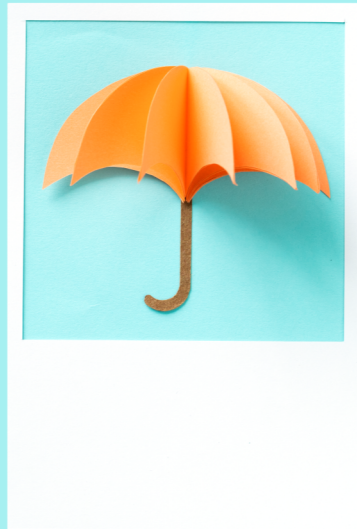


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The Yoga Institute

21 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY



HANSAJI. J. YOGENDRA



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AND
THE YOGA INSTITUTE



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INTRODUCTION

This book is specially curated to boost the health of everyone in society in light of the spread of Covid 19. The different techniques described are based on ancient yoga practices as well as our experience of being the oldest yoga institute in the world.

These 21 ways can be really helpful not only during the lockdown but can also be useful even otherwise. Practicing all 21 ways is ideal but even if you practice a few of them on a regular basis it can be very useful in making your immune system better. This is a humble initiative to keep our immunity strong in the face of adversity.

The steps and tips are simple and can be practiced by people of all age groups and from different walks of life. This book is rooted in science, facts as well as experience.

1

SUKSHMA VYAYAMA: STRETCHES TO MESSAGE IMMUNE SYSTEM ORGANS

The functioning of muscles and internal organs are slow when you wake up every morning. To bring warmth in the body, massage some important organs of the immune system, it is crucial that sukshma vyayama is practised every morning. This will help ease signs like stuffy nose, stiff and heavy body.

It is a full body warm-up yoga that gently works on each body part and eventually increases blood and lymph circulation and helps kick-start your day with elevated immunity.

1. Head and neck movement: Sit or stand erect.
 - Inhale, gently drop your head towards your right shoulder without lifting your shoulder.
 - Exhale, bring head back to the centre. Drop it to the left shoulder and return to the centre.
 - While inhaling, tilt your head backwards and exhaling gently drop it in front
 - While inhaling, turn your head to look far right and behind. Repeat on the other side
 - Rotate your head in all four directions. Clockwise and anti-clockwise
2. Shoulder movement
 - Keeping your hands close at the sides, while inhaling, lift your shoulders as high up as you can towards your ears.
 - While exhaling, relax your shoulders. (Repeat this motion twice.)
 - Practise shoulder rotations taking the rotation from back, down and then upwards while inhaling and as you exhale bring the shoulders down. (Repeat it 5 times.)
3. Spinal movement
 - Make spinal movement like bending from side to side
 - Then backward and forward bending
 - Lastly, twist gently on both sides.
4. Arms and wrist
 - Stretch both your hands to the shoulder level with your palms facing down and fingers as wide apart as possible.
 - While inhaling, take your hands to the respective sides and as far back without tilting your body backwards.
 - While exhaling, return to the front.
 - Stretch your hands out at the shoulder level and gently clench your fists.
 - Keeping the hands straight, perform wrist rotation both clockwise and anti-clockwise. (Repeat twice.)

5. Legs rotation

- Stand straight and lift one leg at a time and swing it gently front and back and then side to side.
- Then rotate it clockwise and anti-clockwise
- Similarly repeat the same thing with ankle movements

Limitations and contraindication: Sukshma vyayama is a very light form of exercise which can be performed by people of every age group.

Benefits:

1. Massaging immune system organs will encourage more production of cells required to kill any kind of infection
2. Body's defense mechanism strengthens and it is ready to fight infections at any time
3. Toxins and waste are easily removed from the body

2

PRANAYAMA THAT IMPROVES RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

As we all know the respiratory system is one of the most important body systems that support our body's immune mechanism to work without any hindrance. However, we hardly use our lungs to its full capacity. Neither do we fully inhale nor exhale, which leads to harmful and dead air in the lungs. If the respiratory system is working well then there are less chances of catching allergy, cough and cold or any chronic disease.

Pranayama is a vast topic in yoga, but one of the most recommended practices is Ujjayi Pranayama also known as victorious breath.

Steps:

1. Sit in meditative posture. Keeping your mouth closed, constrict your throat and inhale through your nose making a sound from the throat. There will be effort visible at the throat. Continue to inhale till fullness is experienced. Retain the air for six seconds.
2. Exhale through your nose with or without any sound and effort.

