

Sirkku Lehtoranta

Stress Management through the Philosophy of Yoga



Bachelor of
Sports and Leisure
Management
Spring 2019



KAMK • University
of Applied Sciences

Abstract

Author: Lehtoranta Sirku

Title of the Publication: Stress Management through the Philosophy of Yoga

Degree Title: Bachelor of Sports and Leisure Management

Keywords: stress management, yoga philosophy, Patanjali, stress, Asana, Klesha, Yama, Niyama

The purpose of this Bachelor's thesis was to produce a four-week yoga philosophy-based course and examine whether it reduced the level of perceived stress in a trial group. The objectives were to understand negative effects of stress on a societal and individual level, study yoga philosophy and deepen professional knowledge of the author regarding these topics. In addition, the original aim of the commissioning party, the learning environment of the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK), was to enhance their offering of stress management related services through the written information and the produced material. However, since the functioning of the learning environment was to be terminated in spring 2019, the main benefit remained in the professional growth of the author.

In the theoretical part of the thesis, the prevalence of stress was discovered and an understanding of the harmfulness of stress on a societal level was established. Correspondingly, the disadvantages of stress on an individual level were researched. These led to the importance of stress management and from numerous techniques, yoga was chosen for this paper. Consequently, the philosophy of yoga was studied, with a focus on the teachings of Patanjali, and based on his techniques and a personal reasoning of the author, the course was compiled.

The thesis was functional, and it had features from product development process and action research. The product development was used when compiling the course, and it involved a development area which was the stress management, and the problem identifying and finding the possible solution which occurred through the research to form the theoretical framework. Lastly, the product was tested with a trial group. Additionally, action research, a method where the aim is to implement a change towards better, was applied and a linear model of the method was executed, thus the cycle of research and action occurred just once. Five staff members of KAMK participated to a four-week trial which was mainly implemented online. When researching the functionality of the course, questionnaires including open and closed questions were presented for the initial mapping and at the end.

The results indicated that this kind of course does not significantly reduce the level of perceived stress. The possible reasons for this, according to the results were: the course was too short, life events affected stress levels, a lack of engagement towards the online materials and introspection, or lack of commitment towards the practice of the suggested yoga postures. Nevertheless, the trial appeared to have other positive effects on the participants, depending on their engagement and personal background, and the course was perceived to be useful.

Had there been more time to work within this context, the author would have reintroduced the topics, this time however, during contact sessions to allow time for introspection and conversation. Nevertheless, when seeking change, the results can be unexpected due to how the problem and suggested solutions are perceived. In conclusion, even without the achievement of reducing the level or perceived stress, the process can be considered successful due to the triggered positive effects, and professional development of the author in a societally important field.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Stress	3
2.1	Definition.....	3
2.2	A common problem	4
2.3	Physiological perspective	5
2.4	Psychological perspective	6
2.5	The harmful effects of stress.....	7
2.6	Stress Management	8
2.7	Evidence based stress management strategies	9
3	Yoga.....	11
3.1	Yoga Philosophy	11
3.2	Previous research regarding yoga and stress.....	12
3.3	Eight limbs of Patanjali in more detail	14
3.3.1	Duhkha and Kleshas	15
3.3.2	Yamas	16
3.3.3	Niyamas.....	17
3.3.4	Asanas	19
3.3.5	Pranayama	20
3.3.6	Pratyahara.....	20
3.3.7	Samyama.....	21
4	Research task.....	22
4.1	Commissioning party.....	22
4.2	Content of my product.....	22
4.2.1	Asanas	24
4.2.2	Week 1: Kleshas	26
4.2.3	Week 2: Pranayama	26
4.2.4	Week 3 and 4: Yamas and Niyamas	27
5	Methods	29
5.1	Research group	29
5.2	Product development	29

5.3	Action research	30
5.4	Questionnaire.....	32
5.5	Analysis.....	34
5.6	Ethical view	35
6	Results	37
6.1	Start questionnaire.....	37
6.1.1	End questionnaire	39
6.1.2	Stress management	39
6.1.3	Course content.....	42
6.2	Comparison to previous research	44
7	Discussion	45
8	List of references	48
Appendices		

1 Introduction

Stress is a common problem for the people of today; the World Health Organisation (WHO) has described it as “the health epidemic of the 21st century” (Meyers, 2018; Soleil, 2016). While short-term stress contributes to a better performance, harmful stress has the capacity to cause a burnout and make a person sick (The American Institute of Stress, n.d.a; Mehiläinen, n.d.). This paper showed that stress factors are varied, and it can be said that for instance hectic schedules, pressure at work, and home or relationship problems may cause health challenges. As presented in chapter two, stress is negatively affecting individuals and society and the prevalence is high worldwide. In the light of the current situation, it can be justifiably argued that more qualified people to work with the matter are undeniably needed in the field of wellbeing.

The objective of this paper was to understand what negative stress is and increase the professional knowledge of the author regarding the philosophy of yoga. The purpose was to compile a yoga philosophy-based course for adults with the main aim to reduce the level of perceived stress, and to implement it to a trial group to discover the possible effects. Overall, this was a functional thesis and features from product development process and action research were applied.

First, stress prevalence, what stress is and how it affects society and individuals were defined, and the practice of yoga philosophy was studied. It was found, as presented in chapter 2, that continuous stress is established to harm the body and mind, thus decreasing the quality of life and causing costs for society. Additionally, the studies described in chapter 3.2 showed that yoga has the capacity to reduce stress and its symptoms. In consequence, a mainly online-delivered course was composed, and the product was tested. The emphasis of the process was in planning and producing the material through the understanding of the theory.

The choice of the topic and the focus on the methods of yoga were related not only to previous research, but also to the personal interests of the author. When writing this paper, she was deeply interested in the subject because stress had been a major issue for her in the past 15 years including severe burnouts and recovery periods. In addition, she had practiced daily meditation for almost six years, out of which five years had been under the guidance of her meditation teachers, learning to perceive the world from a new perspective. These were important factors

since they contribute to the understanding of stress and yoga, and because the personal background indisputably affects the professional interests and future hopes regarding working life.

2 Stress

This chapter describes stress from different perspectives. First, a definition is introduced, then prevalence and societal view are observed. In continuation, individual level is considered by explaining physiological and psychological aspects with the emphasis on the harmfulness of the matter. Lastly, an overview of coping techniques and research related yoga and stress management are illustrated. In chart 1, at the end of the chapter, an overview is shown regarding stress factors, symptoms, consequences, and how to possibly treat all these.

2.1 Definition

Stress is a recognized phenomenon nowadays and it has been researched since 1920's, after a Hungarian born doctor, Hans Selye, started to understand the connection between stress and diseases (PubMed, 1998). Since then, plenty of research has been done and the physiological, psychological and emotional stressors and stress reactions have been established. Not to mention, that numerous stress management techniques have been developed and researched.

However, there is no absolute definition of stress because it is perceived and experienced in many ways. Nevertheless, it can be categorised into a positive "eustress" and a negative "distress". Eustress is experienced in short bursts and it leads into alertness and improves performance. Distress can be for shorter or longer periods, it impairs performance, and can negatively affect the psyche. (Mills, Reiss & Dombeck, n.d.; The American Institute of stress, n.d.a). Figure 1 illustrates the difference.

According to Elkin (2013, p.24), Mental Health Foundation (2018) and World Health Organisation, (WHO, n.d.), stress occurs due to a situation where an individual perceives an outside factor, such as work demands or other pressuring situation or life event, to be too difficult to cope with. As seen, stress can be positive and negative. However, this paper focuses on distress, often in the text referred with the word "stress", and how to possibly reduce and prevent its negative effects.

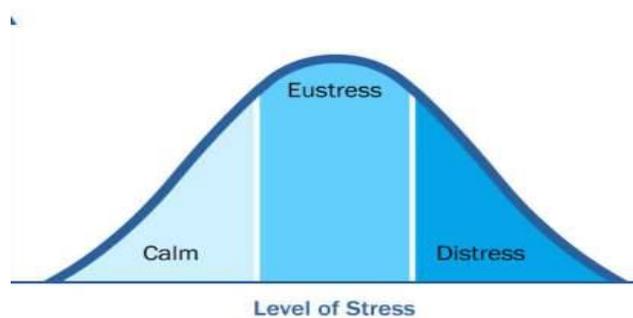


Figure 1. Difference of eustress and distress (The American Institute of Stress, n.d.a).

2.2 A common problem

Stress negatively affects the society of today. In Finland, 23% of men and 24% of women suffered from work-related mild burnout in 2011 (Ahola, Tuisku & Rossi, 2018). Also, Yle (Tuomikoski, 2016) presents that over 25% of Finns confront burnout symptoms at some point of their life. In addition, 30% of Finnish higher education students were experiencing intensive stress according to a study made in 2012 (Pesonen & Kunttu, 2012, p. 45). Furthermore, Statistics Finland demonstrates that the most common health problem due to which studies are delayed in universities and in universities of applied sciences in Finland, is stress (Virtanen & Saarenmaa, 2011).

Globally, the situation is not any better. Overall in Europe, studies show that 50-60 % of work absences are related to work-stress and psychosocial risks, resulting in those being the second most frequent health problems after musculoskeletal diseases (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, n.d., p. 8). In UK for instance, according to a Mental Health Foundation (2018, p.7), 74% of adults had felt so stressed during the past year that they had experienced a difficulty to cope with it. Moreover, the American Institute of Stress (n.d.b) presents different studies which show alarming numbers: one study claims 80% of Americans feel stress in their work and for one third it is causing physical and emotional damage, and another study shows that 65% had faced difficulties because of stress. According to the facts gathered by The Global Organization for Stress (n.d.), there are worrying figures also, for instance, in Australia and China.

Stressed employees have a negative impact towards work productivity, and it can become expensive for employer and society. A specialist in Kaleva magazine (2015) claims that work-related stress is causing at least 1 billion euros of loss per year in Finland. Similarly, psychosocial risks and stress are said to cause significant losses in European societies and companies, by estimation billions of euros at a national level (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, p. 5, n.d.). This is causing worry in whole Europe since stress related sick leaves and absence from work present such high costs (Laine, 2018, p.67). In conclusion, stress is a general problem and its reduction would be beneficial on a societal level.

2.3 Physiological perspective

Stress is a series of physical reactions in body. In the ancient times when living in caves, it was important and kept humans alive in threatening situations. When, for instance, there was an animal that would attack, the body went into a “fight-or-flight” mode, immediately increasing the physiological capability to either stay on the spot and fight or to run away. Today, the reaction remains the same because the body cannot make a difference whether a threatening situation is literally endangering the survival or not. (Palmer & Cooper, 2007, p. 6-7; Elkin, 2013, p. 25; Pietikäinen, 2009, p. 32)

When an individual is exposed to a stressor, the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary body reactions such as breathing or heart rate, creates changes. The hypothalamus activates the pituitary, which then releases a hormone called adrenocorticotropic (ACTH) that enters the outer part of adrenal glands, adrenal cortex, and as a result cortisol is produced. Simultaneously, the middle part of the adrenal gland, adrenal medulla, is activated due to the sympathetic nervous system, thus extra adrenalin, and noradrenalin are produced and released into the blood stream. (Palmer & Cooper, 2007, p. 20-23; Elkin, 2013, p. 27)

As a consequence, the acute physical reactions of the body are: increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, dilation in bronchial passages and coronary arteries, constriction in most blood vessels but dilation in blood vessels of heart/arm/leg muscles, reduction in gastrointestinal system and tears, increase in metabolic rate, spread in nostrils to increase oxygen intake, decrease in blood-clotting time, inhibition of erections or vaginal lubrication, dilation of pupils, glycogen is converted into glucose which fuels with quick energy, increase in mental activity and

concentration. A person will feel stronger and more alert, see better and have more energy available. After the stressful situation is passed, the parasympathetic nervous system tranquilizes the body and at this stage it is normal to feel fatigue. (Palmer & Cooper, 2007, p. 20-23; Elkin, 2013, p. 27)

2.4 Psychological perspective

Stress can be caused by a factor that is not a risk for survival but a mentally perceived threat. Performance-based stressors can be triggered i.e. at work or at school, when deadlines make schedules tight and demands are high. Emotional-based stress is related to such things as relationship problems, divorce, severe illness or a death of a loved one. Often the mentally perceived threat is related with such feelings as shame, being laughed at or becoming socially abandoned. (Pietikäinen, 2009, p. 28, 32)

Other people tend to get stressed easier and in most of the modern theories this is explained by the fact that stress is seen as the difference between demand from outside vs. the inner resources of an individual. This means that there is no possibility to predict the reaction because it is different for each person and a situation that may be challenging for someone, may not be equally experienced by another person. (Puttonen, 2006) In other words, stress is not caused by the external factors that occur in life but through an individual understanding of a given situation. (Palmer & Cooper, 2007, p. 7; Elkin, 2013, p. 30-31) As a Greek philosopher, Epictetus, put it: "People are not disturbed by a thing, but their perception of a thing" (Mattila, 2018). These perceptions can be affected by heredity and childhood home; for instance, alcoholic family, overcritical or overprotective parents, emotional insecurity or teasing at school can possibly make an individual to be more influenced by stress in an adult age. (Pietikäinen, 2011, p. 35)

With short bursts of stress, it can help an individual to achieve better results, arouse mental alertness and add concentration. (Pietikäinen, 2009, p. 27) However, when it is continuous varied negative impact on the psyche may take place. These are defined in the next chapter.

2.5 The harmful effects of stress

Although stress can be useful in specific situations, if the stress reactions will not quiet but constantly keep the body in the alarm-mode, it can cause burnout and illness. There are several directly caused physiological and psychological harmful symptoms and stress-linked diseases. Moreover, already existing pain may deteriorate. This chapter seeks to describe the harmfulness of this phenomenon.

As physiological negative effects can be such things as: sleeping problems, tiredness, fatigue, lethargy, heart palpitations, muscle tension and aches, heartburn, nervousness, shakiness, dry mouth, excessive sweating, clammy hands, cold hand/feet, overeating/loss of appetite, itching, lowered libido, nail-biting, migraines, vague aches, gastrointestinal problems (such as problems with digestion) and change in menstrual pattern. (Palmer & Cooper, 2007, p. 32-33)

As psychological symptoms can be for example impatience, anger, worry, anxiety, panic, moodiness, sadness, guilty, memory lapses, difficulties in concentration, lowered productivity, loss of sense of humour and a risk of depression. (Palmer and Cooper, 2007, p. 32-33; Pietikäinen, 2009, p. 27) Symptoms are varied and they differ from time to time, from situation to situation and from an individual to an individual. Since the behaviour is affected due to the listed components, this can often have a negative impact on relationships at work and/or with friends and family. (Elkin, 2013, p. 22-21)

When symptoms are continuous, the stress becomes chronic and an individual might no longer acknowledge the stage to be dangerous or different from what is perceived as "normal". The pioneer of the stress research, Hans Selye, proposed the General Adaptation Syndrome and the current theory presents three stages according to that:

1. Alarm reaction, where the fight or flight mode becomes activated.
2. Resistance, where body adapts to the situation for example by boosting the immune system.
3. Exhaustion, where after a long-term exposure the body collapses, becomes exhausted and it leads into a burnout and is often related to a general lack of interest in life.

(Pietikäinen, 2011, p. 34; Centre For studies on human stress, n.d.)

In addition, intense and prolonged periods of stress have been linked to heart disease, rheumatism, psoriasis, cancer, lung disease, accidents, depression and suicide. Also, it can make it more difficult to cope with pain regarding already existing illnesses. Furthermore, stress appears to aggravate autoimmune disease. (Elkin, 2013, p. 16-17; Pietikäinen, 2011, p. 38) Taking this chapter into account, the importance of managing stress on an individual level can be understood.

2.6 Stress Management

As seen above, there is the stress that helps to stay alive and push towards a better mental and physical performance, safe in situations where quick action is required and make one focused when facing a demanding task. In short bursts, this works as an advantage but when a long-term stress becomes a risk, stress management skills are needed to maintain physical and mental health. There are different aspects and tools for this.

Stress management, also known as coping, is a set of skills with the aim to reduce the explained negative symptoms. These skills are learned, and with practice they may be changed. Coping can be targeted to:

- managing the stress-factors (the outside circumstances that are creating stress, for example trying to find a new job),
- changing mindset (changing the perception of the stressor, for example reorganising thoughts and understanding that an exam is not the biggest threat)
- or managing stress-responses (for example by calming body and mind with a massage or meditation). (Elkin, 2013, p. 32-34)

Furthermore, healthy lifestyle, with such factors as sleeping enough, eating well and exercising are part of stress management (Johnson, 2018).

