

# Development and Validation of Guided Meditations for Anger Management in Secondary School Children



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## Abstract

**Background:** Diverse concepts of meditations are dealt in the Indian traditional texts which aim at establishing peace and harmony within. Meditations, known for their phenomenal benefits, have made a strong presence as an alternative/ complementary/ adjunct therapy for prevention and management of many mental health conditions. While there are plenty of studies on the benefits of meditations, no studies are cited documenting the process of development and validation of meditations. Further, meditations as a program for anger management is less explored. Hence the present work focuses on developing short, guided meditations for anger management and documenting the process of its development and validation.

**Methods:** The development process involved two steps i.e., construction and validation. Construction part included deriving the concepts of anger management from the Indian classical texts, structuring, and then composing the meditations. Validation part included pilot administration (n-5 adolescents) and expert validation (14 experts). Experts' ratings were analysed using content validation ratio (CVR) technique. Further, the developed meditations were part of the validated yoga module for anger management which was used in a separate study with a sample size of 189. A few relevant findings of those studies are cited in this paper to support further validation of the meditations.

**Results:** Participants understood the guided meditations and were able to completely follow it in the pilot administration. CVR ratio for meditation techniques scored 0.71 as against the 0.51 qualifying value. Significant reduction of anger is observed in studies using the developed meditations as a part of yoga module.

**Conclusion:** Short guided meditations are effective in management of anger among adolescents in the school setting.

**Keywords:** Guided meditation; Anger management; Adolescents; Yoga

**Abbreviations:** CVR: Content Validation Ratio; TM: Transcendental Meditation; BG: Bhagavad-Gita; YV: Yoga Vasista; PSY: Patanjali Yoga Sutras; VC: Viveka Chudamani

## Introduction

Anger in adolescence has drawn global attention because of its consequences and its impact on mental and physical health [1]. Among various therapeutic approaches, meditations are known for their incredible effect [2] and are considered as a panacea for many mental health problems including anger management. Meditations bring positive changes in areas of the

brain that are responsible for emotional regulation, anger, fear and stress [3,4]. Meditations are known to reduce arousal state [5] and achieve balance in the nervous system there by mitigate the stress and enhance wellbeing among adolescents [6]. Guided meditations have shown phenomenal therapeutic, rehabilitative, and educational benefits [7,2]. A review study suggests potential

benefits of meditations that assist adolescents in their school as well as in home settings to manage emotions, thought process and behaviour. Meditation based interventions for adolescents are intended to provide a means for increasing self-awareness and improved coping [8]. Meditation in schools has shown significant effects on various facets of emotional regulation such as awareness, control and clarity. A meta-analysis reports usefulness of mindfulness intervention on mental health and well-being outcomes of adolescents [9]. A review study on mindfulness for children reports potential benefits of integrating mindfulness-based training into school settings in cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual domains [10]. The study further indicates positive impact of mindfulness-based programs on academic performance, psychological wellbeing, self-esteem and social skills in children and adolescents. A study on Transcendental Meditation (TM) reports beneficial effects on restful alertness, self-reflection, self-control, flexibility, and academic performance [11]. TM meditators were less likely to develop suicidal ideation or thoughts of self-harm than the active control group [12]. A systematic review of different mindfulness-based interventions suggests benefits on mental health symptoms and quality of life in clinical and non-clinical adolescent samples [13]. A systematic review of meditation in schools' reports TM programs had a higher percentage of significant effects than mindfulness-based programs. The study also records positive influence of meditations in increasing cognitive functioning and emotional regulation [14]. A few studies have examined the effect of meditation for anger management in adolescents. Improved self-regulation and greater self-awareness are observed in a study on meditation and anger in youth [8]. Decreased anger rumination is associated with practice of 5-10 minutes mediation daily [15]. Mindfulness meditation has shown significant improvement in behaviour and neurocognitive impairments in ADHD adolescents [16]. Meditations also promotes social skills and academic outcome in addition to decreasing anxiety and detrimental self-focus of attention [17]. Different types of meditations such as focusing, mindfulness, and visualisation help to train attention and awareness faculties of brain [18]. Meditation has its roots in Indian classical texts such as Vedas, Upanishads and Darshanas [19,20]. These texts proclaim meditations as an effective self-regulatory strategy to establish mental mastery. Yoga sutras of Sage Patanjali vastly expounds on meditation. According to Sage Patanjali, yoga is achieving mental mastery. All the eight facets of this form of yoga are targeted to restrain the modifications of mind [21]. Many anger management principles are dealt in Traditional texts such as Bhagavad-Gita (BG), Yoga Vasista (YV), Patanjali Yoga Sutras (PSY), Viveka Chudamani (VC) etc. A few to mention includes

