Namaste: Yoga for Attention and Stress Relief
Beat the Heat 2013

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What? Yoga is...

Yoga is an ancient system of exercise and breathing that originated in India thousands of years ago. “Yoga” literally means “union” of body, mind, and spirit. For the body, yoga uses poses that develop muscle strength, flexibility of the spine and joints, and balance. For the mind, to do the yoga poses successfully requires focus, concentration, and controlled breathing. Because yoga is non-competitive and the poses pay respect to nature by representing animals (e.g., cat, dog, snake) and other natural wonders (e.g., tree, sun), it nurtures the spirit. – (Lederer 2008)

Why? Evidence on using yoga with children with disabilities:

ADHD:
• General reduction of ADHD symptoms (Child Symptoms Inventory) including inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity, careless mistakes, fidgeting, out of seat behavior (Abadi, Madgaonkar, & Venkatesan, 2008)
• Yoga deactivates sympathetic nervous system’s fight or flight which increases heart rate and sugar; stimulates parasympathetic giving sense of calm, concentration, emotional balance

Intellectual Disabilities:
• Left prefrontal cortex involved in working memory and controlling impulsivity (yoga shown to improve verbal and spatial memory in typically developing kids by Manjunath & Telles, 2004)

Autism:
  ▪ Use of daily classroom wide yoga interventions resulted in significant decrease in aggressive behavior, social withdrawal and hyperactivity among children with ASD.
  ▪ Yoga teaches us to focus on what children can do; what makes them special vs. a disability perspective
  ▪ Routine, repetition, rules help children with autism learn (TEACHH)
  ▪ Movement increases language learning
  ▪ ASD symptoms addressed (e.g., anxiety, inflexibility, mood, social skills, sensory-motor skills, language skills, attention, self-esteem)

Neuromotor development:
  ○ Improved motor planning, motor speed and accuracy, and spatial memory

Health:
• NIH currently is funding 13 research grants on yoga and meditation (adults)

Relaxed students learn better; relaxed teachers teach better!
The power of a routine is the precise planning of what the student will do and how he will do it in on each step of the routine. Many students are able to learn new skills and participate at higher levels when this strategy is used because they need the following things that routines provide:

**Predictability:** "I know what is going to happen from start to finish."

**Consistency:** "I know what I am supposed to do."

**Anticipation:** "When you do that, I know to get ready for."

**Practice:** "I remember what I did Last time and I can try to do more this time."

(Millie Smith - TSBVI, 2002)

**How? Routines help students:**
- Structure
- Repetition
- Predictability
- Consistency
- Turn-taking
- Expansion opportunities
- Peer interactions
- Choice making
- Initiating

**How? Routines help teachers:**
- Helps teachers, paraprofessionals, staff know expectation/purpose of routine (reinforces goal)
- Can build routines around health/wellness, academics, communication, self-care, any LIFE skill
- Way to teach students that are difficult to teach
- Incorporates task analysis (breaking things down into steps)
Yoga Class Basic Routine

1. Tune in and warm up = breathing + warm up all muscle groups
2. Practice yoga- do poses
3. Relaxation and wake up poses
4. Valediction- parting

Yoga routines should have elements of both calming and alerting moments and allow for both right and left body parts to hold the poses. Symmetry and a structured beginning, middle, and end are important in yoga.

Yoga Differences for Different Ages (adapted from Shakta Kaur Khalsa’s Radiant Child Yoga)

Threes!
- Imaginative yoga, yoga stories
- Need structure and repetition; could/should do same routine every day for a week, or every week if not done daily
- Goal is to get the feel for yoga while having fun
- Time: yoga for 10-15 min, relaxation for 1 minute, songs/games 5 minutes
- 4 students : 1 adult

Four to Eight!
- Imaginative yoga, yoga stories, ask students what kind of story they can imagine with yoga poses
- Add in focus- breathwork, or asking question about what comes next in yoga story
- Warrior cards
- Bilateral coordination develops around 5-6 years. Movements that require arms/legs go in opposite directions may be difficult before then.
- Can begin to lead class- ask who wants to lead class with a favorite pose? What do we do first? Then what?
- Time: yoga for 20-30 minutes, relaxation 2 minutes, quiet time 2 minutes, songs/games 5-10 minutes
- 7 students: 1 adult

Nine to thirteen!
- Show relevance that yoga is a tool in toolbox to help with things in daily lives (tests, peers, parents, rules)
- Give more details about the poses and body parts its affecting, give details yoga’s impact on posture and image
- challenge them physically use a timer and see if they can hold pose longer than personal best
- partner yoga poses may be enjoyable- pair girls with girls, boys with boys
- encourage leadership skills- leading the whole class
- time: yoga for 30+ minutes, relaxation 3-4 minutes, quiet breathing time 5-10 minutes
- 10 students : 1 adult

All yoga poses can be used with any age child. Your approach will be different with an 11 year old compared to a 5 year old, but the postures and exercises will be the same.
Example of Yoga Story - Mountain Story (from Shakta Kaur Khalsa’s *Fly Like a Butterfly*)