At the beginning of the stress research, it was thought to be helpful to reduce the stressor, but now it is said to be more effective to focus on changing the emotional reactions instead (O'Driscoll & Michael, 2013; Puttonen, 2006). To put it differently, the focus is in changing the stress-related perception and through that the reaction, by learning to acknowledge how one thinks, feels and reacts and how to change that into a more favourable direction. There are examples of this when

terminally ill patients, people in jail or in poverty have found happiness due to internal growth. (Laine, 2018, p. 46; O'Driscoll & Michael, 2013)

However, it is worth mentioning that the research regarding this topic is difficult because it is challenging to observe from outside what exactly occurs in the mind of an individual, and how a situation is processed in detail. Consequently, self-reflexion reports may not always be accurate. Therefore, it can be questioned how much truly is known about the topic and that further studies and research are needed. (O'Driscoll & Michael, 2013)

2.7 Evidence based stress management strategies

Many research-based strategies to deal with stress exist, to name a few: Progressive Muscle relaxation, Transcendental meditation, Biofeedback, Guided Imagery, Diaphragmatic Breathing, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Emotional Freedom Technique, (Varvogli & Darviri, 2011) TRE, Yoga/Pilates/Taiji/Asahi, Biohacking, Meditation and NLP (Laine, 2018, p. 199-257).

In the extend of this paper it was not possible to cover them all, consequently, the focus was on the selected aspects of the philosophy of yoga. Moreover, as the different perspectives to manage stress were introduced in the previous chapter, it can be clarified that the chosen methods of this paper were concentrating on changing the perception of the stressors and to managing the stress reactions by practice of yoga postures and breathing exercises. In chart 1 is presented an overview based on the written text regarding stress factors, symptoms, consequences, and how to possibly treat all these.

STRESS FACTORS examples to give an idea, all stress factors are situational and individual	STRESS REACTIONS / SYMPTOMS of harmful stress	CONSEQUENCES (Behavioural changes) of harmful stress	Examples of STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES
external / physical	physical	behavioural changes	

<p>Anything that is perceived as a threat for staying alive/ getting injured etc. For example: - Car/train approaching fast and one needs to jump off road - A sound in the bush that one perceives to be a dangerous animal / a criminal</p>	<p>Low energy, headaches, upset stomach, gastrointestinal problems, constipation, nausea, diarrhoea, dry mouth, sweaty hands, aches, pains, tense muscles, migraines, backaches, chest pain or tightness in chest, rapid heartbeat, insomnia, grinding, loss of sexual desire</p>	<p>Passive behaviour, avoiding others, aggressive behaviour, irritability, snappiness, procrastination, increased alcohol consumption, increased caffeine consumption, comfort eating/not eating, changes in sleep pattern, compulsive behaviour, nervous habits such as nail biting, poor time management, reduced work performance, anxiety</p>	<p>Targeted to either stress reactions or ways to perceive stress factors: Progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, biohacking, Ayurveda, diaphragmatic breathing, cognitive behavioural therapy, emotional freedom technique, Yoga/Pilates/Taiji, NLP, TRE</p>
<p>internal / mental</p>	<p>psychological</p>	<p>possible consequences</p>	
<p>Any situation that is perceived a threat mentally, for example a danger of being ashamed, danger of being socially abandoned For example: Performance based: - A demanding task at school/work, deadline coming up and not enough of time, demanding presentation to give at work etc Emotion based: - A divorce, relationship/social problems, a death of someone close to you etc.</p>	<p>Constant worrying, negative images, unable to concentrate, anxiousness, forgetfulness, feeling depressed, poor judgment, being pessimistic, seeing only negative, reduced self-esteem and self-worth, mood swings, suicidal thoughts</p>	<p>- Risk of depression and disease increase. - Problems at work, since the productivity might have decreased. - Problems with relationships and family. - A risk that healthy living habits may decrease or disappear.</p>	

Chart 1. An overview of stress factors, reactions, symptoms and consequences, and how to possibly treat those. The chart is made by the author and based on the text and sources mentioned in chapter two.

3 Yoga

Yoga is an ancient method to develop holistic wellbeing in terms of the body, mind and soul becoming healed. It is described as a practice towards awareness, where the mind is calm, and actions are conscious and clear, free from a conditioned mind and body. The aim is to find freedom; to be liberated from distractions and find a true inner peace. Through self-reflexion and behaviour-controlling thoughts are acknowledged, with the consequence of consciously deciding on how to think and react. (Schöps, 2016, p. 6-7, 23; Lasater, 2016) Overall, it is a science of the inner world of human beings and the potential strength within, a guide to start a journey towards a mental perspective that is free from suffering (Kassila, 1997, p. 29).

According to the Finnish Association of Yoga, the practice of yoga is an ancient way to move the body through different postures and it contributes to wellbeing, health and spiritual growth. This allows working with physical and mental qualities such as flexibility, breathing, relaxation, overall physical fitness and a deeper self-awareness and growth. (Joogaliitto, n.d.)

3.1 Yoga Philosophy

Yoga is known for over 3500 years in India and it consists of a variety of methods which are based on ancient texts. These are the sutras written by a yogi called Patanjali, Bhagavadgita which is a part of a national epic of India consisting of 18 long educational songs, and Hatha Yoga Pradipika which explains the texts of Patanjali in practice and is described as the foundation of Hatha yoga. Moreover, in the Vedas, the oldest and what are considered as the most sacred texts in India, the practice of yoga is acknowledged, and core concepts and foundations of the philosophy are introduced. In addition, the content of the Vedas was transferred into Upanishads, where the teachings were reflected. All the above-mentioned are said to have had an influence in the development of the philosophy of yoga. (Shöps, 2016, p. 12-14; Burgin, n.d.acd)

In the Bhagavadgita, yoga is described as the pathway towards freedom and it is said to include the core idea of all sacred texts of the world. It also contains perspectives about the yogic philosophy:

- Karma: every action has a consequence
- Dharma: a law of nature according to which it is a duty of everyone to find out what is their task/meaning in life
- Reincarnation: each individual is reborn until they become enlightened and one with the soul of the world (Brahman)
- Brahman: the soul of the world, represents the entire universe
- Atman: the true self which is free of addiction and a conditioned body and mind, a divinity inside everyone; through Atman one gets to know Brahman
- Maya: delusion where individuals become one with their egos, the body and the conditioned mind (memories, conceptions, judgments, biases) that create an untrue sense of reality
- Moksha: divine freedom and liberation, a state where the ego with its desires is gone

(Shöps, 2016, p. 16-18; Kassila 1997, p. 11-12, 17; Burgin, n.d.b)

Patanjali was not the creator of the philosophy of yoga but he logically collected the techniques for the first time when he wrote the book called Yoga Sutra. It is not known if Patanjali was one single person, the whole family of Patanjali or a group of wise men. However, his book is seen as the root and one of the basic texts of yoga. It consists of 196 very short verses called “sutras” and offers a path of eight limbs, in other words eight steps, towards a freedom of mind and positive change. (Schöps, 2016, p. 12, 20; Lasater, 2016)

3.2 Previous research regarding yoga and stress

Based on the research about the possible effects of yoga regarding stress management, it can be seen that there is a positive contribution to the reduction of perceived stress (Sharma, 2014; Chong, Tsunaka & Chan, 2011; Riley & Park, 2015). These three studies were systematic overviews of literature and they all mentioned that there were limitations and that further research is needed. Nevertheless, they all expressed the positive effects of the practice of yoga related to

stress, even though it is undefined how the yoga courses in these studies had been delivered, how much emphasis there had been on physical postures, and on the psychological view of the philosophy.

Consequently, it is worth mentioning two studies where yoga and its benefits to stress management had been studied, and where the methods were specified and the aspects of yoga philosophy can be seen. For instance, a study was conducted in a primary health care, where yoga practice included postures, stretching, meditation, mantras and breathing techniques. The conclusion after a 12-week period was that it had started the healing process and contributed to the wellbeing of the participants who suffered, among other things, from stress, anxiety, sleeping problems, burnout, anxiety and depression (N-Carlsson, Lundholm, Köhn & Westerdahl, 2014). Another study was made involving college students and it was mentioned that the classes taught were based on the foundation of the philosophy of yoga, and that the participants of the study had reported outcomes such as “an increased level of relaxation” and “gaining a greater perspective of their lives” (Villate, 2015). An overview of the mentioned studies can be seen in chart 2.

Author(s) & year	Research	Research method	Results
Sharma, 2014	Yoga as an alternative and complementary approach for stress management	A systematic review. Studies regarding yoga between 2011-2013 were researched to examine if yoga can be used in stress management.	Out of the 17 studies, 12 showed positive changes related to yoga and stress. Yoga seems to help in stress management.
Chong, Tsunaka and Chan, 2011	Effects of yoga on stress management in healthy adults	A systematic review. The effect of yoga on stress management in healthy adults was researched.	The review concluded that yoga has positive effects in stress reduction.
Riley and Park, 2015	How does yoga reduce stress?	A systematic review of mechanisms of change and guide to future inquiry. Three psychological and four biological mechanisms were researched.	Psychological and biological effects were shown to be related in the relationship between yoga and stress.
N-Carlsson, Lundholm, Köhn, and Westerdahl, 2014	Medical yoga: Another way of being in the world - A phenomenological study from the perspective of persons suffering from stress-related symptoms	A descriptive phenomenological design in primary health care setting researching if taking part in yoga would reduce stress when suffering from a stress related illness. These 12 weeks were a start point of the recovery and it included such things as meditation, mantras and breathing techniques.	The trial period provided the participants as an example with new tools to deal with stress and .to see things with a new perspective; the results were positive.

Villate, 2015	Yoga for College Students: An Empowering Form of Movement and Connection	It was examined if semi-weekly yoga classes, with philosophical perspective included, would have an effect to college students. The results were gathered through written responses.	Students had reported increase level in relaxation, greater perspective of their lives, more focus and feelings of empowerment.
---------------	--	--	---

Chart 2. Studies regarding yoga and stress management.

In this paper, regarding the material of the stress management course that was composed, the eight limbs of Patanjali were investigated in more detail. This was justified since the aim of the product was to reduce the level of perceived stress, thus there was reason to concentrate on the eight techniques that are said to have the power to change life on a practical level (Schöps, 2016, p. 24). This decision was made when gaining an overview on how deep and wide the subject of the philosophy is, leading to a more delineated focus. Consequently, the ideas of Patanjali were explored and based upon the subjective judgement of the author and the theory regarding stress and its management, the content of the course material was chosen.

3.3 Eight limbs of Patanjali in more detail

Most yoga practices occur off the mat and this chapter seeks to describe the eight limbs of Patanjali. Reading the sutras of Patanjali is not unambiguous because of the character of this specific style of text; they are short verses that cannot be understood without possessing a greater knowledge of the matter. Therefore, interpreting and commenting on the sutras are an important part of the philosophy, as are other different sources that explain the topic. (Broo & Patañjali, 2010, p. 21-22) Consequently, to better comprehend the core teachings, two books among other sources have been used, which were written by the famous and highly valued yoga teacher B.K.S. Iyengar who brought yoga practice to the West and whose work has been tremendously influential (Iyengar, 2002, back cover), and an online course by a Danish yogi Simon Krohn, who has a Master's Degree in Indian Philosophy (Yogobe, n.d.b).

3.3.1 Duhkha and Kleshas

This chapter seeks to explain what the main reasons for suffering from the yoga philosophy perspective. According to Patanjali, it is not possible to live life without the influence of them, however, by their conscious recognition and using the path of the eight limbs, the negative effects can be reduced. (Schöps, 2016, p. 22-23)

Duhkha means suffering and it occurs when subjective and objective realities are not aligned, for instance due to untrue expectations and ideas of life. (Krohn, n.d.b). Additionally, individuals have roles, such as being a parent, a yoga teacher, a fitness instructor, a teacher, a student etc. and often one may be identified through those, instead of what one authentically is. When people become attached to roles, the sense of “being good enough” becomes dependent on external factors, such as getting a good grade from an exam or succeeding at work, and life can become exhausting when aiming to maintain these mental constructions. (Krohn, n.d.a)

Kleshas, the five main reasons for suffering according to Patanjali, clarify the matter:

1. Avidya: A subjective observation of the world which does not align with reality. This is seen as the cause of other Kleshas and as the origin of suffering. People perceive the world through an individual perspective which is affected for example by earlier experiences, wishes, expectations, dreams and understanding of oneself and others. Avidya can be described as a lack of self-knowledge, where the self-identification is primarily through external roles, instead of the inner self. Misbelieves are common because it is often perceived that subjectively experienced knowledge would be the ultimate true, thus none of it is questioned. (Schöps, 2016, p. 22; Krohn, n.d.a)

2. Asmita: Self-image is not aligned with the reality because the understanding of “who I am” is affected by opinions and observations of other people since childhood. Consequently, leading either into a too low or too high self-esteem, both resulting in excessive selfishness where individuals only think about matters regarding themselves. (Schöps, 2016, p. 22) This can also be referred as the ego, the conscious mind (Krohn, n.d.a).

3. Raga: The desire of absolutely wanting something again; can be seen for example as addictions or greediness. This is when an individual has experienced something pleasant in the past and

wishes to experience the same thing repeatedly, thus the hunt for pleasure is dominating life. (Schöps, 2016, p. 22)

4. Dvesha: The desire to absolutely avoid something that has been unpleasant in the past. This prevents to confront other people and situations with an open mind, instead stereotyping, negative thoughts and avoidance of certain situations and emotions are controlling behaviour. (Schöps, 2016, p. 22)

5. Abhinivesha: The fear of unknown. According to Patanjali, this is the most difficult Klesha to overcome. The mind should be able to distinguish between justified, and unprecise and unnecessary emotions of fear. The latter is not based on any specific experience, instead an underlying fear of death causes a sense that something may go wrong. Thus, it may control life in unwanted way and complicate conscious decision-making which would enable to act as would be most beneficial. (Schöps, 2016, p. 23) Abhinivesha can also refer to a fear of unfulfilling the roles one is identified with, possibly leading into over-accomplishing (Krohn, n.d.a).

3.3.2 Yamas

This is the first step of the eight limbs, consisting of five guidelines to gain a thoughtful interaction with surroundings that help to reach peace and concordance with the self, other people and environment. Following these steps is a process throughout life where self-compassion helps to continue, and learning is constant. (Schöps, 2016, p. 27) Here is a more detailed description of the Yamas:

1. Ahimsa: To be non-violent with everything and everyone, including the self. This covers physical and mental violence in form of words and thoughts, as an example criticism, anger or judgment. In other words, this Yama is about learning to have a considerate interacting with other people and with oneself, and always contemplating on how to cause as minimum amount of harm as possible. (Schöps, 2016, p. 26-27; Burgin, n.d.e) At its deepest, this can be understood as a nonviolent attitude that automatically leads into a peaceful life because the environment can feel the harmony in the person and consequently will act without aggression in return (Jnaneshvara, n.d.d).

2. Satya: To be honest and truthful in words and actions; to be authentic and not trying to be something that one is not. However, Ahimsa must be practiced first, thus truth should be expressed with consideration whether it hurts the other person and with as minimum of damage as possible. It is mentioned, that finding a balance between the non-harming and the truthfulness is challenging and it requires practice (Jnaneshvara, n.d.d). Furthermore, Satya includes the idea of living according to the individual desires and being true to oneself. (Schöps, 2016, p. 26-27; Burgin, n.d.e)

3. Asteya: To not take anything that belongs to another human being, including physical belongings, thoughts and trust. Asteya suggests, that to use ideas of another person is unacceptable and is perceived to be the same as for example stealing a car. This Yama emphasizes generosity towards everyone, and respect towards all possessions of another individual. (Schöps, 2016, p. 26-27; Burgin, n.d.e)

4. Brahmacharya: To have moderation regarding all actions in life, leading into having energy to concentrate on spiritual purposes to find the ultimate truth. Extremes and addictions have the tendency to control life and self-control is needed when resisting impulses. By creating moderation, balance in life is established. (Schöps, 2016, p. 26-27; Burgin, n.d.e)

5. Aparigraha: To ponder how much and what is essentially needed in life, and to possess merely what is essential. This includes all the aspects; food, space, material, success, fame etc. and it emphasizes inner modesty. When letting go of all that is not authentically necessary, this Yama helps to see the true self more clearly. (Schöps, 2016, p. 26-27; Burgin, n.d.e)

3.3.3 Niyamas

In continuation, the second step of Patanjali is described. It includes five guidelines regarding the interaction with the self (Schöps, 2016, p. 28).