Yoga Vasista talks about Manaprashamana (sublimation) - slowing down the mind or reducing the speed of thoughts. It defines yoga as the art of sublimation of thoughts (manah

praçamanopaya yoga ityabhidhiyate) (YV 3-9-32). Patanjali Yoga Sutras talks about Pratipaksha Bhavana (distraction) generating positive thoughts in place of negative thoughts. Generate thoughts of love and compassion in place of anger and hate. Vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam (PSY 2-33), meaning when troubled by negative deliberation, cultivate the opposite. Yoga sutras also emphasize on developing appropriate attitude towards different types of situation/ people in life to establish peace of mind. Practice love or friendliness over wellness, kindness over suffering, pleasure over virtuosity and indifference over immorality (PYS1-33). Anger won't arise when one develop this attitude towards life. Bhagavad Gita, Viveka Chudamani, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, on many occasions, emphasize developing Sadguna (positive traits) such as non-violence (ahimsa), compassion (daya), forbearance (titiksha), forgiveness (kshama) to overcome negative emotions such as anger. Yoga Vasista insists on development of satva guna (positive attitude) to bring in emotional balance. Positive traits or attitude leads to ceaseless happiness or everlasting peace. There exists no room for any mental disturbance or anger. Collective Eastern philosophy of yoga is being in the present moment. Parijnana or Smriti (awareness or mindfulness) training the mind to become aware and mindful of what is happening at this very moment. This technique can help in management of anger. When angry, taking a moment to notice the feelings and activate thinking can mitigate the situation. Healthy expression of anger is possible when one is mindful and aware of the referential context of time (kala), situation (desha) and person (patra) to express anger etc.

S-VYASA Yoga University has developed an advanced meditation technique called Mastering Emotions Technique (MEMT) to gain mastery over emotions [22]. This technique promotes emotional intelligence and emotional regulation [23]. Regular practice of this meditation helps in thinning down negative emotions and culturing positive emotions there by leading to bliss, peace, and good health. This meditation is extensively practiced by the patients and students in the university for more than 15 years and empirically proved as an effective technique for boosting emotional intelligence. This guided meditation has 10 steps. a) Opening Prayer, b) Thinking and Feeling, c) Art of sublimation, d) Invoke, Intensify and diffuse, e) Pair of Opposites, f) Action towards different emotional situations, g) Death experience, h) Silence, i) Resolve, j) Closing Prayer

There is an increasing awareness and support for integrating mindfulness programs into education to promote value-based education in children especially promoting empathy, pro-social relationships, creativity, compassion for self and others [24]. While the therapeutic potential of meditation for mental well-being is increasingly documented, studies citing the process of development of meditation techniques are not available. Although meditation therapy is widely used in many angers related conditions, there are no studies citing development of such meditation techniques. Further, studies on development of guided

meditations substantiated by the scriptural evidential knowledge are not listed. Hence in this current work, an attempt is made to convert a few anger management concepts dealt in traditional texts into guided meditation techniques for anger management.

### Methods and Material

**Design** - Short guided meditations are designed to be practiced in sitting position by secondary school children. Meditations are scripted in English language. These meditations were intended to be part of the integrated yoga module for anger management among secondary school children, developed by the same group of authors. Institutional ethical committee approval is obtained from S-VYASA Yoga University for this study. While the principles of anger management are drawn from traditional texts, the structure is derived from MEMT meditation of S-VYASA University.

