Yoga for Children: An Overview

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To meet the demands of modern lifestyle, full of speed, stresses and tensions, an all-round personality development of children is mandatory. The use of Yoga for personality development in children has diverse applications at their physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels. Excessive stress is harmful to academic performance and may lead to dropping out in children. Yoga through its physical postures (Asana), breathing practices (Pranayama), cleansing techniques (Kriya), meditation therapies (Dhyana) and relaxation training (Yoga Nidra) yields a positive effect in the management of stress in children. Yoga practice benefited children by improving their eye-hand coordination, attention, concentration, competitive performance and relaxation. Visually impaired children showed a significant decrease in their abnormal anxiety levels when they practiced Yoga for three weeks, while a program of physical activity had no such effect. Socially disadvantaged children in a remand home showed significant improvement in sleep, appetite and general well being, as well as a decrease in physiological arousal after Yoga. In one study, it is found that a 4-week program of Yogasanas and meditation lowers the aggressive behavior of children. Meditation helped to reduce problems related to maladaptive behaviors, increase emotional and physical health and psychological well-being in children. Another important area is the application of Yoga in the management of children with emotionally disturbed personality. Finally, the possible role of Yoga in improving the mental state and general well being of HIV positive children and children with AIDS and cancer is being explored.

Key words: Yoga, personality development, children