

*Yoga Therapy for*

# Disease

## Psychosomatic

BY RAMAN DAS MAHATYAGI

The  
ancient  
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Various types of psychosomatic disease arise due to the stress of modern life, untimely sleeping patterns, electromagnetic and chemical pollution, traffic noise, living a "fast food" life with dependency on processed foods, little physical activity etc.

Ayurveda indicates these stresses all imbalance the biological humour (Vata – wind, Pitta – fire, Kapha – water). The ancient system of Yoga describes numerous methods to balance the physiology of the body through asana, pranayama, bandha (locks), mudra and shatkarma (yoga detoxification process).

There are various types of stress related illnesses – here I would like to focus on two, anxiety neurosis and depression, and some yoga practices that can be used to provide considerable relief and improvement in these conditions.

### **ANXIETY NEUROSIS**

Anxiety neurosis is a mental condition which arises due to imbalances of neurotransmitters in the brain. This results in mental disturbances like worrying, unsteadiness of the mind, repetition of thoughts, all of which disturb biological rhythm, sleeping patterns, cause tiredness, headaches etc.

### **DEPRESSION**

Depression is a mental state in which the person feels a lowering of mood, for a short or extended period. This can be triggered by a failed love relationship, loss of a loved one, a decline in health, loss of job, loss of children when they leave home etc. When depressed, a decrease in levels of specific chemicals within parts of the brain occurs. These chemicals are involved in the production of noradrenaline, dopamine and serotonin, and all have a role in normal nerve cell function, particularly the transmission of nerve impulses.

### **UDDIYANA (ABDOMINAL UPLIFT)**

#### **Preparatory stage:**

Stand up straight with feet about a shoulder width apart. Place hands by your sides.

#### **Active Stage:**

Inhale, raising your arms above your head, stretching back slightly looking up towards the ceiling, then exhale through your mouth bending forward and place your hands on your thighs just above the knees. Bend your knees slightly and continue to exhale completely. Straighten your back, then contract your abdominal muscles towards the spine and upwards towards the solar plexus.

**Holding Stage:**

Continue to hold the exhaled breath ie do not breath in at this point Hold this pose for 10 seconds or as long as is comfortable.

**Resolution Stage:**

Relax your abdominal muscles and raise your arms above your head inhaling as you do so. Then relax and assume the Preparatory position. Repeat 3 to 7 times.

**Benefits**

Uddiyana decreases nervous tension by increasing the stability of the nervous system. The power of prana starts to increase and the mind becomes calm. Willpower increases and frustration reduces. This is believed to be a result of increased blood circulation – the practice of pranayama promotes all nerves to receive more oxygenated blood, and replace the impure blood. Uddiyana also helps to control the parasympathetic nervous system which affects the involuntary systems of the body.

**Precautions**

During Uddiyana, during the holding stage do not inhale. Inhalation may cause air logging in the system, that may result in wind, hiccups etc. This asana should be performed on an empty stomach ie 4-6 hours minimum after eating.

**UJJAI PRANAYAMA WITH JALANDHAR BANDHA (CHIN LOCK POSITION)**

**Preparatory Stage:**

Sit in any postures according to your preference such as Vajarasana (bolt posture), Lotus posture, half lotus posture or Sukhasana. Sit firmly upright with spine, head, waist in a straight line.

**Active Stage:**

Inhale through the nose producing sound through the vocal cord. Hold the breath, then rest your chin in the pit of the neck between the collarbones. This is called Jalandhar Bandha.

**Holding Stage:**

Hold the breath for up to 16 seconds. During this period also contract your abdominal muscles towards the spine and upwards (Uddiyana bandha), and also contract your anal sphincter (mool bandha).

**Resolution Stage:**

Slowly release the Jalandhar and Uddiyana bandhas and exhale through both nostrils producing sound through the vocal cords (making a "ha" sound). When exhalation is complete, release the mool bandha.

The ratio of inhalation, holding, exhalation is 1:4:2. ie inhale for 4s, hold for 16s and exhale for 8s.

Repeat 3 – 7 times

**Benefits**

The Jalandhar bandha activates the lung function, and the brain receives extra oxygen which improves the brain's physiological function. Ujjai pranayama also helps to flow the prana in the upward direction, as in the case of depression the prana flows downward.

**Precautions**

During inhalation or exhalation, sound should be produced by the vocal cords, as this sound vibration helps to balance the biological rhythms of the brain.

