

EDUCATION BLENDED WITH YOGA - A SOLUTION FOR YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

All teenagers take risks as a normal part of growing up. Risk-taking is the tool an adolescent uses to define and develop his or her identity, and healthy risk-taking is a valuable experience. Healthy adolescent risk-taking behaviors which tend to have a positive impact on an adolescent's development can include participation in sports, the development of artistic and creative abilities, volunteer activities, travel, running for school office, making new friends, constructive contributions to the family or community, and others. Negative risk-taking behaviors which can be dangerous for adolescents include drinking, smoking, drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sexual activity, disordered eating, self-mutilation, running away, stealing, gang activity, and others. Substance abuse leads to negative outcomes such as unemployment, adolescent pregnancy, drug or alcohol addiction, or imprisonment. Unprotected sex is the primary form of HIV transmission among young people, and every day around 6,000 young people are infected with the virus. Girls aged 15–19 account for one in four unsafe abortions-about 5 million each year. In Nepal and Indonesia, almost 60 % of all males aged 15–24 are smokers. Half of all murders and violent crimes in Jamaica are committed by males aged 18–25, who make up 10 % of the population. These youth risk behaviors will not only hinder their development and their future but also will corrupt the society and finally the country. There is a very effective technology that can deal with human body, mind and soul which will help in coordinating of all the three and prevent corruption of any one of them. This is nothing but the Yogic technology called YOGA. Education when blended with Yoga can avoid all youth risk behaviors and shape them well enough to become the best citizens in the world.

Key words: Risk Behavior, Adolescent, Blended Education, Yoga, Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Necessity is the mother of invention. Every human need initiates the people to invent something that fulfill the need. At present a number of things are needed for our countrymen. And our country is in need of citizens who could bring prosperity and integrated development. This could be achieved only through proper education. Education alone can change today's youth into tomorrow's well-built citizens. The necessity of education improvement has been recognized recently. But education can only improve a person's intellectual through adding up of knowledge. Moreover education has been considered as a tool that provides a good carrier. But an individual's development consists of four main aspects namely, intellectual, psychological, social and spiritual. Education

deals mainly with intellectual and the rest are developed only by the environment and home. If the surrounding environment and home are suitable and safe for the youth they get developed into well built citizens, but whereas when their home and environment becomes unsuitable and loaded with more problems then the youth, especially who are in their adolescent stage will be developing more dangerous risk behaviors. These youth risk behaviors will not only hinder their development and their future but also will corrupt the society and finally our country. There is a very effective technology that can deal with human body, mind and soul which will help in coordinating of all the three and prevent corruption of any one of them. This is nothing but the Yogic technology called YOGA. Education when blended with Yoga can avoid all youth risk behaviors and

shape them well enough to become the best citizens in the world.

Youth At Risk

All teenagers take risks as a normal part of growing up. Risk-taking is the tool an adolescent uses to define and develop his or her identity, and healthy risk-taking is a valuable experience. Healthy adolescent risk-taking behaviors which tend to have a positive impact on an adolescent's development can include participation in sports, the development of artistic and creative abilities, volunteer activities, travel, running for school office, making new friends, constructive contributions to the family or community, and others. Inherent in all of these activities is the possibility of failure. Negative risk-taking behaviors which can be dangerous for adolescents include drinking, smoking, drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sexual activity, disordered eating, self-mutilation, running away, stealing, gang activity, and others. Youth who face environmental, social and family conditions that lead them to engage in behaviors that are harmful to themselves and society are definitely youth at risk. These factors include:

- Low connectedness with school
- Low connectedness with their parents
- Gender roles and expectations
- Low self-esteem
- Family poverty
- Poor legislation

All of these factors can lead to risky behavior including school repetition, early entry into the job market, early and unsafe sex, illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco use and violence.

Youth Risk Behavior

Risky behavior refers to actions that hinder a person's development and successful integration into society. Simply stated it is any behavior that puts the youth at risk for negative consequences, like future poor health, injury or death. This behavior includes:

- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence leading to criminal activities.
- Tobacco use.

- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV infection.
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors.
- Physical inactivity—plus overweight and asthma.
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- Dropping out of school.
- Poor diet.
- Extreme lack of exercise.

III-Effects of Youth Risk Behavior

Substance abuse leads to negative outcomes such as unemployment, adolescent pregnancy, drug or alcohol addiction, or imprisonment. Unprotected sex is the primary form of HIV transmission among young people, and every day around 6,000 young people are infected with the virus. Girls aged 15–19 account for one in four unsafe abortions—about 5 million each year. In Nepal and Indonesia, almost 60% of all males aged 15–24 are smokers. Half of all murders and violent crimes in Jamaica are committed by males aged 18–25, who make up 10 % of the population. In the U.S., 73% of all deaths among school-age youth and young adults result from four causes: motor vehicle crashes, other unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide. Results from the YRBSS (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, USA) suggest that many high school students practice behaviors that may increase their likelihood of death from these causes -- such as not wearing seat belts and carrying a weapon. Also, substantial health and social problems among youth result from unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection and AIDS. In addition, since 67% of all deaths among adults result from heart disease, stroke, and cancer, the YRBSS measures risk behaviors such as physical inactivity and poor nutrition, which are often initiated during adolescence. (Source: excerpt from Facts About Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance -- United States 1997: CDC-OC). These are just a few examples of how young people's risky behavior can seriously hamper not only their personal development, but social and economic development in general.

A study was done by Rahul Sharma et. al. (2008) on Risk

Behaviors related to Inter-personal Violence among School and College-going Adolescents in South Delhi. Among the study participants, 65 (11.8%) reported having carried a weapon in past 30 days. Seventy-four (13.5%) respondents had threatened or injured someone with a weapon in past 12 months. Almost one in every two boys (49.1%) reported being involved in a physical fight in past 12 months. Involvement in interpersonal violence was found to be significantly more amongst males than females. Adolescents who were working part time were more likely to be 'at risk' (67.5%) than those not working (48.5%). In logistic regression analysis, the significant correlates of interpersonal violence were male gender, lower age, number of close friends, having seen role models smoke/drink, and residing in resettlement colonies, slums or villages. The findings regarding violence-related behaviors among adolescents are remarkably similar to those in other countries.

As a matter of fact, the health risk behaviors adopted in youth contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems in adulthood, specifically tobacco use; unhealthy eating; inadequate physical activity; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that may result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unintended pregnancy; and behaviors that contribute to unintentional injury and violence. These behaviors are often established during childhood and persist into adulthood. However, they are largely preventable. Therefore, school health programs should focus on reducing these health risk behavior areas. Research has shown that school health programs can reduce the prevalence of health risk behaviors among young people and have a positive effect on academic performance. Scientific reviews have documented that school health programs can have positive impacts on educational outcomes, as well as health-risk behaviors and health outcomes. Hence, early intervention can improve long-term outcomes.

Need for Yoga Among Youth

A study was done by Leslie et. al. (2010) from Center on Child and Family Outcomes, Institute for Clinical Research and Health Policy Studies, Tufts Medical Center, Boston, USA

to examine rates and patterns of health-risk behavior (e.g., sexuality, depression/suicidality, substance use, delinquency) among a national probability sample of youth active to the child welfare/child protective services system. Recent federal legislation, P.L. 110-351, encourages child welfare systems, Medicaid, and pediatric experts to collaborate to ensure youth entering foster care receive comprehensive health examinations. Analysis of baseline caregiver, caseworker, and child interviews, and assessment data for a sub sample (n = 993) of youth, aged 11-15 years, from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being, a national probability sample of children and adolescents undergoing investigation for abuse or neglect. Almost half of the sample (46.3%) endorsed at least one health-risk behavior. On Poisson multivariate regression modeling, factors related to higher rates of health-risk behaviors included older age, female gender, abuse history, deviant peers, limited caregiver monitoring, and poor school engagement. Given the heightened vulnerability of this population, early screening for health-risk behaviors must be prioritized.

