

Children's Yoga Teacher Training Manual – 2012 By Mahayjoti Glassman

For Ages Infant to 18

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bibliography for Children	2
Āṣṭāṅga Yoga	2
Children’s Yoga Comprehensive Teacher Training	2
Why is Yoga Great for Kids: the Benefits.....	2
Intellectual/Mental	2
Emotional	2
Creative/Intuitive	2
Social	2
Spiritual	2
Ethics: Special Considerations on the Teaching of Children	2
Communication and Interaction	2
Teaching Methodology Pointers	2
Venn Diagram.....	2
Yoga for Infants	2
General Introduction	2
Some Benefits of Infant Yoga.....	2
Mechanics.....	2
Vocalization	2
Some Other Considerations	2
Assisting Tips	2
Design.....	2
Infant Yoga Āsana Techniques.....	2
7 Months: I Am On the Move	2
11 Months: Almost Walking Baby.....	2
12 Months: I’m A Walking Machine	2
Songs and Rhymes for Infant Yoga.....	2

Skills for the end of Toddlerhood	3
Books.....	3
Toddlers	3
General Introduction	3
Toddler Methodology.....	3
The Space.....	3
Raising the Bar.....	3
Design	3
Toddler Techniques	3
Books.....	3

Yoga for 3-5 Year Olds.....

General Introduction	3
Yoga Mechanics.....	3
Setting the Stage	3
Design.....	3
Interactions.....	3
Show Respect for Children	3
Chanting.....	3
Games	3
Lifestyle	3
Meditation	3
Prānāyāma	3
Śavāsana	3
Story Yoga.....	3
Other Essentials.....	3
Class Management/Setting Boundaries.....	3
Rewards, Incentives, and Acknowledgment	3
Trouble Shooting	3

Venues	4
Living in Harmony with Others (Yama) - Ahimsa for Students	4
Living in Harmony with Others (Yama) - Ahimsa for Teachers	4
Preschool.....	4
Magic Redirection Poses.....	4

Elementary: Yoga for 6 - 10 Year Olds.....4

General Introduction	4
Elementary Mechanics.....	4
Accessorize.....	4
Affirmations and Positive Approach.....	4
Āsana	4
Assisting.....	4
Centering.....	4
Chanting and Mantra Methodology	4
Class Themes	4
Design.....	4
Lifestyle	4
Meditation.....	4
Parent Involvement.....	4
Elementary Prānāyāma	4
Games	4
Yoga Class Activities	4
Yama and Niyama for Children.....	4
Yama and Niyama For Teachers	4
Elementary Yoga Goals	4
Methodology Basics	4
Class Management.....	4
Some Language Cues For the General Class	4

Elementary Interactions	5
Other Essentials	5
Yoga Rules for Elementary	5
Middle School: Yoga for 11 - 14 Year Olds	5
Middle School Mechanics	5
Accessorize	5
Affirmations and Positive Approach	5
Assisting	5
Chanting	5
Class Themes	5
Closing	5
Design	5
Middle School Interactions	5
Lifestyle	5
Middle School Prānāyāma	5
Music	5
Middle School Śavāsana	5
Visualizations	5
Sequential Progressive Relaxation	5
Scripted Visualizations	5
Personalized Visualizations	5
Other Essential Activities	5
Other Activities and Introductory Concepts	5
Yama and Niyama for Children	5
Yama and Niyama for Teachers	5
Middle Childhood: The Elementary School Years	5
High School: Yoga for 15-18 Year Olds	5

Yoga Mechanics.....	6
Class Themes	6
Closings.....	6
Dī ṣ ṭ i.....	6
Health Issues.....	6
Lifestyle	6
Meditation.....	6
Prānāyāma	6
Connection through Service	6
Śavāsana.....	6
Yoga Massage	6
Yoga Questions.....	6
Yama and Niyama for Children	6
Íśvara Pranidhana: Remembering.....	6
Goals	6
Yama and Niyama for Teachers.....	6
Affirmations for Tapaḥ	6
Today I open my heart to myself and others. I am willing to extend myself in service to someone in need. I trust my higher power to guide me.	6
Affirmations for Svadhyaya.....	6
Quotes.....	6

Bibliography for Children

There are many new books being released on Yoga for Children. Most of the books are based on the tools. The following is a list of the books with tools. A followup book list will include books on the supportive biological and consciousness information.

Adamson, Jodi B. and Komitor, Eva, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga with Kids. 2000. Macmillan, New York, NY.

Baptiste, Baron, My Daddy is a Pretzel Yoga for Parents and Kids. 2004, Barefoot Books, Cambridge, MA.

Bersma, Danielle, Yoga Games for Children (4-12), Fun and Fitness with Postures, Movements and Breath, 2003, Hunter House Inc. Alameda, CA.

Betts, Dion and Stacey, Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Step by Step Guide for Parents and Caregivers. 2006, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, Philadelphia, PA.

Buddhananada, Swami and Saraswati, Satyananda, Yoga Education for Children, Vol. 1. 1990, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India.

Calhoun, Yeal and Matthew, Create a Yoga Practice for Kids. 2006, Sunstone Press, Santa Fe, NM.

Children of Yoga, Hatha Yoga for Kids. 1990, Integral Yoga Publications, Buckingham, VA

Clennell, Bobby, Watch Me Do Yoga. 2010, Rodmell Press, Berkley, CA.

Cohen, Kenneth, Imagine That!. 1983, Integral Yoga Publications, Buckingham, VA.

Cuomo, Nicole, Integrated Yoga: Yoga With A Sensory Integrative Approach. 2007, Jessica Kingsley Publishing, Philadelphia, PA.

Dass, Baba Hari, A Child's Garden of Yoga. 1980, Sri Rama Publishing, Santa Cruz, CA.

Davies, Abbie, My First Yoga Animal Poses. 2010, My First Yoga, Cambridge, MA.

de Brunhoff, Laurent, Babar's Yoga for Elephants. 2006, Abrams Image, New York, NY.

Douillard, Dr. John, Perfect Health for Kids. 2004, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA.

Freedman, Francoise Barbira, Yoga for Mother and Baby. 2010, Cico Books, London, England.

Garabedian, Helen, Itsy Bitsy Yoga for Toddlers and Preschoolers. 2008, Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, PA.

Garabedian, Helen, Itsy Bitsy Yoga Poses to Help Your Baby Sleep Longer, Digest Better, and Grow Stronger. 2004, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY

Gibbs, Bel, Yoga for Children: Stretching and Strengthening Exercises For 3 - 11 Year Olds. 2003, Anness, Leicester, England.

Gillen, Lynea and James, Yoga Calm for Children: Educating Heart, Mind and Body. 2007, Three Pebble Press, Portland, OR.

Gregg, Susan, Complete Idiot's Guide: Short Meditations, 2007, Alpha / Penguin Books, New York, NY.

Greenland, Susan Kaiser, The MindfulChild, 2010, Free Press, Div. of Simon & Schuster, Inc, New York, NY.

Hahn, Thich Nhat, Mindful Movements; 2008, Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA.

Hahn, Thich Nhat, Planting Seeds, Practicing Mindfulness with Children. 2011, Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA.

Khalsa, Shakta Kaur, Fly Like a Butterfly Yoga for Children. 1999, Sterling Press, New York, NY.

Koch, Isabelle. Like a Fish in Water: Yoga for Children. 1998, Inner Traditions. Rochester, VT.

Loomis, Diane, The Loveables in the Kingdom of Self-Esteem. 1993 Starseed Press, HJ Kramer, Tiburon, CA

Luby, Thia, Yoga for Teens. 2000, Clear Light Publishers, New York, NY.

Luby, Thia, Children's Book of Yoga: Games and Exercises Mimi Plants and Animals and Objects (ages 8 and up). 1998, Clear Light Publishers. Santa Fe, NM.

Loomans, Diana, The Lovables. 1991, H J Kramer Inc., Tiburon, CA.

Parker, DeAnsin Goodson, Ph.D, Yoga Baby. 2000, Broadway Books, div. of Random House, New York, NY.

Pegrum, Juliet, Yoga for Toddlers, Children and You. 2010, Cico Books, London, England.

Pierce, Karen, Yoga Bear Yoga for Youngsters. 2004, Cooper Square Publishing, Lanham, MD.

Purperhart, Helen and Van Amelsfort, Barbara, Yoga Adventure for Children. 2007, Hunter House Inc. Alameda, California.

Purperhart, Helen and Van Amelsfort, Barbara, Yoga Zoo Adventure Animal Poses and Games for Little Kids. 2006, Hunter House Inc. Alameda, California.

Reinhardt, Edna, Creative Yoga for Teenagers. 2010, yoga Education Resources, Victoria Australia.

Saraswati, Niranjanananda, Yoga Education for Children Vol.2. 2009, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India.

Solis, Sydney, Storytime Yoga: Teaching Yoga to Children through Story. 2006, The Mythic Yoga Studio, Arvada, CO.

Solis, Sydney, Storytime Yoga: The Treasure in Your Heart. 2007. The Mythic Yoga Studio, Arvada, CO.

Stewart, Mary and Phillips, K, Yoga for Children: Simple Movements and Games You and Your Kids Can Do. 1992, Fireside / Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.

Sumar, Sonia, Yoga for the Special Child. 1998. Special Yoga Publication, Evanston, IL.

Thakur, Bharat, Yoga For The Family a Holistic Approach. 2004, Roli Books, New Dehli, India.

Tubbs, Janet, Creative Therapy for Children with Autism ADD and Asperber's, 2008, Square One Publishers, Garden City Park, NY.

Wenig, Marsha, Yoga Kids, 2003, Stewart, Tabori, and Chang, New York, NY.

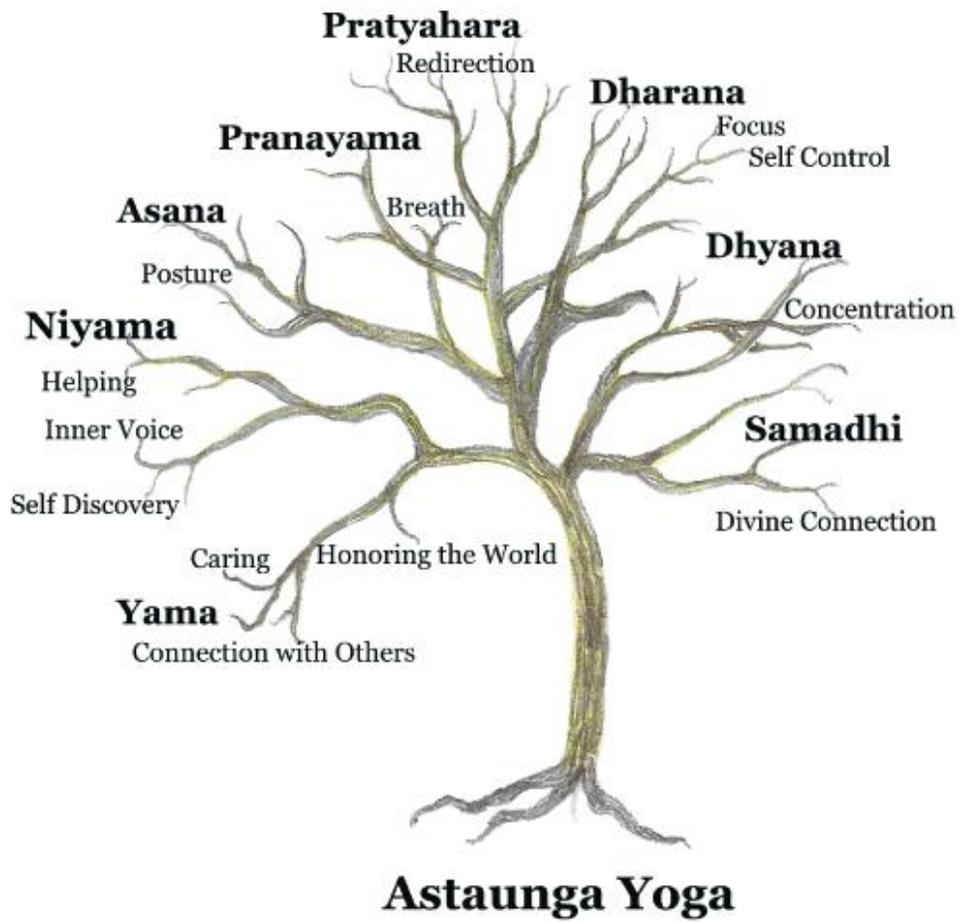
Whitford, Rebecca and Selway, Martina, Sleepy Little Yoga, 2007, Henry Holt and Company, New York, NY.

Whitford, Rebecca and Selway, Martina; Little Yoga, 2005, Henry Holt and Company, New York, NY.

Williams, Nancy, Yoga Therapy for Every Special Child, 2010, Singing Dragon, Philadelphia, PA.

Wynne, Jarrah, Tannaya, Ky and Jessica, Meditations for Kids by Kids, 2006, Blue Angel Gallery, Australia.

Āṣṭāṅga Yoga



Children's Yoga Comprehensive Teacher Training

Overview

The Age Groupings by Years: 0-2/ 3-5/ six to ten/ 11-14/ 15-18

Aṣ ṭ āṅ ga Yoga

Yama = Caring and connection with others

- Ahimsā, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha
- Problem solving and conflict resolution techniques, yoga games, partner-group yoga, guided imagery, teaching methodologies for each age grouping.

Niyama = Self discovery, inner struggle, service, inner listening

- Sauca, Santos̄ a, Tapaḥ , Svādhyāya, Īsvara Pranidhana
- Singing, world chanting, how to communicate with children, socio-emotional stages, affirmations, stories, creative experiences, personal discipline, diet, yoga lifestyle.

Āsana = Posture practice

- Developmentally appropriate āsana techniques, anatomy and physiology for each age group, developmental brain theory, observation and participation in teaching children in a community setting.

Prānāyāma = Breathing techniques

- Breath awareness techniques which are safe for children, emotional fitness.

Pratyāhāra = Withdrawal from the senses (We are more than our bodies.)

- Śavāsana strategies, visualization.

Dhāraṇa = Focus and self-control

- Use of mantra, affirmations, visualization, dṭ ṣ ṭ i, chanting and rhythm.

Dhyāna = Concentration and prolonged focus

- Meditation and stillness exercises

Samādhi = Building a relationship with the Inner Teacher

- The Goal of Yoga

Why is Yoga Great for Kids: the Benefits

How many hours in a day is the average child sitting or in a passive environment?

5 ½ hours

50% of kids between 12-21 not physically active on regular basis

Seeks homeostasis of the body/mind

Physical

- Can bring balance to all systems of the body
- Helps form a deeper understanding the body, how it works and how its health affects our thoughts and moods
- Provides physical activity that strengthens the heart and circulatory system
 - Bathes tissues and organs with the squeeze and release functioning
- Supports young children who are toilet learning and others who may have problems/sensitivities with elimination and digestion by massaging the internal organs

Strengthens and supports the development of the spine, muscles, joints

- Stretches can improve low muscle tone
- Stimulates the 206 bones and 200 joints in the human body
- Energizes the approximately 600 muscles
- Can facilitate better coordination, kinesthetic awareness, and balance
- Can improve sleep and posture

Guides proper respiration

- Supports the continued lung and respiratory development which continues until the age of 8
- Expands lung capacity
- Aid in developing a better balance in the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation
- Encourages efficient diaphragmatic respiration
- Improves oxygenation of all body organs, tissues, and cells

Enhances the proper development of the reproductive system

- Can minimize menstrual discomfort
- Helps to balance hormonal secretions

Can diminish problems with the skin through yoga massage

Assists in recalibrating the hormonal functioning of the endocrine glands

- Applies pressure to glands that are overproducing or underproducing hormones that may cause a negative mental impact

Strengthens the immune system by massaging all the glands

Maintains a calm nervous system for a calm mind

- Can temporarily minimize physical/mental hyperactivity and aggressive tendencies
- Fine tunes the entire brain and nervous system
- Can better balance the brain and the mental processes through regular practice
- Enhances the functioning of the right and left hemispheres
- Organizes and stimulates the entire brain
- Prepares students for classroom learning

Intellectual/Mental

- Can aid with concentration and increased attention span
- Develops focus and concentration
- Enhances development of visual, auditory and kinesthetic intelligences necessary for supporting academic learning
- Encourages critical thinking and creativity
- Provides assistance with learning preparedness
- Nurtures all of the multiple intelligences

Emotional

- Builds confidence through the noncompetitive nature of practice
- Provides experiences that strengthen and expand the self-image
- Calms the mind and supports emotional flexibility
- Can contribute to greater emotional fitness
- Stretches of the muscles can release repressed emotional tension
- Empowers students with tools for better anxiety/stress management
- Increases our sensitivity, intuition, understandings/caring/feelings
- By working on the body the mind becomes calmer
- Retrains the mind to slow down, cease its chatter, relax
- Assists in the cultivation of awareness and compassion
- Supports the development of fearlessness and overcoming complexes.
- Tends to reduce the emotional neediness
- Provides a forum for greater awareness and understanding of feelings, thoughts, and attitudes
- Assists with the appropriate processing and expression of feelings
- Cultivates self-control and self-restraint
- Supports self-care and stress management
- Encourages and perseverance
- Supports a more positive behavior and attitude
- Emphasizes positivity, introspection, focus, and relaxation
- Provides experiences that strengthen and expand self-image
- Develops respect for emotions and diversity of opinion

Creative/Intuitive

- Increases sensitivity, intuition, understandings/caring/feelings
- Enhances a mindful, tolerant, and patient outlook in life
- Supports being more nonjudgmental.
- Emphasizes inner attunement
- Encourages the practice of inner listening and trusting intuition
- Supports developing a relationship with nature
- Appreciates the arts and aestheticism
- Presents techniques for practicing stillness

Social

- Supports the feeling of connection with others and with nature
- Encourages the desire of taking personal responsibility
- Instills a greater understanding of one's impact (positive and negative) on others and self
- Generates a sense of respect for different perspectives
- Assists in the facilitation of new communication skills
- Reinforces the understanding of self and the desire to lead a service-minded and purposeful life
- Offers tools for managing conflict situations
- Improves awareness and social "intelligence" through interactive exercises, discussions, and other yogic practices
- Invites a deeper relationship to the earth, humanity, and all living things

Spiritual

- Nurtures the ability to see the beauty within and without
- Helps nurture the realization that we are more than our thoughts and emotions
- Enhances the realization of the Infinite Nature of our being
- Increases one's awareness of the inter-connectedness of all living Beings
- Brings students into a greater awareness and alignment with one's true Self
- Supports the acknowledgment of a Greater Force that is directing the dance of the Creation.

Ethics: Special Considerations on the Teaching of Children

It often seems as if the transition from working with adults to working with children should be seamless and relatively simple. After all, all of us adults were once children, and many of us have had children of our own. However, as will be discussed throughout this course, it is essential that adults be aware of the significant differences that exist between the adult student and the child student and the ethical obligations those differences present to a teacher. These considerations can be understood in four basic precepts of teaching: Do no harm, add value to the student's developmental learning process, create meaningful relationships, and develop and maintain professional skills.

Do No Harm

We are all aware of this precept as a fundamental aspect of the Hippocratic oath that underlies medical practice. However, this concept is also an essential aspect of working with children. So, what must we be aware of as we attempt to do no harm? First, that children have little power; second, that children are actively developing and that early development becomes the foundation for later development; and finally that adults in our society have the responsibility to protect children.

The concept of "do no harm" goes beyond the obvious physical considerations. With careful developmental considerations, children should never hurt themselves or find pain during a practice. Similarly, a child should not experience emotional pain, such as embarrassment or humiliation, because of a teacher's actions in class. And finally, a child should not experience what could be considered cognitive damage. Children should be taught correct information, not subjected to untested theories or oversimplified concepts. For instance, telling a child that she is "right brained" is a gross oversimplification of what we know about the brain and could lead to a variety of choices that are not based on solid information.

It is important to remember that children come to us because some adult has brought them to us. They may come willingly, but they do not appear out of their own volition. When teaching adults, many of us have had the student who leaves class, or never returns to take another class. We can view this as a decision that is appropriate for adults to make – as teachers we acknowledge that we are not a good fit for each and every student. However, when children are in our class, they do not have the option of simply leaving. They are "stuck" with us. This can pose new responsibilities for a teacher. If a student is unhappy with the class, or for some other reason not willing to participate, it is still the teacher's responsibility to not "harm" that child, to create an environment where even a resistant child can emerge from the class unscathed. How unfortunate it is to hear an adult say, "I took a yoga class when I was nine, and I hated it. I swore I'd never do that again."

Add Value to a Child's Developmental Learning Process

Children are learning machines. They are actively learning about their world and the people in it all the time, even when they are sleeping. Children who do not receive the appropriate support, stimulation, nutrition and adequate time for sleep do not thrive. Additionally, these needs vary depending on the age and developmental level of the child. It is essential that teachers understand this growth process and attempt to provide those aspects necessary for the best outcomes, even if these tasks aren't part of the formal lesson plan. An example of this is occurred when schoolteachers realized that some of their students were not learning during morning lessons and discovered that those students were not eating breakfast before coming to school. Before the teachers could add value to those children's learning processes, it was essential to feed them breakfast.

Children who are sleep-deprived, hungry, lonely or over stimulated bring aspects to the class that a teacher must accommodate. Fortunately, there are types of activities that can meet many types of needs. For instance, a long *śavāsana* never hurt anyone, but might help a child who is exhausted. A teacher of children can never approach a class with a totally preconceived lesson. We often say to adult students that they bring different bodies with them to each class and it is important to be open to that. Children, like adults, bring not only different bodies, but also different minds and feelings to each class. However, until children develop true reflective capacities in early adolescence, they are not able to fully understand and express this reality. The teacher must be sensitive to the ways these aspects are communicated (often nonverbally) and constantly adapt to these in order to add true value to the experience for the child.

Create meaningful relationships

The ultimate task of the child is to be able to navigate the world of relationships in the culture in which he lands. Neuroscience teaches us that the brain develops as a function of social interaction. Thus, there is nothing more powerful a teacher can offer a child than the opportunity to experience and observe meaningful relationships. Thus, teachers of children must be aware of the relationships they are developing with not only their students, but with the parents and caretakers that come attached to those students. Indeed, teachers should be aware of all the relationships they are developing that they might be sharing with their students either by the students observing them, or by what stories the teacher chooses to share with the students.

Children learn these social interactions largely through observation, and teachers must not behave in ways that model inappropriate relationships behaviors. Meaning is created between two people, whether it is actively sought or not. The teacher has a responsibility to help young students understand and experience meaning within relationships.

Develop and maintain professional skills

Becoming a professional who works with children carries with it great responsibilities. The first of these is to keep children safe. All states have a version of "duty to report" regulations. That is, if a teacher or other person in a position of trust suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, it is necessary for that person to contact the authorities. Usually the contact is through Social Services, however in dramatic circumstances the police might be called. The key word in this concept is "suspect." It is not necessary for the teacher to determine for sure what is happening, nor is it necessary for the teacher to document many instances of injury or neglect. At the first indication that something might be amiss, it is required of the teacher that the authorities must be contacted.

States protect teachers from ramifications that might arise from this reporting. Teachers cannot be sued if the concerns cannot be substantiated as long as the report was made in good faith.

In addition to understanding the state's mandates for protection of children, teachers are responsible for keeping their understanding of developmentally appropriate practice updated. Teachers must process new information critically, and be sure they are sharing the most current information with their students and the adults who are caring for them. An example of what can happen when teachers don't pay attention to the quality of research this is the recent turmoil over vaccinating children. An article was published in 1998 that proposed a link between autism and the MMR vaccine commonly given to young children. Subsequently, many parents opted to not vaccinate their children at all, sometimes upon the recommendation of a teacher. However, anyone who read the first article could have understood that the research was so poorly done as to be meaningless (and indeed it was retracted by the publisher,) and there now exists a wealth of data that indicate there is no link between the MMR vaccination and autism. Sadly, in choosing to not vaccinate their children, many parents ended up with very sick children who infected other children who could not be immunized because of health issues. Professionals working with children must be committed to keeping abreast of the newest and best research findings applicable to child health and well-being.

Working with children can bring a great deal of satisfaction to the teacher and great benefit to the students. But the work carries with it great responsibilities. A thoughtful approach that includes self-understanding will enable teachers to navigate these waters and chart a course that works for them and their charges.

Communication and Interaction

The manner in which the teacher communicates with the students sets the foundation for how everyone will be interacting with each other in class. All of the components of yoga ethics, yama and niyama, are reflected in your communications. The relationships, the sense of community that will hopefully evolve is all rooted in how the teacher interacts with the students. The teacher models the communication. You are the most important ingredient of the class!

Communication is the tool that we use to express our needs, desires and interests. The teacher actively invites students to communicate with kindness. This begins with the initial teacher greeting. Children are asked what they know about yoga, how old they are, where they attend school, and what some of their interests are. Communication continues with chanting and singing. Questions may be asked throughout the yoga practice by the teacher, by the students. Simple questions that they understand and can answer. There may even be a part of the class where lively discussion may occur. In the course of the class the teacher may extend or build on student comments. Perhaps even adding more postures to expand the experience and validate student input.

While the teacher tries to stimulate conversation, the teacher also models attentive listening. The teacher's time is balanced between talking and listening. It is necessary to explain and demonstrate to the children how to listen to each other. Encourage the less verbal children get to talk and or participate in a noticeable way. "Can you please show everyone your camel pose?"

Language is not used only to control children's behavior and to manage the routine. The teacher includes references indicating respect such as: please, excuse me, thank you. Imagine a class where children are expected to be quiet, mainly listen, and not talk to each other. Give the teacher their full attention. This is not normal! This type of class will not build relationships. This is a teacher-dominated class. When a class is teacher dominated, the needs of the students are not being met.

A system of turn-taking conversation may be developed. (Raising hands is important!) Some classes may close with a snack where lively conversations can take place. Point out positive things. "I love the way you all are waiting so patiently!" Point out prosocial behaviors. Encourage cooperative yoga play ideas. When children face problems, invite discussion. How do others approach these dilemmas? Assist children in thinking things through by asking guiding questions. Be reticent in providing answers.

Interactions are usually classified as being negative, neutral, or positive. Negative communications are those that carry messages of disappointment, anger, coldness, disrespect, or impatience. These communications make students feel less valuable, less competent and unappreciated. When a negative interaction is directed at one student, it is experienced by all of them.

Positive interactions carry messages of hope, contentment, respect, and interest. Students feel valued and appreciated.

Interactions can also be characterized as being warm (some touch, smiling, making eye contact, pleasant tone of voice) or cold (impersonal, distant, put down, superior). Cold or unpleasant interactions make children have bad feelings about themselves. These interactions include ordering children to do things, raising the voice, being sarcastic or critical, belittling, constantly telling children "no", "don't", or discounting children's feelings. (Alert: Not everyone likes to be touched. If a child does not want to be touched, honor that.)

Show respect for children by:

- Letting them know they are valuable: "Tell me about it."
- Treating them with the same politeness as your friends.
- Showing acceptance for their feelings (even if you disagree)
- Considering their ideas: "Show me. I want to see."
- Using polite words and actions
- Guiding rather than bossing: "Can you please help us?"
- Sharing with children
- Showing patience and support: "I am waiting patiently....."
- Appreciating the child for who s/he is without comparison, unconditionally: "I am so glad to see you!"

Respond with compassion:

- Validate their feelings even if unacceptable: "You must feel awful."
- When a feeling is validated through sympathetic response, the problem becomes vastly reduced
- Negative responses show children that they are not understood or even that you don't care or that the child's feeling is incorrect.
- How do we take children's feelings seriously? "You sound like you are really made about that?"
- Show respect for the students
- Show interest and enthusiasm about what they are doing in class
- Be pleasant
- Pay attention to their work: "I knew you could do it!" or "Look at you!"
- Initiate conversation
- Solve disagreements without anger: "I'm sorry that is not ok."
- how no prejudice: "I want to hear what everyone has to say."
- Consider everyone's point of view
- Discuss feelings: "How did that make you feel?"

Verbalization and Communication

- Weave into the program songs, sounds, rhymes
- Try to maintain a melodic and animated voice
- Respond to their needs without compromising your leadership
- Practice breath awareness.
- Keep the breath and speech slow and steady.
- Keep instructions very simple. One instruction at a time.
- Short sentences.
- Take care not to talk them to death.
- Demonstrate. Copy cat me!
- Redirect or ignore misguided behaviors: "OK. Let's get ready for the volcano!"
- Choose words that invite imagination, focus, and interest!
- Make conversation with every child in every class.

Relationship Building

- Connect with each student during the class as much as possible.
- Leave no student behind.
- How can a sense of community be developed?
- Interweave compassion, caring, connection, and laughter.
- There may be someone who would rather observe than participate.
- Try to spend one on one time with each student.
- Actively seek to strengthen your personal relationship with each student.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Observe. Analyze. Intuit.

Life Skills

- Encourage students to listen to their Inner Voice/Light.
- What tools can be used when they are over-emoting or afraid?
- What tools can be used when frustrated and disappointed?
- Support respect for all living things
- Offer opportunities for relieving the suffering of others: "What are some things we can do when we are really mad?"
- Yama and Niyama

The one thing you might want to add is the information that only 7% of communication is verbal. The remaining 93% of what we communicate comes from our tone of voice and body language. The younger the child, the more he or she will focus on the non-verbal aspects of communication -- the fallacy of "do as I say, not as I do." One aspect of integration we might ultimately explore is that which occurs when our words and our body language are consonant with each other. This results in clearer communication and also increased feeling of well-being.

Teaching Methodology Pointers

ASK YOURSELF

Who am I being?

What feedback am I receiving and how am I responding to it?

What do I want to share?

What do I love? What am I passionate about?

What do I feel would be helpful for them to learn and think about?

How can I turn some of these ideas into a theme?

What will be fun for them?

How can I have more fun?

Am I being developmentally appropriate on all levels?

How can I weave into the yoga what is important for them today?

What yoga practices and attitudes can I share to accomplish this?

What sort of structure and ritual will benefit this group?

How can I help them to understand the concept of balance to support themselves and to carry with them throughout the day?

How can I engage and guide their focus and build a more positive and compassionate outlook?

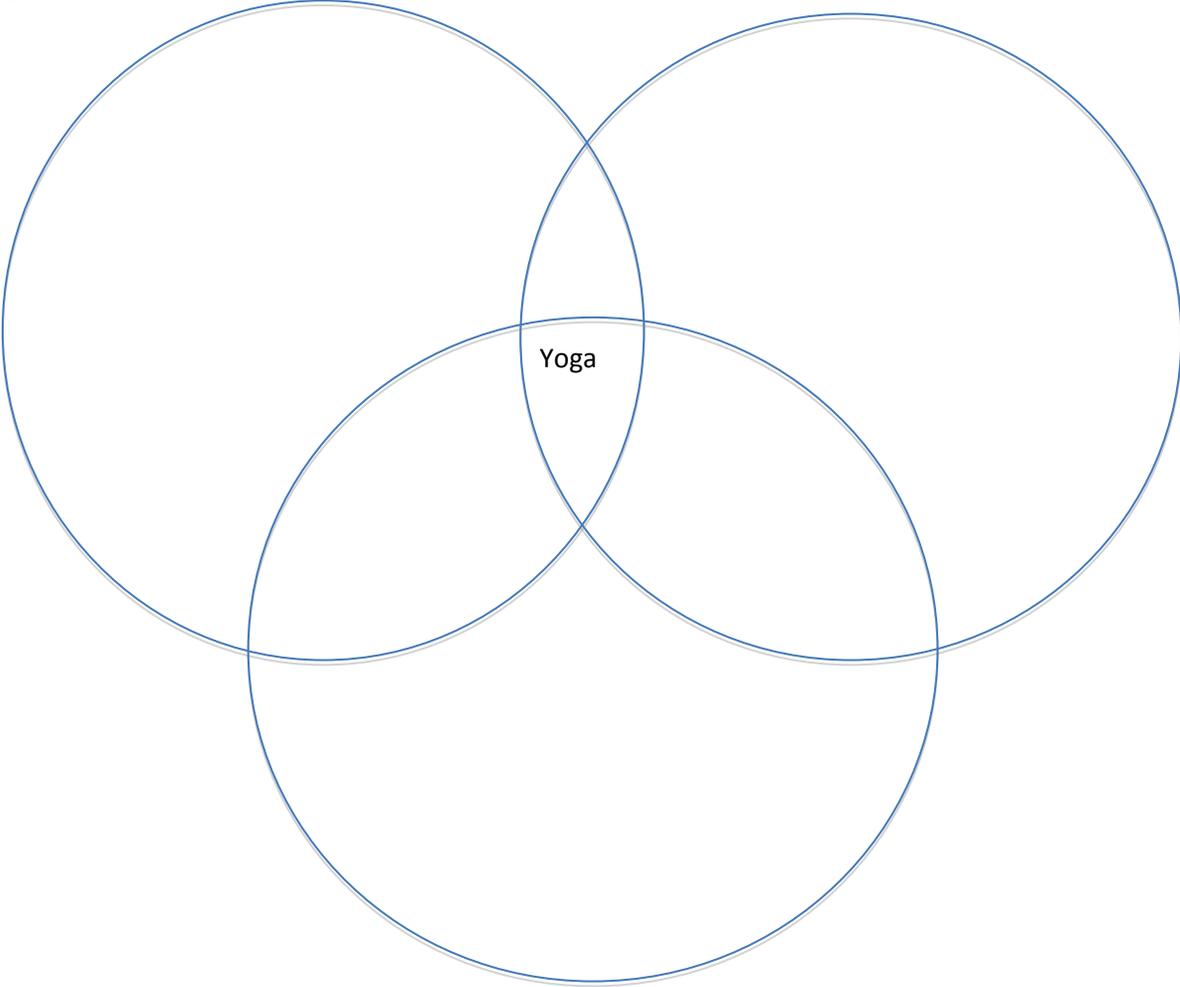
How can I build connections between the students within the class, within their community, and the world?

How can I facilitate more verbal and caring interaction?

How can I involve them in learning in a nonjudgmental manner?

Am I authentic?

**Venn
Diagram**



Yoga for Infants

What developmental milestones and characteristics would be helpful to remember?

What is physically difficult?

How do they affect your class design?

How do they affect the activities you want to implement?

What are some realistic expectations of what these students can do?

What are some things that they cannot do?

General Introduction

With the arrival of this long awaited child comes personal and spiritual transformation. Parents begin their long pilgrimage hand in hand with this new Radiant One. For some little ones the process of transitioning to physical form and being birthed seems to flow effortlessly. For others the new life experience and new body with all its sensations is uncomfortable. These sensations resulting from external and internal stimuli occasionally make it difficult for the infant to find peace.

The new parents are often desirous of finding support that can bring *santośa* to the newborn. Infant yoga offers techniques to help soothe, offering physical and emotional comfort to the child. It invites a “dance of gentle soothing touch” through guided movement, breath, and sound. Infant yoga facilitates a “coming together” of parent and child to celebrate the joy, love, beauty and sacredness of this new partnership.

Some Benefits of Infant Yoga For the Infant

—

For the Parent

—

Mechanics

Physical

- Experiment with gentleness the full range of motion.
- Gently maneuvering the arms, legs, and torso. Never forcing.
- Blend infant yoga with infant massage techniques.

Socio-Emotional

- Engage in constant eye contact, singing, and communication.
- Present a variety of vocalizations and verbal interactions. Sing.
- Converse. Ask questions. Answer questions.
- Encourage and participate in interaction.
- Laugh and enjoy whatever is expressed.
- Invite communication and interaction

Vocalization

Singing, rhythm, and voice modulation has a profound effect on brain development. It actually engages more language centers in the brain than regular speech. Singing also reflects a feeling or state of balance, contentment, and equanimity of mind and heart.

In Infant Yoga we remind ourselves that we are not interacting with adults but a young, newly born infant....so our voice will be more melodic, more silly, exploring different tonalities with the voice and observing how baby responds.

Imagine that you are doing a voice over for an animated film. This animation in the voice also spreads to the expressions in our eyes and face and hands....and on occasion, irresistible just plain "being in love" silliness. Sometimes postures are accompanied by cheering, adult babbling, hugging, clapping, and other odd behaviors.

Some Other Considerations

- The smaller the baby, the slower the movement.
- It's about quality not quantity. Enjoy your time together!
- Ask and invite baby's permission to practice yoga together.
- Bless the baby, yourself, and the practice.
- Create a flow, a dance of movement, energy, and love.
- Notice the baby's body language and cues.
- Take a break when the baby appears tired or hungry or just done.
- Sing, talk, and communicate with the baby.
- Your audible breathing relaxes the baby and the parent.
- Intuit whether the baby needs relaxation and/or stimulation.
- The smaller the baby, the slower the movement.

Assisting Tips

- Invite the baby to set the flow and to lead "the dance".
- If the baby stiffens, lighten the touch, slow the movement and pace.
- If the baby becomes distracted, stop for a moment, leaving your hands on the baby. Sing gently until mutual eye contact and then resume your activity.
- If the baby's back arches, pause to tune in to the baby's needs. Perhaps initiate a different experience.
- Maintain eye contact and watch the baby's body movements carefully to determine what is enjoyable and what may be unpleasant. Honor this.

