Yoga for Coronary Heart Disease

Cardiopathy is the generic term used for health related heart conditions. The most common form of these is Coronary heart disease, one of various illnesses affecting the heart. Heart disease is the leading cause of deaths in the United States and UK, approximately doubling those caused by cancer.

The most common kind of coronary heart disease is angina. Symptoms include pains in the chest, which indicate the heart is being taxed to work dramatically more than nature intended. Irregular and racing pulses coupled with subsidiary pains often experienced in neighbouring areas such as the neck and arms are all alarm bells. Remedial action is mandatory if further damage is to be prevented. If symptoms aren't heeded to, blood clotting and heart attack frequently follow with time. A heart attack will damage the heart permanently and this increases one's susceptibility to future reoccurrences.

What happens is that fatty substances build up enough to plaque the arterial walls. This reduces blood supply to the heart as the arteries close up progressively. Oxygen supply reduces and this leads to symptoms which indicate further troubles, possibly fatal, could be on the way.

There are a few risk factors involved which are known as major and contributing; the major ones have been proven to increase risks of heart disease. It is possible to take positive steps to reduce likelihood of illness with some of these risk factors where as in the case of genetics, this may be unavoidable. Certainly changes to one's lifestyle are the way to implement positive steps to reduce difficulties. Those at risk include; having high blood pressure, being overweight, smoking, drinking, having high cholesterol from saturated fatty foods, diabetics, being sedentary, gender, race and 'state of the art-sign of the times' type 'A' males or females burning the fire without ever giving it space or fuel to sustain itself wholly.

The more ticks in your 'risk factor box', the more likely you are to develop heart disease. Some risks can be changed, treated, or modified, some cannot. By controlling as many risk factors as possible, through lifestyle changes and prescribed medicine, you can reduce your own risk of heart disease.

The effect of smoking, well demonstrates the barrage of attacks the heart faces daily in order to sustain healthy rate and pressure. This is made increasingly difficult by tightening arteries which tax the system heavily. Any activity that overworks the body-mind, leads to toxins gathering, whereby blood vessels are damaged as excessive traffic passes through a contaminated

system. This eventually causes a pile up, often ending in the Accident and Emergency ward.

Yogic practice is proven to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels effectively. This burns calories, strengthens and increases elastin in all muscles, which includes the heart especially.

With age everything slows down. If we haven't tendered our field well, this increases chances of systemic failure; the heart will be unable to harvest enough energy for the whole body. This is where community, synergy or yoga come into play.

I believe that stress is the main cause of most disease. By stress I mean an imbalance of tension. The root cause of stress is ignorance; who we are, what's important, how society is the macrocosm of the heart and underground blood flow. When stress becomes our 'pulse', we move away from the present and fly to past or future, addicted to our stories that thrill or depress us. They keep us from reality which is plain and simply now; all embracing.

Stress increases tensions within the body. This may cause thickening of the blood which gets charged with adrenaline. Blood pressure raises and subsequently damages arterial walls. Just like a torn muscle, when they repair, these linings have hardened, inviting plaque to settle. Blood is naturally at greater risk of clotting the thicker it becomes, often resulting in heart attack. Increasing amounts of stress contribute to the spiral effect, whereby people seeking to alleviate symptoms actually add to them by for example, sugar binging, loading with stimulants, drink, other drugs and, losing sleep.

How Yoga Helps

University, health and government body studies have shown that regular practice of yoga reduces the risk of heart problems, as it has a direct and sometimes immediate effect upon blood pressure and pulses. The working of an individual blood vessel is known as endothelial function. This is the manner in which each cell contracts and expands to facilitate blood flow, in exactly the same way that the heart contracts and expands to give or take blood into or out of itself. This epitomises life – day, night, activity, rest, tension, relaxation, fullness and emptying. Blood is the very life of our matter. Ever increasing stress leads to fixed conditioning in our global quest to have more, be more and get 'there' quicker than the rest. The end of the road is inflexibility, as this conditioning snares us in our own mesh. This boils down to each blood droplet,

which mirrors this; diminished suppleness means it cannot breathe – no expansion, nor contraction.

The Yogic Practices

First and foremost, we all need to remember **how to relax**. Relaxation techniques are many, all devised to reconnect us with our core. What happens in the process is that the body learns how to balance it's tension/relaxation formula; a mixture of the parasympathetic and sympathetic branches of the nervous mechanism. The parasympathetic branch deals with restoration; cellular regeneration – this is how our bodies will be tomorrow and how we program the genes of our offspring.

Yogic Sleep, classically termed Yoga Nidra is the traditional method of centring or resetting. It mirrors nature, allowing the body, brain, nerves and mind to sleep. It is conscious sleep. The body sleeps, while 'Seer' or the mind's observer overlooks the process.

Practice Yogic Sleep

Lie on your back on the floor. When you can't, you may be sitting or even discover the need and ability to implement these techniques in a queue or in a traffic jam.

Feel the weight of your body. Feel the weight of your head. Feel the weight of your two arms. Focus on one arm, feeling its weight moving down towards the ground. **Take your time**. Feel the weight of the hand, fingers and thumbs as they all release and soften with your awareness. Observe the other arm and hand, fingers and thumb as they soften like a flower smiling at the sun. Notice your breath as it moves into or out of your body. Notice as you exhale that your body is heavier; this cradles you with a sense of support. It's that 'end of the day feeling' where you know that you are letting go for a while. If you feel anxious or cannot re-lax, allow this and continue the practice anyway.

Notice that after you breathe out and let go (however much you do), you then breathe in again! Even if your breath is laboured, the air still found its way to your lungs. Ego might be 'trying' whereas nature is 'happening'. **Lengthen your exhalation** and observe the pause after you breathe out. Allow the inhalation to sink below and behind your navel. **Continue this process for a few weeks**.

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