

# The therapeutic use of yoga hasta mudras.

H. Blashki Grad Cert Y.T., K. Tribe Grad Dip M.T.

Australian Institute of Yoga Therapy

*This presentation is an extract from a minor thesis for the Graduate Certificate in Yoga Therapy, Australian tertiary accredited course code 21720VIC, Melbourne, Australia, October 2008*

## Main Research Question

Will regular practice of Hasta Mudras (Yoga hand gestures) reduce symptoms or relieve pain in specific health conditions?

## Introduction

The practice of Yoga in the West has predominantly focussed on asana, pranayama, in some schools bandhas, and meditation, and whilst most yogis know of some classic hand Mudras such as Jnana or Chin Mudras, most have very little knowledge of the various Hasta Mudras.

Although Mudras are mentioned in the very earliest Indian Vedic texts, there is very little detail written about them as they were techniques that were never intended to be learned from a book, but rather passed down from guru to student. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika and other seminal yogic texts consider Mudras to be an independent branch of yoga called a yoganda, which requires very subtle level of awareness, and is considered a 'higher' practice of yoga.

According to Swami Satyananda Saraswati, "Mudra practices establish a direct link between Annamaya Kosha, Manomaya Kosha and Pranamaya Kosha. Mudras manipulate prana in much the same way that energy in the form of light or sound waves is diverted by a mirror or a cliff face. The nadis and chakras constantly radiate prana which normally escapes from the body and dissipates into the external world. By creating barriers within the body through the practice of Mudra, the energy is redirected within."

## Summary of Aims

This research project explored if working with a given Hasta Mudra could benefit people with specific health conditions, such as back pain, joint pain, tinnitus, allergies and exhaustion.

It also explored how people respond in the short term to these hand gestures and whether or not they experience 'shifts' in energy in their bodies, where they experience this energy, or, if there is no immediate response, is there likely to be any beneficial outcome in the longer term.

The study sought to find out whether the outcomes of Hasta Mudra practice was affected by where and when they were practiced, For example; with the participants sitting quietly and being reflective, simply watching television, being a passenger in a car, or even chatting with others while working with their specific hand position.

Finally the study aimed to find out if there were other aspects of well-being that are affected by doing Hasta Mudras for one specific condition?

## Methods

People with **back pain, joint pain, tinnitus, allergies** or **exhaustion** were recruited from the general population of the regional town of Gembrook Australia (n=20).

Participants were paired as close as possible by condition and randomized to either receive a prescribed, condition-specific Hasta Mudra (n=10) or be waitlisted as a control (n=10). Both the test and control groups were asked to complete a subjective wellness and subjective quality of life questionnaire prior to and at the end of the 6-week intervention, along with providing any other comments at the completion of the study.

The test group was asked to incorporate the practice of their prescribed Hasta Mudra into their normal day, for several minutes at least twice a day and to complete a subjective wellbeing questionnaire at the end of each day of the trial.

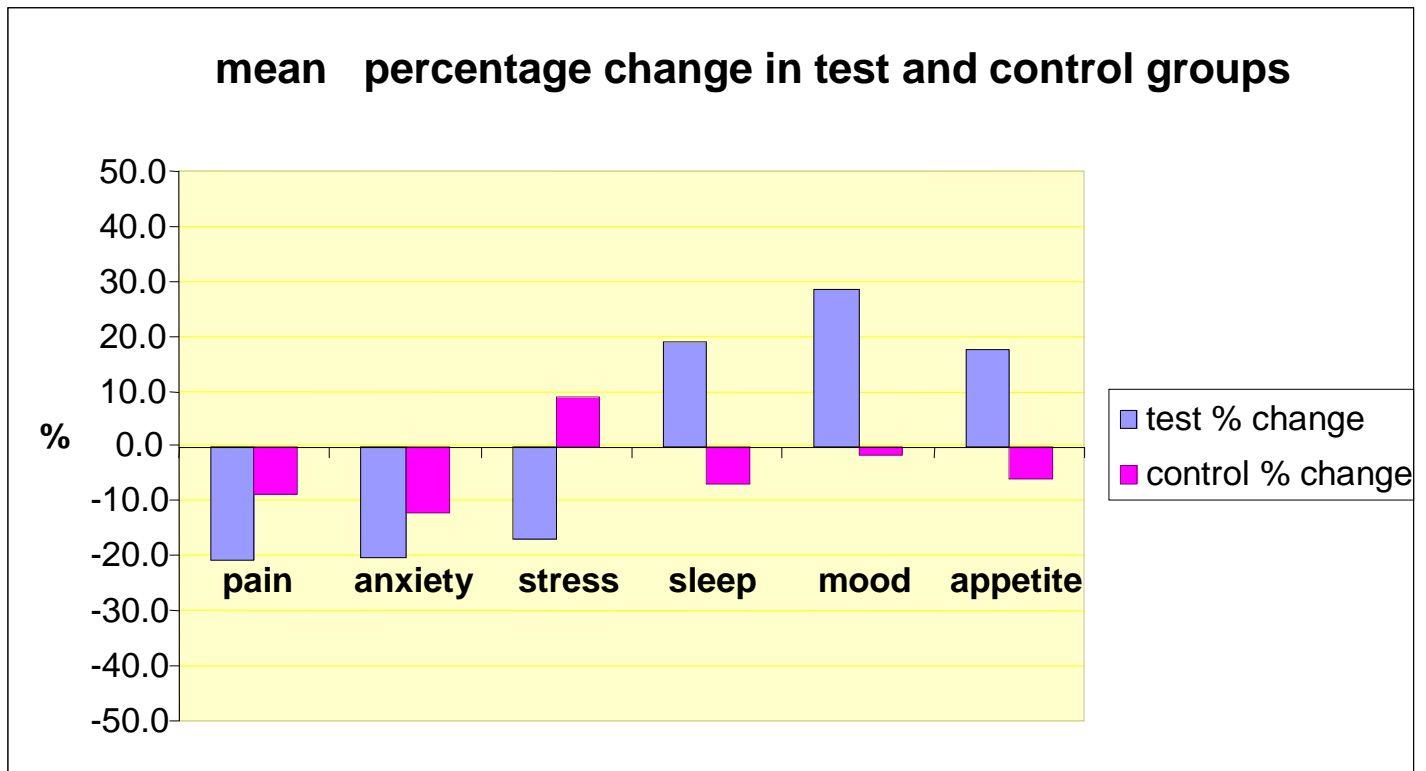
## Results

We found that there was a 20.6% reduction in pain or symptom levels in the test group compared to an 8.9% reduction in the control group. Anxiety was reduced by 20.5% in the test group and by 12.2% in the control group, stress (reduced) by 17.2% in the test group and 8.8% in the control group. There was a statistically significant change in the mood level of the test groups with an improvement (increased calmness) of 28.6% compared to a deterioration (increased irritation) of 1.6% for the control group. Sleep was also (statistically) significantly improved in the test group (19%) compared to a control group sleep deterioration of 6.8%.

9 of the 10 test group participants completed the 6-week trial and compliance with the completion of daily questionnaires was high.

Participants reported including the practice of the Mudras as part of their normal daily activities, including while: watching television, reading, travelling (as passenger), resting, chatting with friends. We believe the results are particularly significant, as they were NOT part of a dedicated Yoga or meditation practice, which could otherwise have accounted for the beneficial results

## Results – Test group vs Control



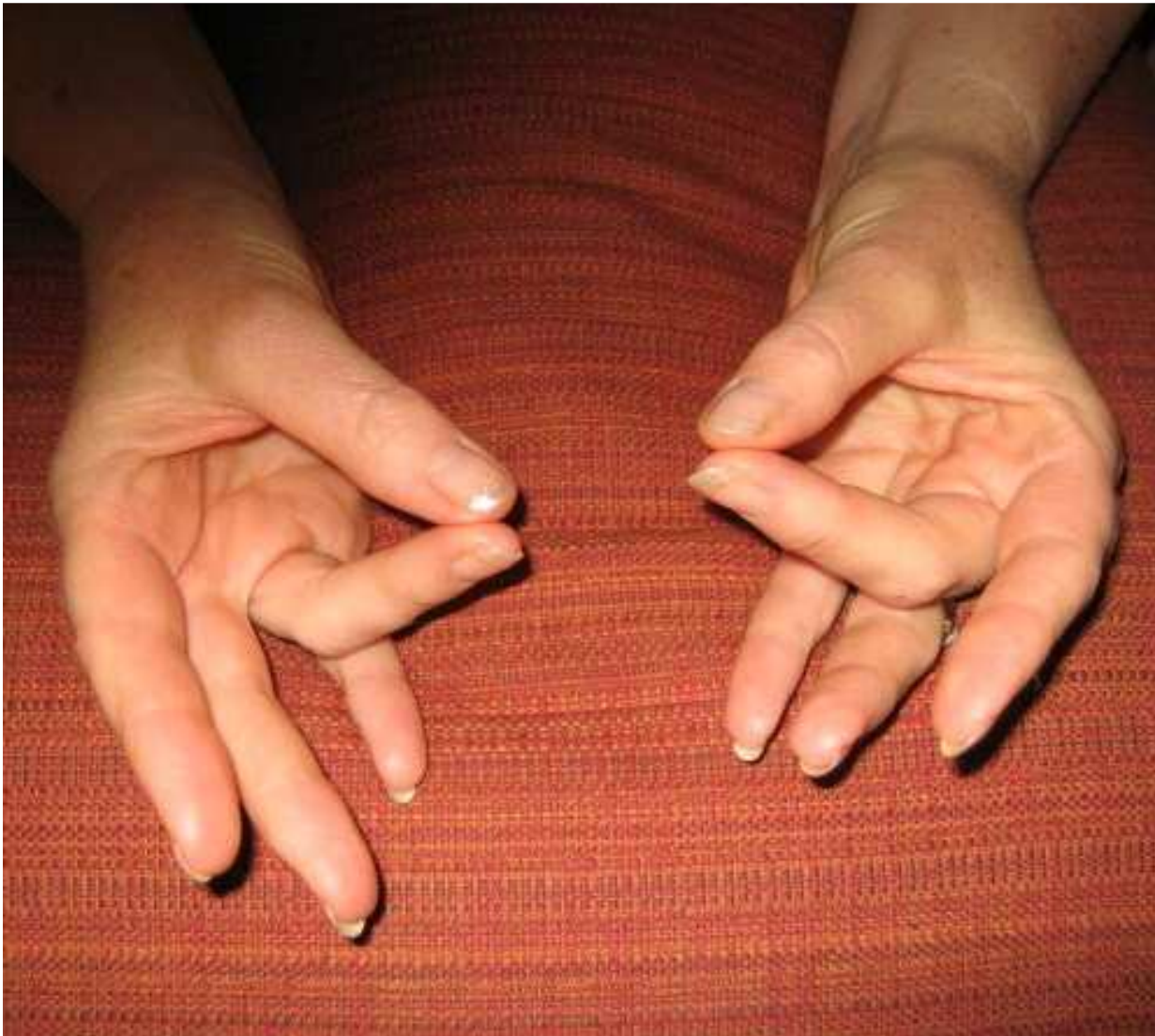
### Note:

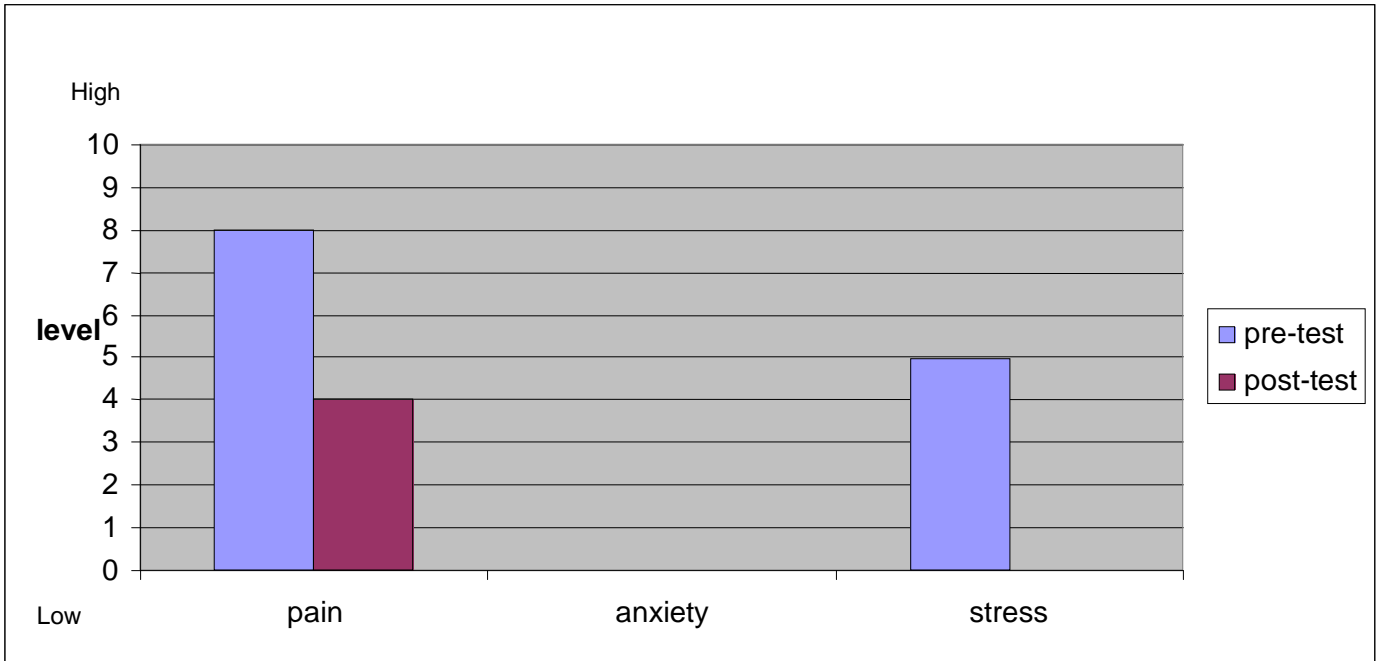
Reduction in pain, anxiety and stress are positive outcomes, while increases are negative.

Increases in sleep and mood are regarded as positive outcomes, while decreases are negative.

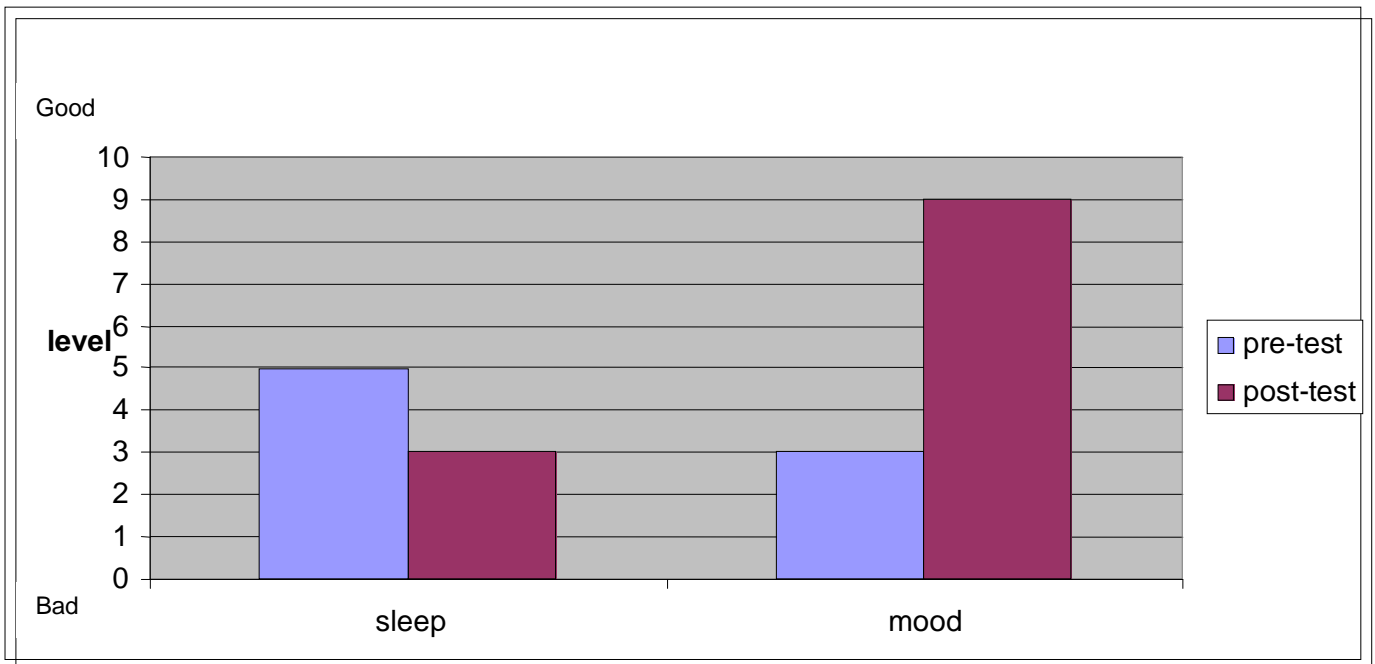
## TEST GROUP RESULTS

Aching joints (generalised) - Joint Mudra (n=1)



