

The Impact of a Prescribed Pranayama on Emotional Intelligence

Little, M. , June 2010

Australian Institute of Yoga Therapy, Melbourne, Australia

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Objective:

The aim of this study was to gauge the impact of a prescribed pranayama practice on Emotional Intelligence, in particular its influence on an individual's outlook on life and their response/reactions to life.

Methods:

This multiple case study (N=8) of four weeks duration evaluated the effects of a daily practice of nadi shodhana (alternate nostril breathing) on Emotional Intelligence (EI). Participants were recruited from fitness centres and Yoga schools in suburban Melbourne and the randomly selected group consisted of eight females with an age range of 18 to 50. Participants were taught the nadi shodhana breathing practice and asked to practice it for eight rounds after rising each morning. A 'self-reporting' Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEIQue-SF) questionnaire (short version) was administered at the beginning, midway and at the end of the study. The four categories of EI measured were: well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability.

Results:

Considering the average score of all participants, there was improvement noted in the areas of Self Control and Well Being. However there was no marked change for Emotionality and Sociability from pre to post trial. The following chart shows the number of participants indicating changes in the post-trial questionnaire, compared to the pre-trial.

	increased	Decreased	Remained the same
Emotionality	3	3	2
Self-control	6	2	
Well-being	5	2	1
Sociability	4	3	1

Discussion

EI is a relatively new area of investigation, with limited guidelines on protocols for its study. Since emotional traits can be ingrained by adulthood, it is likely that meaningful changes will require a long period of time to become established in an individual's behaviours, attitudes and mind-sets. The initial trial period of four weeks may have started emotions moving rather than actually improving the emotional intelligence of participants.

The breathing practice may have brought up emotional issues that had not been recognised or examined previously, and on the TEIQue-SF questionnaire, participants may have noticed that how they perceived themselves to be during the first week, was challenged as the breathing practice created space and possible stillness for the reflection to be more honest than perhaps in the initial stages of the trial.

Conclusion:

While this study did show improvement in two of the areas of EI, following the daily practice of nadi shodhana pranayama, the short duration of the trial, the small number of participants, the lack of controls and the inability to accurately evaluate participant compliance meant that meaningful conclusions have been difficult to establish.

The modestly positive results of this study however do indicate that further studies of longer duration, with larger sample size and with a more rigorous analysis of the data are warranted.