

Meditation and Self-Awareness: In View of Heartfulness

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Abstract

Yoga is a balanced way of life, and Heartfulness (Sahaj Marg) is a natural path of meditation. Heartfulness traces its similarities to Patanjali yoga and meditation, as mentioned in the Upanishads, Balasubramaniam (nd). The Bhagwat Geeta explained the importance of inner awareness for mental and physical well-being. Meditation is viewed as a path to enhancing self-awareness. This paper discusses meditation, self-awareness, and the importance of self-awareness in counselling. The source of data for this study is secondary. This study explains the importance of meditation for self-awareness and counselling, especially in modern society. Meditation develops self-awareness, compassion, and empathy in the heart and mind. The objectives of this paper are 1. To study Heartfulness meditation and self-awareness and 2. To explain the importance of self-awareness in counselling.

There are various approaches to counseling that focus on dealing with life issues. Counselling is a type of pure awareness. Meditation is an effective method that develops knowledge of oneself and decision-making power. From this perspective, Heartfulness meditation has four basic practices that regulate the mind and create balance. The uniqueness of heartfulness is its Pranahuti technique. Since ancient times, meditation has been mentioned in the human lifestyle. Singh (1986) stated that the best tool for mental health promotion is yoga.

Keywords: *Heartfulness, Meditation, Yoga, Self-Awareness, Counselling*

Introduction

In the modern era, people struggle with various issues and try to overcome them with their unsuitable ways and roots. Few of them consult counselling experts to get proper advice, which is for a temporary period. Since ancient times, various permanent methods have been suggested and practised. The sage Patanjali clearly explained the importance of yoga for a balanced life by connecting the highest inner potentials and creating harmony within. According to him, individual strengths will be realised and utilised, and weaknesses can be recognised and solved only when self-awareness is developed. Meditation is the easiest and most practical method to cultivate self-awareness. When meditation is universally accepted and clearly understood throughout all cultures and climates, it will benefit many individuals. Different types of meditation are used in practice. One of the most widely practised types of meditation is heartfulness. A study has been conducted on meditation, including heartfulness and its benefits. According to Krishna et al. (2022), the potential therapeutic and preventative benefits of

meditation for mental health and psychosomatic issues have been recognised because of its ability to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Even recently, most people have been practising, benefiting from, and appreciating its benefits.

As per Iyer et al. (2022), The Heartfulness program is a simple, heart-centred approach to developing a caring, compassionate learning atmosphere that fosters personal well-being and strengthens social-emotional competencies for a healthy lifestyle. The purpose of Heartfulness meditation is to cultivate and develop pure awareness, which is called self-awareness, among its practitioners through regular practice. In integrative health approaches, meditation is one trend that impacts well-being by developing self-awareness. The individual can understand his or her strengths, weaknesses, and emotions and be able to deal with them properly by developing self-awareness. Self-awareness is also helpful in understanding one's surroundings to function effectively. Self-awareness is a key element in counselling; it is more important to the client and the counsellor. By having self-awareness, a client can express his or her

situations and problems, and a counsellor can effectively understand the client's needs. Hence, from a philosophical perspective, meditation is an ancient traditional practice for developing self-awareness, which could facilitate counselling. The source of data for this study is secondary.

According to Kalaiyarasan (2017), self-awareness is the capacity for introspection and self-recognition. A person's development is adversely affected if they are unaware of their identity. Subjective and objective self-awareness are the two forms of self-awareness described by Aliksieieva (2022); the capacity to objectively and realistically assess one's behaviour is known as self-awareness. A psychologist specialising in diagnosis typically works with clients to help them understand their circumstances and identify various contributing elements. While therapy is being implemented, psychological help should be obtained in addition to mobilising one's resources to solve the issue. For an efficient counselling procedure, the client can provide accurate information about the circumstances and their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. Both the therapist and the client must be self-aware during this process.

According to Mytsko (2011), counselling includes helping the client identify themselves, helping him or her resolve issues, and providing support so that the client may get through a crisis. Thus, the client should be conscious of his/her beliefs, principles, and behaviour.

Understanding Heartfulness Meditation

As per Patel (2018), the natural route of Sahajmarg, also known as Heartfulness, is a way of reaching people's doorsteps and offering them free meditation. This is the system of ancient times. There is acceptance and use of heartfulness meditation. Pranahuti (Pranasya Pranaha) is what makes it special. Many people are encouraged to practice heartfulness techniques daily because they are simple to learn and provide immediate results. Fundamental techniques include bedtime prayer and heartfulness meditation with relaxation, rejuvenation, and inner connection. Ramachandra Ji Maharaj (Fategarh)

rediscovered the antiquated system. Ramachandra ji Maharaj, affectionately known as Babuji, strengthened the system internationally by officially registering it and expanding its services to other countries. Parthasarathi Rajagopala Chari Ji extended this system's global reach.