From the literature and literary review, it is comprehended that the anger episode has three aspects. 1) External triggers 2) Internal processing and 3) Response. One has limited control over the first two aspects i.e., external trigger or the internal processing. However, by practice, reasonable control could be established over 'response'. While meditations have a profound impact on perceiving the external triggers and internal processing, it can bring in dramatic self-control over the third aspect 'response'. Anchored in this principle, the process is aimed at experiencing the physiological and psychological changes that occur during anger episode, importance of response pattern and learning a few techniques to gain control over one's own response to anger. The scope of the study includes Construction and Validation of meditations. Construction part included deriving the concepts and their operational definitions from the traditional texts which is already detailed in the introduction part and then structuring and composing the meditations. Validation part included pilot administration and expert validation. Further validation of these meditations is done by considering a few relevant findings of another study by the same group of authors.

### Construction

Four concepts considered for development of meditation are

- a) Parijnana (awareness)
- b) Manaprashamana (sublimation)
- c) Pratipaksha Bhavana (witching of emotion) and
- d) Sadguna-kshama (positive virtue-forgiveness).

The derived operational framework of these concepts is explained below:

**Parijnana (awareness):** Becoming aware of one's own personal signs of anger allows the person to take necessary steps to manage his or her anger before it gets out of control. This awareness is made to experience by evoking, intensifying, and defusing an anger thought through guided meditation and

guiding them to experience the physiological changes related to anger emotion.

**Manaprashamana (sublimation):** Sublimation of anger thoughts. Calming down the mind by repeating a word in the mind again and again and slowly and slowly. This is experienced by invoking and intensifying an angry thought and then recognising the speed and repeatedness of angry thought. Then directing to slow down the thought process (reducing the speed of thoughts) by internal auto suggestion of any statement such as 'Relax', 'Take it easy', and even the angry thought itself such as 'I am angry', 'I will hit now' etc.

**Pratipaksha bhavana (switching of emotion):** This process involves experiencing two opposite emotions one after the other. This helps in recognising the emotion and to swiftly evoke an opposite emotion. When angry, thinking of something or someone most loved drastically brings down the anger feeling. Emotional stability is gained by practicing this with different set of opposite emotions. Pair of opposite emotions such as heat and cold, stretch and relax, happiness and sorrow, love and hate, reward and insult can be employed.

**Sadguna-kshama (Positive virtue-forgiveness):** Forgiveness is one of the positive virtues that turn away the anger emotion. Forgiveness appears crucial for management of anger as most of the time anger arises from condemning or disagreeing to other's action, speech and attitude. Through guided meditation, directing the person to live an angry situation with retaliation and then re-live the same angry situation with compassion. Living and re-living the same situation with different response patterns helps one to understand the importance of use of appropriate response pattern in anger management.

The structure for developing the meditations using the above four concept is derived from MEMT meditation technique. Accordingly, the design included three parts a) preparation b) main meditation c) conclusion. Preparation part included sitting in a comfortable posture, normalising the breath and bringing the mind to present. Different situations were created to guide subjects on four concepts of anger management in the main meditation part. Conclusion part included observing silence for few seconds, making a positive affirmation mentally and repeating it 3 times and then relax. Preparation and conclusion part remained same for all the short meditations. Only middle part, the main meditation varied depending on different concept of anger management.

**Composing:** A few situations were identified with which children can relate themselves with the concept. These situations were reviewed by the second author who is an expert in development of meditation techniques. After several rounds of discussion and review, following situations were selected for each of the concept as in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Situations for various meditation techniques.

SI No	Technique	Situation
1	Awareness	<p>Imagining a live angry situation of their choice and getting into an intense angry mood. Build up the anger emotion by experiencing frustration, irritation, and other related feelings. Observing the bodily changes including heartbeat, respiration rate, heat etc. Guide to neutralise the anger emotion and observe the bodily changes.</p> <p>This helps them to become aware of their anger emotion and become aware of the physiological and psychological changes that occur during anger.</p>
2	Sublimation (Manaprashamana)	<p>Invoke and intensify an angry situation of their choice. Guide to become aware of the speed of thoughts and then ask to repeat an auto suggestion slowing down the speed each time. For example, 'I am angry', 'I... am.... angry....' 'I.....am.....A.n.g.r.y.....'. Angry thoughts are defused with a few repetitions. Unknowingly the mind becomes calm and serene in this technique.</p>
3	Switching of emotion (Pratipaksha Bhavana) Heat and cold experience	<p>Imagine a hot summer day playing in the open field with sun right overhead and experience the bodily changes, feeling of thirst, sweat etc. Then guide to move swiftly to a situation of an early morning of a winter season, going to tutorial /sport without proper winter wears. Experience of mist, fog, biting cold and shivering. Guide to come to the present moment.</p> <p>Analyse two opposite feelings that occurred within without the support of external factors and realise that the mind has the capacity to internally shift to opposite emotion without external aide.</p>
4	Forgiveness (kshama)	<p>Invoke and intensify an angry situation. Guide to react with an anger driven response and then recall the same situation and guide to react with forgiveness driven response. Come to the present moment and contemplate the experience. Anger driven response worsens the problem while forgiveness driven response eases out the problem. Physiological changes during both situations are opposite.</p>

