

Les Mills Lab: BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW™ and Heart Rate Variability Study



Introduction

Recovery is a major fitness trend right now. Mostly this involves specialised boutiques and services offering advice and techniques to aid recovery from physical activity. However, we believe the real recovery people need is from the everyday stress and anxiety caused by busy modern lifestyles.

As such, we set out to evaluate if the calming effects of BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW can improve key components of recovery such as how our bodies regulate vital health factors such as stress and sleep.

BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW is a yoga-based workout that helps build flexibility and core strength while reducing stress and enhancing focus using mindfulness to create a lasting sense of well-being.

Heart Rate Variability (HRV) is the measurement of interval variation between each beat of the heart. Measuring HRV is an effective way to make an evaluation about how well recovered and ready we are for the day. The higher the variability between heartbeats, the more likely we are to be mentally and physically equipped to manage, and recover from, daily stress.

The hypothesis

Performing a sequence of yoga stretches (20-30 minutes) with subsequent meditation (10 minutes) three nights per week will increase HRV, positive feelings and quality sleep.

Method

The study involved 66 Les Mills Instructors from the U.K. and U.S. For the first two weeks instructors collected their HRV and resting heart rate each morning, as well as their total exercise time and exercise intensity each day. They also answered weekly surveys about their feelings and sleep quality.

For the second two weeks, the group was split into two groups of 33. The control group continued with their usual training schedule while the experimental group added three, 30-40 minute, evening sessions of BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW per week - on top of their usual training schedule.

Both groups continued collecting the same data and answering the same questions.

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Results

The instructors who completed BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW three evenings per week experienced significant improvements in all of the measured variables.

- They recorded a statistically significant increase in HRV
- An 18% increase in satisfaction with daily life
- Positive feelings relating to confidence and motivation improved by a minimum of 29%
- Sleep quality improved by 15%
- Also impressive was the decrease in negative emotions; anxiety and tension by 26% and feelings of sadness and negativity by 39%

The control group experienced no significant differences in any variables measured over the four-week study period.

Conclusion

Lead Researcher Associate Professor Jinger Gottschall says the findings provide evidence that the calming effect of adding BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW sessions to your evening routine results in valuable physical and mental health benefits.

“BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW is a useful recovery solution for managing the everyday pressures of a busy modern lifestyle because participants feel more positive, confident and motivated,” says Dr Gottschall.

Les Mills Head of Research Bryce Hastings says, “The results are significant because they are relevant to anyone who needs some recovery from the mental and physical stresses modern life presents.

“You don’t need to be a particular level of fitness to start BODYBALANCE/BODYFLOW and by doing it on a regular basis, you can start enjoying the same benefits the study participants gained,” says Hastings.