

2019

# Finding Inner Peace: My Journey to Relieve Stress and Anxiety

Shannon Mitchell  
smitchell710@my.uri.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog>

---

## Recommended Citation

Mitchell, Shannon, "Finding Inner Peace: My Journey to Relieve Stress and Anxiety" (2019). *Senior Honors Projects*. Paper 720.  
<https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog/720><https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/srhonorsprog/720>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at the University of Rhode Island at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu).

# Finding Inner Peace Through Yoga: My Journey to Relieve Stress and Anxiety

Shannon Mitchell- Psychology, Human Development and Family Studies

Sponsor: Paul Bueno de Mesquita, Psychology and The Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies

## Introduction

*The goal of this project was to find out if yoga can help relieve stress and anxiety and overall help one find inner peace.*

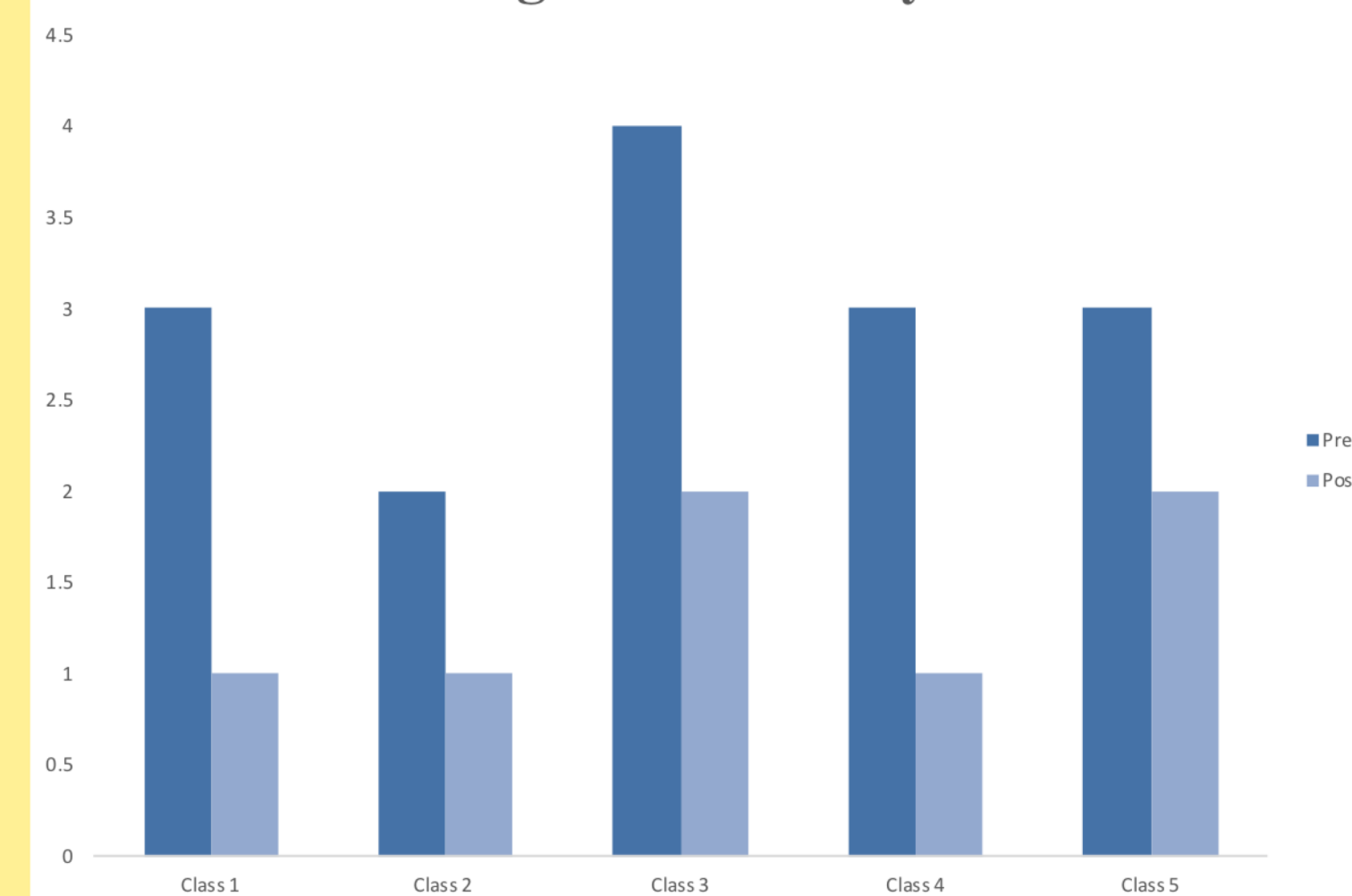
- Modern life can create the conditions for increased levels of stress and anxiety.
- This is particularly true for college students who experience a lot of changes and pressures regarding academics, romantic relationships, friendships, and career plans.
- Yoga is a Hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline that focuses on breath control, meditation, and specific body postures, and is widely practiced for physical and spiritual health, as well as relaxation.
- A review of the history of yoga and literature reviews regarding yoga's benefits to reducing stress and anxiety were done. In addition, a single subject case study approach was employed using a participant observer method.



