

New study finds new connection between yoga and mood

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Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) have found that yoga may be superior to other forms of exercise in its positive effect on mood and anxiety. The findings, which currently appear online at *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, is the first to demonstrate an association between yoga postures, increased GABA levels and decreased anxiety.

The researchers set out to contrast the brain gamma-aminobutyric (GABA) levels of yoga subjects with those of participants who spent time walking. Low GABA levels are associated with depression and other widespread [anxiety disorders](#).

The researchers followed two randomized groups of healthy individuals over a 12-week long period. One group practiced yoga three times a week for one hour, while the remaining subjects walked for the same period of time. Using magnetic resonance spectroscopic (MRS) imaging, the participants' brains were scanned before the study began. At week 12, the researchers compared the GABA levels of both groups before and after their final 60-minute session.

Each subject was also asked to assess his or her psychological state at several points throughout the study, and those who practiced yoga reported a more significant decrease in [anxiety](#) and greater improvements in mood than those who walked. "Over time, positive changes in these reports were associated with climbing GABA levels," said lead author Chris Streeter, MD, an associate professor of psychiatry

and neurology at BUSM.

According to Streeter, this promising research warrants further study of the relationship between yoga and [mood](#), and suggests that the practice of [yoga](#) be considered as a potential therapy for certain mental disorders.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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