1. Shaucha: To aim for purification at all levels. Keeping the body externally clean with personal hygiene and internally purified by eating healthy and practicing yoga postures, Asanas, and breathing techniques, Pranayama. Additionally, this contains purifying the mind by having clear and kind thoughts and consideration towards other people. Furthermore, a thought of pure

environment is included, such as transportation and home furniture. (Schöps, 2016, p. 28-29; Burgin, n.d.f; Iyengar, 2005, p. 18)

2. Santosha: To be satisfied with physical, mental and intellectual capabilities. In other words, this means complete acceptance of oneself and feeling lack of nothing. Santosha is a state of mind rather than an achievement and it adheres tranquillity of mind when desires are not in control. However, even with full acceptance over oneself, the aim is to constantly improve. (Schöps, 2016, p. 28-29; Burgin, n.d.f; Iyengar, 2005, p. 19)

3. Tapas: To have self-discipline to perform actions one might not have an urge for, but which will enhance a positive effect in life. This conflict of desire creates an internal fire which is said to burn impurities and it can be used as a fuel to continue in the path of yoga. In practice Tapas leads to observing and controlling impulses and poor behaviour, coupled with cultivating positive habits. This helps yogi to become stronger in body, mind and character. (Schöps, 2016, p. 28-29; Burgin, n.d.f; Iyengar, 2005, p. 19-20)

4. Svadhyaya: To educate the self to become the best one can be through examining reasons behind the actions of an individual. In other words, one should be aware what kind of cause-reaction chains are controlling his/her reality to enhance the learning and growing due to flaws and mistakes. In addition, this includes the reading of ancient sacred texts to contribute to the introspection, and to help to understand the existing connection with divine. (Schöps, 2016, p. 28-29; Burgin, n.d.f; Iyengar, 2005, p. 20-21)

5. Ishvara Pranidhana: A surrender, trust and devotion to a higher power, or can also be perceived as having a basic trust in life. The idea of the "individual self" that has desires and a will to work towards personal contentment should be freed from the identification of "I" and instead grow towards the universal, connected, self. The key is in accepting how things are and the limitations of life and having faith that all is and will be as should. This Niyama highlights that one should be free from desire, and with having a trust in life, or a higher power, let go. (Schöps, 2016, p. 28-29; Burgin, n.d.f; Iyengar, 2005, p. 21-22) In the Upanishads, the word Ishvara means collective consciousness, presenting that God is not a personified character as has been described in different religions due to lack of personal experience, but instead God can be found in Ultimate Reality by expanding individual consciousness (Jnaneshvara, n.d.d).

3.3.4 Asanas

The Asanas of yoga refer to the third step of Patanjali, the practicing of the physical postures. Interestingly, this seems to be how the word "yoga" is often understood in the Western world, according to the personal experience of the author. It is worth of mentioning, that asanas are not merely about improving physical condition, but they are involved in enhancing the overall wellbeing.

There are many different styles of practising yoga Asanas, some are more emphasized to meditation and others are varied by their physical aspects (Yogobe, n.d.a). The aim is to find a deeper realization and understanding of life, with the means of physical postures (Schöps, 2016, p.32). Patanjali claims that Asanas unite the body, mind and soul, and when the mind loses the self-centric perception, it discontinues to be of disturbance (Iyengar, 2002 p.160).

In this thesis, the focus is on Hatha Yoga which is a hypernym for physically-emphasized styles of yoga. These practices contribute into finding an inner peace by balancing the male sun-energy (ha) and the female moon-energy (tha), and consider aspects of body that go beyond the physical anatomy by suggesting that body stores not only nutrition but for instance feelings and thoughts which affect the flow of energy. With the influence of mind, blockages in the physical body are generated, thus those should be opened to allow the life-energy flow freely. (Schöps, 2016, p. 32-36)

In Hatha Yoga, there are five layers in the body: the physical body (Annamaya kosha) which is the only level that can be touched, the energy body (Pranamaya kosha) which is the bridge between body and mind, the information body (Manomaya kosha) which collects information of the outer world and stores e.g. hopes, fears, needs and emotions, the sagacity body (Vijnanamaya kosha) where intelligence operates and the bliss body (Anandamaya kosha) where happiness is. Moreover, there are seven Chakras, energy centres of the body, which should be freed from blockages to achieve a balance in life. Consequently, the understanding of this flow is perceived to be important and Hatha yoga is about directing the energies and opening the blockages. (Schöps, 2016, p. 32-36)

3.3.5 Pranayama

The fourth limb of Patanjali is about breathing. Generally, emotional state affects an individual: while a tense mind creates superficial and unregular breaths, a relaxed mind supports calm deep breathing. This step views the matter contrariwise, suggesting that the way of breathing has the power to calm the body and mind. Consequently, to attain a peaceful mind, help the flow of energy and tranquil of the body, different techniques to control inhaling and exhaling are used. (Schöps, 2016, p. 218-219; Wells & Skovmand, n.d., p. 32; Miller, 2003, p. 19-20)

The word prana refers to the vitality of the body but when stress and tension is experienced, it cannot flow freely. In general, when breathing is irregular and superficial, it may keep the body and brain deoxygenated and, for instance, decrease the level of concentration. There are four stages: inhalation, retention, exhalation and suspension, and in yoga a full breathing including all these, is said to balance and relax body and mind. (Schöps, 2016, p. 218-219; Wells & Skovmand, n.d., p. 32; Miller, 2003, p. 19-20)

3.3.6 Pratyahara

The fifth step is about sense withdrawal and keeping the focus inside, to not react on sensory stimulus (Schöps, 2016, p. 30). This is the result from practising the before-mentioned four steps and it establishes the basis for the next three stages of Patanjali (Iyengar, 2002, p.34). Practising pratyahara is understood in various ways, for instance, as a complete stage of relaxation where one can register what is happening around him without reacting, as withdrawing from an automatic reaction in a conflict situation, as withdrawing from using outside stimuli such as TV, food, or music to block thoughts and emotions, or as finding a peaceful place where sensory stimulus is minimal (Frawley, n.d.; Lasater, 1999). It is a stage that leads into understanding that the consciousness is not equal to the constantly changing sensory stimuli (Lasater, 2016).

3.3.7 Samyama

Samyama contains the last three steps which are Dharana, the ability to fully concentrate on one thing, Dhyana, meditation, and Samadhi, the inner freedom. These interconnected stages are directed solely to the practice of the mind. When concentration can be held, it leads into meditation which is practising to experience life without a conditioned mind that is affected by subjective knowledge, mental constructions, emotions and expectations. This is said to lead into the Samadhi, the ultimate goal of yoga practice, which has been described for instance as self-realization, enlightenment, absolute inner freedom or becoming one with the universe. (Schöps 2016, p. 30-31; Lasater, 2016)

4 Research task

The purpose of this thesis was to compile a course to introduce selected topics of yoga philosophy, with the main objective to reduce the level of perceived stress of the participants. In this chapter, the content of the product is described.

4.1 Commissioning party

The commissioning party was the learning environment for activity tourism students of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, called Myötätuuli. Even though the department was unexpectedly discontinued due to the financial situation of KAMK, this process was carried till the end. Therefore, their main task resulted in offering a platform to execute the thesis.

Originally, the idea was that the future students who would have made their practical training in Myötätuuli, would have had this material for them to use to enhance the offering of stress management services of the learning environment. This would have been convenient since Myötätuuli provided wellbeing products for companies, organizations and private persons that were delivered by students. In this situation however, the main benefits of the thesis remained with the professional growth of the author and in the usefulness of the course for the participants.

4.2 Content of my product

Overall, the trial lasted for four weeks and was implemented for five female KAMK staff members. There were two contact sessions and the rest of the material was delivered online. Here, the content and order are first described and justified. Then, each topic is explained in detail in the same sequence as they were introduced for the participants.

After careful reasoning, the parts selected for the course were the first four steps out of the introduced eight and Kleshas. This was due to wanting to keep the weekly material within a limited amount because the author thought that might had contributed to the commitment of the participants since too much information may feel overwhelming. Especially, because the

given information was not merely about following the physical practices but required time for mental work and contemplating. If the course would had lasted longer, more aspects might had been introduced. Chart 3 gives an overview of the selected topics and their meaning.

Chosen topics	Meaning
KLESHAS	Main reasons for suffering.
YAMAS	Guidelines to the interaction with surroundings.
NIYAMAS	Guidelines to the interaction with the self.
ASANAS	The practice of physical postures.
PRANAYAMA	Breathing exercises.

Chart 3. The chosen topics for the course, and their meaning as is described in chapter 3.

Furthermore, the decision was justified since the first two steps set focus towards the right direction regarding the aims of yoga, the Asanas enhance peace of mind (Iyengar, 2002, p. 28) and Pranayama soothes body and mind (Schöps, 2016, p. 218). In addition, the Kleshas are crucial in the practice of yoga because they add self-awareness and acknowledgment on how mind works (Jnaneshvara, n.d.b). When combining this knowledge with the theory of stress, it can be concluded that they seem possible tools to change perspective regarding stressors and to reduce stress reactions.

Since the eight limbs of Patanjali can be practiced in any sequence (Schöps, 2016, p. 24), the course order was decided due to other aspects. Asanas were chosen to be the first due to their calming effects, and because the author wished to practice those during the first contact session. During the same week the Kleshas were explained to have a mental perspective in addition to the physical postures. The second week, four breathing techniques were introduced since those could easily be connected to the Asana practice, and they were an additional tool to calm the body and mind, which is important when stressed. Last, on the third and fourth week, the Yamas and Niyamas were presented in the original order of Patanjali.

Kleshas, Yamas and Niyamas were explained as written in chapter 3 and illustrations from the life of the author were given to enhance the understanding. The personal examples are seen in appendix 3. In addition, the course emails sent to the participants are shown in appendices 7-10 and 11-14.

The course was otherwise delivered online, except for the start and end sessions on 12.3 and 9.4. In practice, both sessions proceeded as planned, and the content is shown in chart 4 and 5.

Session 1 – Start

Beginning, short introduction	10 min
Filling in the questionnaire, signing the course agreement paper	20 min
Handout of overview of the course, explaining	5 min
Giving written instructions of the postures, going them through in practice	30 min
Short overview of stress (handout)	5 min
Short overview of yoga philosophy (handout)	5-10 min
Making sure all is clear / questions	5 min

Chart 4. Content of the start session.

Session 2 – End

Start with yoga asanas and pranayama	30 min
Filling in the final questionnaire	20 m
Time for talking and possible questions	5-20 min

Chart 5. Content of the end session.

4.2.1 Asanas

The postures chosen for the course were due to their advantages in reducing stress and anxiety. There were two programmes of 20-30 minutes and both were introduced during the first contact session. Afterwards written instructions that can be seen in appendix 4 were given, and two videos were sent by email, see appendix 8. The idea was that the participants would learn to do the programmes on their own, to enhance the listening of their individual body-sensations and mind.

The postures of the class 1:

1. Cobra helps to reduce depression (Yoga Club, 2016).
2. Child pose helps with tension (Macklin, 2013), and relieves stress and anxiety (Yoga Club, 2016).
3. Downward facing dog releases stress and tension (Macklin, 2013).
4. Mountain Pose can reduce stress (O, 2017) and helps with focus (Yoga Club, 2016).
5. Lotus Pose calms the brain and helps to release stress and negative emotions stored in the hip area and the second chakra (Kaivalya, n.d.; Dodson, n.d.).
6. Happy baby pose calms the mind and helps with stress and fatigue (Brady, n.d.).
7. Seated forward bend helps to reduce stress (O, 2017)
8. Corpse pose relieves stress and tensions (Yoga Club, 2016).

Asanas 1-3 is a sequence which helps to maintain a calm mind (Frazier, 2018).

The postures of the class 2:

1. Standing forward bend helps to keep the calm (Frazier, 2018).
2. Triangle pose helps with relieving stress and anxiety (Yoga Journal, 2007a).
3. Tree Pose helps to gain the balance and relief stress (Yoga Club, 2016; (Tree pose, 2015).
4. Easy Pose cultivates calmness in the brain (Brady, n.d.).
5. Fish Pose helps to reduce fatigue and anxiety (Yoga Journal, 2007b).
6. Bridge pose can relieve tension and stress (Yoga Club, 2016; O, 2017).
7. Plough pose relieves stress (Mehta, n.d.).
8. Corpse pose

Furthermore, all the above-mentioned postures are related to calming the mind and/or reducing anxiety and stress according to a professional yoga teacher online course (Wells & Skovmand, n.d., p. 39-68.).

4.2.2 Week 1: Kleshas

Since Kleshas are the main reasons that upset the mind according to Patanjali, the author saw them as important views to be aware of. Thus, they were introduced on the first week of the course. The significance of stressors might decrease, if one would understand that the subjective observation of the world does not align with reality, and that the perception of truth and living according to mental constructions bring suffering, not the reality itself.

In addition, strong desires have the power to control life (Schöps, 2016, p. 22) and possibly cause additional stress. Furthermore, since it is not possible to find absolute certainty in life, this can cause fear (Schöps, 2016, p. 24) and consequently over-accomplishing to fulfil roles and expectations (Krohn, n.d.a), possibly leading into stress. Therefore, Kleshas are important to acknowledge and process through.

- ➔ The given task: “Look at yourself in a very honest way, and write down/contemplate what roles you identify yourself with? How do these roles show in your life? Also, write down/contemplate how do the Kleshas affect your life? (This task is only for your individual purposes.) “

4.2.3 Week 2: Pranayama

On the second week, breathing exercises were introduced since they are suggested to help with tranquilizing body and mind. Four different techniques that are calming and suitable for beginners were given.

Deliberate Breathing - Sahita pranayama: The natural breathing stages of inhaling, exhaling and retention are suggested to be consciously practiced to learn the rhythm (Iyengar, 2002, p. 33). This exercise leads to physical and mental stillness (Rukat, n.d.).

Visama Vritti Pranayama – Unregular Breathing: A calming exercise that can be done at any time, for example in the class room or before sleeping. (Schöps, 2016, p. 221)

Anuloma Viloma – Alternate Nostril Breath: This technique balances the masculine and feminine energies of the body, decreases stress and brings clarity of mind (Wells & Skovmand, n.d., p. 34-35; Miller, 2003, p. 21).

Kuksa Pranayama – Belly and Chest Breathing: This exercise releases tension and relieves anxiety, leading into calm (Miller, 2003, p. 23).

4.2.4 Week 3 and 4: Yamas and Niyamas

Since these can lead to living in harmony with the self and the surroundings, the author considered them as an important aspect to introduce during the course. The idea with the Yamas and the Niyamas (week 4) however, is not to suppress the thoughts and emotions, but to gently direct those towards a more beneficial focus. If for example having angry emotions towards another person while wishing to practice non-violence (ahimsa), it is suggested to be beneficial to remind the mind by talking to it and saying: “this is not useful, this only brings me more suffering, let’s go towards the other direction”. To clarify, the other direction does not mean for instance moving from hate to love but aiming to let go of the negative, moving from hate to non-hate. (Jnaneshvara, n.d.c)

When acknowledging thoughts, this process is suggested to be useful:

1. Observe the thoughts that come to mind. This can be done along the daily activities and during the time that is set for self-contemplation.
2. Label the thoughts as “not useful” or “useful”. Negative thoughts have power only when they are not acknowledged. This should not be seen as judging oneself for not thinking positively, but to honestly and transparently become aware of harming thought patterns.

3. Let go of the negative thoughts, do nothing with them. The positive thoughts however can be enforced, so they would move into actions. Keep in mind that thoughts and emotions are not suppressed, it is a soft and loving process where detachment of unnecessary thoughts is enhanced.

(Jnaneshvara, n.d.a)

However, to avoid misunderstanding, it should be mentioned that thought patterns cannot be forcefully changed, instead a deeper understanding of the self will naturally lead into their changing. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned process will help to identify thoughts for example by exposing repeating patterns of the mind and helping to acknowledge what is in the unconscious. When the underlying conceptions begin to unveil, the understanding towards the self, the others and life increases. (Laine, 2018, p. 90-91, 139)

The five guidelines of Yamas and Niyamas have been presented based in the theory from chapter 3 and examples from the life of the author.

- ➔ The given tasks: “Look at yourself in a very honest way and write down/contemplate how do the Yamas/Niyamas show in your life? What could you maybe do differently, especially keeping in mind how to treat yourself better?”

5 Methods

The methods of this thesis consisted of a combination of a product development process and an action research. The steps to build the content had features of both, and the aim to produce a change was mainly related to the action research. (Service design toolkit, n.d.; KAMK n.d.) This chapter describes the processes in more detail.

5.1 Research group

To gather the research group, an advertisement and detailed information that are seen in appendices 1 and 2, were published in the intranet of KAMK on 25.2.2019. In addition, a promoting email of the course was sent to the staff of the school by the supervisor teacher of Myötätuuli. This was done two and a half weeks before the start of the course and there were five days to register. Originally, six women registered, out of which one cancelled due to a sickness. Consequently, the trial group consisted of five female staff members, aged between 29-55 years.

5.2 Product development

The adapted features from a product development process, as explained in Service design toolkit (n.d.), are described here.

First stage: In general, this includes defining the development area and setting objectives, deciding how to measure, identifying target audience and considering what tools to use. In this case, stress management regarding the level of perceived stress was the development area, the objective was to reduce stress and its symptom, and measuring was conducted through surveys. The target audience identifying was accomplished through research regarding stress prevalence. The tool usage consideration was initiated by looking at variety of different options that were described in the theory.

Second stage: Usually, this consists of identifying the problem of customer. In this paper, it showed as understanding the problem through the theoretical framework that presented information about stress symptoms and coping mechanisms.