Design

Infants and toddlers thrive on repetition of movement and sound so all techniques can be repeated for quite a while and there may not be a need for seeking out an enormous repertoire of yoga experiences.

When first beginning the practice, start with small movements and a very slow pace with a few repetitions. Check with the baby to see how your offerings are being received. Stop when it is needed. Remind yourself that this is the baby's practice, not yours.

For newborns a very, very simple practice is offered. As the child grows, the practice naturally become more diversified. The time period may be as short as 5 minutes or as long as 15 minutes. What does the baby want?

Infant Yoga Āsana Techniques

Setting the Stage

Prepare and relax yourself.

Prepare the room. Minimize light and interruptions.

Decide whether to use oil or not, diapers or not.

Recalibrate your expectations. What is the intention?

What is the best time to practice?
Where is the ideal location?
Will you be needing a blanket or two?
Perhaps a pillow?
Some music?

Centering

Find a comfortable seated position for yourself and baby.
Find your tadāsana.
Place your hands in a position of receptivity.
Practice diaphragmic breathing. Eventually lengthen the breath.
Practice at least 8 cycles.

Making Contact

Gaze into the baby's eyes and set the intention.
Make contact with the Sacred Being.
Invite the child and your self into the experience of mutual 'coming together'.
Establish the connection and begin the relationship.

Some General Techniques

Performing slow foot/ankle rotations as well as flexion.
Bend the knees, engage gentle hip rotations.
Manipulate the body into a gentle spinal twist.
Lie the infant on the tummy and perform leg lifts, knee bends.
Baby can be inverted on adult legs at a 45 degree angle.
Gently massage the baby with oil for deep relaxation.

I Love You

1. Adult sits with knees at 45 degree angle, rest the baby on your thighs, facing you. Do you need back support?
2. Place your hand on the infant's chest, taking a few deep breaths. Gaze into the baby's eyes. Focus on the baby's breath rhythm.
3. Close your eyes and feel the connection in both of your hearts, in both of your breaths.
4. Feel the warmth, connection, and love that is being exchanged.
5. Gently stroke the baby with one hand from one shoulder down the body to the soles of the feet. What sound can you make?
6. Continue for 30 seconds or more. Then switch to the other hand/side of the body.
7. End with touching foreheads or noses, a smile, and a I Love You!

Chair Pose

1. From the I Love You position lower/straighten your legs to the ground while keeping baby on the thighs. Baby can also be lying on a blanket.
2. Place your palms on the bottoms of baby's feet.
3. Gently push your palms away from you so that baby's knees are bending slightly toward her/his chest.
4. Pause for 8 seconds as you breathe.
5. Pull your palms closer to you, allowing baby's legs to lengthen.
6. This can be repeated 3-5 times.
7. Make up a song or rhyme or speak melodically while you are doing this.

Heart to Heart

1. Hold infant heart to heart, supporting the back of head to your chest.
2. Close your eyes and visualize the hearts joining. Can you hear the beating of your hearts as they come together.
3. Rest in this sacred place for as long as you both like.
4. Sing a special song.

Elevator

1. Adult stands in a horse stance with feet more than hip width apart.
2. Hold baby so s/he is facing you. Baby's legs may be pressing into your abdomen. Support baby's neck/head and bottom.

3. Take a deep and full inhalation.
4. On the exhalation quickly drop down into a wide squat. Hold on to that baby!
5. When the inhaled breath returns, press into the floor and lift yourselves back up into the starting stance. What sounds go best with this pose?
6. Repeat 3-10 times.

Infant Yoga, A Simple Routine

1. Lay baby on the back and make good eye contact with the baby.
2. Begin by gently stroking her stomach in circular motions.
3. Gently stroke down her legs with long strokes.
4. Pull baby's knees to chest while s/he is still lying on back.
5. Hold for a few seconds then release
6. Circle one thigh clockwise, starting with the leg into the chest.
7. Gently straighten the leg. Repeat with the other leg.
8. Move baby's legs in bicycle motion, lengthening one leg while the other is up to the chest.
9. Finish by stroking baby's tummy in circular motions.
10. With a gentle squeezing action, start at the thighs and move down the leg to the ankle.
11. Rotate ankles in one direction, then the other.
12. Take both hands and place them on the side of baby's head and in one sweeping motion, move down the entire body.
13. Finally sit cross-legged on the floor and hold your baby close to your chest.
14. Breathe loudly and rhythmically, inhaling and exhaling through your nose much like ocean waves ebbing in and out.

Help My Tummy

Round One

1. Lay baby on back and make eye contact.
2. Gently massage baby's arms and legs, stimulating and soothing the baby.
3. Begin by gently rubbing her stomach in a circular motion.
4. Slowly pull the baby's legs back until the knees move toward the chest.
5. Carefully use both hands to softly hold for 3-8 seconds.
6. This can help the baby release gas through the digestive tract.
7. Release the pose by pulling the baby's legs back straight down.
8. Rub gently up and down each leg and on stomach and chest.
9. Pull both knees back to the baby's stomach and hold for a few seconds.
10. Return legs to straight position and gently massage them.
11. Repeat this process three or four times. Continue breathing audibly with each movement.

Round Two

1. Push both the baby's knees back into stomach and slowly circle the extended legs in a clockwise motion. Reverse the circles and repeat.
2. Return the baby's legs to a straight position.
3. Draw one knee back to the baby's chest or stomach and hold one leg straight without straining. Slowly switch legs. Repeat three or four times each leg.
4. Raise both legs slightly in the air, without straining the baby, and gently move them in circular motions like a bicycle.
5. Finish by massaging the baby's legs, stomach and chest.

Hula

1. Once again infant is lying on the back with your thumbs on the upper back of the thighs and the fingers around the front as in Help My Tummy.
2. Circle the thighs in a clockwise motion with both hands.
3. Repeat for 5-20 seconds.
4. Match the rhythm in your voice to the rhythm of the movement.

Fussy Baby Yoga

1. Pick up your baby so s/he is facing you.
2. Bring the baby into your chest and hold comfortably.

3. Keeping your mouth closed, slowly initiate simple breathing.
4. Try your ujjai breath.
5. Visualize the image of ocean waves.
6. Remain patient, calm, unperturbed, with perfect equipoise!

7 Months: I Am On the Move

Baby Dandāsana

1. Sit in Dandāsana, position baby on top of your legs/knees in its own seated Dandāsana pose facing you (OR sit with baby's spine leaning into your torso and facing a mirror).
2. Holding baby's hands in yours, you can begin a gentle forward and backward rowing motion while singing:
3. Row, row, row your boat – Gently down the stream. Merrily merrily merrily merrily. The sweetest baby I have seen.
4. Shall we do it again?

Baby Granthimuktāsana

1. Sit in Baby Dandāsana or have baby sitting in your lap with its spine resting on your navel or in śavāsana.
2. Place your hand on the baby's right leg and bring it up to the baby's nose
3. Tickle the nose with the toes.
4. Repeat up to 5 times and then repeat with the other foot.
5. Laugh. Giggle. Can also be done when baby is lying in a supine position....any time.

Baby Matsyendrāsana

1. Position baby in Baby Dandāsana, gently guide the baby's torso to twist in to the left. Then back to center.
2. Repeat 3 times. Then repeat 3 times on the right side.
3. When these are completed, raise baby's hands over head.
4. Shake and wiggle those hands before bringing them down and clap them together. YAY!

Baby Paścimottanāsana

1. Sit in Baby Dandāsana. Place baby's hands in yours and bring her/his hands over the head.
2. Then assist the baby in leaning forward and touching the toes.
3. Repeat up to 5 times. As infant grows, s/he will eventually perform this unassisted.

Baby Śirṣāsana

1. Sit with your knees bent, soles of the feet on the floor, legs slightly touching.
2. Gently place the baby on your legs in a supine position with the crown of the head near your shins and ankles. Cradle the head between your ankles.
3. The baby's feet are resting on your thighs. Keep your hands on the front of the baby's hips for safety.
4. Baby is resting at a 45 degree angle but if s/he seems uncomfortable, gently come out of the pose. If baby is content, gently bend and lift up and down, producing a slight bouncing effect. Keep your heels and hips on the floor.
5. Sing a bouncy song!

11 Months: Almost Walking Baby

On Your Marks

1. While on your knees or in a seated position, place your hands under baby's armpits.
2. Hold the baby so s/he appears to be standing. Gently lift baby up in the air and then bring feet back to the ground.
3. What are you going to say?

The Stork

1. Sit in Dandāsana with baby facing you (or with baby's back into your chest.)
2. Lift baby's left leg by gently bending the knee and bringing it into the baby's chest. Hold for 5 counts.
3. Lower baby's leg to floor and try again up to 5 times.
4. Then repeat on right leg.

12 Months: I'm A Walking Machine

The Sapling

Stand in front of the baby and demonstrate a tree pose.

1. Identify the pose for baby. "Look. I'm a tree!"
2. Then while seated or standing, position the baby standing in front of you with baby's back to your chest.
3. Wrap your hand around baby, resting on baby's chest to stabilize.
4. Then with your other hand lift baby's other foot and bring it to rest on the base leg. (This is particularly fun in front of a mirror).
5. "Look you're a tree!"
6. Repeat a few times and then switch to the other trunk.

The Dog

1. Demonstrate downward facing dog for your child.
2. Identify the pose. "Look. I'm a dog! Bark. Bark."
3. Gently place baby in the same position. See if s/he can hold it and/or assist the baby in holding the position.
4. "Look. You're a dog! Bark. Bark."

Twinkle

1. Place baby on back.
2. Encourage baby to grasp your thumbs.
3. With your right hand lift the baby's left hand.
4. As you bring this hand down, lift the other hand.
5. Synchronize these movements to each syllable in Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

Super Baby

1. The adult comes into a supine knees toward head pose, keeping head on the ground.
2. Place baby belly down on your shins, keeping your hands around his shoulders
3. Bounce or rock the baby gently.
4. What are you going to say?

Closing

The Infant Yoga session can end with a very non-traditional śavāsana, depending on the baby's wishes. This may be performed with the adult standing, holding the baby, singing, slowly moving, or dancing. The little one may be positioned in any of the following positions: "heart to heart" posture, lying down right next to the adult, lying in between the legs of the adult, sitting in a supported pose. If at all possible, the adult could lie on the floor in traditional śavāsana...but, you know, any position will do. Soft music may be played or a nature cd.

- Mentally put aside any monkeys that have been jumping up and down. Allow your heart to open and shine.
- Release your muscles by 'body zone' as you nestle into Mother Earth.
- Relax more deeply with each outflowing breath.
- Give the baby permission to sing and make sounds while you enjoy a few moments of connecting with the earth, while connecting with your inner sanctuary of serenity and peace.
- I honor my inner sanctuary where my Divine Friend resides. I rest in the arms of the Infinite One. I blend with that Inner Presence. We are One.
- The Śavāsana experience may be for 3 minutes or whatever the Universe/Baby allows. Good prescription for bedtime.

Songs and Rhymes for Infant Yoga

- Baa Baa Black Sheep
- Bunny Foo Foo
- Frere Jacques
- Head Shoulders Knees and Toes
- Home Home on the Range
- Humpty Dumpty
- I'm a Little Teapot
- Itsy Bitsy Spider

- Jingle Bells
- Ladybug Ladybug Fly Away Home
- London Bridge
- Mary Had a Little Lamb
- My Bonnie Plays Over the Ocean
- Oh Hanukkah Oh Hanukkah
- One Potato
- Pat A Cake
- Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater
- Polly Put the Kettle On
- Rain Rain Go Away
- Ride a Cockhorse
- Ring Around a Rosie
- Row Row Row Your Boat
- She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain
- Twinkle Twinkle
- Wheels on the Bus
- You are My Sunshine
- Zipadeedoodah

Remember to coordinate the rhythm and pacing of the rhyme or song to the purpose of the practice.

Is it stimulating or relaxing?

Should the tune be zippy or more like a lullaby?

Other Songs

Ananda is the ocean. Ananda is the ocean. I am One with Thee.

Once a tiny lake but now a mighty sea. Oh, Ananda, I am One – with Thee.

Happiness runs in a circular motion. Love is like a tiny boat upon the sea.

Everybody is a part of everything anyway. You can have it all if you let yourself Be.

Om Śantiḥ .

Skills for the end of Toddlerhood

(about age 2), children

- Have gone from relying on nonverbal communication to developing functional language skills
- Are well-grounded in the “pragmatics” of language.
- Should be able to engage in “joint social attention.”
- Are beginning the transition from functional language to conceptual language (e.g. “horseness” and separate from “horse.”)
- Have made the transition from reflexive to controlled behaviors
- Have learned that they can have intentional impacts on their world – enjoy exploring cause and effect
- Have started to engage in autonomous behaviors and thought processes (think of the word “no.”)
- Have developed attachment relationships to caregivers, family members, favorite toys and places.
- Have developed the foundations of an “Internal Working Model” of relationships and their place in the world.
- Have begun to develop compliance and can enjoy pleasing others
- Have rudimentary abilities to control their impulses and control their behavior
- Start to be able to empathize with others.
- Engage in “social referencing” to gauge their emotional responses.

Thus, yoga practices for toddlers should provide opportunities to integrate this developing sense of how they fit into their world, with their need for attachments and also for understanding of their effect on the world. For instance, in infant massage, we maintain eye contact, make sure the baby feels safe and also try to be sensitive to the messages the child is giving us.

Books

Itsy Bitsy Yoga: Poses to Help Your Baby Sleep Longer, Digest Better, and Grow Stronger, by Helen Garabedian

Baby Massage, by Suzanne P. Reese

Infant Massage, by Vimala Schneider McClure.

Web: Hands to Heart International.

Toddlers

General Introduction

Usually the time line for this group is considered 12 months through 36 months. Once the child is walking, the adult facilitation of the yoga experience changes dramatically. More physical play and creativity are included. The yoga teacher performs the role of assisting as well as directing. Musical instruments can be included for the child to explore.

They are going to want to MOOOOOVVVE..... This is active, moving around the room yoga blended with calming, soothing āsana. Take care not to have too many sedentary activities. Honor their developmental needs.

Toddler Methodology

The Space

As the young child becomes increasing mobile, it becomes more difficult to contain them in a particular area. Consequently the entire room becomes the yoga mat. Teachers ensure that there are not any safety hazards, i.e., tripping hazards (electric cords, items on the floor) and remove any items that could injure the children. Then number one priority in any yoga class is the safety and comfort of the participants.

They will need to have room to move, explore and run, however if the room is too spacious, it will present class management challenges.

Raising the Bar

The very young child will require some guidance and a little explanation or perhaps demonstration about what will be happening and what your expectations are. Please remember they have only been on the planet for 2 years or less so their life experiences have been very limited. The class designs are very, very simple and somewhat open ended in order to meet their needs and interests. Teacher expectations are geared toward a fun yoga movement experience with some anticipation of non-compliance, versatile movement and sound experiences combined with a lot of lesson plan flexibility and fairly fast paced action packed activities that will keep them moving and engaged. When their interest wanes, the teacher is prepared to “pull another rabbit out of the hat” at a moments notice.

Design

Themes that they enjoy may range from imitating animals, having an animal parade, Going to the Zoo to Let's Be a Pet or even Let's Be Mommy/Daddy! Although they have seen animals in the zoo, on television, and in books, young children may require a little more information about what the teacher has in mind. A demonstration can be helpful and then they can sometimes supplement additional creative ideas or the teacher can present questions: What can our elephants do next?

Keep your directions simple. Try not to talk the children to death. Ideally the predominant sounds heard during a class are the sounds of the children...not the teacher.

To encourage the behaviors you want to see occur again, it is helpful if the teacher joins in the activity and /or offers praise and encouragement such as smiles, laughter, nods, a touch on the shoulder, high 5s, and the ever popular thumbs up mudrā! Acknowledgments such as: The elephants are running. Look at these elephants! Look at what you are doing! We are swaying from side to side. They are trumpeting and singing. They are lying down to sleep. The elephants are resting. These verbal cues may arise from movements you see the children are making or from ideas that are percolating.

Affirmations can also be sprinkled in: I am special! My body is amazing! You are awesome! I am happy. We are good elephants. I am having a good day. Elephants are good listeners. Show me your listening ears. Reward appropriate behavior. Good listening! Reward it with frequency! I love the way you are moving your trunks up and down! Be specific about their appropriate behavioral expressions.

Allow the children to guide the direction of the class. As teachers, we need to have the humility to be able to recognize that fine line between facilitation, allowing a class to unfold and being overly manipulative or controlling. When the teacher is unable to be creative with the class flow, the class is no longer child centered or meeting the

child's needs. How can we tune in to the needs of the children but guide the class in a way that it is not too chaotic! (By the way a little chaos is the norm.)

Postural experiences can be repeated, expanded, and open to experimentation. As we did with Infant Yoga, teachers can hold the students' interest with an animated voice and gestures. Participate. Wiggle. Can you get silly? Be playful. Let the imagination flow like a river.

Opening

Greeting and extending love in some acceptable way to these little ones is key. Start from the very first with cultivating an unconditionally loving relationship with each child. Find a way to show each little one that s/he is very special to you.

Starting with a name game/song can be fun! Be sure that once again there are finger/hand/arm gestures....ESPECIALLY if they are sitting.

Discussions with each parent (even a phone call outside of class) can be helpful in understanding what the interests of every child are so that the class is fine tuned to unfold in a fulfilling way for every one!

Toddler Techniques

- Cat-cow with all the sounds, of course. The cat may even walk around for a while, Meow. OK kitties, let's look at your tail. Oh now isn't that a fine looking tail. Meow. Now let's look at that tail from the other side. Now what do you want to say to that tail?
- Down dog. Puppies eating. Mad puppies. Happy puppies. Now show me how you wag your tail. The Doggie Tunnel.
- Show me your birthday cake...and let's put candles on the cake. How many candles shall we have today? Blow out 1 candle. Blow out 2 candles.
- Partner yoga with tree pose holding hands
- Run in circles. Run in place like the football players do.
- Play simplified Hokey pokey or simply Ring Around a Rosy.
- Star. Falling star.
- Rock.
- Cobra - Inhale to "mmmmm". Exhale to "ssss" or "shshshsh". Add other sounds
- We're goin' to the zoo....heigh ho the dairy o. We're goin' to the zoo.
- Now I see a Cow. Lion. Gorilla. Bat. Tyrannosaurus Rex. Buzzing bee.
- Spinning like the fan.
- Hopping balance poses.
- Then calmer and more serene
- Legs up the wall.

Closing

Like Infant Yoga, the closing may be a SHORT śavāsana experience, a nature walk (or sit) outdoors, a story, a song, chanting while lying down. Something simple. Something sweet.

Benefits of Toddler Yoga

-

Books

Itsy Bitsy Yoga for Toddlers and Preschoolers, by Helen Garabedian

What can you do when the chaos sets in?

Yoga for 3-5 Year Olds

What developmental milestones and characteristics would be helpful to remember?

What is physically difficult?

How do they affect your class design?

How do they affect the activities you want to implement?

What are some realistic expectations of what these students can do?

What are some things that they cannot do?

General Introduction

Yoga for the very young child is introduced in accordance with the various stages of human development. Young children between the ages of 2-5 years learn through exploration, experimentation, imitation and play. Play is purposeful activity for the young child. Play is their methodology for learning. Imaginative play is their bridge to reality. They do not learn through instruction and direction but rather from experience.

Preschoolers are highly imaginative and intuitive beings who are not always operating on the playing field of intellect and logic. Still discovering what their bodies can do, they thrive on investigating the world through the senses and through movement of legs, feet, arms, and hands. Subsequently, the introduction of āsana for this age group is play-based. While many poses may resemble adult postures, they quickly morph into the world of fantasy, play, sound, and movement since this is how the young brain is wired for learning and experiencing life. Yoga games, stories, and other expressions of creativity may also be incorporated.

Yoga Mechanics

The young child loves repetition and will enjoy repeating their yoga experiences over and over. As they mature, they will enjoy more structure, holding the poses a little longer, and exploring modifications. Engagement of all the senses is paramount! Along with increased doses of creative movement and sound, imagination is encouraged. Pretend you see something. Pretend you are going on an adventure to the jungle, on a train, in space, on the ocean floor.

Freedom of expression reigns here! Everyone in the class may not necessarily be doing the same thing. In fact it is rather interesting to introduce a flower pose, for example, and then invite everyone to find another way to do this! Classes may be a wonderful mixture of teacher direction and student direction. Let playfulness prevail!

- Introduce poses that coordinate both sides of the body
- Select a practice that will meet the needs of the left and right sides of the brain
- Initiate movements that work across the midline
- Enliven and animate every pose
- Alternate active energizing poses and calming poses
- Offer powerful poses for building strength, confidence, assertiveness
- Hold poses for just a bit for supporting determination and perseverance
- Balance poses for endurance, focus, and quieting.
- Invite certain students to lead some of the poses each class.
- Employ dhristi
- Become familiar with the flow and watch for those signs of when to facilitate energizing vs calming experiences.
- How can you be “in” the flow but not “of” the flow.
- Compose a list of “peaceful postures”
- Compose a list of “magic redirection postures”
- What is a realistic goal for your class?

Setting the Stage

Preparing the room, preparing yourself, and preparing for the class is a gift you give to your students and to yourself.

The Room

When surveying the room, consider how can I physically transform this room so that it can become a sacred space where students will love to be? How can the room become “that special place”? There is, of course, the obvious reducing the number of items that could be distractions and unnecessary stimuli. Is there a phone? Are there shades that can be drawn? Can the lights be dimmed? How can I declutter the room?

How can you specialize the physical plan with items that will make it more special? Perhaps there will be a small cloth and/or table with natural objects, honoring the creation. Is it appropriate to burn a candle during the meditation? Can the props be brought/stored in attractive containers? What small things can you do to beautify even a small part of the room as a gesture of caring? Flowers?

If the class will be outside: Is there a shaded area? Is the ground cleared? Will everyone need sunscreen? Will there be interruptions?

Self Preparation

Your daily personal āsana practice coupled with a stillness practice is essential for you to be able to tap into your Inner Teacher in the most efficient manner. These practices comprise your foundation on the path of becoming a yoga educator, one who assists in the process of uncovering all that each student can become, of supporting each student in realizing her/his fullest potential.

Your personal practice is the anchor that will personally ground you. It will provide a sanctuary for you in breath awareness and other yogic attitudes. These gifts will assist in strengthening your connection with that Inner Presence.

Allow yourself 5 minutes of personal centering before the students arrive. When difficulties arise, use positive self-talk. I am strong. The Divine is in control. I can do it. Use the tools you teach.

Practice patience with yourself. You will make mistakes and this is part of the process. In the world of music, “mistakes” are sometimes referred to as improvisation, an awareness, a turn in a different direction. Don’t hesitate to say “I’m sorry” to someone in the class. If you want students to engage in certain behaviors that are appropriate for yogis and yoginiis, you need to model and practice those in front of everyone. Honor imperfection.

Design

There are 6 major components to a class.

1) Pre-class informal welcome and greeting

Introduce yourself and let the students know individually that you are interested and care about them before every class. Be confident that they will let you know what they need. How can you show them that your caring is unconditional?

2) Formal opening and centering

Chanting, singing, prānāyāma, meditation. All of these practices can bring joy and improve behavior. These practices are just as helpful for supporting the teacher as for students.

3) Student introductions/games + Puppet expectation review

Establish a time for relationship building and encourage the class to participate in setting their own boundaries. The most important points (as well as reinforcing your expectations) may be reviewed at the beginning of class by a puppet or members of the class.

4) Warm ups and Class Implementation

Simple warm ups are a nice way to begin a class. Include the 6 spinal directions. It is surprising how many children may need stretching. Some may even complain about discomfort as your yoga experiences engage muscles that are not accustomed to being activated. When winding down, be sure to select poses and experiences that relax the body/mind.

5) Extensions

What is the expected time duration of your class? If you need to stretch the class out, add a story, dancing, a game, artistic expression: finger painting, drawing, creative movement, scribbling, water color painting, playdough modeling, making musical instruments, etc. Some “free play” time with yoga blocks and other props is another consideration.

6) Śavāsana/Closing

This may be the only quiet time the students get all day. Children can lie in “do nothing doll” or “starfish”. They may choose to snuggle with a beanie baby or nature object. Bring the focus back to the breath. Prānāyāma experiences such as Belly Breathing can be implemented. Śavāsana may last from 2-5 minutes.

Interactions

The manner in which the teacher communicates with the students sets the foundation for how everyone will be interacting with each other in class. All of the components of yoga ethics, yama and niyama, are reflected in your communications. The relationships, the sense of community that will evolve, all are rooted in how the teacher interacts with the students. The teacher models the communication. You are the most important ingredient of the class!

Communication is the tool that we use to express our needs, desires and interests. The teacher actively invites students to communicate with kindness. This begins with the initial teacher greeting. Children are asked what they know about yoga, how old they are, where they attend school, and what some of their interests are. Communication continues with chanting and singing. Questions may be asked throughout the yoga practice by the teacher, by the students. Simple questions that they understand and can answer. There may even be a part of the class where lively discussion may occur. In the course of the class the teacher may extend or build on student comments. Perhaps even adding more postures to expand the experience and validate student input.

While the teacher tries to stimulate conversation, the teacher also models attentive listening. The teacher’s time is balanced between talking and listening. It is necessary to explain and demonstrate to the children how to listen to each other. Encourage the less verbal children to talk and or to participate in a noticeable way. “Can you please show everyone your camel pose?”

Language is not used merely to control children’s behavior and to manage the routine. The teacher includes references indicating respect such as: please, excuse me, thank you. Imagine a class where children are expected to be quiet, mainly listen, and not talk to each other, giving the teacher their full attention. This is not normal! This type of class will not build relationships. This is a teacher-dominated class. When a class is teacher dominated, the needs of the students are not being met.

A system of turn-taking conversation may be developed. (Raising hands is important!) Some classes may close with a snack where lively conversations can take place. Point out positive things. “I love the way you all are waiting so patiently!” Point out pro-social behaviors. “You are so thoughtful (kind, generous, etc).” Encourage cooperative yoga play ideas. When children face problems, invite discussion. How do others approach these dilemmas? Assist children in thinking things through by asking guiding questions. Be reticent in providing answers (unless everyone is under 4 years old).

Interactions are usually classified as being negative, neutral, or positive. Negative communications are those that carry messages of disappointment, anger, coldness, disrespect, or impatience. These communications make students feel less valuable, less competent and unappreciated. When a negative interaction is directed at one student, it is experienced by all of them.

Positive interactions carry messages of hope, contentment, respect, and interest. Students feel valued and appreciated.

Interactions can also be characterized as being warm (some touch, smiling, making eye contact, pleasant tone of voice) or cold (impersonal, distant, put down, superior). Cold or unpleasant interactions make children have bad feelings about themselves. These interactions include ordering children to do things, raising the voice, being sarcastic or critical, belittling, constantly telling children “no”, “don’t”, or discounting children’s feelings. (Alert: Not everyone likes to be touched. If a child does not want to be touched, honor that.)

Show Respect for Children

- Letting them know they are valuable: "Tell me about it."
- Treating them with the same politeness as your friends.
- Showing acceptance for their feelings (even if you disagree)
- Considering their ideas: "Show me. I want to see."
- Using polite words and actions
- Guiding rather than bossing: "Can you please help us?"
- Sharing with children
- Showing patience and support: "I am waiting patiently....."
- Appreciating the child for who s/he is without comparison, unconditionally: "I am so glad to see you!"

Respond with compassion

- Validate their feelings even if unacceptable: "You must feel awful."
- When a feeling is validated through sympathetic response, the problem becomes vastly reduced
- Negative responses show children that they are not understood or even that you don't care or that the child's feeling is invalid.
- How do we take children's feelings seriously? "You sound like you are really mad about that?"
- Show respect for the students
- Show interest, excitement and enthusiasm about what they are doing in class
- Be pleasant and joyful.
- Pay attention to their work: "I knew you could do it!" or "Look at you!"
- Initiate conversation
- Solve disagreements without anger: "I'm sorry that is not ok."
- Be inclusive by showing no favoritism: "I want to hear what everyone has to say."
- Consider everyone's point of view
- Discuss feelings: "How did that make you feel?"
- Be a smile millionaire.

Verbalization and Communication

- Weave into the program songs, sounds, rhymes
- Try to maintain a melodic and animated voice
- Respond to their needs without compromising your leadership
- Practice breath awareness.
- Keep the breath and speech slow and steady.
- Keep instructions very simple. One instruction at a time.
- Short sentences.
- Take care not to talk them to death.
- Demonstrate. Copy cat me!
- Redirect or ignore misguided behaviors: "OK. Let's get ready for the volcano!"
- Choose words that invite imagination, focus, and interest!
- Make conversation with every child in every class.

Relationship Building

- Connect with each student during the class as much as possible.
- Leave no student behind.
- How can a sense of community be developed?
- Interweave compassion, caring, connection, and laughter.
- There may be someone who would rather observe than participate.
- Try to spend one on one time with each student.
- Actively seek to strengthen your personal relationship with each student.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Observe. Analyze. Intuit.

Life Skills

- Encourage students to listen to their Inner Voice/Light.
- What tools can be used when they are over-emoting or afraid?
- What tools can be used when frustrated and disappointed?
- Support respect for all living things/beings.

- Offer opportunities for relieving the suffering of others: “What are some things we can do when we are really mad?”
- Yama and Niyama

How to Keep it Interesting?

- Observe what the students enjoy, what interests them
- Be aware of what poses interest the girls and the boys.
- Dance between teacher and child directed poses
- A little noise, a little chaos...is NORMAL!
- What is the difference between guiding and controlling?
- Explore new movements, sounds, and experiences.
- Keep the energy flowing. Keep the pace moving. Pause frequently.
- Lean on rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.
- Create a routine. Stay close to it in every class. Have some variety.
- Let students take turns leading poses.
- Find a way to give students some choices.
- What is the ideal balance between child direction and teacher direction?
- Plan activities that are fun and induce laughter!
- Be playful. Have fun!
- Be your Self!

Accessorize!

- If you use music, you may want to consider keeping the volume low, and selecting music that is soft and slow. Nature cds can be pleasant and fun!
- Use and/or make yoga cards, posters, books
- Mats can be useful but are not necessary, especially since students will actually be moving all over the room. Individual “spots or centers” can be designated by writing names on masking tape on the floor or purchasing rubber shapes to place on the floor or taping shapes with names on the floor.
- Blankets may be used, but are pretty mobile on wood floors. Very nice for covering students during śavāsana.
- Musical instruments such as shakers are terrific.
- Scarves and/or streamers are wonderful for movement and dancing.
- Yoga cards can be purchased or made and laminated. Pictures from magazines and/or calendars can also function as “yoga cards”.
- Yoga posters can be purchased on line to post on the wall, listing many of the poses used in class for students to see and from which to select yoga poses.
- Bean bags, washcloths, socks, or beanie babies can be used as eye bags.
- Yoga blocks can be utilized for building walls, castles, towers, and trains.
- A bell or chime may be rung before meditation and/or closing the class. A child may be invited to strike the bell as a reward for good behavior.
- Using puppets even minimally is more magical than you can possibly imagine!

Affirmations

Young children experience a lot of stressors in their lives and often have a difficult time measuring up to the expectations of themselves and others. They experience fear of separation, anxiety, as well as 'not being good enough'. Young children love the magical power of affirmations as a tool to protect the mind from becoming rooted in negative, defective thinking. Sprinkling an occasional affirmation can support the development of inner courage and better self-esteem.

- I am kind.
- I am a Good Friend.
- I take care of my friends (family).
- I am strong (brave, powerful).
- I can do it!
- I am OK!

These can be blended with powerful poses, such as warrior and hero postures. Affirmations are generally constructed in the present tense as a condition or ability that is possessed right now! They may be strongly affirmed

with loud voices! As you become more familiar with the students and their life experiences, other affirmation ideas will emerge.

Āsana

Yoga postures strive to achieve harmony of mind and body. The postures strengthen muscles and greatly increase flexibility and balance. They have beneficial effects on blood and lymph circulation, respiration and hormonal secretions and profound effects on the propensities of the mind. They are also one of the most effective means of controlling stress and supporting the balancing of the glandular system as well as other body systems.

Yoga postures for young children are easy and not strenuous. The teacher engages students in the culture of physical fitness, healthy care for the body, and personal discipline on an age appropriate level. The yoga postures not only are beneficial for the body, they have also a calming effect on the nerves and emotions.

Assisting

- Keep focused on the positive.
- Restrain yourself from correction. Let's try this! What do you think of...?
- Always assist in the positive.
- Compliment. Vocalize your observations. Acknowledge.
- Invite students to compliment one another.
- Physical adjustment is not necessary unless the child is attempting something extremely dangerous.

Centerings/Opening

The manner in which the teacher chooses to open the class requires thoughtfulness and consistency. Whenever a formula is decided upon, the teacher tries to keep to that general framework in order to establish an sentient atmosphere which the students will find comforting. These activities are vital for assisting them in shifting gears from the world of externalizing, doing, and thinking to a different kind of focus – to the world of being, breathing, coming together with kindness and consideration, coming inside to the Fullness, bringing the awareness to the feeling in your heart. This is the time of Spiritual Being and connection.

- Introduce Namaste. (The Light within Me greets the Light within You.) Invite students to greet each other, to bless themselves, to greet the teacher.
- A simple chant and/or song.
- Prānāyāma experiences such as: Your belly is rising up and down like mountains (or ocean waves....depending on their life experience).
- Take a few minutes after Quiet Sitting, to close your eyes, place your hands on your heart and think about a place that makes you feel loved and safe. Think of home.
- A visit from the Rules Review Puppet
- Code: Sometimes teachers will have a rhyme, some words, or signal that the children will automatically respond with words or actions. Here are a couple of examples.
 - 5.4.3.2.1 – Then all the kids are lying on their backs.
 - Show me your Do Nothing Dolls!

What are some other opening experiences you would like to offer the students?

Chanting

In general chanting is simply the rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds. Chanting can include mantra as well as other meaningful sounds from other languages. Chants may range from a simple melody involving a few notes to highly complex musical structures

Chanting a mantra, sacred text, name of God, or other words is a commonly used ancient practice. Many spiritual traditions consider chanting to be a tool for spiritual development. There are diverse examples of chanting around the world in Africa, Gregorian, Vedic, chanting Hebrew texts, Qur'an reading, Baha'i chants, Buddhist chants, Roman Catholic chanting of psalms and prayers, yogic chanting, and so forth. Various Hindus and Buddhists chant Om. Followers of Islam chant the 99 names of Allah, "the beautiful names". Around the seventh century Christians developed the "Jesus Prayer" or "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." Native Americans observe chanting in preparation for activities such as healing, hunting, battles, controlling weather, initiation rites and funerals.

Today chants are used in a variety of recreation settings, such as sports events, protesters championing a cause, auctioneers driving the price, jumping rope, and music concerts. In some many cases the chanting creates a feeling of passion and collective connection of purpose.

There are two basic types of chanting. Personal chanting where one chants alone, called japa. Chanting in a collective setting with others is called kiirtana. Kiirtana is usually accompanied by musical instruments, clapping, and other movements or gestures.

What is mantra?

Mantra is the transformation of breath into sound. The sound may be a syllable or group of words. Rhythmic breathing and repetition redirects negative thinking and brings a more positive focus. Many consider mantra to be a sacred thought or prayer to be repeated with the full understanding of its meaning.

The science of mantra is based on the idea that sound is a form of energy that has a definite predictable effect on the body/mind. Mantra have the ability to alter defective patterns of the mind as well as the actual brain chemistry. The power of the mantra is in the vibration of its sound(s).

Mantra may be chanted internally or externally. It is a formula for controlling and directing the mind in a more positive way. This science acknowledges that emotions, feelings, and beliefs are vibratory in nature. By engaging in a mantra practice, we choose the thoughts that define who we are, what we want to feel and believe. We have the power to select and redirect the thoughts that occupy the brain.

How and why does it affect us?

Chants, songs, and mantra can provide “technical support” in directing the mind toward a specific goal. Through this practice we are choosing the positive power that certain syllables evoke. The effect of the sounds corresponds with the degree to which the practitioner feels or understands the meaning of the sounds. Although some benefit can be derived whether the meaning is understood or not.

Many mantra are derived from the Sanskrit language. The Sanskrit alphabet is based on the inner sounds emanating from within the body, specifically from the 50 glands clustered around the cakra. Advanced meditators attuned their minds to these inner sounds and each sound became one letter. There are 50 glands, 50 sounds, and subsequently 50 letters in the sanskrit alphabet. So the sanskrit language is the human body’s eternal song. The careful combination of sanskrit letters can vibrate these glands and the mind in a specific manner, creating a powerful elevating effect on the mind.

If you want the truth, I'll tell you the truth,
Listen to the secret sound which is inside you.
The One no one talks of ...speaks the secret sounds to Himself
And He is the One who has made it all. -
Kabir song

Chanting requires deep breathing. Consequently many of the benefits of prānāyāma are also applicable to chanting. There occurs a relaxation of the sympathetic nervous system.

