

Yoga elevates state of mind

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Study Shows Hard Evidence That Yoga Elevates State of Mind

THE NOTION that yoga is a tonic for the mind, as well as the body, isn't such a stretch anymore.



Practicing yoga might boost a neurotransmitter associated with regulating depression and anxiety disorders, according to a new report in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.

Researchers at Boston University School of Medicine and McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass., used magnetic resonance spectroscopic imaging to measure levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid, or GABA, in the brains of eight regular yoga practitioners. They found that the yoga group experienced a 27 percent increase in GABA levels after an hour of yoga, while 11 control subjects, who read for an hour, received no such benefits.

“The study shows that there’s a neurochemical response to the practice of yoga that’s similar to neurochemical responses we see when people are treated with antidepressants,” says lead author Dr. Chris Streeter, an assistant professor of neurology and psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine.

Although yoga has been associated with a reduction in depression and anxiety, the study is one of the first to provide hard evidence. “This is a behavioral intervention that you can use to augment treatment,” Streeter says. “I would recommend it.”

– Los Angeles Times