

## **The Effect of Om Chanting and Bhramri Pranayama on The Children's Academic Anxiety and Stress Level**

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**Abstract:** Stress and anxiety in children and teenagers are just as prevalent as in adults. Stressed out and negligent parents, high expectations in academic or other performances, abused or deprived childhood, growing up tensions and demand for familial responsibility are the main causes of childhood and teen Stress. Parents, who are not emotionally available for their children or lack positive coping mechanisms themselves, often spur their offspring. Stressed children show signs of emotional disabilities, aggressive behavior, shyness, social phobia and often lack interest in otherwise enjoyable activities. Research tells us that children, who are forced to live on prematurely adult levels, sometimes become oppositional to following the parents' rules (or those of society). Such children tend to respond to Stressors with aggression and indignation. Many teenagers tend to become nonconformists and fall prey to teenage depression in response to a variety of growing up anxieties. However, Stress induced fears and anxieties in children adversely affect children's performances at various levels. Stress can cause headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, eating disorder, allergies, insomnia, backaches, frequent cold and fatigue to diseases such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes, heart ailments and even cancer. Methods of coping with Stress are aplenty. The most significant or sensible way out is a change in lifestyle. Relaxation techniques such as meditation, physical exercises, listening to soothing music, deep breathing, various natural and alternative methods, personal growth techniques, visualization and massage are some of the most effective of the known non-invasive Stress busters.

**Introduction:** Research suggests that Stress can actually increase our performance. Instead of wilting under Stress, one can use it as an impetus to achieve success. Stress can stimulate one's faculties to delve deep into and discover one's true potential. Under Stress the brain is emotionally and biochemically stimulated to sharpen its performance.

Listing the causes of Stress is tricky. There can be innumerable Stress factors since different individuals react differently to the same Stress conditions. Extreme Stress situations for an individual may prove to be mild for another, for yet another person the situations might not qualify as Stress symptoms at all. Stress is often termed as a twentieth century syndrome, born out of man's race towards modern progress and its ensuing complexities. For that matter, causes such as a simple flight delay to managing a teenage child at home can put you under Stress.

- 1. Academic Anxiety:** Anxiety is a psychological and physiological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components. These components combine to create an unpleasant feeling that is typically associated with uneasiness, apprehension, fear,

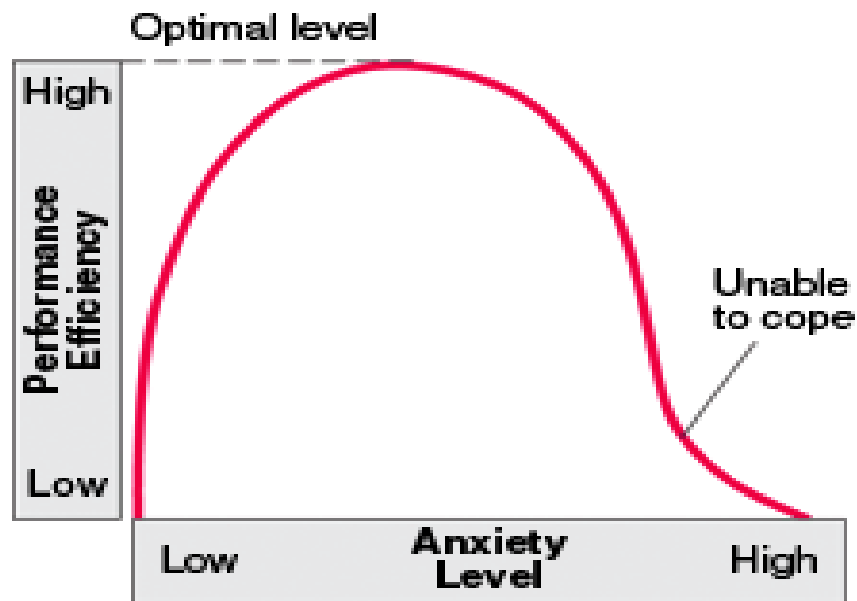
or worry. Anxiety is a generalized mood condition that can often occur without an identifiable triggering stimulus. As such, it is distinguished from fear, which occurs in the presence of an observed threat. Additionally, fear is related to the specific behaviors of escape and avoidance, whereas anxiety is the result of threats that are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable.