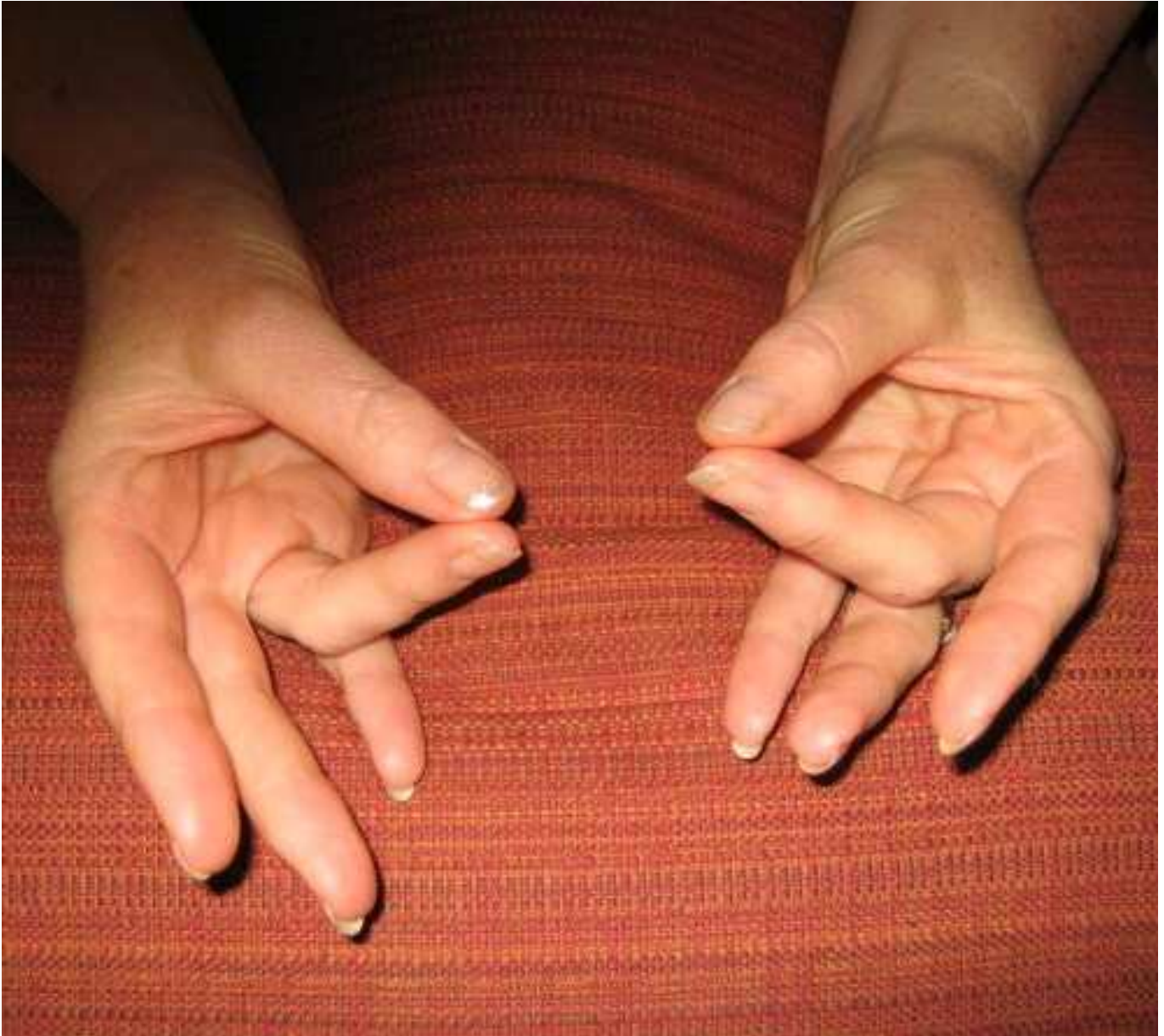


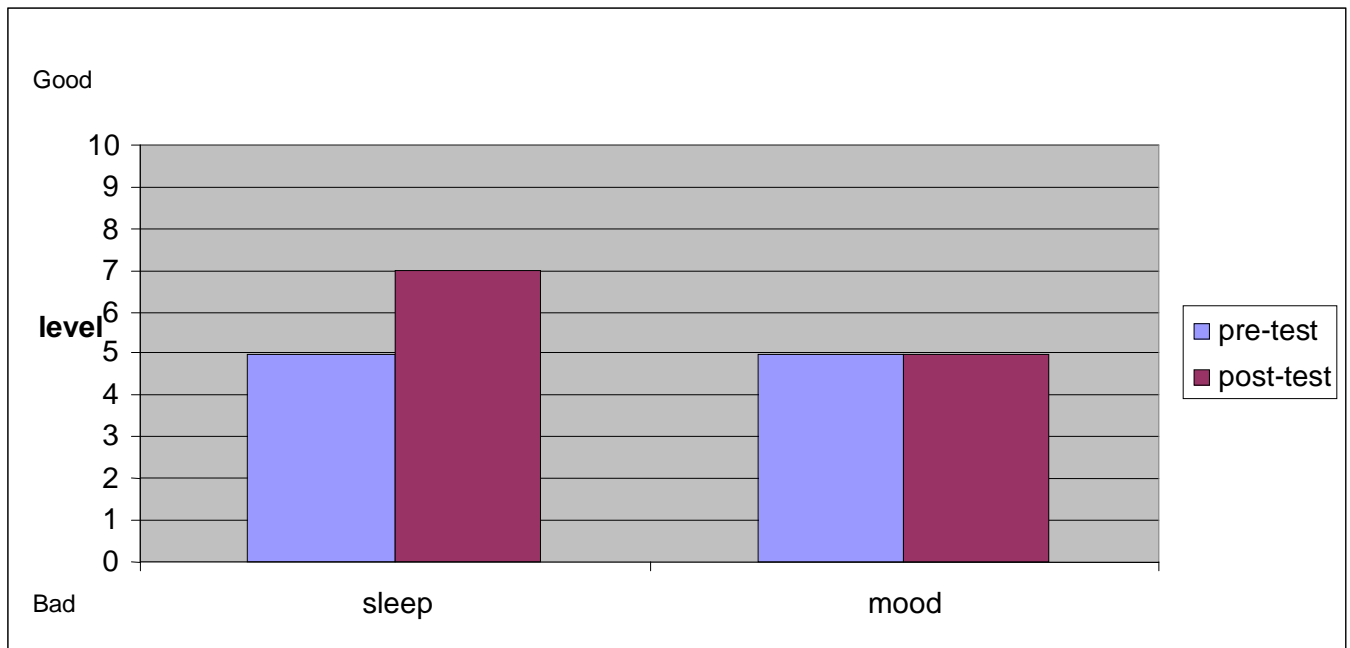
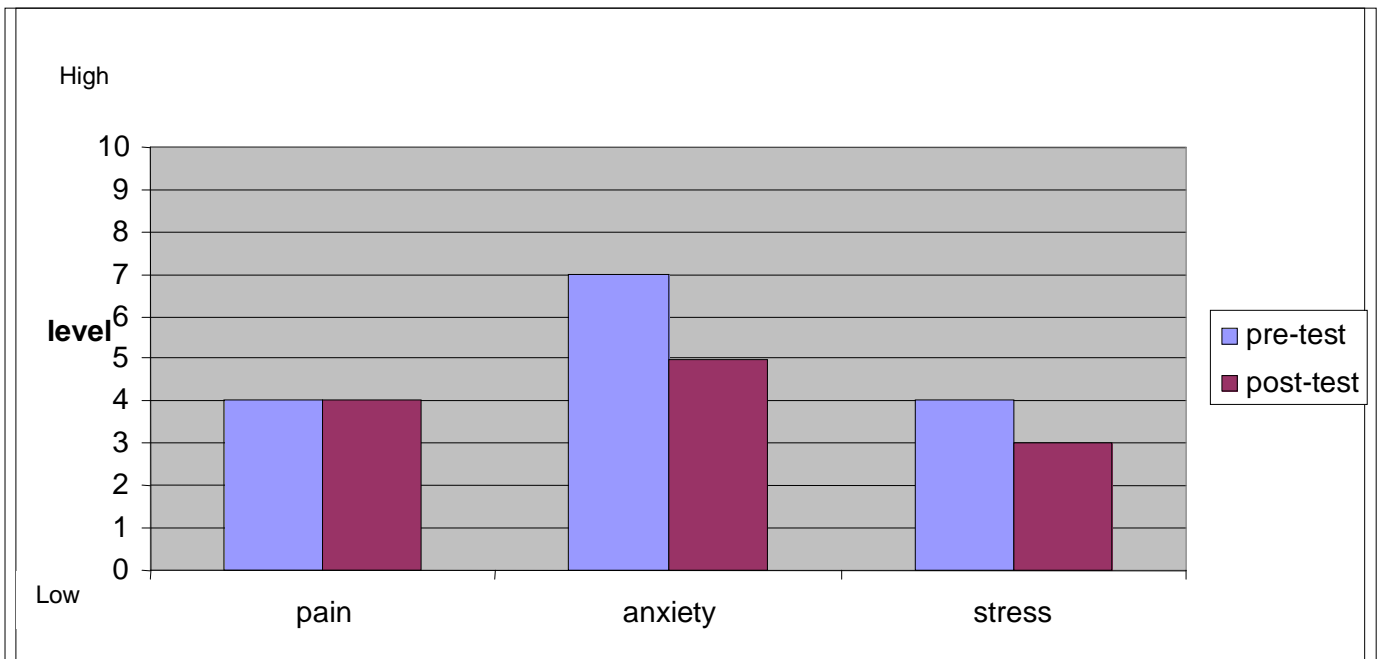
Where no bar is shown, result is 0.



