A different weight loss experience: a qualitative study exploring the behavioral, physical, and psychosocial changes associated with yoga that promote weight loss

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Abstract

Yoga interventions improve obesity-related outcomes including body mass index (BMI), body weight, body fat, and waist circumference, yet it is unclear whether these improvements are due to increased physical activity, increased lean muscle mass, and/or changes in eating behaviors. The purpose of this study is to expand our understanding of the experience of losing weight through yoga.

Methods. Semistructured interviews were qualitatively analyzed using a descriptive phenomenological approach.

Results. Two distinct groups who had lost weight through yoga responded: those who were overweight and had repeatedly struggled in their attempts to lose weight (55%, n = 11) and those who were of normal weight and had lost weight unintentionally (45%, n = 9). Five themes emerged that differed slightly by group: shift toward healthy eating, impact of the yoga community/yoga culture, physical changes, psychological changes, and the belief that the yoga weight loss experience was different than past weight loss experiences. Conclusions. These findings imply that yoga could offer diverse behavioral, physical, and psychosocial effects that may make it a useful tool for weight loss. Role modeling and social support provided by the yoga community may contribute to weight loss, particularly for individuals struggling to lose weight.
Having a weight loss tool available at each of these occasions to provide real-time feedback and in-the-moment support may assist users with initiating and maintaining changes over the entirety of a day. Smartphone-based weight loss interventions offer the potential to deliver help at the exact moment necessary to support health behavior change in a way never before possible. Consistent with the increase in smartphone ownership, there has been a proliferation of health-related apps available on the market, especially ones targeting exercise, diet, and weight.19 Recently, a search using the term...