Chanting is a method for regaining and maintaining peace during stressful times. When we are feeling stress, a few moments of chanting (either internal or external) can clear away the negative thoughts that obstruct our connection to our Inner Teacher. When lying down to sleep, mantra repetition can calm the thoughts, giving the body permission to relax. Scientific studies indicate that repetition of certain sounds has a calming effect. When sad or frustrated, it can uplift the emotions and refocus the attention toward the positive.

When the mind is calm and clear, we make the best decisions for the well-being of all. Our mental equipoise influences others' feelings of peace and harmony. Our positive kind words and actions bless ourselves, because we feel the impact of positive thought and action, and have the potential to touch all around us. This is how we make the world a better place.

Chanting Techniques

With the young child, chanting may be with words and/or sounds that have meaning or no meaning, simply because they like to explore sound. They may engage their mouth, hands, feet, and body. They can stand, sit, dance, or jump when repeating.

The following are some chanting options:

The vowels: Ahhhhh. AAAAA. EEEEE. IIIIII. OOOOO. UUUUU.

Consonants: MMMMM. SSSSS.

Om.

Śantiḥ . (Peace)

Om śantiḥ .

Om śantiḥ śantiḥ śantiḥ .

Om Jyoti. (Light)

Shalom. (Peace)

Baba Nam Kevalam. (Love is all there is)

Love is above me. Love is below me. Love is all around.

Children love moving their hands: clapping, holding mdurā such as Jnani or Anjali, making other hand/arm movements over the head, behind the back, holding hands, clapping partner's hands, clapping body parts, etc. Coincidentally this also goes for the feet, such as stomping or dancing.

They may chant/sing together or do a copy cat, call response. There are five types of chanting vocalization: 1) sung loudly, 2) softly, 3) a whisper, 4) only the lips moving, 5) inside.

Chanting may be introduced during the Opening, during meditation and/or during śavāsana. The "Continuous Om" or "Ocean Om" can be practiced sometimes up to a minute. Usually a mantra, prayer, and/or affirmation can be repeated at least three times. Afterwards you can allow just a moment or two of absolute stillness, taking the cue from the students as to when to end.

Chanting may be practiced at any time during a class. It is a great opener and closer, but one may break out into a chant at any moment.

Class Themes

The very young child is fascinated by nature, by all living things, animals, and dinosaurs. Adventures that are planned under the ocean, the desert, at the zoo, in the forest, to Africa, and so forth can hold the students' interest and imaginative participation for a long, long time. Safaris may also end up in outer space, the island of insects, the mountain of birds, and the land of transportation vehicles! Themes can revolve around a story, fiction or non-fiction.

Closings

As you can imagine, closing rituals are also very important. The teacher considers what s/he wants to leave the students with at the ending. Are there thematic concepts to bring in? What happened in the beginning and throughout the context of the class and how can it all be wrapped up? Is there an intention to be revisited? Was there something significant to be remembered?

Students can be encouraged to practice poses at home. Certain children can assist with the packing away of special items. Find a way to individually honor each student if possible for the time and energy shared. Closings can include revisiting a simple chant, a song, and eventually with the sharing of the Namaste mudrā. Students collectively assist with putting mats and other paraphernalia away.

Games

Games have that magical quality of focusing attention ever so effectively. It is a wonderful vehicle for laughter and at the same time the children are interacting with each other, taking turns, practicing patience, sharing, caring for one another, and building compassionate relationships.

Relationship Building Games

Duck Duck Swan

Played just like Duck Duck Goose, the children assemble in a circle with one child progressing around the outside of the circle and tapping each child on the head. With each tap the child who is standing says "Duck". At some point the child stops and says "Swan". The child who is tapped jumps up. Each child runs in opposite directions around the circle. When they meet (on the other side of the circle), they give each other a big hug. They say: I love you so

from head to toe. The child who had been directing the game then sits down and the new player proceeds around the circle "Duck".

London Bridge

Children play the standard London Bridge game, with these words:

London bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down.

London bridge is falling down, our friend ___.

Take our arms and hug him/her up, hug him/her up, hug him/her up.

Take our arms and hug him/her up, our friend .

New Age Musical Chairs

Chairs are in a double line back to back in the center while children dance in a circle around them to music. When the music stops, everyone sits down and a chair is removed. However instead of children having to leave the game, whoever does not have a chair sits in someone else's lap. This person wraps their arms around the child's waist. At the end of the game there will be only one chair and everyone will be sitting on one lap with their arms around the waist of the person in front like a chain.

Yoga Games

Can You Do It?

All students spread their arms into a "T" position. Feet are hip width apart. The teacher turns on some music. Students will rock back and forth or side to side, shifting weight from one foot to another. When the music is stopped, everyone must "freeze" and hold the position without falling.

Follow the leader.

The teacher may choose one child each class to lead a certain number of yoga poses. (This is when yoga cards can be helpful or a poster for the child to select poses.)

Yoga Charades

Each student chooses one yoga card and performs the pose. The first person who guesses what it is leads the next one after every one practices it three times.

Lifestyle

Feelings can surface from time to time. A child may overreact or over-emote. The teacher wants to remember that this is developmentally appropriate for this age group. They do not yet have much control or restraint over their emotions until perhaps 7 years of age. During this 3-4 year old stage, they are sometimes overwhelmed by their desires (and the delayed fulfillment thereof) and emotions. Preschoolers are just beginning to understand delayed gratification, frustration, and trying to learn patience and the benefits of expressing anger in kinder ways. The teacher helps children expand their emotional intelligence by identifying emotions and verbalizing what you think they are feeling: "Oh goodness. Diego is really frustrated right now. What can I do for you?"

The Brave Breath and other simple prānāyāmas can deflate stress for the disappointed or quick-to-cry child.

What other yogic practices or attitudes would benefit children of this age?

Meditation

- Can be in a comfortable seated or cross-legged position.
- Can be lying down in śavāsana

For the very young child meditation is sometimes most effective in a lying down position which minimizes distractions. Meditations can include giving each child a nature object to hold. Student may hold a shell, a stone, a pinecone, fairy or dragon tear. Compose a very short story (fiction and/or non-fiction) about items that are used.

Meditation Technique/Visualizations

The length of time of silence is miniscule (sometime non-existent) in the beginning. Eventually meditations may be one minute and then gradually lengthened (perhaps to 3 minutes) as children become accustomed to the class format. The meditation can include chanting softly, gazing at an object, singing, and other techniques.

Bell – The bell guides our way to our inner home within the heart. Softly ring the bell every 5-10 seconds throughout the meditation. Allow it to resonate.

Candle Gazing – (A collective chant.) I am a child of Light. I bring light to others. Gaze at a candle. Notice the blue at the bottom of the flame - the brown in the middle of the flame. Can you see the wick? Look at the bright yellow part of the flame. Feel its warmth.

Dragon Smiles – Each child may be holding and rubbing glass dragon tears. (One in each hand.) Every time you rub a dragon tear, a dragon somewhere in the world smiles. These can also be tapped together lightly during kiirtan, a chant, or meditation itself.

Little Light of Mine – Invite all the children to tap lightly on their hearts...to look down at their hearts... “Touch the Light. Smile to your Light. Feel your Light. It is always shining even in the night.” “Listen, listen, listen to my Light. It shines inside my heart even in the night”.....OR..speak to your Light. “Hello Little Light are you there? Hello Little Light are you there?”

Mother Earth Breathing

Breathe in. I feel happy. Breathe out. I feel happy.

All of Mother Earth’s children are breathing with us.

Raccoon, Eagle, Rabbit, Bear, Whale, Ant, Tree.

They are all breathing with us.

Mother Nature – Visualization. You are sitting in the lap of Mother Nature surrounded by the light of love. It is filling you up. The light is filling up your feet, your legs, your tummy, your chest, your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your neck, and your head. Your whole body is filled up with light. ;You are sitting the lap of your Divine Friend who is always with you...and who will always be with you...forever.

Pebble – Everyone collects one pebble from outside and brings the stone to hold in their hands during Stillness.

Rainbow – Paint a picture in your mind with your eyes closed of the rainbow. Pick one color and bathe your whole body in that color. Paint your body from your head to your toe in that color. How does it feel? Isn’t this wonderful? It’s like a color shower.

Rose – Get a rose or other flower. You may get one that will be passed and shared in the class OR you may give one flower per child. Each one of you is this flower – beautiful and handsome. You smell wonderful. Everyone is coming to see you, to be near you. Everyone loves you and wants to play with you. Everyone wants you to be their friend.

Shapes – With your eyes closed draw a picture of your favorite shape and paint it with your favorite color. Variation: Draw 3 different shapes.

Singing Bowl – Invite the sound of the bell. Listen, listen, listen to your heart’s song.

Music

To use music or not to use music That is the question! Can you find appropriate music that will match your intention? This can be particularly useful if there is traffic or other noise from which you wish to “shield” the students. Music can support or detract from the ambience you are trying to create. It needs to be carefully selected and to correlate with the your goal for the class . Consider: Instrumental vs vocals. Jiggly vs. calming. Fast tempo, slower tempo.

Parent Involvement

What your position is on parent involvement will depend substantially on your venue or type of class. For example, is your class a family yoga class, or a yoga studio class, or an afterschool class on campus? Some teachers prefer minimal or nonexistent parental involvement. What is the intention of your class?

Prānāyāma

What is prana?

Prana is the life force energy that flows in and out of our bodies. We take it in when we inhale and release it when we exhale. Prana is everywhere.

What is prānāyāma?

Prānāyāma is the science of yogic breathing. It involves controlling the movement of prana or energy through the use of various techniques. Every technique has a particular goal such as heating, cooling, soothing, energizing.

Prānāyāma is the heart of most practices and is what distinguishes yoga from other physical practices. Breathing is a natural and primarily involuntary process. Respiration oxygenates organs, muscles, cells, and soothes the nervous system.

Through proper diaphragmatic breathing, the chest opens and the lungs expand. Abnormal breathing frequently occurs high in the chest. This breath pattern can trigger the fight or flight response and manifests at a fast, shallow pace. This technique tends to overstimulate the sympathetic nervous system and can cause other general health problems.

When we breathe through the nose, the relaxation response is reinforced which calms the nervous system, lowers respiration and the heart rate. The breath naturally becomes slower, facilitating an even deeper relaxation response. Incoming oxygen is better filtered with nasal breathing and purified than through mouth breathing.

How is prānāyāma introduced to children?

The breath rhythm has 3 basic parts: exhalation, inhalation, and the pauses in between. In most schools of yoga retention of breath and other adult practices are not recommended for children because the nervous system is not fully developed.

Children usually lack focus on their breathing. Many young children who experience high stress have already begun to develop improper breathing patterns.

Unhealthy breathing can be imprinted on children by parents. Breathing patterns have a profound effect on emotional well-being. It is the teacher's aim to support young children in the following ways:

- To be able to slow down and deepen their breathing
- To enhance their awareness of the breath
- To provide abdominal breathing experiences and
- To increase their understanding of how breath can be used to manage stress.

Yogic breathing is also closely connected to the ability of memory and learning. We absorb impressions and learn better when the breathing is calm. The more calm and steady our breathing is, the stronger is the power of receptivity. So the learning capacity can be enhanced with a calm body and calm mind. The retentive power wanes tremendously during physical or mental restlessness and anxiety.

Medical studies have confirmed that there is a correlation between breath, thought, and many physiological responses. A harmonious mind is created and sustained by slow, deep, and regular respiration. Proper breathing holds the key to a balanced mental state. Oxygen purifies the blood and is good for the nerves.

Full oxygenation of the blood and organs invigorates the body, inspires the mind and gives a sense of well-being and contentment. By learning the art of prānāyāma, children become aware of how a calm mind is associated with deep breathing.

What are some of the benefits of yogic breathing?

Through attention to the breath, we tap into the fullness of who we are. Greater understandings shine through with a new, fresher perspective. Yogic breathing exercises can help to improve stress management. Deeper, fuller breathing clears out stale air and improves the quantity of oxygen filling the lungs. When breathing is most efficient, fresh oxygen is supplied, the lungs are strengthened, there is also an improved emotional stability, one feels self-confident, self aware and there is equanimity of mind.

Prānāyāma increases the total functioning capacity of the brain and supports better integration between the physical, mental and other layers of our being. Other benefits include:

- Can increase ability to focus

- Slows breathing rate
- Can relieve asthma symptoms
- Reduces blood pressure
- Improves overall oxygenation of organs and cells
- Can minimize anxiety and fear complex.

Prānāyāma Methodology

What is air?

The existence of something invisible such as air can be demonstrated with young children in many ways:

- Blowing up balloons and allowing them to deflate around the room.
- Making paper fans and then having the children fan themselves. Can you feel that? Can you feel it touching your face?
- Buying a package of ping pong balls and some straws, have the children get on all fours and blow a ball around the room. (This can also be done on a table but be prepared, they won't stay on the table for very long!) They can also blow cotton balls and analyze the difference between blowing ping pong balls and cotton balls.
- Taking students outside on a windy day and letting them observe the effects of the wind.
- Blowing a feather and catching it.

Supine Belly Breathing

1. Children can lie on their backs and place a small stuffed animal or toy on their belly buttons.
2. (Close your mouth and breathe through your nose.) Watch your toy lift up and down as you breathe. Now it is going up. Now it is going down. Now it is going up. Now it is going down.
3. Make your toy go up. Make your toy go down. What is your toy doing now?
4. Use your breath to move the toy. Continue for 1-2 minutes or until someone gets restless.

Yoga Breath Centering for Young Children

Ahhh Breath - Take a deep inhale breath followed by an exhaled "ahhhhh" breath while folding forward.

Balloon Breath - Take a breath. Place your hands on your belly button. When you breathe, breathe all the way down to your hands. Feel your tummy expand like a balloon? And then the balloon gets smaller and flat. Breathe into your balloon...and then let it go. What color is your balloon? Make your balloon belly really big.

Bee Breath - Pretend that you are a bee. Breathe into your balloon belly. When you are ready to exhale, make a very high-pitched "hum" like a bee. Make it loud. Make it long. Place your hands over your ears and do it again. This is fun to do while flying around the room!

Big Bird Breath - Children are standing. On the inflowing breath the wingtips are lifted high above our heads. On the out-flowing breath dive/bend forward and touch the wingtips to the earth.

Birthday Cake Breath - Imagine there is a cake in front of you....but there are no candles. Hold out your hand. Spread your fingers apart like candles. How many are there? Blow them out one at a time. All at once!

Brave Breath - Deep inhale. Deep exhale. Repeat 3-5 times slowly. Can sometimes be practiced with a partner or teacher as well as in a circle with everyone holding hands.

Chopping Wood Breath - Stand with the feet hip width apart or wider and join your hands together as if holding an ax. On the inhalation, raise the ax up high overhead. Stop for a moment. On the exhalation, swing the arms downward, holding the ax, with a "ha" sound. Knees may or may not bend as the ax descends. On the inhalation, swing the ax high overhead once again. (The ax can transform into a hammer if they do not understand what an ax is).

Elephant Breath - Stand with the feet hip width apart or wider and make a trunk by joining the fingers together. Allow your arms to hang down like the elephant's trunk, swaying from side to side. On the inhalation, raise the trunk high over your head, making your "R-R-R-R-" elephant trumpeting call. On the exhalation, lower your trunk down to the earth with a heavy sigh.

Lion Breath - Assume a kneeling position with your fingers spread wide like lion's claws on your thighs. Inhale. On the exhalation, the paws leave the thighs and hit the floor. At the same time the mouth opens and the tongue hangs

out and the lions ROOOAAARRR, a very guttural, throaty roar. Then students assume the original position. The Lion Breath may be loud and ferocious like the Rowdy Lion or it may be soft like a whisper like the Gentle Lion.

Rabbit Breath - In a kneeling position inhale through the nose in 3 quick breaths. Exhale out through the nose in a long breath, fold downward and bring the forehead to the earth.

Robin Breath with Mudrā - In a standing position hold the hands in the Anjali Mudrā and inhale. Exhale and point the hands away from the body. Inhale while opening the wings (arms in a “T” position). Exhale and bring the hands together extended in front, pointing away from the body in Anjali Mudrā. Inhale Anjali Mudrā into the heart.

Snake Breath - Inhale through the nose, then on the exhalation make a hissing sound, slowly, slowly. (The exhalation should be much longer than the inhalation). Fun to do in Bhujangāsana.

Sunshine Breath - Inhale as you reach up for Father Sun. Grab some sun! Exhale as you bring the handfuls of sun into your heart. Add a song.

Śavāsana

After having so much fun, relaxation can be a challenge. The very young child may need some help winding down. What kinds of yoga experiences can we include to facilitate serenity? Calming music, forward folds, dimming the lights, speaking slower, speaking quieter, ringing a bell. What else?

Initially the śavāsana experience may be 2-5 minutes and then slowly lengthen the practice (perhaps after the third or fourth class). Observe the children for when the practice should end.

When telling or reading a short story in śavāsana, students can be reminded to: Close your eyes and paint pictures in your head.

- Using short visualizations and imagery can be wonderful: Imagine that the clouds in the sky are filled with love and they are pouring love down on you. They are bathing your body with love from head to toe.
- During the śavāsana practice, the teacher may review points, comments, and/or ideas that were shared throughout the class to once again revisit their importance.
- Short, simplistic affirmations may make their appearance once again to support the students in achieving a relaxed state of being: I am calm. I am relaxed. I am OK.
- The teacher may sing a song or simple chant softly over and over.
- Tell a story.
- Allow a very brief time for stillness.
- A very brief śavāsana experience can even begin the class.

Śavāsana Visualizations

- Body Drop Sequential Rotation
- Raise your foot and drop it to the ground.
- Raise your other foot and drop it to the ground.
- Raise your arm and drop it to the ground.
- Raise your other arm and drop it to the ground.
- Stick your tongue out and say ahhhhh. Put it back in your mouth.
- Raise all your arms and legs and drop all of them to the ground.
- Open your eyes and blink them 3 times. Then close them
- Ahhhhhhh. I am calm. I am peaceful. I am happy.

Mother Nature Visualization

You are sitting in the lap of Mother Nature surrounded by the light of love. It is filling you up. The light is filling up your feet, your legs, your tummy, your chest, your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your neck, and your head. Your whole body is filled up with light. You are sitting the lap of your Divine Friend who is always with you...and who will always be with you...forever.

What are some techniques for closing?

Story Yoga

Yoga can be facilitated through stories. The methodology of accomplishing this can be implemented in a few ways.

- 1) The teacher can review all the potential poses prior to the telling of the story.
- 2) The story can be told with the understanding that the poses would be “composed” (follow the leader style) as the story moves along.

3) The same as 2 but everyone can express the happenings in any way.

This is a Mountain.

This is a mountain. It's a beautiful tall mountain.
Can you feel how strong the mountain is?
Can you feel how powerful it is? It cannot fall down.
It is forever strong.

On the mountain there are many trees.
Tall trees. Beautiful trees.
The trees have long branches, reaching for the sky.
Many animals love the trees.

But more than anybody, the birds love the trees.
They live in the trees.
They sing in the trees and
They have their babies in the trees.

Near the mountain there are people.
They say: Let's go to the mountain and cut the trees.
They run to the mountain.

They have big axes. They start to cut the trees.
They cut very quickly. Bang, one tree.
Bang, two trees. Bang three trees.
Bang, bang, bang....many trees.

The birds are angry. They have no home. They fly away.
They call the wind and clouds to help them.
Big black clouds come. Wind and storm come.
The clouds make rain.

Stones on the mountain start rolling.
Oh no. There is too much rain. There are stones everywhere.
The mountain is angry. The people can no longer cut the trees.

The rain goes away.
The trees stand tall and strong.
They are smiling.

And the birds come back.
They are smiling too.
They can still live in their trees.

Magic Medicine

One day, an old witch looks in her house.
She says: I like snakes, but now I have too many!
Big snakes, small snakes, purple snakes and red snakes.
The old witch says: I want to use medicine.

This will chase away the snakes.
She has many medicines.
She has big and small medicines.
She doesn't know which medicine is the right one.
So she chooses one and puts it everywhere.

Oh no, look! This medicine doesn't kill snakes!
This medicine turns them into donkeys.
Big donkeys, small donkeys. Purple and red donkeys!
There are donkeys everywhere!
The old witch says: I want to use medicine.
This will chase away the donkeys.

She has many medicines.
She has big and small medicines.
She doesn't know which medicine is the right one.
So she chooses one and puts it everywhere.

Oh no, look! This medicine doesn't kill donkeys!
This medicine turns them into turtles.
Big turtles, small turtles. Purple and red turtles!
There are turtles everywhere!
The old witch says: I want to use medicine.
This will chase away the turtles.

She has many medicines.
She has big and small medicines.
She doesn't know which medicine is the right one.
So she chooses one and puts it everywhere.

Oh no, look. This medicine doesn't kill turtles!
This medicine turns them into tables.
Big tables, small tables. Purple and red tables!
There are tables everywhere!
The old witch says: I want to use medicine.
This will chase away the tables.

She has many medicines.
She has big and small medicines.
She doesn't know which medicine is the right one.
So she chooses one and puts it everywhere.

Oh no, look! This medicine doesn't kill tables!
This medicine turns them into crocodiles.
Big crocodiles, small crocodiles. Purple and red crocodiles!
There are crocodiles everywhere!
The old witch says: I want to use medicine.
This will chase away the crocodiles.

She has many medicines.

She has big and small medicines.
She doesn't know which medicine is the right one.
She chooses one and puts it everywhere.

Oh no, look! This medicine doesn't kill crocodiles!
This medicine turns them into trees.
Big trees, small trees. Purple and red trees!
There are trees everywhere!
The old witch says: I don't want to use medicine again.
I get into problems all the time.
I will just cut the trees.

The witch works very hard. All the trees are falling down.
They are lying flat on the floor.
Beautiful, straight trees. But not trees with leaves and branches.
They are trees with big noses. And ears!
Their eyes are all closed. Their hands are relaxed.
The trees are cut, but they are smiling, softly smiling.

Because they are floating, floating far away.
Far away into the sky, to the stars and sun.
The sun is smiling, too.
The sun's eyes are big. She calls: Come closer, come closer.
Closer and closer to my beautiful light.
Come, come closer to me.

The Pink Elephant

Once upon a yoga time

The elephants had small ears and the monkeys had big ears.

The monkeys used to tease the elephants about their small ears.

This made the elephants really sad.

There was a Pink Elephant and she thought:

I must do something so the elephants will grow big ears.

She collected herbs in the fields and made a medicine brew.

Then she called all the elephants to drink it.

She was hoping their ears would grow by drinking her medicine.

But instead of growing big ears all the elephants turned into donkeys.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink

This time when they drank they all turned into birds,

Flamingos, owls, and eagles.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink.

This time when they drank, they all turned into insects.

Grasshoppers, praying mantis, and bumble bees.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink.

This time when they drank, they all turned into sea animals,

Fish, seals, starfish, and sharks.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink.

This time when they drank, they all turned into vehicles,

Cars, helicopters, bicycles, and airplanes.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink.

This time when they drank, they all turned into plants,

Trees, bushes, and flowers.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink.

This time when they drank, they all turned into furniture,

Tables, chairs, tvs, and couches.

Pink Elephant tried again. She cooked and she cooked.

And called all the elephants for a drink.

This time when they drank, they all grew wonderful big ears.

They danced and sang.

They invited the monkeys to see their big ears.

The elephants shared bananas with the monkeys, but

When the monkeys ate the bananas their ears became small.

Some medicine must have fallen on the bananas so that

When the monkeys ate those magic bananas, they grew small ears.

Other Essentials

Class Management/Setting Boundaries

Do you have realistic expectations of your students?

Do you expect them to obey immediately when asked to do something?

How can we challenge children in a class and not frustrate them?

In what ways can we support appropriate behavior?

Are you having fun with them? Are you helping them?

Are you complimenting them?

A dependable routine helps children to feel comfortable and to become familiar with your expectations. A regular routine will reduce behavioral uncertainty.

One of the significant differences between teaching adults and children is that you may experience a few more behavioral deviations in a kids yoga class. It is virtually impossible to do a few classes without coming to the “We-have-got-to-have-a-few-rules” place. Rules can be minimal. While there may be a couple of problem areas that manifest immediately, rules may also be an evolving work in progress. Teachers do not need to formulate a gigantic agenda of rules in the first class.

Rules can be discussed with all students via a puppet. Frequently children will share things with a puppet that they may be reticent to speak about with an adult. The puppet is “medium” who can bring “lightness” to a topic that some may find unpleasant and restrictive. All students participate in the process of making the rules. This invites them to make their own decisions, to make a commitment to the process and exercise some control. In general students will comply with rules more effectively when they have been given permission to participate in the process rather than when rules are decided upon and imposed by the teacher.

When talking with children about rules, speak to them just as you would speak to a friend. State the facts: “It’s hard for me to do my job when someone is __. What do you think we can do?”

The puppet may make an appearance every day (especially with preschoolers) so that everyone can review the parameters of the class in a light-hearted way. One technique for doing this can be to have the puppet “act out” in all the ways that are unacceptable and then say “Whyyyyyy not?” Allow the students to instruct the puppet!

The teacher collaborates with the children to come to a mutual agreement regarding what the solutions are to behavior problems and how to manage the flow of the class. What will be the alternatives if someone is having a difficult time “going with the flow”? Do you need to make alterations in the class flow? Is the flow meeting the needs and desires of the children? What do they need? What is the effect of the behavior on the entire class? On others?

Some recommended boundaries to consider are:

- Inside voices
- Walking feet
- Respect each other’s space
- Move when the teacher says GO (or some other verbal cue)
- Raise your hand to speak when you have something to say
- Be attentive and try to focus
- Everyone controls their bodies.
- Everyone controls their voices.
- No shoes.

The Three Rules of Kindness are: Be kind to self. Be kind to others. Be kind to all living things.

Redirection is a behavior management technique. Redirection is when you change the focus, when you change the subject. Sometimes it involves ignoring the misbehavior and moving on.

Behavioral problems are minimized with good interpersonal relationship building between students and teacher. This can be facilitated through positive communication, guidance, and games. Establishing clear boundaries is key to maintaining harmony within the group.

Rewards, Incentives, and Acknowledgment

Students who have been acting appropriately and “making the effort” can be given a reward or incentive. Students can:

- Ring a bell or chime.
- Get stickers.
- Play with the beanie babies or some other prop.
- Be the first at something.
- Assist the teacher in some way.
-

Rewards are a type of acknowledgment. They show appreciation and give the student information about how s/he is doing. They encourage healthy self-concept, establish harmony, and support the children in feeling better about themselves, especially in this new situation.

A reward may be an acknowledgment that what they are doing is absolutely right! It may be a nod, a smile, a touch on the shoulder, a high five, a thumbs up mudrā, pounding mudrā, and so forth.

Rewards may be given to each student for some specific thing that they did well, i.e., the quietest, the strongest, the best balancer, the best breather. Consider verbally validating every student. Don't leave anyone out if possible. Rewards and validations may be frequently used in the beginning and then gradually phased out (if the class membership remains consistent).

Trouble Shooting

If behavior problems manifest, some of the following questions may be helpful in determining what course of action to pursue:

- What am I doing or not doing?
- What needs may not be getting met?
- Can I meet them?
- How am I feeling?
- Do I need to make an inner attitude or humility adjustment?
- What can I do to be better prepared?
- What is my personal plan for handling frustration, anger, and disappointment?
- What can I do when the flow gets out of control?
- How can I establish a flow that is interesting for the students?
- Breathe. Meditate. Percolate. Try not to over think.

Some Trouble Shooting One-liners

We can learn the new pose when you can control your body. Show me how you can control your body! (Repeat 2-3 times calmly). This is sometimes called Grandma's Rule. Its formula is quite easy. When you do this for me, then we can do this for you. OK, when every one can show me your Rock Pose, we will be doing Adventure Yoga next.

Thank you. Sometimes you can actually follow a request with a simple thank you even though the student(s) have not yet actually followed through on it. It sends the assumption that the student will make a better choice and hopefully do it. Terms of politeness show appreciation and respect.

I'm sorry, you don't seem interested in doing yoga at the moment. You can take a break over there for a while and then join us later when you are ready. How does that sound? If the child continues to refuse, you may need to usher the child from class. Eeck. Rarely happens. This is where having another teacher can be helpful so that the class can continue uninterrupted.

Excuse me, interrupting friends is not ok. Can you please raise your hand when you have something to say? Thanx. Some acting out is normal. Address the situation directly.

OK. Time out. (Time out mudrā). Let's have a pow wow. The group can review ground rules and what can be done to keep the class running smoothly.

OK Doris will be leading the next pose. Doris what would you like to do? The student causing the behavioral problems is invited to participate in a more (hopefully) acceptable way.

Matthew, you don't seem too interested in what is happening right now so if you want to just sit on your mat and watch for a while that would be fine.

Eros, is there something you need to say to the class?

Let's get ready for the Sunbird Pose. Redirecting the class with a challenging balance or strengthening pose which they might have to hold it for 10 seconds or longer.

Gertrude, Honey, I'm sorry but if we can't work this out, you will have to sit on your mat for a bit. Fidgety children may get only 2 warnings and then they are out. Sometimes it helps if they can have something in their hands. They can only continue to have the item if they "go with the flow".

Meredith you can come back when you can control your body.

Jerry, excuse me, but you are making my job very difficult. If you can't control your body, I will have to have a chat with your mom and I don't want to do that. Can we work out a deal? (The threat. The very last resort.)

- Try to speak in calm, nonjudgmental, and slow voice. Emphasize a focus on body and breath.
- Give the patience song a go. (Time: London Bridge): I am waiting patiently, patiently, patiently. I am waiting patiently...for my turn.
- Patience and consistency helps children feel comfortable.
- Be patient with yourself and students. Things will not always go smoothly (or exactly like what you had in mind).
- Keep up the compliments and showing appreciation when the behaviors you do want to see are happening. Validate them doing when they engaging in positive, cooperative behaviors!

Venues

What are the possibilities for where children's yoga classes can be held? In your home, the park, school, church, YMCA, yoga studio, athletic club, recreation center. What are some other choices?

How can one advertize?

Living in Harmony with Others (Yama) – Ahimsa for Students

Principle of Non-harming (Ahimsa)

- To express and guide every thought, word, and action toward all animate and inanimate beings with compassion, love, and respect.
- To refrain from purposely inflicting pain or hurt.
- To not allow any harm to come to a living being that would directly endanger one's existence.

Like tall grasses blowing in the wind, young children are constantly being swayed back and forth by the winds of ego. There are three primary lessons of ahimsa.

- We are kind to ourselves.
- We are kind to others.
- We are kind to all living things.

From the yogic perspective everything is alive. Even if one examines a pencil under a microscope there exists movement, albeit a crude level of existence, but a consciousness all the same. Teachers stretch children beyond self-centeredness toward helping and caring for others, guiding them in the direction of expressing more sensitivity and consideration for all.

Empathy is the ability to observe and understand the feelings and experiences of others. In early childhood children begin to recognize basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, frustration, and disappointment.

Adults extend and build upon this blossoming awareness.

Children realize that a certain amount of conflict is a normal part of life and techniques for exercising self-restraint and control. Opportunities are given to engage in problem-solving and to participate in the establishment of rules and consequences. Adults encourage children to think for themselves, pointing out what friends like and dislike. The benefits of self-control are addressed in group discussions and daily living. A perspective of understanding both sides of conflicts is provided, empowering children with the ability to handle conflict independently and solve their own personal problems in appropriate ways.

Goals

- To increase the understanding of joy and pain experienced by all people, animals, plants and the environment due to external circumstances.
- To facilitate the acquisition of empathy and respect for all living beings and things.
- To practice the art of initiating and maintaining friendships.
- To practice resisting the temptation of expressing disrespect and undesirable negative behavior, particularly as retribution.
- To learn to express anger, disappointment, and frustration with benevolence.
- To actualize the fulfillment of personal needs with consideration for others.
- To develop the skills of expressing kindness, caring for one who has been hurt intentionally or unintentionally.

Objectives

- Providing a physically and emotionally safe atmosphere of mutual kindness, compassion, friendliness and respect.
- Supporting the scientific study of nature and all living beings, their gifts and their challenges.
- Facilitating activities that present the graduated scheme of development of all beings.
- Proposing concepts illustrating the components that are conducive to a "happy" environment versus "sad" environment, happy friends versus sad friends, "happy" furniture versus "sad" furniture.
- Presenting opportunities to identify, express and understand feelings.
- Engaging in exercises and games to cultivate friendship.
- Experimenting with simple conflict-resolution skills.
- Demonstrating acceptable methods of expressing anger and frustration.

Key Concepts

Ecological Awareness

- How do we care for others (human, plants, animals, rocks, furniture, air)?
- Do animals and trees have feelings?
- What makes them happy?
- What makes them sad?
- How can we be good friends with Mother Earth?
- Tell me about some of our animal friends on Mother Earth.

Self-Restraint

- How do we feel when we are hurt?
- What can we do when we are angry?
- What can we do instead of hitting?
- When we are angry what is unacceptable? Why?
- What are some good choices for expressing our feelings?
- What are some bad choices for expressing our feelings and why?
- When we are angry, how does grabbing, kicking, pushing or biting make things better?

Friendship

- Do friends say mean things to each other?
- How can we be good friends?
- Why are rules important and why do we follow them?
- How do you know what your friends are feeling?

Empathy/Benevolence

- What is kindness?
- What is gentleness? Why is it important?
- How can we work things out in a kind manner?
- What can we do when someone hurts us?
- When we hurt a friend, why do we need to 'fix' him/her?
- How do we fix a friend that we have hurt (physically, emotionally)?
- How can we tell friends with gentleness that we don't want to play?

In what other ways can we support the development of compassion and empathy?

Virtues: Empathy. Ecological Awareness. Benevolence. Self-Restraint.

Vocabulary: angry, brave, caring, compassion, considerate, control, courage, courageous, determined, feelings, force, friendly, gentle, happy, harm, hurting, hurtful, kind, kindness, loving, pain, painful, self-restraint, strength, thoughtful, unacceptable, understanding

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

- Ecological Awareness: I am kind to myself. I am kind to my friends. I am kind to Mother Earth.
Self-Restraint: I am controlling my body. I am careful with my body. I use my words when I am mad. Hands are for hugging. Feet are for walking.
- Empathy: I am kind to myself. I am kind to others. When I hurt a friend, I need to fix them.
Benevolence: I don't like that. I'll play with you later. I am a super friend! I don't like it when you hit me. That hurts me. Let's be friendly.

Living in Harmony with Others (Yama) – Ahimsa for Teachers

1) What causes us to react inappropriately to situations?

“If you truly loved yourself, you could never hurt another.” -
Buddha

2) What constructive strategies can be used to reduce one's inclination to engage in unnecessary or harmful speech/action?

“A wound caused by an arrow heals swiftly, but a wound caused by words can be as deadly as a weapon.” -
The Mahabharata

3) How are you taking care of yourself?

“Kindness in words creates confidence.
Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.”
Lao-Tzu

4) What determines whether a thought, action, or word is harmful or compassionate?

“If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”
Mother Teresa

5) How can embracing the practice of Ahimsa affect your lifestyle and the lifestyle of other living beings?

“First, as far as possible, articles of food must be selected from among those items in which development of consciousness is comparatively little...it must be considered whether it is possible to live in a healthy body without taking such lives.”
Anandamurti

6) How will you develop a personal relationship with each student?

“Choose to do no harm.”
Unknown

7) How can you help your students to feel safe and comfortable?

“Do good immediately and keep on postponing bad (hurtful) actions.”
Anandamurti

8)How will you respond to unkind or intolerant comments in the class?

“Life is so hard, how can we be anything but kind?”
Buddha’s Little Instruction Book

What are some of the stages of Ahimsa practice?

- Moving from rage/resentment®Expressing anger appropriately
- Rigidity®Flexibility
- Judging®Tolerance
- Blaming®Accepting what is
- Victimizing/Teasing®Positive encouragement
- Overcommitting myself®Saying no
- Allowing myself to be taken advantage of®Communicating boundaries

Affirmation of Ahimsa

I choose to behave with kindness toward myself, others, and the Earth.

“My optimism rests on my belief in the infinite possibilities of the individual to develop nonviolence.
The more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes till it overwhelms your surroundings
and by and by might over sweep the world.”
Mahatma Gandhi

Preschool

The world of the preschooler is truly a world of wonder. By the age of 3, a child's brain is 90% of adult size. Much of this growth is synaptogenesis – the forming of new connections. The child has many skills:

- Language is exploding. Grammar is developing to organize both vocabulary and thought patterns.
- Explicit (verbal) memory develops and extends the range of problem-solving and understanding the world and the creatures in it.
- Emotions that are not too intense can be verbally mediated. A child can start to “talk himself down” or use words to stay attentive.
- Autonomy is a critical issue. The child is seeking to navigate his world as a thinking creature with preferences and goals.
- As the child gains better control over voluntary movements, he creates a sense of himself in space, an embodiment of himself in the world. This embodiment becomes a foundation of self-concept.
- An increasing understanding of the motivations of others develops. This is called “theory of mind” and “mentalizing.”
- Imitation and modeling continue to be significant learning pathways. “Monkey see – Monkey do” is a mantra for this age group.
- Basic temperament is being shaped by relationships and the environment to develop personality.

