop naturally during the course of the maturation of these individuals, but rather in these individuals the alignment/integration between the psyche and the environment can be developed through love, support and encouragement. The healthy self is an authentic representation of an individual's thoughts (cognitive experience), feelings (emotional experience), and body (physiological experience). For the self to be a healthy, authentic representation of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and physiological needs, there must be an attunement among the coexisting components of the self, both internal and external.<sup>12</sup> A Psychological sense of dysregulation can also arise when the cognitive faculty of an individual gives too much emphasis on either the outer societal community or too much on the inner aspects of his or her own psyche. In a dysregulated sense of self, there is conflict between the inputs of the intellect, the emotions and the behavior whereas in a healthy and a regulated individual, there is a harmony among the different voices of the intellect, emotions and the behavior. To have an alignment between all the aspects of the psyche (emotional, psychological and its manifested behavior), there should be a cultivation of practices which can allow for regulation of thoughts, emotions and psychological experiences. Regulation of thoughts, emotions and feelings doesn't mean in any way that we get detached from the internal states of the mind nor does it mean the repressing of our internal experience, but rather Self- Regulation or regulation in general just means a healthy way of relating to both or internal states of mind and the outer environment. Mindfulness and yoga are two pathways to embodied well-being. To be mindful is to embody and embodiment is the practice of yoga.<sup>13</sup> Yoga is the embodiment of a self in which there is no conflict between

<sup>12</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 36.



the emotions, thoughts, perceptions and to the external environment. Yoga is the perfect peace of mind which results from the harmonious functioning of all the aspects of our embodied self. Ther embodied practices of Yoga and Mindfulness are good means to developing the sense of alignment between the psyche and the world. It can be said from the above thoughts said about alignment, integration of the psyche and the world that all or nearly all problems of existence or to be precise the psychological problems arise due to the failure to disharmony between the psychical aspects of the self and the societal aspects of the community.

### **Building Resilience: The Role of Distress Tolerance in Mental Health**

In the field of mental health, Poor distress tolerance and self-regulatory resource depletion are related to self-regulatory failure. Distress tolerance is the ability to experience uncomfortable feelings and physiological arousal without reacting in a maladaptive manner. Self-regulation requires that an individual be able to tolerate distress and remain engaged with his or her goal. When there is self-regulation resource depletion, then the cognitive faculties which are needed for the emotional self-regulation get fatigued and they are not able to do their job.<sup>14</sup> Distress tolerance is a very important skill to have in life to move forward in life otherwise we will get stuck in a challenging situation. Distress tolerance is an important skill for maintaining a good mental health because in life there may be many painful situations which will arise which we can't change, so distress tolerance gives the capacity to an individual to see this painful experience as an inevitable flow of this ever-changing life and do our hobbies and our works despite the challenging circumstances. Distress tolerance is an act of rebellion during the times of challenge and pain.

### **Finding Freedom: The Gap Between the Stimulus and the Response**

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth.<sup>15</sup> Yoga and mindfulness-based practices do just this, they allow us to react less and observe more, or to react after observing the stimulus or the situation clearly and distinctly. A yogi or an individual who is mindfully aware will not react to any stimuli blindly without any second thought but would rather try to evaluate the repercussions of the stimuli and whether to react on a stimulus or not. An individual who has not developed various self-regulatory skills through yoga and mindfulness will react on a stimulus or a situation without analyzing or thinking about the situation and react impulsively or compulsively which result in various mental health problems. Impulse control disorders arise due to the failure to reflect between the gap of the situation and the response. For an impulsive person, the mere thought of smoking (the stimulus) might cause the behavioral response of smoking a cigarette (response) without any reflection. If the person would have been emotionally regulated, then he would have reflected on the thought of the emotional mind, and then acted accordingly after proper analysis of the stimulus (the thought of smoking). So, the capacity to abide in the gap between the stimulus and the response and to take our decisions and actions from there will result in actions and behaviors which are conducive both to the society and the individual.

### **Transforming Responses through Yoga and Therapy**

The yogic and mindful conceptualizations, view the self as existing in the space between stimulus and the response. It is between both the internal and external triggers that individuals experience the self.<sup>16</sup> The yoga therapist or mostly directly a therapist in general doesn't has the job of eliminating the stimulus (the problematic situation) altogether, but his or her job is to help the client to work on what is in his or her direct control which is the reaction or the response to the present circumstances or situations. After meeting with any yoga practitioner or a psychological counsellor or a therapist, it's not as if the memory a person has of traumatic experiences in his life will vanish from his mind, but rather the therapist's main job is not to remove or try to manipulate the traumatic memories in the mind of his or her client, but rather to help the clients to tolerate the pain of the traumatic experiences and continue to live their lives. A therapist tries to create a healthy relation in the mind of the client between his or her traumatic memories and his emotional and psychological aspects of the psyche. In other words, it's not the removal of the problem that matters in the field of therapy, yoga and counselling, but what matters is to change the client's way of relating and navigating through his or her problems and conflicts in a much healthier and functional manner.

