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Effects of high-frequency yoga breathing called kapalabhati compared with breath awareness on the degree of optical illusion perceived.

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Abstract

Prior research has shown that methods of meditation, breath control, and different kinds of yoga breathing affect attention and visual perception, including decreasing the size of certain optical illusions. Evaluating relationships sheds light on the perceptual and cognitive changes induced by yoga and related methods, and the locus of the effects. In the present study, the degree of optical illusion was assessed using Müller-Lyer stimuli before and immediately after two different kinds of practice, a high frequency yoga breathing called kapalabhati, and breath awareness. A nonyoga, control session tested for practice effects. Thirty participants (with group M age = 26.9 yr., SD = 5.7) practiced the two techniques for 18 min. on two separate days. The control group had 15 nonyoga practitioners assessed before and after 18 min. in which they did not perform any specific activity but were seated and relaxed. After both kapalabhati and breath awareness there was a significant decrease in the degree of optical illusion. The possibility that this was due to a practice or repetition effect was ruled out when 15 nonyoga practitioners showed no change in the degree of illusion when retested after 18 min. The changes were interpreted as due to changes in perception related to the way the stimuli were judged.

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