However, the child's functioning is very different than the adult's. Although the brain is furiously making connections, these connections are not well organized. Thus, the associations a child makes are often less than logical. Piaget called this “preoperational” thought. It is characterized by egocentrism, magical thinking and animism. It is important to be aware that the preschool child

- Is always making connections, and if the world seems chaotic, these connections can be confusing
- While it is wonderful to be the center of the world when things are going well, during times of difficulty it is not such a good location.
- The abilities to plan, defer gratification and inhibit impulses are still developing. Deficits in these areas can be very frustrating to the child who isn't able to do what he sees other doing.
- Physical abilities are continuing to develop “cephalocaudally” (from head to foot) and “proximodistally,” (from the midline outward.) Thus, the preschooler is still awkward, and struggles with fine motor skills.

Magic Redirection Poses

Happy Baby

Lie on floor. Raise feet and hands to ceiling. Be a happy baby shaking and flapping your hands and feet! What baby sounds is your baby making? Don't laugh!

Bear or Elephant

You are standing tall on the African Plain near great Mount Kilimanjaro. Fold forward placing hands palms down on the dry earth. Then walk forward, keeping arms and legs as straight as you can. Count 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8. Then walk backwards. Count 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8. Repeat walking forwards and backwards and perhaps around the plains. Take care not to step on a mouse!

Boat

Lie face down on the ground, resting your forehead on the sandy beach. Bend your knees with feet extending skyward. Stretch your hands back, grasping the ankles. Raise your legs, chest and head upward, supporting the weight on the navel. Hold for just a short time. Then release your entire body to the ground once again. What sounds does your boat make?

Camel

Stand on knees with the toes tucked under. Slowly bend the trunk and head backwards until one or both hands grab the heels. Continue breathing. Imagine that you have a hump like the camel. How would it feel to carry a person across the desert? The camel is often called 'the ship of the desert'. (Can also be practiced with one hand on a heel at a time),

Car

Sit on ground with legs straight in front. Imagine right foot is on gas pedal. Fasten seat belt. Start engine with your key. Take hold of steering wheel. Move sitting bones forward. Cars can also race each other. Scoot across the room by moving the hips one side at a time. Time for some major drag racing!!!

Donkey

Begin in table top pose. Press hands into ground. Kick our feet up in air. Kick high. "Hee haw. Hee haw. Hee haw."

Flower

Sit on the floor with the soles of your feet together. Dive your hands under the legs. Gently lift bent legs into the air with the soles of the feet together. Fingertips point upward. Only the tailbone is on the ground. Let your flower fully bloom. Feel the warm sun.

Gorilla

Sit leaning slightly forward with the wrists bent backwards. The fingers are pointing in the direction behind you. The back of the hands is on the ground. Palms are facing up. This is gentle gorilla. Then beating the chest with fists. "Who, who, who, who." Mad gorillas. What are you mad eabout? What makes you this scared?

Hammer or Ax

Stand with legs farther than hip width apart and with hands interlaced extended far above the head. Then on the next exhale breath swing forward towards the ground below. Repeat this motion over and over. What sound does your hammer make?

Helicopter or Fan

Stand with arms in "T" position. Then twirl. What sounds does your helicopter make? Then all the helicopters crash into the ground.

Jellyfish

Standing bent over with arms and hands pointed toward ground, swaying and swishing arms back and forth. What is your jellyfish doing?

Lion

Sit on your knees with your claws spread widely on your thighs. On the next exhale breath pounce your paws forward on the ground, opening your mouth wide and “rarrrrrrr”. Inhale bringing your paws back up to the beginning position. Repeat A LOT!

Pencil Roll

Clear the room! Lie on the ground on your back with your arms extended straight over your head. Roll as far as you dare.

Rocket Ship

Stand with your arms extended straight in front of you. As you count down, you sit down a little further (Chair Posture) with each number. 10.9.8.7.6.5.4.3.2.1. On “blast off “ you jump up with your arms in a “V” position and prepare to launch once again.

Seal

Sit with knees bent and soles of feet together. Lift feet off the ground. Balance on tailbone with legs raised. Knees are bent. Arms are extended forwards with hands around the calves. Clap your flipper feet together while making your seal sounds What does your seal want right now?

Shake your Sillies Out

In a standing position shake your arms, hands, legs, feet in any random movement that you choose. Make some silly sounds! Walk around a bit and shake, shake, shake.

Sunbird

In the table top position lift one arm so that it is pointing towards the wall in front of you. Release it down to the floor. Then lift the other arm. Then lift each leg one at a time and extend it out behind you. What sound does your sunbird make? For the ultimate challenge lift one leg and one arm.....

Super Friends

Lie on tummy with legs together. Forehead is on floor. Stretch arms in front. Raise arms and legs as if flying in the sky. Who is in danger?

Tipi

Standing with legs more than hip width apart with arms overhead crossed over each other, making an “X”. “I am a tipi standing in the grass.” Then fold forward with arms coming straight down touching the feet. “Here is the doorway where you may pass.”

Tree

Have children begin this pose by slightly leaning against the wall. Practice sapling first with the ball of the foot into the ground. Then eventually lift foot up the trunk. Many prefer to place one foot right on top of the other in the beginning. With practice 5 year olds can do this without the wall. Open the arms and “twinkle” the leaves.

Turtle

In a seated position spread your legs far apart, bringing the soles of your feet together. Bend downward with your hands going under the legs and out the other side. Leaning on your forearms, bring your head down as far as you can. Feel the nice roundness of your turtle shell. Turtles take their homes with them wherever they go and so do you!

Volcano

In a standing position with feet together and knees bent, bring the palms of the hands together over the heart. As you jump into the air, the arms fly upward into a “V” position. While landing with the legs wide apart, the hands wiggle while spurting hot lava shoots out. The flapping hands move with the lava coming all the way down the sides of the volcano, down, down to the hips while making erupting volcano and hot lava sounds.

Elementary: Yoga for 6 - 10 Year Olds

- What developmental milestones and characteristics would be helpful to remember?
- What is physically difficult? What is socio-emotionally challenging?
- How do these factors affect the activities you want to implement?
- What are some realistic expectations of what these students can do?
- What are some things that they cannot do?

General Introduction

During the ages of six to ten years, students are becoming a little more sensitive and self-critical about their personal abilities, their bodies, and their intelligence. They are a little more self-aware. Teachers encourage students to love and appreciate their bodies and to think about that part of self which is Infinite...whether you call it your soul, spirit, or your Inner Friend.

With the more sophisticated thinking and developmental processes of six to ten year olds, the bar may be raised pertaining to the goals and purpose of the yoga class. Science, history, nature, math and other academic concepts can be explored. Students may become occupied with inventing their own yoga poses, themes, and stories. Imagination and creativity are encouraged. Opportunities for greater focus and concentration are presented. More connections with the world, all living beings, with each other and with the Inner Teacher are strengthened through the yoga class experience.

In the elementary class tools are presented for developing self-awareness and thoughtfulness. How can the yoga teacher provide insights to enhance social, mental and emotional well-being? Yoga techniques can support girls in coping with body image issues, moodiness, and negative emotions such as jealousy. Yoga can support boys in developing a higher respect for others, satisfying their competitive nature and redirecting aggressive tendencies.

Yoga activities are presented for the whole mind and whole brain. Combinations of yoga experiences include breath techniques, āsana, games, meditation, and ecological connections to the earth, nature and all living beings.

Elementary Mechanics

The elementary child is becoming more competent in many developmental areas. With improved body coordination and flexibility, exploration of new challenging movements keeps their interest. With the advanced development of stronger back muscles and greater physical strength, more diverse balance poses and inversions are included. These āsana elicit focus, grace, and greater perseverance. Poses may be held a bit longer. Repetitive movements that flow are performed.

Six to ten Year olds still enjoy rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. Āsana for the early ages of this group may still be performed with some animation, but there is a little less running or moving around the entire room. Before 8 years of age play and fantasy continue dominate the child's world.

They process by moving, seeing, listening, touching, hearing, and singing. Teachers engage students' brains, hearts, minds, and bodies. They relish sensory experiences and are beginning to catch a glimpse of those matters of the heart and soul. In late elementary and sometimes earlier the teacher can introduce the practice of being present in each moment, of being mindful. What does your body feel like? Children are encouraged to look within and feel things physically and psychically.

Experiences that build connections, enhancing bonding, unity and sharing have a certain amount of appeal as well as activities that build confidence, strength, self-esteem and courage. They thrive on relationship building activities through games and group/partner yoga experiences.

With increased concentration, elementary students can engage in more contemplative activities, i.e., longer śavāsana and meditation experiences.

Elementary students may begin experiencing stressors from a variety of factors such as low academic achievement, depression, obesity, asthma, attention challenges, a decline in parent involvement, and violence. Anxiety can have a negative effect on test taking and academic performance. six to ten year old yoga techniques include physical and mental strategies for calming the nervous system in order to combat stress.

With increased intellectual capability, reflective questions can be asked: How does your body feel? After 8, children are more capable of abstract reasoning. Metaphors can be used in the class: Let's shake like jelly.

Yoga can help reduce behavioral problems, enhance the brain's cognitive function, and support student's intentions to better balance their emotions and moods.

Accessorize

Eye pillows and blankets may be used. The young elementary child may cover the eyes with a beanie baby, washcloth or sock (preferably a clean one!) Children may be "awakened" with a bell, a song, a chant, a glockenspiel, a singing bowl, etc. Other considerations include: straps, stretchy bands, pillows, mats, blankets, lotion, and essential oils. Students may begin using mats.

Affirmations and Positive Approach

There is a popular expression: 'we are what we think'. Part of the human condition involves negative thinking. With the elementary experience, students may be victims of bullying, criticism, gossiping, mudslinging, and other negative personal experiences. Their socio-emotional development at this age leaves them very vulnerable and fragile with somewhat limited self-defense strategies against such 'attacks'. Students can be urged to notice and recognize negative thinking as a part the human experience and to utilize affirmations as a "shield of protection".

When facilitating discussion concerning affirmation construction, teachers take care not to put a student down or to trivialize any feeling, belief, or opinion that a student may have. Ideally emotions and feelings (no matter how insignificant they may seem to adults) are very real, important, and formidable to the student. Teachers try their best to honor and acknowledge all fears, doubts, and anxieties in order to show each student that s/he is cared for and valued.

Positive affirmations have the power to minimize the effects of negative thinking. Other yoga tools such as mantra chanting (kiirtan or japa) and singing can be instrumental in the process of transforming detrimental and self-defeating thought patterns.

Affirmation Experiences:

Affirmations can be used during yoga such as:

Tadāsana - I am strong. I am powerful

Warrior I - I can do it!

Śavāsana -I am calm. I am peace. I am ok.

They can also be included in the śavāsana and meditation practices.

Invite students to think about some personal characteristic about themselves that they would like to improve and turn it into an affirmation. Give a personal example of yourself. When constructing affirmations, they are generally placed in the present tense to reaffirm that this is a condition that is happening now not in the future.

- All good things rain down on me.
- I believe in myself.
- I am intelligent.
- My opinions are important.
- I am doing a good job!

Students may also write an affirmation, put it anonymously on a piece of paper, and place it in a box...and the teacher may pull different ones out to use in each class.

Affirmations bring positive reinforcement for inner peace, joy, and self-compassion. They provide students with a sense of empowerment and enhance self-esteem. Affirmations along with prānāyāma can be practiced when preparing for tests.

The more positive mental practices are encouraged, the greater the possibility of achieving balanced emotional fitness!

Blessings:

Can be included in the āsana practice, meditation, prānāyāma, and śavāsana. They are positive affirmations of hope. Student can create their own blessings as well.

- May I be happy. May I be at Peace. May I be well. May I dwell in my heart. May my heart bloom and grow.
- May you be happy. May you be at Peace. May you be well. May you dwell in your heart. May your heart bloom and grow.
- May we be happy. May we be at Peace. May we be well. May we dwell in our hearts. May our hearts bloom and grow .
- May you be full of joy. May you be free of suffering.
- May I be full of confidence. May I enjoy great self-esteem.
- May I be loving, kind and understanding of others.
- May I make wise decision. May I enjoy Happiness.

Āsana

Alignment

- :It is with the six to ten year olds that very simple alignment points can be mentioned. It is important to focus on just a few so that it remains a fun and enjoyable experience. Take care not to go overboard with assisting. Proceed with gentleness and intuitive sensitivity.
- Beginning with the feet, it can be fun to explore how animal feet are so different: bear paws (pointing in) or duck feet (pointing out). Ideally the feet are positioned with the toes straight ahead. How can the children help each other to do this? Some recommend that when standing the feet should be fist width apart. Feet checkers!
- When the hands are on the floor, the fingers can be spread wide like the rays of the sun.
- Knees are, of course, over the ankles when lunging.
- Shoulders are rolled back and not sloped forward or hunched toward the ears.
- The tailbone is tucked. Try to gently discourage 'banana' back.

Posture

Support erect posture without tension or strain by showing the students the "happy posture", with shoulders 'open', back straight, chest fully expanded. Then show "sad posture" with the back rounded, head falling forward. Show me your happy posture with the corners of the mouth going up into a smile. (Inhale). Show me your sad posture with a scowling face. (Exhale). Then you can repeat this over and over just like a seated cat.

Anatomy

Some basic anatomy information can be shared with these ages. What would be some very fundamental examples of this?

Dṛṣṭi

Concentrating on a point or dhristi can be employed with six to ten year olds with some success. This can be applied in all balance poses as well as warrior and other poses as well.

Animal Fun

Elementary students love learning more about nature trivia and animals. Tell me something interesting about: Gorillas, camels, eagles, swans, giraffes, cobras, prairie dogs, flamingos, lions, elephants, rabbits, butterflies, spiders, bears, starfish. With these ages you can present little known facts about various animals and invite them to join you in researching information. If you could be any animal who would you be?

- Play animal charades.
- Choose a totem with whom you can identify.
- Incorporate and/or invite animal facts.
- Use animal metaphors: Wake up like a dog. Climb like a monkey. Sing like a bird. Sunbathe like a lizard. Leap like a dolphin.
- Practice animal habits and movements.

Ecological care of the planet is supported as well as an emphasis on the interconnectedness and interdependency of all living beings.

A hippo can run faster than a person. A kangaroo can hop 30 feet in one leap. A lion's roar can be heard from 5 miles away. A snake has no ears but picks up sound waves with its tongue. A giraffe can clean its ears with its 21" long tongue.

Students are invited to discover their inner yogic animal nature and their connection to all the members of our world as family.

Metaphor

In the āsana practice affirmations and references to particular personal characteristics can include metaphor related to nature:

- I am as strong as the mountain! I am as clear as the blue sky. I am as smooth/calm as the ocean. I am as bright as the sun.
- I'm as quiet as a clam. I'm as loud as a lion. I'm as gentle as a lamb. I'm as brave as a tiger. I'm as shy as a shrimp. I'm as wild as a chimp. I'm as mean as a shark. I'm as nice as a bunny.

The Social Fun Factor

Group and partner poses can be enjoyable for these ages. Virtually any pose can be transformed into a group or partner pose. These poses nurture that growing inner thirst to connect with others, creating opportunities that build bonds, sharing, and a sense of unity.

Vinyasa

Older elementary students are ready for the 'joining together' of āsana sequences. As they become more familiar with the yoga āsana repertoire, they may enjoy combining or transforming poses into 'duets' or 'triplets' and can practice Surya Namaskar. With increased competency, students may even take turns leading certain vinyasas that the class favors or has invented.

Each āsana is a connecting bridge to the world, nature, body, mind, and to that Inner Greatness.

Assisting

At six to ten years of age some students will attempt yoga positions in unsafe and dangerous ways. They are still discovering how their bodies work. Gentle and caring assists are provided when a student is in an unsafe position. Teachers can begin discussions with students about āsana and body safety issues. Older students may assist younger ones.

Centering

Puppets may still participate in the six to ten year old class. It is a wonderful tool for capturing the students' interest especially during a crucial activity that can be boring, of non-interest, or threatening.

If students are very talkative and active, some teachers may start a class with meditation, śavāsana, or other activities that are calming such as simple prāṇāyāma experiences.

Bowling

Students are sitting in a comfortable cross-legged position. Invite them to: Close your eyes. Please stretch both your arms out towards the ground, stretching your fingers straight...as if they are plugging into the earth. Think of things that you don't like. Think about any problems you had today. Think about something that drove you crazy. Imagine that those negative thoughts are turning into black bowling balls. With every inhale, I want you to imagine that those bowling balls are popping up on your shoulders and on the exhale they are rolling down your arms and fingers into the earth...and then they disappear. Inhale and there they are again. Exhale and roll them away. (Repeat 4-5 times or so..)

Set an Intention

Explain to students how to go about setting an intention for a class? What are some age appropriate intentions for this age group?

The Tree

Everyone is on the floor in Rock or Seed position. The rain comes and waters all of the seeds. Then the sun comes out and the light warms all of the seeds. The tree seed begins to sprout upwards. First all of the seeds kneel and then they stand. Then they stretch up onto tiptoes, stretching their arms high above their heads. The finger leaves are spread wide apart.

The Chinese sometimes refer to that mental state of when the mind is racing and spiraling here and there as “monkey mind”. Yoga āsana and breathing practices can support the calming and quieting of the mind. These tools can help us to focus and concentrate the mind for the tasks at hand.

The Yoga Sun Dance is a wonderful series for this. Body scanning from toes to head, concentrating on each body part is another technique. Virtually all deep breathing experiences can minimize monkey mind as well as balance poses and forward bending can also assist.

Chanting and Mantra Methodology

Mantra concentrates mental focus. The repetition of certain sounds produces a healing and calming effect. This is particularly due to the deeper breathing that naturally occurs during chanting and singing experiences.

Mantra and chanting can counter negative/defective thinking. These techniques relax the sympathetic nervous system, the brain, and uplift our emotional well-being.

Elementary students love call response chanting.

- Om Jyoti Om Jyoti Om Jyoti Om. Can be first repeated by the teacher and then copied by the students. The rhythm may remain constant or the teacher may jazz it up.
- Śantiḥ Peace Om Om
- Shalom Peace or simply Shalom Shalom Shalom.
- Allah Akbara. (God is great).
- Hari om. (Calling The Great)
- Hallelujah.
- Om śantiḥ śantiḥ .

Students may also enjoy the opportunity of composing their own mantra, affirmations, and/or mduṛā.

If the teacher has a song, poem, or affirmation; this can be chanted repeatedly.

Teachers may facilitate discussions with children about the uses of chanting and when chanting may be beneficial as a tool in their daily lives. Chanting can, of course, be performed any time of the day, but it is especially useful when emotionally challenged, at night when falling asleep, when riding in the bus, when fearful. Mental chanting or silent japa can be repeated when experiencing a frustrating and stressful situation.

Who can share some ideas of frustrating situations that you or someone you know experienced when perhaps a japa practice might be helpful? When someone takes something away from you.

Pushes you, gets in front of you in line,

Who can share some feelings that you or someone you know has experienced where perhaps a japa practice might be helpful? (When sad, crying, frustrated, scared, disappointed, or angry.)

Engages the mouth, hands, feet, balance as well as music and rhythm.

Chanting employs sound and rhythm, using the natural rhythms of the body, soul, and nature, i.e., the sound of the ocean waves on the beach, the rhythm of birds’ singing, wind blowing the trees. The repetition of certain sounds calms and nervous system and the psyche. Chanting is incredibly focusing, calming and energizing. Rhythm and melody can be combined with hand movements. Accompanying movements can include mduṛā that involve the hands and/or feet. including lalita or dance. Lalita, for example These help to develop concentration, breath coordination, communication, and motor skills. Chanting is the ideal preparation for yoga practice. It naturally facilitates deep breathing and centers the mind. Hamsa. Hahmmmm sahhh. Symbol for om .

Class Themes

Initially themes may be similar to those used for preschool children but can include more sophisticated information and animal facts. Students love any connection with nature, i.e., forest animals. the bug tribe, life in the jungle.

Classes can be dedicated to life cycles of particular animals including what they eat, how they raise their young, where they live, who their friends and enemies are, how they defend themselves when faced with danger, and other life situations. Snakes don't have ears so how do they hear?

Explore animal themes: Exploring the Desert, Swimming the Ocean, Living in the Woods, Life on the Prairie, Flying in the Air, On the Farm.

Closings

Closings may reference something that occurred in the class, a story, an occurrence, an affirmation, a song, or the intention of the day. The yoga teacher may end the class with an affirmation, with a wish for the class, with a visualization, or with a blessing.

- May you find peace and happiness in what we have shared together here in yoga class today. Om Śantiḥ .
- May there be peace in your heart.
- May there be peace on earth/in our school community and in your home.
- May you see the bright side of every thing.

The teacher may show appreciation or thank the class collectively in some way. S/he may remind the students of some homework assignment.

Each child can share something that was interesting or fun for them – be it a part of a story, an event that occurred during the class, demonstrate the favorite pose of the day (individually or all at once!). Perhaps there will be a group pose that everyone will perform together.

Children can assist with the cleaning and putting back together of the room. A special child or children can ring a bell or signal the end of the class or perhaps lead the group expression of Namaste.

Ideally closings are soft and gentle, warm and loving. Students are left with a closing that “fills their cup” for personal empowerment that that are compassionately connected to others and the Infinite.

Design

Relationship building and a sense of community is enhanced through greater social awareness. Ritual in the class format remains important. Students may formally greet each other and the teacher at the beginning of class with “Namaste” or

“Namaskar” or other greetings in various languages. six to ten year old yoga classes may last for 30-45 minutes or more with the addition of games and/or races.

Games

Games are a time for joking, laughter, and fun. Yoga games are an essential ingredient to supporting students in the development of interconnectedness, tolerating conflicts, and find compassionate solutions to problems and personal dilemmas.

Games contribute to nurturing a greater sense of community and self-fulfillment by fostering closer relationships. Games can provide insights into others' personal struggles and support the development of pro-social skills such as compassion and caring for others. Students become aware of the feeling that others possess. They observe yoga friends expressing similar feelings that they understand. Yoga games stretch the imagination, challenge problem solving and offer opportunities for laughter and fun.

Games offer the beginnings of establishing a socio-emotional therapeutic environment. They have a wonderful way of lessening stress and anxiety, helping children to feel like they have some control. They also invite self-discovery as they explore and experiment with new techniques and strategies of relating to others.

Balance Tag

Have the children dance or move around to music. When the music stops, everyone needs to assume a balance pose wherever they are.

Balloon Tag

Send 1 or more balloons around the room. Everyone has to keep them in the air by tapping them with a certain body part. Call out elbows, head, knees, chime, etc.

Compliment Game

Two students are standing and they are holding a shared strap in each hand (2 straps are used). A student is invited to come into the circle of straps. The two students with straps take turns giving specific compliments: I really like the way you _____. The student receiving the compliments makes eye contact and thanks each person.

Happiness Runs

After doing a prānāyāma experience like belly breathing, give everyone a piece of paper that has a list of items like (My favorite activity. An animal that is like me. An exercise I enjoy. How I spend time alone. How I spend time with others. Things that make me feel happy. My favorite memories. Things I do well. How do I ask for help when I need it. Other things that will make my life happy.). When they have completed filling it out, have everyone share what s/he has written. Point out individual differences and how wonderful and unique each individual is. Make a public remark about what is and what is not making everyone happy, i.e., It's not money. It's not popularity.

Mirror Me

Sit or stand with a partner and decide who will be the first leader. Raise your hands so that the palms are facing each other but not touching. Then the leader makes a slow series of movements that the follower needs to copy. The hands are moved in different ways. They can be moved up and down, side to side, around in circles in a way that the partner can follow. Keep the movements very, very slow. After a few minutes, switch leaders.

Mother May I

One child is selected to be the 'mother'. The rest of the children are lined up on one end of the room. When "mother's" back is facing them, they all try to creep up on her. Every time the 'mother' turns around, all the 'children' freeze in a yoga pose (perhaps tree). (The freeze pose can be different poses of personal choice or all the same. If balance poses are chosen, swaying is ok but anyone with two feet on the floor has to go back to the start.) The first student to reach 'mother' takes her place. (Variation: Mother may call out a pose for everyone to do or choose a card. Be a tree, mountain, waterfall, etc.)

Mystery Animal

Get some animal cards or take some pictures off the internet. Mix all the cards up and place them face down. Each student selects one card and shows it to the entire group. Everyone tries to mimic that animal through sounds and movements.

Races

There are many kinds of races that can be held: monkey scuttle, crabs, wheelbarrows, cobras, donkeys, elephants, penguins, etc. What else?

Red Light Green Light

All students are on one side of the room and the leader is in the middle or other side of the room. The leader (with her/his back turned away from the students) says Green Light. Students may perform "movement yoga poses" that will move them closer to the leader the leader. These may include general movements such as flying, jumping, walking, swimming, or crawling with her/his back turned away from the students poses such as Warrior I, flower, donkey, tree, sunbird, ragdoll, etc.

When the leader turns around, everyone freezes. (These images can also be available on cards that the leader may select.) Whoever touches the leader first is the next leader. This game may also be played with two leaders, one for movement, one for 'frozen yoga pose'.

Śantiḥ and the Ball

Śantiḥ in me. Śantiḥ in you. Peace, peace in all we do.

Everyone repeats this chant and then one at a time at the conclusion of the chant the ball is rolled to someone who tells something positive him/herself. It can be something the person likes to do, something the person is good at, or a personality characteristic. Then the person can throw/roll the ball to someone else. (Body part variation.)

Synchronized Yoga

The group decides ahead of time what poses might work best for this exercise. Each pose is called out one at a time and students try to synchronize the performance of the pose or sequence in perfect synchronicity.

Whisper

All students sit in a circle. One person whispers something in his/her neighbor's ear. The message may be something silly like "meow like a cat", "sing row row row your boat", or "do the waterfall pose". Then the next person whispers the same message in the next person's ear. The very last person will perform whatever the message is.

Yogini's Choice

Each student names a pose and gives directions on how to do it. The group listens and then follow the yogini as s/he leads the others. Then the next child gets a turn.

Points to Remember

- Always be respectful.
- Consider each student as your friend.
- Practice genuine listening with sincerity and without a personal agenda.
- Limit talking and lecturing.

Lifestyle

Students are reminded in classes "Let's be friendly." Discussions can ensue regarding: What does it mean to be friendly?

What are some ways in which the teacher can help children to see their value to the world or to the class, and to see their Inner Light/Inner Radiance? What other generic or universal names can be given to define this Divine aspect of our being? The teacher may present a definition of the actual meaning of yoga. What are some metaphors that define yoga for six to ten year olds?

Yoga teachers remind students of the fullness of their physical - spiritual being. You are more than your body. You are more than your mind. You are more than your feelings. You are unique! Discussions may occur about how to live a life in the spirit of Yama and Niyama, including issues regarding eating habits and diet, personal and environmental cleanliness, how to summon up positive energy and be free from negative or violent thoughts. (See Yama and Niyama for Students).

How can students make more positive choices that respect and support oneself and others? How can we give them the ability to manage conflicts and embrace problem solving with creativity and compassion?

Students can be urged to notice and recognize negative thinking as a part the human experience. The escalation and prevalence of vicious negativity, if left undeterred can damage self-image. There are many yoga tools that can support the navigation through those rocky waters. Positive affirmations can defuse and in many cases with long term practice can even transform the effects of negative/defective thinking.

Students are encouraged to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. This practice of redirecting the mind and refusing to 'buy into defective thinking' can further the development of concentration and a more joyful demeanor. The more these practices are engaged the healthier we are.

Meditation

Meditation is often regarded as a "time in" exercise. Students experience what it is like to be still, quiet and focused. During these experiences of active resting, students are trying to concentrate the mind and thoughts. Regular practice promotes inner clarity and a calmer nature, nurturing a stronger mental-emotional balance.

Teachers develop their own way of defining meditation. When formulating your personal definition of meditation, consider: Why do I meditate? What do I feel when I meditate? What is my mind doing when I meditate? How does meditation affect me (physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually)? If you are new to meditation, what is your expectation of what you may gain from meditation? What is the struggle inherent in meditation? How can we make meditation a fun experience?

Meditation is as easy as making a picture in our heads. Meditation is as easy as taking a long, slow breath.

The students can decide what their meditation practice will be, what the meditation posture will be, what the most ideal "mental picture" will be, what mantra or affirmation will be used.

Discussions can center around symbols and how a symbol is "picture" of something that has personal value. We see symbols on street signs what do they mean? Sometimes an animal can have personal significance or represent a characteristic that one may want to embody. What does a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis mean to you? What do the following symbolize to your students: bear, deer, snake, dolphin, shark, eagle, heron?

Art, writing, drawing, painting, and creative movement can be effective ways of helping to integrate meditation practices and to encourage intuitive thinking and feeling. Students may draw or creatively express feelings or things that were observed during meditation.

Sometimes yoga teachers can ask students about how they are feeling, physically or psychically. From these conversations the yoga, meditation, and śavāsana practices can be fine tuned to the needs of the students.

Meditation can involve simple belly breathing with a beanie baby on the belly and/or simply inviting the students to breathe. Initially it can even begin with the eyes open, i.e.,One, breathe....Two, breathe.....Three, breathe....Four, breathe....Five, breathe... Now let's close our eyes and keep breathing in....and out. Imagine that you can feel your animal rising and falling on your belly. You can continue counting your breaths. If your mind should start thinking about something else, just say to yourself: Oh I'm going to go back to looking at my animal and breathing again.

After the meditation, the teacher may ask how are you feeling right now? What was your favorite part of the meditation?

Eventually you may incorporate different mantra or words or affirmations with the synchronization of the breath. All of these exercises can also be offered during śavāsana.

Finger Meditation

Right Hand: Inhale. Then bring the thumb and index finger together. Then exhale. Inhale and bring the thumb to the middle finger. Exhale. Inhale bring the thumb to the ring finger. Exhale. Inhale bring the thumb to the pinky finger. Exhale. Then repeat this with the left hand.

Getting Rid of Cooties

Play the Hokey Pokey and invite students to put a feeling in the circle. This can be announced aloud or written on a piece of paper and thrown onto the floor (or into a container.) Everyone can discuss a little about the importance of "letting go" and releasing mental garbage.

The Happy Tree

Close your eyes. Take a deep in breath. When you breathe back out, feel your body relaxing. Breathe in. As you breathe out, relax your legs. Breathe in. As you breathe out, relax your arms and neck.

Imagine a tree. The tree has fruit on it. The tree can have any fruit that you want on it. Do you see the fruit? Some of the fruits are happy. Some of the fruits are sad. Can you tell which fruits are happy? Can you tell which fruits are sad?

Ask the sad fruits: What do you need to be happy? Listen quietly. Can you hear them speaking to you? Do they want to go somewhere? Do they need something? Great! Give them what they need. How do the fruits feel now? Look at the tree. How does the tree feel? Does the tree need anything? Good! Give the tree what it needs.

See the sun shining down on the tree. Feel the rays of the sun helping the tree. Put some of your favorite things into the sun. What would you like to put into the sun? Smiles, love, fun, someone you know who is suffering. Okay, go ahead and put some things that make you feel good into the sun. Take a deep breath. Feel the good energy from the sun going into the tree. Take another deep breath and see more good energy going into the tree.

Now thank the tree and thank your self for your great work. Open your eyes when you are ready.

After the Tree Meditation, you can ask questions: How do you feel? Do you feel different? How did the sad fruit look different from the happy fruit? What did the sad fruit need? What did the good energy look or sound like? Do you think this meditation is helpful? Do you think you could do this meditation on your own?

So meditation helps us to discover the Center or the Teacher within. At this Center there is no fear, no stress, no doubt.

Solis

Chant: Inside, inside with my third eye, I see myself clearly. Outside, outside eyes open wide, I send love to all dearly. Om. Amen.

Walking Meditation

Let's walk very slowly around the room in a circle for 3 minutes. Feel your heels hitting the floor. Feel the ball of your foot stepping down onto the floor. Feel your toes pressing together as they touch the floor. Feel your leg picking your foot up and getting ready to step down once again. Walk as slowly and as quietly as you can. We don't have to be in single file. You may walk next to another child.

Remember to breathe. Remember to keep your brilliant mind focused on the feeling of your body and on the flow of your breath. Look at your feet. Feel your body moving. Feel your breath as it flows in, flows out, flows in, flows out. (Variation: Repeat an affirmation or blessing. I am patience.)

White Light Meditation

Pretend that you are surrounded by a beautiful white light. The light is so peaceful, and safe and happy and loving. Every time you breathe in, the white light fills you up. Every time you breathe out, the white light pours out of you and into the world. It touches the other children. When everyone inhales, all that love and light comes back to them. Imagine that the white light is touching and holding, all of your friends and they are feeling peaceful, loving and kind. Exhaling, the white light continues to fill the room. Then it goes outside of the room into the street, into the trees, into the whole city, then the whole state, and then the country and then the entire planet earth.....then it comes back into your heart.

Yoga is for on the mat. Yoga is for off the mat. Yoga is for all the time.

Parent Involvement

In the preschool class situation you may actually have occasions when the parents may be participating in the class. However in the elementary yoga class situation, parents generally do not stay.

Elementary Prānāyāma

Prānāyāma increases and awakens the total functioning capacity of the brain and naturally occurs in the practice of āsana as well as in chanting. It is the practice that distinguishes the āsana practice from other physical practices. The regular practice of prānāyāma can increase emotional stability. Releasing emotions such as anger, competitiveness, disappointment or just plain old grumpiness in a nonviolent manner can be facilitated through prānāyāmas such as the Lion Breath or Volcano as well as fun yoga poses that induce laughter. Students can be invited to share their trigger experiences about what makes them angry.

Balloon Breathing

This can be performed seated or lying down. The hands are placed with interlaced fingers on the tummy. With the inhale breath, we pooch the tummy out, blowing up the balloon. With the exhale breath, we pull the tummy in, shrinking the balloon. This can be repeated slowly 5-6 times.

Belly Breathing

Students may be supine, prone, standing, or sitting. Hands (or some other prop, i.e., rubber duck) are placed on the lower belly. Breathe through the nose and into the belly so that hands (or prop) are going up and down with the breath just like waves in the ocean. Encourage students to try to make the hands/prop move (by exaggerating the breath). Try to relax all muscles to support the lengthening and slowing of the breath. Can also be practiced with a balloon or stuffie between the hands and the tummy..

The Blossoming Flower

Children are all seated in a circle with their feet pointing towards the center. Everyone is holding hands. All bring their heads down towards their knees and the hands towards the feet (as if in paschimottanāsana). It is nighttime and the giant flower is sleeping. The sun is coming up over the mountain. The giant flower begins to awaken. With

the hands resting on the legs, everyone slowly sits up. Then slowly the arms are raised above their heads. Still holding hands everyone slowly lies down on the floor. Everyone raises one leg, followed by the other leg. Then both legs go over the head and down toward the floor in halāsana. The flower is now open. The flower is now awake. When evening comes, the flower will slowly close and go to sleep once again.

A Breathing Rhyme:

Clap your hands 1.2.3. Clap your hands just like me.
Stomp your feet 1.2.3. Stomp your feet just like me.
Breathe in 1.2.3.(Show 1.2.3. fingers) Breathe out 1.2.3.
Breathe in 1.2.3. Breathe out 1.2.3. just like me.

Breathing Staircase

The first child lies on the back with bent knees, soles of the feet on the floor. Second child lies in same position, gently placing the head on the first child's belly. Children continue in this sequencing, until all are resting with heads on bellies. Then everyone closes their eyes and listens to the breathing of the person on whom they are resting. Can the entire staircase synchronize their breathing? This is a relaxing and bonding experience.

Desk Breathing

With your elbows on the desk, lean forward and put your head on your desk. Cover your eyes with your hands or rest your head on you hand and close your eyes. Breathe in deeply, and breathe out very slowly. (Practice seven times.) Make a picture in your head of a landscape or some place where you like to go. (This scene can even be discussed and collectively created before the exercise. Let them imagine at some point that they are one with the trees, mountains, lakes, or sky.)What do you want to do there? Do it. Do you see anyone there? What will you do next? What do you see? What do you hear?

Flying Breath

While seated, rest your hands on the floor so that you become a pyramid. Inhale and raise the hands over the head as the fingertips come together, pause. Then exhale the hands down to the floor. Repeat several times. (Bird/animal sounds can also be produced.)

Introducing Breath

Please breathe deeply. Take a deep breath in. This is an inhale breath. Now pucker up your lips like you are blowing out all the birthday candles and breathe out. Take a deep breath in. Making blowing sounds breathe out. Now take a deep breath in...and this time breathe out through your nose with the mouth closed. This is an exhale breath. Breathe in. Breathe out. (Teacher can use an exaggerated ujjai breath for emphasis). Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in and think a happy thought. Breathe out.

Om Breathing

From a standing position inhale the arms out to the side and up over the head, bringing the palms together. On the exhale fold forward saying "om" all the way.