Situations are designed carefully to ensure children can a) relate themselves with the situation b) experience the internal processes and c) internalise the concepts of coping mechanisms stated in meditation. After finalising the situations, script was written for each of the steps i.e., preparation, four different meditation concepts and conclusion step. The script was reviewed several times by the second author, a veteran in developing meditations. Necessary modifications were made in the English language, usage of simple words, grammar etc. Then the script was audio recorded to check the duration and to modulate the tone and tenor. Audio recordings were reviewed by the second author several times. Initially, recorded audio for each step exceeded the time allotted. Then the script was modified to bring it to stipulated duration. Final script was shown to two yoga experts and oral comments were sought. Both reviewed the audio clips and gave encouraging feedback.

**Validation**

Validation of the developed guided meditations was carried out in three ways as detailed below.

a) Pilot administration - The audio clips of the meditations were administered informally to a group of 5 adolescents and oral feedback was obtained to access the feasibility and understanding of the contents. Adolescents were boys and were friends in an apartment. All of them were studying in 9<sup>th</sup> standard. Overwhelming response was received from pilot administration of the audio clips. All the participants understood the guided meditation and were able to completely follow it.

b) Expert validation - The framework of meditation, along with a concept note was sent to 14 experts in the field of yoga, clinical psychology and integrative medicine. Most of the experts were Ph.D. holders with more than 10-15 years of experience. Experts were requested to evaluate the meditations as a technique in management of anger. They were asked to provide their rating on a Likert scale with 0 = necessary, 1 = a little useful, 2 = moderately useful, 3 = essential and 4 = extremely essential. Further they were asked to rate the meditations in terms of its relevance, specificity, sensitivity and evidence drawn for anger management as detailed in table 2 below

Experts' ratings were analyzed using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR), which is a method for measuring the level of agreement of an item among experts in the panel. The more the experts agree on an item, the greater the level of content validity for that item [25]. The framework of meditations was included in the yoga module framework which comprised of 18 yogic techniques and meditation was one of the techniques. Experts provided the ratings technique (Table 2) wise. Validation of this yoga module was a separate study [26].

Validation through another study: The developed meditations were part of the yoga module used in a study (n=187) to assess effect of yoga on anger management in secondary school children [27]. Anger assessment was done using a validated 23-item self-reporting Adolescent Anger Assessment Scale [28]. The results of this study were interpreted in a different context in the current study to corroborate the subjective and objective benefits of meditation.

**Table 2:** Framework of meditations sent to expert validation.

Meditation	1	2	3	4	5
<p>1-relevance, 2-specificity, 3-sensitivity, 4-evidence, 5-overall comments</p> <p>Short guided meditations comprised of three parts a) Preparation b) One of the four Anger Management Techniques and c) Conclusion.</p> <p>Preparation process includes adopting a sitting meditative posture, bringing the mind-body-breath awareness by observing the posture and breathing. The concluding process includes observing silence, making a resolve. The middle part includes one of the four anger management techniques as detailed below:</p> <p>Prajna (awareness) – Thinking and feeling of anger by evoking, intensifying and defusing the anger emotion. This helps children to become aware of their anger emotion, physiological and psychological changes that occur during anger.</p> <p>Manaprashamana (sublimation) – Art of sublimation of anger thoughts. The process involves evoking anger emotion and then reducing the speed by slowing down the thought process.</p> <p>Pratipaksha Bhavana (shifting of emotions) – It is a process of experiencing opposite emotions one after the other. This helps in swiftly shifting the mind to an opposite emotion.</p> <p>Sadguna (developing positive virtue): Forgiveness is one of the positive virtues that turn away the anger emotion. This process involves calling or re-living an instance once with anger driven response and recalling it again with forgiveness driven response</p>					