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<sup>14</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 56.

<sup>16</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 83.

## Beyond the Illusion: Yoga and Mindfulness in Dissolving Self-Attachment

The mindfulness-based approach views the self as the witness or the observer of experiences. When the sense of “I” is associated with the mental on-goings or to the flow of experiences instead of being the observer of the experience, then that creates psychological suffering. According to the Buddhist Model of Psychotherapy, holding onto the conception of a permanent self also leads to suffering.<sup>17</sup> Yoga practices and meditation allows the mind to be aware of attaching to an illusory sense of a self which leads to craving and aversion and also letting go of the sense of permanence which wrongly misinterprets the objects of experience as having permanent existence and both the coupling of the illusory sense of a sense and the sense of permanence leads to desire to the objects of experience, thereby leading to attachment to the objects of experience, but as the objects of the world are impermanent, so these objects cannot satisfy that sense of an illusory self. Like mindfulness-based techniques, yoga was developed as a means for cultivating a higher consciousness and transcending self through mental and physical discipline and practice.<sup>18</sup> According to the Yoga Philosophy, attachment to egoism or the sense of an “I” causes suffering and this attachment to the “I” is considered as an obstacle to self-realization. The purpose of Yoga is to remove the obstacles and hurdles that cloud our view of getting knowledge of the real self. In Yoga, the individual is not seen as someone who lacks or misses something, but rather according to the Yoga Philosophy, all the individual needs to do is to remove the obstacles which cloud the Real Self (source of light, happiness and fulfilment) which are present in the individual.

### Non-attachment and the Awakening to the Real Self

The Yoga and the mindfulness approach meditation practices do not emphasize on correcting the “I” or the “ego”, but rather they focus on the process of just being. The illusory self is a work of ignorance and will always lack something whereas the Real Self is already fulfilled and doesn’t need any object of attention from the outside world to fulfil it or complete it. Some of the practices which are included in the embodied practices of the mindful and the yogic self are as follows – Being mindfully aware, honoring our breath and physical experience, living in inquiry, accepting impermanence, cultivating non-attachment, discernment of what is not- self, allowing what is without judgement.<sup>19</sup> Mindful awareness is a state of being present to the moment which exists in the now in direct immediacy instead of being lost in the thoughts about a dead past and an imaginary future. An individual who walks on the path of Yoga should not accept anything on face-value, but rather should pierce every object with the knife of inquiry and see its true nature or see it for what it is. Further, there should be an understanding at the embodied level that the sense impressions and the mental states are transient and impermanent. Even the self is transient. Due to the neurological construction in the brain, it feels as if there is an appearance of a permanent self.<sup>20</sup> Psychological Suffering arises from the resisting to or not accepting the truth of impermanence. The practice of non-attachment is an essential part of the Yoga and mindfulness-based meditation practices. In the process of non-attachment, an individual allows the natural flow of objects to pass through the field of experience, but doesn’t hold onto, grasp onto, cling to those objects. It is not the objects which appear in the field of experience which causes us suffering, but rather it’s an additional layer of clinging to the objects of experience that creates suffering. Suffering is not inherent in life; it is created by an illusory psychological self that is always resisting the natural flow of experience by resisting it or trying to grab it. As nonattachment is achieved, all craving ceases.

### Freedom through Acceptance

Embracing everything that arises without judgement is a key aspect in the practice of Yoga. One of the most important tools of yoga is meditation, and the key component is attention. Typically, people have varying skills with their attention. The development of skill in its use is usually addressed only indirectly, such as paying attention in school or playing in sports. Yoga meditation trains the ability to be fully attentive and absorbed in several distinct ways. Direct, voluntary control of attention is achieved through the practices of breathing (pranayama), postures (asanas), withdrawing attention (pratyahara), and directing attention (dharana). In all these practices, attention is focused on a chosen object, and the practitioner becomes deeply immersed or absorbed in the experience. As skills improve, a second level of attentional absorption is achieved, practiced in the open-ended form of meditation known as dhyana, which allows a free flow of

<sup>17</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 91.