Partner Back Breathing

One student lies in Child's Pose. The other student places their hands on the first student's lower back. First student breathes into second student's hands. First student feels the rising and falling of the back with the breath. Breathe through 7 or 8 cycles. Switch partners.

Pinwheel Breathing

With pinwheel in hand, purse your lips and blow the exhale breath to turn the pinwheel. How slowly can you go? Try to make your exhalation just as long as your inhalation. Count to 4 to start.

Volcano Breathing

Stand with feet together, placing the hands together at the heart. On the inhalation bring the palms together over the head. As the palms and arms extend towards the highest point (at the end of the inhalation before the exhalation) the legs jump apart, the exhalation begins and the arms follow the exhalation from high in the sky, sliding down (extending away from the body). As the hands and arms slide down, the hands are shaking and students are making shshshshshsh sounds. Eventually the hands arrive near the hips, at the point (right beginning the inhalation) the feet jump back together and the palms come together. The palms rise toward the heart and once again ascend to repeat.

Fundamental Tips for Breathing

- Breathe through the nose – unless otherwise specified or unless your nose is stuffed up.
- Define and demonstrate the in-halation and out-halation.
- Explain how the body expands on the inhalation and contracts on the exhalation.

Breath Awareness Techniques (more for 8-10 year olds)

Breathe slowly and deeply

It is like watching the waves splashing on the beach

Where do you feel the breath? Is it in the upper or lower chest?

Where does the breath start? Is it slow or fast? Can you hear the breath? Are your inhalations just as long as your exhalations?

Feel the breath as it leaves your body.

Notice how the more you relax, the exhalation is lengthening.

Notice how your body is moving like a huge ocean wave with the beginning of each new breath.

The Benefits of Yogic Mindful Breathing

- Can relieve asthma symptoms.
- Can minimize negative emotions, i.e., frustration, disappointment, anger, anxiety. .
- Can calm the agitated mind/thoughts
- Breath practices can help us to release, process angry or negative emotions

How can we encourage students to embrace the breath as a friend and use it in challenging situations? How can the breath, yoga, and śavāsana help one to manage emotions, transitions, and stress?

Elementary Śavāsana

Students are encouraged to balance activity with relaxation by allowing the body-mind to rest and recharge. Śavāsana experiences help students learn to release stress physically and mentally. Visualization and imagination experiences stimulate certain centers of the brain that can provide support as they progress toward their life goals.

In today's fast paced busy world, teachers remind students that our bodies are like batteries that sometimes work better once they have been given the opportunity to recharge and rest. In some cases śavāsana may be the only quiet relaxing time of the day. For many to give themselves permission to relax is a huge challenge. For the younger elementary aged child the teacher may need to offer a reward (a sticker, a duty such as ringing a bell, teaching part of the class, etc.) as an incentive to wiggle less and to successfully accomplish the "śavāsana mission".

Stillness encourages the development of self-control and self-regulation. Śavāsana techniques can calm the emotions and nervous system, re-tuning the body, the mind, and the brain. Śavāsana allows students to catch a glimpse of the fullness of who they are and to begin that process of connecting with the Inner One. Śavāsana and meditation are techniques that teach us how to be still and to find comfort in that Inner Presence in times of fear, uncertainty, and chaos. Students are invited to resist sleep and to try to remain awake. (However sometimes sleep just comes...and that's ok).

How

The most popular position for śavāsana is in a supine position with hands relaxed, palms up and the legs resting a little apart. But students can be given choices to rest in any position that feels comfortable: curled up like a dog, face down and prone with hands stacked on top of each other supporting the forehead (crocodile), with legs up the wall (sleeping bats), on their sides (sleeping cats), etc.

Lights may be dimmed, but total darkness is not always recommended. Minimizing interruptions is a prerequisite. Afterwards students may share thoughts and feelings.

Students are invited to mindfully watch the breath and to breathe deeply. A relaxing prānāyāma breath can be introduced such as the exhaling Snake Breath or Belly Breathing or Watching the Ocean Tides Breathing. Then students can simply relax into their own natural breathing pattern.

Śavāsana is facilitated by the teacher and can be combined with imagery, body awareness, breath awareness, music, singing, affirmation (I am calm. I am ok. I am loved. I am valued.) or the samkalpa of the day, chanting, a story, prānāyāma, and other techniques that bring the mind into a deep state of awareness, beyond dreaming or sleeping. When: Although Śavāsana experiences are generally offered at the end of the class, it can sometimes be facilitated at the beginning of a class particularly if it is an after school āsana class when students' may welcome the opportunity to de-stress and transition into the yoga class more effectively.

Why

The regular practice of Śavāsana can bring about pronounced changes in cognitive abilities just by being more physically relaxed and reducing muscle /emotional tension. Śavāsana practice can produce increased concentration and memory abilities as well as reduce anxiety. Many studies are showing that tranquility increased the ability to concentrate and maintain attention. Because Śavāsana has the capacity to reach into the deeper layers (kosas) of the mind, children can see their own inner potential on the "Śavāsana quest".

Śavāsana Prānāyāma

When beginning the śavāsana experience, invite the students to take a deep breath in and a deep breath out. Sometimes you can encourage the elongation of the exhalation with a sigh – ahhhhhh – or a "ha" breath or shalom or "peace".

Once the breathing becomes relaxed, breathe in positive imaginings and breathe out positivity, i.e., breathe in sunshine, breathe out love and caring. Breathe in birds are singing, breathe out smiles and laughter. Students may mentally count their breaths. Breathing in and breathing out equals one round. The breathing is individualized, slow and rhythmic.

Yoga Nidra

This technique takes the mind through a "rotation of consciousness" where the mind is invited to be successively be aware of different parts of the body. Yoga nidra presents a series of rapid images and seeks to relax the body and mind in such a way that information can enter the brain at deeper levels. All the body muscles can be tightened one at a time and then relaxed.

Make a right fist, hold it, let it go. Tighten your left hand, hold it, and let it go.
(Repeat this with the right hand, left foot/leg, right foot/leg. Chest. Lower back. Shoulders.)
Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth.
Scrunch up you face, hold it there, and let it go. Tense the entire body, hold it, and let it go.

Śavāsana

Adventures can include beautiful natural landscapes with lakes and oceans, waves and clouds, mountains and blue sky. Śavāsana cloud watching might include rabbits, dragons, dogs, ogres, horses, and colors. When painting on your Śavāsana canvas, consider a sensory adventure resplendent with sensations of colors, sights, and sounds. Perhaps the students will even select some of the images and experiences be included in the deep relaxation. As you are narrating the śavāsana experience, remember to speak in a slow paced soft and gentle voice, inserting pauses between phrases and sentences. Incorporate stillness and a quiet rhythm into your experience.

The Beach

Imagine that you are lying on the warm sand on the beach. The clear blue sky is above you and the sun is shining. The warm sand is covering your feet very lightly like a blanket. This feels good and is so relaxing. Your feet are relaxing into the earth.

The sand is falling lightly on your calves, gently covering them. They are relaxing into the earth. The sand gently covers your knees and thighs. Your legs are feeling heavy and relaxed as they sink into the earth. The blanket of sand gently covers your chest. Your chest and your back feel heavy and relax as they sink into the earth.

The sand gently falls lightly on your shoulders, arms, and hands. They are feeling heavy and relaxed as they sink into the earth.

Your head is resting on top of this sandy pillow. The sun is shining gently on your face. It warms your skin and your head is feeling heavy and relaxed as it rests on the earth. You can feel your whole face relaxing, your mouth, your eyes, your cheeks, your nose, your forehead, and finally your hair.

Your whole body is relaxed as it sinks gently into the earth. You feel calm. You feel peaceful. The breath flows in and the breath flows out. The breath flows in and the breath flows out. The breath flows in and the breath flows out.

Evergreen Lake

Imagine that you are surrounded by mountains and in the middle of the mountains is a lake. It sparkles as the sun touches it. You can hear the lapping of the waves on the shore. With each breath you can hear and see the waves as they tap the shoreline. Breathing in. Breathing out. Breathing in. Breathing out.

There is a boat waiting for you. You step into the boat and it begins to take you to the island as if guided by an invisible force. You feel safe and calm as the boat gently floats onward. You can feel the movement of the lake in your breath.

The boat draws nearer and finally touches the island. You step out and look around. What do you see? Somebody is coming to greet you and is taking you to a special place. What does it look like? Is it a building, a garden, a cave, a forest?

What do you see? Who is there? What are you doing? Stay here for a while. Explore this place. Your friend is giving you something. What is it? What can you do with it? You thank your friend as you step once again into the boat and it floats back to the shore on the other side of the lake as if guided by an invisible force.

You feel safe and calm as the boat gently floats onward. The lake is sparkling as the sun touches it. You can hear the lapping of the waves on the shore. You are relaxed. The boat is gently rocking. The boat has touched the shore.

Radiant Sunlight

Imagine that the sun is gently shining down and you can feel its soothing warmth. Ahhhh. It feels wonderful. The sunshine is coming down and touching your toes and feet. They are soaking up the sunlight. They feel so warm and heavy. They feel happy and relaxed.

The sunlight is coming down and touching your calves, knees, and thighs. Your legs feel so warm and heavy. They feel happy and relaxed.

The sunlight moves to your hips, stomach and chest. They are soaking up the sunlight. They feel so warm and heavy. They feel happy and relaxed.

The sunlight is coming to your arms, elbows, and fingers. They are soaking up the sunlight. They feel so warm and heavy. They feel happy and relaxed.

The sunlight is coming and touching your chin, mouth, cheeks, nose, eyes, forehead and hair. It feels so warm and heavy. The head feels happy and relaxed. You are feeling relaxed. You are feeling happy. You are filled with the light of the sun.

The Rainbow

Feel the floor beneath your back. Imagine that your back is sending roots down into the ground. Imagine that you and your body are a little island, floating in the sea. There are palm trees growing on your island under the blue sky. Your hair is the forest. Your two eyes are two beautiful lakes. In between your fingers are nice little harbors.

Imagine that you hear the sound of the waves along the beach. The sound of the waves is your breath. You can hear it coming in...and going out...coming in....and going out. You are counting the waves 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8. Now your mind is floating like a cloud above the island and you are looking down at the island. You are smiling and the breeze is blowing your cloudy hair.

As you are floating, you see to a rainbow. You are taking a bath in the colors of the rainbow. What is your most favorite color? Bathe in it. Imagine that your whole body is all that color and floating. Now you are swimming in all the rainbow colors - Orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, gold. Now bathe yourself once again in your favorite color.

You are breathing it in. You are breathing it out. It is filling up your entire body. When you inhale, it comes into your body. When you exhale, it spreads to your arms, legs and trunk. It is spreading to your head and neck. How does your color feel? Soak it up.

And when you get up, feel the freshness of your favorite color.

The Seed

Imagine that you have planted 2 seeds, one in each foot. With each breath, those seedlings begin to grow. Each time you breathe they grow a little further – up to your ankles and knees – up to your hips – up to your waist. The stems and branches reach up towards your tummy and still they are growing. They grow up into your heart – to your throat – to the middle of your forehead. Your seedling is flowering. With each breath, more and more petals unfold. It is blooming tall and majestic surrounded by clear blue sky. Your flower holds its head high in the clear blue sky, waving in the wind, feeling the warmth of the sun. Your head is crowned with this flower.

Someone You Love

Imagine that you are with someone you love, someone who makes you happy. Smile at this person. Then imagine someone that you don't like, someone who causes you sadness. Smile at this person. Then imagine you are looking at yourself. Smile at yourself. Then remember something about yourself that you don't like. Smile at this thing any way. Smile at yourself.

Now take the hand of the person you love, and the hand of the person who makes you sad. Holding hands all three of you are walking together to your favorite place in the whole wide world, a place that makes you feel happy, a place where you feel safe. What do you see there? What do you hear? What are you going to do there?

Tactile Awareness

Feel your body on the floor. Can you feel all the places where your body touches the floor? Your head, your shoulders, your arms, your hands, your back, your legs, your heels.

Now imagine that a butterfly is settling on your right hand. On the top of your head. Now it is touching your neck. On your right shoulder. On your left shoulder. Now on the tip of your nose. On the top of your head.

Now the butterfly flies to a tree that is filled with blooming flowers. There is a flower, falling down to the earth. Oh it is not a flower, but the butterfly. It is flying again. You are under that tree, looking up through the leaves at the clear, blue sky. You are feeling happy. You are happy. You are relaxed.

Śavāsana can last anywhere from 2-10 minutes and may be closed in many ways: with a gentle clapping, a chant, a song, a bell. Invite the students to wiggle their toes and fingers, to stretch their arms and legs. Bring your knees to your chin and roll over on your right side and rest. Then press your arms into the floor to come up to sitting. (See Closings).

Games

Animal Charades

Give everyone a card with an animal picture on it. Ask each student to imagine being that animal and then to move around and do some things that the animal would do. The teacher at some point says "Freeze" and everyone tries to guess the animal. Then during the āsana class following this game, invite everyone to perform a couple of āsana that represent some of the movements that the different students engaged. (Please be respectful of students who may choose not to participate.)

Dogs and Snakes

All the students form a tunnel by performing Downward Facing Dog. Allow some space in between students. Then the very last student assumes the Cobra pose and begins to slither through the dog tunnel, using hands and/or forearms. This student becomes "a dog" when reaching the end of the tunnel and the last person assumes the Cobra pose and begins slithering down. When the teacher notices the students are tiring, s/he may call "The sky is falling" whereby everyone stops whatever they are doing and assumes the "Rock Pose".

Dragon Treasure

One student, the dragon, sits blindfolded in the center of the circle. Students are standing 10' or so away. Students try, one at a time, to tap the head of the dragon without the dragon hearing them. If the dragon hears them, s/he

points at them and lets out a mighty roar. This person needs to go back to the starting point. The student who is successful in tapping the dragon and not being heard becomes the next dragon. (Can also be performed with all students in a line facing the dragon who is pretending to be asleep with a 'treasure' on the floor in front which others are trying to steal.)

Factory Assembly Line

Invite all students into a line. Each one will assume a repetitive movement and sound as if each is a piece of machinery in a factory assembly line. These may include large arm circles, up and down or side to side body movements, flapping elbows, foot stomping, hands clapping, etc. Sounds may include honking, beeping, barking, siren sounds, helicopter or boat sounds, and so forth.

An object (like a ball or whatever) is passed from the one student to another during this process all the way down the line. Movements must be adapted so that the item may be passed from one student to the next.

Group Sculpture

One student creates a sculpture by directing each student's participation as it relates to connecting to another student, i.e., Sara please put your foot on Aaron's knee, Aaron please put your hand on Diego's back, Diego please put your elbow on Katie's shoulder, etc. until everyone is connected. Then the sculptor stands back and admires the sculpture, names the sculpture, and turns around. As the sculptor turns around everyone can let go and the next sculptor begins another work of art.

Spider Web

This is a nice activity for introductions, but may be used any time as well. Students are seated in a circle and one person is holding a ball of yarn, holding the end in one hand and the ball in the other. S/he will say her/his name and two things that s/he really likes to do. Then the student will roll the yarn ball across the circle to another student while holding on to the end. This is repeated over and over until there is a spider web like design, demonstrating the interconnectedness of everyone.

Testing the Mountain

All students stand stiff as boards as the teacher gently pushes each student. Students should lose their balance. Then the teacher says "Mountains Arise". All students engage in Tadāsana. Someone can read aloud all of the Tadāsana alignment cues. Students breathe deeply. Hopefully when the same pressure is applied, students are stronger. The teacher then plays some dance music, but whenever the music is paused – everyone assumes Tadāsana. Students are gently pushed – a few at a time during each 'pause' until everyone has been 'challenged' a time or two.

Up to the Roof

Students may pair up back to back, sitting on the floor with knees bent and flat feet on the floor. At some point the teacher says: 'Elevators up!' All students hook elbows and press their backs against each other e'! And once again students will press their backs together and try to slide down to a squat and to the floor.

'Roofs!' Once completed students then face each other, taking two steps backwards. Extending their arms straight out in front at shoulder height, the palms are joined flat against your partners' palms. With the hands still touching, press them up over your heads forming a slanting rooftop shape. Lean into each other and find the balance that holds you both up. Try to lean so much that you would fall forward if your partner were not leaning into you.

We Have A Situation

The teacher and students brainstorm a list of situational dilemmas that they see often such as: 1) Your parents tell you it's time for bed and you are not finished with something you are interested in, 2) You are pushed on the playground, 3) You are playing with a friend but you both want to do different things. You do rock-paper-scissors and you lose, 4) Your parents tell you that you have to include your sibling in a game but you and your friend would prefer not to, 5) You are lost, 5) You are being approached by a stranger.

Someone spins a bottle in the middle of a circle of students, everyone says: "We have a situation". When the bottle stops and points at someone, s/he lists two choices that s/he could use in that situation. Then s/he becomes the new spinner. The lesson: There are always choices.

Yoga Class Activities

Posture Collages

Have the students do individual drawings of postures.

Body Map

Do a drawing of the body with all the internal organs or pin in cutouts followed by discussions about how the body is affected by yoga. Can be life sized.

Coaching Tips

Poster or personal journal page. Drawings of alignment points, steps to keeping balance, etc.

Distinction Drawings

Have them explore drawing feelings and behaviors, choices and reactions, support and competition, open minded and close minded, judging and appreciating, etc.

Quizzes

Exploring the Body

Have a discussion with pictures about the body, its organs and what they do for us.

- Review what the largest organ of the body is.
- What organs are responsible for: breaking down food, absorbing nutrients, cleaning the blood?
- What organ pumps blood, controls all of your muscles, is responsible for your breath?
- What organ collects and eliminates the waste of the body?

Have An Affirmation Class

- Identify something about yourself that you would like to change or something that you do that causes you sadness. OR, choose some other personal goal that you would like to achieve.
- Write down a sentence about it.
- Change the words of the sentence to be something positive. This can embody a quality that you want to have in order to be successful and usually begins with "I am _____."
- Repeat this to yourself during meditation. When are some times that you would like to use it?

Create your own Affirmations.

Have students spontaneously create an affirmation.

Repeat Basic Affirmations

- I am full of intelligence.
- I choose my actions wisely.
- I am loved and I am loving. I am clear and creative.
- I can focus on one thing at a time.
- I accept and release all of my feelings.
- I always have a choice.
- I release all fear and I feel joy.

Explore Choices

- What āsana and breathing experiences are your favorites? Draw them. Write about how they make you feel.
- List your favorite foods. What foods do you think are the best choices for your personal mind/body growth?
- Think a moment about other students that you know. Which ones do you think are the most supportive of you?
- Make a list of poses you want to learn and practice more. Write them in your journal. Turn them in to your teacher.

Journal

Have a journal for each student. Guide the write entries and draw pictures.

- What does the word yoga mean? How do you feel when you are practicing yoga? Draw a picture of your favorite āsana.
- Write down each of these qualities and the āsana pose that best matches that characteristic for you: fearless, strong, peaceful, courageous, confident, focused, balanced, caring, energized, powerful.
- The early ancient yogis would watch animals and insects. They observed the way that they moved, what they did, and what they ate. Choose an animal or insect that you can watch for a while. Take what you see and construct a yoga pose. What will you name it? Draw it. Teach it to others.

- How do you feel about your thoughts? Are they supportive? Do they ever put you down? Are they negative? Are they creative? If your thoughts would listen to you, how would you like them to be? Can you create an affirmation that might be helpful?
- Draw a picture of two āsana you have been practicing and their names.

Animals and Nature

The early ancient yogis would watch animals and insects. They observed the way that they moved, what they did, and what they ate.

*Make a list of āsana that might be good for this class.

Be Strong

Yoga is a practice that can help students get in touch with their inner courage and outer strength. Today we will be practicing some of those poses and we will explore how you feel when you perform them.

*Make a list of some āsana that would be good for this class.

What Am I Made Of

Bring a poster or handouts of the body's skeleton with the bones labeled. Discuss posture and how it affects the body, how it affects the mind. Review alignment points. Play a game in which students can: Name that Bone.

Homework: Notice people over the next week wherever they are and how they are sitting and/or standing. (People sitting in their cars, students at a computer, someone standing in line, someone watching television, etc. What other postural activities can we observe?) Report back to class what you have seen.

Where is My Center?

Bring 5-6 objects from home and have the students guess where the center is of each object. Design a class with certain āsana that give the students a chance to feel and study where their center is.

*Make a list of these āsana.

What Is Balance?

Invite students to discuss physical balance. What are some examples of losing physical balance? Invite students to discuss mental balance. What are some examples of losing mental balance?

*Introduce some poses that challenge and bring balance.

How Can You Maintain Your Mental Balance?

Invite students to make a list of characteristics or qualities that we all want to have that define mental balance. To demonstrate this state of mind/body bring to class a hanger that is balancing two items or other balancing device. What are some of the yoga experiences we have practiced that might help maintain personal balance? (Breathing techniques, affirmations, āsana, etc.)

*List these.

What About These Feelings - Part I.

Sometimes we feel sad. Sometimes we feel grumpy. Sometimes we see our friends and parents feeling this way. What can we do for ourselves? What can we do for someone else?

*List some āsana and other practices that we can do to minimize these feelings in ourselves and to help others.

What About These Feelings - Part 2.

Everyone is fearful, nervous, or even scared in certain situations. What are some situations that you or someone you know has difficulties with? What are some yoga tools that we can use to lessen fear or to lessen nervousness/anxiety?

*List some of these.

What About These Feelings - Part I3

How do you respond to different situations? How do you feel about the way that you respond to different situations? Have you ever felt that you have gone 'overboard' in your response to a situation? How did it feel? What do you think are some of our choices in how to respond to bad situations? How can we let them go? Can you ever hear your 'inner wisdom' speaking to you in these situations? How can you make better choices and not react?

What Am I Eating?

Bring a food pyramid to class and invite students to talk about different foods. Identify some foods that you like or don't like? Why is that? Have you ever noticed how some foods make them feel? Why is a balanced diet important? Design an āsana program making up different poses for different foods and/or the animals and insects who particularly favor certain foods. What does this quote mean " I am what I eat " ?

*List some of these. Be sure to include a couple of balance poses.

What Are Lines of Energy?

Many āsana have dynamic lines of energy. This is particularly true of standing poses but others as well. Invite the students to explore lines of power or energy in different poses. Can you press evenly into both feet? Can you express the energy you feel with your hands?

Where do you feel the energy in: Mountain, Triangle, Standing Star, Warrior Poses, Down Dog, various Balancing Āsana, Bridge, Shoulder Stand, etc.

What do you do When You Have a Problem?

What are some of our choices? How do you and/or some of your friends solve problems? What yoga tools do you think might be helpful in this process?

Yama and Niyama for Children

Satya

Benevolent Truth: Proper action of mind and right use of words with the spirit of well-being for all.

Developmental Characteristics

Children naturally gravitate towards truth and their youthful minds rely on adults to present factual information and guidance tools that maximize their growth potential.

Verbal communication is key to expressing their intentions, desires and feelings with adults providing a wide selection of options. With Satya children learn to speak with the spirit of kindness. Differentiations between kind words and hurtful words are clearly identified and the positive consequences of each are delineated.

Of equal importance is the inner courage to stand up for what is considerate and compassionate. Initially when young children begin to practice the art of speaking up for themselves, their voices are intensely emotionally charged. As greater confidence is gained, gentle recommendations to express feelings with compassionate consideration can be introduced.

Consistent verbal and physical support empowers children towards placing higher value on themselves, others, and the environment. Children thrive where compassionate verbal expression creates a reality filled with a high standard of integrity. When children act responsibly toward others, their self-respect blossoms. The expression of dishonesty generally emanates from fear and a desire to control outcomes. Children's thoughts and intentions are redirected towards positivity and benevolence as their relationships with friends and the world continue to evolve. In this environment they are empowered with the words and the courage to overcome instinctive fear and self-doubt.

Goals

- To encourage the right use of words and thoughts with the spirit of benevolence in all relationships.
- To be honest and truthful with self and with others.
- To understand the workings of the mind and the value of listening with the heart when faced with difficult choices.
- To awaken the thirst and rationality of making good verbal choices and bring an awareness of learning from mistakes.
- To cultivate inner strength, courage and self-esteem in order to openly oppose hurtful behaviors in self and others as well as speaking courageously.

Objectives

- Creating an environment filled with compassion, understanding and love, devoid of fear.
- Feeling support and approval for making kind choices and using right words through positive reinforcement, i.e., stickers, verbal praise, hugs, pat on the shoulder, "high fives", handshakes, privileges, and smiles.
- Improving personal competency in choosing words and expressing moral courage by standing up for one's rights and the rights of others.

- Providing opportunities to increase skills in speaking with confidence, polite consideration, appropriate tone of voice and understanding the advantages.
- Experiencing the responsibility that comes from using kind and unkind words, their positive and negative consequences
- Expressing the needs of self and others with compassion and respect.
- Practicing the art of external and internal listening.
- Sharing the beneficial understanding of being truthful.

Key Concepts

- Sincerity - What is truth? Why are we kind with our words? What happens when we use mean words? Why is lying unacceptable (or a bad idea)? How do you feel when someone lies to you? How do you feel when you lie to someone?
- Moral Courage - When should we stand up for others? How do we do it? How can we stand up for ourselves? What word do we say when we need help? Have you ever wanted to say 'no' to someone? How can we say 'no' in a nice way? Why is it important to tell friends what we like and don't like?
- Respectful External Listening - Why is it important to listen to what others say? How can we be good listeners? Why is it a good idea to raise our hands and take turns speaking in class? What's the big deal about following directions? Why is the well-being of the group important?
- Respectful Speaking - What is the difference between speaking with a 'sugar bear voice' and a 'grumpy bear voice'? How do we like it when others yell at us? What can we say when others yell at us? Which voice do we prefer? What can we say when others yell at us? Which voice do we prefer? What respectful words do we use when someone does something kind for us? What's the big deal with this? How do compliments make us feel? How can we compliment a friend, parent, or teacher?
- Trustworthiness - What happens when we lie? What happens when we are truthful?
- Integrity/Feelings - How do we feel about name-calling? What feelings come up when someone says bad words to us? What can we say if someone calls us a bad name? What can we say if someone calls us a bad name? What can we say if someone uses bad words with our friend?
- Inner Listening - Who is our Inner Friend? What role does or can your Inner Friend play in your life? How is this Inner Friend nurtured?

Virtues

Sincerity. Integrity. Moral Courage. Trustworthiness. Respect. Moral Rationality.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

- Sincerity - Lies hurt me and my Inner Friend. I choose to say kind words that make my friends happy.
- Inner Listening - I am trying to listen to my Inner Light.
- Moral Courage - Everyone makes mistakes. I need help. I need a hug. I stand up for my friends. You need to be nice to my friend. I'll do better next time. Please use your inside voice.
- Integrity - I am honest with myself. I carry the light of truth. Lying hurts my friends.
- Respect - I am wearing my listening ears. I speak with kindness
- Trustworthiness - When I am honest, my Inner Light shines brightly.

Vocabulary

Goodhearted, honest, inner spark, inner voice, integrity, listen, lying, moral courage, respect, responsible, self-confident, sincere, truthful, spiritedness straightforward, trustworthy, truthful

Asteya

Principle Non-stealing. Not to take possessions that belong to others (physically or mentally), or to deprive others in any way (physically or mentally).

Developmental Characteristics

Impulsive behaviours can surface where children will take something without asking. The family and the community begin to increasingly encourage children to acquire a greater degree of patience, self-sufficiency, delayed gratification, and self-control. Elementary children struggle with unmet needs, desires and social expectations.

With gentle firmness adults slowly introduce social norms, expectations, and responsibilities of living in a community. In the previous yamas, the societal emphasis has been placed on compassion, verbal interactions, and feelings. With the emergence of Asteya, we see an extension to possessions, physical objects, and internal greed. Once the environment is supportive and children begin to comprehend the value of cooperative turn-taking, sharing, generosity, and patience, they realize that most of their needs are met in time. Self-control on the physical level invariably leads to internal control and mental peace of mind.

Goals

- To understand the social system of ownership and proper utilization of objects.
- To experience the concepts of cooperation and generosity.
- To comprehend the fairness of sharing equally and rationally.

Objectives

- Experiencing the benefits of self-restraint with concern for the welfare of others.
- Understanding the advantages and joys of sharing, turn-taking, and patience.
- Rehearsing the skills of giving, turn-taking, and delayed gratification.
- Exploring the necessity for natural consequences and the laws of karma.

Key Concepts

- Respect - How do we get what we want in a considerate manner? How can we politely interrupt others? How can your point be made strongly yet with compassion? Why can't we take something that belongs to another? What happens when we do this? When we hurt a friend, why is it important to 'fix' him/her? How do we fix a friend that we have hurt (physically, emotionally)?
- Patience - Why can't we have everything we want right now? Is it hard to wait? Let's talk about some times when it was hard to wait.
- Taking Turn - Why is turn-taking important? How do we feel when someone doesn't take turns? What can we do when someone gets in front of us in line?
- Sharing - How do we feel when we can't have what we want right away? What can be done? What is cooperation? How do we feel when someone doesn't share with us? What are our choices?

Virtues

Responsibility. Cooperation. Courtesy. Generosity. Patience.

Vocabulary

Big-hearted, charity, cooperation, courtesy, enough, disappointed, fair, favour, frustrated, generous, giving, grabbing, integrity, plenty, safe, secure, self-sufficient, sharing, taking turns, trust.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

- Cooperation - Please, take one thing at a time. Good cooperation skills! Let's be friendly.
- Courtesy - May I use this? Can I have a turn when you're done. Thank you. Excuse me. Can I have one more, please.
- Generosity - I'll be done in two minutes. Giving to others is fun!
- Patience - It can be hard to wait. I can wait for my turn.
- Responsibility - My turn isn't over.

Brahmacharya: Principle of Universal Love

To remain attached to the Supreme Consciousness.

To treat all objects, animate or inanimate as an expression of the Supreme Consciousness.

Developmental Characteristics

Young children have a natural spiritual disposition. As the rational mind gradually develops and becomes increasingly attached to the material world, it is necessary to redirect the awareness toward the Inner Essence. The more children are reminded to apply the inner realization of the divine presence, the more they will be anchored to that peaceful, spiritual ideation vibrating at the central core of every being. This is a sweet and blissful internal feeling. When repeatedly experienced, it can easily be recalled.

Within this principle lies the regulation of sensory desires, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping. Adults support children maintain an appropriate balance in these daily activities.

Emphasis is placed on validating the Divine Presence in all living beings and their dharmic responsibilities. From the yogic perspective every atom, rock, and plant is vibrating with Cosmic Energy. Albeit inanimate and immobile beings exhibit this vibrational quality on an extremely limited level, however on a molecular level there exists life, activity, and movement. Therefore, their participation is honored and respected by children as significant participant of this world.

Goals

- To reinforce the inner knowledge of Divine Omnipresence.
- To express the understanding of Divine external presence in the world.
- To maintain balanced in the expression of the sensory organs and physical desires.

Objectives

- Increasing the awareness of Universal Love in everyone and everything.
- Bringing joyfulness into the environment through increasing exposure to music, art, and beauty.
- Introducing the multifarious forms of the Divine in the creation and their dharmic responsibilities.
- Facilitating an understanding of our interrelationship with all these manifestations.

Key Concepts

- Omnipresence - Where is there a spot where God is not? Who is your closest friend? Why is it important to try to love all living things?
- Dharmic Responsibility/Overcoming Fear - Who are the members of our universal family? Is every living being valuable? What benefits do various animals and plants (whom you may not particularly like) give the world?
- Self-Esteem - What special gifts do we each give to our families, our communities, and to the world? When we make mistakes, does that mean we are bad people?

Virtues

Sweetness. Love. Equanimity.

Vocabulary

Affectionate, amused, beauty, bravery, carefree, cheerful, clarity, delighted, devotion, elated, enchanted, equanimity, good-humored, the Great, humility, imagination, inner light, inspired, joyful, kinship, loving, modest, omnipresent, sweet, together, unity.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

- Omnipresence - There is no spot where The Great is not. Every thing has an inner Shining Light. I love all living beings.
- Dharmic Responsibility - Every being has an inner Shining Light.
- Self-Esteem - It is only with the heart that one has the proper sight. I am moving closer to my Shining Inner Light. Shine, little Light, shine.

Yama and Niyama For Teachers

Satya, Benevolent Truth

- Proper action of mind and right use of words with the spirit of well-being for all.
- Action of mind or use of words with the object of helping others in the real sense.

Building on Ahimsa, the practice of Satya involves living mindfully and introspectively. Being true to your Cosmic Self is the essence of Satya

1. How do we build congruent integrity between what is thought, what is spoken, and what is acted upon?

The spiritual aspirant fearlessly gazes directly at the reflection in the "inner mirror". With an attitude of forgiveness and understanding, fearlessly we glance toward those deeply buried issues that manipulate our lives, reclaiming displaced or denied parts of ourselves.

"You never find yourself until you face the truth." Pearl Bailey

“Honesty is the route toward wholeness.” - Vimala McClure

Social expectations or superiority complex may force us to resort to: Minimizing. Giving excuses. Giving mixed messages. Attacking. Be in denial. Controlling behaviors.

How can we give ourselves permission to be spiritually authentic?

Not causing harm requires staying awake. Part of being awake is slowing down enough to notice what we say and do.
The more we witness our emotional chain reactions and understand how they work, the easier it is to refrain.
It becomes a way of life to stay awake, slow down and notice. Pema Chodron

2. When are hurtful words chosen?

The spiritual aspirant resists the temptation to surrender to the unkind mind and strives to remain one pointed toward the Goal with unswerving determination.

Before you speak, it is necessary for you to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart. - Mother Theresa

When one intends to move or speak, one should first examine one’s own mind and then act appropriately with composure.
Śantiḥdeva

3. Under what circumstances might one not deliver the complete truth of a situation?

Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? (Sufi origin)

4. What ultimately determines whether an action, word or thought is harmful?

5. What is truth?

God is Truth. Gandhi

Seek Him within the earnest zeal with sincerity and love. Then the glittering Entity will emerge within your heart with its Supreme Effulgence. Those who take Satya, that is Parama Purusa, as their shelter are free from fear.” Anandamurti

Affirmations of Satya

- I communicate my thoughts, feelings, and beliefs with kindness in all my relationships.
- I choose to speak and act with sincerity and integrity.

Integrity means to be whole and undivided, to be authentic, as when our true heart speaks through our thoughts, words, and actions. If our experience of inner truth is not made real through our actions, we will lose the power of authenticity and feel the twinge of self-betrayal.” Rob Rabbin

“To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.” Robert Muller

What specific concepts do I personally need to remember in the practice of Satya to be a better teacher?

How can I preserve the all round well-being of my yoga students? How do I support the 3 styles of learning? What should I say to my students? What shouldn’t I say to my students?

Asteya, Responsibility

- Not to take possessions that belong to others (physically or mentally), or to deprive others in any way (physically or mentally)
- To renounce the desire to acquire or retain the wealth of others
- To give up the desire of acquiring what is not rightly one's own

Arguably the obvious application of Asteya is forceful robbery. . However any physical action that involves depriving others of what is due is avoided by the Asteya practitioner – infringing on copyright, taking office supplies, income tax evasion, refusing to help someone when help is needed.

1. But are there exceptions to this, i.e., when an overly self-interested well-to-do government or wealthy corporation is involved?

There are plenty of recommendations on how to get out of trouble cheaply and fast. Most of them come down to this:
Deny your responsibility” - Lyndon Johnson

2. Why do we want more than we have?

3. How are backbiting and mudslinging practices violations of asteya?

4. What are some other forms of mental robbery?

- Withholding = not standing up, loving unconditionally
- Not listening with sincerity, not being straight forward
- Being controlling, manipulative
- Showing disrespect of others' personal boundaries/abilities

What are we stealing when we:

- Read someone else's mail or notes
- Neglect in helping another in need
- Show up late for an appointment/class

Desiring or taking things that do not belong to us sabotages not only our spiritual progress but the progress of others' as well.

5. Once we have identified some unfulfilled desires how do we manage them?

Stages of Non-stealing

1. Not taking what isn't yours
2. Not trying to get more than you need
3. Not wanting more than you need or are given
4. Not accepting more than you need
5. No desires
6. Being Pure Mind

Affirmations of Asteya

- I take responsibility for every aspect of my life.
- I can set limits and I respect the boundaries set by others.
- I choose to joyfully accept my obligations to myself, others, and the Earth.

“To believe in something and not to live it, is dishonest.” Gandhi

“When we obtain what we desire by honest means, our mind remains at peace, free of fear; whereas when we obtain what we desire by dishonest means, we lose our peace of mind and become victims of fear.” - Swami Kripalvananda

What concepts do I need to remember in the practice of Asteya to be a better teacher?

What responsibilities do I have for my students in the spirit of Asteya?

Brahmacarya,

- Universal Love
- To remain attached to the Supreme.

This refers to the practice of perceiving every one and every thing as an expression of the Divine. Not only does this Consciousness exist in every atom of the universe, but there also is a universal dance or rhythm in which all beings are moving toward greater balance – toward the Supreme Goal.