Limitations/ Contraindication:

There are no limitations. This pranayama can be practised by everyone.

Benefits:

1. Pranayama when practiced regularly results in healthy sinuses and helps get rid of cold and cough
2. Smooth functioning of respiration
3. Removes infections and excess mucus from the throat
4. Immune system is strengthened by removing harmful toxins from the body.
5. Lung capacity is increased
6. It has therapeutic benefits in asthma

As the functioning of the respiratory system is improved so is the breathing capacity. Yoga says every cell is affected by the way you inhale and exhale.

3

ASANA THAT IMPACTS THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

The lymphatic system is an imperative part of the immune system. The lymph helps to discard waste material from the body and also provides cells that can defend our body from harmful foreign bodies. Unfortunately, this system has no pump that can aid easy circulation. Its activation depends only on the contraction and relaxation of muscles.

The one anti-gravity asana that can prove to be helpful is Sarvangasana.

Steps

1. Lie down on the mat
2. Bend both the knees and feet close to hips.
3. Take support of the hands and lift your hips and legs up while exhaling
4. Chin should be in a jugular notch
5. Maintain this posture for a few seconds and gently lower you back to return to the starting position

Limitation/Contraindication

1. Hypertension, cardiac ailments
2. Pregnancy
4. Respiratory disorders
5. Cervical spondylosis, spinal problems, neck injuries or trauma
6. High myopia, glaucoma, serious eye disorders

Benefits

1. When legs are against the gravity, the drainage of the lymph becomes easier
2. Immune system is strengthened
3. As the core muscles actively participate, all the necessary lymph organs gets massaged which stimulates the entire lymphatic system
4. The fighting and defending capacity of the body is improved
5. Your body resists infections better

Practice the asana every day and you will feel the difference.

Note: For people who cannot perform Sarvangasana, they can simply practice legs up on the wall.

4

SOOTHING IMPACT OF SLEEP ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

In factories, to get the production done smoothly, the machines are given a break for a few hours to cool them down. Similarly, our body works non-stop which causes the nervous system to be agitated. Thus, it is of utmost importance that it is given a break by getting proper sleep at night. It is a necessity, not a luxury.

You shut down your brain, surrendering all your worries so that your cells get some time to recharge and get ready for the next day. When you have slept well, you can think right and calmly. This will reduce your stress, which, in turn, boosts your immune system.

There is a technique we call as Yogendra Pranayama IV which has a sedative effect and puts you to sleep very easily.

Steps

1. Lie on your back, knees bent and feet close to your hips.
2. The knees and feet should be close to each other.
3. Place one hand lightly on your navel, the other hand by your side
4. Inhale slowly, gradually and fully so that your diaphragm pushes your abdomen out
5. Exhaling, let the abdomen fall down.
6. Practise continuously for about 5-10 rounds

Limitation/ Contraindication: Everyone can do this pranayama

Benefits

1. It improves digestive capacity
2. There is a sedative effect on your nervous system. Its practice relaxes your entire body
3. It improves the vital and tidal capacity of the lungs
4. It leads to quietude and inner harmony

A simple technique like this will have a positive and long-lasting effect on your body.

5

STRENGTHEN YOUR BONE AND MUSCLES

Bones and muscles are used for locomotion and they also produce blood cells. The immune system then uses these cells for transportation. When your bones and muscles are working smoothly with minimal degeneration, the immune system becomes better. Also, they are the storage facility for calcium, which aids the immune system to fight better.

The simple asana technique which everyone can practice is Utkatasana.

Steps

1. Stand erect; keep your hands at their respective sides
2. Keep one-foot distance between both your feet, which are parallel to each other
3. Focus your eyes at one point straight ahead
4. While inhaling, with palms facing down, raise both your hands parallel to each other, in front of the body, up to shoulder level
5. Simultaneously raise your heels to stand on the toes
6. Exhaling, lower your body to a squatting position till your thighs press against the calves
7. Hold this squatting position suspending your breath for six seconds
8. Inhaling, rise up again on your toes
9. Make a pause on the toes, retaining your breath for six seconds
10. Exhaling, lower your heels to the floor, bring the hands down and return to the starting position

Limitation/Contraindication

1. Moderate and severe arthritis of knees, acute deep vein thrombosis, sprained ankle, stiff joints, vertigo and sciatica pains
2. Do not retain your breath if you are suffering from any cardiac condition

Benefits

Chair pose is all about perfect balancing asana which involves most of the major group muscles thus strengthening your immune system.

