



Children's Yoga Teacher Training Module 1 - The benefits of yoga for children -Yogic philosophy



The Benefits of Yoga

There are endless physical, mental, emotional and spiritual benefits of yoga, no matter what age we are.

Physical Benefits

- Yoga asana and pranayama supports every system in the body-

Yoga Postures/Asana, Pranayama and Meditation have a profound impact on all the systems of the human body. The muscles, bones, nervous system, respiratory, circulatory and digestive systems benefit greatly from regular practice and can support the healthy functions of our body.

Skeletal System

- Helps develop, strengthen and release tension from bones, muscles and joints.
- Encourages strength and endurance
- Reduces pain and improves posture

Respiratory System

- Helps supply oxygen to every cell in the body and then transports carbon dioxide, the waste product of respiration out of the body
- Stretch and strengthen these areas and encourage deep full breathing

Cardiovascular System

- Promotes healthy blood pressure
- Strengthens heart
- Supports blood circulation

Digestive System

- Supports the functioning of ingestion, digestion, absorption and defecation
- Improves blood and nerve supply to the digestive systems to maintain good functioning

Nervous System

- Improves blood circulation, easing muscle tension
- Activates parasympathetic nervous system
- Asana reduces stress and anxiety levels, and increased feelings of calm and well-being.

Endocrine System

- Regulates metabolism, growth, development and puberty, and tissue function
- Regulates and controls the secretion of hormones from all glands in the body



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Mental Benefits

- Relieves stress, anxiety and worry, by encouraging body and present moment awareness
- Sharpens concentration
- Improves mood, the balancing of hormones can allow us to feel more at ease
- Increases mindfulness
- Reduces depression
- Improves sleep
- Moves you from sympathetic to parasympathetic nervous system- or from flight-or-flight to rest-and-digest
- Helps build sense of self

Emotional Benefits

- Develops self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, self-love
- Improves relationships with those around, increases empathy, sympathy and understanding of others
- Helps you deal with all emotions including sadness, grief, anger, loneliness, frustration and more.

Benefits of teaching yoga to children

Children & Young People are under an increasing amount of pressure and stress. At school and at home children struggle with personal, social & emotional stress & anxiety. Exam stress, high expectations from social pressures, time spent on their phones/screens, problems with family life & social groups, childhood trauma are all examples of the types of stress that children have to endure as they grow up, children can become very confused, negative & depressed as a result of all this pressure.

As a society, our lives are busier and more complex than ever before with little time for rest and reflection and a lot of time spent draining our parasympathetic nervous system. The pandemic has made us isolated; lacking human connection has been a huge ongoing trauma for us all, especially for children & young people. When we practice yoga we slow down, we dissolve the walls between us & we discover a deep connection between us, others & the world around us.

Recent statistics show that teen suicide has risen by 67% since 2010. I strongly believe that if parents, school teachers & other school staff are all taught meditation, yoga asana & breathing techniques to share with their students from an early age then we can prevent the rise in depression & other mental health issues. This, in turn will build a society that is in touch with its emotion guidance system, understands the mind- body connection & produces a generation that feels love, kindness and compassion for themselves and others.

Childhood & adolescence is a very hard time; trying to work out our emotions & mental wellbeing, whilst the body attempts to regulate bodily functions which can be incredibly overwhelming.



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However, with the multidimensional tools of yoga, we can help children establish a practice that will support their health & wellbeing in profound ways, which will eventually create a healthier, happier and peaceful world.

Yoga teaches us how to be calm, how to relax and most importantly how to be aware of ourselves, our emotions, our body, our mind and of others. It teaches coordination, self-control and flexibility, which are all valuable concepts to our wellbeing. It is very important that we listen to, understand & be compassionate towards our bodies. I have met many adults who do not listen to their bodies when they are tired. They continue working until they break down and become very ill. Teaching yoga to children from a young age helps them learn how to listen to what their bodies are telling them, how to feel when they are tired or tense & when they need to rest; knowing when to stop.

Humans are collectively going through destruction of the old ways we used to live, a new way of life is being born & the next generation are going to need the powerful tools of yoga, meditation, mindfulness & energy work to help birth the new paradigm.

Now more than ever, children & young people need us to support them. You are part of this shift, thank you for being here. The work that you do has such a rippling affect in the world & you are already helping so many others ignite their own light, just for being you.

Emotions & Trauma

"When you shut down emotion,
you're also affecting
your immune system,
your nervous system.
So the repression
of emotion,
which is a survival strategy,
then becomes a source
of physiological
illness later on."

Star seeds
fb/starseeduniverse

– Gabor Maté

When we experience a big emotional or a traumatic event, it's important to sit with the overwhelming feelings and emotions that bubble up. If we push them down/keep them locked inside and try to act as 'normal', then they will stay lodged in our bodies and eventually bubble up or worse- turn to dis-ease and thus, disease. So when these feelings or experiences happen instead of sucking it up, try to *manifest* a new reality or pretending to be strong (so others can perceive us as brave) why not take time to just be. To be with the sadness, the frustration, the pain, the loneliness, the heart break, the grief, the loss.



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The power of awareness has the ability to heal, when we truly look at something and give it space to be, we are letting the allow a sense of release from the trauma &/or allowing emotions move through us.

What does it really mean to be brave? Is it brave to fight our emotions? Or is it, in fact, braver to show how we really feel and to be compassionate to all that we feel?