Another view is that anxiety is "a future-oriented mood state in which one is ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events" suggesting that it is a distinction between future vs. present dangers that divides anxiety and fear. Anxiety is considered to be a normal reaction to Stress. It may help a person to deal with a difficult situation, for example at work or at school, by prompting one to cope with it. When anxiety becomes excessive, it may fall under the classification of an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety is a normal response to a threat or to psychological Stress and is experienced occasionally by everyone. Normal anxiety has its root in fear and serves an important survival function. When someone is faced with a dangerous situation, anxiety induces the fight-or-flight response. With this response, a variety of physical changes, such as increased blood flow to the heart and muscles, provide the body with the necessary energy and strength to deal with life-threatening situations, such as running from an aggressive animal or fighting off an attacker. However, when anxiety occurs at inappropriate times, occurs frequently, or is so intense and long-lasting that it interferes with a person's normal activities, it is considered a disorder.

**Causes:** The causes of anxiety disorders are not fully known, but both physical and psychological factors are involved. Because anxiety disorders are prevalent in some families, heredity probably plays a role. Anxiety is viewed at a psychological level as a response to environmental Stresses, such as the breakup of a significant relationship or exposure to a life-threatening disaster. When a person's response to Stresses is inappropriate or a person is overwhelmed by events, an anxiety disorder can arise. For example, some people find speaking before a group exhilarating. But others dread it, becoming anxious with symptoms such as sweating, fear, rapid heart rate, and tremor. Such people may avoid speaking even in a small group. Anxiety disorders may also be caused by a physical disorder or the use of a drug. For example, an overactive thyroid or adrenal gland can cause anxiety, as can a tumor called a pheochromocytoma. Drugs that can cause anxiety include corticosteroids, cocaine, amphetamines, ephedrine, and sometimes caffeine if too much is consumed. Withdrawal from alcohol or certain sedatives can also cause symptoms of an anxiety disorder. In older people, dementia may be the most common cause of anxiety.

## **How Anxiety Affects Performance:**



The effects of anxiety on performance can be shown on a curve. As the level of anxiety increases, performance efficiency increases proportionately, but only up to a point. As anxiety increases further, performance efficiency decreases. Before the peak of the curve, anxiety is considered adaptive; because it helps people prepare for a crisis and improve their functioning. Beyond the peak of the curve, anxiety is considered maladaptive, because it produces distress and impairs functioning

**Symptoms:**Anxiety can arise suddenly, as in panic, or gradually over minutes, hours, or days. Anxiety can last for any length of time, from a few seconds to years. It ranges in intensity from barely noticeable qualms to a full-blown panic attack, which may cause shortness of breath, dizziness, an increased heart rate, and trembling (tremor).

Anxiety disorders can be so distressing and interfere so much with a person's life that they can lead to depression. People who have an anxiety disorder (except for certain very specific phobias, such as fear of spiders) are at least twice as likely to have depression as those without an anxiety disorder. Sometimes depression develops first and an anxiety disorder develops later.

- 2. Stress:** Stress is a common problem that affects almost all of us at some point in our lives. Learning to identify when you are under Stress, what is stressing you, and different ways of coping with Stress can greatly improve both your mental and physical well being. Stress can affect both your body and your mind. People under large amounts of Stress can become tired, sick, and unable to concentrate or think clearly. Sometimes, they even suffer mental breakdowns. The word 'Stress' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a state of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy". A condition or circumstance (not always

adverse), which can disturb the normal physiological and psychological functioning of an individual. In medical parlance `Stress` is defined as a perturbation of the body's homeostasis. This demand on mind-body occurs when it tries to cope with incessant changes in life. A `Stress` condition seems `relative` in nature. Extreme Stress conditions, psychologists say, are detrimental to human health but in moderation Stress is normal and, in many cases, proves useful. Stress, nonetheless, is synonymous with negative conditions. Today, with the rapid diversification of human activity, we come face to face with numerous causes of Stress and the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

**Types of Stress:** Depending on the Stressors and the types of changes or events we are dealing with, Stress can manifest itself physically, emotionally and/or mentally.