6

KEEP YOUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM HEALTHY AND BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Our digestive system is exposed to a maximum number of pathogens, but these can be removed through regular bowel movements. Discomfort like constipation, acidity, indigestion can compromise the immune system, especially our tonsils and appendix.

Most of the asana are extremely helpful in strengthening the digestive system, but the one asana that is extremely useful is Bhujangasana.

Steps

1. Lie down on your stomach
2. Bending at the elbows, place your palms facing down near your chest, keeping your elbows close to your body
3. Inhaling, raise your head and neck upwards to look up towards the ceiling
4. Raise your upper body only until the navel and not more. Make sure that your feet remain together and not get separated
5. Remain in the final position holding your breath for six seconds
6. Exhaling, bring your head, neck and torso down to rest on the mat

Limitation/ Contraindication

1. Hypertension, heart ailments
2. Pregnancy, peptic ulcers, hernia
3. Hyperthyroid

Benefits

1. It massages and stimulates the adrenal gland
2. It tones up the abdominal muscles
3. It reduces constipation and flatulence

Bhujangasana not only helps you activating digestive system but it also builds confidence

7

KRIYAS: CLEANSE YOUR SINUSES

When we talk about hygiene, our understanding is limited to cleaning the body externally, but we hardly give importance to the body's internal hygiene, i.e. the cleansing of sinuses, throat, digestive system, etc. Internal hygiene is given the highest priority in yoga. For example, when there is no excess of sticky mucus in the body then there will be no chance for bacteria, viral or other infection to grow. Immune system can become stronger since there is no blockage or hindrance anywhere.

Yoga has many Kriyas like Jal-neti, Kapal Randhra Dhouti, Karana Randhra Dhouti and Kapal Bhati. Jal-neti is the kriya that can be practiced and is very helpful for the immune system.

Steps

1. Take a cup of warm drinking water, add a pinch of salt to the water to taste like tears
2. Wash your hands thoroughly
3. Stand comfortably, cup the right palm and pour the required amount of the prepared water to fill it
4. Holding your palm near your face, close the left nostril with the left index finger, bend forward to bring the right nostril to the cupped palm. Dip the right nostril into the water and inhale deeply so that the water is snuffed up your nostril and straighten your head.
5. After the water is sucked up in the nostril, immediately bend the head forward and the water will flow out naturally either through the mouth, opposite nostril or the same nostril. Repeat with the other hand and nostril.
6. After the completion of inhaling water through both nostrils blow out gently any watery discharge one nostril at a time. It is necessary that you practise Kapal Bhati after performing Jala Neti.

Limitation/Contraindication: Not to practise during severe nasal infection.

Benefits

1. It improves your eyesight
2. It cleanses the nasal passages and brings about freshness
3. It removes all dirt- and bacteria-filled mucus from your nose
4. It prevents nasal infections if practised regularly
5. Bouts of allergies or rhinitis are reduced
6. It helps to drain the sinus cavities

8

FOOD AND EATING HABITS

The whole world is talking about different types of food habits and diets. But to explain it in simple words, eating Satvik food is not just easy to digest but nutritious. Some of the tips about satvik food are:

1. Minimum the use of spicy and oily food
2. Try to include liquid in each meal. Herbal tea for breakfast and snacks, buttermilk or dal for lunch and soup or raab for dinner.
3. Choose your protein right. Eating non-vegetarian food can prove to be very harmful to the body. Instead; eat pulses, peanuts, chana, dairy protein like paneer. If you are vegan then you can replace dairy with soy.
4. Bakery items or cold drinks with too much sugar can impair the immune system.
5. The more fresh fruits and vegetables you eat the better.
6. Big NO to junk items. Those can be had once in a while but not the main source.

Yoga prescribes certain eating habits.