1. What do you want?

2. What can be done with desires/needs?

“To relax, to feel the love in your heart and keep to that as your focus in every situation – that’s the meaning of spiritual surrender.” Marianne Williamson

3. What is the difference between “God is my co-pilot” to “The Supreme Being is my Pilot and Navigator”?

The spiritual aspirant abdicates the driver’s seat, offering the results of all actions and thoughts to the Divine. The driving force of the selfish ego is displaced and transformed.

4. How can we be of the utmost service to each other? What is the end result when we do this?

More dynamic possibilities are achieved that can extend beyond our limited expectations when we shift our mental perspective and identify Who is ultimately in control of our lives.

Affirmations of Brahmacarya

- Today I choose to believe in Love.
- I release the fear that keeps me from feeling safe, supported, and cared for.
- I choose to dwell in my heart.

A Native American elder once described his own inner struggles in this manner: Inside of me there are two dogs. One of the dogs is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time.” When asked which dog wins, he reflected for a moment and replied, “The one I feed the most. Native American saying.

I live not in myself, but I became a portion of all around me...Are not the mountains, waves and skies a part of me and of my soul, as I am, them? Lord Byron

He is your Supreme Friend. You are never alone. He can never remain neutral, seeing your sacrifice. Move according to His wishes and you will be relieved of all sufferings. Anandamurti

Whatever you speak or do, forget Him never. Keeping His Name in your heart – work, remembering, it is for Him. And endlessly active, drift in bliss. Anandamurti

What concepts do I need to remember in the practice of Brahmacharya to be a better teacher?

What kind of teacher-student relationship should be maintained and How? What is appropriate and inappropriate?

Elementary Yoga Goals

To provide tools to develop self-awareness and enhance physical, mental, social, and emotional health and well being. What it means to be a human being and how yoga can help.

Physical Fitness

- To enhance kinesthetic awareness and control with an emphasis on strength and flexibility.
- To introduce the importance of personal and physical balance and coordination.
- To advance the understanding of basic āsana alignment and safety.
- To extend the expression of stretch, hold, and release in the āsana practice.
- To promote an understanding of some physiology/anatomy and how it relates to the āsana practice.
- To invite a deeper ability to center, integrate, and balance.
- To improve the understanding and practice of yogic breathing as it relates to challenging life situations and the mechanics of why and how it works.
- To encourage the knowledge of āsana and other yogic practices as a scientific system of self care.

Mental

- To enhance focus and concentration and its applicability to academic learning, creativity, and personal achievement.
- To promote techniques that will enhance personal, mental, emotional safety.
- To emphasize the importance of inner balance of mind and attitudes.
- To encourage the practice of perseverance, determination, and confidence. Respect and tolerance.
- To support a deeper connection with one's inner self.
- To provide techniques that nurture the practice and importance of relaxation and releasing of tension.
- To apply specific techniques for the management of stress.
- To observe, identify, accept and present techniques for promoting a better balance with thoughts and feelings as well as self analysis.
- To introduce mindfulness, thoughtfulness, and other characteristic values that contribute to mental fitness.
- To introduce mental flexibility, tolerance, and sensitivity.

Emotional

- To enhance the awareness and understanding of feelings of self and others.
- To provide tools for appropriate processing and expression of feelings.
- To encourage the positive development of self esteem and awareness of choices.
- To highlight the importance of stability and self control, self care and stress management.
- To present opportunities for joy, laughter, and success.

Social

- To support personal responsibility and to understand the impact one's actions and contributions.
- To encourage respect for different perspectives and for the well-being of the community.
- To introduce communication and conflict resolution skills.
- To nurture the selection of positive choice for the benefit of one's individual being and for the betterment of the community.
- To increase one's tolerance of conflict and of responding to situations in a creative and compassionate manner.
- To acknowledge that everyone is doing their best and that we are responsible for our own lives.
- To present that every individual (including all living beings) is a whole, unique being, deserving of understanding and respect.
- To present that we are all connected to a greater world community.

Methodology Basics

Class Management

In the six to ten year old yoga class the students will be more participatory and may offer quite a few personal preferences and suggestions during the collective rule making process than preschoolers. You may choose to review the rules at the beginning of each session. Students may even compose a personal contract which they may sign. When students are actively participating in this process, they are more likely to honor it, to feel a keener sense of membership in the class, and appreciate the shared relationship of mutual respect.

Raising one's hand before speaking is a habit that these children will more readily understand than the preschooler who may not have this practice fully integrated. Handraising is more of a daily school ritual for six to ten year olds.

Students still enjoy some acknowledgment, reward, or appreciation. Stickers, comments, special tasks, leadership opportunities can be helpful tools.

A Sample Elementary Schedule

- 5 minutes of stillness.

To assist the transition of students from outer attention to inner awareness. This encourages the yoga practice of becoming centered, peaceful, and focused. The practice can be a useful tool in the management of stress reduction, self control, and inner attention.

- 5-10 minutes of conversation

To facilitate a compassionate 'connection experience'. It can also include concepts, information, and observations of the needs of the student community and may involve some daily intellectual and expansive exploration of developmentally appropriate concepts of living within a yoga context. This may include metaphor, activities, books, assignments, knowledge, feelings, musings, and, of course, random general sharing.

- 5 minutes of warm ups and other mind/body preparations.

To promote the 'coming together' of the group. These can include games, kinesthetic experiences, and so forth.

- 15-20 minutes of yoga.

To 'knit' everyone to the experience, please begin with some breath awareness, chi gong, or other awareness that connects one with the inner breath, the fullness of 'being'. 5 minutes of partner or playful group work can be shared and/or other cooperative game experiences Sprinkle in some fun!

- 5 minutes of rest and visualization.

To more fully integrates the body/mind. Rest and recharge. These activities slow down the brain waves, activating the right hemisphere of the brain. They enable students to more deeply absorb the experiences of the day as well as enhancing greater self awareness.

- 5-10 minutes of creative and thoughtful activity.

To engage the experiences of the day through creative self expression (drawing, writing, journaling, etc.).

Some Language Cues For the General Class

- Remember to breathe deeply.
- Get grounded.
- Lengthen your spine.
- Check your personal alignment.
- Respect your edge.
- Keep your attention on your self.
- Feel your pose growing from the inside out.
- Notice what is bubbling up from within and let it go.
- Breathe.
- Listen to your breath.
- Let go of all thinking and let it be.
- Send a color through your body on the exhale breath.
- How does your body feel?
- What are you thinking about?
- What feelings are you having?

Elementary Interactions

As students progress through six to ten years of age, the intellectual and communication capacities become greatly enhanced. Many of the principles of teacher-student interactions that are applicable to the preschooler are extended to this age group. Here are a few pointers:

DON'T tell students to calm down or feel that the practice has to be quiet.

DO encourage laughter and loud voices from time to time. This a wonderful stress reliever and it's just plain fun!

DON'T over use negatives such as 'don't', 'no', 'wrong'.

DO focus on phrasing instructions or corrections in the positive. Redirect.

DON'T dictate or order the students around

DO invite children to participate with "please", "let's try this", and/or "now we're going to...."

DON'T over-talk.

DO keep instructions simple.

DON'T be critical

DO identify the gifts of each student. Acknowledge and complement as they are still sensitive to criticism.

DON'T be distant.

DO tell the students that you care. "I care about you." "I want you to be safe." "I missed seeing you last week." "I want you to be successful." "I care about your feelings."

Teaching Methodology Pointers

Ask yourself and explore the following questions:

- Who am I being?
- What feedback am I receiving and how am I responding to it?

- What do I want to share?
- What do I love? What am I passionate about?
- What do I feel would be helpful for them to learn and think about?
- How can I turn some of these ideas into a theme?

- What will be fun for them?
- How can I have more fun?

- Am I being developmentally appropriate on all levels?

- How can I weave into the yoga what is important for them today?
- What yoga practices and attitudes can I share to accomplish this?

- What sort of structure and ritual will benefit this group?

- How can I help them to understand the concept of balance to support themselves and to carry with them throughout the day?
- How can I engage and guide their focus and build a more positive and compassionate outlook?

- How can I build connections between the students within the class, within their community, and the world?

- How can I facilitate more verbal and caring interaction?
- How can I involve them in learning in a nonjudgmental manner?

- Am I authentic?

Other Essentials

Sensory Integration and Special Needs

There are many aspects of the yoga and āsana practice that can minimize learning challenges for some students. These include ADD, ADHD, dyslexia, developmental delays, nervous and endocrine system issues, and many others. Specialized yoga practices have been found to increase attention and focus, build self esteem, create flexibility in the skeletal system, enhance better sleep patterns, release overactive energy, digestion and elimination issues, asthma, providing greater harmony with some physiological and psychological imbalances, improving hormonal secretion, and improve test taking abilities by reducing anxiety and improving some aspects of memory retrieval.

There are also emotional imbalances that can benefit from yoga practices and the redirection of defective thinking as well as aggressive and disruptive tendencies. Some of these practices include kiirtan, chanting, yoga nidra, śavāsana, prānāyāma, karma yoga (opportunities for service) and other yoga activities related to yama and niyama. Because the pressure to achieve and conform can be quite overwhelming, relaxation experiences are particularly beneficial as well as simple prānāyāma. Details regarding these practices and their therapeutic effects will be covered in more detail in the next level of Yoga Teacher Training for Children.

You may notice that certain student may be hypo or hyper sensitive to certain sensory stimuli. These include touch, sound, visual, and certain movements. Teachers may see a poor sense of body/spatial awareness (clumsiness). Some students may seek out and engage in extreme sensory experiences sometimes referred to as sensory seeking. These include crashing to the floor, engaging others constantly with their hands, or their voice, etc. Teachers provide students with the experiences that give them what their bodies/nervous systems are demanding, providing a therapeutic environment. If they have 'busy hands', give them yoga that will satiate their hands. If they have 'busy legs', give them yoga that will satiate those busy legs. If they have 'busy mouths', chant like crazy!

Depending upon what you are observing, some activities that they may enjoy might be:

- Crashing (or falling to the ground)
- Somersaulting
- Rocking back and forth
- Rolling lengthwise like a pencil
- Kicking, stomping.
- Flexing and extending the legs.
- Walking legs up the wall.
- Shaking, wiggling.
- Crawling, climbing.
- Animal 'walking': Be a crab, bear, dinosaur.
- Bouncing, jumping, galloping.
- Holding up the wall (pressing into the wall) with the hands, back, hips, shoulders, feet.
- Shake those sillies out.

See: Yoga for the Special Child by Sonia Sumar

Yoga is a comprehensive therapeutic system that can provide a better balance for the total personality of the child.

Stress

Young children have countless stressors in their lives, i.e., chronic illness or death of a loved one, betrayal of a friend, academic challenges, random acts of verbal or physical violence. Some stress arises from their thoughts. Some arise from various influences in their environments at home, school, and neighborhood. Divorce is second only to death as a significant source of stress in children's lives.

External and/or internal stimuli can cause a physiological and/or psychological response that can knock children off balance. These can cause the stimulation of a fight or flight response. The sympathetic nervous system can activate the release of stress hormones and neurotransmitters that send cues to the heart, circulation, lungs, metabolism, immune system and skin to resolve the threat.

Physiological responses can include an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. Respiration can speed up and remain shallow. The spleen can release red and white blood cells and blood can be diverted to the skin. Logical memory can become blocked and concentration compromised. All of these symptoms are essential for the body to flee from the perceived threat.

If stress is prolonged or continues for too long, there exists the increased risk for prolonged illness. To manage stress, positive thinking techniques can be employed, healthy outlets can be provided for the proper management of frustration and disappointment, positive and productive self talk including affirmations can be utilized.

Children cannot always control the stressors that manifest in their lives, but yoga teachers can offer tools that can support them in managing their stress a little better. Positive strategies can include: a healthy diet, regular āsana practice, regular exercise, minimizing stimulants and drugs, affirmations, noticing negative self talk, and being in the frequent company of supportive friends.

So many young children are attempting to manage incredibly high levels of stress. Āsana practice can support the process of unblocking and releasing emotions. Yoga techniques, such as śavāsana, chanting and simple breath awareness techniques can minimize the physiological and psychological affects of stress.

Trouble Shooting

- We can't learn the new pose until you can control your body,(control your speech).
- Please show me how you can control your bodies.
- Let me hear you say: I am controlling my body. I am controlling my voice.
- Can we please keep the volume down in our voices, thank you.
- I'm sorry there are too many students talking. Let's see –Tina has her hand raised. Tina, what did you want to say?
- I'm sorry if you do not want to participate in the class flow, you may move to the sidelines and rejoin us when you are more ready. If a child is "sidelined", s/he is welcome to return when there is a readiness/willingness to self regulate. If problems continue, it may be necessary for you to conference with a teacher or parent. You may choose to consider the 3 strikes and you are out rule.
- I can see that Toby does not feel like participating at the moment. Toby if you want to sit over here for a bit, that's ok.

Children will be children. Even at this age there will be restless wiggling, more than one talking at a time, shouting, etc. Patience, "inner listening, and consistency are key to minimizing trouble shooting.

Self Assessment: Ask yourself:

- What are you as a teacher doing or not doing?
- Does this child have an unmet need that I can take care of?
- Is it time for me to take a deep breath?
- How am I feeling?
- Do I need an inner attitude adjustment?
- Does this child need an opportunity to ground him/herself?
- How can I give that to her/him?
- Set a group intention with the students? Mention some possibilities. Weave this into the class.
- What is your personal system for dealing with anger, disappointment, or frustration in a class situation?

Yoga Rules for Elementary

1. Please remove your shoes when entering the room.
2. Listen and follow teacher instructions.
3. Patiently raise your hand and the teacher will call on you to speak.
4. Finish assignment activities and return on schedule.
5. Respect safety of yourself and others always.
6. Please be kind, honest, and respectful.

Consequences

1. You may receive a first warning.
2. On the second warning you will be asked to "Take 5". This will be in the form of a prone restorative pose or meditative pose with eyes closed.
3. A note may be sent to your teacher.
4. A conference with your teacher and parents may be arranged.

Rewards

1. You may enjoy use of the yoga props prior to class.
2. You will learn new, fun, and more challenging āsana.
3. You will have an opportunity to lead some āsana sequences in class.
4. You will be able to assist the teacher in facilitating the class.

Student Printed Name

Age

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Middle School: Yoga for 11 - 14 Year Olds

- What developmental milestones and characteristics would be helpful to remember?
- What is physically difficult? What is socio-emotionally challenging?
- How do these factors affect the activities you want to implement?
- What are some realistic expectations of what these students can do?
- What are some things that they cannot do?
-

General Introduction

During the ages of 11-14 years, students are experiencing the second largest stage of physical development in a life span. Along with extensive body growth and physical changes, students are entering full-blown puberty and the corresponding increase in hormone production that can cause temporary imbalances. Secondary sexual organs become increasingly manifest as well.

While rationality is becoming more advanced, irrationality can have its moments in the sun as well. The left side of the brain concedes its dominancy to the right side.

Students commence that passionate exploration of: Who am I? Personal preferences and idiosyncrasies are more clearly defined.

The young tween and early adolescent frequently experience feelings of vulnerability and over-sensitivity about personal appearance. Occasional elevated emotionality may be expressed along with moodiness and difficulties with emotional regulation. Students may lean towards egocentrism and self-preoccupation as they seek to navigate the somewhat choppy waters of this stage of human development.

Āsana, prānāyāma, yama & niyama, as well as other yogic practices can offer some stability for middle schoolers. Teachers support students in guiding their awareness and development towards a deeper inner connection and understanding of their full potential.

Middle School Mechanics

The middle school aged child rises far above the elementary child in virtually all areas of competency. As they enter this new landscape of adolescence, they possess the ability of increased focus and concentration along with a passionate drive that may lead to competitiveness. The teacher is challenged to produce healthy and safe options for more advanced physical expression of āsana and of accommodating the diverse interests of these students.

The desire for more chanting and kiirtan (more rhyme, rhythm, and repetition) is vibrantly alive. Conversation and discussion honoring mutual respect and diversity of various opinions and thought processes can prove a bit tricky for the nonjudgmental compassionate teacher who strives to acknowledge freedom of expression of all participants and invites introspection and reflection through asking open-ended questions and offering yogic perspectives.

Group and partner creative experiences are extended with awareness of the benefits of some gender separation. Collaborative brainstorming is supported as well as allowing issues to sometimes “marinate” for a week before revisiting them. Some issues may be left open for further exploration, rather than “tying up everything nice and neatly”.

The middle school student may desire a more in-depth understanding of emotional/hormonal development and the yoga practices that can provide some respite from the developmental storms of this age. Prānāyāma, positive self-talk, kiirtan, chanting, meditation, and other yoga tools may give students support as well as conflict resolution options, journaling, and opportunities for creative expression.

Yoga activities may focus on the moral dilemmas found in the mindful practice of Yama and Niyama as they embark on the journey through the landscape of self- knowledge and spiritual self exploration while establishing compassionate connections with Self, all beings, and the Earth.

Accessorize

The 10-14 year old child is inclined toward defining one's self through clothing, body alterations and other devices. Accessories such as those one might find in an adult yoga studio would be helpful. It may even be possible to borrow yoga balls or other props from a nearby studio (while perhaps distributing some of the studio's flyers as well).

Affirmations and Positive Approach

Teachers continue to "pepper" āsana classes with affirmational and positive self talk options to fortify the all-round "constitution" of the students. Affirmation activities such as those introduced in the elementary module can be applied with this age as well.

- Invite students to list 5 positive characteristics about themselves. Assure them that their answers are private. Please use only positive language. Then invite students to list 5 positive experiences they have encountered in the yoga class and finally 5 things they have learned in your class. When the time is up. Let the students read what they wrote. Some may choose to share with the class and some may not. Tell them to keep the paper and read it before doing their homework, before quizzes and tests and any time they feel uncertain about their class work.
- I am strong. I am in control. I can do this. I am responsible. I am focused.

Positive self-talk during āsana practice can help develop mental strength as can the positive visualization of outcomes.

Āsana

The middle school student experiences stress, tightness, muscle strain, and fatigue. Warm ups that include joint rotations, flexion and extension, and so forth may assist them in their physically rigorous lifestyle. Āsana injuries may be more common during adolescence as students may strain or over-effort in the poses. Consequently warm ups are crucial to assist them in transitioning "out of the ego" as well as implementation of movements preparing the six directions of the spine.

Students enjoy longer vinyasa experiences such as the surya and candra namaskar series. These flows may be practiced for as much as four repetitions or more and can be practiced dynamically or statically. Their bodies can demand a more active āsana flow. Āsana that can help regulate menstrual as well as supporting hormonal balance (for teen boys and girls) are considered. Many of the major āsana are introduced with some advancement, i.e., pascimottanāsana, dynamic bhujangāsana, dhanurāsana, sarvaṅgāsana, cakrāsana. These can be practiced with up to 8 repetitions with the exception of sarvaṅgāsana and twists. These are practiced with fewer repetitions. This is also applicable to balance poses.

Generally the āsana practice is more dynamic than static. Perfection is not demanded and there is limited correction and assisting. Alignments can be corrected with gentleness and are verbally administered. Students may be invited to lead or co-teach vinyasas. More alignment cues may appear, i.e., Press through your sitting bones to lengthen the spine. Press the top of the head and the tailbone away from each other. Scoop the tailbone in. Engage the abdominal muscles without making them hard. Lift the chest. Roll the shoulders and the top of the arm bones toward the back of the body. Draw the shoulder blades onto the back and lift the chest, etc.

Students can be invited to research (in yoga books, videos, television programming, yoga websites, online yoga classes, youtube) warm ups, āsana, other yoga practices and their benefits.

Middle schoolers will want to know how āsana are affecting the body and other yoga information. Some will have a proclivity toward fitness. They can collectively participate in constructing their very own Yoga Class Tips Information Sheet regarding time, place, preferred type of clothing, bathroom needs, empty stomach, and other āsana tips, i.e., no straining - for newcomers as well as Tips for Personal Practice at Home.

As mentioned in the elementary module, they may have their own journals and/or notebooks for writing āsana names, descriptions, drawing pictures, and tracking āsana benefits.

These students may request a little more anatomy and physiology knowledge.

The ease or difficulty with which an individual is able to perform them can be introduced as a metaphor for life. Physical (or mental) challenges with the poses are addressed in a positive way and lend themselves to developing a method of looking at other life challenges. Students can practice focusing their thoughts and developing a stronger self-image by embracing the grace and challenges of life without taking defects and mistakes so personally.

Greater variety can be introduced depending upon student interest such as: desk āsana, eye exercises, partner and whole group poses, creative activities, games, compassionate interaction, conflict resolution options, and moral dilemmas.

Bandha are “locks” that are applied to particular areas of the body. These direct the prana and apana. They can enhance energetic equilibrium, increase the ability to focus, and positively impact the entire body-mind. They are wonderful tools for maintaining postural alignment.

There are 3 main bandhas:

- Jalandhara bandha – the neck lock
- Uddiyana bandha – the diaphragm lock
- Mulabandha – the pelvic floor lock

When all 3 locks are applied together with the correct posture and concentration, it is called the Mahabandha or great lock.

Mudrā is a technique of creating energetic pathways with the hands. The position may lock and/or guide energy flowing throughout the body and directly impacts the brain. Every portion of the hand/body possesses an associated reflex in the brain. Each finger and point of contact connects to a part of the brain representing various emotions and behaviors. The hands and fingers can become a “keyboard” for inputting a particular spiritual desire or goal. Touching the thumb to each fingertip creates a specific pattern or circuit and seals the mudrā. Mild pressure can be applied.

The thumb may represent the personal.

The index finger – wisdom

Middle finger – focus

Ring finger – energy

Little finger – connection

Not all mudrā apply to the fingers and hands alone. Shambhavi mudrā, for example, where the eyes are turned up to look through the center of the forehead, stimulates the ajna chakra.

Assisting

Occasionally middle school students engage in the unsafe expression of āsana. Every teacher cultivates a firm yet compassionate approach to these situations. An awareness of the liability hazards associated with touching students is carefully reviewed. Consider verbal cues or demonstrating misalignment yourself so students can see the differences between incorrect and correct alignment issues and what the long term affects can be. Assists can be a splendid opportunity to introduce more anatomy and physiology background.

Chanting

Any sort of chanting is welcomed with this age group even the simple elementary chanting. Chanting experiences can be enhanced (if you dare) with musical instruments. Bringing someone in to teach a bit about drumming and or percussion can be quite exciting. Rhythmic movement with legs and feet (as in the lalita dance) and or hand mudrā can be introduced.

Teachers can introduce students to the simple om chant as well as the more complicated aum chant. Chanting can be done seated, standing, prone (a little challenging), and supine (as in śavāsana). Simple chanting can be assimilated into the āsana practice.

Three Part Chanting Vinyasa

Construct a 3 āsana part vinyasa and chant aaaaah during the first part exhalation, oooooo during the second part exhalations and mmmmmm during the third part exhalation. Use this as your opening and/or closing sequence.

AUM Tree Āsana Chanting

Break Vrksāsana into 4 parts.

- With the ball of the foot into the earth and the hands (at the sides of the hips) pointed towards the earth, chant: aaaaaaaa (as in car)
- With the hands in anjali mudrā at the heart chakra, chant: oooooo (as in door).
- With the hands in anjali mudrā resting on top of the head, chant: uuuuuu (as in moon).
- With the hands reaching up to form branches with fingers flickering like leaves, chant: mmmmmmm. Hands may flicker all the way down back into the first tree position.

Chanting with Diversity

Include in the chanting practice the sounds of many languages, such as the following words that reflect the word “peace” in many languages. Chanting can include many of these in one session or choosing a different one or two for each class. These can also be collectively and slowly chanted while practicing śavāsana (four or five times or more).

Salaam=Arabic. Pengon=Cantonese. Shalom=Hebrew. Shanti=Hindi. Mir=Russian. Paz=Spanish

Class Themes

Class themes, if any, are based on developmentally appropriate student need and interest. Some story yoga may be utilized. The teacher may research literature being studied by the students. Ask students about their interests, and/or bring in some age appropriate mythology.

Closing

Some of the closings in the elementary module can be applied here. Be sure to bless them well!

A Sample Closing

- Slowly move your fingers. Slowly move your hands.
- Slowly move your feet. Roll to your right side and push yourself up with your hands.
- Open your eyes. Let us sing OM together.
- Om, Om, Om.
- Now it is time to say: ‘namaste’or....
- Now it is time for all yoga friends near and far to say: ‘namaskar’.

Design

The teacher designs the class to meet the perceived needs of the students. Many yoga tools can be deployed affirmation, bandha, group/partner yoga, service, story yoga, mantra āsana benefits, chanting, music, prānāyāma (what it can do for you), mudrā, meditation (how does it feel), dhristi, yogic practices (fasting, observing silence, personal discipline, vegetarian/vegan diet, etc.), philosophy, and lifestyle

Warm ups

Each item can be practiced 3 or more times.

Ankle bending. Ankle rotation. Knee bending. Squat and rise. Hand clenching.

Wrist bending. Wrist rotation. Elbow bending. Shoulder rotations. Neck warm ups.

Eye movements. Palming.

Yoga Philosophy

Introduction of Yama and Niyama, 8 Fold Path (astanga yoga), and other yoga details can be skillfully interwoven here and there into āsana classes or there can be a more intentional focus in the form of handouts, etc.

Sanskrit

Throw in a little Sanskrit from time to time.

Meditation/Śavāsana

Be aware that students may verbalize their feelings and visual images better after a śavāsana or meditation experience.

Students' interests and life challenges guide the intention of every class.

Middle School Interactions

Just as in any student yoga class the teacher seeks to attune to the emotions, mental processes, and needs of the students and to give them a sense of the feeling grounded. Ask students: How does this feel in your body? Do you notice any change in your thoughts?

Intuit as a teacher: How you can build and strengthen their Inner Courage and enhance greater understanding?

Allow enough spaciousness in the class to help them find the courage to express their emotions. The teacher invites positive and compassionate problem solving through the stillness, movement, focus, and energy generated in the āsana practice.

Lifestyle

Teens want some flexibility to be able to think and act according to their own nature. They are yearning to know what the relationship is between breath, thoughts, and behavior. Curiosity abounds concerning the questions: Who am I? Who is the watcher of the thoughts I am thinking? When students begin the practice of learning to listen to the Inner Voice, they can make healthier life choices.

When encouraging interactions, it is not uncommon for the names of Jesus, God, Buddha, and other spiritual terminology to surface. The teacher is open to differences, open to diversity, open to the acceptance of various thoughts and feelings without judgment. Depending upon the setting, it is often inadvisable for the teacher to prescribe to one ideology over another, but to acknowledge all.

The teacher is always listening to determine student personal interests, passions, and to tap into these in the yoga class in some manner. In this way potential service projects or ways to ease the suffering of others will emerge. Look for those opportunities to discuss selfishness vs. selflessness.

The teacher may find in the course of facilitating a yoga class that some application of emotional First Aid may be necessary. This may include guiding conversation that has to do with the basic psychology of emotions. Students are invited to share the various techniques that they are using to cope with anger, including what are some of the issues that make them angry? The teacher honors how everyone is triggered differently and may point out how interesting it is that everyone has different issues. All "issues" are validated no matter how insignificant they may appear.

How can we deal with these concerns in a compassionate and respectful way? Why would we want to do this? How can we make matters worse? How can changing the breathing, 'changing channels', or simply walking away work or not work?

Archetypes can be woven into a theme, a story, or students can be invited to demonstrate a different archetype that describes how they are feeling today. (Archetypes are listed in Śavāsana Section). The archetype may be a posture that is held or it may move around on the mat. Students may also be angry statues that make sounds but do not move off their mats. Students may be encouraged to let their anger out, without harming anyone. This allows children to explore anger in a way that may assist them in integration.

Changing Channels

(These exercises may be done as an addendum to meditation or during śavāsana or as a Time In Exercise during the class.) Students may be invited to close their eyes and notice: What are you thinking about? Notice what is on your mind.

Imagine that it is winter and you have your winter coat, gloves, and hat on. You are having a snowball fight with a friend. (Continue elaborating and sprinkling some silence in this scenario for 1 minute. Then change the channel.)

You are on the beach with your swimsuit on. The sun is shining. You are walking on the sand and playing with the waves as they come in and go out from the beach. (Continue elaborating and sprinkling some silence in this scenario for 1 minute.)

Invite students to notice how they are feeling, emotionally and physically in the body. Then ask the students about when would be some helpful times to practice this in their daily lives? Hopefully someone may mention...when I am anxious....when I am afraid....when my mind keeps thinking of something negative over and over....

Changing channels scenarios can sometimes include something a little frightening and something pleasurable. Can you think of a few more opposite Changing Channels scenarios to narrate for the students? Students may also write or narrate some scenarios.

Middle School Prānāyāma

The mind tends to follow the breath. So one of the keys to controlling the mind is controlling the breath. How can your yogic breath support you throughout the day? When they are frustrated, disappointed, angry, fearful, upset, trying something new, essentially whenever one is feeling "off center".

How does breath awareness affect your mental state of mind? Students are reminded of how yogic breathing and breath awareness relaxes and rejuvenates the body-mind. Healthy breathing patterns can increase energy and release built up tension.

Simple prānāyāma practices are supported. Due to the physical, emotional, and hormonal developmental challenges of this age, alternate breathing and/or nadi shodhana are often not recommended.

By finding select times throughout the class when the group will synchronize their breathing together in a relaxed manner, a sense of community and safety is established.

Full Lung 3 Zone Breath Awareness

Stand or sit with hands resting against the sides of the body at the level the very lowest portion of the rib cage, including the navel. Can you feel the ribs expanding and contracting? While exhaling, press the hands gently. Inhale. Then on the exhale breath, press the hands gently while slightly leaning forward from the waist. Release. Practice 3 times.

- Then bring your hands up a bit towards the middle of the ribcage (near the diaphragm) and repeat. Fold slightly forward on the exhalation.
- Finally place your palms on the upper part of the chest (by the collarbone) and repeat.
- Practice with awareness of all three zones and on the exhalation, express a "ha" while forwarding folding further and keeping the head down.
- While inhaling, lift the body slowly up and once again. Talk about the alignment and perhaps demonstrate "cannonball head syndrome".

Three Zone Variation

Repeat this exercise but substitute another vowel sound instead of the 'ha'.

Finger Tapping/Lifting Prānāyāma

Invite students to sit in a comfortable seated position. This can be practiced kneeling or sitting cross-legged. Hands are resting on the knees or thighs. While inhaling, raise one finger at a time (on the right hand) up then down until each finger has had a turn. While exhaling, repeat with the left hand the same up and down tapping with each of the left fingers. Inhale on the right. Exhale on the left. Inhale on the right. Exhale on the left. This can be repeated five times.

Middle School Śavāsana

The teacher facilitates Śavāsana experiences that assist students in the practice of focusing their thoughts and developing stronger self-image. Extended sleep deprivation can affect mental performance, muscle control, and mood. The inability to have restorative sleep can contribute to health problems. Adequate sleep is vitally important for mental and emotional health.

With the increased stimulation that middle schoolers receive every day, deep restorative sleep is becoming increasingly difficult for some. Sleep disorders among students in this age group are on the rise. This can significantly impact their behavior and academic success in school. Many of the śavāsana techniques mentioned in this module can be practiced at home in order to bring this restorative peace to these students, giving the nervous system permission to relax more efficiently. Śavāsana and the relaxation response is the antidote to de-stressing the overloaded immune and nervous systems.

Below are some different types of śavāsana experiences. When implementing a śavāsana experience, the teacher observes the students' breathing and assesses how they are doing in order to determine the time length of śavāsana.

Student input to this experience can be encouraged. They may be asked what images they would like to have in their closing story. While trying to keep imagery peaceful, sometimes images of conflict are important and have deeper meaning. Ask students how the resolution will occur. Include symbols or archetypes in your creative śavāsana visualization! Be imaginative. The teacher supports the student use of imagination by allowing some stillness or "pauses" within the story so that the children have time to explore their visions.

Invite students to sit or lie down. Covering them with a blanket is a nice caring touch when possible. Ask them to close their eyes and to breathe more deeply, more slowly. Don't be too surprised if the first few sessions are only 30 seconds to 1 minute in length. Relaxation in a group may require some practice.

Visualizations

The visualization aspect of the śavāsana experience is meant to be relaxing and soothing and to support students in coping with stress. Calming music can also be very restorative. Sometimes in the course of introducing guided imagery, it is thoughtful to allow students to "fill in the blanks" or have some input in the experience so that it may be more personalized, i.e., take them to a special place and then let them continue the experience. Perhaps they open a note that talks about some special experience or encounter at school, in the community, or at home. Perhaps their Inner Teacher or Inner Advisor is walking down the path towards them with a special message.

Ask questions like: Someone is walking towards you. Notice the facial expression of this person. Or there is an animal coming to greet you. How is it moving? What color are its eyes? By imposing some open-endedness, you can support students in accessing subconscious information that may be helpful and deeply powerful. Students can begin to experience their own inner guidance abilities and empower their own intuition and inner connection.

Sequential Progressive Relaxation

This technique allows students to experience the difference between tensing and relaxing specific muscle groups. This increases the awareness of the body and enables them to have a deeper release and relaxation experience.

Bring your attention to your feet. Now tense all those muscles in your feet. Hold the muscles tightly for 1.2.3.4. Now release all those muscles in your feet. They are relaxed.

Bring your attention to your legs. Tense all the muscles in your legs. Feel your legs lift right off the floor with all your muscles tensed. Hold them there for 1.2.3.4. Then release your legs to the floor. They are relaxed.

(Continue the same narrative for the belly, back, arms and hands (can be lifted), shoulders, face...
Now your entire body is relaxed. Please take 3 nice long, slow breaths. 1.2.3.

Scripted Visualizations Sound Awareness

Please lie down on the floor in śavāsana. Allow your body to relax completely. Take a long, deep, inflowing breath. Release a long, deep, outflowing breath. Inflowing breath. Outflowing breath. Inflowing breath. Outflowing breath. (Pause with the talking for a bit)...Relax completely and close your eyes.

- Feel your body on the floor.
- You are here. It is Monday. Listen to the sounds around us.
- Imagine a large circle is surrounding you. (Make the sound of hands rubbing.)
- Take this sound and place it on your large circle.
- Remember the sound.
- Now make another circle inside the large circle.
- (Make the sound of stepping feet.)
- Place this sound on the second circle.
- Remember that sound.
- Now make a third circle inside the second circle.
- (Make the sound of clicking with the tongue.)
- Place this sound on the inner circle.
- Now remember all three sounds. Make them come alive on their circles.
- In the center of all of these circle is a point...This point is your breath.
- Listen to your breath.

Counting Śavāsana

I'd like for everyone to please lie down on your backs with your feet completely relaxed. Place your arms a little bit away from your body on the floor with the palms facing up. Give your arms permission to be completely Let your entire body to be completely relaxed. Let your body feel heavy like a statue. Feel the heaviness. Feel the releasing. Feel the relaxation.

Feel the stillness of your body. Feel your breath, breathing your body. Can you feel the rhythm in your breath. Breathing in. Breathing out. Begin to count your breaths. Remember that the breath flowing in and the breath flowing out is one breath. Breathing in and breathing out is one cycle. (You may even want to demonstrate this prior to śavāsana so everyone is absolutely clear what one cycle is.) Today let's do 12 cycles.

Inner Mountain

Find a comfortable seated position and gently close your eyes. Picture a mountain. Notice everything you can about this mountain. How tall is it? What is its shape? What colors do you see on the mountain? What trees and animals reside there? Notice how calm, strong, steady, majestic, and wise it is.

Now imagine that you are this mountain. You are strong, steady, majestic and wise. Here come the strong winds, snow, rain, and sun. In bad weather and good weather, you are the mountain. You remain the same. Your foundation is rooted deep into Mother Earth and you are unshakable.

Sit like the mountain. Trust in your foundation. Feel your inner strength that can carry you through whatever comes. Feel the breath flowing in. Feel the breath flowing out. The mountain watches everything come and go. Feel the fullness and confidence of the mountain.

Take a big breath in and let it out with a sigh – ahhhhh. Wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch and take another deep, energizing breath. Open your eyes and breathe normally – strong calm, and focused.

The Inner Friend

It is time for deep relaxation. Find a comfortable position on the floor. Close your eyes. Feel the air coming in through your nostrils and filling up your body. Feel the air leaving through your nostrils and leaving your body. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. With every breath you are more and more relaxed. Breathing in. Breathing out. Nice and quiet. Great job!

Imagine that you have an Inner Friend. This friend knows and cares about you more than anyone else in the world. This friend is someone you can always trust. This friend cares about your feelings and can help you with any problem.

Invite your Inner Friend to come and visit you. In what shape does your Inner Friend appear to you? Perhaps your Inner Friend appears as an animal, or a person, or a warm glowing light, or as someone you know. You may feel the

presence of your Inner Friend even without seeing him or her. Feel that warm, comfortable, safe feeling that you have with your very closest Friend.