## TEST GROUP RESULTS

Joint pain & inflammation (specific joint) – Joint Mudra  
(n=3)

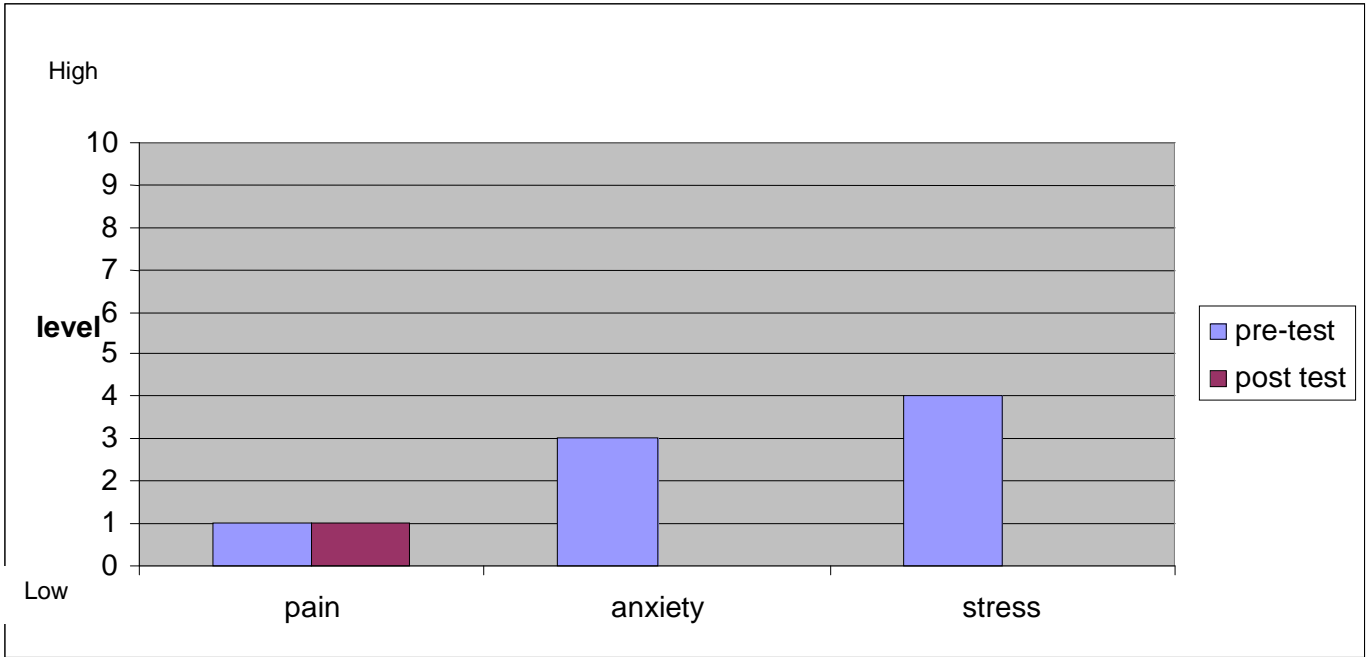




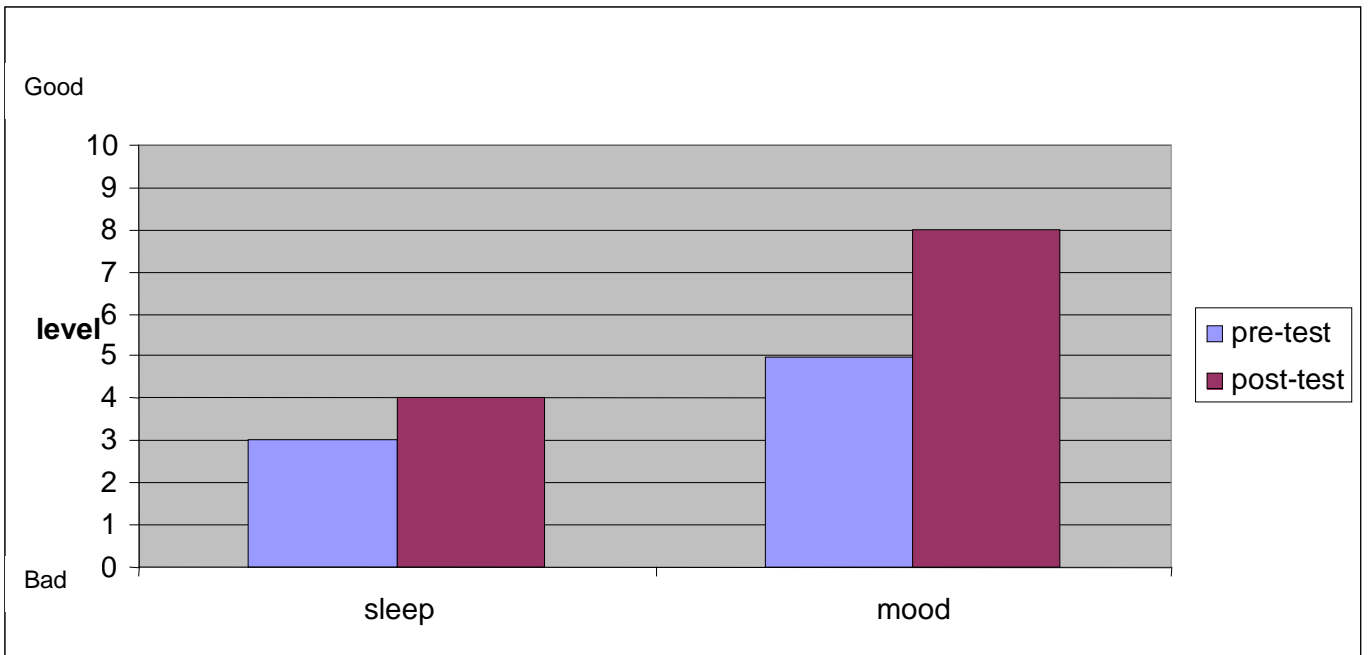
## TEST GROUP RESULTS

Tinnitus – Shunya Mudra (n=1)



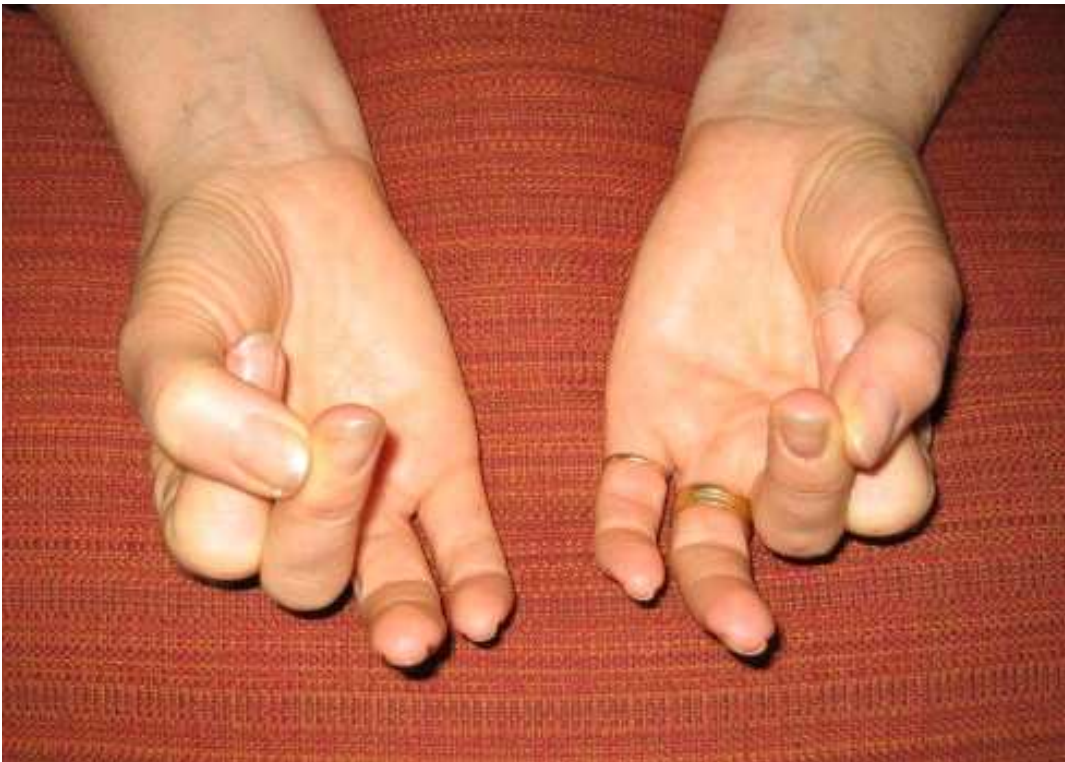
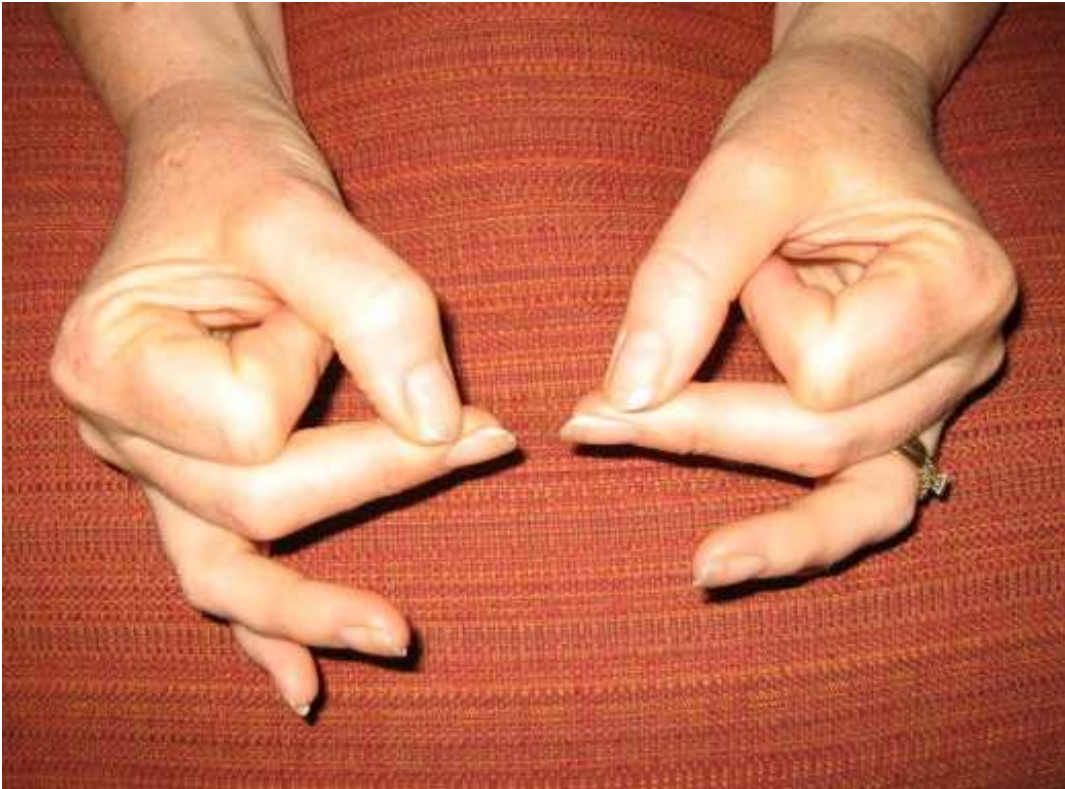