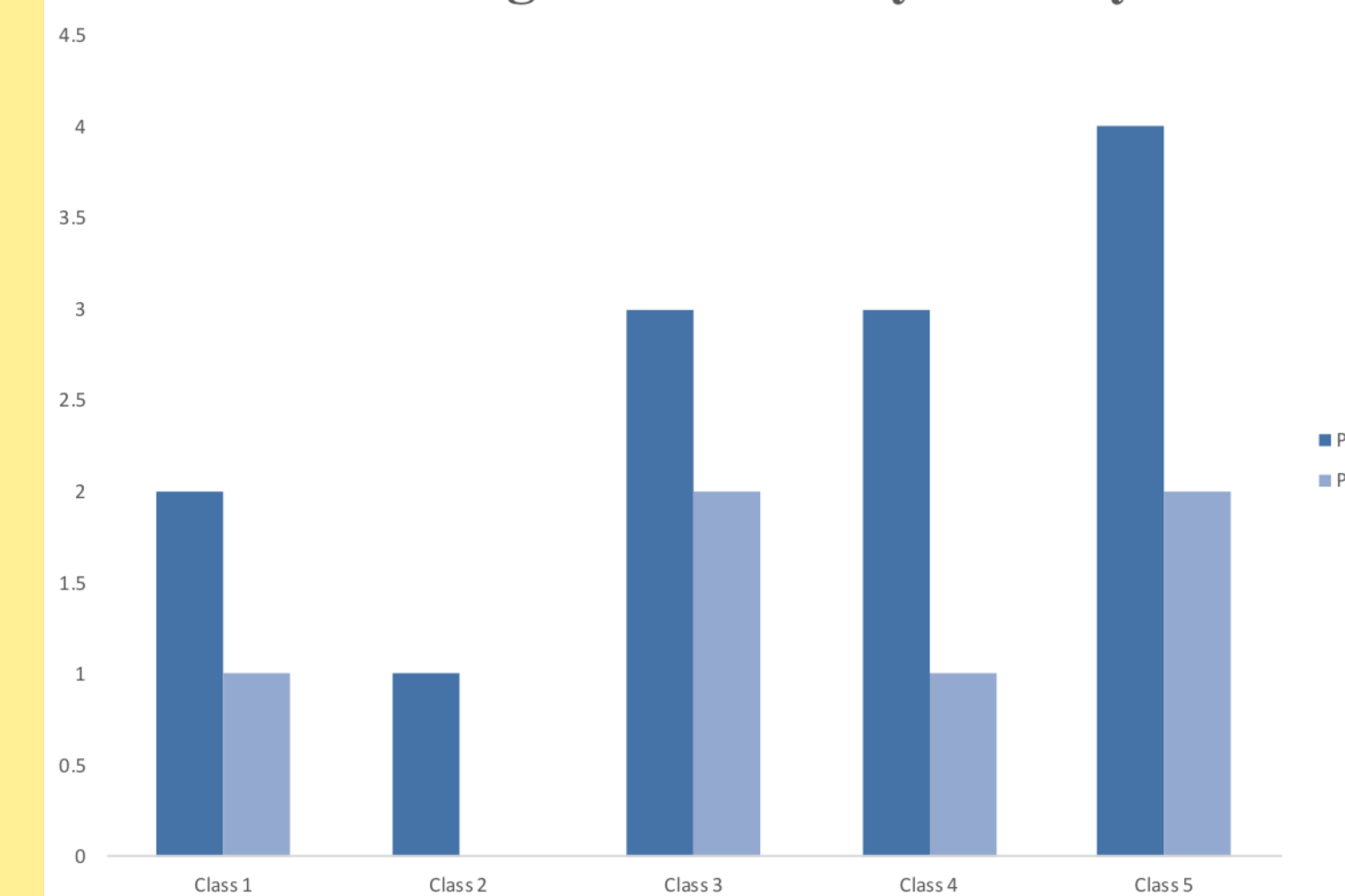
## Results

- Yoga reduces stress and anxiety levels and can help one find inner peace.
- Research studies show yoga, especially yoga breathing (pranayama), is an effective treatment for anxiety.
- Yoga reduced stress levels and improved well-being in college and adolescent students.
- Yoga lowered my stress and anxiety levels, and it may lower yours too. The charts below show data from five classes, using the Likert scale I developed.
- Overall, I felt more relaxed after yoga, less stressed, and less anxious.

How Yoga Lowered My Stress



How Yoga Lowered My Anxiety



## Discussion

- The goal of my project was to find out if yoga can help relieve stress and anxiety and overall help one find inner peace.
- Many people struggle with stress and anxiety. Yoga may be an alternative, inexpensive way to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Both the literature review results and single-subject case study results show that yoga can be used to help relieve stress and anxiety.
- Meta-analysis and systematic reviews show that yoga decreases stress and anxious symptoms.
- I was expecting to find that yoga could help reduce stress and anxiety, and the results match this.
- As for inner peace, I believe that I have been able to find some inner peace. I have found lots of joy and happiness in yoga.
- My stress and anxiety levels were reduced, and I believe if I were to continue my journey with yoga and integrate yoga into my daily life, my stress and anxiety might be able to decrease almost completely.

### Implications:

- There is a continuing need for further research, particularly for college students.
- Results were one case-study only. More case-studies are needed.