Another study by Shead et. al. (2010) stated that risk factors for youth gambling problems are best understood within an ecological model recognizing the interwoven relationship that exists between the individual and their environment. Empirical studies covering individual, relationship, community, and societal factors associated with adolescent gambling problems are reviewed. The cumulative body of research suggested that males who are exposed to gambling at an earlier age are at greater risk of developing gambling problems. Individuals who report poor family cohesion, have family members or friends who also gamble, and those exposed to and engaged in a wider variety of gambling options are at greater risk. Adolescents with impulsive, high sensation-seeking personalities and exhibit emotion-focused coping styles are more likely to experience gambling problems. Anxiety, depression, ADHD, poor academic performance, substance use, and delinquency are also strong predictors. Many of these risk factors appear to predict a general behavior syndrome encompassed by overall mental health problems, substance abuse, delinquency, and

problem gambling. Increased exposure to gambling opportunities and marketing of gambling is recognized as a potential risk factor at a community level while gambling-permissive cultures may instill positive attitudes and beliefs toward gambling.

Health risk behaviors are established during childhood and adolescence and can extend into adulthood. Therefore, encouraging the adoption of healthy behaviors during childhood is easier and more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors during adulthood. Yoga is the best solution to the problem of youth risk behaviors since practice of Yoga inculcates healthy behaviors and brings about healthy body, mind and soul. Yoga enhances the mind-body connection, which can improve the mood and physical health - and even lighten various psychological disorders. While doing Yoga one focuses on inner peace. Self-realization, relaxation, focus, and harmony are the cornerstones of yoga. So practicing Yoga will promisingly bring about healthy behaviors and prevent risk behaviors in the youth. It also helps the youth to identify their risk behaviors and get rid of them.

Related Studies on Yoga

Youth with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) tend to more likely involve in risk behaviors than the normal youth. And it has been proved that Yoga act as a conventional therapy for ADHD. A randomized controlled pilot study was done by Haffner et. al. (2006) to compare the effectiveness of yoga and conventional motor exercises for children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Nineteen children with a clinical diagnosis of ADHD were randomly assigned to either yoga or conventional exercise. Children in the yoga group showed greater improvements in attention and reduced symptoms of ADHD, as reported by their parents. However, children in both groups improved over time, and at the end of the study, the group means for the ADHD scales did not differ significantly from those for a representative control group. The training was particularly effective for children who were also undergoing pharmacotherapy. The authors conclude that yoga can be an effective complementary or concomitant treatment for ADHD.

Anxiety and its disorders among youth has been an

important reason for their risky behaviors. Kirkwood et. al. (2005) reviewed controlled clinical trials on the effectiveness of yoga for the treatment of anxiety and anxiety disorders. The review covered major databases, as well as organizations such as the International Association of Yoga Therapists and the Yoga Biomedical Trust. Most yoga interventions included asana, breathing, and relaxation. One study compared Kundalini yoga to mindfulness meditation and relaxation, and found that yoga was more effective in reducing anxiety than mindfulness meditation and relaxation. Several studies compared yoga to anti-anxiety medications, and reported greater improvements from yoga than medication.

Depressed youth also tend to behave risky. Kirkwood et. al. (2005) reviewed both published and ongoing research on Yoga-based interventions for the treatment of depression, up to June 2004. 5 randomized controlled trials were identified. Most interventions focused on younger adults (mean ages 18-35), and clinical status varied from mild depression to severe depression. All five trials reported positive outcomes, and only one reported any adverse outcomes (fatigue and breathlessness). Breathing practices were an important part of the interventions and asana practices included back bending, which traditionally has been thought to relieve depression. However, the overall positive results suggest that yoga has potential as a therapeutic intervention for depression.

Yoga – Meaning

Yoga as a system of thought and practice has a primary reference to the philosophical system that flows from the teachings of the ancient Indian Yoga philosopher, Patanjali. Maharishi Patanjali is believed to have compiled his Yoga Sutra around the 3rd or 4th century BC but archeological evidences and the study of ancient scriptures suggest that yoga was practiced in ancient India as early as 3000 BC. This is an ancient but basic text on Yoga as written by Sage Patanjali 400 years B.C. As the printing technology was not available at that time, this text has been transferred through generations by oral recitations (Shruti). That is why the whole knowledge of yoga is very concisely packed in total 196 lines or Sanskrit Sutras by Patanjali so that students can easily remember these

sutras. The word yoga means "union" in Sanskrit, the language of ancient India where yoga originated. It is the union occurring between the mind, body and spirit.