**Physical** – this occurs when the body as a whole starts to suffer as a result of a Stressful situation. Symptoms can manifest in a variety of ways and vary in their seriousness. The most common physical symptom is headaches because Stress causes people to unconsciously tense their neck, forehead and shoulder muscles. However long-term Stress can lead to digestive problems including ulcers, insomnia, fatigue, high blood pressure, nervousness and excessive sweating, heart disease, strokes and even hair loss.

**Emotional** – these responses are due to Stress affecting the mind and include anxiety, anger, depression, irritability, frustration, over-reaction to everyday problems, memory loss and a lack of concentration for any task. Anxiety is normally shown as a response to loss, failure, danger or a fear of the unknown. Anger is a common response to frustration or social Stress and can become a danger to other individuals if not kept in check. Depression is frequently seen as an emotional response to upsetting situations such as the death of a loved one, illness and failure.

**Psychological** – long-term Stress can cause psychological problems in some individuals. Symptoms include withdrawal from society, phobias, compulsive behaviors, eating disorders and night terrors.

**The Dynamics of Stress:** In a challenging situation the brain prepares the body for defensive action—the fight or flight response by releasing Stress hormones, namely, cortisone and adrenaline. These hormones raise the blood pressure and the body prepares to react to the situation. With a concrete defensive action (fight response) the Stress hormones in the blood get used up, entailing reduced Stress effects and symptoms of anxiety. When we fail to counter a Stress situation (flight response) the hormones and chemicals remain unreleased in the blood stream for a long period of time. It results in Stress related physical symptoms such as tense muscles, unfocused anxiety, dizziness and rapid heartbeats. We all encounter various Stressors (causes of Stress) in everyday life, which can accumulate, if not released. Subsequently, it compels the mind and body to be in an almost constant alarm-state in preparation to fight or flee. This state of accumulated Stress can increase the risk of both acute and chronic psychosomatic illnesses and weaken the immune system.

**Om chanting:** OM or AUM is the most important and significant word of Mantra tradition. It is considered as the root mantra of all mantra. Om is the life of Vedas; Om is the basis of the world. OM is the most often chanted sound among all the sacred sounds on earth. This sound is considered as the sound of the existence.

All mantras begin with Om upnishads begin with Om all religious ideas are centered in Om. Thought of Om elevates the minds of all. The Christians the Hebrews end their prayer with 'amen' which is a modification of Om. The Muslims end their prayers with ahmeen also a modification of Om. The Mandukyaupnishad, Mundakakathopanishad, the Gita and Brahma Sutras sing the glory of Om.

It is believed that the whole universe, in its fundamental form, is made up of vibrating, pulsating energy. Om is considered as the humming sound of this cosmic energy. OM is said to be the original primordial creative sound from which the entire universe has manifested. It is also known as the 'Anahat Nada', the "Unstruck Sound". This means the sound that is not made by two things striking together. If one observes the nature of sound you'll find that all ordinary audible sounds are produced by the striking of two objects: bow and strings, drum and stick, two vocal cords, waves against the shore, winds against the leaves, bat against the ball, tires against the road etc. In short all sounds within our range of listening are produced by things visible or invisible, striking each other or vibrating together, resulting in pulsating waves of air molecules which we interpret as sound. In contrast to the above, OM is the sound which is not the result of the striking of two objects. It rather emanates on its own. It is the primal sound of the universe that contains all sounds in itself.

**Mandukyaupnisha:** Om represents past, present and future and also that exists beyond time and space. Om has no beginning or end.

**Yoga vashishta:** If we control prana we shall be able to control mind and the thought process. This is possible by practicing Pranayama as well as Om chanting. Therefore it is better to practice pranayama first and Omkarjapa.

**Swatwaraupnishad:** The self as like fire it relies by can stand awareness of the sacred syllable Om.

Om chanting has a profound effect on the body and mind of one who chants and also on the surroundings. Om vibration also produces a very significant effect upon the endocrine gland. Cranial nerve, by the vibration multiplies all through the body increasing every vibration reach the deep lying tissue and nerve cells and the circulation of blood increases in the tissue organ involved.