Third stage: Normally, this part is about solving the problem of the customer. In this thesis, as a result of research regarding the effects of yoga on stress, combined with the professional interest of the author, the perspective to solve the problem was chosen. In detail, the aim to decrease the level of stress was implemented through introducing the teachings of Patanjali.

Fourth stage: Generally, experimenting the gathered and selected material with a trial group is implemented. In this case, the course was tested with five staff members of KAMK. The surveys at the beginning and at the end tested the functionality of the material.

However, after the trial, the finalizing of the end-product according to the received feedback, product pricing and market placing (Service design toolkit, n.d.) did not occur due to the limited amount of time and credits to work with this paper.

5.3 Action research

In addition to the previous method, there are characteristics of an action research. It is a process where the aim is to change matters towards better, not merely being interested of how things are now. (KAMK n.d.) In this thesis, the aim was to produce a decrease regarding the level of perceived stress.

Action research is linked with people, bint with context, includes a change and is based on a rapport that everyone who are taking part in the process are committed to. Basically, there should be the describing, interpreting and explanation of a specific phenomenon as in other research, and additionally, the aim to seek to better the situation. Characteristics are for instance problem solving with theory and practice combined, increase of theoretical understanding of the topic, practical perspective and getting immediate practical benefits. (KAMK n.d.) Most of these were seen in this thesis since the course was run with the aim to make a change in the lives of the participants through a process in which the participants and the author were committed to, the theoretical outline was established before compiling the course, theory and practise were used

in the course, and practical benefits were expected. Furthermore, the process contributed in the understanding of the phenomena.

In addition, generally action research is defined by cyclicity: acknowledging and defining a problem → understanding what is happening, choosing the aim → making research-/action plan to solve the problem → action aligned with the plan, experimenting → observation and evaluation of the action and experimenting according to plan, remarks are made → due to evaluation new action plan is made → again, action aligned with the plan → observation and evaluation etc and this will keep going as long as the problem is solved. A crucial part of the process is to reflect on how the planned action and its consequence are working because there lies the possibility to a new understanding of a matter, thus a chance developing it towards better. (KAMK n.d.)

However, there are different ways to implement this type of research, and within the framework of this thesis, a linear model was used. It is where research and action take place just once (one cycle) and is conducted according to a plan made beforehand. Other options would have been an iterative model, where the cycle would have been completed as many times as needed to find the solution, and a reflective model, where the focus would have been on discovering models of behaviour and searching solutions for problems arisen from those. (KAMK n.d.) Although only one cycle was implemented under these circumstances, based on the aspects and results received from the participants, the author discussed what could had been the possible next step. In other words, that would had been “the next cycle” in the process, including improved tools towards a change.

Here are described features of the method (KAMK n.d.) and how those showed in this paper:

- Target group is active in process → participants committed to certain tasks during the trial period, such as Asana practice and introspection.
- Having a cooperation between the target group and the researcher → This was not a noticeable feature in this paper due to only two contact sessions, however the researcher helped with finding suitable yoga postures at the beginning and used examples from her own life to enhance the learning of the course content.

- Action is focused on solving the problem and related to practice → The action was focused on aiming to create new perspectives of life, to reduce perceived stress and it was implemented on a practical level.
- Framework to solve problem is clear and organised → The course outline was planned and organised beforehand.
- Scientific precision is avoided

Challenges of the method are i.e. that it can be harder to accomplish the whole process because there is the research to be made and additionally the responsibility to implement a change. Secondly, there may be bias in the research resulting from personal views and over-involvement of a researcher. Moreover, to create a change, participants of the study should be completely involved in process. (USC Libraries 2018) In this thesis, there was a possibility that these challenges would affect the process since

- without the aim to run the course in practise (only preparing it), there would have been more time to cover the theory, thus a possibility to gain a deeper understanding of if,
- the personal views of the author affected when compiling the course content and defining the steps of Patanjali,
- and participant involvement was beyond reach, in form of not practising the given asanas and contemplating the core messages explained in the videos, which could negatively affect the results.

5.4 Questionnaire

A questionnaire can be used in an action research to collect information. They are suitable at the beginning to measure the initial mapping and at the end to measure if change has occurred. (Kananen, 2017, p. 102-103) In this process, the surveys were implemented during the contact sessions to have the benefit that the participants could clarify the questions if needed (Valli & Aaltola, 2015, p. 89-90) and to ensure that all the answers would be received.

The aim was to establish an understanding of the perceived stress at the beginning of the course and whether any aspects had changed during the trial period. Both, open and closed questions were used for the purpose of open questions possibly helping to gain new ideas regarding the course and to identify the opinions of the participants (Valli & Aaltola, 2015, p. 106). In addition, closed questions were applied when asking about the level of perceived stress to facilitate the evaluation of the possible change.

Here is explained in more detail how the experience of the perceived stress was examined:

- how the participants experienced stress and its symptoms at the beginning of the period and if this had anyhow changed by the end of the trial,
- how stressed the participants had felt during the month before the trial and whether this had changed during the four weeks,
- and whether the participants had felt that stress had negatively affected their life during the month before the course, on daily and weekly basis and overall, and whether this had changed during the test period.

In addition, it was examined how the participants experienced the course by asking

- what were their initial interests and expectations, and afterwards, how was the experience,
- how they were managing their stress at the beginning and how they understood the reasons behind their stress, and whether something had changed in the understanding regarding stress, its management or the self during the course,
- and what worked poorly/well to have their opinion of the content.

The language was taken into consideration when forming the questions since it should tempt the respondents to describe their experience of reality. Consequently, the usage of abstract and general language was avoided. In addition, there are different levels of prescriptive open questions and when researching experience, the structure should be as open as possible. (Valli & Herkama, 2018, p. 39-41) On the other hand, since the aim was to research specific issues, a more prescriptive perspective was applied, for instance in giving options when asking about the stress

symptoms. This was to avoid vague answers which may sometimes be the problem with open questions (Valli & Aaltola, 2015, p. 106). Nevertheless, the prescriptiveness was considered and applied to the possible extent in each question. The start and end questionnaires can be seen in appendices 15 and 16.

5.5 Analysis

The data resulted from the questionnaires seemed to illustrate a comprehensive overview regarding the stress of the participants and on the other hand, their thoughts about the course-experience. A qualitative content analysis was used (CIRT, n.d.a) when interpreting the mainly used open questions. To support the understanding, also closed questions were asked, and an idea of a quasi-experimental analysis was applied (CIRT, n.d.b).

The qualitative content analysis included such features as becoming familiar with the results by reading the questionnaires several times, focusing the analysis under two main topics that were the experience regarding stress and the course content, and an overall interpretation of the data with the aim to explain the findings (CIRT, n.d.). The interest of the author was rather in the individual responses and meanings of those than in the frequency of a certain outcome, which also is characteristic for this type of analysis (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, n.d.). The quasi-experimental design examines cause-effect relationships: in this thesis whether the trial reduced stress, the independent variable being the course material. However, the results were not compared to another non-participant group as generally is done in this setting. (CIRT, n.d.b)

Overall, the objective was to explore the results in a critical way to gain an understanding that would be as non-biased as possible. The author aimed to avoid the natural perception of the answers to reduce the subjective filter on the analysis. In other words, it was important to seek to make a difference between the understanding based on personal experiences of the author and what truly was meant from the perspective of the respondent. In addition, it was considered that the previous research, on the positive effects of yoga in stress management, should not influence the interpretation of the results. (Valli & Herkama, 2018, p. 35-37)

To sum it up, the start questionnaire gave initial information about the participants and the aim was to understand how they experienced and understood their stress and how they coped with

it. In addition, it was examined what were the expectations and reasons for attending the course. The end questionnaire examined the possible change in the level of perceived stress, whether any change in stress management had occurred, if the introspection during the course had unfolded any new understanding related to the self and stress, and how the course was experienced. This was done to reveal whether the material was successful or not, and how it was perceived.

5.6 Ethical view

For a thesis to be credible and ethical there is a legal framework to be followed, called a responsible conduct of research. It means that a researcher needs to follow certain principles and the process is supported by a peer view system and a tutor-teacher. Violations against this rule are for instance a research, where sources are marked inaccurately, research reports are poorly described thus explanation given might be misleading, an overall neglecting, ignoring the commonly accepted terms for scientific papers, or an overall disregard for the responsible conduct of research, as an example, falsification of sources or plagiarism. (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta, 2012, p. 6-8)

With attention to the participants, ethical issues were covered by a course agreement that can be seen in appendix 17. For example, the following matters should be mentioned before starting a research process: participants should be well-informed regarding the thesis, course and practical matters to have a general idea of what to expect, and they need to be aware that they are allowed to interrupt the participation at any time if feeling uncomfortable since ethical aspect is more important than research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, p. 155-156). Consequently, the course agreement paper included the name and content of the thesis, course outline, dates for the start/end session, a cancellation policy, an agreement that they had received enough of information of the upcoming process and a commitment to the material. Furthermore, in the first session the cancellation policy was specifically mentioned to avoid causing any possible harm.

All the participants signed the course agreement, thus accepting the ethical frame. In addition, the anonymity was guaranteed by sending the material derived from the questionnaires to each

participant before publishing the text. Hereby, they could read it through and decide for themselves whether privacy protection was enough. The emails regarding this were sent on 22.4.2019 and all agreed in publishing the results as originally proposed by the author.

6 Results

The aim of the research was to examine if the course would reduce the level of perceived stress in the participants and this chapter demonstrates the results of the questionnaires. First, the initial stage was described through the answers of the start questionnaire. Then the results of the start and end surveys were compared, and the outcome was derived. Overall, the results were varied.

6.1 Start questionnaire

In general, the start questionnaire illustrated various symptoms, different coping strategies and different expectations for the course. This chapter seeks to describe the initial situation.

Four of the respondents had been somewhat stressed and one extremely stressed, on average, during the four weeks before the trial. Stress showed in their life in varied ways and physical symptoms were reported as following:

- All the five said stress negatively affected their sleep,
- two of them reported muscle tension,
- one reported tiredness,
- and one reported headache, feeling nausea, lack of recovery, increased heart rate and low ferritin levels.

Psychological symptoms were reported:

- One reported anxiety, and one reported excessive worrying,
- two reported a difficulty to remember things,
- one reported getting annoyed more than normal and being more emotional, and one reported moodiness.

Social symptoms were also reported:

- One reported a lack of motivation to do things,
- one said wanting to withdraw from work society,
- and one said not being present in the moment.

All the participants said stress had negatively affected their life during the past four weeks (answering possibilities never/sometimes/often/very often):

- For one participant on a weekly basis and sometimes.
- For two participants on a daily, weekly basis and overall sometimes.
- For one participant on a daily basis often, and on a weekly basis and overall sometimes.
- For one participant on a daily, weekly basis and overall often.

The whole group reported performance-based stress, originated from deadlines and critical situations at work. The stress was managed in several different ways, however, two respondents or more, reported such things as spending time with family, doing sports, scheduling tasks and using essential oils.

When asking about the causes of stress, two of the respondents answered with topics related to their mind-set, such as seeking external acceptance, being demanding towards oneself or being conscientious. The three other answers were related to outside factors, mainly work. The difference in answers can be explained with two things: the question was not precise enough, or a lack of self-understanding of the respondent. As mentioned in the theory, it is the mental mindset that is the core cause of stress, not the external factors, but if an individual has not made mental work with herself, she might not acknowledge this. Regarding the reasons for participation and expectations, were reported such things as interest in yoga and body care; wishing to learn easy movements to practise at home, and the possibility to learn to clear the mind.

6.1.1 End questionnaire

The results were compared with the first survey and the participants were randomly named as A, B, C, D and E to show the main findings regarding change. One aspect was to examine if the level of the perceived stress had been reduced and if further understanding regarding the matter had developed. Secondly, the overall experience and successfulness of the content was in the interest of the author. In addition, it should be mentioned that one participant returned the second questionnaire by email because she did not participate the second contact session for an unknown reason.

6.1.2 Stress management

Overall, the results were varied and suggested that this kind of course does not reduce the level of perceived stress. Main reasons to this, derived from the questionnaires, seemed to be the lack of engagement to the online material and the influence of other external factors. One participant had not watched all the materials, two had not taken time for introspection, and only one participant had practiced the suggested Asanas and Pranayama as in instructions. In addition, other life events, such as holiday, busy work period or a retreat, seemed to affect by increasing or decreasing stress during the trial.

However, the course had triggered some new aspects since four participants reported a change in their stress management. Such things as “new thoughts”, returning to daily yoga practice, more introspection, a capability to “take a break” and an increase in focus had occurred. Furthermore, two participants said to have gained new perspective regarding the causes for their stress, related to such things as achieving-related performance to gain external acceptance and being attached to roles. Also, one participant commented the material had served as a reminder about the most common reasons of stress.

In conclusion, the perceived levels of stress did not significantly reduce due to the course material, but new aspects were triggered. Additionally, the level of engagement and external factors affected the results. In chart 6, the answers are presented in more detail.

	Had the person followed the course?	How stressed on average before / after	Stress symptoms Reduced / not reduced	Negative effects of stress before/after
A	Asanas: No Pranayama: No Introspection regarding Kleshas/Yamas/niyamas: Yes	1 and 1	No reported change.	Daily 2 and 1 Weekly 1 and 2 Overall 1 and 2
B	Asanas: 2 times a week Pranayama: Almost daily Introspection regarding Kleshas/Yamas/niyamas: Mainly no	1 and 1	External circumstances regarding a hectic period before holiday and the holiday itself, first increased and then decreased stress symptoms.	Daily 0 and 0 Weekly 1 and 1 Overall 0 and 0
C	Asanas: 2 times a week Pranayama: A few times Introspection regarding Kleshas/Yamas/niyamas: Yes	3 and 2	Experience of stress slightly reduced through listening more to oneself, leading into some change in actions/thoughts.	Daily 2 and 2 Weekly 2 and 2 Overall 2 and 2
D	Asanas: Not the suggested ones, but other ones yes Pranayama: No Introspection regarding Kleshas/Yamas/niyamas: No	1 and 1	Slight reducing was reported, mainly due to introspection.	Daily 1 and 0 Weekly 1 and 1 Overall 1 and 1
E	Asanas: yes Pranayama: yes Introspection regarding Kleshas/Yamas/niyamas: Yes	1 and 2	More anxiety was reported.	Daily 1 / Weekly 1 / Overall 1 /

Chart 6, part 1/2. Results regarding the level of perceived stress.

	Change in stress management strategies during the course yes / no	Any new perspectives regarding the understanding of the reasons behind stress, related to the self, other	Conclusion
A	No	Opened/reminded about the most common stress-creating thought patterns.	No significant change in stress.
B	Four weeks was reported to be a "short time to take all in" but some new thoughts had arisen during the course.	The respondent did not answer the question, she said she had not had the time to watch the material regarding Yamas and Niyamas, thus could not give answer to all questions.	No significant change in stress that could be related to the course; other external factors seemed to have more influence. The participant did not watch all the material.
C	Yes, more introspection and a gentle attitude towards the self.	Yes, related to achieving due to need of acceptance.	Slight reducing in stress, some new aspects gained.
D	The course had served as a boost to return to yoga practice. Also, another course/retreat during the trial was reported to have a positive impact on the stress management.	The respondent reported that she understands herself better every day, however, she was not sure whether stress related issues had unfolded.	Slight reducing in stress and a positive change in stress management. However, the course mainly seemed to serve as a "boost" to return to yoga practice, and other external factors (than this specific course) were reported to affect the coping.
E	Yes, the respondent reported as learning outcomes a capability to "take a break" and concentrate on "what was important on a given moment".	Yes, related to exaggerating the importance of the roles of ego, understanding the importance of "letting go", to realizing how negative emotions are holding her back. Consequently, leading into learning a "kinder and a more practical approach towards what the body and mind needs".	No reducing in stress, vice versa. However, the course was reported to be useful and to give new aspects.

Chart 6, part 2/2. Results regarding the level of perceived stress.

6.1.3 Course content

Altogether, the course was experienced positively, with clear instructions and suitable Asanas. Although the level of stress did not considerably reduce, all the participants reported the trial to be useful for them. This was for such reasons as possible improvement in physical wellbeing, boosting daily yoga practice, and raising curiosity towards yoga philosophy. Four participants suggested that having more contact sessions would have been desired since those either might have been nice, helped with engaging to the material, or could have enhanced the possible self-reflexion. Moreover, two participants reported the course to be too short, and two other participants asked for permission to use the material afterwards, which also may indicate a need for a longer course period.

All in all, the results showed that the experience regarding the course appeared to be different for each individual. It seemed, that for three participants it had had some impact, as it was for instance reported as “useful and educative” and triggering to “re-think many aspects of life”, or as an enjoyable course with relaxing material. On the contrary, for two participants the trial seemed to have less influence due to lack of engagement and other unspecified reasons. The chart 7 presents the results in more detail.