Types of Yoga

Theologically speaking; there are four divisions of Yoga, that form one of the cornerstones of Hinduism. In Sanskrit, they are called Raja-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga and Jnana-Yoga. And the person who seeks this kind of a union is called a 'Yogi':

- **Karma-Yoga:** The worker is called the Karma-Yogi.
- **Raja-Yoga:** One who seeks this union through mysticism is called a Raja-Yogi.
- **Bhakti-Yoga:** One who searches this union in love is a Bhakti-Yogi.
- **Jnana-Yoga:** One who seeks this Yoga through philosophy is called the Jnana-Yogi.

Yoga Techniques

A combination of yogasanas, pranayama and meditation works wonders for those intent on cleansing both physical and subtle body.

Yogasana

A yogasana is a body posture in harmony with one's inner consciousness. It aims at the attainment of a sustained and comfortable sitting posture to facilitate meditation. Asanas also help in balancing and harmonizing the basic structure of the human body, which is why they have a range of therapeutic uses too. Asana is a Sanskrit word used to describe a position of the body. Patanjali, the founder of Ashtanga Yoga defines asana as "Steady and comfortable posture". Traditionally many asanas are practiced in Hatha Yoga tradition, primarily to achieve better physical and mental health. Asanas have deep impact on the entire body and mind complex, it affects different systems in the body like muscular, respiratory, circulation, digestive, excretory, reproductive, endocrine and nervous system.

Pranayama

Pranayama forms a vital step in the path of ascendancy through Yoga. Pranayama is derived from 2 Sanskrit words - Prana - life force and Ayama control. Therefore, in its broadest description, Pranayama would mean the control

of the flow of life force. Very few people breathe correctly. Some use only the upper part of their lungs; others breathe with only the diaphragm (lower part) leaving the upper structures of the lungs inactive and partially collapsed. In those parts of the lung that are not used, slimy secretions accumulate and the tissues become devitalized. Thus a luxurious soil is prepared for the tubercle bacillus, pneumococcus and other scavenger germs. This habit of shallow breathing accounts in a good measure for the fact that one third of all deaths result from diseases of the lungs. For one individual perishing from food starvation, thousands are dying from oxygen starvation. Breathing problems can be corrected by yoga through the practice of Pranayama. Pranayama has various techniques that are designed for the maximum capacity utilization of the lungs - something that most of us do not do. Pranayama also help in regulating the temperature of the breath flow thereby solving a lot of problems related to breathing.

Meditation

Generally human mind is fickle, like a butterfly, which always flies from here and there and does not wait at one place for long. But the speed of our mind is far more than the butterfly or it may be greater than the speed of light. Mind can recollect past experiences, keeps thinking about the future and experiences the present with all its might and we do not have any control over our minds journey. Meditation is the study of deep concentration, calmness and tranquility of the mind. It is the study of attaining complete control over ones mind. Meditation takes the consciousness beyond conscious, sub conscious & unconscious states to super consciousness. It may be impossible to describe meditation; one can only understand it through the direct experience. Meditation can be also explained as the shifting of focus from outer objects or activities to an inner dimension where one may encounter timelessness, a connection to wisdom, or a sense of peace. Meditation increases awareness of intuition, improves concentration and focus, reduces stress, anxiety and tension, increases creativity, brings about better relationships, increases self-awareness and self-acceptance thereby bringing a deeper sense of spirituality and meaning.