Relaxation: 5 to 10 min of relaxation reduces tension in all parts of the body and maintains balance

Meditation: By practising a regular minimum of 30 min of meditation, a regulated mind will be centred and shift to a deeper level of feeling and intuition.

Rejuvenation: Regular practice of rejuvenation creates lightness, joy, and a care-free attitude

Inner Connection (Prayer): Inner connection (Prayer) is the connection of the inner and listening heart's voice.

Heartfulness Meditation and Self-Awareness

As per Hornostay (2001), "self-awareness is the capacity of an individual to reflect upon themselves, to perceive themselves from the outside, to reflect upon their capacities for successful personality formation, development, and improvement." According to Abolin's Encyclopaedia of Modern Ukraine (2019), morality is a spiritual and ethical force that governs behaviour and consists of generalised rules, values, behavioural patterns, and principles of approach toward others. According to Shkilna (2014), moral self-awareness is the awareness of one's moral traits, behaviour, actions, intentions, attitude towards the outside world, and one's activities towards oneself and society.

Heartfulness Meditation

According to Patel (2018), heartfulness meditation attempts to assist people in connecting with their inner selves to achieve calm and a healthy state of mind. Many studies have been conducted to learn how heartfulness meditation might improve one's psychological, emotional, and social well-being. As per Kaniamuthan (2021), It has been observed that

the practice of heartfulness meditation directly impacts spiritual, psychological, social, cognitive, and physical advantages.

Heartfulness meditation, influenced by yoga and yogic traditions to foster self-awareness, has recently made scientific advancements. The impact of heartfulness meditation on psychological issues such as loneliness and poor sleep quality (Thimapuram et al., 2020), stress, anxiety, and depression (Singh, Mohan Kumar, 2011), as well as thankfulness. (Arya et al., 2018) was examined. Participants in a 24-week Heartfulness self-development programme showed improvements in psychological stability, moral reasoning, self-efficiency and positive attitude. According to Amarnath et al. (2023), students who participated in the heartfulness intervention reported feeling less stressed and more contented than those in the control group. The results highlighted the critical role that heartfulness meditation plays in reducing stress because it promotes emotional regulation, relaxation, and an optimistic outlook. Cortisol, a hormone linked to stress, was reduced in those who practised heartfulness. This shows that heartfulness meditation reduces stress by directly influencing stress reactivity through physiological means. Students receive complete assistance through the HELP program's heartfulness meditation and counselling services integration. It was mentioned in the study that students could address the underlying psychological reasons contributing to stress and build coping mechanisms by using counselling services as a platform.

Impact of Heartfulness Meditation

According to Ranjani (2021), the self-care program dramatically lowered American high school students' levels of loneliness. The program focuses on self-care through guided practice of relaxation, meditation, rejuvenation, and self-observation. The guided tools from Heartfulness are the main component of the program. It is a program for cultivating self-awareness, finding inner peace, and enhancing social and emotional abilities.

Raja (2018) stated that meditation, a well-known method for reducing stress, fosters increased

perceptiveness and sensitivity to one's surroundings. One learns to balance work as one's mind becomes peaceful and in sync with one's heart and becomes more grounded and self-assured. Heartfulness meditation, which is specially tailored to the demands of contemporary life, offers a variety of advantages in addition to relaxation, such as clearing the subconscious mind of unwanted impressions that cause mental clutter and directing the mind toward the objective through an introspective prayerful attitude. People who have established a balance in their lives and are aware of their weaknesses, abilities, and interests in a way that supports managing their workload are free from work stress. One requires physical stamina, mental clarity, a happy mindset, and proper sleep to attain balance. Physical relaxation and mind regulation techniques in Heartfulness meditation address the burden of excessive thinking, which leads to mental and physical fatigue and lack of sleep. Since Heartfulness meditation involves tuning the mind to the heart, working in harmony and joy at work is brought about, leading to better empathy and compassion. Tuning into one's heart also improves intuition and creativity. With the development of these abilities, a person makes fewer mistakes and develops an acute sense of awareness of his surroundings.

Importance of self-awareness in counselling

The activity of a consultant is "counselling," according to Osadko (2005), "aimed at providing services in the form of discussing issues raised by organisations and individuals.

According to Tsymbaliuk (2005), psychological therapy is a conversation between a person and a psychologist to help them resolve issues and build interpersonal relationships.

Dowden (2014) advises counsellors on conducting counselling in "stress-free zones" while also conversing with the client, meditating, and planning physical activity. The author suggests a three-step methodology to increase self-awareness. Each strategy enhances behavioural, emotional, and cognitive processes.

Andrea (2000) stated that vocational counselling includes various goals, including raising a client's level of self-awareness, expanding that client's understanding of the working world, and combining those two goals so that the client may make the best career decisions possible.

As per Raja (2023), Heartfulness meditation is useful for lowering students' stress levels. According to him, the Holistic Education and Life-skills Programme (HELP) now includes mindfulness meditation. Combining therapy with heartfulness meditation creates a holistic strategy that addresses both the psychological and physiological components of stress management.