	Experience of the course Asanas / Online material / Other	Expectations and were they met	Usefulness of the course, impact on the stress management in the future	Other	Conclusion
A	Clear material, easy to follow. Wished for group meetings to enhance practice and introspection, and material in Finnish.	Expectations: To learn simple exercises to improve flexibility and concentration. - The course was reported to be as expected.	Yes, useful in terms of improvement in physical wellbeing.	Liked practicing yoga with the group, would have wished to have 1-2 additional contact sessions.	The course was experienced clear and possibly improving physical wellbeing, however, had no other significant impact; possible meetings might have been useful.

B	The respondent wished she would have had more time for the course materials. Good structure. Asanas were familiar and "easy". The content would have required contemplation and concentration.	Expectations: Learn to control the mind and tranquilize the body. - The course was reported to be positively surprising due to the emphasis on yoga ideology; more of "traditional yoga postures were expected".	Yes, useful because it was "eye-opening" in terms of yoga philosophy; it aroused curiosity towards the matter.	Lack of time due to personal reasons was reported to prevent the needed concentration and contemplation to digest the course content. It was reported that a longer period of time would have been needed to cover the material.	The course had some impact and the content was experienced to be useful, however, external factors prevented the absorbing of the content to a large extent. A longer course period was reported to be needed.
C	Was happy to have participated, liked the calm voice in the material, videos were suitably short, relaxing and grounding asanas	Expectations: to learn to practice yoga and see whether it would help with stress and relaxation. - The course was reported to be as expected, will have the courage to do yoga in the future.	Yes, in terms of possibly continuing the practice of the asanas with her children, since it helped to relax.	Would have wanted to have more contact sessions.	The course had some impact, the respondent enjoyed the course, would have wanted more contact sessions.
D	Overall, the course was experienced to be too short, but "very nice". The asanas were described as gentle, relaxing and calming. Online material was said to be a "nice addition" but would have required "more concentration" from the participant.	Expectations: To return to a daily yoga routine, to refresh and deepen knowledge about yoga, get tools for meditation. - The course was reported to "meet the expectations and beyond".	Yes, since it gave a boost to return to daily yoga practice.	Would have wanted to have more contact sessions and a longer course period. Was happy with clear instructions and a "nice atmosphere".	The course was experienced to have "a nice atmosphere" with clear instructions and it had some impact since it gave a boost to return to yoga practice. To have more contact sessions and a longer course period were suggested.

E	<p>The course was experienced as "very useful and educative", enhancing the understanding of power of yoga. Examples from the life of the author were reported to contribute to the understanding of the online topics. The course triggered the participant to practice introspection.</p>	<p>Expectations: Learn more about basics of yoga, to see if yoga affects stress and physical state. - The course was reported to meet the expectations since it helped to give a new perspective regarding stress and triggered the participant to "re-think many aspects" of her life.</p>	<p>Yes, the participant reported to aim to continue with yoga techniques in everyday life.</p>	<p>The course was experienced useful as it was.</p>	<p>The course was experienced as useful and educative as it was, and it was reported to have an impact for the participant since it triggered self-reflexion and she planned to continue with the techniques in future.</p>
---	---	---	--	---	---

Chart 7. Results regarding the course content.

6.2 Comparison to previous research

Previous research related to yoga and stress management, presented in chapter 3, mainly suggested that yoga practice reduces stress. Conversely, the results of this thesis proposed that the trial period did not contribute to the decrease of the perceived stress. Reasons for this can be varied, however the author of the paper suspects that this is connected to the length of the course and the form of delivery.

As it was reported, a longer course period and more contact sessions were desired by the participants. These might had allowed more time for introspection, and enhanced concentration and engagement, possibly leading into adopting new aspects of life according to the teachings of Patanjali. Online-delivery seemed to trigger a lack of commitment regarding the content for most participants; a support of the group could had been useful.

7 Discussion

This thesis illustrated the harmfulness of stress on an individual and societal level, showing the importance of stress management related work. As a method for this paper, yoga was chosen to be the strategy to aim to cope with stress, delivered through the compiled course which was mainly given online. Therefore, an overall understanding of yoga philosophy was gained, and focus was set on studying the eight limbs, originally introduced by the yogi called Patanjali. Out of those eight steps, the course content was based on the first four and the Kleshas, thus those were explored in more detail. The aim of the course was to reduce the level of perceived stress. A trial period of four weeks was run for five women of KAMK staff, and the outcome was varied.

In short, the results suggested that the level of perceived stress did not considerably decrease. This possibly was affected by other external factors that had occurred in the life of the participants and a short course period. Additionally, the online delivery of the material may have contributed to a lack of full engagement to the content. However, the course was experienced to be useful for all the participants and indicated to result in some positive impact for three of them. The overall experience was reported to be favourable, although varied and dissimilar for everyone, and having triggered a different outcome for each. Furthermore, as written in chapter 2.6, it can be argued that self-reflexion reports may be inaccurate, thus that may also have affected the results of this paper. Since it is not possible to externally observe the details of a human mind, it may be that not all the changes and aspects were recorded.

If the same process had been executed by another person, presumably the content of the product would have been different. This is due to a personal judgment over the course content, to the individual understanding of the matter, and giving examples from the life of the author. In addition, when aiming to implement a change, identical results can never be guaranteed even if the exact same trial period would be run. This is because each individual tends to comprehend life and react to external output in various ways, depending on their personal background, as also was seen in the varied results of this paper. Moreover, as specified in chapter five and shown in the end questionnaire, the level of participant-involvement is never guaranteed. However, when looking at this specific course, the same conclusion can likely be derived from the given material, adding the reliability.

For further research, the author suggests implementing a similar course but with different delivery. If there would had been more time to work within this context, she would had conducted a second round of the same topics but by covering those during weekly contact sessions. Those could had included asanas, re-introducing the views of Patanjali and conversation, possibly leading into an increase in engagement and introspection. She hopes in the future it would be possible to experiment that with another group.

It is worth of mentioning, that the development of the professional knowledge of the author was indisputable. Since she comprehended that stress can cause serious damage for an individual and society, this contributed to her understanding of it being an important aspect to consider. It seems to her that it is dangerous when the unnormal becomes normal; when the burnout-leading behaviour patterns become standard, in consequence enhancing the idea that the mental side should not be overlooked and how, for example, the methods of yoga can give a great value when in working life.

In addition, the shocking numbers of stress prevalence made the author realize that more emphasis regarding stress management would be needed in the society and that the current norms seem to necessitate re-adjustment. For her it appears that a change, to enhance the wellbeing and balanced life of people, should be pursued. She thinks, that moving from an achievement-based behaviour and norms that are driven by external motivations and expectations, towards strong individuals who are brave enough to proceed according to their internally desired goals and pace, might adhere to general health and reduce the stress related costs in society.

With attention to the yoga philosophy, the using of the examples from the life of the author obliged her to reconsider several aspects of life, as was seen in the videos and appendix 3. The main realizations were related to Kleshas, Yamas and Niyamas. The author understood that the constant attachment to the ego and the aim to fulfil different roles have been causing her excessive stress as those set several expectations and demands of how life “should be”. Also, the fear of death unfolded to be an underlying challenge, however beginning to reduce its power due to acknowledging the matter during the process of the thesis. Moreover, the guidelines given for interaction with others and the self presented fresh visions to daily life, such as an increased controlling of negative impulses, emphasizing daily introspection, consciously aiming for “good enough” instead of excessively contributing into work matters, learning about complete

acceptance and nonviolence especially towards the self, and increasingly embracing the trust in life.

In summary, the deep dive in the yoga philosophy and theory regarding stress showed the work-related potential of the personal interests of the author. Together with professional development, this paper significantly contributed in gaining new aspects regarding her personal growth, especially in terms of finding balance and happiness in life. The author sees that these are the first steps in a bigger picture because one is not capable of guiding others without a personal experience of a matter. Thus, the personal breakthrough and understanding of stress, its management, and yoga are needed first, to then better contribute to the wellbeing of others. As are the famous words of Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see".

8 List of references

American institute of Stress. (N.d.a). *What is stress*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.stress.org/daily-life/>

American Institute of Stress. (N.d.b). *Workplace Stress*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.stress.org/workplace-stress/>

Ahola, K., Tuisku, K. & Rossi, H. (2018). *Työuupumus*. Retrieved from

https://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/terveyskirjasto/tk.koti?p_artikkeli=dlk00681

Brady, A. (N.d.) *8 Yoga poses to Help You Manage Stress*. Retrieved from

<https://chopra.com/articles/8-yoga-poses-to-help-you-manage-stress>

Broo, M. & Patañjali. (2010). *Joogan filosofia: Patañjalin Yoga-sūtra*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.

Burgin, T. (N.d.a). Philosophy of Yoga. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Retrieved from

<http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/bhagavad-gita/>

Burgin, T. (N.d.b). Philosophy of Yoga. *Moksha and Maya*. Retrieved from

<http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/moksha-and-maya/>

Burgin, T. (N.d.c) Philosophy of Yoga. *The Vedas*. Retrieved from

<http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/the-vedas/>

Burgin, T. (N.d.d) Philosophy of Yoga. *The Upanishads*. Retrieved from

<http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/upanishads/>

Burgin, T. (N.d.e). Philosophy of Yoga. *The five Yamas of yoga*. Retrieved from

<http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/the-five-Yamas-of-yoga/>

Burgin⁶, T. (N.d.f). Philosophy of Yoga. *The five Niyamas of yoga*. Retrieved from

<http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/the-five-Niyamas-of-yoga/>

Centre For studies on human stress. (N.d.). *History of stress*. Retrieved from <http://humanstress.ca/stress/what-is-stress/history-of-stress/>

Chong, C. S., Tsunaka, M., & Chan, E. P. (2011). Effects of yoga on stress management in healthy adults: a systematic review. *Alternative therapies in health and medicine*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21614942>

CIRT. (N.d.a). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Retrieved from https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/qualitative/analyzing_data

CIRT. (N.d.b). *Quantitative approaches*. Retrieved from https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/quantresearch/approaches

Dodson, C. (N.d.). *The Holistic Benefits of Lotus Pose*. Retrieved from <https://www.doyouyoga.com/the-holistic-benefits-of-lotus-pose-61617/>

Global organisation for Stress. (N.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.gostress.com/stress-facts/>

Elkin, A. (2013). *Stress management for dummies*. Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kajaani-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1183946>

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. (N.d.). *Campaign Guide Managing stress and psychosocial risks at work*. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjNicklbtjhAhXuh4sKHfkrCnAQFiABegQIBxAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fguides.osha.europa.eu%2Fstress%2FIE-EN%2Fstory_content%2Fexternal_files%2FEU-OSHA%2520Manage%2520Stress%2520campaign%2520guide.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1lcx8nj3EZ1M6onJHyPKCq

Frawley, D. (N.d.). *Pratyahara: Yoga's forgotten limb*. Retrieved from <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/pratyahara-yogas-forgotten-limb>

- Frazier, R. S. (2018). Maintain Your Calm. *Health*, 32(9), 35–37. Retrieved from <http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=132176444&site=ehost-live>
- Gould, E., & Galea, L. A. M. (2018). Fifty years of stress and more to come: A tribute to Bruce S. McEwen. *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology*, 49, 1-2. doi://doi.org/10.1016/j.yfrne.2018.03.003
- Granath, J., Ingvarsson, S., von Thiele, U., & Lundberg, U. (2006). Stress management: A randomized study of cognitive behavioural therapy and yoga. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 35(1), 3-10. doi:10.1080/16506070500401292
- Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. (2009). *Tutki ja kirjoita* (15. uud. p.). Helsinki: Tammi.
- Iyengar, B.K.S. (2002). *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. London: Thorsons.
- Iyengar, B.K.S. (2005). *The Illustrated Light on Yoga*. New York: HarperCollins
- Jnaneshvara, S. (N.d.a). *Witnessing Your Thoughts in Yoga Practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.swamij.com/witnessing.htm#fivecolorings>
- Jnaneshvara, S. (N.d.b). *Yoga sutras 2.1-2.9: Minimizing Gross Colorings that Veil the Self*. Retrieved from <http://www.swamij.com/yoga-sutras-20109.htm#2.3>
- Jnaneshvara, S. (N.d.c). *Yoga Sutras 2.30-2.34: Yamas and Niyamas, rungs #1 and #2*. Retrieved from <http://www.swamij.com/yoga-sutras-23034.htm>
- Jnaneshvara, S. (N.d.d). *Yoga Sutras 2.35-2-45: Benefits from the Yamas and Niyamas*. Retrieved from <http://www.swamij.com/yoga-sutras-23545.htm>
- Johnson, J. (2018). How to tell if stress is affecting your sleep. *Medical News Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322994.php>
- Joogaliitto. (N.d.). *Mitä jooga on?* Retrieved from <http://www.joogaliitto.fi/joogaliitto/mita-jooga-on/>

Kaivalya, A. (N.d.). *Why is Lotus Pose So Darn Hard?* Retrieved from

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-4437/Why-Is-Lotus-Pose-So-Darn-Hard.html>

Kaleva. (2015). *Asiantuntija: Stressistä miljardikulut työelämässä vuosittain*. Retrieved from

<https://www.kaleva.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/asiantuntija-stressista-miljardikulut-tyoelamassa-vuosittain/698329/>

KAMK. (N.d.). *Eettiset suositukset*. Retrieved from

<https://www.kamk.fi/fi/opari/Opinnaytetyopakki/Opinnaytetyoprosessi/SoTeLi/Opinnaytetyoprosessi/Eettiset-suositukset>

KAMK. (N.d.). *Toimintatutkimus*. Retrieved from

<https://www.kamk.fi/fi/opari/Opinnaytetyopakki/Teoreettinen-materiaali/Tukimateriaali/Toimintatutkimus>

Kananen, J. (2014). *Toimintatutkimus kehittämistutkimuksen muotona: Miten kirjoitan*

toimintatutkimuksen opinnäytetyönä? Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu. Retrieved from <https://kamk.finna.fi/Record/kajakki.49542>

Kassila, T. (1997). *Filosofia ja ihminen: Elämänfilosofian kysymyksiä*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

Krohn, S. (N.d.a). Yoga philosophy. *Avidya and Trsna – Playing roles and why it sucks*. [Online

course]. Yogobe. Retrieved from <https://yogobe.com/en/courses/yoga-philosophy/avidya-trsna/avidya-trsna-lecture>

Krohn, S. (N.d.b). Yoga philosophy. *Duhkha – The starting point of yoga philosophy*. [Online

course]. Yogobe. Retrieved from <https://yogobe.com/en/courses/yoga-philosophy/duhkha/duhkha-lecture>

Krohn, S. (N.d.c). Asceticism – The key strategy of yoga. Retrieved from

<https://yogobe.com/fi/courses/yoga-philosophy/asceticism/asceticism-lecture>

Laine, S., & Laine, S. (2018). *Tietoisuustaidot : Miten saavutan kehon ja mielen tasapainon* (2.

uudistettu painos ed.). Helsinki: Viisas Elämä. Retrieved from

<https://kamk.finna.fi/Record/kajakki.51844>

Lasater, J. (1999). Return to Stillness: In a world of information overload, the yoga practice of pratyahara offers us a haven of silence. *Yoga Journal*, (147), 84. Retrieved from <http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=6168438&site=ehost-live>

Lasater, J. H. (2016). What is Yoga? *Yoga Journal*, 8–16. Retrieved from <http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=118087631&site=ehost-live>

Macklin, K. (2013). Tension Tamer. *Yoga Journal*, (257), 26. Retrieved from <http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=88348751&site=ehost-live>

Mattila, A. (2018). *Stressi*. Retrieved from https://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/terveyskirjasto/tk.koti?p_artikkeli=dlk00976

Mehiläinen. (N.d.). *Stressi*. Retrieved from <https://www.mehilainen.fi/hyvinvointi/stressi>

Mehta, A. (N.d.). *5 Excellent Yoga poses for Stress Relief*. Retrieved from <http://anmolmehta.com/yoga-stress-relief-poses/>

Mental Health foundation. (2018). *Stress: Are we coping?* Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwj6ku6S2ureAhWfKSwKHdI6ARcQFjABegQICRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mentalhealth.org.uk%2Ffile%2F3432%2Fdownload%3Ftoken%3D709ABkP8&usg=AOvVaw0dnZ903Le8RrldzTTkavzp>

Meyers, T. (2018, June). Stress: The health epidemic of the 21st century. *Thrive Global*. Retrieved from <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/stress-the-health-epidemic-of-the-21st-century/>

Miller, O. H. (2003). *Essential yoga: An illustrated guide to over 100 yoga poses and meditations*. San Francisco: Yhdysvallat.