**SARVANGASANA (SHOULDER STAND POSITION)**

**Preparatory Stage:**

Lay down flat on your back with legs extended and together, arms straight by your sides with palm facing down.

**Active Stage:**

Inhale, hold the breath, and raise both legs together up to 90 degrees. Exhale. Then inhale, hold and raise your waist and back, leveraging your back and waist with your hands. Straighten your legs and trunk. The body weight should be evenly across the shoulders and head.

**Holding Stage:**

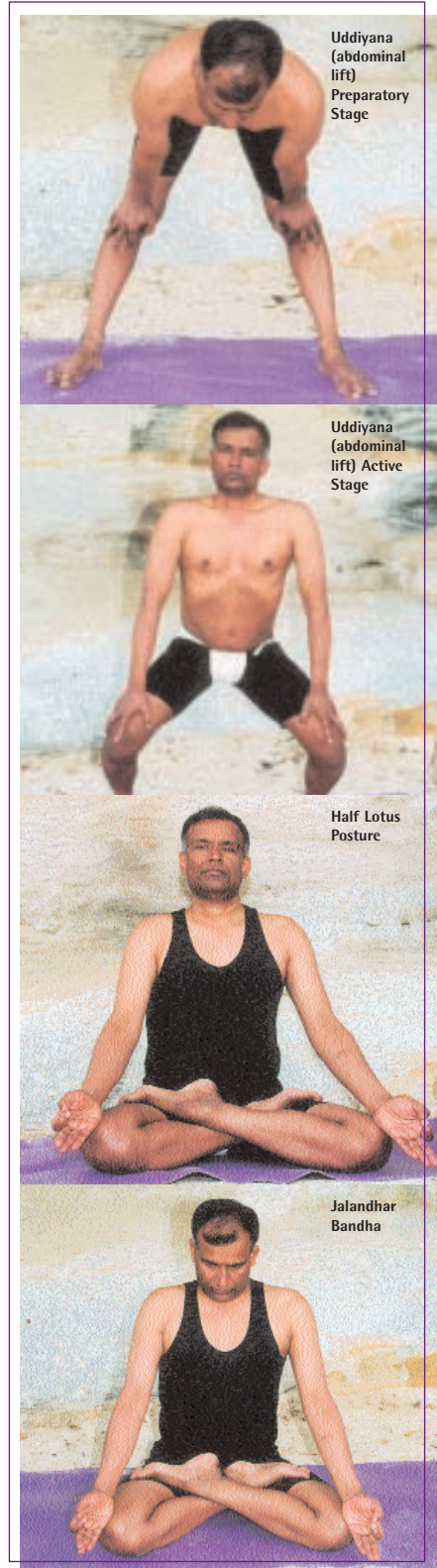
Stay in this final position for 20s. Return to normal breathing

**Resolution Stage:**

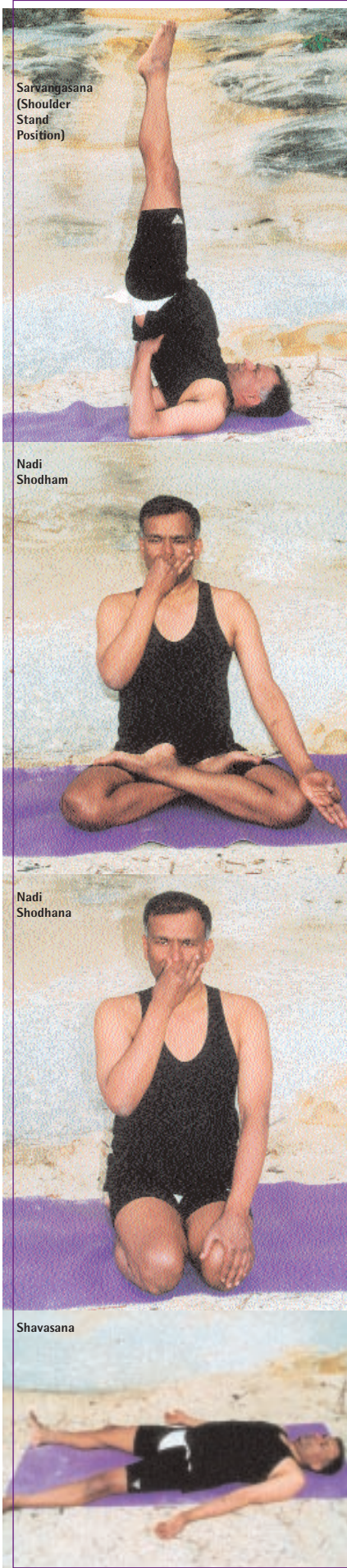
Bring feet and legs forwards, and lower your spine towards the ground. With back on the ground and legs at 90 degrees, inhale, hold and slowly bring both legs down to the ground. Exhale. Resume normal breathing. Relax in Savasana. Repeat 2 more times.