The way that we react to our own emotions, feelings and experiences will inform how we react to the children we are working with. When we practice holding space for ourselves, we can begin to hold space for our students in a compassionate and loving way.

Yoga starts and ends with the breath.

We carry our breath with us in every moment. It anchors us and helps us to focus on the moment rather than be distracted by our thoughts. Closing our eyes and coming back to the breath when we are angry, scared or upset during the day can help us gain control of a situation and not let our emotions get the better of us. Being present in the moment can help us see things clearly and to make good judgments or decisions. Listening to our breath and taking our attention inside automatically calms and relaxes, this is such a great skill for children to learn from an early age, thus eliminating anger and pain.

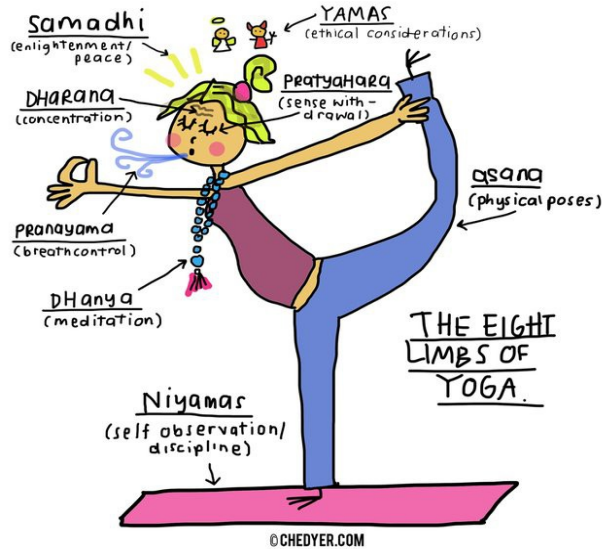
From practising yoga postures one can gain great understanding of the body and increase proprioceptive abilities. **We begin to feel deeper and develop a union between our body, mind and spirit.** Synchronized breathing with the postures can help us develop **mindfulness and concentration** which are important skills that can help us in daily life.

As well as all the emotional and spiritual effects, yoga can also be a great way to **stay fit and have fun.** Stories can be used as part of a children's yoga class to engage the children in the postures and to **develop their imaginations and creativity.** Children can feel mentally and physically rejuvenated after a yoga session, leading them to feel calmer at home after a class, with improved sleep patterns. Yoga allows children to develop **confidence and self-esteem**, whilst opening their minds.

Yoga is NOT a competition; it's accessible for all! Though some students may be more flexible than others, it doesn't mean any of them are better than one another, to be a 'good yogis', you just need to show up!



Bringing the 8 Limbs of Yoga into a kids class



Yamas- The attitude towards others and the world around us. Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, non-possessiveness, non-lust- not giving into our ego's desire.

- Ahimsa (non-harming or non-violence in thought, word and deed)
- Satya (truthfulness)
- Asteya (non-stealing)
- Brahmacharya (celibacy or 'right use of energy')
- Aparigraha (non-greed or non-hoarding)

Niyamas- How you treat yourself and your attitude towards yourself. Cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of self, living with an awareness to the divine.

- Saucha (cleanliness)
- Santosha (contentment)
- Tapas (discipline, austerity or 'burning enthusiasm')
- Svadhyaya (study of the self and of the texts)
- Isvara Pranidhana (surrender to a higher being, or contemplation of a higher power)

ACTIVITY- Before the class, place Y and N leaves under mats and big tree in the middle. Ask children to look under their mats, which Y and N do they have? What does it mean? Place it on the tree. Has anyone used them this week? Did anyone not use them? How did it make you feel?



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Asana. Moving our bones, joints, muscles, cells, organs! Stretching and strengthening the muscles. Yoga Asana not only keeps us physically strong and supports our immune system but a regular practice allows us to stay mentally strong, build resilience, confidence, focus and most importantly brings us peace

ACTIVITY- stories, games, partner poses, sequences, etc!

Pranayama. The link between the mental and physical disciplines. While the action is physical, the effect is to make the mind calm, lucid and steady. Normal breathing should be slow, deep and rhythmical- most people use only a fraction of their lung capacity for breathing- shallow, barely expanding the ribcage. Prana- not just air when we breathe in and out but prana to- subtle energy. Regular practice can help Control of prana which leads to the control of the mind. See Module 4

Pratyahara- Taking our awareness to our inner world- listening to our bodies, slowing down, feeling our bodies from the inside. This helps us feel and see clearly. This can be explored during our relaxation at the end of the session of with these activities-

ACTIVITY-

1. Explore Senses

Touch- feely bag, write letters/shapes on backs

Sight- I spy

Smell- Essential oils foot massage

Hearing- Singing bowls, bells

Taste- use foods

2. Withdrawal from senses -In partners, one sits still eyes closed, the other gently moves feather along the skin. Can the one with eyes closed stay still and not be tickled!

Dharana--Keeping this internal attention and focusing on one thing- colouring, watching our breath, puzzle, mantra. Most children can already focus their attention quite well without the constant fluxuations of the mind. This is something that we learn over time which takes us away from the present moment.

ACTIVITY- Feather race, colouring, making mandalas.

Dyana- Meditation –Letting go of the focus and becoming completely immersed in the present moment. **ACTIVITY**- Guided meditation

Samadhi- Complete Bliss, the goal of Yoga. Supreme state of consciousness. This happens as a result of practice, you can't plan this or set a goal for this, it happens spontaneously, all is at peace, experience truth and connection. This limb cannot be taught, it can only be experienced.