Mills, H., Reiss, N., & Dombeck, M. (N.d.) *Types Of Stressors (Eustress Vs. Distress)*. Retrieved from <https://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/types-of-stressors-eustress-vs-distress/>

N-Carlsson, A., Persson Lundholm, U., Köhn, M., & Westerdahl, E. (2014). Medical yoga: Another way of being in the world—A phenomenological study from the perspective of persons suffering

from stress-related symptoms. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health & Well-Being*, 9, 1–10. <https://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2213/10.3402/qhw.v9.23033>

O, C. S. (2017). A sequence to Stay grounded & present. *Yoga Journal*, (297), 69–71. Retrieved from <http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=126106218&site=ehost-live>

O'Driscoll, M. P. (2013). Coping with stress: A challenge for theory, research and practice. *Stress & Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, 29(2), 89-90. doi:10.1002/smi.2489

Palmer, S., & Cooper, C. L. (2007). *How to deal with stress*. London: Philadelphia: Kogan Press Ltd, 6-7, 20-23, 32-33. Retrieved from <https://kamk.finna.fi/Record/kajakki.37153>

Panda, S. (2014). Stress and health: Symptoms and techniques of psychotherapeutic management. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 5(4), 516-520. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=100812591&site=ehost-live>

Pesonen T., & Kunttu K. (2012). Korkeakouluopiskelijoiden Terveystutkimus [Pdf]. Retrieved November 11, 2018, from http://www.yths.fi/filebank/1864-KOTT_2012_verkkoon.pdf

Pietikäinen, A. (2009). *Joustava mieli: Vapaudu stressin, uupumuksen ja masennuksen ylivallasta*. Helsinki: Duodecim. Retrieved from <https://kamk.finna.fi/Record/kajakki.41224>

PubMed. (1998). *Hans Selye and the development of the stress concept*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9668601>

Puttonen, S. (2006). *Stressin fysiologiset vaikutukset*. Retrieved from http://www.ebm-guidelines.com/dtk/ltk/avaa?p_artikkeli=ttl00352

Rukat, J. (N.d.). *5 Types of PranaYama for Beginners*. Retrieved from <https://www.doyouyoga.com/5-types-of-pranaYama-for-beginners/>

- Riley, K. E., & Park, C. L. (2015). How does yoga reduce stress? A systematic review of mechanisms of change and guide to future inquiry. *Health Psychology Review*, 9(3), 379-396.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25559560>
- Seitanmaa-Hakkarainen, P. (N.d.). *Kvalitatiivinen sisällönanalyysi*. Retrieved from
<https://metodix.fi/2014/05/19/seitamaa-hakkarainen-kvalitatiivinen-sisallon-analyysi/>
- Service design toolkit. (N.d.). Retrieved January 1, 2019, from <http://sdt.fi/en.html>
- Sharma, M. (2014). Yoga as an alternative and complementary approach for stress management: a systematic review. *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine*, 19(1), 59-67. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24647380>
- Schöps, I., Beer, G. & Laitinen, T. (2016). *Jooga: Aloittelijoille ja edistyneille* (2. painos.). [Helsinki]: Gummerus.
- Soleil, G. (2016, July). Workplace stress: The Health epidemic of the 21st century. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/workplace-stress-the-heal_b_8923678
- Tree Pose. (2015). *Yoga Journal*, 34. Retrieved from <http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=109905684&site=ehost-live>
- Tuomi, J., & Sarajärvi, A. (2018). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi* (Uudistettu laitos ed.). Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi. Retrieved from <https://kamk.finna.fi/Record/kajakki.51628>
- Tuomikoski, M. (30.3.2016). Tuore tutkimus paljastaa: Työuupumus muuttaa aivojen toimintaa. *Yle*. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8748057>
- Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta. (2012). Hyvä tieteellinen käytäntö ja sen loukkausepäilyjen käsittelyminen Suomessa. Retrieved November 29, 2018, from https://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf
- USC Libraries. (2018). Organizing your Social Sciences Research Paper: Types of Research Design. Retrieved from <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>

USC Libraries. (2018). Organizing your Social Sciences Research Paper: Qualitative methods.

Retrieved from <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/qualitative>

Valli, R. & Aaltola, J. (2015). *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin: 1, Metodien valinta ja aineistonkeruu: virikkeitä aloittelevalle tutkijalle* (4. uud. ja täyd. p.). Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Valli, R. & Herkama, S. (2018). *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin: 2, Näkökulmia aloittelevalle tutkijalle tutkimuksen teoreettisiin lähtökohtiin ja analyysimenetelmiin* (5., uudistettu ja täydennetty painos.). Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Varvogli, L., & Darviri, C. (2011). Stress Management Techniques: evidence-based procedures that reduce stress and promote health. *Health Science Journal*, 5(2), 74.

<http://www.hsj.gr/medicine/stress-management-techniques-evidencebased-procedures-that-reduce-stress-and-promote-health.php?aid=3429>

Villate, V. M. (2015). Yoga for College Students: An Empowering Form of Movement and Connection. *Physical Educator*, 72(1), 44–66. Retrieved from

<http://kamezproxy01.kamit.fi:2084/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=100606336&site=ehost-live>

Virtanen, V. & Saarenmaa, K. (2011). *Stressi haittaa korkeakouluopiskelijan opintoja*. Retrieved from https://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2011/art_2011-05-30_005.html?s=0

Wells, K.E. & Skovmand, L. (N.d.) *Professional yoga teacher training course material*. [Online course, Pdf]. Skill Success. Retrieved from <https://www.skillsuccess.com/start-course/>

WHO. (N.d.) *Stress at the workplace*. Retrieved from

https://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/stressatwp/en/

Yoga Club. (2016). *10 Hatha yoga poses for stress relief*. Retrieved from

<https://eu.yogaclub.com/blogs/news/10-Hatha-yoga-poses-for-stress-relief>

Yoga Journal. (2007a). *Extended Triangle Pose*. Retrieved from

<https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/extended-triangle-pose>

Yoga Journal. (2007b). *Fish Pose*. Retrieved from <https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/fish-pose>

Yogobe. (N.d.a). *Joogatyylit*. Retrieved from <https://yogobe.com/fi/jooga/tyylit>

Yogobe. (N.d.b). *Simon Krohn*. Retrieved from <https://yogobe.com/se/team/simon-krohn>

Appendices

ADVERTISEMENT EMAIL:

Feeling stressed? Interested in yoga and its philosophy? If your answer is yes, check this out!

Did you know that continuous high levels of stress can cause plenty of physical and mental symptoms? Those can be such things as low energy, headaches, insomnia, loss of sexual desire, irritability, anxiousness, reduced self-esteem, reduced work performance, poor time management, comfort eating/not eating... Just to name a few! Would you like to do something about it?

I am a sports student, looking for participant(s) for my Thesis related online course, lasting for 4 weeks. It is free of charge and max 8 participants will be accepted (places are filled in registration order). It takes approximately 2-3 hours of your time / week and you can adjust the practices in your schedule as you wish (except for the Start and the End session on 12.3 & 9.4). Offered for KAMK Students and Staff.

Please, do not hesitate to contact me for further questions, I am happy to answer.
(sirkkulehtoranta@kamk.fi)

WHAT: A four week “course”, mainly online, about the philosophy of yoga (Yoga Sutras of Patanjali). Includes Yoga postures and mental perspective. The aim is to reduce the level of perceived stress.

WHY: The aim is to research if this period of four weeks would reduce the level of perceived stress or not.

WHEN: Starts after Ski holiday, an introduction session on Tuesday 12.3. at school.

FOR WHOM: For anyone who experiences stress, does not have any major physical restrictions (such as severe injury, pregnancy, continuous pain etc) and is open and willing to try this out.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please see the attached file and please feel free to contact me via email for further questions.

SIGN UP the latest by next Thursday, 28.2. by sending an email to sirkkulehtoranta@kamk.fi
The language of the course will be either in English or in Finnish, depending of the participants.

Welcome to join the journey! 😊

Kind regards,

Sirkku Lehtoranta

More detailed information:

NAME OF THE THESIS

Stress Management through the Philosophy of Yoga

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE THESIS?

To compose a course regarding stress management through the means of yoga and examine if it reduces the level of perceived stress.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE?

You will be engaged with the course for a period of four weeks. During those four weeks you will commit in:

- Participating two contact sessions (On Tuesday 12.3 and on Tuesday 9.4 in the afternoon, the exact time will be given later on)
- Doing yoga 3-4 x 20-30min per week (with online / written instructions)
- Go through the online material sent every week (max 15min per week)
- Answer questionnaires at the beginning and at the end of the course

If you wish to participate, send an email to sirkkulehtoranta@kamk.fi

WHY YOGA?

There are several studies regarding yoga and its capacity to reduce stress. Consequently, a narrow taste of philosophy of yoga is introduced during this course.

COURSE CONTENT

A brief overview of the eight steps towards the freedom of mind and positive change that a yogi called Patanjali put together. During the four weeks, we will take a bit closer look especially into the first four steps and the five main reasons of suffering (according to Patanjali).

Course outline:

- Asanas – a set of yoga postures that are said to relieve stress (They are not physically tiring, can be done alongside other training programmes, suitable for all levels)
- Pranayama – breathing techniques to clarify the mind
- Kleshas – the five main causes of suffering
- Yamas – guidelines to interact with the surroundings
- Niyamas – guidelines to interact with the self

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION?

Possibly reduce the level of perceived stress. However, this cannot be guaranteed.

WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

If you feel the participation of the course is causing you damage of any kind, you are free to discontinue anytime. In such case however, this should be informed (to Sirkku).

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE RESULTS OF THE THESIS?

The results will be used solely for the purpose of writing the thesis and evaluating the course content.

WHO ORGANIZES THE THESIS?

KAMK, Myötätuuli is the commissioning party. They mainly operate as a platform.

WHO HAS EVALUATED THE THESIS PLAN?

Thesis plan was evaluated by Jaana Kari.

WHO AM I AND WHY I CHOSE THIS TOPIC?

I am a 32-year-old sports student interested in stress and its management due to personal experiences in having few serious burnouts in the past. The aspect of yoga and its philosophy was chosen because it is close to my personal values, since I have practised daily meditation for almost six years now and I have come to see the benefits of personal growth in practise.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have any further questions, please feel free to send an email to sirkkulehtoranta@kamk.fi (English/ Finnish)

Kleshas:

Avidya: "Examples of this can be found many, and some of them are merely just being revealed as life goes on and I gain experience and understanding. However, here is one: I have this hope that I would be successful in school and work, and an idea that this would be an important thing in life, because this is how I got appraisal from my parents and teachers when I was a child and I perceived that it made my father happy. This wrong kind of perception of reality has made me to be too demanding towards myself and led to an idea in my head that there is never enough of time to do everything that is needed. Here can be seen that subjective, "wrong" information over the reality is increasing my stress levels due to demands that I, and my environment, has created for me. However, acknowledging this decreases the emphasis of the stressor; it allows me to suffer less when I understand that the stress related to school and work is primarily because of expectations in my head, due to identifying myself with the role of being a good student or employee, than because of the external world. This requires constant observation, especially because it is seen as the main cause for the other Kleshas."

Asmita: "A low self-esteem may dominate my life, especially if I go in the pilot-mode and do not pay attention to the origins of my actions. For example, wanting to go to exercise even though I am tired, but thinking that I am more loved if I look good. This can lead into thinking about the exercise and eating routines too much. Or a constant observing of the environment, whether I am being accepted in the current situation for example by observing gestures of other people, often unconsciously especially before being aware of this and admitting it to myself. Both habits lead into thinking about me and enhance self-centeredness; instead of thinking how the other person is feeling for example, I am thinking if I am being accepted or my mind is somewhere else planning my exercise routines etc. Also, the stress about the school work can be looked from this perspective: deep down I am searching the primitive approval that a child needs from a parent, now aiming to boost the low self-esteem with good grades and appraisal from the teachers, again leading into too much stress. Note, I am not saying that good results would be unwanted, but there is a difference in achieving things due to external and internal reasons. Nevertheless, when being aware of this pattern, it helps me to acknowledge the sources of my actions and reduce their power, for example in terms of learning to return assignments badly made, or accepting that I don't need to like all the people, nor they need to like me, knowing that the world will not end with that, however, the stress does decrease."

Raga: *“This shows in my life, as an example as a burning desire to go travelling again, even when knowing that there is no possibility for the moment. However, this distracts me from the reality of what is happening in my life right now and right here and causes stress. Also, this shows sometimes as eating candy to feel better and gain pleasure.. Acknowledging this is leading me into accepting life as it is, and this lessens unnecessary stress and keeps my mind calmer.”*

Dvesha: *“In my life this shows as not wanting to break up with anyone ever again. Of course, in my current relationship I really wish I would not need to, but this was different in my past relationship. We were together for five years even though I was insecure if I wanted to be with the man, however, I was avoiding the break up due to the pain that comes with it and the feeling being alone. Those forbid me to look at the situation with an open mind. Also, when I started instructing group exercise classes about seven years ago, a few times I made some mistakes and I felt extremely embarrassed afterwards; this has pushed me to work very hard with the preparation of my classes, causing sometimes unnecessary stress, just to avoid the embarrassment and feeling of shame. This step seems to be harder for me than Raga, since it sometimes feels scarier to let such feelings as threat of abandonment, shame or embarrassment to take over me, but the awareness of these help to work my way towards accepting all that I experience. (However, not easy!).”*

Abhinivesha: *“In my life one example is, that when I have had a busy period at school and I have needed time for myself instead of seeing my friends, I have felt the pressure from their side, and this has triggered a fear in me that I will end up all alone in this life. I first asked myself, so what if they do not understand me needing my own time. The answer in my mind was: They will abandon me. I again asked myself, so what and the answer was that I would end up alone. I went on with this cycle of questions and I ended up with an answer: there was an underlying fear of dying on the street of hunger and alone. Which, when said loud like this, sounds a little bit ridiculous, but as an emotion it was true. Acknowledging it helps me to put things in the right perspective and gives me more strength and independency to do what I really want to do, despite of what other people say or is expected according to my roles. Or another example could be regarding time management, I have this irrational fear that I do not have enough of time to do everything that is needed for school/work, but when I look at it more carefully, it does not have an argued source. If I would not manage to finish my tasks due to deadlines even when trying my best, I do believe that the teachers would understand it and I could still get it done. The point is that I need to*

understand what fear is irrational and with that understanding I can learn to look at the reality clearer. But of course, this is an ongoing process as all the Kleshas."

Yamas:

Ahimsa: "I might work on preparing my classes or a school assignment even when being extremely tired → this is being violent towards myself and treating myself wrong, when letting the ego and the desires and fears to lead the doing. Or when I put myself down with thoughts such as I am ugly and fat and worth of nothing → I am being violent towards myself. By observing my thoughts, I select, repeatedly, for example not to think bad of myself. However, when practicing this, it seems to be leading into a more balanced life."

Satya: "In my life this shows as an example by respecting my inner desires of making a Bachelor's degree at this age despite of what my friends and parents think. Or the same way the other way around: stopping my previous studies because it was not my field of interest, even though people around me thought I was insane for doing that. Or for example, when I give feedback for my classmates or colleagues a work, I try to think how I word it and really concentrate on which tone I am using, so that it would be put out in a nicer way. However, I do have to admit that sometimes I fail in this. When I am fighting with my boyfriend, I sometimes find it very difficult and say hurtful things to him in the heat of the moment. And I also find this somewhat difficult sometimes, because not all the people I encounter with are conscious of their actions. If I feel my boundaries are not being respected, for example if I feel that I am "stepped on", with receiving impolite words, someone is (mentally/physically) crossing my personal space or unfair decisions are done, it requires contemplation on what to do. Ahimsa should be practiced first, so letting other people treat me bad is violence towards myself, however, I need to work on controlling my emotions and aiming to defend myself (if needed) in a way that is less hurtful to the other person. This requires constant practice and finding a balance between ahimsa and satya is sometimes challenging."

Asteya: "When I was single, I desired a boyfriend/husband of someone else. Also, in my previous relationship I cheated on my boyfriend of that time, at least at some level, and that was violating this Yama since the trust of other person was taken. Also, for example plagiarism would be against this step."

Brahmacharya: "For example, I tend to put a lot of energy in work sometimes, even though when I am very tired, and this tends to control my life: I don't pay so much attention to my personal

growth and self-reflexion (spiritual purposes). Or when I have this extreme desire of being fit and I put too much energy and concentration in eating right and in exercising, that there have been times it has controlled my life. Which, when looking back, has not been successful in any way, but instead moderation in having a healthy lifestyle (as an example) results in a nicer life and less stress. This reminds me that not all needs to be absolute or perfect and makes life easier and more adjustable and allows more time for meditation and the work within."