**Benefits**

During this process the body's cell capacity is increased allowing more oxygenated blood into the body and specifically the brain/hypothalamus. The increase in blood supply improves the secretion of neurotransmitters, which increases memory power and mental capacity. With Depression the face is often stressed – Sarvangasana relieves this through increased blood supply throughout the facial and scalp muscles. Due to improved physiological function of the endocrine glands, mental and physical balance is restored.



The author, an Ayurvedic Practitioner and Yoga Teacher, runs YATAN Holistic Ayurvedic Centre in Gordon, Sydney. He is General Secretary of the World Academy of Ayurveda, India and is a member of ATMS, ANTA, NPA, AAA, IYA. He can be contacted on 02 9499 7164 or 0410 476 099.



**Precautions**

Do not practice if you are pregnant, have heart disease or ulcer. Do under the supervision of a qualified Yoga Teacher.

**NADI SHODHANA (LOTUS POSTURE WITH PRANAYAMA, MUDRA)**

**Preparatory Stage:**

Assume a comfortable sitting posture or the lotus position. The left arm should be straight with the wrist on the left knee, palm up with the thumb and index finger touching, remaining fingers extended. The right hand should have the index and middle fingers folded into the palm.

**Active Stage:**

Begin by blocking the right nostril with the thumb and inhaling through the left nostril for 4s.

**Holding Stage:**

Then hold for 16s blocking both the nostrils using the thumb and ring finger. While holding the breath, contract the stomach inwards towards the spine and upwards (Uddiyana) and contract the sphincter muscles upward (mool bandha)

**Resolution Stage:**

Unblock the right nostril, while blocking the left and exhale for 8s. As you exhale relax your abdominal muscles but maintain the mool bandha lock. At the end of exhalation release the mool bandha.

Repeat the process, however this time block the left nostril and inhale through the right nostril.

This then completes one round. In this way repeat 3 to 7 rounds.

**Benefits**

Nadi Shodhana impacts every extremity of the body, relieving tension. It benefits the nervous system and the mind becomes calm. The cell and tissue activity increases, improving vitality. There is more control over prana (vital current).

During normal respiration, when suffering anxiety or depression, the total volume of air intake is quite low, only 10% of the total breathing capacity. In Nadi Shodhana pranayama, the lungs expand fully, intake of oxygenated air is increased, and the carbon dioxide in the blood is more fully expelled.

**Precautions**

During pranayama practice do not hold the breath longer than the instruction indicates.

In the case of anxiety neurosis, Nadi Shodhana has a better effect if done outside in the open air. Before pranayama you should ensure you have an empty bladder and bowels.

**SAVASANA (CORPSE POSTURE)**

**Preparatory Stage:**

Lie flat on the ground. Part your legs by 1.5 feet and arms 12 inches from the sides of the body with palms facing upwards. Close your eyes, relax your mind and body and all the organs.

**Active Stage:**

Focus your attention on the breath and visualise each part of the body is relaxed and free of tension. Mentally move upwards through the body, starting from one leg at the toes and moving up to the foot, ankle, calves, knees, thigh, waist, then do the other leg in the same manner up to the waist. Then lower abdomen, navel point, heart, chest, shoulder, throat, lips, nose, ears, eyes, eyebrows, forehead, scalp, hair. Feel that everywhere is quiet, relaxed, free of tension. Then repeat the process backwards from head down to toes.

**Resolution Stage:**

Watch your breath then activate all the points of the body through the same process, working upwards only this time, and visualising the prana activating the parts instead of relaxing them. After completing this activation visualisation, then shake the hands and feet then the arms, legs, then open your eyes.

This process should take around 30 minutes.

**Benefits**

During Savasana, EMG frequency and amplitude is greatly decreased. Muscular tension is released, mental fatigue is relieved and the mind becomes fresh. Generally the pulse rate is increased when suffering depression and anxiety, but after Savasana practice it is greatly reduced.

**Precautions**

When you start this asana, don't move your body or open your eyes.

*Disclaimer: this article is meant as a guideline and should not be a substitute for tuition under the supervision of a qualified Yoga teacher.*