**Analysis**

The CVR data with respect to meditation technique was retrieved from the referred study and is presented in Table 3 below. As per the Lawshe’s CVR ratio the [26] minimum value (qualifying value) for 14 experts is 0.51 and meditation technique scored 0.71 indicating high content validity. Yoga intervention study in which the meditations were used as a part of the yoga module, recorded significant reduction of anger scores in yoga group. Table 4 shows the pre and post anger scores of yoga and control group, retrieved from the referred study. In particular, the subjective feedback from this study was that the student liked the meditations very much.

In the feedback form, more than 50% of the children in yoga group have mentioned they enjoyed meditations most and it was very helpful in dealing their anger issues [27].

**Results**

Four short meditations of 5 minutes duration each were constructed which consisted of three parts 1) preparation, 2) meditation and 3) conclusion. Details as below in Table 5.

**Table 3:** Yogic Techniques with CVR as per Lawshe formula.

Yogic Techniques	n <sub>e</sub>	N	N/2	n <sub>e</sub> -N/2	CVR	
Techniques reviewed by 14 experts						
13	Meditation	12	14	7	5	0.71

ne = number of experts indicating ‘essential and extremely essential’ (3 or 4 in 0-4 Likert scale), N = Total number of experts, CVR = Content validity ratio, \* excluded in final module.

‘(courtesy reference 26)’

**Table 4:** Paired t test results of anger assessment.

	Pre-Data		Post Data	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yoga Group (n-114)	46.2	6.92	42.41	7.31
Control Group (n-75)	46.36	8.15	46.73	7

‘(courtesy reference 27)’

**Table 5:** Description of guided meditations.

Technique	Duration	Description
Preparation	1 minute	Settling down in a comfortable sitting position with eyes closed
Meditation	3 minutes	Driving one of the four concepts i.e. awareness, sublimation, switching to opposite emotion, developing virtues
Conclusion	1 minute	Silence and positive affirmations

### Discussion

From the current study, we found guided meditations are easy and incredibly effective techniques for anger management in adolescents. The short meditations of 5 minutes duration were found to be very simple but prize-winning techniques to execute in the school or classroom environment. The study also revealed both subjective and objective rationale to suggest potential benefits of short, guided meditations in management of anger among secondary school children. The uniqueness of this study is developing meditations and validating it using statistical methods and processes. This is the first of its kind study engaged in development of guided meditations not only for anger management but in general. The scientific and evidence-based methodology employed sets a trend for standardisation and replication of the study. In general, most of the meditations are derived from experience of an individual and are empirically tested. Ample numbers of guided meditations are released in the market but the science of developing these meditations is not revealed. Meditations have entered the modern scientific world and hence there is a dire need to develop adequate evidential descriptive system and processes for developing meditations. Though not related to development of meditation, a study has attempted classification of meditation based on Behavioral and mental concepts of western psychology [29] According to this study, the four dimensions of meditation are (i) attention regulation, (ii) motivation (iii) attitude and (iv) practical context. A study reports that yoga in general improves mindfulness in adolescents [30]. Another study states that trans-disciplinary interventions improve awareness [31].

The concepts of Manaprashamana, Pratipaksha Bhavana, Positive Virtue and Parijnana were chosen after thorough study of anger management techniques in traditional text. We also cross checked the same by referring the texts and scientific papers of psychology. The three 'D' (delay, distract, decide) concept is popular in modern psychology for anger management. A master degree presentation reports increased anger awareness better is the anger management. This being the first of its kind study on development of meditations, we resort to studies on development

