BODY PRACTICES AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING SOMATIC WELL-BEING

Viktoriia Trishchova[1]
Nataliia Shylina[2]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-720-8-11

The current development of psychological science and practice is characterized by a growing tendency toward the integration of medical, psychological, and somatic health-related knowledge in the search for effective ways to preserve and restore human health. The issue of somatic well-being is becoming increasingly relevant and is considered not merely as the absence of disease, but as an integrative indicator of the harmonious functioning of the bodily and psychological spheres of the individual. Increasing levels of chronic stress, socioeconomic instability, and the consequences of traumatic events may contribute to an increased occurrence of psychosomatic symptoms. In this context, traditional psychotherapeutic approaches may benefit from being supplemented with nonpharmacological methods, among which mind-body practices occupy an important place. They may facilitate access to and processing of unconscious psychological processes through work with muscle tension, breathing, and movement, thereby supporting the restoration of the body's self-regulatory capacity [3, p. 930].

A fundamental basis for understanding the relationship between psychological and somatic processes is the biopsychosocial model of health [7, p. 130]. According to this concept, psychological factors play a direct role in the development of functional disturbances and somatic symptoms through specific life circumstances and the individual's patterns of interaction with the environment. Classical psychosomatic approaches emphasized that emotional tension and intrapersonal conflicts may manifest at the physiological level and contribute to somatic dysfunction [1, p. 15].

An important role in the development of psychosomatic disorders is attributed to alexithymia, which is characterized by difficulties in recognizing, understanding, and verbalizing one's own emotions [9, p. 155]. Individuals with high levels of alexithymia may be more likely to express psychological difficulties through bodily symptoms because of difficulties in adequately processing and expressing emotional distress at the psychological level. As a result, bodily reactions may become an important channel through which

[1] Odesa National Polytechnic University, Ukraine
[2] Odesa National Polytechnic University, Ukraine

internal tension is expressed. Studies indicate a high prevalence of alexithymic manifestations among patients with somatic disorders, highlighting the need for specialized intervention programs aimed at restoring the connection between bodily sensations and emotional states [2, p. 60].

A key psychological mechanism underlying the effectiveness of mind-body practices is the development of bodily awareness and interoceptive sensitivity [6, p. 3; 11, p. 8]. Interoception encompasses the perception, processing, and mental representation of internal bodily signals, including heartbeat, breathing patterns, muscle tone, and temperature. The individual's ability to recognize and interpret these signals may contribute to the early identification of changes in emotional and physiological states and, consequently, to the prevention of emotional dysregulation.

Bodily awareness enables individuals to detect changes in their physical state at an early stage of the stress response, which may reduce the risk of persistent psychophysiological disturbances. Body-oriented techniques can contribute to a more integrated sense of self by reducing excessive muscle tension, facilitating the processing of traumatic experiences, and supporting autonomic nervous system regulation through the modulation of sympathetic and parasympathetic activity [3, p. 932].

Among contemporary movement-based practices, aerial yoga is of particular interest in working with psychosomatic symptoms. It combines elements of classical hatha yoga, stretching, Pilates, and aerial arts with the use of a suspended silk hammock [4, p. 263]. The hammock facilitates the distribution of body weight, reduces compressive loading on the spine and joints, and enables the performance of inverted asanas with additional support.

Static and dynamic exercises combined with regulated breathing techniques (pranayama) have a multifaceted effect on the body. Research indicates their potential effectiveness in reducing chronic pain, supporting cardiovascular function, and improving respiratory function [8; 12, p. 102]. In addition to its physical component, aerial yoga may provide significant psychological benefits: regular practice may contribute to reduced anxiety, decreased depressive symptoms, increased stress resilience, and improved psychological adaptability [5; 10]. Learning new movements with the support of a hammock may also enhance self-confidence and contribute to the development of a positive body image.