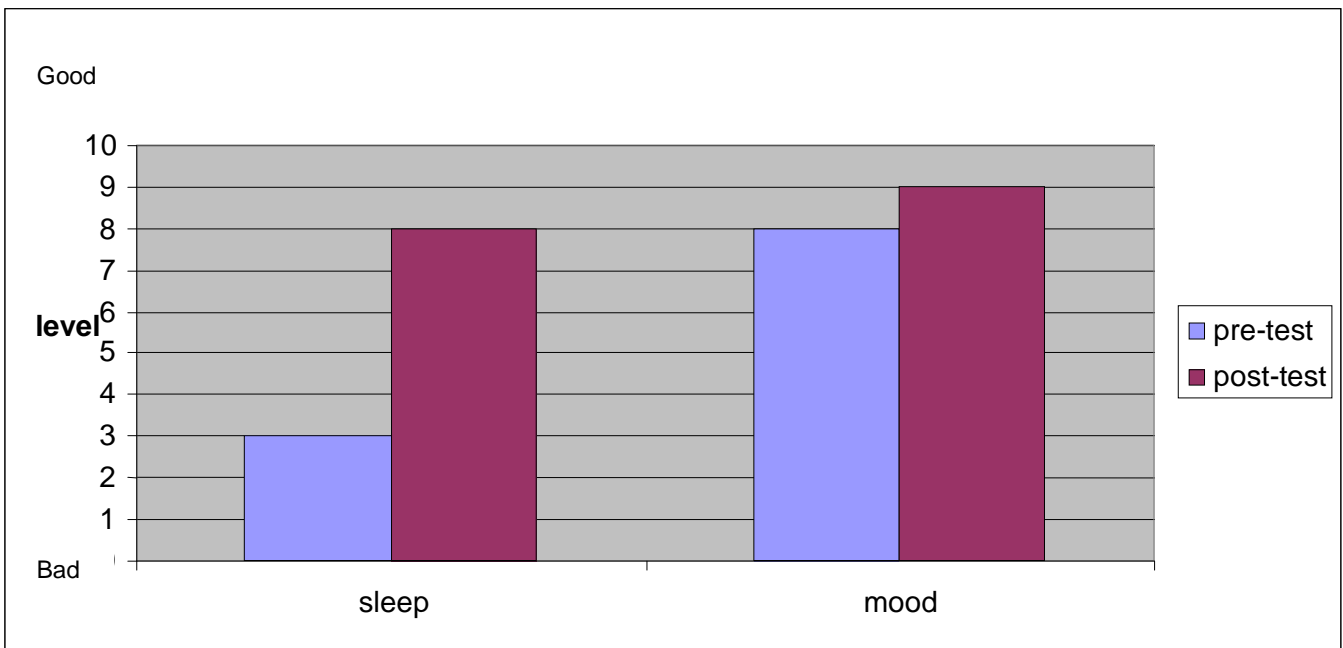
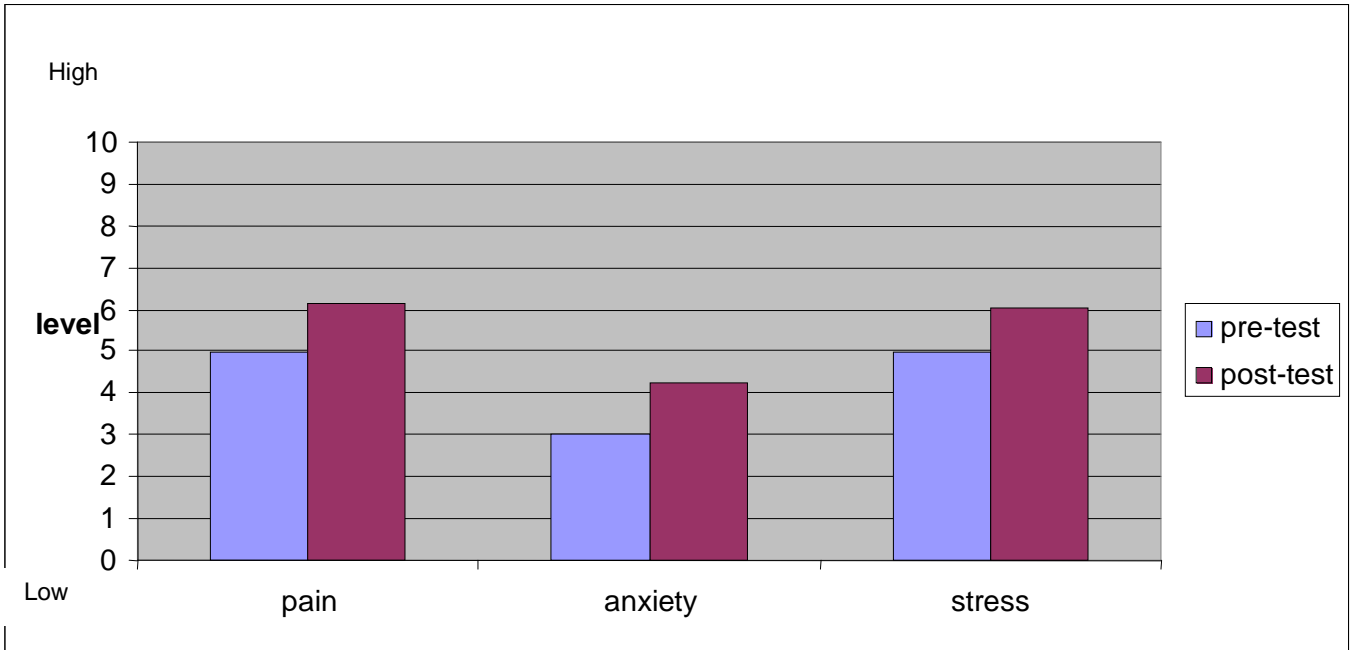
Where no bar is shown, result is 0.