Self-Awareness and the Counsellor

According to Max (2012), knowledge of self-awareness makes it possible to practice counselling. Because it entails ongoing personal learning and development, self-awareness is highly appreciated. Knowledge counsellors make it possible to evaluate their efficacy continuously. Max further explained that we cannot be accountable or improve our efficacy in the selection and training for self-awareness without a more detailed understanding of how we evaluate this attribute.

Indian Approach

The heart chakra is another name for the Anahata chakra, according to Sharma (2016). The three lower physical and emotional centres are connected to the three higher mental or spiritual centres in the heart. It is linked to the senses and air components. Heartfulness is a unique practice of meditating on the heart by subtle suggestion as divine light is present within the heart, which makes it possible for one to create feelings of love and compassion for others; hence, meditating on the heart is a unique opportunity to advance in love and create a balanced life.

Self-awareness and Genetic Counselling

According to Laura (2023), many students recommend that self-awareness practices be promoted and made available frequently as part of the program's schedule, emphasising mental

wellness. There should be various self-awareness practices available.

Yoga, Meditation, and Counseling

According to Peter (2008), many mental health professionals use meditation as a part of their treatments. In the end, meditation results in encountering higher states of awareness. There is ecstasy, joy, and calm. It is necessary to experience this transpersonal consciousness, in which awareness appears as intuition and wisdom. (Rama et al., 1976). There is ecstasy, joy, and calm because of the "witness consciousness." The experiences of global awareness, in which the line between subject and object (knower and known) dissolves, are what practices ultimately lead to. Finding that space and experiencing a very different self—a realm of pure awareness—is the goal of yogic meditation. This self was known as Atman, Chaitanya, or Chaitanyatman, and I refer to it as "the awareness self." The main goal is to assist clients in becoming more aware of and free from difficult feelings and experiences. Yoga is essential in counselling because it demonstrates how to recognise and attain oneness with self-awareness. Before teaching this new yoga to counselling clients, the counsellor must first master the most fundamental principle and practice of awareness. This is the idea and practice of separating everything we are aware of, whether it is something inside or outside of us, something pleasant or terrible, or something in between—from awareness as such.

The goal of meditation is to enter a state of pure consciousness. Meditation is the key link between therapy and yoga, provided that it is understood correctly as a practice of awareness rather than just standing or sitting in a particular way. Although "meditation" and "yoga" are frequently used, their benefits for counsellors and clients can only be understood in this context.

Self-awareness development for counselling

As per Pieterse (2013), self-awareness training is for the therapist to have the capacity to recognise their emotional responses and to comprehend and perhaps use these responses within the

therapeutic relationship. Self-awareness is paying instant attention to one's thoughts, feelings, bodily reactions, and conduct. According to research on therapist self-awareness, an essential element of good psychotherapy is awareness of personal processes, such as unresolved conflicts, family dynamics, cultural biases, and worldview.

Many studies have emphasised the importance of self-awareness as a part of counselling training and ongoing development. Training programs and continuing education must expressly incorporate self-awareness training as the whole framework for the growth of self-awareness. According to the literature, self-awareness is key to successful counselling and psychotherapy (Edwards & Bess, 1998).

Counselling and Self Awareness

According to Fayeze (2015), self-awareness is a higher-level cognitive ability to distinguish between self and others. Self-awareness is the capacity to perceive and comprehend oneself appropriately. One becomes aware of oneself by identifying, analysing, and storing knowledge about oneself in this condition. People must acknowledge and reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, emotions, thoughts, behaviour, attitude, and motives to live a good and balanced life.

According to Briere (2007), those who lack the capacity for self-awareness are characterised by a persistent sense of emptiness, confusion about who they are, vulnerability, contradicting ideas

and feelings, and a failure to set goals for the future. A prior study by Myers (2003) confirmed the importance of self-awareness in fostering personal development. Self-awareness encourages people to consider and analyse their strengths and weaknesses and learn more about themselves and others. This results in stronger connections with others.

Fayeze (2015) discovered that, when compared with the control group, the activity carried out in group counselling considerably increased the level of self-awareness and decreased the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Conclusion

This study discusses heartfulness meditation or Sahaj Marg, its effects on self-awareness, and its importance in counselling. It also emphasises that there is a strong relationship between self-awareness and counselling. Heartfulness meditation greatly influences self-awareness. As a basic principle, life is self-awareness. Sahaj Marg has had an impact on human lifestyles since ancient times. This study is unique because it presents important information about the relationship and impact between meditation and self-awareness. Heartfulness has a unique feature of transmission that is easy and fast, impacting the human brain and heart. Through heartfulness meditation or Sahaj Marg, self-awareness can be achieved, which is relevant and important in the counselling process and its outcomes in dealing with various human problems.

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