<sup>20</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 94.

attention in the present moment. Dhyana engages unconscious processes and tends to be spontaneous.<sup>21</sup> Another cause of suffering is resisting what is happening. In Buddhism, it is believed that we suffer not from what is happening but due to our relationship with what is happening Buddhist teacher Shinzen Young created a mathematical equation to explain the relationship between suffering and resistance. The mathematical equation is as follows: Suffering = Pain multiplied by Resistance. Pain is that which we cannot control. It can be many things—a physical sensation, a relational loss, or a material loss. Pain can be small (a delay at the grocery store) or overwhelming (the loss of a loved one). Resistance is ours to manage, and therefore so is the suffering. For example, if we are delayed at the grocery store (low level of pain), yet manifest large amounts of resistance, we can experience a great amount of suffering while waiting in line. Conversely, we may experience great pain (e.g., a cancer diagnosis) and yet allow what has happened to be and acknowledge it for what it is—and then we will experience manageable pain and the suffering also would be negligible.<sup>22</sup> Suffering is directly proportional to the level or the extent of our resistance to the current experience. No Resistance doesn't mean that we will intentionally put our hands in fire and not resist it, but rather it's the internal sense of resistance to experience which we are talking about here. It's the internal resistance of not liking the current experience and wanting it to be something different than what it is. All psychological (nearly all) arises from the desire for a version of experience which is not currently happening. Without resistance or the want for the current experience to be any other than what it is, there can be no suffering.

### Inner Harmony and Contentment

In yoga philosophy, non-violence doesn't only include the violence towards others, it also includes the violence towards oneself where we generate unnecessary tension and suffering in our minds by being too critical of ourselves and the world around us. Truthfulness includes breaking the habits that cause our physical and mental well-being to deteriorate. Non-stealing is not desiring what we don't have. Non-stealing may keep on generating even when it is not expressed in the outer activities, when in the mind there is a process of generation of impressions that lead to our desiring the objects that others don't have. Once our energies which are directed towards desiring frivolous objects are destroyed, then we can use that freed energy for pursuing the activities and practices that move us onwards on the journey of spiritual freedom and mental calm. Through the restraint and observances, yoga poses and breathing, and uplifted state of mind, we can be happy with who we are and what we have.<sup>23</sup>

### Exploration of the Benefits of Savasana in Yoga

In Yoga there is a type of asana called savasana which activates our parasympathetic mode of rest by giving us a chance of observing and relaxing into the present moment experience without doing any activity of thinking in the mind. Slow, relaxed breathing soothes the sympathetic nervous system while activating the parasympathetic nervous system.<sup>24</sup> This shift leads to lower cortisol levels, relaxed muscles, and a decrease in blood pressure. During savasana, the relentless stream of thoughts run through the mind, but the thought cannot cause us to suffer until and until we start to identify and get attached to that thought. For example, instead of the attitude of "I am sad", there can be huge perspectival shift in saying that I am observing the thought of "I am sad". In the second statement there is an observation of the emotion called sadness, instead of the attachment and clinginess that happens in the first assertion. Lying still during the yoga posture of savasana can make us aware about the constant agitation that our minds produce from the day to the night. The practice of yoga is not about controlling emotions, but rather it is the act of inviting all emotions in the tent of our being without a sense of any internal or psychological resistance.<sup>25</sup>

### The Role of Acceptance in Anxiety Management

The mind creates suffering by judging the situation and throwing conceptualizations over the top of it. The solution to be free from this suffering is to just observe this process of mental agitation without getting engaged with the uncomfortable sensation or the situation. In most of the cases of Generalized anxiety disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorders, the anxiety is something which seems to be dangerous to the, but it is not in reality. The waves of anxiety come and go. But the additional judgement

<sup>21</sup> Annellen M. Simpkins and C. A. Simpkins, *Meditation and Yoga in Psychotherapy: Techniques for Clinical Practice* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 42.

<sup>22</sup> Cook-Cottone, *Mindfulness and Yoga for Self-Regulation: A Primer for Mental Health Professionals*, 96.