Benefits of Yoga

The health benefits of yoga are initiated because you're focusing on inner peace. Self-realization, relaxation, focus, and harmony are the cornerstones of yoga. Research shows that the health benefits of yoga include improvements of all sorts of ailments, from back pain to fatigue. Improved depression, body image struggles, eating disorders, and even physical problems such as back pain and asthma are some of the health benefits of yoga practice. The most important benefit of yoga is physical and mental therapy. The aging process, which is largely an artificial condition, caused mainly by autointoxication or self-poisoning, can be slowed down by practicing yoga. By keeping the body clean, flexible and well lubricated, we can significantly reduce the catabolic process of cell deterioration. To get the maximum benefits of yoga one has to combine the practices of yogasanas, pranayama and meditation. According to medical scientists, yoga therapy is successful because of the balance created in the nervous and endocrine systems which directly influences all the other systems and organs of the body. Yoga acts both as a curative and preventive therapy. The very essence of yoga lies in attaining mental peace, improved concentration powers, a relaxed state of living and harmony in relationships. Through the practice of yoga, one becomes aware of the interconnectedness between our emotional, mental and physical levels through the following benefits.

- Brings down stress and enhances powers of relaxation
- Boosts physical strength, stamina and flexibility
- Bestows greater powers of concentration and self control
- Inculcates impulse Control
- Helps in rehabilitation of old and new injuries
- Intensifies tolerance to pain and enhancing mental clarity
- Boosts functioning of the immune system
- Enhances posture and muscle tone
- Improves blood circulation
- Results in healthy, glowing skin

- Cleanses and improves overall organ functioning
- Bestows peace of mind and a more positive outlook to life
- Infuses a sense of balance and internal harmony.

Education Blended With Yoga

Positive youth development has its roots in multiple contexts including the individual, family, school, community, and society. An individual's personality, temperament, experiences, and opportunities all contribute to the youth's behavior and developmental trajectory. The above said positive youth development can be brought about when education is mingled with an everyday practice of Yoga which should be mandatory. Yoga practice for at least 30 – 35 minutes per day including some asanas, pranayama and meditation will bring out tremendous positive effects on the youth. Each day schools and colleges should start with Yoga. When Yoga is brought into the curriculum of schools and colleges, youth risk behaviors will be minimized gradually and finally the youth can eradicate the risk behaviors. This will finally give rise to a society without any corruption and the country will become free from any terroristic activities and anti-socialistic activities.

Implications of Yoga Blended Education on Youth

When youth gets education blended with Yoga they will be able to identify their behaviors whether healthy or unhealthy and will definitely avoid the risky behaviors. The implications of Yoga blended education can be illustrated as follows.

- Develop self awareness on both physical and psychological level.
- Help counter feelings of helplessness and depression.
- Increase brain activity which is associated with better performance and doctors even suggests that yoga can enhance cognitive performance.
- Result in an invigorating effect on both mental and physical energy and improved mood.
- Rise in self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Increase in self-knowledge.
- Reduction in tension.
- Willingness to tackle problems.
- Avoidance of fear.

- Acceptance.
- Reduce annoyance with others.
- Tend to be less irritated by others.
- Develop more liking of people.
- Make the practitioner a desirable person.

Yoga helps youth to get rid of depression, anger, anxiety, and any other psychological disorders which cause their risky behavior. When the minds of the disturbed youth get cleared from all sorts of psychological disturbances, they will be definitely able to think in a positive manner and thereby avoid risky behavior.

Conclusion

Healthy risk-taking is a positive tool in an adolescent's life for discovering, developing, and consolidating his or her identity. Adolescent risk-taking only becomes negative when the risks are dangerous. Youth will become aware of healthy and unhealthy risk behaviors with the help of this Yoga blended education. With adults making poor lifestyle and family choices, a trickle down effect has reached our youth. To overcome the poor lifestyle and family choices, the youth has to be clear in making decision and free from psychological disorders. This can be achieved only by Yoga. Youth behaviors can be also determined by parents and they can prevent the risk behaviors by inculcating healthy behaviors in them. WHO convened a meeting in October last year with researchers and representatives from some projects currently under way in developing countries. This highlights the importance of parents in preventing adolescent health risk behaviors, the ways in which parents influence these behaviors, and their

implications for programmes aiming to improve adolescent health. Education with Yoga along with parent's extra care will help to vanish the youth risk behaviors and make our country flawless.

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