Tell your Inner Friend what is going on with you. Ask your Inner Friend a question. Listen to your Inner Friend's response. The answer may come in words, or pictures, or a sound, or a feeling....or perhaps your Inner Friend is saying that the answer will come later. Thank your Inner Friend. Remember that you can meet with this Friend at any time.

Now come back to this room...and take a deep breath in and let it out with a aaahhhhh. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Stretch your arms and legs. Open your eyes. Now take your hands and rub them together for 8 counts and place them over your heart or your belly, sealing this new understanding into yourself.

Sunbeam

Close your eyes. Notice the sunny sky above you. It feels warm and inviting. One of the many brilliant sunbeams reaches down towards you. This light beam fills up your whole body, from the very top of your head...it travels all the way down your spine and moves out through your fingers and toes. You feel that you are safe. You feel that nothing can harm you.

In your imagination, open your eyes and start walking down the path that appears at your feet. As you arrive at the gate to the garden, reach into your pocket and put any trouble or worry that you have on the branches of the large tree right over by the side of the path. It is your special trouble tree. It is the place where you can leave anything that's troubling. Reach into your pocket and pull out your worry. Put it on the tree. Now open the gate and step into your garden.

Ending: Retrace your steps down to the beginning of the path. When you are ready, wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your body, and roll on to one side. Then press your hands into the ground and push yourself up. Come into a sitting, cross-legged position.

Guiding Star

Lie back and watch the silvery moon and the stars as they sparkle and dance across the night sky. Then notice that there is one star that seems to stand out from all of the rest. This star is twinkling at you. When you smile, it sends a beam of light down to you. Let the light touch you and fill your body up until you are glowing. Breathe in the lovely starlight and spread its warmth through your entire being.

You are thinking about only the star. The more you think about it, the brighter it grows....and you also grow brighter. Suddenly the star begins to move across the sky. You watch it with your eyes. The star is shining a beam on something. You take a moment to see what the light is shining on. Perhaps it's a place for you to visit. Perhaps it is a message. Go and follow the star to see where it is leading you.

This guiding star is your star. Each time you notice it in the sky, it will lead you to a special discovery or answer you have been seeking. Whatever it is, remember that it is just for you.

You will be returning now. Send a smile of thanks to your guiding star. When it is ready, it will twinkle back at you. (Close with a transition back to the body.)

Personalized Visualizations

These are short stories that you have created based on interests and discussions you have had with the students. This may also include images or concerns that students have voiced that they would like to have included in the śavāsana experience for the day. It can include archetypal images and/or situations. The following are some possible archetypes:

the trickster (the sneaky one), the warrior (the fierce one, the champion), the wise ruler (stepping into responsibility), the monster (scary self), the angel (our kind and giving self), the content one (feeling satisfied with who we are and our own personal gifts and challenges, the kind or friendly one (our compassionate social self), the bear or the hermit in the cave (taking time to be alone or being reflective), the clown (our silly, playful self), the explorer or adventurer (facing adversity and the unknown with courage and some fearlessness), the guide (the inner advisor or teacher).

The Three Minute Vacation

This exploration may be anywhere from one minute in the beginning of teaching to 5 minutes or more, depending somewhat on student restlessness/restfulness. The lights are turned off when possible - and soft, soothing music may be played. You may invite students to remember a favorite experience with a friend or family member. You may invite students to remember a special vacation or nature experience or a time when they were outdoors with a friend. Who is with you? Where are you going? What kind of day is it? What are you doing? What are you talking about?

Other Essential Activities

Electric Circle I

Invite the students to sit and join hands. Feel the breath, inhale and exhale - flow down the arms and into the hands. Feel the heat and squeeze. Hum softly. Then make it louder like an electrical line. Sit quietly and listen to the silence.

Electric Circle II

Invite the students to stand in a circle. All left palms are facing the ceiling. All right palms are facing the floor. All right hands are touching the next person. Everyone is asked to inhale through the left palm and exhale through the right palm. Inhale through the left palm and exhale through the right palm. Inhale through the left palm and exhale through the right palm.

Feel the current that is passing through the hands around the circle. Close your eyes and continue inhaling through the left palm and exhaling through the right palm. Feel the flow of community within the group. Then bring the hands up to the heart in anjali mudrā. Listen to your breathing and to the breathing of your neighbors for three rounds of breath.

Making Mandala

A Mandala or Native American Shields can include collection of geometric patterns, animal, plant or other symbols, and/or other archetypal symbols that have personal resonance for students. They can be found in books, on line, and/or be created by individual artists. These creative projects may also be manifested through a variety of mediums, i.e., colored pencils, markers, paint, colored sand on paper plates, posterboard, tag board, or other cardboards. Students may want to make a prototype before creating the final version. This project can take one class or many classes.

Becoming Statues

Play some music that may be Sanskrit chanting or melodies with instrumentation from India like sitar or tabla, for example. When the music stops, everyone must assume any standing position. The focus may be balance poses only, any standing pose, seated poses only, etc. Please be sure to review their knowledge repertoire prior to practice. This game can also be practiced as a review of the Sanskrit names of poses with the teacher calling out the Sanskrit name of a pose to see if everyone can figure it out.

Other Activities and Introductory Concepts

Yoga is beneficial not only to your physical and mental health but can also help you to understand your inner experiences. It can give you tools that will apply to your daily living situation.

- What is the difference between yoga and exercise? (The focus is on the breath and the attention is on the process.)
- Why are warm ups important?
- Describe each section of the class and its purpose: time in, warm ups, yoga, visualization, meditation, breath awareness.
- Partner yoga from the elementary module, i.e., see saw, elevator, rooftops.
- Namaste or Namaskar are traditional ways to begin and end a yoga class. Students may modify and add to this process.
- I AM STRONG, FLEXIBLE AND BALANCED.
- What are these aspects? How would you define them? Practice sun salutation and three of the following: Tadasana. Rag doll. Down dog. Push ups. Cobra. Warrior. Triangle. Tree. Star twist. Bridge. Partner pose. Balloon breathing.

- Creative drawing – Draw a house, tree, person. Write down your questions, concerns, and personal goals for yoga class.

- YOUR BREATH

- Show a poster of the respiratory organs/system. Discuss the process of breathing and why this is important to the body/mind. How does your breath change when you experience different emotions?:
- Āsana: Rock, cat, down dog, up dog, rag doll, mountain, crescent moon, tree, plank, push ups, cobra, shark, squashed bug, bicycle, bridge, prone twist.
- Breath Homework – Do bear breath for 5 minutes before going to sleep. Record what you observed and how you slept.

- THIS IS MY BODY

Examine a skeleton, skeletal poster, or handout. Review the sections of the skeleton (sacrum, lumbar, thoracic, cervical). Study the vertebrae.

Āsana: Practice arching the back in different ways, straightening, sitting and standing. Rag doll, crescent moon, frog, down dog, twisting star, dancer, cobra, up dog, bow, turtle, boat, table, butterfly, bridge, supine twist.

Creative drawing – make a drawing of your skeleton.

Homework - Use a mirror to observe your own alignment and posture. Study your spine, legs, knees, ankles, feet. Notice the posture of those around you. Don't make judgments about it, just make notes. Share your observations at the next class without naming people.

Future Classes - Place your body in incorrect postural positions. What are some observations that you have made about your posture and how you would like to strengthen your posture.

Homework – Pick an organ. Find out what it does and where it is located in your body? How does this understanding affect choices that you make in your daily life?

- For the lower grades try some of the games from the elementary module.
-
- Who is your Inner Advisor? Journal or draw any information or messages from your Inner Advisor.

- WHAT IS BALANCE?

Discuss balance. How does it feel? How does balance or lack of balance affect us in life? Give examples. Demonstrate and discuss how to go about achieving better physical balance (by centering body and mind with the breath, with dhristi, moving opposite lines of energy).

How can affirmations and positive self talk help to maintain personal balance? What other yoga tools can help you to stay balanced?

Practice a challenging balance pose for a while. What did you discover about your physical and mental practice to make this pose work better for you? Think about where you need more balance in your life. Write in your journal about it.

How can you check in with your Inner Advisor before making decisions?

- Have quizzes every once and a while.
- Define the word yoga.
 What makes yoga different from exercise?
 What do you get out of yoga class?
 Where are your lungs? What do they do? What protects them?
 How is the breath controlled?
 What happens to the nervous system and your muscles when you breathe fast?
 When you breathe slowly?
 What breathing do we practice in the āsana practice and why?

- Another quiz.

Where is your spine? What are the 6 directions of the spine?

What are vertebrae? How many do you have? What are the spinal sections?

What is the most high risk vertebrae group for injury?

Where is your sacrum? What does it protect?

Where are you scapulae, femur, tibia, collarbones, etc?

What happens to your spine when you slump? To your lungs, heart, stomach?

Label skeletal bones.

- Still another quiz.

Label lungs, brain, spinal cord, heart, stomach, small and large intestine, colon, liver, pancreas, kidneys.

What are the basic functions of 3 of the above items.

How do the following affect the body? Forward bends, standing poses, balance poses, twists, back bends, inversions, restorative.

- Tell your partner what is the yoga method of deep breathing and how it can be helpful.

- What is equanimity? How does it help in your yoga practice? How do you use focus? How does it affect your thinking and feeling? What does it mean to be non-reactive? How can this be beneficial? How would you like to do this?

Homework – Journal what equanimity means to you and how you would like to try to maintain it? What yoga poses help you to remember to maintain equanimity?

Homework – Watch for some event in your life as an opportunity to practice equanimity. What happened? How did you use equanimity? What did you do or say? How did you feel?

Homework – Write about a situation in which you felt really angry or sad. Allow yourself to feel it again. Can you let it go yet? Can yoga help? Do you have any new ideas about how to do this differently?

- Invent a new yoga pose. Write the instructions and present it to the class.
- Invent a new vinyasa of 5-7 poses. Write the instructions and present it to the class.
- Make a list of the yoga poses you have been practicing. Write about how each one makes you feel.
- How do āsana make you feel? Which ones make you feel strong, balanced, calm, more focused, energized, relaxed, clear thinking, warms you up, helps you to inner listen, makes you feel good about your self?
- Make a yoga āsana book. How does physiology relate to the yoga poses?

Yama and Niyama for Children

Aparigraha, Principle of Moderation

- Non-indulgence in the enjoyment of amenities and comforts superfluous to preservation of life
- Non-possessiveness
- Physical and mental detachment

Developmental Characteristics

Young children do not yet fully comprehend the limits and the consequences of relentless desires and wantings. The practice of keeping to basic needs, comforts, and happiness in moderation can influence some control on the endless desires of the human mind. Thus an uncluttered, simple environment exuding peace and comfort will facilitate the character to be more satisfied with smaller quantities. It is of paramount importance that the environment is

exemplary in this regard. The spirit of moderation, love of simple living can often eradicate influences such as uncontrolled television watching, excessive materialism, and other addictive behaviours.

This perspective requires that internal mental focus shift from self-absorption to caring for the collective well being of others and the environment. The practice of observing the needs of others and giving things to those in need can curb the habit of unnecessary accumulation and instil the joy that comes from serving the community. Attention is also brought to the frequent observation of how the unbridled fulfilment of every human desire impacts the planet and ultimately all living things.

Goals

1. To increase awareness and benefits of materialistic simplicity and the happiness that is inherent in simple living.
2. To understand the joy of delaying personal gratification in deference to the happiness of others.
3. To begin to understand how our actions and choices directly impact others and the environment.
4. To experience the joy of sharing and giving to others.

Key Concepts

Generosity/Simplicity: What is taking turns all about? Why is sharing so hard?

Why can't we have everything we want? What can we do to make someone happy today?

Environmental Empathy: Why do we respect and care for Mother Nature and her gifts? How can we make the air (earth, lakes) happy? How can we make the air (earth, lakes) sad? Why do we turn the water off right away when we are done? Where does it come from? Why do we turn the electricity off right away when we are done? Where does it come from? Whose job is it to keep Mother Earth happy? Divine Security: To whom does everything belong? Who supplies us with everything we need?

Ownership: To whom do all the things belong?

Vocabulary: Appreciating, caring, comfortable, conserving, cool, creative, enough, fair, generous, grateful, happy, imagination, moderation, modest, patience, peaceful, pleased, plenty, recycle, sensitive, simple, simplicity,

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

Generosity: There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.

I share my light with others. I take care of my friends.

Environmental Empathy: I take care of Mother Earth and the environment.

Divine Security: I am happy everywhere. I am easily pleased. The Supreme takes care of me. The Supreme gives me everything I need.

Simplicity: I have enough/plenty.

Living in Harmony with Oneself: Niyama

Sauca, Principle of Purity

- Purity and cleanliness, both physical and mental.
- One should practise selfless service to humanity.
- View the world with a Cosmic outlook.

Developmental Characteristics

Children naturally love aesthetically pleasing surroundings. However, they often struggle with the ability to maintain neatness and orderliness. Opportunities are provided for them to assist with the routine cleaning and maintaining the orderliness of the environment.

Like adults children fall victim to defective thinking and negative frames of mind. These may include anger, selfishness etc. Adults unhesitatingly apply various methods in a caring and respectful manner to assure that the children will not linger excessively long in such static mental states. Acknowledging feelings, dialog, art, nature activities, negotiation, and mental redirection are a few techniques that can assist children in processing emotions and "moving on".

Goals

1. To understand the principles of basic hygiene, its benefits self and others.
2. To increase exposure and appreciation for aesthetics, beautiful surroundings, as well as clean and neat appearance.
3. To gain insights into techniques for maintaining mental clarity through redirection, cheerfulness, and forgiveness.

Key Concepts

Personal Hygiene/Health: Why do we wash our hands? What is healthy/junk food? Why do we try to eat more healthy food than junk food?

Mental Purity: What makes our minds 'muddy'? How can we keep our minds clean? What can we do when we get 'down'? How can we help a friend who is frustrated? How do we like to cheer ourselves up when we are in a bad mood? Who makes mistakes? Why is forgiveness important?

Aesthetic Appreciation: How do we feel when are surrounded by neatness and nature? What kinds of beautiful things do we like to hear, to see, to touch, to smell, and to taste?

Environmental Responsibility: How do we keep Mother Earth 'happy' (the air, land, and water)?

Vocabulary: aesthetic, beauty, beautiful cheerfulness, clean, cleanliness, clutter, consideration, cooties, dirty, garbage, germs, healthy, hygiene, junk, mess, pretty, pure, purity, neat, orderly, organized, shiny, shining, sick, sorting, tidy, trash.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

Personal Hygiene: I am bright. I am neat and clean. I take care of my body.

Aesthetic Appreciation/ Environmental Responsibility: I take care of Mother Earth.

Mental Purity: I listen to my Inner Advisor.

Santosa, Principle of Contentment

To remain content. To accept ungrudgingly and without a complaint the reactions of one's actions

Developmental Characteristics

By nature children are generally content with just a little. Their disposition is happy, cheerful and carefree. They do not require an environment that artificially stimulates their desires, keeping them perpetually entertained. Instead they relish that underlying current of peace and harmony, inspiring them to grow and expand.

In order to sustain contentment it is imperative that mental equipoise and a strong self-image are nurtured. Equilibrium is maintained so that the mind neither gravitates towards superiority nor inferiority. This can only endure when anchored in the Infinite.

These natural quiet moments when the children can play without excessive external stimuli and technological involvement are encouraged and treasured. Finding delightful playful interactions with nature and simple things is integral to achieving santosa.

With the perpetual rise of commercialism, importance is placed on the quality of experiences rather than the quantity of possessions. Exposure to extravagant materialism often results in dependency on material possessions for happiness. Communicating a sentiment of gratitude nurtures this balance. Within the perimeters of santosa resides appreciation for what has been given and the acknowledgement that the Divine extends all that we need.

Goals

1. To experience support for one's state of contentment, personal achievement, and happiness.
2. To embrace positive self-esteem and self-acceptance.
3. To experience satisfaction in personal performance.
4. To develop an initial understanding of the significance of gratitude and satiation.
5. To develop an initial understanding of the 'gift' or positive balance found in all unfortunate events.

Key Concepts

Contentment: How can we cultivate patience? How do we find a little peace when we are sad/mad? When we feel enormously sad or mad, what can we do to 'pop out' of it?

Self-Acceptance: How can we be just a little happy right now?

Humility: Who has the nicest dress/artwork? Who is the best student/most favored student in the school?

Equanimity: How do we get what we want with consideration and respect? What choices do we have?

Vocabulary: accepting, calm, cheerful, comfortable, complaining, content, disappointed, empathy, frustrated, glad, good enough, grateful, happy, humility, impatient, patient, quiet, relaxed, rights, satisfied, thankful, unsatisfied.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

Self Acceptance: I know I am loved. I am frustrated. It's ok to be mad (disappointed). I am doing everything good enough.

Contentment: I am special. I am like a fish: content with a little and live in bliss.
I did my best. I see the bright side. A few will do.

Humility: I am patient with my friends. Everyone is good. Everyone's art is wonderful.

Equanimity: I love myself. I am considerate to myself. I am making the world more beautiful. I am really mad, but I'll be ok.

Yama and Niyama for Teachers

Aparigraha, Moderation

- Non-indulgence in the enjoyment of amenities and comforts superfluous to the preservation of life
- Non-possessiveness
- Physical and mental detachment

1. How are we living in this world?

Should we limit the number of our possessions? What is consumer pseudoculture?

Overindulgent utilization of our planet's resources is not only disrespectful of our ecological heritage, but it also dishonors other living beings - be they plant, animal, mineral, or element. Logic and compassion dictate that ideally human beings should only use what is needed not what is wanted.

2. What happens when we simplify the number of our possessions?

Aparigraha is not about owning possessions it is about the attitude towards belongings.

For example, no one shall accumulate more than a certain amount of money or no one shall possess more than a certain number of houses or no one shall be owner of more than a certain area of landed property. But it is not possible for society to fix the minimum limit in all spheres. Anandamurti

3. What can we do about the excess?

4. What changes are necessary to be free from greediness? What is our goal for living on planet Earth?

- "Just say 'no'" to physical, emotional, and mental clutter
- Say no to the static cling of attachment and accumulation
- Don't fall prey to "sales" mentality
- Using Craig's and Annie's Lists
- Reduce overall personal consumption
- Supporting small community businesses

When we choose a lifestyle that is respectful of all living beings, we honor the sacred nature of the creation. A more spiritually progressive attitude evolves toward our belongings and what we consume as we become more Earth friendly, showing respect for the Bhagavad Dharma of all. Choose to re-dedicate your life to spiritual simplicity.

The exploiters forget the basic truth that this malleable world is very limited. A few become rich and others become poor. In such a condition millions are without food, live without shelter, work without education, suffer without medicine and move without proper clothing. Anandamurti

5. How does attachment and greed affect others?

- Some products result in species injury or extinction.
- Some agribusiness practices result in animal cruelty

Approximately 200 million acres of land in the US could be returned to forest with an 80% reduction in meat consumption. Such an immense gain would have extraordinary benefits to the whole Earth community. We would see the erosion of our topsoil halted, and our hydrological cycles renewed so that we would have more and cleaner water. Countless species of wildlife would have their habitats restored, saving them from the wave of extinction now sweeping across the planet. John Robbins

Aparigraha is not about owning possessions it is about the attitude towards belongings.

Affirmations for Aparigraha

- Today I choose to simplify my life.
- I now bring my values, words, and actions into harmony.
- I honor and take care of Mother Earth.
- All I need is around me.

Quotes

We make our living by what we do....we make our life by what we give. Danny Glover

We believe that the Spirit pervades all creation and that every creature possesses a soul in some degree, though not necessarily a soul conscious of itself. The tree, the waterfall, the grizzly bear, each is an embodied Force, and as such an object of reverence. Ohyes

What specific concepts do I personally need to remember in the practice of Aparigraha to be a better teacher?

How does aparigraha apply to you as a teacher?

Sauca, Purity

Purity of both physical and mental bodies.

1. Why is personal cleanliness, neatness and orderliness important and what is its spiritual significance?

2. What is "mental pollution"?

Mental clutter

Cleansing the mind is a far more laborious job than cleansing the body, clothes, house, etc. Intelligent people should not, therefore, allow their mental purity to be stained. - Anandamurti

The ancestor of every action is thought. Ralph Waldo Emerson

3. What are some “sure-fire” solutions for cleaning mental pollution and promoting a healthy mental diet?

“The feeling of selflessness, the feeling of universalism is the only remedy to remove mental impurities. People who have fascination or temptation for any material object can gradually remove that mental pollution arising out of selfishness by adopting just the reverse course.” – Anandamurti

“Positive thoughts rise like steam and negative thoughts fall like water. The mind is an ocean of thoughts. It has a greater chance to evolve if it contains more positive thoughts than negative.” – Swami Kripalvananda

Spiritual practices improve our clarity keep the inner mirror from collecting excessive dust. To keep this mirror clear, we need the “dust cloth” of painful honesty and inner courage. Unresolved issues cause scratches on our “mental plate”. Always keep your mental mirror in perfect condition.

4) How can diet affect our physical/mental/spiritual clarity?

When the reflecting mirror is free from all impurities, you will get a better reflection, the mental reflection of ..(the Supreme Entity) Anandamurti

5) How can service to others support spiritual hygiene?

“If people do good deeds in their environment, good thoughts will occur in their minds whenever they rest... So the first and foremost method of keeping the mind pure is to engage oneself in virtuous deeds. That is do, virtuous deeds night and day.” - Anandamurti

The impurities are not an integral part of your original stance, but are distortions created by Prakrti. To realize that original stance they must be removed. However, they are embedded in the mind, they are inseparably associated with it, they are the propensities causing pleasure (positive mental propensity) and pain (negative mental propensity). If these propensities lie dormant or are unexpressed, the mind is unable to maintain its existence centring around its Mahattattva or existential I-feeling, and when they are over-active they lead microcosms far away from the original stance. Those people can be called kṛta tma (successful in their mission) who have freed themselves from these distortions, like pain and pleasure, and have thus become as pure as gold.

Affirmations for Sauca

- Today I choose to be clean and clear in thought, word, and deed.
- I behave in clarity in all my relationships.
- I contribute to the beauty of the world.
- I cultivate purity in my body, emotions and Spirit.
-

Quotes

“The question isn’t whether we are finite or infinite, perfect or imperfect, mortal or immortal, but whether we identify ourselves with limitation and the body or with infinity and freedom.” - Walter Starcke

What specific concepts do I personally need to remember in the practice of Sauca to be a better teacher?

What kind of vibration do you want to create in your class? How? Why?

Santośa, Contentment

- To remain content.
- To accept ungrudgingly and without a complaint the reactions of one's actions

1) Why is it important to balance personal pleasure and desire?

Between physical, mental, and emotional cravings, the mind can quite effectively keep us in a state of perpetual motion.

From contentment results unparalleled happiness. Patañjali

2. How can we escape this endless cycle? What is the secret formula for dispersing any negative emotions and defective thinking?

Can I let go of personal preferences and receive whatever life experiences are presented to me?
Acceptance is the magic that makes change possible.
Melody Beatty

I have not failed making a light bulb 10,000 times. I have found 10,000 ways that it does not work. Thomas Edison

3) How can I be more accepting and patient of myself and others?

“We accept the things we cannot change. Change the things we can and seek the wisdom to know the difference”. –
St Francis (paraphrase)

Be loyal to our inner truth/higher power
Trying to be nonjudgmental accepting the way that we/others are
Controlling selfishness

Each individual is master of his or her destiny. It is up to each person to create the causes of happiness. - The 14th Dalai Lama

4) What are some strategies and techniques that can support this goal?

- Be more selfless - Working on our attachments to outcomes/comfort
- Engage the “witnessing consciousness”
 - Trying to be less reactive and more thoughtful and introspective in times of conflict.
 - Learning to witness and observe the mind without being judgmental and critical
 - “Isn’t that interesting. Look at how my mind is reacting to this.
- Employ positive auto-suggestion as a defense plan against fear, anger, self-criticism, and negative thinking.
 - To think thoughts just opposite to the mean tendencies which occupy the mind.
- Acknowledge that every circumstance holds within it the capacity for Self expansion.
 - Instead of indulging in frustration: “How is this situation going to bring me closer to my life goal?”
 - Can I cultivate gratitude for the diversity of lessons that arrive at my doorstep?
-

“There is no darkness that is so deep that I will not find God
when I go deeper still.” - Unknown

- Meditation practice is crucial for nurturing this state of proper mental ease by strengthening our relationship with the Inner Divine.

Happiness is the result of inner maturity. It depends on us alone, and requires patient work, carried out from day to day. Happiness must be built, and this requires time and effort. In the long term, happiness and unhappiness are therefore a way of being or a life skill. Matthieu Ricard

Challenges and Transformational Goals of Santośa

- An addiction to struggle and crisis □ Recognizing past patterns and a willingness to feel contentment
- A habit of being the victim □ Being loyal to Myself and clarifying my choices
- Dependence on others for self-definition □ Accepting myself and choosing my own ways of being

- Chronic unhappiness □ Meditation and contemplation, serving others, and focusing on the non-material benefits of life
- Negative focus on the past or future □ Cultivating a willingness to live in the present
- Jealousy of others □ accomplishments, personalities, wealth □ Acts of kindness and generosity
-

When practicing Santośa, one endeavors to cultivate the ability to tolerate all types of mental disturbances. This encourages an attitude of evenness to arise where we may not be as fearful of unpleasant circumstances. Unfortunate experiences are acknowledged as gifts and lessons that are provided to improve our well-being and the well-being of others. Once we become increasingly successful in lessening our grip on certain attachments and place our trust in the wisdom of the Supreme, we find that our footsteps begin to lead forward with more contentment and peace.

Affirmations for Santośa

- Today I choose to be content.
- I accept myself and others as they are.
- I refrain from criticism and fault finding in myself and others.
- I accept the world as it is and contribute to its healing.
- Life is designed for my awakening.

Quotes

Delight in whatever fate may bring. Darshana Upaniṣad

Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans. John Lennon

Content with ordinary life, you can show all people the way back to their own true nature. Lao Tzu

What specific concepts do I personally need to remember in the practice of Santośa to be a better teacher?

How do you meet your students where they are at and still inspire them to reach higher?

Middle Childhood: The Elementary School Years
by BethAnn Bierer

Adults often remember a child's elementary school years fondly. It is a period of growth and change, to be sure, but not usually one of turmoil. Children eagerly set about the task of learning, and not just school learning. They continue to observe adults, but also are influenced by their peers. They are learning about themselves as complex and complicated individuals. They are also learning skills – how to participate fully in their household, how to care for younger children, how to study, how to develop skills to express themselves artistically.

This period of rapid learning is reflected in brain development. The brain is busy getting more organized, developing connections, and pruning away unused synapses. The axons of neurons that get used regularly get myelinated, so impulses move even more quickly from one part of the brain to another. Thus, thinking, emotions and reactions become more efficient. Another ability that begins to emerge during these years is reflection, in a rather concrete sense. Children can begin to process the "whys" of their choices and their thoughts. Adults can facilitate the development of this process and help children build a foundation of complex understandings to carry into adolescence and more abstract patterns of processing.

Elementary years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Growth slows and becomes steadier. -Bodies become leaner, more muscular and coordinated. -Growth plates should be protected from repetitive motion injuries and heavy weight or resistance work. -Senses are as developed as an adult's, but usually prefer familiar foods, smells, etc. -High energy level, learn well through movement, probably need a certain activity level to maintain attention, focus and acuity. -Sleep is very important, but easily disrupted by environmental stimulation. -Right and left hemispheres working better together (think math "word problems") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Children seem wired to learn in groups and benefit from adult guidance. -Friendships become important "definers" of the self as does a sense that they are important contributors to their families or groups. -learning is rapid and focused on concrete tasks, the how and when more than the why. -feeling productive is important, hobbies develop -more complex self-perceptions are developing -can misunderstand sarcasm or misinterpret things said emotionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This is the age when religious, spiritual and/or values education starts, whether formal or informal. -Children seem to have an inherent sense of fairness and readily observe others' behaviors, can be judgmental. -Children tend to trust adults, and this can lead them to seem gullible. However, this also lets them learn from the "experts" in their world. -Can struggle with fine distinctions, things are either right or wrong. -Can be very prosocial and altruistic. -Benefit from spending time in nature, often have an innate sense of being "comforted" in a natural setting. 	<p>A child who is "integrated" at this age moves easily through his environment, relating to others appropriately, trusting that adults are going to be helpful and feeling like she has something to offer to those around her. She wants to learn and is eager for new experiences, as long as they aren't too unfamiliar. When her concrete thinking is not sufficient to understand the world, she needs support and guidance to resolve conflicts and regain equilibrium. She seems to navigate from a secure base and has a sense of "true north," even if it is somewhat simplified.</p>
------------------	--	---	---	---

High School: Yoga for 15-18 Year Olds

What developmental milestones and characteristics would be helpful to remember?

What is physically difficult?

How do they affect your class design?

How do they affect the activities you want to implement?

What are some realistic expectations of what these students can do?

What are some things they cannot do?

General Introduction

By this age puberty is generally fully established in girls and boys are still moving forward into it. Muscle mass has increased as well as the formation of secondary sexual characteristics. Students may express occasional resentment or resistance to new ideas or appear to be oppositional as they continue down the road of establishing their unique identities and independence. A test of the rules may occur.

Teens are 'digging in' to that process of separating from their parents and redefining their own sense of self. In this quest they become even more intrigued by: Who am I? Why am I here? What contribution can I give to the world? Who are my friends? What do I like? What do I dislike? What are my talents? What are my beliefs, values, and world-view? How shall I program my personal GPS for stepping out into the world and what sort of footprint shall I make?

This is a time when teens are searching for different ways of thinking, alternative exercises, and new philosophies. It is a time to explore the world and to find their place in it. It is a time of discovery! Students can explore more sophisticated levels of thinking and personal feelings. They can access and understand the importance of inner listening and connecting with their intuition and inner wisdom. They may be inspired to learn of techniques for improving their ability to make better life choices as they move into positions demanding more personal responsibility. Depression due to circumstances, relationship problems, or personal losses can surface.

Questions concerning values, beliefs and identity can be common as older teens begin that shift toward thinking about their future and the future of the world. By the time they are 18, they are considering career decisions and moving out of the home. High-risk behaviors begin to emerge. Older teenagers experience incredibly high levels of stress related to academics, relationships, and employment to mention only a few.

A regular āsana practice can produce increased stamina, perseverance, and determination on the physical, emotional and mental planes. It enhances a positive sense of Self. Āsana and other yogic practices can enhance self-regulation and be of support during a crucial time when the brain is restructuring. There exists a direct correlation between physical, mental, emotional, and social health with the development of successful relationships and successful life. Yoga supports kinder problem solving strategies and compassionate analysis of considering diversely creative possibilities, managing stress more effectively, and nurturing emotional as well as spiritual intelligence. Yoga contributes to helping kids of all ages to live a more meaningful life.

Yoga Mechanics

High school students are more competitive in nature and often passionate about athleticism, musicianship, etc., they may want to learn a thing or two about muscles and how they work. Yoga, of course, is excellent for cross training. For runners, yoga can assist in strengthening the hips and the achilles. Eye hand coordination and arm strength can be supported for baseball and basketball players. The gymnast may be shopping for increased flexibility, coordination and balance.

Some students will seek even more specific knowledge of anatomy and physiology as well as how it can be best supported in achieving a particular desired personal goal. Building core strength, focus, balance, and flexibility are high on the list of concerns for the older adolescent youth.

Āsana and Class Design

Āsana that are offered are often at an adult level of competency. More vinyasas are extended. These have evolved from the 4 part or so sequences of middle school to as many as 12 parts. Some individual āsana when practiced may have as many as 8 repetitions (inversions and twists excepted). Students are invited to compose their own creative sequences. Vinyasa or repetitive āsana work has the capability to encourage physical strength, control and ability with greater mental focus and calmness. Verbal cues remind students to focus on alignment, lines of energy, and breath awareness. Āsana are presented that can assist with balancing male and female hormonal development. Many āsana are beneficial to a more balanced conditioning of the body for certain activities. These may be performed before and/or after the activity.

- Baseball: Arm reach, cat, gomukhāsana, ardha chandrāsana, kapotāsana, uttanāsana, vrksāsana.
- Basketball/Volleyball: Leg lunges, padottanāsana, salabhāsana, urdva mukha svanāsana, marichiāsana
- Calming the mind: Janushirāsana, paschimottanāsana, yoga mudrā, diirgha pranam
- Computer: Arm reach and stretches, setu bandha, cat/cow, down dog, janushirāsana, neck stretches, wrist stretches, shoulder roll, twists, virabhadrāsana, ustrāsana, supta padangustāsana
- Concentration/mental clarity: Vrksāsana, ustrāsana, bhujangāsana
- Depression: Setu bandha, supta padangustāsana, ardha matsyendrāsana
- Running: Setu bandha, butterfly, natarajāsana, foot stretches, ardha chandrāsana, janushirāsana, kapotāsana, trikonāsana, virabhadrāsana, leg lunges, paschimottanāsana, supta padangustāsana, salabhāsana
- Skiing/snowboarding: Virabhadrāsana, padottanāsana, urdhva mukha svanāsana
- Soccer/football: Setu bandha, butterfly, adho mukha svanasana, neck stretches, kapotāsana, trikonāsana, urdhva mukha svanāsana, leg lunges, supta padangustāsana
- Swimming: Padottanāsana, urdva mukha svanāsana, ardha matsyendrāsana, gomukhāsana, tabletop thread the needle
- Tennis: Padottansana, gomukhāsana, dhanurāsana, adho mukha svanāsana
- Weightlifting: Trikonāsana, padottanāsana, tabletop thread the needle, sukhāsana twist

Other hobbies and interests that involve repetitive muscle use that can result in stress and damage are those pursuits and practices towards being a musician, writer, painter, poet, actor, sculptor, vocalist.

As mentioned in earlier modules, regular āsana practice particularly with emphasis on the bandhas can enhance proper postural development. Alignment cues may be as advanced as what one may find in an adult yoga class.

Yoga teachers revisit and re-emphasize awareness. Listen to your body. Practice these postures safely. The more that you can listen to your body, the more you will know how to comfortably stretch your body. The yoga teacher emphasizes how overstretching can cause damage and the recovery time from such injuries can be extensive.

Students are invited to tune in to the rhythm of the body. Some teachers even show students how to find and watch their own pulse rhythm. Appreciation of the body and the noncompetitive nature of āsana practice are reiterated.

Many teachers divide classes by gender by this age. Others keep the classes co-ed. Be aware of sexual tension. How can the class be structured in a way to reduce this element for their well-being?

Giving students another choice that brings them out of their brains, out of their ipods, and out of their iphones is a great relief!

More and more yoga vocabulary is coming into the teaching of the āsana:
Music may be played for all or part of the class. This is especially nice when the rhythm of a vinyasa matches the musical rhythm. Devotional music from various cultures can be very enjoyable.

Class Themes

An āsana class can be composed of a few vinyasas as well as several repetitions of various other āsana. Classes may also be based on specific benefits, i.e., a class for strengthening core muscles, a backbend class, confidence building āsana, arm strengthening poses, techniques for minimizing the blues, restorative poses, yoga strategies for anxiety, etc.

Themes can center on academic studies, including mythology (Greek, Roman, Celtic, Asian, African, Hindu, Native American, Nordic, Polynesian, Mayan and so forth). This is the age of idealism so themes based on biographies of Dr Martin Luther King Jr, Gandhi, and other personalities can be interwoven. A theme may pertain to a portion of the class or the entire class.

Special 'yoga events' can be planned, such as a class that will incorporate 'rounds' of practice (15 minutes of chanting rotated with 15 minutes of meditation for 1 hour), an āsana class honoring Chinese New Year (featuring the animals of the Chinese zodiac and those representative of Chinese culture), an outdoor class āsana practice, an āsana class honoring Cinco de Mayo, a yoga competition in which every student will win some outstanding recognition, group āsana 'sculpturing', a vegetarian or vegan snack pot luck, a mudrā class, participation in a Martin Luther King event or other cultural event, etc.

Often in certain venues, i.e. schools, the yoga teacher needs to be mindful and respectful of presenting āsana and other practices in as universal and generally acceptable terminology as possible. Reference to certain spiritual concepts and the theistic aspects of yoga may need to be restrained or omitted. However, occasionally yogic concepts may be introduced in a cultural context that is more generally acceptable and 'digestible', i.e., Native American and indigenous cultural philosophy and lifestyle concepts.

In situations where references to the Divine are not possible, one can introduce concepts evoking dedication to 'the Creation' or the Earth. As idealists, teenagers are often very enthusiastic about cultivating a deeper relationship and even advocating for a more compassionate and pristine environment with respect shown for all living beings and ecosystems. Environmental issues such as recycling, energy conservation, species preservation, air quality, and so forth may be of interest, particularly if teachers have presented these in the classroom or if there are issues of special interest in the local community or in the media.

This population can be given 'om-work'.

Closings

The teacher skillfully weaves into the closing the most significant parts of the class. This may include a blessing such as the following.

May you find peace within today. May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of confidence in yourself and others. May you use the gifts that you have received, and pass on the caring that has been given to you. May you be content with yourself just the way you are. Let this knowledge settle into your bones, and allow your soul to be refreshed. May the spirit of yoga be the wind that blows free within you, the water that refreshes you, and the fire that warms you.