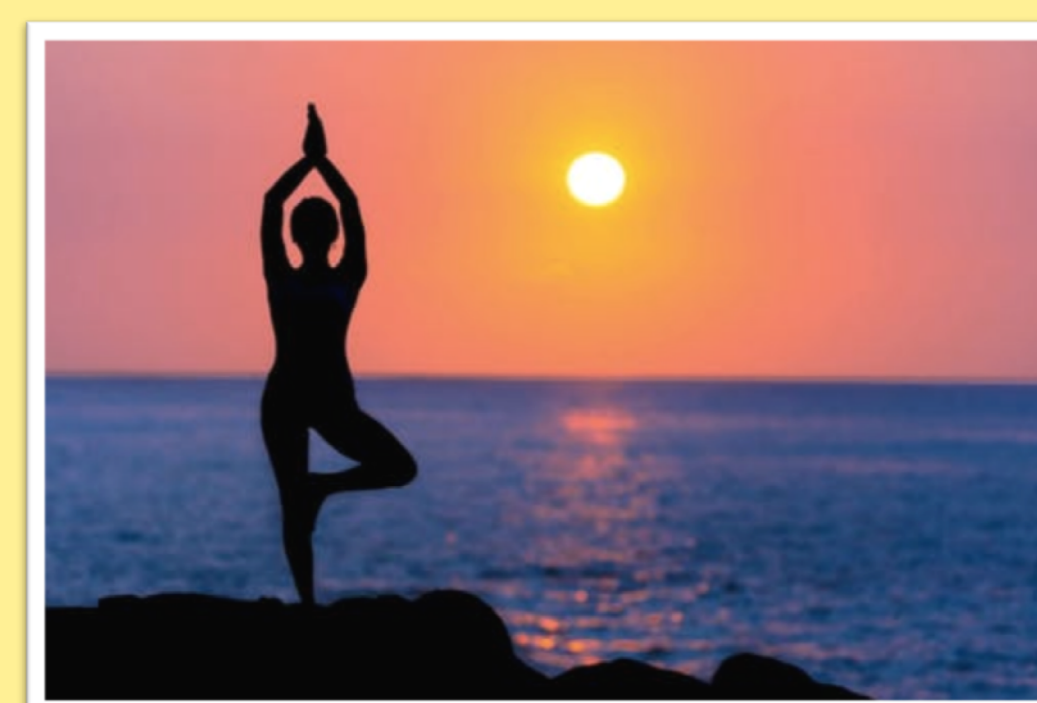
### Future research:

- Reliable and valid measures for both stress and anxiety and ways to assess inner peace are needed in yoga research studies.

## Methods

- A review of the history and development of yoga was completed. This was done in order to gain a better understanding of yoga.
- Research regarding meditation and mindfulness was conducted as well to understand the relationship they have to yoga.
- A literature review was done on the benefits of yoga, specifically related to reducing stress and anxiety.
- Interviews of two different yoga instructors were conducted about their experience with yoga.
- I took yoga classes at the studio *All That Matters* in Wakefield, Rhode Island to verify these benefits first hand.
- Before and after self-assessments were recorded to help document the results of these experiences. A Likert scale was used to measure how stressed and anxious I felt before and after I took yoga classes:

0=Not stressed/anxious      1=Slightly stressed/anxious  
2=Moderately stressed/anxious      3=Very stressed/anxious  
4=Extremely stressed/anxious



## How to be Mindful:

- Be fully present
- Be aware of where you are and what you are doing
- Have a non-judgmental attitude



## Interviews

- *Interview 1:* Yoga instructor, Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health.
  - Yoga has wonderful benefits on the body and mind.
  - “When the body starts to unwind, the mind will follow.”
- *Interview 2:* Yoga instructor at All That Matters.
  - Started practicing for the physical benefits, but then shortly realized how much of an impact yoga had on her mental health.
  - Yoga has helped reduce her anxiety.
  - Yoga breathing (pranayama) helps her reduce stress and anxiety.



## Literature Cited

- Cabral, P., Meyer, H.B., & Ames, D. (2011). Effectiveness of yoga therapy as a complimentary treatment for major psychiatric disorders: A meta-analysis. *The primary care companion for CNS disorders*, 13(4).
- Kauts, A. & Sharma, N. (2009). Effect of yoga on academic performance in relation to stress. *International journal of yoga*, 2(1), 39-43.
- Pascoe, M.C., & Bauer, I.E. (2015). A systematic review of randomized control trials on the effects of yoga on stress measures and mood. *Journal of psychiatric research*. doi: 10.1016/j.jpsychires.2015.07.013.
- Prasad, L., Varrey, A., & Sisti, G. (2016). Medical students' stress levels and sense of well-being after six weeks of yoga and meditation. *Evidence-based complementary and alternative medicine*, 2016, 1-7.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Paul Bueno de Mesquita, Professor Tendhar, and to all the yoga instructors at All That Matters. Thank you for all your help and guidance throughout this journey. Also, thank you to the Honors Program for giving me funding in order to make this project happen!