Aparigraha: "For example, I have been thinking that how good grades do I really need from school and what is enough in terms of always wanting to do work/school related tasks extremely well. As I understand, this is another way of creating space in between the world of inside me vs the roles I have in this life and who I am underneath all that. Because, when being able to let go of wanting to fulfil roles (for example student – good grades, work – recognition etc) it gives free space for my internal desires and natural flow. A simple example of this could be that if I want success at school, I need to work for it at the cost of using that time and energy that could be used for something else. Especially, if that "something else", would be for example a much-needed rest, or an activity where my creativity would flow, instead of having stress when working on something that is done due to reasons related to external factors. In the long run these moments of my own time and giving space for my inner self help to see my internal desires and help to clarify what is underneath the roles. However, note that success may come, when working in a flow but it should not be the primary cause of performing, instead an attitude of modesty and humility combined with internal desires should direct the actions. (Birds sing and it is beautiful, but they do not sing BECAUSE it is beautiful, they sing due to their nature.) However, it is somewhat tricky because the ego might wish to succeed, and the society not only gives deadlines but teaches us to be achievement-driven. But in my experience, the more I can let go of expectations and apply the attitude of moderation regarding the outcome, and emphasize the working aligned with my inner interests, the less I have stress and the happier I feel."

Niyamas:

Saucha: "The easiest part of this is probably taking care of good personal hygiene and eating nutritious food. But keeping the thoughts pure seem a bit more difficult since the mind often works automatically, and it takes practice to identify the negative and useless thoughts. For me, one example of this would be when feeling stressed with life and getting caught up in the mental structures that I run in my head, for instance panicking that there is not enough of time or thinking

that I am not smart enough to finish my tasks (as has come up in the earlier videos). What I have started to do in my head often is that when a negative thought comes up that don't bring me anywhere, for example will I ever manage to finish my thesis, I acknowledge it, maybe look into it a bit more to see what fears are behind of it, then label it as 'not useful' and telling my mind that this thought will only bring me more suffering and not take me anywhere. However, this requires constant work and constant choosing and it is not always possible since it is not possible to tell the mind what to do. However, sometimes the suggesting and reminding of the mind helps, and when it works it seems to unload the mind from unnecessary blocks. For example, when I remind myself that 'I will finish my thesis', or just saying to myself, 'this is not useful', I tend to become less stressed."

Santosa: "For me, this is tricky one, the mind always seems to want more. I wish I was thinner and more fit. I wish my hair would look better. I wish I had more money. I wish I was wiser regarding enlightenment and life, to better overcome my fears and difficult emotions, that for example generate stress and relationship problems. Overall, I wish I would manage to accept that I am good enough, just as I am, and my contentment would not be so dependent on external factors, such as have I gained weight or what grade I got from my thesis or what other people seem to think of me. With the acceptance, that takes place step by step, the constant pushing and feeling unfulfilled disappears and is replaced with moving forward with a more peaceful and less stressed mind. For example, finding joy in sports instead of thinking the results I get from it. Or studying yoga because I am authentically curious and with a pace that is suitable for my situation, instead of pushing it and constantly feeling of not being enough."

Tapas: "This can be many things that require self-discipline to take the actions that bring me forward in the training of the self. This shows in such things as meditating every day even when having the urge to watch Netflix, not speaking bad about other people but instead investigating myself in conflict situations. Also, aiming to maintain calmness even in stressful situations and trying to choose the self-control instead of frustration – not always so easy. However, I can see that the more I have the discipline to meditate, to practice introspection and keep the calmness in different situations, the more it brings me clarity of mind and somehow reduces suffering, since my self-understanding increases, and communication becomes better. Some days I succeed better in this and other days not so well!"

Svadhyaaya: *“When I think for example of how I strive for school and work tasks at the cost of my own wellbeing, that is a good place to stop to examine my actions and especially, the reasons behind those. Mostly, (as mentioned earlier) it comes from identifying myself with the role of a student, a role of a good girl who needs the approval of others (teacher/clients) to feel good about herself. So, the main reason for draining myself is not the amount of work there is, but the insecurity and feeling of not being good enough, that the work aims to compensate. Or another example, when for example eating a lot of chocolate (cause) and feeling very guilty about it (action), the actual cause is the idea, hope and expectation that I SHOULD look different than I do due to a fear of not being loved. For me, especially related to stress, I am all the time becoming more aware of the internal demands that I hold that are the core causing trouble in my actions, but of course, it is a process. I also implement the self-study for example by reading books that help me to gain new perspective about myself related to the world, by taking time just to sit with my thoughts and emotions and I write things down with the aim to search my inner motives and believes even when the truth feels uncomfortable and by talking to my meditation teachers in an authentic way of how things really are going, so that I can gain new perspective from our sessions. The self-study helps with understanding myself and with that, understanding the people around me, and definitely contributes in reducing harmful patterns from my life. And of course, there are moments of clarity and moments of despair and complete chaos, but I have learned to accept it as a part of the process.”*

Ishvara Pranidhana: *“I often tend to over-plan things: how to work out to get better results for myself, how and when to study and get everything done. Plan after plan, schedule after schedule, only to make myself better and to boost my egocentric thinking and roles. Whereas this Niyama suggests letting go. Letting go of everything (except for yoga practice) and just have a trust in life. For example, when writing this thesis, or doing other school stuff, this idea of letting go and trusting that what will be is ok, helps to lower my stress and decreases the feel of guilt when I have less productive weeks. At the end of the day, it is my ego that is threatened since the constant achieving guarantees good results and gives a feeling as if all would be under control, but when letting go, I am afraid that I get a bad grade and things would not go well. In other words, fear and the lack of trust are drowning me in stress and planning. Some days I succeed better in the letting go, some days not so much (yet) but I feel better and am less stressed when managing to surrender to the flow of life.”*

WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS OF THE POSTURES

All the postures are claimed to either relieve stress and/or anxiety and/or calm the brain and/or mind. As an individual practise, both sessions take about 20-30min.

The postures of the Session 1:

NOTE: 1-3 is a sequence (Check the video).

First two rounds: make slowly, hold each posture for 3-4 breaths. Then make 2-4 rounds more as a modified sun salutation sequence, in the rhythm of your own breathing.

Sequence:

- Start from standing position, feet slightly apart
- On inhale reach the hands towards the ceiling, gaze up
- On exhale bend forward, placing hands or fingers on the mat
- On inhale chest forward
- On exhale a long step backwards into a plank (right/left)
- On inhale knees on the floor
- On exhale chest in the floor
- On inhale into the cobra
- On exhale chest down
- On inhale into the child pose
- On exhale into the downwards facing dog
- On inhale a long step forward, chest forward (right/leg)
- On exhale curve back

- On inhale all the way up, reach towards ceiling, gazing up
- On exhale hands on the sides of the body

9. Cobra – Kobra – Bhujanga

- Press feet and pubic bone towards the floor and relax the buttocks
- FIRST 2 ROUNDS: Place hands in front of the body and on inhale lift the chest up, keeping the hips on the floor
- ROUNDS 3-6: Keep hands under the shoulders and on inhale lift the chest up as much as your body allows, look straight forward and keep elbows close to your body
- On exhale come down / on inhale into the child pose

(Schöps, 2016, p. 70; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 61-62)

10. Child pose – Lapsen asento – Balasana

- Sit on your heels and rest your head on the floor
- If uncomfortable, place hands underneath your forehead

(Schöps, 2016, p. 210)

11. Downward dog – Alaspäin katsova koira – Adho mukha svanasana

- From all fours, tuck the toes on the mat and on exhale straighten the legs, feet at hip-width distance. You may take a correcting step if needed.
- You can bend your knees a bit (if hamstrings and calves feel very tight), press heels towards the mat, aiming to touch it
- Toes pointing forward, lift the buttocks and tailbone towards the ceiling, straighten the back
- Spread fingers and push them towards the mat, rotate elbows slightly outwards

- Keep weight evenly distributed

(Schöps, 2016, p. 67; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 63)

12. Mountain Pose – Vuoriasento – Tadasana

- Stand still, feet together and weight distributed evenly on the soles of the feet
- Lock the knees, softly pull kneecaps up
- Contract thighs and the core softly
- Lengthen the spine by pushing the tailbone down and bringing the pubic bone forward, and stretching the top of the head up while bringing jaw slightly towards chest
- Open the chest, press shoulder blades down, turn upper arms outwards and let relaxed arms hang on the sides
- Hold for 8-10 breaths

(Schöps, p. 64; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 39-41)

13. Lotus Pose – Lootus – Padmasana / Puolilootus – Ardha Padmasana

- Sit on the floor and bring the other foot on top of the thigh, so the outer edge of the foot is pressing the groin
- The heel should be as close as possible to the navel
- YOU CAN STAY HERE IN A HALF LOTUS, OR
- Rotating the knee slightly outwards, bring the other feet on top of the thigh, outer edge touching the groin
- Straighten the spine by pulling towards the ceiling from the top of your head

- Place hands on the knees, palms upwards, the thumb on top of the index finger
- Hold for 8-10 breaths
- Repeat to the other side (1-2 times both sides)

(Schöps, p. 39, 206; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. 53-54)

14. Happy baby – Onnellinen vauva – (No sanskrit name)

- Lay on your back and on inhale flex the knees
- Grab from the toes and on exhale pull knees towards the floor
- The whole back/spine is on the floor
- Swing from side to side
- Hold for 8-10 breaths

(Schöps, 2016, p. 212)

15. Seated forward bend – Länsivenytys – Paschimottanasana

- Sit firmly on both buttocks (If difficult due to tightness in hip-area, place a folded blanket/pillow underneath)
- On inhale bring hands towards the sky and stretch the spine, on exhale lean forward
- Grab from your feet with your hands / use a belt and pull toes
- Aim to straighten the back, especially the lower back
- Let your forehead rest on your shins / on a pillow and relax the neck
- Hold the pose at least for 10 breaths, or longer if it feels comfortable

(Schöps, 2016, p. 110; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 57-58)

- Corpse pose – Kuolleen miehen asento – Savasana

- Lay down on your back, straighten the arms and the legs (If pain in lower back, flex your knees and let them lean towards each other)
- Palms facing towards the sky, let the feet fall a bit outwards
- Relax the muscles and soften the tongue, the forehead and let eyes sink to the back of the head
- Mentally go through the body, how does it feel after the practise
- Stay here for 3-10 minutes

(Schöps, 2016, p. 215; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 67)

The postures of the Session 2:

REPEAT 1 + 2 for two rounds

9. Standing forward bend – Eteentaivutus seisten - Uttanasana

- Stand in the Mountain Pose and move feet to about hip-width distance
- Grasp and lock the elbows, on inhale stretch the arms above the head
- On exhale bend forward, let the arms hand towards the floor
- Release tension
- If you feel any pain in the back, flex the knees and/or let the arms hang freely towards the floor
- Hold for 8-10 breaths

(Schöps, 2016, p. 65; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 47-48)

- Triangle pose – Kolmio – Utthita Trikosasana

- Take a long step to the side, heels aligned, front foot pointed forward and back foot rotated 45 degrees
- Straighten both legs, share the weight evenly on both feet and press the outer edge of the back foot towards the floor
- Hips are open to the side
- On inhale lift hands up and lengthen the spine, on exhale stretch the spine and bring the front hand on the floor / on the shin, the other hand towards the sky
- Look up, arms in straight alignment, keep pushing the outer edge of the back foot towards the mat
- On inhale stretch the top of the head forward and on exhale open the hips a bit more
- On inhale come up, on exhale release, other side
- Hold for 5-8 breaths

(Schöps, 2016, p. 88; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 42)

10. Tree Pose – Puu – Vrksana

- Bring weight to the other leg
- Bring the sole of the other feet to the inner thigh/calf
- Lock the straight knee, contract the thigh and push the flexed knee outwards
- On inhale lengthen the spine by pulling head up and on exhale, press the tailbone down
- Push the straight leg firmly towards the floor
- On inhale bring the hands up and on exhale relax the shoulders / Or on exhale bring the hands in front of the heart
- Hold for 8-10 breaths each side

- (Schöps, p. 83; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 40-41)

11. Easy Pose – Mukava Räätälinasento – Sukhasana

- Sit in a comfortable position and cross your legs
- Make sure buttocks are firmly against the floor, relax hips and let the knees sink towards the floor (NOTE: if hips are tight, sit on a folded blanket/pillow)
- Straighten the spine stretching the hands towards the sky
- Bring hands on the knees, palms downwards to direct focus inside, keep the spine straight by softly pulling the top of the head towards the sky
- Close your eyes and stay here for 8-10 breaths
- Repeat with legs crossed the other way around

(Schöps, 2016, p. 202; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 52-53)

12. Fish Pose – Kala – Malsyasana

- Lay down on your back, straighten legs, and place hands underneath the buttocks, palms towards the floor, place forearms and elbows close to your torso
- If straight legs give too much pressure, choose to flex the knees throughout the movement
- On inhale, pull shoulder plates together, lift upper torso and arch the spine, support with arms
- On exhale, bring the crown of your head on the floor, MAKE SURE WEIGHT IS ON THE ARMS (not on your neck)
- With straight legs point toes forwards (OR keep knees flexed)
- Hold for 5-8 breaths, release on exhale

(Schöps, 2016, p. 137; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 66)

Bridge – Silta – Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

- Lay down on your back and place feet to hip-width distance, close to the buttocks
- On inhale lift the hips up, push the jaw towards the chest, push the upper arms and the feet firmly towards the ground
- On exhale, bring hands underneath the body and interlace the fingers OR grab from the ankles
- On the next exhale, exhale push the tailbone towards the knees
- Hold for 5-8 breaths, release on exhale

(Schöps, 2016, p. 133; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 67-68)

13. Plough pose – Aura – Halasasana

- Lay on your back and on inhale bring your legs behind your back
- Keep your back as straight as possible, let the toes touch the floor/wall/book
- With straight arms, interlace the fingers behind your back, aim to bring shoulders underneath your body and, draw your chin away from the chest
- The bodyweight is on the shoulders and the neck is free (If needed, place a blanket underneath the shoulders)
- Hold at least for 10 breaths, or more if comfortable

(Schöps, 2016, p. 186; Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 66)

14. Corpse pose – Kuolleen miehen asento – Savasana

- Lay down on your back, straighten the arms and the legs (If pain in lower back, flex your knees and let them lean towards each other)
- Palms facing towards the sky, let the feet fall a bit outwards

- Relax the muscles and soften the tongue, the forehead and let eyes sink to the back of the head
- Mentally go through the body, how does it feel after the practise
- Stay here for 3-10 minutes

- The sequence helps to maintain a calm mind
- Cobra helps to reduce depression
- Child pose helps with tension and relieves stress and anxiety
- Downward facing dog releases stress and tension
- Mountain Pose can reduce stress and helps with focus
- Standing forward bend help to keep the calm
- Triangle pose helps with relieving stress and anxiety
- Tree Pose helps to gain the balance and relief stress can relief stress
- Lotus Pose calms the brain and helps to release the stress and negative emotions stored in the hip area and the second chakra
- Happy baby pose calms the mind and helps with stress and fatigue
- Fish Pose helps to reduce fatigue and anxiety (
- Bridge pose can relieve tension and stress
- Plough pose relieves stress
- Easy Pose cultivates calmness in the brain
- Seated forward bend helps to reduce stress
- Corpse pose relieves stress and tensions

- **STRESS** - *“People are not disturbed by a thing, but their perception of a thing”*

Stress occurs due to a situation, where an individual perceives an outside factor, such as work demands or other pressuring situation or life event, to be too difficult to cope with. Stress is different for everyone: it is not about the outside circumstances but how an individual perceives the situation.

EUSTRESS is experienced in short bursts and it leads into alertness and improves performance. **DISTRESS** can be for shorter or longer periods, it impairs performance, and can negatively affect the psyche.

If the stress reactions will not quiet but constantly keep the body in the alarm-mode, it can cause a burnout and make a person sick. When symptoms are continuous, an individual might no longer acknowledge the state to be dangerous or different from what is perceived as “normal”.

STRESS FACTORS examples to give an idea, all stress factors are situational and individual	STRESS REACTIONS / SYMPTOMS of harmful stress	CONSEQUENCES (Behavioural changes) of harmful stress	Examples of STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES
external / physical	physical	behavioural changes	
Anything that is perceived as a threat for staying alive/ getting injured etc. For example: - Car/train coming towards you fast and you need to jump off road - A sound in the bush that you perceive to be a dangerous animal / a criminal	Low energy, headaches, upset stomach, gastrointestinal problems, constipation, nausea, diarrhoea, dry mouth, sweaty hands, aches, pains, tense muscles, migraines, backaches, chest pain or tightness in chest, rapid heartbeat, insomnia, grinding, loss of sexual desire	Passive behaviour, avoiding others, aggressive behaviour, irritability, snappiness, procrastination, increased alcohol consumption, increased caffeine consumption, comfort eating/not eating, changes in sleep pattern, compulsive behaviour, nervous habits such as nail biting, poor time management, reduced work performance	Targeted to either stress reactions or ways to perceive stress factors: Progressive Muscle Relaxation, meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, biohacking, Ayurveda, diaphragmatic breathing, cognitive behavioural therapy, emotional freedom technique, Yoga/Pilates/Taiji, NLP, TRE
internal / mental	psychological	possible consequences	

<p>ny situation that is perceived a threat mentally, for instance a danger of being ashamed, danger of being socially abandoned</p> <p>I.e. Performance based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A demanding task at school/work, deadline coming up and not enough of time, demanding presentation to give at work etc <p>Emotion based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A divorce, relationship/social problems, a death of someone close to you etc. 	<p>Constant worrying, negative images, unable to concentrate, anxiousness, forgetfulness, feeling depressed, poor judgment, being pessimistic, seeing only negative, reduced self-esteem and self-worth, mood swings, suicidal thoughts</p>	<p>Risk of depression and some diseases grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problems at work, since the productivity might have decreased. - Problems with relationships and family. - A Risk that healthy living habits may decrease or disappear. 	
---	---	--	--

YOGA PHILOSOPHY - OVERVIEW

“Yoga is the cessation of movements in the consciousness” (Yoga sutra 1.2) Yoga is an ancient method towards holistic wellbeing considering body, mind and soul becoming healed. Most of Yoga practise occur off the mat.