1. Chew your food until it becomes a paste in the mouth
2. Do not overeat: fill your stomach half with solid food, 1/4th with liquid and leave remaining 1/4th empty for gases to pass through
3. Eat light dinner and sleep a minimum 2 hours after dinner

NATURAL SOURCE OF VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Immune system can be given good stimulation with some necessary vitamins and minerals. Here are some of the natural sources:

Vitamin C: This plays an important role in repairing tissues and is excellent anti-oxidant. The natural sources are citrus fruits like orange, lemon, tomatoes, gooseberry (amla), potatoes, green leafy vegetables and broccoli.

Vitamin E: An antioxidant which helps the body to fight against infections and thus boosting immunity. It also has anti-inflammatory properties. Its pivotal sources are spinach, almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, cooking oil like vegetable oil and peanut oil.

Vitamin A: The main role is proper growth and thus giving a nudge to the immune system to work better. It cuts the mucus segregation around sinuses, eyes and other body parts. The natural sources are milk, carrots, pumpkin and sweet potato.

Folate: The primary role is in enhancing and regulating cell division. Some of the natural sources are beans, legumes, dal, pulses, beetroots, different nuts and seeds.

Iron: Iron deficiency is increasing and because of that immunity is lowering. Following are the food sources which can help to increase iron in your body. Spinach, dry fruits and nuts, millets like bajra, ragi, jowar and beans.

10

NATURE AND SUNLIGHT ON IMMUNE SYSTEM

As we all know, the only natural source of Vitamin D is exposing our skin to sunlight. Vitamin D affects the immune cells thus increasing their efficiency and it also regulates the immune system.

Spend at least 5-10 minutes of your time in the sun. If possible do some activity like reading or listening to music while you are sitting in the sun.

To gain positivity, you can definitely connect with nature. Stand at the window and just stare blank at a tree or up in the sky. At the same time you can listen to the birds chirping and try to live in the moment.

At night simply enjoy the silence of nature, admire the moon and, if you are lucky, you can see the infinity of stars.

Benefits of these small steps will slowly calm your mind and your body will be relaxed. Relaxed body means absence of stress and hence you will have the most responsive immune system.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MEDITATION ON IMMUNITY

Meditation is the best known technique that can deeply impact your body, mind and soul. The immune system tends to get positively charged by meditation.

1. In a room which is full of natural light and ventilation, sit cross legged and gently close your eyes.
2. In the beginning start reverse counting from 100 to 1. If you make a mistake then restart again. Your agitated mind will immediately calm down.
3. Once you have achieved a calm state of mind you can start moving inwards. Gently focus on your breath. Inhale and exhale gently.
4. Continue to maintain this for 5 min.
5. Gently shift your focus to the friction of air touching the nostril. The subtle air will make you feel calmer and calmer.

Benefits:

1. Parasympathetic nervous system is activated which helps to think with calm mind
2. Anxiety and depression will stay at bay
3. There will be no obstacle in the effortless working of the immune system
4. You will always remain in a happy mood because meditation releases happy hormones
5. You will feel rejuvenated and refreshed throughout the day. And no negative thoughts will cross your mind.

12

POWER OF POSITIVITY

The manifestations of our mind resonate in the universe and it brings back to you the exact same thing. If we manifest positive thoughts it will come back to you. This is the power of positive thoughts.

So if you want your immune system to strengthen you have to be in a positive state of mind.

Following are the ways where you can increase the positive vibe within:

1. Learn to live in the present. Past is of no use and future has not yet come.
2. We are all surrounded by criticism always so pay attention to nothing but constructive criticism.
3. Confront all your problems with a smile. When you wear a smile your day will become much better and happier.
4. Our mind is full of thoughts, analyse it well. The moment you encounter a negative thought just throw it out by doing an activity like cooking or singing or anything that makes you feel good.

Benefits

1. The effect of positive thinking is so huge that one can literally come out of any dangerous situation
2. Your psychological and physical well-being will be improved
3. Coping with any physical ailment becomes easy
4. Lastly, the immune system will never be compromised

13

EFFECT OF MANTRA CHANTING

Mantra chanting is also known as mantra yoga. It has nothing to do with religion. Mantra can be of any choice. The simplest mantra is chanting of OM. The vibration created from the sound heals all the problems, be it physical, mental, emotional or psychological. Its power is unmatched.

Mantra chanting increases faith in a person which brings out positive energy and thus healing becomes much faster. When you have a compromised immune system, mantra chanting can be your curative source.

