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ORIGINAL ARTICLE



**BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF MEDITATION AND YOGA IN SPORTS**

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**ABSTRACT :**

Meditation is a practice where an individual uses a technique – such as mindfulness, or focusing the mind on a particular object, thought or activity – to train attention and awareness, and achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable state. Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophical traditions.

**KEYWORDS :** Meditation , mentally clear and emotionally.

**INTRODUCTION**

Meditation has been practiced since antiquity in numerous religious traditions, often as part of the path towards enlightenment and self realization. Some of the earliest written records of meditation (Dhyana), come from the Hindu traditions of Vedantism. Since the 19th century, Asian meditative techniques have spread to other cultures where they have also found application in non-spiritual contexts, such as business and health. Meditation may be used with the aim of reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and pain, and increasing peace, perception, self-concept, and well-being. Meditation is under research to define its possible health and other effects.

**ROLE OF MEDITATION AND YOGA IN SPORTS**

Meditation has recently grown in popularity, and as more people see the benefits of it, more coaches, trainers and athletes are beginning to incorporate it into their training plans. Novak Djokovic, Olympian and professional tennis player claims he practices 15 minutes of mindful meditation a day. Other athletes like Lebron James, Kobe Bryant, and Derek Jeter, to name a few, also use meditation.

**1. Enhances Focus**

Meditation allows us to focus on the present moment. There are a lot of distractions for an athlete as they perform; the noise of the crowd, the competitors beside them, or even past mistakes. These distractions can have negative impacts on their performance and may be the reason an athlete misses the podium or their chance at making an Olympic team. The practice of meditation teaches

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athletes to strengthen their focus on the present task at hand and drop all distractions, especially negative thoughts that may interfere with their success. Staying focused on the game or race is an essential component for an athlete to succeed.

## **2. Helps Athletes Cope with Pain**

With all the intense training that athletes go through on a regular basis, it's not unusual for them to be in pain or discomfort. According to a recent study, meditation has been proven to sharply reduce a person's sensitivity to pain. The study measured how participants responded to pain before and after attending four 20-minute meditation training sessions over the course of four days. The results showed that participants rated pain 57% less unpleasant and 40% less intense, on average, after they went through the meditation training. These findings show that meditation can help athletes cope with pain, which can help them push through those tough moments of training when it hurts the most.

## **3. Improves Sleep Patterns**

Another benefit that meditation has on athletes is that it improves sleep patterns. A study published in the Journal of Sleep showed that athletes who do not get enough sleep can experience negative effects such as weight gain, inability to maintain focus, mood disturbances, increased anxiety or depression, and decreased motor control. All these negative effects can dramatically impact an athlete's performance. By incorporating meditation into their workout routine, athletes can sleep better and fight insomnia. This is because meditation techniques evoke the relaxation response, a deep physiological shift in the body that's the opposite of a stress response. This relaxation response can help eliminate stress, which is usually the cause of sleep trouble. Athletes who have difficulty sleeping due to the stress of their training or upcoming competitions, could benefit from a good night's sleep.

## **4. Boosts the Immune System**

Not only does meditation help an athlete sleep better, it also helps boost their immune system, preventing illness that could affect their training or competition. A study conducted by the University of Wisconsin, evaluated the potential preventative effects meditation and exercise have on incidence, duration and severity of acute respiratory infection (ARI) illness. The study found that those who practiced meditation experienced fewer incidences of ARI, as well as shortened duration and severity of symptoms compared to those in the exercise and control group. Bottom line: meditation can help lower the chance and severity of illness, allowing athletes to continue to train for success.

## **5. Reduces Stress**

Whether it be from training or competition, athletes are always under stress. While some stress can be good, too much can hinder performance. Therefore, it's important for athletes to find ways to manage and reduce their stress. Meditation is a good way to do it because it increases positive effects and decreases negative effects, such as anxiety. A recent study found that participants who experienced mindfulness-based stress reduction had significantly less anxiety, depression and somatic distress compared to those in the control group. Their findings suggest that the emotions they were experiencing may be processed differently in the brain. Athletes who adopt mindful meditation can reduce their stress and be more prepared to perform during competitions.

Meditation has many key benefits that can help with athletic performance. Athletes who incorporate meditation into their workout routine can be better prepared for competition and have a mental edge on their opponents.

## **Yoga**

Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophical traditions. There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

### **Physical benefits**

“The relaxation techniques incorporated in yoga can lessen chronic pain, such as lower back pain, arthritis, headaches and carpal tunnel syndrome,” explains Dr. Nevins. “Yoga can also lower blood pressure and reduce insomnia.”

### **Other physical benefits of yoga include:**

- increased flexibility
- increased muscle strength and tone
- improved respiration, energy and vitality
- maintaining a balanced metabolism
- weight reduction
- cardio and circulatory health
- improved athletic performance
- protection from injury

## **CONCLUSION**

As every athlete or coach knows, a huge part of the game is mental, and yoga can help with your mental strength, too. Meditation helps you focus, reduces stress, and stabilizes emotions. It's also known to help as a form of pain management, which can be very beneficial in sports.

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