# TEST GROUP RESULTS

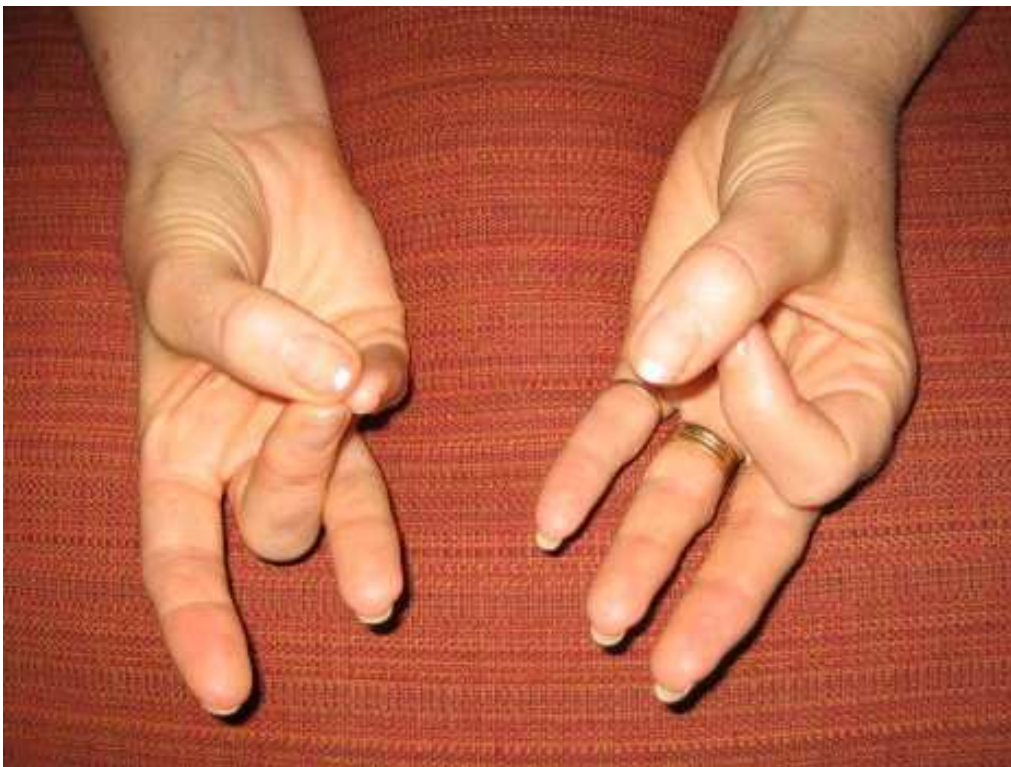
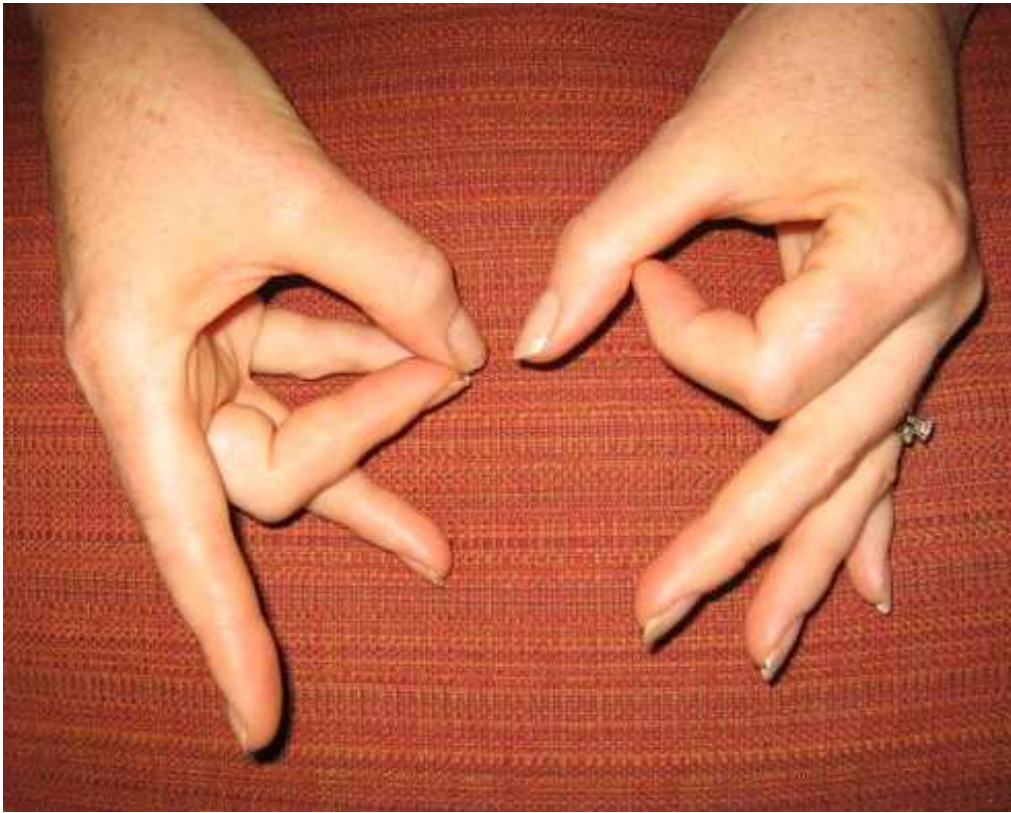
Allergies – Brahmara Mudra (n=1)

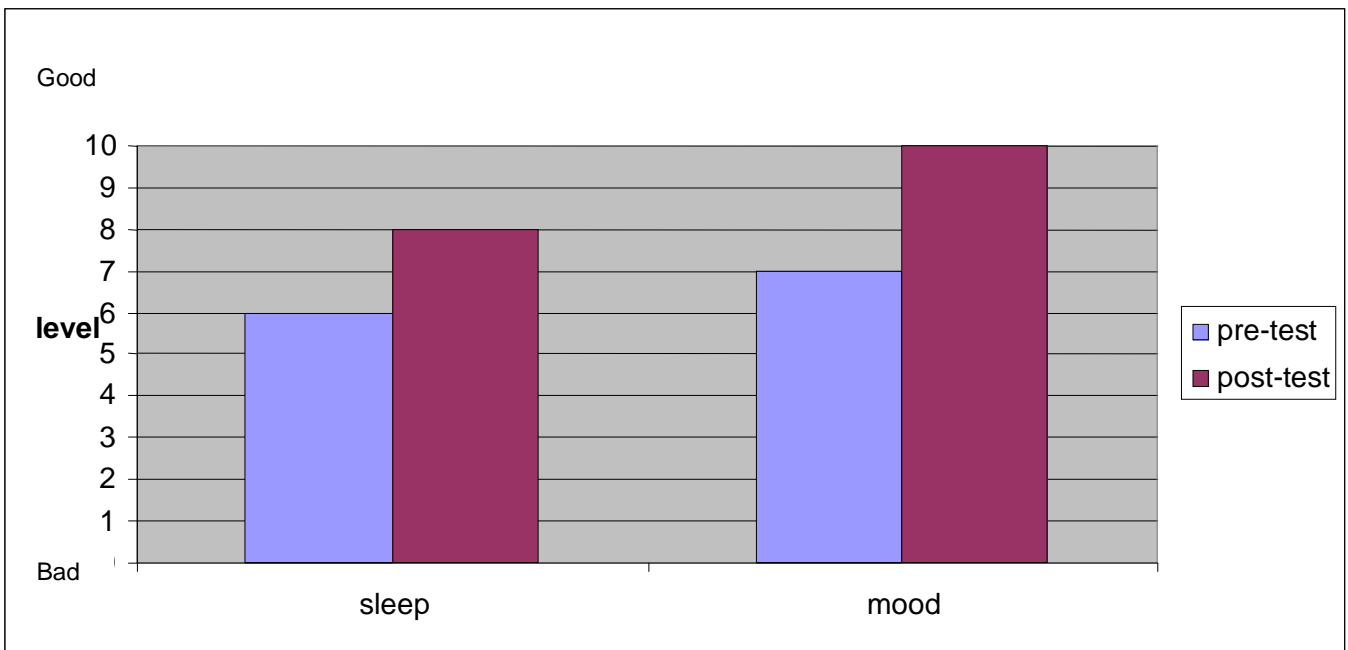
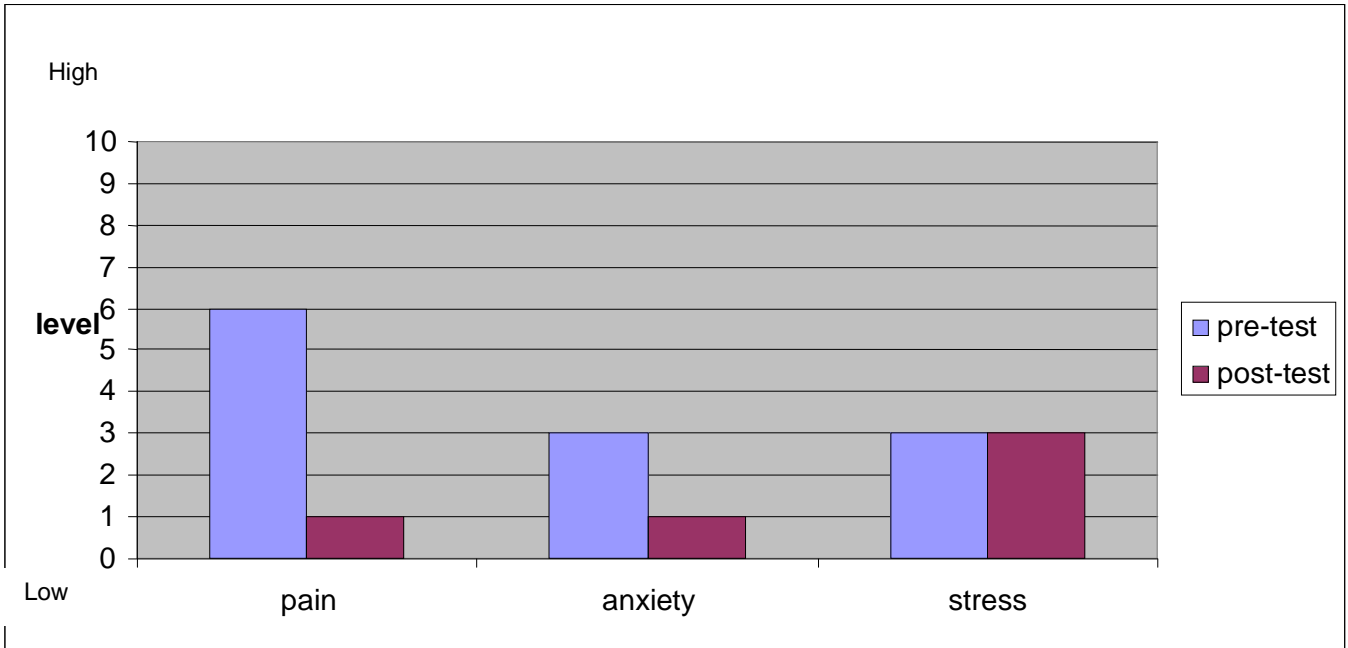