## Technique:

- Sit in any comfortable meditation posture (padamashan, sidhasana, sukhasana)
- Keep the head and spine upright return whole body.
- Close the eyes and feel the calmness of mind.
- Now take deep breath in and start chanting Aum.
- The voice should be natural, melodious sweet and clear.
- Now start next recitation.
- Recite in this way which deep faith and devotion.
- After finishing the recitation sit quietly, visualize Om in front of your forehead and meditation on it for few minutes.

## Benefits:

The positive effect of Om chanting on memory is described in Manu Smriti.

- The syllable Om should be pronounced before the beginning and ending the study of Vedas, for unless it is pronounced at the beginning and the end the learning will be easily forgotten.
- The effect of Omkar recitation is very powerful and result. All the nerves and other channels in the body are cleaned and purified. The mind becomes peaceful as its instability is reduced and one can progress successfully in meditation.

**BhramariPranayam:** The name Bhramari is given to this Pranayam to this Pranayam because we produce a humming to this sound like a bee. In this Pranayam the practitioner imbibes the same deep, low pitched sound as the bee.

**According to hatha yoga pradipika:** Breathing quickly making a reverberating sound like the male black bee and exhale slowly while softly making the sound of the female black bee. By this yogic practice one becomes lord of yogis and the mind is absorbed in bliss (Hath Yoga Pradipika, II/68).

**Technique:** sit in a comfortable meditative asana. If necessary adjust your body to make sure that you are perfectly comfortable.

- Hold the spine as straight as possible.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

- The lips should remain gently closed with the teeth slightly separated though out the practice.
- Raise the arms sideways and bend the elbows, bringing the hand to the ears. Use the index finger to plug the ears. The flaps of the air may be pressed without inserting the finger.
- Bring the awareness to the center of the head where ajna chakra is located and keeps the body absolutely still.
- Breathe in through out the nose. Exhale slowly and in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound like that of the black bee.
- The humming sound should be smooth, even and continuous for the duration of the exhalation.
- This is one round.

At the end of exhalation, breathe in deeply and repeat the process.

When the practice is finished, keep the eyes closed and listen for any subtle sound occurring within the mind beyond the sense of normal hearing.

### **Benefits:**

- 1) With the practice of this Pranayama the mind becomes steady.
- 2) It makes voice pleasant and melodious.
- 3) It is beneficial in conditions like mental tension, agitation, high blood pressure, heart disease etc.
- 4) It is also useful for meditation.
- 5) It cures diseases of throat and the vocal organs become strong.
- 6) Breathing becomes deep and subtle.
- 7) It is also useful for hypertension and depression and aids brain cells.
- 8) BhramriPranayama increases power of concentration.

### **Problems:**

1. Researcher had some problems in selecting and finding the subject for the research.
2. He faced problem regarding place for practice.
3. Sometime the subjects were irregular in yogic practice and had to motivate regularly.

### **Suggestion For Further Research:**

The researcher had studies “The Effect of Om Chanting and Bhramri Pranayama on the Children’s Academic Anxiety and Stress Level.” and measure to make the study perfect were taken. But there is always scope for improvement, so I feel my duty to point out limitation of this study and suggest the possible scope to the further investigation-

1. Many yogasana (eg. Shavasana, Sarvangasana, .shashnkasana), Shatkarmas (eg. Kapalbhanti, Jalneti, Sutra Neti) & Pranayama (eg. NadiShodhan, Shitli, Shitkari etc.) have

excellent strength. Researcher can increase the parameters by assimilating the above practices in their research.

2. The researcher may collect the sample from different places.
3. This research study covers a specific age group (12-15) of collage students. In further research researcher may involve different age group in their study and the disable persons can also be taken as for subjects.
4. The study on research work can also be done by making control group.
5. In future research researcher can manipulate the sample size.
6. The effect of Om Chanting and Bhramri Pranayama can also be studies on various psychological and physiological disorders.

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