1. Choose any mantra that you believe in. It can be God's name or simply a mantra from ancient scriptures.
2. Select a time and place and make sure you maintain the discipline for coming days.
3. Sit quietly and focus on your breath.
4. Start chanting the mantra 5 times loudly.
5. Once done, chant the mantra in your mind 5 times.
6. This will take not more than 5 min of your time.

Benefits

1. Calms the mind.
2. The vibrations of mantra stimulates hypothalamus, this is the gland responsible for many functions in the body including the immune system.
3. The mantra directly also impacts lymph nodes.

14

MAINTAIN A BALANCED STATE OF MIND

Human mind is full of mental modifications or vrittis and that makes our personality. These vrittis can be positive or negative. In a majority of cases it is negative which are called kleshas. These kleshas are ignorance, ego, desire, aversion and attachment. In most people, these kleshas overpower them and they are always surrounded by some physical or mental health problem. Our immune system also gets affected by these negative qualities. Thus, it becomes our prime responsibility to maintain a balanced state of mind.

There are many different ways:

1. Manage your stress by managing your work well. If something goes out of the hand then figure out ways of putting an end to it. Do not stretch yourself overly.
2. If you are surrounded by negative thoughts, always think of the opposite situation. This technique is called pratipaksha bhavna. Learn to look at the big picture.
3. Inspire yourself and stay motivated by appreciating your efforts. You need no one's appreciation but yourself. Love yourself and be confident.

Benefits

1. When you have a balanced state of mind, your mental health is in its prime.
2. Even when your personal or professional life hits rock bottom, if your mind is balanced then you can easily float back to the surface.
3. As far as the immune system is concerned your mind directs your brain to function in the right direction and thus it recharges every organ.

15

VIHAR: RECREATE TO STAY HAPPY

Up until now, we must have understood the importance of staying happy and its impact on our immune system. Yoga stands on four pillars and focusses on ways for everyone to make these pillars the foundation of life. One of these pillars is Vihar or recreational activities. In life we all have certain other interests and goals and these need to be more than just career goals.

Things to do in Vihar:

1. Spend time on your long-lost hobby like painting, singing, music, sports, etc.
2. Playing with children and being child-like is another way of staying mentally fit
3. Many people find happiness in performing social service or caring for animals.
4. Always keep yourself ready to learn from children, peers, and even nature.
5. When you are at home you can always walk and do some physical activity within the house; once you get the opportunity to go out in nature, step out immediately.
6. You have to take a break every day. Don't think it's the same as working non-stop for 6 months and then taking a 20-day vacation. Don't just think but act upon it.
7. Appreciate what you have. Love thyself and you will see how healthy you can be.

Benefits

1. Your mental and emotional realms will be at peace and that will reflect on your physical well-being.
2. You will hardly have time to think negatively and hence you will also end up forgetting about your physical ailments.
3. You will realise that life is much more than tension, work and stress. Growing as a person will become a natural process.
4. You will sail through any situation you are put in, whether it is good or bad.

16

STATIONARY LIFE CAN IMPACT IMMUNE SYSTEM

Immune system organs are spread throughout the body and thus it becomes our duty to keep them active and stimulated all the time. When you sit or stand for a very long time, the immunity is badly compromised. The organs become lazy and refuse to work. The only way to keep it going is by moving around frequently.

1. Set an alarm and stand up or sit down every 2 hours
2. Walk for 2 to 5 min at regular intervals
3. Stretch your legs out and spread your arms wide for blood to circulate well
4. Twist your spine in all the possible direction slowly and gently
5. Head and neck movement needs to be done
6. Give a break to your eyes
7. Walk up and down a staircase, if there is one. Alternately, keep water and other essentials away from you so that you have to get up to fetch them.
8. Do not delay if you need to use loo, it is the most dangerous thing to do.

The above 8 activities will definitely help you massage your immune organs for 16 hours. Every 2 hours, engage in a new activity so don't get bored.

KEEP YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS UNDER CHECK

The most important lesson that Yoga teaches us is self-study (Swadhyaya). Self-study here means learning about yourself and understanding what kind of person you are. This simple practice will support you in keeping your negative side under check.

When there is control over the negative thoughts, life becomes easy. There should be one goal: to grow as a human being and improve each day. Once you start doing this, there can be no limit to your inner growth.

Rishi Vyasa said “When you do your natural duties success will follow for sure”. One of the most important natural duty is to keep a distance from negativity. A simple technique that can be practiced every day is reflection.