# TEST GROUP RESULTS

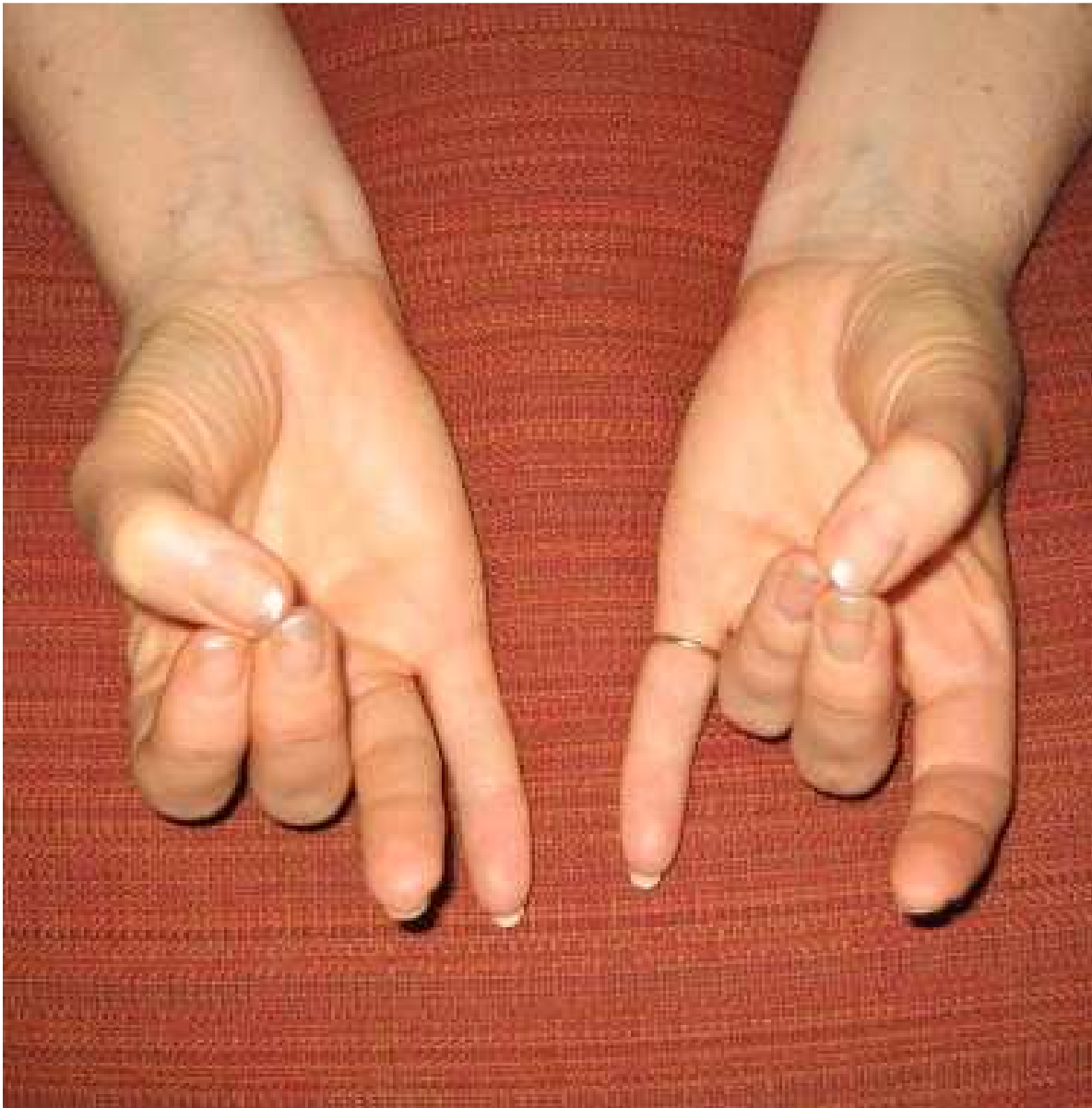
Back Pain – Back Mudra (n=2)

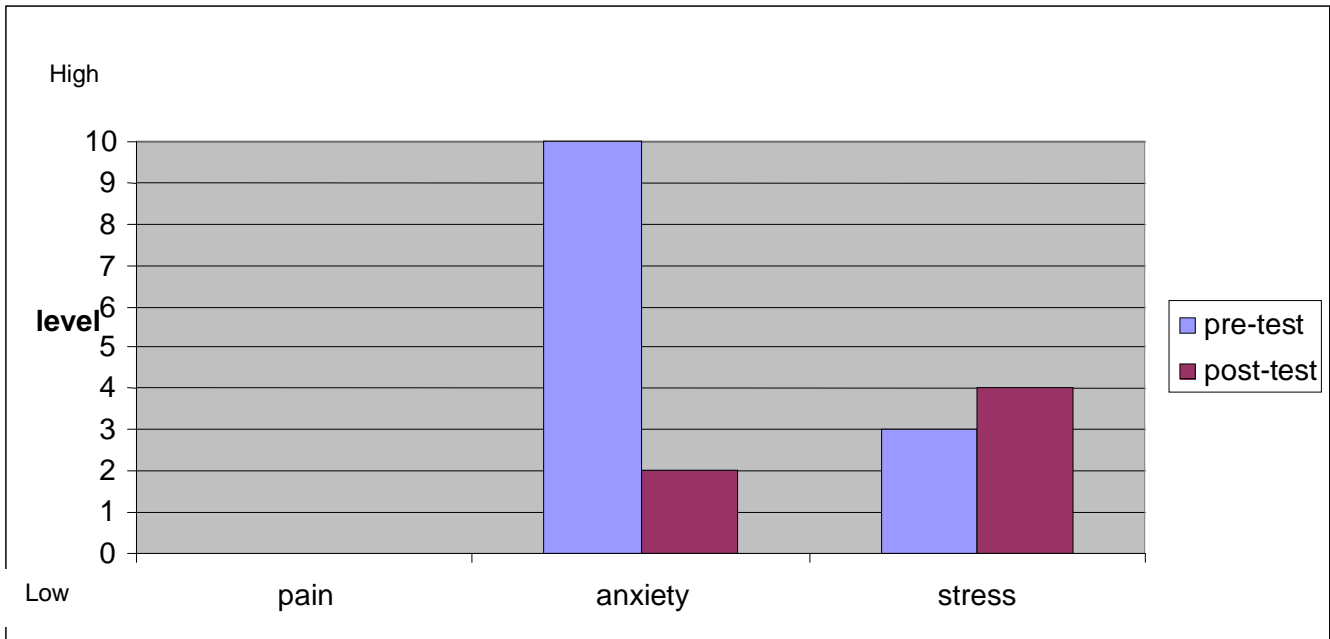




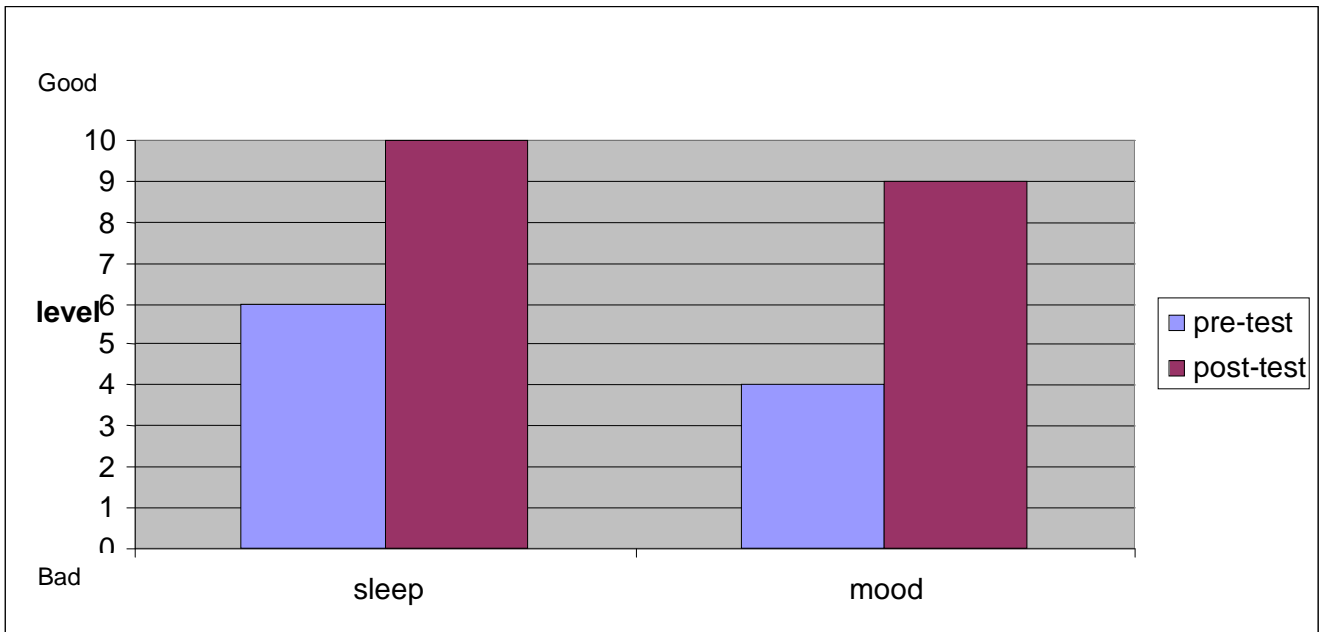
## TEST GROUP RESULTS

Detoxification – Pushan Mudra (n=1)