Thus, the purposeful integration of mind-body practices, particularly movement-based approaches such as aerial yoga, into psychological support for individuals experiencing psychosomatic symptoms may be an effective means of promoting somatic well-being. The combined effects of physical activity, breathing techniques, and the development of bodily awareness may contribute

to reducing psychophysiological tension and strengthening the individual's capacity for self-regulation.

References:

1. Didkovska L. I. (2010) Psykosomatyka: osnovy psykhodiahnostyky ta psyhoterapii [Psychosomatics: basics of psychodiagnostics and psychotherapy]. Lviv: Vydavnychyi tsentr LNU im. I. Franka, 264 p.

2. Gotych V. O., Fedyk O. V. (2025) Problema aleksytymiyi v suchasnomu naukovomu dyskursi [The problem of alexithymia in modern scientific discourse]. *Naukovi zapysky. Seriya: Psykholohiya – Scientific Notes. Series: Psychology*, vol. 1(7), pp. 58–62. Available at: https://journals.cusu.in.ua/index.php/psychology/article/view/648

3. Tymoshenko M. P. (2024) Tilesno-orientovana terapiya yak innovatsiynyy metod roboty psykholoha [Body-oriented therapy as an innovative method of psychologist's work]. *Zhurnal «Perspektyvy ta innovatsiyi nauky» – Journal «Perspectives and Innovations of Science»: Seriya «Psykholohiya» – Series «Psychology»*, no. 5(39), pp. 930–939. Available at: https://perspectives.pp.ua/index.php/pis/article/view/11670

4. Chubuk A. O., Husiev A. (2018) Analiz mozhlyvykh nebezpek na zanyattyakh z aeroyohy [Analysis of possible dangers in aerial yoga classes]. *Problemy okhorony pratsi, promyslovoyi ta tsyvilnoyi bezpeky: materialy Vseukrayinskoyi naukovo-praktychnoyi konferentsiyi* (Kyiv, April 2018), pp. 262–266. Available at: https://confopcbproc.iee.kpi.ua/article/view/144021/141938

5. Shelestova O. V., Parafilenko N. (2025) Yohya yak sposib stabilizatsiyi psykhiky ta pidvyshchennya stresostiykosti i adaptyvnosti [Yoga as a way of mental stabilization and increasing stress resistance and adaptability]. *Formuvannya kompetentnostey obdarovanoyi osobystosti v systemi pozashkilnoyi ta vyshchoyi osvity – Formation of Competencies of a Gifted Personality in the System of Extracurricular and Higher Education*, vol. 1(4), pp. 423–432. Available at: https://jrnl.kai.edu.ua/index.php/FCS/article/view/20691

6. Critchley H. D., Garfinkel S. N. (2017) Interoception and emotion. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, vol. 17, pp. 7–14. Available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/ 28950976/

7. Engel G. L. (1977) The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine. *Science*, vol. 196, pp. 129–136. Available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/847460/

8. Jayawardena R., Ranasinghe P., Ranawaka H., Gamage N., Dissanayake D., Misra A. (2020) Exploring the Therapeutic Benefits of Pranayama (Yogic Breathing): A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Yoga*, vol. 13(2), pp. 99–110. Available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32669763/

9. Nemiah J. C., Sifneos P. E. (1970) Psychosomatic illness and problem of communication. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, vol. 18, pp. 154–160.

10. Park C., Finkelstein-Fox L., Groessl E., Elwy A., Lee S. Y. (2020) Exploring How Different Types of Yoga Change Psychological Resources and Emotional Well-

Being across a Single Session. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, vol. 49, article 102354. Available at: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32147083/

11. Parma C., Doria F., Zulueta A., Lanzone J., Boscarino M., Giani L., Lunetta C., Vassallo M., Parati E. A., Picozzi M., Sattin D. (2024) An Overview of the Bodily Awareness Representation and Interoception: Insights and Progress in Neurorehabilitation Research. *Brain Sciences*, vol. 14(4), article 386. Available at: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11048399/

12. Sharma H., Swetanshu, Singh P. (2024) Role of Yoga in Cardiovascular Diseases. *Current Problems in Cardiology*, vol. 49(1), article 102032.