

# HOW CAN MEDITATION CURE STRESS IN YOUNG ADULTS

**Stress and depression are the biggest ailments troubling the youth. However, what we need is to develop a capacity to handle negative stress, writes Master Shriv**

**W**orld Health Organisation's definition of health, as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, captures the broad tenets of wellness. Globally, stress and depression are the top causes of illness and disability among the youth. Suicide ranks second among the main causes of death in young adults. At its worst, stress and depression can lead to suicide. This is also one of the biggest challenges faced by students in India. Recognising stress and depression at an early stage is critical for reducing mental and physiological breakdown in youth.

The factors that contribute to high risk are lack of sleep, poor eating habits and inadequate exercise. All this encompass an ideal combination for depression to set in. Day-to-day challenges such as managing peer pressure, high cost of education, propensity to land a decent job after education and failed relationships also force youth to remain stressed.

Unfortunately, despite attempts to create awareness, societal stigma is associated with stress and depression in the youth. This dissuades the youth or the family members to accept it as a medical problem, thereby debarring them from looking for solutions or going in for counselling to eradicate this extremely crippling phenomenon.

## IMPLICATIONS OF STRESS

A survey shows that globally, a substantial percentage of today's youth is suffering from some form of stress and

depression. A Yale University research says stress and depression reduce the area of our brain responsible for self-control, thus reducing our coping ability. This affects the cardiovascular system leading to hypertension, which dramatically increases the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and heart failure that is proven by crippling illnesses among the youth. Moreover, it also impacts the digestive system causing bowel problems. However, the effect is reversed once stress and depression is handled.

## WHAT IS MINDFUL MEDITATION

Mindful Meditation is a unique technique where one is not directed at being different from how we already are. Instead, it helps us become aware of what is real and true, moment by moment. It teaches us how to be unconditionally present; in other words, it helps us to connect with whatever is happening around us.

If breathing is good, which it is, then paying attention to the breathing pattern as a phenomenon has unprecedented powers and how that can be attained by youth is what should be the focus. This is proven after extensive research into investigating the benefits of Mindful Meditation — a practice in which one sits quietly

while focussing on one's breathing and body. The technique helps us to analyse the past, foresee the future and plan the present while addressing the physiological and psychological aspects of individuals initially and in advanced stages. Focussed, rhythmic monosyllabic vibrations, when internalised, can create the rise of positive energy, thereby reducing toxins — which is the main cause of stress and depression.

## IS STRESS BAD

Well, not really. Imagine, if students do not have any pressure to achieve higher grades in examinations, no one would excel in academics. What we should clearly understand is that the aim should be to manage the negative stress. It is the negative stress, which is harmful. Our aim should be to augment positive stress since it is the key to success for all individuals, and more so, for the youth. Not many people know that there are two types of stress — healthy and unhealthy. Healthy stress levels can have dramatic results and can push you to peak performance. The stress that causes anxiety and health problems is bad stress.

In the process, one does not judge thoughts that arise but merely observes them. The practice helps to 'be here and now'. Stefan Hoffman, from Boston University's Centre for Anxiety and Related Disorders, in his talk on meditation to address psychological disorders says, "I was sceptical at first. I wondered, 'Why on earth should this work?' But it seems to work quite well."

*(The author is a practising lifestyle and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) coach)*