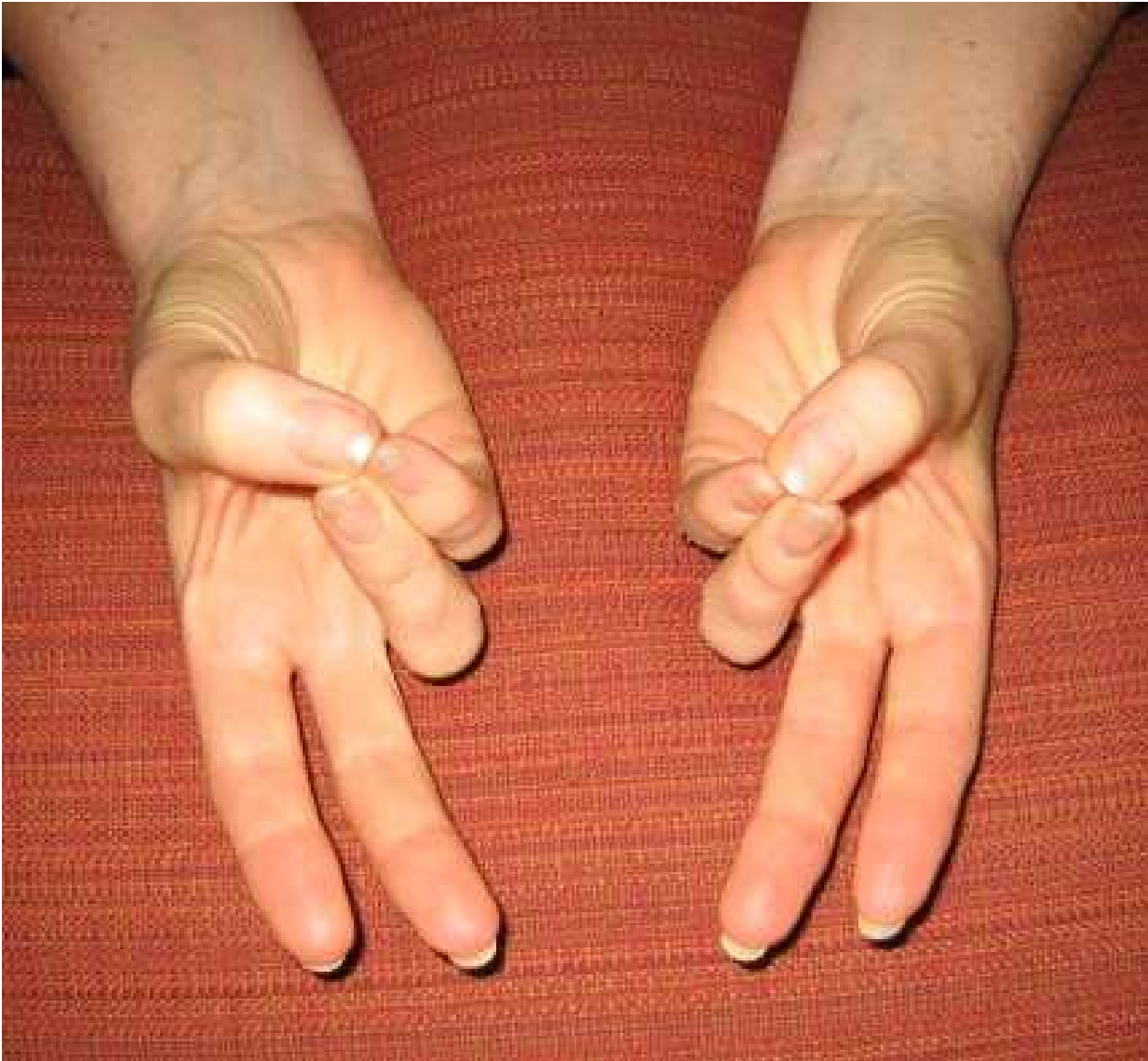


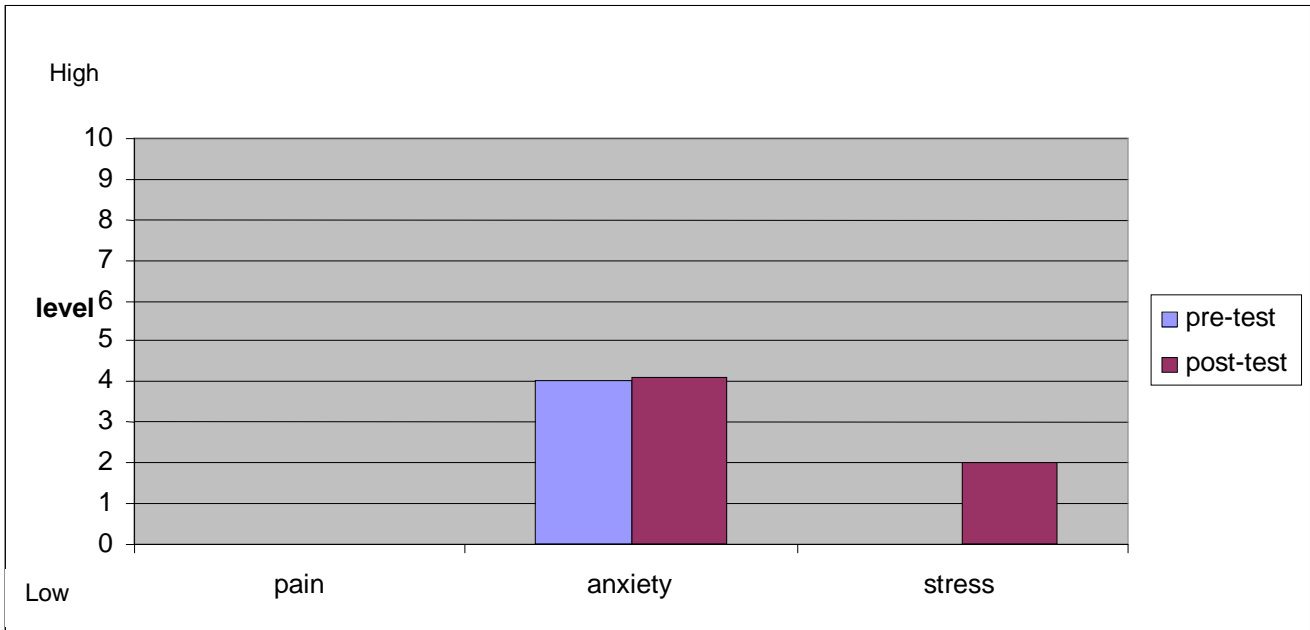
Where no bar is shown, result is 0.



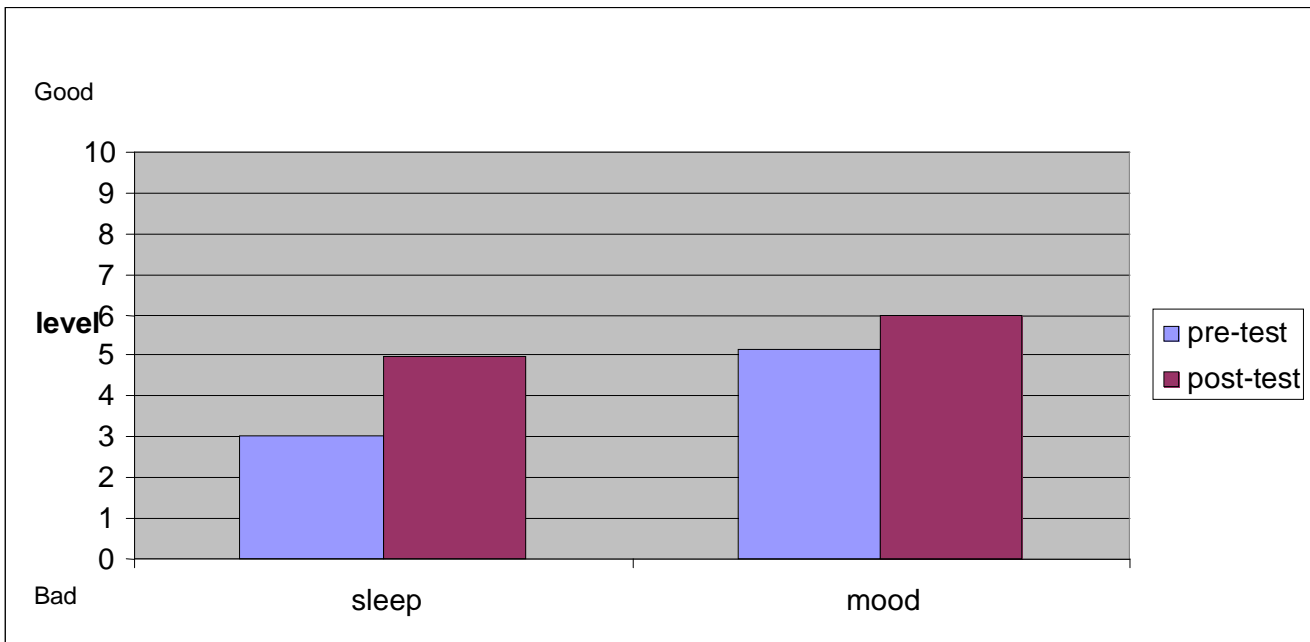
## TEST GROUP RESULTS

Exhaustion – Pran Mudra (n=1)





Where no bar is shown, result is 0.



## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that a daily practice of Hasta Mudras is an effective intervention in the treatment and management of back pain, joint pain, tinnitus, allergies and exhaustion. Since Yoga Hasta Mudras do not require a dedicated place of practice, nor require any specialized equipment or resources and are easy to perform and non-invasiveness, they are a promising intervention for the treatment of a variety of health conditions.