1. Teacher gives signal it’s time for yoga, dims lights, gathers props (cotton balls, feathers, blanket), turns on music
2. Students gather materials for yoga (i.e., mats), take off shoes, and sit on mat.
3. Warm up breaths and stretches
4. Begin mountain story-When a pose is introduced, the class completes the pose, with guided and physical assistance as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poses in Story</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Energizing</th>
<th>Calming</th>
<th>Picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mountain pose</td>
<td>Once there was a tall, beautiful mountain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree pose</td>
<td>The mountain had tall trees on it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Bird pose&quot;</td>
<td>On this mountain lived a very beautiful bird.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Running in place&quot;</td>
<td>Down in the valley there was a town with many people. They heard there was gold on the mountain. They wanted to see it so they began running as fast as they could.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chopping</td>
<td>Once they got to the mountain, they picked up their axes and began to chop up the ground to get the gold.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poses in Story</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountain pose + walking up and back</td>
<td>The mountain became smaller and smaller as they chopped.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Mountain Pose" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bird pose”</td>
<td>The beautiful bird was sad when she saw this. She thought she could help and began flying to her cloud friends.</td>
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<td><img src="image2" alt="Bird Pose" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Camel pose</td>
<td>She found a big, gray rain cloud who was happy to help the mountain. It puffed up until it was as big as the mountain.</td>
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<td><img src="image3" alt="Camel Pose" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wind mill</td>
<td>The cloud made it rain and the winds blow around.</td>
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<td><img src="image4" alt="Wind Mill" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder and cannon breath</td>
<td>Thunder and lightning came crashing down on the people on the mountain.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Thunder and Cannon Breath" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulders</td>
<td>Huge rocks came loose and rolled down the mountain.</td>
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<td><img src="image6" alt="Boulders" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>The people were scared and ran home.</td>
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<td><img src="image7" alt="Running" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain pose</td>
<td>The mountain was once again strong and tall.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Mountain Pose" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poses in Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resting pose for relaxation, quiet time, and wake up</td>
<td>The people were happy to be at home with what they had.</td>
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</table>

5. Conclude the yoga session with having the students do the following:
   a. Press hands together
   b. Thumbs to heart
   c. Say, “Namaste” (Nahm –es – tay)
   d. Tell students that means, “Be well.”

6. Have students clean up mats and... check their schedule to transition to next activity

**Hint:** Choose at least one breathing and/or relaxation activity/pose to do every day at the same time. Students will begin to anticipate this quiet time to calm and focus themselves. (Carla Tantillo)

**Ideas for Secondary Students**

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**Adaptations for Students with Special Needs**


- Yoga can be inclusive to people with all abilities with the use of props.
- Don’t expect children to do poses the way they look in pictures. Allow children to do the pose in a way that feels right for their bodies.
- Chair/wheelchair yoga can work too, if unable to get student onto floor.
- Help children get into poses and hold them. Do yoga on the days your OT, PT, or APE is in class.
- Do partner yoga (adult or peer partners).
- Set a relaxing mood with an uncluttered space, soft music, dim lights; sitting/reclining/ laying out of wheelchair with eyes closed and rhythmic breathing is yoga. Cover eyes with eye pillow during relaxation.
- If students refuse to participate, honor their choice, but have clear option (ex: do you want to be part of class or do you want to go to peace circle= area to be peaceful) if disruptive ...
- Consider photos and other visual supports for accuracy in following directions, etc.
- Use props/adapted equipment (e.g., do poses next to a wall; use a cushion, ball, bolster, or any other supported positioning tool, use towel rather than hands-on to assist in student’s positioning, provide objects to focus on or use for balance)
How Can I Fit This In?

1. Reflect- what are most stressful times of the day? After lunch? Friday afternoon?
2. Select a time- use yoga activities at the time(s) each day when you need to constructively harness student energy. Plan to implement 10 + minutes per day; add it to your class schedule; commit to a 6 week trial period.
3. Set up your classroom- designate area for any necessary yoga props, in most secluded, quiet calm area of class.
4. Yoga integrated into lessons on days with PT, APE, OT- small group vs. whole group.
5. Circle time.
6. Students do yoga 1:1 during sensory break or at centers.
7. As a reverse inclusion activity.
8. Thematically for animal, science, nature, health, and math … units.
9. As coordinated set of activities for recreation and leisure development for secondary students.
10. Minimum of 1 time / week of a yoga routine.
11. Other __________________________

Hint: Discuss terminology of “yoga” versus something more neutral such as movement and relaxation strategies with campus administrators.
How does this tie to the student IEP?

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>IEP Goal/Objective</th>
<th>TIE to Yoga</th>
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</table>
How will I use information from this session in my classroom next week/month/year? Do I want to try . . .

Lesson Plans:

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<th>I will use . . .</th>
<th>How?</th>
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Region 13 Resources

Yoga therapy for every special child: Meeting needs in a natural setting
[Paperback] 613.7 Wi Nancy Williams.
Published 2010

[Paperback] 613.7 Be Betts, Dion E. (Dion Emile), 1963-
Published 2006

Yoga for children with special needs
[DVD] 613.7 Ba TRP Wellness.
Published 2008

Get ready to learn™: Classroom Breaks Yoga therapy in the classroom
[DVD] 613.7046 Bu Anne Buckley-reen.
Published 2009

Get ready to learn™: Floor 1 Yoga therapy in the classroom
[DVD] 613.7046 Bu Anne Buckley-reen.
Published 2009

Get ready to learn™: Floor 2 Yoga therapy in the classroom
[DVD] 613.7046 Bu Anne Buckley-reen.
Published 2009

Get ready to learn™: Seated 1 Yoga therapy in the classroom
[DVD] 613.7046 Bu Anne Buckley-reen.
Published 2009

Get ready to learn™: Seated 2 Yoga therapy in the classroom
[DVD] 613.7046 Bu Anne Buckley-reen.
Published 2009

Fly like a butterfly: yoga for children
[Book] 613.7 Ka Khalsa, Shakti Kaur, 1950-
Published 1998

Drive thru menus: Exercises for relaxation and stress busters
[Kit] 616.98 Bo Bowen-Irish, Tere.
Published 2003
References