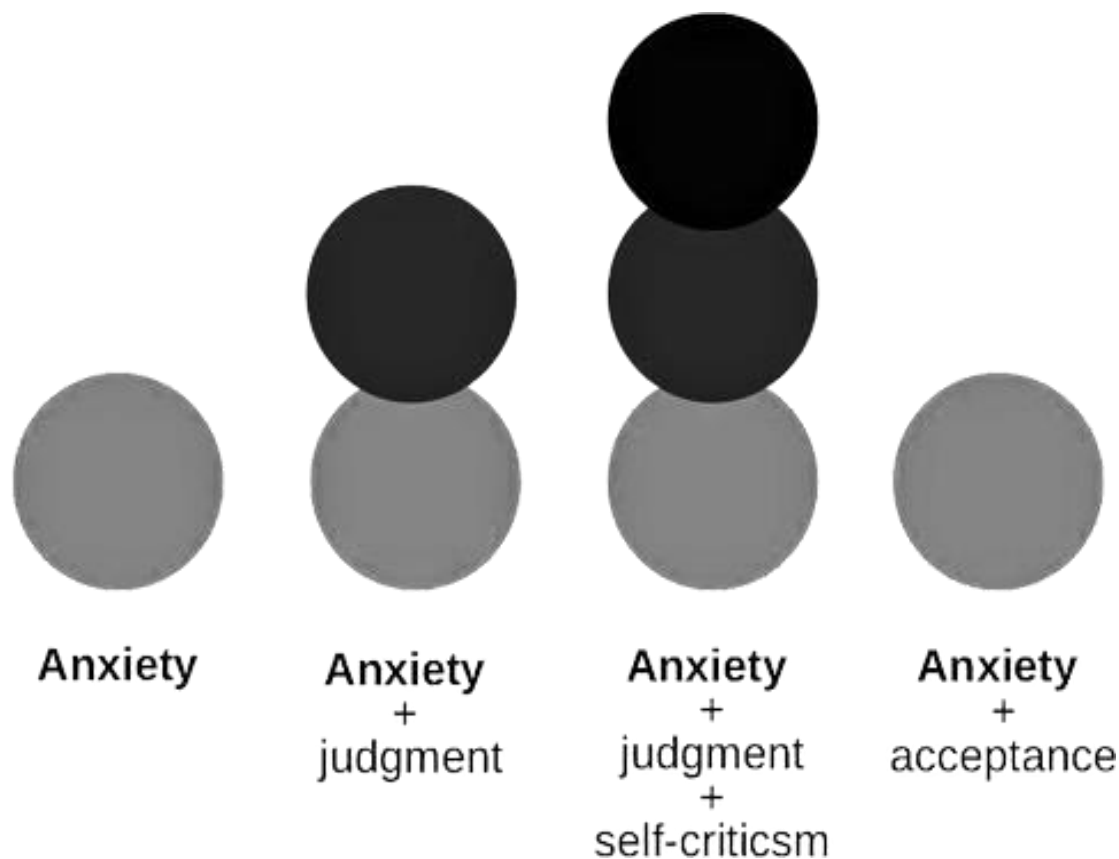
<sup>23</sup> Horovitz and Elgelid, *Yoga Therapy: Theory and Practice*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Simpkins and Simpkins, *Meditation and Yoga in Psychotherapy: Techniques for Clinical Practice*, 143.

<sup>25</sup> Horovitz and Elgelid, *Yoga Therapy: Theory and Practice*, 99.

and self-criticism on top of the anxiety is what fuels the cycle of anxiety, whereas if there is an attitude of acceptance, relaxation into the experience of anxiety, then the anxiety subsides in due course of time.

**F2**



**The Concept of Equanimity in Yoga**

Yoga teacher and practitioner, Sam Dworkis, suggests that: Enhanced flexibility, strength, and endurance need not be yoga’s goal. The “goal” needs to be to learn how to pay attention to “what is.” “What is” is how you feel right now. “What is” is not trying to get your hands to the floor; or trying to do a headstand or trying to do a back bend or trying to do any yoga exercise. Most importantly, an appropriate yoga practice is not trying to get your body to feel like it may have felt in the past or trying to get your body to feel like you think it should feel. If you were supposed to be different, you would already be there. An appropriate yoga practice, therefore, is not about trying; it is about non-aggressively doing . . . it is about being.<sup>26</sup> Yoga is more generally about being totally effortless and spontaneous from the inside even when the body is active doing its job. Most of the mind’s energy during the day is lost in doing something at the level of the mind like thinking, judging and criticizing the current experience instead of being focused on the task at hand. The goal of Yoga is perfect peace of mind which can happen only when the mind has become equanimous and doesn’t tilt towards any polarities of opposite emotions, thoughts, perceptions and judgements. Through the continuous practice of yoga, mindfulness and meditation the mind becomes much stronger to handle the challenges of life.

**Conclusion**

The integration of Yoga philosophy into modern therapeutic practices presents a revolutionary approach to mental and emotional well-being. Through fostering mindfulness and self- regulation, individuals can transcend psychological suffering and attain profound inner peace. Yoga's core tenets of non-attachment and acceptance of impermanence offer robust tools for navigating life's challenges with resilience and equanimity. Supported by both research and clinical outcomes, Yoga and mindfulness-based therapies empower individuals to heal trauma, cope with stress, and cultivate a harmonious relationship between their inner world and the external environment. Embracing these practices not only enhances personal well-being but also fosters a healthier society by nurturing genuine self-expression and emotional equilibrium.

<sup>26</sup> Christina Sell, *Yoga from the Inside Out: Making peace with your body through yoga* (SCB Distributors, 2013), 94.



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