Dṛṣṭi

Teachers remind students of conscious breathing and focused awareness (on an internal or external point, on a line of energy, of muscular tension without over-stretching, of a particular region of the body) in each posture. Students may be asked to focus on the heart center, or the point between the eyebrows, or a point on the floor. Dhristi is about directing the focus. The focus may be on the breath, on an external point (or organ or muscle group), on an internal point, or on a feeling. What awareness can you bring to a pose to make it more significant?

Games

Yes include these from time to time.

Health Issues

There are many physical and mental issues that begin to deeply affect adolescents. Some of these are: acne, anxiety, asthma, backache, constipation, depression, fatigue, headaches, indigestion, nervousness, premenstrual cramps, poor posture, and mood swings.

Lifestyle

Some yoga students will be interested in what the possibilities are for 'living yoga off the mat'. They may be intrigued about learning the deeper significances of Yama and Niyama (The 10 Yogic Keys to Happiness) and may express an interest in personal tracking of some of these principles as well as other yogic practices and disciplines. Open discussions about nutrition and physical-mental-emotional good health are important as well as various techniques for conflict resolution.

If appropriate, an introduction into the study of cakra, traditional astaunga yoga, and other areas of yoga are explored. Materials and information can be shared from various yoga magazines and even a comparative study of various āsana styles.

Yamas and Niyamas for Teens

There are 5 yamas. These are things that are helpful to avoid. They have to do with how to live and to be respectful to others, including all living beings, and the environment.

Ahimsa: Do no harm.

Living in a peaceful manner is the first yama and it is based in nonviolence. How can we avoid violence in our actions, our words, and even our thoughts? Why is it important to control one's temper? For some practicing ahimsa includes not eating meat or using products that contain animal ingredients.

Satya: Tell no lies.

Deciding to tell the truth and to act according to your inner truth is the essence of satya. How does one live with integrity? There are those who say that lies hurt the soul of the person who tells them. What do you think? And yet what is an example of a situation where a "lie" may be a compassionate act?

Asteya: Don't take what isn't yours.

Though there are many temptations, how do you resist this? Some other examples of stealing are stealing attention from another, interrupting, and of course shoplifting. How do you think being late for an appointment can be classified as stealing?

Brahmacharya: Master your urges.

There is nothing wrong with strong sexual desire...but it is important to consider controlling an urge so that it doesn't control and dominate you. This applies not only to sexual desire but also to eating, sleeping, and other behaviors that can become excessive. How can a desire for a certain body type, a car, etc. keep one from living a balanced life and keep one from following the path of inner peace?

Aparigraha: Don't be greedy.

How does one determine the difference between enough, not enough, and just plain too much? Do you know of anyone who is possession obsessed? How do you see this tendency affecting this person's life? Greed can also drive one to monopolize conversations, be jealous of others' possessions, and cause us to be dissatisfied with ourselves. There are 5 niyamas. These are things that are helpful for us to do as much as possible. The niyamas are qualities that we want to cultivate and express more in life.

Sauca: Keep it clean.

Obviously there are benefits to dressing in clean clothes, bathing regularly, and living in a clean environment. However sometimes it is hard to keep the room clean. Who has the time? Who cares? There are those who say that an

uncluttered living environment helps to unclutter the mind. What do you think of that? What are some yoga tools for helping to keeping the thoughts “clean” and to get rid of defective thinking?

Santoša: Chill.

This niyama is about finding happiness with what you have and who you are. How much does getting more ‘stuff’ relate to your happiness? Santoša does not mean forgetting about improving yourself. It invites us to reevaluate the obstacles that come forward as perhaps being opportunities and to take full responsibility for who we are and where we are going.

Tapas: Cultivate self-discipline.

What is discipline to you? Some people think that discipline has to do with being determined and persevering, allowing anything to distract one from the goal. When striving to become a better musician, for example, the aspiring musician may spend many hours daily in practice and striving to increase personal knowledge about music. The same can be said for the athlete. In the quest to achieve competence, some personal sacrifices are made when you are passionate about something. Being disciplined is not easy. What are some ways in which you would like to be more disciplined? What does this mean to you?

Svadyaya: Understanding.

Svadyaya has to do with remaining inspired and improving one’s understanding of one’s self and our complex relationship with the world. Reading, studying, and contemplation give us the ability to understand the deeper meaning of life experiences. How can being still and connecting with our inner intuition support our personal expansion? What do you want to understand more fully in your life experience?

Ishvara pranidhana: The Force.

What does ‘The Supreme’ mean to you? Does your ego ever get in the way? Do you ever feel devotion to nature, the soul, or simply to the process of living? This niyama has to do with defining and expanding upon our understanding of our relationship with The Supreme or whatever higher force or higher power means to you. It doesn’t necessarily mean being ‘religious’ but of understanding the forces at work in our lives and that there is a higher ‘force’ at work. How does this ‘force’ affect your daily life? What is your relationship with this ‘force’? How can you deepen your relationship with this One?

Meditation

The high school student can meditate for longer periods of time and will enjoy some diversity in this practice. Greater focus on the breath with relationship to the āsana practice as well as how to manipulate the breath to ease ‘mental anguish’ can prove helpful. Various walking meditation techniques are very entertaining and build a deeper class rapport. These students enjoy guided meditations, color meditations, and other meditative adventures. A comparative study of different types of meditations can be introduced with their corresponding benefits. Experiences can also be offered with ‘meditating’ through the cakras.

Student can explore different meditation positions, such as, sukhāsana, kneeling, virāsana, full lotus, half lotus, and bound lotus. Please be careful as some of these positions have safety issues.

Additional mudrā can also be practiced beyond the Namaste/namaskar mudrā, om mudrā, jnana mudrā. Buddhi mudrā, chalice mudrā, gomukha mudrā, prithvi mudrā and others can be experienced.

Students may enjoy meditating on a mandala, candle gazing, or other practices.

Affirmations can be included in the meditation, i.e., Each day I am becoming happier. My inner core of being is at peace. Every experience is an opportunity for greater growth. I embrace the universe. I send loving thoughts to all human beings (to all living beings) and wish happiness and well-being for all.

Mantra or the point of focus during meditation can also be in English such as: Peace, love, joy, one, We are One, One is all, All is one, I am all, Let it be, Amen, and so forth. Listening to the stillness between mantra and watching the inhalation and exhalation of the breath is also beneficial.

A Meditation Exercise: Find a comfortable seated position with a straight back and closing your eyes. Turn your attention to each body part as we repeat or think the following:

Feet, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Legs, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Hips, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Stomach, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Chest, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Back, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Arms, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Hands, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Neck, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Head, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Face, please be calm and tranquil. Wait here in peace until I need you again.
Feel how relaxed your body is. Now ask your body: Body, as you are resting and waiting, please reveal your wisdom to me.

At the end of the meditation, repeat: Thank you for your wisdom.

Prānāyāma

The breath has the never-ending task of continuously nourishing the body-mind. Conscious breathing enhances that body-mind connection and sets the groundwork for body-mind harmony. The importance of breathing through the nostrils is made with scientific emphasis. By adulthood most individuals have developed breathing patterns that are restricting the oxygen flow. As you know, this undernourishes the tissues, muscles, and brain. Oxygen restriction results in greater personal issues with anxiety, lowers stress tolerance, and can result in an inability to respond or think quickly.

Shallow breathing is the most frequent culprit. Periodically increasing the length of the exhale breath so that it is longer than the inhalation can be accomplished through simple counting.

Counting: Let's inhale 4 counts and exhale 6 counts. (Practice 3 rounds). Let's inhale 4 counts and exhale 8 counts. (Practice 3 rounds). Notice the difference in your thoughts in How does your mind feel after we have completed just a few rounds of this breathing? What do you notice?

Notice: Notice the gentle rising of your abdomen when you breathe in and the falling of your abdomen when you breathe out. Watch this for several breaths. Now I would like for you to focus on your rib cage. Notice the gentle expansion and contraction of your rib cage as you inhale and exhale. Watch this for several breaths. Finally, I would like for you to focus on your upper chest. Watch how your upper chest rises with the inhale breath and falls with your exhale breath. Sometimes this movement is much softer and gentler with the upper chest. Watch this for several breaths. Full yogic breathing is a dance that combines these 3 movements. Imagine the breath filling the abdomen and then moving like a wave, engaging the rib cage, and flowing to the upper chest. Then watch the out breath leaving the abdomen, the rib cage, and the upper chest in like a wave. Let's try this again in a continuous flowing breath....

Ocean Breathing: Inhale slowly, filling your tummy. Exhale slowly. Inhale. Exhale. Can you tighten the back of the throat as if you are snoring? Listen to the sound of your breathing. This breath calms the nervous system, calms, the emotions, and relaxes the body. Breathe the ocean in. Breathe the ocean out. Feel the breath flowing like the ocean up and down the spine. Feel the breath going in and out like the tides. Breathing the tide in. Releasing the tide out.

Breathing in Reverse: As you breathe in, say to yourself: Breathing in 20. As you breathe out say to yourself, breathing out 20. With the next breath say: Breathing in 19 and as you breathe out: Breathing out 19. Continue counting backwards. If you lose your place, simply go back to 20 and start over. The goal is to stay aware even if you do not make it to zero. It is normal to be starting over a bit.

How are You Breathing Quiz?

1. Take a deep breath. As you are inhaling, what is moving?
 - a. My shoulders move up and my chest is rising. My stomach is contracting.
 - b. My stomach is expanding. My chest is sinking slightly. My shoulders are not moving.
2. Now, watch your body as you are exhaling. What is moving?
 - a. My shoulders are moving downward. My chest falls.

- b. My stomach is sinking back in. My shoulders and chest are not moving.
3. Take one more deep breath, an inhalation and an exhalation. What sounds are you hearing?
 - a. Louder inhale than exhale.
 - b. Louder exhale than inhale.
4. Take another deep breath and concentrate on your chest muscles. When do you think you are exerting more effort?
 - a. On the inhale more than the exhale?
 - b. On the exhale more than the inhale?
5. Next time you look in the mirror at your profile is your stomach:
 - a. Lightly contracted
 - b. Just hangin' out.
6. When you take a deep breath, what is moving:
 - a. My chest.
 - b. My stomach.
7. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Breathe 8 normal breaths. Which hand moves more?
 - a. My chest.
 - b. My stomach.
8. Feel the position of your back is it:
 - a. Looking pretty slumped. I should probably stand/sit straighter.
 - b. A nice straight line from the top of my head to my heels.
9. Pretend you are hyperventilating by breathing quick shallow breaths (no more than 10 seconds please). Does it feel:
 - a. Not so bad.
 - b. Unnatural and uncomfortable.
10. Without changing your breath rate, count how many yogic breaths (one inhalation and one exhalation) you make in one minute. Was it:
 - a. More than 15 breaths
 - b. Less than 15 breaths.

(More than 5 a) answers = you have some serious restricted breathing patterns.

More than 5 b) answers = you are breathing deeply and fully. Of course, even one a) answer indicates a need for some improvement.

Breath is life, and learning to breathe well is a gift you give your mind-body.

Connection through Service

The yoga teacher is always listening and observing for short-term opportunities for students to engage in direct or indirect service. These may range from raising a small sum of money to purchase a flock of chickens for a family in Afrika through organizations such as the Heifer Foundation - to collecting clothing, blankets, and toys for the local Women and Children's Shelter - to collecting donations to send to the site of a natural disaster.

Projects may include the class only or expand to their families and/or the school at large. They may be as simple as bringing glasses of water out to an obviously thirsty tree to sending photos, drawings, and letters to those in our armed services overseas. Service can mean spending a few hours helping to serve prepared food to homeless folks in a dining hall or giving out bottles of water and fruit to homeless people on the streets. Service can mean assisting a local family who is suffering in some way. Service can be collecting books to donate to a prison or juvenile detention center.

The number of community service opportunities are limited only to the extent that we may not be fully utilizing our imagination.

Śavāsana

Śavāsana experiences take teens out of their day-to-day stress-filled lives and gives them some peace. At an age when restorative sleep does not always come so easily, śavāsana is invaluable. During śavāsana, the thoughts slow down and (hopefully) eventually become suspended. Śavāsana experiences can be very diverse. There can be more silence. There can be soft chanting, music, or nature sounds in the background. The yoga teacher can lead a guided meditation or even tell a story. A philosophical thought or short quote can be repeated three times as an ending. Students may also compose śavāsana experiences that are presented by the teacher.

These experiences can focus on allowing the body to merge with the earth or float in the sky.

With every breath, imagine that you are inhaling peace and light. This peace is gathering up all the chatter, worries, and chaos in its light. On your next exhalation, all of these are exhaled and in that exhalation they are transformed into peaceful, positive energy.

With each breath, feel your muscles relaxing and your bones becoming heavier. Feel your foot bones, leg bones, hip bones, back bones, rib bones, shoulder, neck and head growing heavier and melting into the earthy. Relax your body into the embrace of Mother Earth. Breathe in peace. Breathe out peace.

Your Essence: Begin this Śavāsana Experience with the Sunbeam Śavāsana from the Middle School Module.....Follow this path to your Special Place. Find a place to sit down and soak in the safety and peacefulness of this Special Place. Allow the sunlight that emanates from this Place to melt all your worries away. Imagine that even your body and mind are melting into the sunlight, until all that is left of you is Your Essence. What color is Your Essence? What does it look like? Is it Light or Energy or a Being of some kind? Feel that you are completely free of worry. Feel that you are pure being. Take a deep breath. How do you feel? Take a few minutes to get comfortable with Your Essence. Notice how different you feel. Feel it deeply.

Now, invite Your Essence to take the form of the Ideal You. Create an image of yourself as everything you want to be. See yourself as being everything you want to be. How do you look? How do you move? How are you dressed? How do you express yourself? How is this Ideal You similar to you? How is this Ideal You different than you?

Put on your Ideal You just as you would put on a shirt. How does it feel to be the Ideal You? How do you feel inside? What thoughts are floating around your head? How does your body feel when you are moving? Does the world seem different through these new eyes? How so? If you could sum up in one sentence how the Ideal You is, what would you say?

With your Ideal You on, think about your current life concerns. How is life different? Do your same issues seem as important? Is there some thing that you can now let go of more easily? Is there something you no longer need to be afraid of? How can you change things so that your life would be more balanced?

Thank the Ideal You. Please take a deep breath and return to the path in your Special Place. Take another deep breath as you pass through the gate. When you are ready, you may wiggle your fingers and toes. Stretch your arms and legs. Please roll to one side and feel what it is to be in this room. Open your eyes and come into a seated position.

Your Inner Advisor: Begin this Śavāsana Experience with the Sunbeam Śavāsana from the Middle School Module.....Follow this path to your Special Place. Find a place to sit down and soak in the safety and peacefulness of this Special Place. Smell the fragrance of your Special Place. Feel the warmth of the sunlight of your Special Place. Listen to the sounds of the birds or the breeze or the running water. Settle yourself in to a comfortable spot. Relax as you think about a problem you are having.

As you begin, imagine how good it would feel to have a guardian angel or magical very wise mentor on your side. Someone who knows you and cares about you even more than you do yourself. This is someone who you can trust.....someone who cares about your feelings.....someone who can help you. Life would be so much easier. You would feel so much safer. You could be a lot more relaxed.

Invite this Friend to join you at your Special Place. This friend is your Inner Advisor. What form does this friend take? It may be an animal, a person, a glowing light, someone you know.....or you may just feel this Friend's presence and not see anything, but you can feel the caring. You can feel the wisdom.

Please ask your Inner Advisor to be with you. Explain your problem. Tell your Inner Advisor the situation. Ask questions. Listen to your Inner Advisor's responses that may come in words, or pictures, or just a feeling of understanding. Is your Inner Advisor going to give you any advice today?

Consider what you have experienced. Do you have enough suggestions from your Inner Advisor to move ahead with your problem? If not, why not? Discuss your options with your Inner Advisor.

When you feel you have gotten as far as you can for today, thank your Inner Advisor. Your Inner Advisor is telling you that you can meet together any time just by going inside, relaxing, breathing, and entering your Special Place and inviting your special friend to join you. Now, say goodbye, in whatever manner seems appropriate. After your Advisor has left, find your way back to the path and through the gate.

Wiggle your hands and toes. With your hands push your body over to your right side and come up into a comfortable seated position.

Stories for High School Students

These are not necessarily stories for āsana practice but stories that can be read aloud during class by the students or teacher, taken home and read or read during śāvāsana.

Nasreddin planted a flower garden, but when the flowers came up so did a great crop of dandelions among them. Wishing to eliminate the unwanted guests, Nasreddin consulted with gardeners near and far, but none of their solutions worked.

Finally, Nasreddin traveled to the palace of the sheikh to seek the wisdom of the royal gardener himself. But alas, Nasreddin had already tried all the methods the kind old man recommended to him for eradicating such troublesome weeds.

Silently they sat together for a good long time. At last, the royal gardener looked at Nasreddin and said, "Well, then, the only thing I can suggest is that you learn to love them."

Traditional Sufi story

On his early morning walk along the shore, an old man noticed a young woman picking up starfish and tossing them into the ocean. As they passed each other, the old man said, "Pardon me, but why are you picking up all those starfish?" The young woman answered, "Because if I leave them stranded, they'll die in the hot sun."

"But," the old man said, "this beach is miles long and there must be millions of starfish on it. No matter how many you rescue, how can it make any difference?"

The young woman looked down at the starfish in her hands, threw it into the sea, and said: "It makes a difference to this one."

Contemporary Spiritual Story

Remember the five simple rules to be happy: 1. Free your heart from hatred. 2. Free your mind from worries. 3. Live simply. 4. Give more. 5. Expect less

Reflect upon 5 yogic tips for spiritual competency. Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly. Leave the rest to The Supreme!

One day an elephant saw a hummingbird lying flat on its back on the ground. The bird's tiny feet were raised up into the air. "What on earth are you doing, Hummingbird?" asked the elephant.

The hummingbird replied, I have heard that the sky might fall today. If that should happen, I am ready to do my bit in holding it up."

The elephant laughed and mocked the tiny bird.

"Do you think THOSE little feet could hold up the SKY?"

"Not alone," admitted the hummingbird.

"But each must do what one can.

And this is what I can do." -

A Tale from China

The Cracked Pot

A water bearer had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole that was carried across the back of her neck. One of the pots had a crack in it and the other pot was perfect. One pot always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, but the cracked pot always arrived only half. For years this went on daily. The water bearer delivered only one and a half pots of water each day. The perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments...but the cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection. It was miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After years of bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day:

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What for?"

"For the past two years I have only been able to deliver one half my load because of this crack in my side. Water slowly trickles out all the way back to the house. Because of my defect, you do all of this work and you don't receive full value for your efforts." The pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the cracked pot, and said, "I have been aware of your crack for some time. When we return to the house tomorrow, I want you to notice the flowers along the path."

The next day as they climbed up the hill, the cracked pot observed beautiful wild flowers on one side of the path. They were cheerful flowers basking in the sun, brightening the day of all who passed. But when they arrived at the house, once again the pot felt sad as it had leaked out half its water as usual. Again the pot apologized for its failure.

The bearer replied: "Did you notice that there were flowers only on one side of the path? That's because I have taken advantage of your defect. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table and this beauty graces the house and all who enter."

Each of us has our own unique defects. We are all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Divine will use our defects to grace His table. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them. Embrace them and you can be the cause of great beauty. Know that in weakness, we find our strength. - Source Unknown.

The Wish Fulfilling Tree

There was a man who wandered throughout the world seeking his deepest desire. He wandered from one city to another, from one realm to another looking for fulfillment and happiness, but in all his wanderings never came to it.

Finally one day, tired from his search, he sat down underneath a great tree at the foot of a mountain. What he did not know is that this was The Great Wish Fulfilling Tree. Whatever one wishes for when seated underneath it immediately becomes true.

As he rested in his weariness he thought to himself, "What a beautiful spot this is. I wish I had a home here," and instantly before his eye a lovely home appeared.

Surprised and delighted he thought further, "Ah, if only I had a partner to be here with me, then my happiness would be complete," and in a moment a beautiful woman appeared calling him "husband".

"I am hungry," he thought. "I wish there was food to eat." Immediately a banquet table appeared covered with every wonderful kind of food and drink, main courses, pastries, sweets of every variety.

The man sat down and began to feast himself hungrily, but partway through the meal, still feeling tired he thought, "I wish I had a servant to serve me the rest of this food," and sure enough a manservant appeared.

Finishing the meal the man sat back down to lean against this wonderful tree and began to reflect, "How amazing it is that everything I wish has come true. There is some mysterious force about this tree.

I wonder if there is a demon who lives in it," and sure enough no sooner had he thought this than a great demon appeared. "Oh my," he thought, "this demon will probably eat me up," and that is just what it did.

Ya Never Know

Long ago there lived a farmer and his son. The boy worked hard on his father's farm and one day he happened to capture a strong, beautiful wild horse. All the neighbors told the farmer how fortunate he was. The farmer replied, "Ya never know." He looked at the distance mountain and he smiled.

The boy spent his days tending to the farm and the beautiful white stallion. After years of careful training, the horse ran swifter than any other in the valley. But one day the father and son awoke to find their precious steed was gone. The son was heartbroken. The neighbors gathered around and commented about their rotten luck. But the farmer replied, "Is this a good or bad thing? Ya never know." He looked at the distance mountain and he smiled.

Some time passed and one day the magnificent animal returned ... with a wild mare. The neighbors praised their fantastic good fortune, but the farmer replied, "Is this a good or bad thing? Ya never know." He looked at the distance mountain and he smiled.

One day while the son was racing their splendid horses, he fell off and broke both legs badly. The villagers bemoaned the family's terrible misfortune. But the farmer, calm as usual replied: "I'm sure his legs will heal in time. Is this a good or bad thing? Ya never know." He looked at the distance mountain and he smiled.

A few days later soldiers marched into the village. A war involving the barbarians to the north was underway. All the able-bodied young men were required to join the army. The families prepared their sons for battle and bid them farewell. Reluctantly the young men joined the soldiers. All but one. It was obvious that the farmer's son's legs would take many months to heal. The neighbors envied the farmer's good fortune! The farmer looked across his fields. He saw the two fine horses. He saw his son. The farmer just smiled.

- A Sufi/Buddhist Tale

Yoga Massage

Massage can calm the body and the mind and is an excellent stress reliever. It is also very healthy in promoting good skin health! This massage is for the face and head.

- Rub your hands together 8 times vigorously and place them over your closed eyes.
- Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Feel that energy coming into your head.
- Now open your eyes and place your hands and fingers like two rakes at the top of your forehead. Slowly rake through your hair and over your head down to your neck - 3 times. (We'll be doing every direction 3 times.)
- Now rub over your eyebrows and around your ears.
- Rub down the sides of the nose and under the eyes - 3 times.
- Now let's rub down the side of the face and in the moustache area - 3 times.
- Gently massage the neck from the center out around the sides - 3 times
- Let's finish by gently rubbing and slight pinching the muscles in the upper shoulders.

Yoga Questions

- Which feels better to you forcing a pose or letting a pose unfold?
- How does your yoga practice apply to something in your life right now?
- How do you make friends and live cooperatively with your body?

- What does your body like? What does your body dislike?
- When are some times in a day that you would like to deepen your breath?
- What are some situations when you would like to remember to practice breath awareness?
- What yoga stretches help your brain to wake up? To focus? To release tension? To bring mental clarity? To clear your thoughts? To connect with your Inner Essence?

Pledge of Alliance

I pledge alliance to the Earth
 And to all life that it nourishes
 All growing things
 All species of animals
 And all races of people.
 I promise to protect all life on our planet
 To live in harmony with nature
 And to share our resources justly
 So that all people can live with dignity
 In good health and in peace.
 - Aline E. Wolf.

Yama and Niyama for Children

Undergoing some personal inconvenience or suffering, in the course of rendering service, in order to attain the Goal.

Developmental Characteristics

As young children become more mature, their increasing capacity for compassion, empathy and sympathy requires attentive nurturing. Many clinical studies indicate that empathy exists in varying degrees from individual to individual. To assure its continued development adults offer supportive activities and discussions to guarantee its flourishing development. Ideally at an early age it is desirable to habituate young children towards thinking with empathy and sympathy, towards giving rather than taking.

Adults vigilantly watch for circumstances to engage in helping others. On occasion these service experiences may involve some personal sacrifice or inconvenience. This is accomplished with minimal pressure, allowing multiple choices. *Tapaḥ* embraces service-mindedness, giving a little beyond what is natural for us. It entails stepping a little outside of the human tendency of self-absorption, stretching to overcome “me-ness” and thinking of others first. Lending a helping hand to other living beings expands the mind, eliciting a sense of joy and happiness that is boundless and self-sustaining.

Children enjoy the appreciation from those who are helped and receive validation as worthy members of the community. In this way their self-esteem will grow and lightening the burden of others will become a naturally pleasant habit for them.

Goals

1. To sacrifice personal preference or comfort in order to help another.
2. To volunteer service or comfort without expecting any personal reward.
3. To make decisions, bearing in mind the well being of others.
4. To increase awareness of those who are less fortunate and recognize when someone is “in trouble”.
5. To increase knowledge and practice techniques for giving comfort.

Key Concepts

Sympathy: What makes us sad? How can we help someone who is ‘in trouble’? Why is it important to help others? How can we help someone who is hurting?

Selflessness: What happens if we don't help others? How do we feel when we help others?
Servicemindedness: What can we do to help others? How do we feel when someone helps us?

Vocabulary: affection, caring, comfort, crying, determination, discomfort, fortunate, frowning, hard, helpful, hurting, involved, need, pain, rescue, sacrifice, service tearful, trembling, in trouble

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

Selflessness: I can help. Baba Nam Kevalam. I open my heart to others.

Sympathy: When I see a friend hurting, I need to fix them.

Service: There is someone who needs help. I go out of my way to help.

Svadyaya, Understanding

The study, with proper understanding, of scriptures and philosophical books.

Developmental Characteristics

Young children are scientific explorers, making discoveries and inquiries about the mysteries of the universe with every breath. They are constantly assimilating information through all of their sensory organs, formulating and reinventing a contextual framework that will serve as the cornerstone of their life experiences.

Somewhere in this landscape are the seeds from which wisdom can grow. The key to nurturing wisdom is actively supporting the spiritual search to uncover our truly Divine Nature. On this journey we learn to discern the nature of our many internal voices and to realign ourselves with our Inner Teacher. Through the coordination and blending of intuition and intellect, feeling and thinking, we grasp the building blocks of true understanding and begin our pilgrimage toward Divine Wisdom.

Goals

1. To apply inner listening, critical thinking, and problem solving during daily challenges.
2. To begin to understand some of the root causes of our desires and feelings.
3. To begin to tolerate the desires, feelings, and interests of others.
4. To value good company and friendship through acknowledging differences and specialities as wondrous and acceptable.
5. To begin to accept others as they are and acknowledging our differences.

Key Concepts

Reflection: What choices do we have in expressing our feelings? What does our Inner Light voice say? What does our inner Positive Voice say? What does our inner Negative Voice say? Which voice do we want to listen to the most? Why?

Understanding/Universalism: How are we alike? How are we different?

How do we feel about different food preferences, favourite colours, etc.?

Is this acceptable?

Vocabulary: acceptance, different, feeling, heart, inner light, inner teacher, interesting, intuition, knowledge, listening, mind, open mind, reason, remembering, same, thinking, tolerance, understanding, wisdom.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

Spiritual Understanding:

I am a child of the universe. Om. Shanti. Baba Nam Kevalam.

I am protected by the Divine. When I call on the Light within, I am home. I am always sitting in the lap of my

Supreme Friend. My Supreme Friend lives in my heart. I am still.

Spiritual Unity:

I carry my Light with me.

There is no spot where The Great is not.
I see the One in the Many and the Many in the One.
My Supreme Friend lives in the heart of every being.

Fearlessness:

I am in the lap of the Divine.
When I'm nice to the bee, the bee won't hurt me. God's Light shines within the spider.

Ísvara Pranidhana: Remembering

Ísvara means "the controller of this universe", or more specifically, "the controller of all the thought-waves of this universe".

Pranidhana means to adopt something as a shelter.

So Ísvara Pranidhana is to accept Ísvara as the sole ideal of life with firm faith, in pleasure and in pain, and to move with accelerated speed towards that Supreme Shelter.

Developmental Characteristics

Very young children are innately connected to all things spiritual. Their umbilical cord to the Divine Self remains unaltered. Like magnets they are drawn to spirituality, uplifting music, and the wonders of nature. They long for spiritual nurturing of the Divine Within.

To maintain this precious inclination throughout life adults introduce spiritual practices, observations and discussions about the Supreme. Children thrive in a regular routine of "stillness". For children this reflective and meditative time becomes a welcome part of their day.

Just as time and energy is expended every day to feed the physical body, the Inner Spirit is also deserving of the same. Children are given the freedom to design their spiritual practices, i.e. listening to soothing music, singing songs, doing yoga, relaxation, meditation and/or reading inspiring stories. Devoting a few minutes to exploring spirituality and reassuring children of the Supreme Presence are key to advancing spiritual attunement. This knowledge of the divine origin of all living and inanimate beings supports young children in overcoming irrational fears.

Goals

1. To experience a variety of practices inspiring inner awareness and joy.
2. To increase awareness of how to 'take shelter in the Supreme' particularly in overcoming fear and inferiority.
3. To experience the joy and serenity found by being in nature.
4. To start to practice yoga postures, relaxation, visualizations, and meditations
5. To introduce the concept of devotion and unconditional love for
6. the Supreme Entity.

Key Concepts

Spiritual Understanding: Who is our Divine Friend? Why can't we always hear the voice of our inner Friend? What can we do to see or hear our Friend? How does our Inner Light help us? Who is always watching and taking care of us? Who loves us more than anyone else? Who always helps us when we are afraid or discouraged?

Spiritual Unity: Where is our Special Friend? What can we do when we are afraid?

Vocabulary: concentrate, connection, devotion, Divine, everything, everywhere, free, God, happiness, imagine, Inner Light, joy, meditation, Mother Nature, oneness, protection, shelter, sitting in the lap of the Divine, spirituality, stillness, Supreme Friend, unity, wonderful.

Affirmations and Verbal Tools

Reflection: I am listening to my Inner Friend.

Understanding: I can listen and learn. I understand. I don't understand. Different is ok.

Universalism: I am a good friend. I am open-minded. I am willing to see things from a different perspective.

Yama and Niyama for Teachers

Tapah, Service

Undergoing some personal inconvenience or suffering, in the course of rendering service
To accept physical hardships for others' welfare.

In Tapah Practice the aspirant accepts a vow of selflessness, that is, to sacrifice personal pleasures in exchange for serving others. Through this practice of putting others first, we reaffirm our connection to all living beings and ultimately the Supreme Creator by actively seeking opportunities to alleviate the suffering of others without expectation of anything in return.

1. One of the factors that block our journey to selflessness is "I-need-to-be-in-controllism". What are some others?

Four categories of service are:

Serving with your physical body
Security service,
Economic service,
Imparting intellectual and uplifting knowledge.

2. What are some examples of each one?

3. Which of these would you consider the most lasting and of a permanent nature?

4. Why is it that financial donations and recycling may not fulfill the ideal criteria as service activities?

In fact one's greatness lies in the degree one is able to accept hardships for the sake of others. -
Anandamurti

5. If one engages in a large quantity of social service, will it counteract the "negative balance" in one's spiritual bank account?

But if you serve (someone) with a selfish motive to have a return in your bad days, the entire effort of Tapah is lost in a moment. Tapah (practice) is, therefore, to be above selfishness... There must be one and only one purpose ... and this is to shoulder sorrows and miseries to keep (those we serve) happy, to free them from grief and to give them comfort." -
Anandamurti

6. The objective of performing service is ego detachment and coming closer to the goal of maximizing our Divine Potential? What can we do when the ego becomes inflated through doing service thus undermining the ultimate purpose?

The object of service is the Divine.

You have appeared before me as a living being to offer this precious opportunity of rendering service to You." -
Anandamurti

7. To whom is service rendered?

Of course helping others is not confined merely to human members but offering comfort to plants, animals, minerals, elements, and all of those with whom we share kinship in the world community.

8. Is it possible to be overly service-minded?

9. What is the highest expression/motivation for service?

One enters into the helping act not only because there is a need to be met. Service gradually becomes an offering, first to those we are with, but eventually to that greater truth or source of being in which we are all joined in love. Helping becomes an act of reverence, worship, gratitude. It is grace merely to have the chance to serve.

Mother Teresa, for example, bending to hold a dying leper, sees there only "Christ in a distressing disguise." She's not "helping a dying leper," she's loving God, affirming in whomever she's with universal qualities of perfection and beauty." -Ram Dass and Paul Gorman

Affirmations for Tapaḥ

Today I open my heart to myself and others. I am willing to extend myself in service to someone in need. I trust my higher power to guide me.

Quotes

Tapas is a way of expressing the passion in your heart. - Cat de Rham and Michele Gill

Life's most urgent question is, what are you doing for others? Martin Luther King, Jr.

Questions

What changes do I need to remember in the practice of Tapaḥ to be a better teacher?

How can I facilitate Tapaḥ in an āsana class?

Svadhya, Understanding

The study, with proper understanding, of any spiritual subject

Implicit faith in the Supreme Being irrespective of whether one lives in momentary happiness or sorrow, prosperity or adversity.

We learn to listen and to read with our heart, and to use our minds to filter out the garbage and find the gems... We take ourselves into heaven or hell by choosing whether our hearts or our egos will run our lives." - Vimala McClure

Generally study includes five main steps:

- Reading
- Hearing someone else speaking (or speaking aloud yourself)
- Inner listening
- Contemplation and
- Implementation.

●

1. Svadhya is concerned with understanding the deeper significance of our lives and why?

2. Why does clear understanding require utilization of intellect and intuition?

Learning how to listen with our hearts is one of the most valuable contributions we can make to our relationships - including our relationship with ourselves. Vimala McClure

3. What are some ways in which intuitional development can be nurtured?

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.
William James

Affirmations for Svadhya

Today I seek a deeper understanding of life.

I am willing to see things differently.
I read and listen with an open mind and heart in order to form compassionate, responsible options.
I reflect on my life with the intention of understanding the truth.

Quotes

The ultimate lesson all of us have to learn is unconditional love, which includes not only others but ourselves as well. - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Stop trying to figure out why someone acts the way he or she does. The powerful question is: Why do I react the way I do? - Susan Jeffers

Svadyaya is the practice of looking deeper. Vimala McClure

Everything is written inside. You are the book. Haven Trevino

Think of your computer. A machine. A tool with so much potential. You can't use it if you don't get to know it. Humans are similar. We need to study ourselves. - Cat de Rham & Michele Gill

What changes do I need to remember in the practice of Svadyaya to be a better teacher?

Why is it important to understand my students? How can this be supported?

Ísvara Pranidhana, Taking Cosmic Shelter

Ísvara means "the controller of all the thought-waves of this universe".

Pranidhana means to adopt something as a shelter.

So Ísvara Pranidhana is to accept Ísvara as the sole ideal of life with firm faith, in pleasure and in pain, and to move with accelerated speed towards that Supreme Shelter.

In yoga union with Cosmic Consciousness is the goal of the spiritual aspirant. The practitioner of Ishvara Pranidhana places primary focus on the Divine, acknowledging our relationship with the Cosmic Self who resides within.

1. What is the most important and difficult spiritual practice?

Setting aside time each day to pray or meditate in solitude helps us bring awareness to the rest of the day. Quieting the mind and directing its flow toward oneness with the inner Self allows us to re-experience the peace and joy which is the heart of all existence. Accessing this inner connection helps us to behave in what which reflect our values, and thus our impact on the world around us is positive and profound. Vimala McClure

2)What is the difference between performing this practice individually and collectively?

The indomitable mental force aroused as a result of collective Ísvara Pranidhana will help you solve any problem great or small, on this earth. Anandamurti

3. What are some of the benefits of meditation?

4. Why is "auto-suggestion" so important and what is the difference between auto-suggestion and hypnosis?

It is important that we meditate upon something which stirs our hearts and brings peace and unity to our minds.
Vimala McClure

By dedicating our lives to that Supreme Entity, unlimited positive energy is invited into every dimension of our lives. The spiritual devotee struggles to relinquish dependency (which keeps us separate) on the ego by accepting all events as being orchestrated by the Divine and leaving personal attachment to outcomes in the capable hands of the Creator.

When the individual mental flow is synchronized with the Divine Flow, we are able to rise above all fears, and find that eternal inner Serenity.

Affirmations for Ísvara Pranidhana

May all beings dwell in the earth.

May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings see the bright side of everything.

May all beings be healed.

May all beings be at peace.

Quotes

People are like stained glass windows, they sparkle and shine when the sun is out but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light within. – Unknown

What changes do I need to remember in the practice of Ísvara Pranidhana to be a better teacher?

How do I support these practices and why?

The essence of the Divine One is all-pervading. Love Is All There Is.
Baba Nam Kevalam.