Before going to sleep, sit quietly on your bed, close your eyes and focus on your breath. Now gently reflect upon what happened during the whole day.

Don't analyse but simply recall the things you did from morning till night.

It may take 10 min to 20 min depending on how much you remember.

Benefits

1. At the end of the practice you will have a sense of detachment from the actions and thus no stress.
2. Any mistake done will get jotted in your brain and you will realise it was your alter ego that was not ready to accept but you are being given a chance to rectify it.
3. A sense of realization that nothing is permanent will make you a better human being.
4. You not only keep your negative thoughts under check but you reach a stage where you will be at least neutral towards the situation, if not positive.

18

TRATAKA: RELEASE THE STRESS FROM WITHIN

Many yoga techniques have an immediate effect on the body and one such technique is Trataka. It is the most powerful tool to keep the anxiety and stress away. There are many different ways it can be practiced but here we use candles.

Steps

1. Sit erect in a comfortable posture or on a chair
2. Place a candle about 2 feet away so that the flame is slightly lower than your eye level
3. Steadily gaze at the tip of the flame
4. Continuously gaze until tears roll up or your eyes get weary.
5. Close your eyes and visualize the flame
6. When the image goes away cup your eyes and open it
7. Repeat it 3 times

Benefits

1. Strengthen your optic nerves and thus calms you mind
2. Tiredness and laziness is removed which is helpful in stimulating the immune system
3. Concentration and focus is improved
4. Mind becomes steady

HAVE FAITH IN SELF AND HIGHER REALITY

Ishwara pranidhan or faith in a higher reality is given a much higher importance in the ancient text of Yoga Sutra. When you have faith in that higher reality you achieve a lot more because you also end up having faith in yourself. Faith gives the confidence to win battles and even cross the seven seas. Compromised immune system and for that matter any health issues can be resolved if you have faith.

When you go to sleep, you are confident of waking up the next morning. This demonstrates faith. Otherwise people will always sleep in fear. Another example: you send your child to school because you have faith that nothing will happen to the child and they will come back safe. You might not realise the fact that even the smallest of action is performed out of faith.

You have come alone in this world, so for your betterment instead of keeping expectation from others have faith in yourself and the higher energy. Your life moves ahead with the support of people around you but that doesn't mean they are there only for you.

Faith has limitless power and it brings positive traits in you like good health, confidence, humility, compassion, empathy, enthusiasm, proactive nature and the belief that you can conquer the world.

AFFIRMATIONS FOR STRONG IMMUNITY

In yoga, it is always believed that affirmation does wonders. It can be used in anything, be it you work, health, personal relationship etc. Now to boost your immunity some affirmations are listed below.

1. I am a healthy person
2. I am surrounded by a healthy and happy environment
3. I love myself and protect myself from negativity
4. People around me are very loving
5. I respect nature and its way of teaching us lessons
6. My outer and inner body is fit
7. My immunity is getting stronger day by day
8. My body is able to fight any infection
9. All the required organs are functioning well in coordination
10. I trust God, whatever happens is always for good

There are 2 ways you can manifest these affirmations:

1. Sit in any meditative posture, keep a book of affirmation in front of you and repeat in your mind 3 times.
2. You can keep a book and write these affirmations with full concentration once a day. This is a practice that really helps and you can call it 'My 10 positive points'.

Once you make your statements and write them down every day, you will start feeling grateful about the smallest things in life and that works wonders for the immune system.

21

STAY EMOTIONALLY STABLE

Most of us feel insecure, anxious and sad because of our expectations from others. We always think “I am right and the other person needs to understand this”. But, in reality, this type of thought really brings you down emotionally. Emotional health is always directly related to physical.

To stay emotionally fit,

1. First, accept the other person the way they are
2. Reflect on what is making you upset and then try to work upon it
3. Limit your expectations from yourself and from others
4. You are your own healer.
5. Remember: No one else can help you but yourself
6. Fulfill your duty

Benefits

1. It has been researched that emotions are one of the vital reasons for illness.
2. Diabetics and people with heart ailment tend to feel more repressed than others.
3. Since illness is related to emotions, stability will first protect your immune system and thus no ailment can enter your body.

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We hope that this eBook benefits the readers and takes forward The Yoga Institute's vision and mission to spread the awareness and goodness of yoga and its philosophy to as many householders as possible.

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