

Just what the doctor ordered: Take a yoga class and depression, anxiety improve

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Scientific studies already support yoga practice as a means to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Now a new study out of Boston

University School of Medicine (BUSM) provides evidence that yoga and breathing exercises can improve symptoms of depression and anxiety in both the short term—with each session as well as cumulatively in the longer term, over three months.

Published online in the *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, these findings suggest yoga can be a helpful complementary treatment for [clinical depression](#) or major depressive disorder.

A group of 30 clinically depressed patients were randomly divided into two groups. Both groups engaged in Iyengar yoga and coherent breathing with the only difference being the number of instructional and home sessions in which each group participated. Over three months, the high-dose group (HDG) spent 123 hours in sessions while the low-dose group (LDG) spent 87 hours.

Results showed that within a month, both groups' sleep quality significantly improved. Tranquility, positivity, physical exhaustion and symptoms of anxiety and [depression](#) significantly improved in both groups, as measured by several validated clinical scales

"Think of it this way, we give medications in different doses in order to enact their effects on the body to varying degrees. Here, we explored the same concept, but used yoga. We call that a dosing study. Past yoga and depression studies have not really delved deeply into this," explained corresponding author Chris Streeter, MD, associate professor of psychiatry at BUSM.

"Providing evidence-based data is helpful in getting more individuals to try yoga as a strategy for improving their health and well-being. These data are crucial for accompanying investigations of underlying neurobiology that will help elucidate 'how' yoga works," said study collaborator and co-author Marisa M. Silveri, Ph.D., neuroscientist at

McLean Hospital and associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Depression, a condition that affects one of every seven adults in the U.S. at some point in their lives, is treated with a variety of modalities, including counseling (especially through [cognitive-behavioral therapy](#)) and medication. Research has shown combining therapy and medication has greater success than either treatment alone. Although studies with more participants would be helpful in further investigating its benefits, this small study indicates adding [yoga](#) to the prescription may be helpful.

More information: Tammy M. Scott et al. Psychological Function, Iyengar Yoga, and Coherent Breathing: A Randomized Controlled Dosing Study. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice* November 2019 - Volume 25 - Issue 6 [DOI: 10.1097/PRA.0000000000000435](https://doi.org/10.1097/PRA.0000000000000435)

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