of yoga modules including meditations, to substantiate the findings of this study. There are a few studies on development of integrated yoga module for various mental health conditions. A yoga module developed for treatment of depression was validated by 9 experts and pilot administered on 9 subjects [32]. Similarly, yoga module for schizophrenia was designed based on traditional texts and validated by 10 yoga experts [33]. Yoga module developed for obsessive compulsive disorder was based on traditional texts and validated by 10 yoga experts [34]. The trend of developing yoga modules follows either a few or all of the following steps 1) based on traditional texts 2) expert validation 3) pilot study and 4) field study. Our current study also followed similar structure for development of the meditation for anger managements. Principles of anger management were derived from traditional texts. It was validated by 14 inter-disciplinary experts. Pilot administration was done with 5 adolescents. Field trial was carried out (though as a separate study) with a large sample size of 189. The short, guided meditations administered as a part of the yoga module helped the children to directly experience anger feeling / emotion and its manifestations at both physiological and psychological level consciously (with awareness). Children were able to internalise the coping strategies as it was in the form of meditation, imparted during relaxed, stable state of mind and after burning out the fatigue and exhausted because of dynamic practice of Asanas. Further children could easily embrace the techniques as they found the situations chosen for the meditations were very familiar to them and realistic. The verbal feedbacks received from children were that they enjoyed meditation most among all the yogic techniques and felt relaxed and refreshed after meditation. Children found it easy to employ the techniques during anger situation and could see the results then and there. Children found 'pratipaksha bhavana -switching over the emotion' most effective. A few statements made by students to mention 'I was angry with my brother last night and immediately thought of Ice-cream as I like it most and suddenly my anger vanished'. 'I was angry yesterday when my teacher shouted at me in the class. I started repeating in the mind relax, relax. Immediately I was calm and corrected myself'. 'I had a big fight yesterday while we were playing; suddenly I tried to forgive him and smiled at him. He

also smiled at me and problem solved'. The novelty of the present work is the developing guided meditation techniques for anger management which are secular and different from the popular types of meditation used in the research studies. Most of the research studies on meditation have used either Transcendental Meditation (TM) [35,36] or Mindfulness Meditation (MM) [7,37] and are used either as sole intervention or as a component of popular interventions. Variety of concerns focused in these studies are improved cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, self-control, sleep pattern, school climate; increased self-esteem, feeling of wellbeing; decreased anxiety, depression blood pressure, heart rate etc [7]. No study has been cited examining the efficacy of a meditation for anger management and also using short, guided meditations.

In the present work, the newly developed meditations are part of the yoga module which comprised of asanas (physical postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), dhyana's (meditations), relaxations and knowledge points. Assessment and validations are done as a comprehensive holistic yoga program. Hence, efficacy of the meditation programs could not be done. However, children stayed focused, attentive once they burn out their energies in a systematic way and could stabilise their body and breath through asanas and pranayama respectively. Physical postures (Asanas) and breathing practices (Pranayama's) traditionally known to support and foster meditation practices [38]. However, future studies may focus on comparing meditations as standalone technique as well as as a part of the yoga program. Initial plan of the study was to record the meditation and run in the sessions. However, it did not work as we included the meditation as a part of yoga module, and it was not feasible to have the audio facilities in the yoga room. An attempt to run through the laptop indeed distracted the children and they lost the flow of the practice. Hence the meditations were administered by the yoga instructors. A review study on mindfulness in adolescents suggests the need to shift from feasibility studies towards large well-designed studies. The qualitative findings of the present work provide preliminary evidence for standardisation of format and scientific approach [39]. The meditation techniques developed in the current study allow them for replication as well as for comparison. While school-based meditation programs advocate many benefits, extensive research on meditation and adolescents are yet to begin. The present work can provide sufficient evidence and lead to further examination in this area. In addition to the concepts of anger management enumerated in this work, Indian classical texts also enumerate other techniques such as Chittaprasadana (tranquillity of mind), Iswara Pranidana (surrendering), Ananta Sama Patti (expansion), Disha Nirdeshana (channelize), Satsanga (Company of wise) etc. Future work can focus on developing guided meditations using these concepts for management of anger.

### Conclusions

Short, guided meditations are effective in management of anger among adolescents. Guided Meditations helpful in making

children stay focused and relate themselves throughout the meditation. Sitting position with eyes closed keeps them away from distractions and falling asleep. Practicing asanas and a few breathings technique prepare the children for Meditation. Asanas and Pranayama's enhance the effect of meditation for anger management in adolescents. Meditation based yoga programs are good for anger management in secondary school children.

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