Yoga is a variety of methods, based on ancient texts:

- Bhagavadgita which is a part of a national epic of India consisting of 18 long educational songs.
 - Hatha Yoga Pradipika which explains the texts of Patanjali in practise and is described as the foundation of hatha yoga.
 - Vedas, the oldest and what are considered as the most sacred texts in India, where the practise of yoga is acknowledged, and core concepts and foundations of the philosophy are introduced.
 - Upanishads, where the teachings of the Vedas were reflected by teachers and students.
 - Yoga Sutras of Patanjali where the techniques of yoga were logically collected for the first time.
- ➔ This course concentrates on the teachings of Patanjali. He offers a path of eight limbs, in other words eight steps, towards a freedom of mind and a positive change.

MAIN POINTS OF PATANJALI:

KLESHAS: The five main reasons for suffering. According to Patanjali, it is not possible to live life without the influence of the these. However, by their conscious recognition and using the path of the eight limbs, the negative effects can be reduced.

THE PATH OF THE EIGHT STEPS:

1. Yamas – guidelines to the interaction with surroundings
2. Niyamas – guidelines to the interaction with the self
3. Asanas – physical postures to work with the body, the aim is to find a deeper realization and understanding of life
4. Pranayama – breathing techniques to allow the vitality flow freely in the body
5. Pratyahara – a sense withdrawal
- 6-8. Samyama – contains the last three steps which are Dharana, the ability to fully concentrate on one thing, Dhyana, meditation, and Samadhi, the inner freedom

- ➔ During this course, we will take a look at Kleshas, and steps 1-4.

WELCOME EMAIL

Dear All,

You have registered in my thesis related course, I am thankful for the interest 😊 Here are some further details.

We will start on Tuesday 12.3. at 16:00-17:30 in the SMART GYM (Älysalu), TAITO 2.

SESSION 1 (Start) content:

1. I'll introduce myself shortly, filling in the questionnaire, signing the course agreement paper
2. Handout of overview of the course, explanation
3. Give out written instructions of the postures, go them through in practise
4. A Short overview of stress
5. A short overview of yoga philosophy
6. Make sure everything is clear / questions

What to bring: Comfortable stretchy clothes, a blanket (big enough so it can be folded) and a belt, to aid some of the yoga postures if needed.

Our second session is held on Tuesday 9.4. at 16:00-17:30.

I am happy to meet you all next week, and if anything is unclear, please let me know.
Warmly welcome to the course 😊

Kind regards,

Sirkku

EMAIL YOGA SESSIONS

Dear All,

Here are the links for the yoga sessions:

Yoga 1:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMEI_NNI0Bc&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1HUgi-z28pTL5KqNz43XZ6XYTJTVsMDk4On6SU_L2Uegun46yjnzCtmRY

Yoga 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDr-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDr-HbdCEmY&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3F4xhEFuWjsTgeGvxgaWOzVfmL-9KGEq-CbuUOOuTwJRaAm9oOXQ6MKvg)

[HbdCEmY&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3F4xhEFuWjsTgeGvxgaWOzVfmL-9KGEq-CbuUOOuTwJRaAm9oOXQ6MKvg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDr-HbdCEmY&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3F4xhEFuWjsTgeGvxgaWOzVfmL-9KGEq-CbuUOOuTwJRaAm9oOXQ6MKvg)

ENJOY! 😊

Yogic regards,

Sirkku

EMAIL WEEK 1, KLESHAS

If identification of the self occurs only through roles, this may cause stress. It is as stirring muddy water in a glass; the mud will disappear only when the movement stops. In other words, the answer is to calm the mind, and to let go of the roles and mental constructions that has been created. That is not the easiest task, but more of a process that happens over time. It is about being aware of the reality and accepting it as it is, watching thoughts and emotions but not engaging with those. (Krohn, n.d.c)

This course is aiming to help with the “letting go” and heading towards a mind that is more still and present in the moment. This is done, by starting the identification of the mental structures, hopes, expectations, roles etc. to better understand how the mind works and how to become more aware of it, and hopefully, start a journey towards an unconditioned and free stage.

Let us start with Kleshas, the five main reasons for suffering according to Patanjali, that will help to clarify the matter.

- ➔ TASK: Looking at yourself in a very honest way, and writing down/contemplating what roles you identify yourself with and how does it show in your life? Also, writing down/contemplating how do the Kleshas show in your life? (This task is only for your individual purpose.)

LINKS:

Klesha # 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-L5W5vu0jY&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1QwKqz0mCKzplIzoi0eVs7UWBycoX8UYAZyEfbwwlxxUWeGYKOc1xn_4

Klesha # 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51ocsPxuKDE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2eSr311beoWaDqZeHlc5fPfiDWiD2fLYbMcZb7i7fIQXpmsdQgcZ7AKpl>

Klesha #3&4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_uC0kh_mXo&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1m_0STXSus4Ar0HBF4K1e33Behg3cpjGly9XF7XmWvl27cGOO5XZEY0CM

Klesha #5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ex7l1SrLuw&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2eSr311beoWaDqZeHlc5fPfiDWiD2fLYbMcZb7i7fIQXpmsdQgcZ7AKpl>

Good luck!

Kind regards,

Sirkku ☺

EMAIL WEEK 2

Dear All,

Hope you are doing well. Here is the material for the second week.

You may either check out the written instructions in the attached file, (especially for Unregular Breathing and Deliberate Breathing since they are rather easy to understand), or see the videos. I would ask you to implement at least one breathing exercise / day, (should be rather easily done, just a matter of remembering it).

ABOUT PRANAYAMA

Emotional state affects breathing: tense mind creates superficial and unregular breaths and a relaxed mind supports calm deep breathing. The fourth step of Patanjali suggests looking at the matter the other way around: the way of breathing has the power to calm the body and mind. Consequently, to attain a peaceful mind and help the flow of energy and tranquil of the body, different techniques to control inhaling and exhaling are used.

The word prana refers to the vitality of the body but when stress and tension is experienced, it cannot flow freely. In general, when breathing is irregular and superficial, it may keep the body and the brain deoxygenated and for instance decrease the level of concentration.

Four different techniques that are calming and suitable for beginners are introduced in the videos and written instructions.

Please, see the written instructions attached, and/or the videos.

Deliberate breathing: <https://youtu.be/hTMI3Rc9vxY>

Unregular breathing: <https://youtu.be/VjdNUTzpxi4>

Alternate nostril breath: <https://youtu.be/iQpiDn90LdA>

Chest and belly breathing: https://youtu.be/N8_3UpXYRMc

Enjoy :) -Sirku

Written instructions of Pranayama

Pranayama

These exercises can be done either as individual practises when needed or as part of the yoga asana practise. Start cautiously, observe the reactions of your body. Aim to make one exercise of your own preference each day.

Deliberate Breathing - Sahita pranayama

- Can be done in for instance in Lotus pose, Easy pose or Corpse pose, or whenever during the daytime
- Observe your breathing and acknowledge the rhythm: inhale, natural pause, exhale, natural pause
- Inhale and hold the pause for a bit longer than usual (it should not feel uncomfortable)
- Exhale and hold the pause for a bit longer than usual (it should not feel uncomfortable)
- Repeat for 1-5 minutes

(Iyengar, 2002, p. 33; Rukat, n.d.)

Visama Vritti Pranayama – Unregular Breathing

- Can be done any time, for example in the class room, at work or before sleeping
- Count to three when inhaling and count to six when exhaling (In long-term, the times can be prolonged little by little when the body get used to the exercise)
- Repeat for 1-5 minutes

(Schöps, 2016, p. 221)

Anuloma Viloma – Alternate Nostril Breath

- Can be done in easy pose or in Lotus pose, or sitting on a chair
- Place the index and the middle fingers between your eyebrows
- Inhale and exhale

- Close right nostril with thumb and inhale through left nostril on count to 5
- Close both nostrils and count to 5 (If this feels uncomfortable, hold for less time or do not hold the breath at all)
- Release the right nostril and exhale on a count to 5 and inhale on a count to 5
- Close both nostrils and count to 5 (If this feels uncomfortable, hold for less time or do not hold the breath at all)
- Release the left nostril and exhale on a count to 5 → This completes one round.
- Repeat for 5 rounds
- (Over time, it can gradually be built up into inhaling and exhaling with 8 counts and holding the breath for 16 counts, however, start cautiously.)

(Wells & Skovmand, n.d. p. 34-35; Miller, 2003, p. 21)

Kuksa Pranayama – Belly and Chest Breathing

- Can be done in Easy pose and in Corpse Pose
- Close your eyes and place your hands on your belly, bringing your focus there
- Inhale on a count to 5, feeling the belly expanding and rounding; the chest should not move
- Exhale on count to 5, feeling the belly flattening

→ repeat 7 times
- Move your hand on your upper chest and focus your attention in the middle of the chest
- On inhale (5), feel the ribcage expanding and the breath extending into front, sides and back of the chest
- Exhale completely (5)

→ Repeat 7 times

When finished, observe how/if it felt different when doing the belly breathing vs the chest breathing

- (Miller, 2003, p. 23)

EMAIL WEEK 3

Dear All,

Here is the material for the third week. Hope you are continuing with your yoga and pranayama practise...and of course above all I wish you are enjoying those. Have a great week, Sirkku 😊

ABOUT YAMAS

These are five guidelines to gain a thoughtful interaction with surroundings that help to reach peace and concordance with the self, other people and environment. Following these steps is a process throughout the life where self-compassion helps to continue, and learning is constant. Before you check the material, it is worth of mentioning though, that the idea with the yamas and the niyamas (week 4) is not to suppress the thoughts and emotions, but to gently direct those towards a more beneficial focus. If for example having angry emotions towards another person while wishing to practise non-violence (ahimsa), it is suggested to be beneficial to remind the mind by talking to it and saying: “this is not useful, this only brings me more suffering, let’s go towards the other direction”. To clarify, the other direction does not mean for instance moving from hate to love but aiming to let go of the negative, moving from hate to non-hate.

When acknowledging thoughts, this process is suggested to be used:

1. Observe the thoughts that come to the mind. This can be done along the daily activities and during the time that is set for self-contemplation.
2. Label the thoughts as “not useful” or “useful”. Negative thoughts have power only when they are not acknowledged. (This should not be seen as judging oneself for not thinking positively, but to honestly and transparently become aware of harming thought patterns.)
3. Let go of the negative thoughts, do nothing with them. On the contrast, the positive thoughts can be enforced so they would move into actions.

Please, kindly keep in mind that thoughts and emotions are not suppressed, it is a soft and loving process where detachment of unnecessary thoughts is enhanced.

In addition, to avoid misunderstanding, it should be mentioned that thought patterns cannot be forcefully changed, instead a deeper understanding of the self will naturally lead into their changing. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned process will help to identify thoughts for example

by exposing repeating patterns of the mind and helping to acknowledge what is in the unconscious. When the underlying conceptions begin to unveil, the understanding towards the self, the others and life increases.

Links:

Yama 1 <https://youtu.be/zUDONs7gvBk>

Yama 2 <https://youtu.be/fyBzLvULug>

Yama 3 <https://youtu.be/BNceO5LZaGo>

Yama 4 <https://youtu.be/UY0Dr6bw5P0>

Yama 5 <https://youtu.be/3hQmRujzRLU>

EMAIL WEEK 4

Dear All,

Here is the material of the last week. Hope you have had the time to see the videos regarding the Yamas (w3), this week is about Niyamas.

NIYAMAS

Through the Niyamas, Patanjali introduces five guidelines on how to act towards the self. The thought-process introduced in last week's email can also be applied here.

TASK: "Look at yourself in a very honest way and write down/contemplate how do the Yamas and the Niyamas show in your life? What could you maybe do differently, especially keeping in mind how to treat yourself better?"

LINKS:

Niyama 1: <https://youtu.be/e5piTOIOkPE>

Niyama 2: <https://youtu.be/MAb8c9rZwiU>

Niyama 3: <https://youtu.be/9gDXCS-XSvM>

Niyama 4: <https://youtu.be/duKZpl1kXU0>

Niyama 5: <https://youtu.be/pbXIUodLk4>

Sunny regards,

Sirkku

LAST SESSION - EMAIL

Dear All,

I wish to remind you that we will meet on next Tuesday 9.4. at 16:00 in Älysali (the same place as last time) as agreed.

We will do some yoga together (about 30 min) and then I will kindly ask for you to fill in the final questionnaires. In addition, if there are any questions or topics you wish to cover with me or the group, this would be a good time for that 😊

This all will take about 1 hour, depending of the conversation and how much you wish to write feedback.

See you then.

Kind regards,

Sirkku

START QUESTIONNAIRE

First name:

Age:

In your experience, how stressed have you been on average during the past four weeks?

Circle the answer.

0 = not at all, 1 = somewhat stressed, 2 = stressed, 3 = extremely stressed

How stress shows in your life? What kind of symptoms have you experienced during the past four weeks?

- Physical symptoms:
- Psychological symptoms:
- Social symptoms:

In your experience, how much has stress negatively affected your life during the past four weeks?

0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = very often

- On a daily basis? _____
- On a weekly basis? _____
- Overall? _____

In what kind of situations do you often/easily experience stress?

How do you currently manage your stress?

Do you understand the reasons behind your stress? If yes, please specify.

Why did you get interested in this course? Why do you wish to reduce your stress levels with the means of yoga?

What are your expectations regarding this course?

END QUESTIONNAIRE

First name:

Age:

In your experience, how stressed have you been on average during the past four weeks?

Circle the answer.

0 = not at all, 1 = somewhat stressed, 2 = stressed, 3 = extremely stressed

Has any of your stress related symptoms changed? If yes, please specify.

In your experience, how much has stress negatively affected your life during the past four weeks?

0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often, 3 = very often

- On a daily basis? _____
- On a weekly basis? _____
- Overall? _____

Did you manage to follow the course for the past four weeks?

- Did you practice the asanas 3-4 times a week? Yes/no, please specify.
- Did you practice Pranayama daily? Yes/no, please specify.
- Did you watch the online material regarding Kleshas, Yamas and Niyamas? Yes/no, please specify.
- Did you practice self-reflexion according to Patanjali's teachings? Yes/no, please specify.

Have you changed your stress management strategy during the course? Yes/no, please specify.

Did you experience this course useful or not? Do you think it will have some impact on your life and your stress management in the future? Yes/no, please specify.

Did any new perspectives unfold during the course?

- Related to the understanding of the reasons behind your stress (in other words, related to why you perceive certain things to be stressful)?
- Related to yourself?
- Other?

How did you experience the course?

- Overall?

- The yoga asanas?
- The online material?

Did the course meet your expectations? Yes/no, please specify.

What worked well / what worked poorly during the course? Suggestions, ideas, critique, anything else you wish to mention?

AGREEMENT OF THE COURSE

Name of the thesis: Stress Management through the Philosophy of Yoga

Content of the thesis: To compile a 4-weeks-course, partly based on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and to research if participation to this course would reduce the level perceived stress.

Course content: A brief overview of the eight steps towards the freedom of mind and positive change that a yogi called Patanjali put together. During the four weeks, we will take a bit closer look especially into the first four steps and the five main reasons of suffering (according to Patanjali).

Course outline:

- Asanas – a set of yoga postures that are said to relieve stress (They are not physically tiring, can be done alongside other training programmes, suitable for all levels)
- Pranayama – breathing techniques to clarify the mind
- Kleshas – the five main causes of suffering
- Yamas – guidelines to interact with the surroundings
- Niyamas – guidelines to interact with the self

Start session on 12.3. End session on 9.4.

Cancellation policy: If the participation of the course is causing damage of any kind, one is free to discontinue anytime. In such case however, this should be immediately informed to Sirku by email.

The participants can revise the final research report before it is published, to review the parts where **results, information and comments** presented in the questionnaires are used. This guarantees the anonymity of the participants.

I hereby confirm that I have received enough information regarding the upcoming course. I commit myself into

- practising the given yoga practises over a period of four weeks,
- going through the given online materials,
- and answering the start and end questionnaires.

Date:

Signatures: