

# Yoga for Children with Special Needs



**Yoga**   
In My School

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# 7 Tips to Teaching Yoga to Children with Special Needs

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## Think Fun

- sense of curiosity & play
- smile, laugh, enjoy

## Engage w Themes

- topics of interest to children
- kinaesthetic learning modality

## Repeat Often

- regular, consistent practice
- structure & variety

## Praise Generously

- find what they're doing well
- build confidence

## Teach Relaxation

- essential self-calming techniques
- alleviate anxiety & stress

## Keep it Short

- attention span
- creative & energetic

## Use Props

- visual support
- behavior management

## Notes

# Most Powerful Message

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One of the most powerful messages of yoga is that of self-acceptance. Each of us is different and unique with our own set of needs, limitations and strengths.

It is essential that children with special needs discover their own magnificence. Practicing yoga allows them to experience their mind and body without judgement. They are allowed to develop at their own rate, in their own time. Yoga breathing, affirmations, mindfulness techniques and poses teach children how to tune into their inner teacher, their intuition, and become comfortable in their body while quieting the critic in their head.

The non-competitive nature of yoga helps children feel accepted and able to participate regardless of physical or mental ability. Everyone is encouraged and progresses according to their personal dedication, focus and ability. Group practice also creates a sense of community and connection to the class, the community and all humanity.

As children with special needs learn to appreciate their own unique talents and abilities, they will truly be able to reach their fullest potential in heart, mind and body.

## I am Magnificent!

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- Unique and wonderful just the way you are



## Notes

# Most Powerful Tool

Start, return to and finish  
with the breath

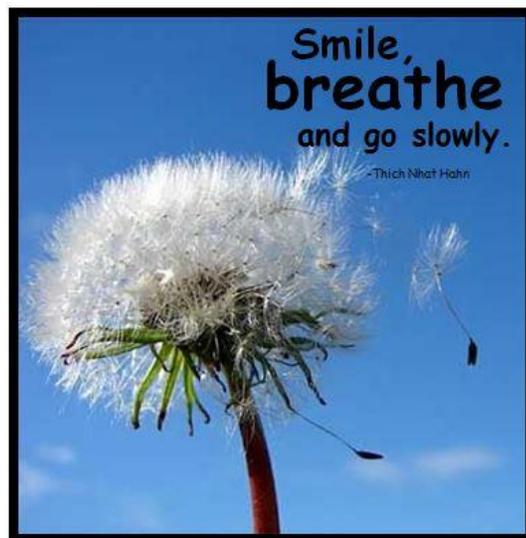


## Benefits of Breathing

- Increase awareness
- Reduce stress
- Rejuvenate entire body
- Improve concentration
- Tone muscles
- Increase blood flow
- Calm nervous system
- Manage emotions

## Nostril Dominance

Throughout the day we alternate breathing dominance between the right and left nostril every 20 minutes or so. Calm, steady attention is promoted by the left nostril: activity and energy by the right nostril.



Keep it Short • Repeat Often • Think Fun



Notes

# Toys and Props

There are numerous breathing toys and props which you can use to promote efficient lung development. It is recommended that blowing toys be one use only or not be shared with other children until they are washed and disinfected. Breathing toys and props include:

 <p>Bubbles</p>	 <p>Pinwheels</p>	 <p>Harmonica/Recorder</p>
 <p>Hoberman Sphere</p>	 <p>Feathers</p>	 <p>Pompoms</p>
 <p>Scarfs</p>	 <p>Party Blowers</p>	 <p>Whistles</p>
 <p>Ping-Pong Balls</p>	 <p>Straws</p>	 <p>Cotton Balls</p>

# Breathing Exercises & Games

## Affirmation Breathing

This breath combines the power of *pranayama* with affirmations. You will breathe normally. As you inhale say silently to yourself “I am.” As you exhale complete the sentence using a positive adjective to describe yourself. For example: Inhale, “I am,” Exhale, “calm.” Inhale, “I am,” Exhale, “creative.” Inhale, “I am,” Exhale, “organized.” Inhale, “I am,” Exhale, “happy.” Feel free to use one affirmation over and over again or use different ones for each breath. When finished sit quietly for a moment and pay attention to how you feel.

## Airball

**Supplies:** plastic drinking straw for each player and a cotton ball, pompom or crumpled ball of paper for each team.

In this breathing game the players use straws to pass the cotton ball to their team members. Give each person a straw and have them lie on their bellies in a circle in groups/teams of 4-6 people. Start by placing the cotton ball in front of one player. The group/team then tries to pass the ball around the circle, so that every player has a turn. They cannot touch the ball but can only move it by blowing on it through the straw.



**Variation:** Instead of blowing the cotton ball have players pick it up by sucking onto the end of the straw and place it in front of the next player before letting it go. This focuses on the inhalation instead of the exhalation.

## Air Walk

Lay on your back on the floor. Reach the arms overhead. On an inhale raise the right hand and left leg so that they touch above you. You can connect the hand to knee, foot, etc. It isn't as important where they touch as the fact that a connection is established. Exhale and lower. Inhale, raise the left hand and right leg to touch. Exhale and lower. Continue in this manner. Enjoy this [video of Air Walk](http://bit.ly/1mssAq9).  
<http://bit.ly/1mssAq9>

## Notes

## Back to Back Breathing

Divide the group into pairs. Have partners sit back to back. Feel the contact with and support of your partner. Inhale and exhale with awareness of your partner, feeling the expansion and contraction of the shoulders, backs and ribs of both



partners. Direct the breath into different parts of your back – upper back, middle back, lower back. Feel how the back become wider on the inhale increasing the contact and gently moves away on the exhale. Try to synchronize (inhale and exhale together) and/or syncopate (one partner inhales while other exhales) the breath.

**Variation:** Ask one partner to make a sound (maybe ‘ah’), sing or talk. Ask the other partner where they felt the sound and what it felt like. Take turns. Experiment with different sounds and pitches. How do the sounds feel different /similar? Do you feel them in the same place or in different places?

**Variation:** Experiment with twists.

Grasp your partner’s leg with your right hand, your right knee with your left hand. Look behind you. Switch sides and repeat. Alternatively, extend your arms at shoulder height,



## Balloon Game 1

Use a balloon as a prop. Demonstrate how a balloon is filled with the breath (inhale) and then deflates (exhale). Have children time their exhale to the same speed as the real balloon. Teacher lets air out of the balloon at varying speeds and intervals. As the air is let out the children slump in their seats or onto the floor becoming completely relaxed.

## Balloon Game 2

This game focuses on lengthening the exhale. Imagine you are a large balloon. Use three deep breaths to fill your balloon, making each inhale a bit longer than the one before. Once your balloon is full use one large exhale to deflate your lungs while running around the space to let the all the air out as if you were a filled balloon deflating. Once empty, lay motionless on the ground until the teacher picks up the balloon.

## Notes

## Blow Painting

**Supplies:** Various colors of paint, paper, straws and newspaper.

Place a couple dollops of paint on each paper (cardstock recommended). Have children blow through the straw close to the paints moving them around to create a work of art. Warning: prepare for a mess by lining the area with newspaper. Watch this video of Blow Painting. <http://bit.ly/1r650m0>



## Bunny Breath

Bunny Breathing teaches *viloma* or interrupted breathing. Here the focus is on the inhale to increase oxygen intake and stimulate the brain. Using your bunny nose, inhale in three brief sniffs (one, two, three), then exhale completely. Repeat a few times. With pre-school children you can encourage them to make bunny ears with their fingers on top of their heads, begin with fingers curled and then straighten the fingers more with each sniff until they are straight up. Slowly curl fingers again as you exhale.



**Variation:** Practice bunny breathing while standing and add in a hop after the exhale.

## Bumble Bee Breath (Bhramari)

This breathing exercise focuses on the exhale and where the sound vibrations resonate within the body. Inhale deeply and exhale with a humming sound similar to the droning of bees. This breathing technique is formally known as *Bhramari Pranayama*.



### Variations:

*Bee Orchestra:* Using your hand to conduct with a simple up and down motion invite children to change the pitch of the sound (low, medium, high) and become aware of where the vibrations are depending on pitch. Ask different children to take turns conducting the bumble bee orchestra.

## Notes

*Sense Withdrawal:* Repeat bumble bee breathing but this time use your thumbs to close your ears and your fingers to cover your eyes, to help concentrate on the vibrations inside your head.

### Flying Bird Breath

Sit cross legged with your arms at your sides. Inhale and fly your arms overhead. Exhale and lower the arms to the floor. Raise and lower your arms with each breath as if they were wings of a bird. Repeat a few times. Keeping the arm movements coordinated with the breath, inhale quickly and exhale slowly. Repeat a few times. Next inhale slowly and exhale quickly. Repeat. This almost always makes kids laugh.



**Variation:** Stand in a line, one in front of the other. The first person is the leader whom everyone else follows as they gently fly around the room with their bird wings, breathing deeply. Softly perch on your yoga mat before taking off again this time with a different leader.

### Group Pillow Breathing

Have one student lie on the ground on their back. Have the next student lie down using the first student's belly as a pillow. Arrange all the students in this manner so they are all using a friend's belly as a pillow. Breathe slowly and deeply. Become aware of the rise and fall of your head as your friend breathes and your belly as you breathe while another friend's head rises and falls. Change your breathing patterns (fast inhale/show exhale, slow inhale/fast exhale, 'ha' breath, yawning, coughing, laughing, etc.) and notice how it impacts you and everyone around you.

### 'HA' Breath

This is an enthusiastic breathing technique which increases energy, builds *agni* (inner fire) and stimulates the solar plexus. Inhale and reach both arms up overhead. Make fists and pull your elbows down to your waist as you exhale with a 'HA!' Inhale reach up, exhale, 'HA.' Repeat 5 times. For fun vary the volume of 'HA' as you exhale. Try 'HA' Breath while practicing Chair Pose. This is great active breathing technique that kids love.

## Notes

## Heart & Belly Breath

Sitting comfortably place one hand on your heart, one on your belly. Close your eyes. Inhale and exhale paying attention to the breath as it moves through your body. As children get older or have more experience with developing breath awareness you can begin to direct the breath. Inhale and fill your belly, then your heart. Exhale; empty the belly, then the heart. Repeat.

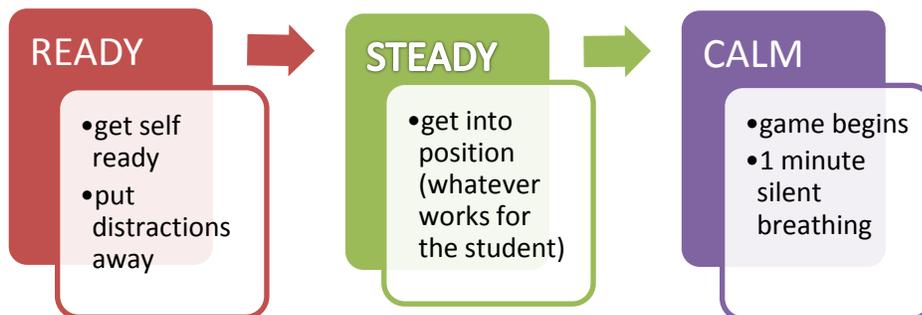


## Horsey Breath

Come into Horse Stance (feet wide and parallel, slight squat, as if you were riding a horse). Inhale and on an exhale blow the breath out making the lips flap while lightly shaking your head (think of a horse blowing). Repeat a few times. This breathing technique helps to release tension in the neck, shoulders, jaw and face.

## Ready, Steady, Calm

Make being quiet and calm into a game. The challenge is to see if students can be calm and quiet for one full minute. Expect all students to win.



## Snake Breath

Using [Cobra](#) Pose as inspiration come up into the back bend with an inhale, exhale long and slow making a ‘ssssss’ sound as if you were hissing like a snake, slithering through the grass, gently lowering to the floor. Focus on softening the throat, shoulders and belly.

## Notes

## Steam Engine

The goal of this exercise is to make the exhale twice as long as the inhale. Sit on the floor side by side in a row. First imagine that you are a steam engine. Inhale naturally, do not force or push, just let it flow. Exhale with a big “shhhhhhh” as if you were an engine letting off steam. The steam comes out long and slow. As you steam, wiggle forward on your bottom and move your arms like the wheels of a steam engine chug-chug-chug. See who can go the furthest on one breath. Cross the room only moving on the exhales with the “shhhhhhhhh.”



## Swimming Stuffedies

This breathing exercise helps children to learn diaphragmatic breathing. Invite all children to lie down on their backs. Place a small stuffed animal on their belly. Try to get the stuffed animal to swim on the waves of the breath. Inhale and the stuffed animal rises. Exhale and the stuffed animal descends. Repeat for a few moments allowing children to relax and enjoy the sensations and benefits of deep belly breathing. Alternatively use small rubber ducks. Enjoy this [video of Swimming Stuffedies](http://bit.ly/1oOSaDX). <http://bit.ly/1oOSaDX>



## Take 5

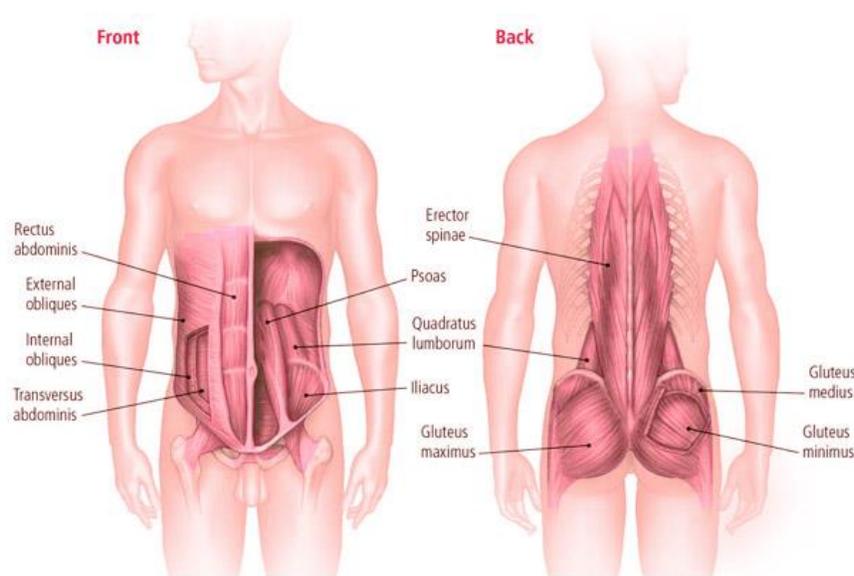
Sit comfortably. Lift one finger at a time as you breathe in through your nose and count in your mind: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Pause for a second. As you exhale, count backward: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, putting down a finger for each number. Repeat two or three times.

**Variation:** Older children can begin to add a retention hold. Take 5 then looks like this: inhale to a count of five, hold for a count of five, exhale for a count of five. Repeat.

## Notes

# Core Musculature

The core muscles of the body (those of the back, sides, pelvis, buttocks and abdominals) are essential to enjoying freedom of movement in everyday activities such as bending to tie your shoe, sitting in a chair, lifting an object or turning to look behind you. They provide an essential link between the upper and lower body and help to maintain equilibrium in the body. Working the core also improves balance, stability, postural alignment and function of the nervous system thereby reducing stress, muscular fatigue, lower back pain and compression of the internal organs.



Placing an emphasis on core musculature helps to achieve deeper respiration and develop core strength and endurance. It is important to focus on the breathing, especially the exhalation during core activation, so as to coordinate movement with the breath. In so doing the body is trained to work in harmony making it easier to move freely with strength and flexibility.

## The Goldfish Song

Craig Hanauer of Every Kid's Yoga recommends Laurie Berkner's *The Goldfish Song* to improve core strength while engaging children in playful music and language development.

- Gently touch below collarbones to prompt lifting the chest
- If they are unable to lift their chest off the floor for swimming, use a pillow or folded blanket under the chest for support

# Poses to Develop the Core

## Notes

### Bear Walk

Come into Downward Facing Dog (Adho mukha svanasana).

**Version 1:** Lift each limb in turn. Lift one hand, put it down. Lift the other hand, put it down. Lift one leg, put it down. Lift the other leg put it down. Lift one hand and the opposite leg, balance, put them down. Left the other hand and the opposite leg, stay steady, put them down. Growl like a bear.

**Version 2:** Bear walk around the space moving both limbs on one side simultaneously. Both right hand and foot move together, then left hand and foot move. This develops concentration, focus and coordination. Dig for insects, crawl into a log, stand on your hind legs and roar.



### Boat (Navasana)

Sit with your legs in front of you, knees bent. Place your hands under your knees. Lift up on your heart to stay in your boat. Come up to tiptoes. Maybe float your feet off the ground. Don't fall out of your boat (roll back onto the tailbone).

### Double Boat

Sit facing your partner. Hold hands. Touch the bottom of one foot to your partner's. Lift your foot up and lower it down. Repeat on the other side. If ready for a challenge lift both feet. Come down carefully.

### Happy Cat/Angry Cat (Marjarasana)

Kneel on all fours in Table position. Inhale and look up toward the ceiling, allowing your back to lower, your heart to come up and through your arms. Meow and smile, you are a Happy Cat. Next exhale, round your back, lowering your head to look at our belly. Hiss and yowl, you are an Angry Cat. Repeat.



## Hunting Cat/Balance Beam

Kneel on all fours in Table position. Lift and stretch your right hand in front of you while simultaneously lifting your left leg back behind you. Stretch long. Lower down. Now practice with left hand and right leg. Repeat on each side. Add a cat's claw swiping to catch a bird, mouse as you lower.

## Crab

Sit with your legs bent in front of you, hands on the floor behind your hips. Lift the hips up and walk/scuttle forward, back, left, right. Rest as needed. Hold crab races or play Crab Soccer.

## Flower

Sit with the soles of the feet touching, knees out to the side. Take one hand (this is your leaf) and thread it under the same leg from the inside out. Repeat with the other hand. Lean back, lifting the feet off the floor and balancing on your sitz bones. Watch [this video tutorial](http://bit.ly/1weIDIX). <http://bit.ly/1weIDIX>

## Happy Baby/Dead Bug (Ananda Balasana)

Roll onto your back. Lift your feet skyward, bending the knees. Grasp your feet with your hands, pulling the knees toward the armpits. Coo, giggle and make happy baby sounds. Sing a lullaby. Or if practicing Dead Bug scurry on the roof moving hands and legs quickly then stop when the teacher says, "Dead Bug."



## Plank/Lizard/Crocodile

Kneel on all fours in Table position. Straighten your legs behind you, lifting the knees off the ground and resting your weight on your hands and toes.  
**Advanced:** Slowly lower yourself to the ground.

## Rock & Roll

Sit hugging your knees into your chest. Roll back and forward repeatedly. Be aware of what is behind children so they do not bonk their heads.  
**Advanced:** Encourage children as they come up to float into boat pose for a moment then resume rolling.

## SeeSaw

**Partner Pose:** Sit with legs extended out to the sides facing a partner who is doing the same thing. Need to be close enough that legs or feet touch your partner. Reach across and hold hands with your partner. Rock forward and back with a sew say motion. You can also stir up a batch of soup or cookies

## Notes

by moving in gentle circles first one direction, then the other.

### Simple Seated Twist

Sitting inhale and extend the spine, reaching through the crown of the head. Exhale and twist bringing left hand to the right knee and looking over your right shoulder. Inhale and exhale while holding the twist. On an inhale come back to center. Take a breath. Repeat on the other side.

### Superman

Lie on your stomach. Imagine you are Superman/Supergirl flying to save the day. Stretch your arms in front of you. Lift your arms, head and legs off the ground and fly. Yeah! You saved the day. Relax.

### Swimming

Lie on your stomach. Stretch your arms out in front. Wiggle your right fingers and lift the arm off the ground. Lower. Wiggle your left toes and lift the leg off the ground. Lower. Lift your right arm, head and left leg off the ground. Repeat on the other side. **Variation:** Bend the knee as you lift the leg, reach the arm back to touch the leg to connect and balance the brain.

### TipToe

Stand with feet slightly apart. Inhale and raise your hands overhead. Exhale and lower the hands. Inhale and as you raise the hands come up onto tiptoes. Exhale and lower hand and feet to the ground. Repeat.



## Notes

# The 4 B's of Self Calming

Barbara Gini of BodyLogique highly recommends this simple 4 step approach to release tension, ease transitions, promote calm and re-engage children of all abilities.

## STEP 1: BRAKE

- Put the brake on excess energy
- Press hands firmly together to the slow count of 4 (4X)



## STEP 2: BRAIN

- Wake up the brain
- Clasp hands together and press down firmly on the top of the head (4X)



## STEP 3: BODY

- Wake up and calm down the body
- Squeeze the entire body: shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, legs, knees, ankles



## STEP 4: BREATHE

- Breathe deeply into the belly
- Breathe slowly in and out 4X



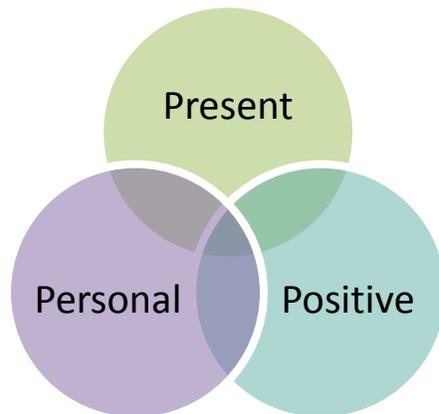
## Notes

# Affirmations

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Affirmations are short phrases that affect the subconscious mind and mould feelings, behaviours, and attitudes. They help to reprogram existing behaviours and thoughts, leading one to greater success and positive action.

The words in an affirmation help to focus on the aim, objective or situation one wants to achieve or create. They have three elements.



By affirming what you want in life, you mentally and emotionally make it true. By repeating the words you focus your mind on your goal, and create a mental image of the desired result. These mental images imprint on the subconscious mind and transform habits, behaviour, reactions and attitudes.

## Sample Affirmations

- I treat others how I like to be treated.
- I am a positive influence on others.
- I am proud to be unique.
- I am a great problem solver.
- I complete my homework assignments on time.
- I have many amazing talents.
- Ideas for problem solving come quickly and easily to me.
- I learn from my challenges and can always find ways to overcome them.
- I make like-minded friends easily and naturally.

**Find More** <http://www.pinterest.com/yogainmyschool/affirmations/>

# My Affirmations

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I AM

# Visualizations

*Visualization = Purposeful use of mental sensations*

Images are like magnets to our mind and pull us in the direction we want to go. Research shows the same neuro-pathways in the brain are activated when you vividly imagine something as when you actually do it. Visualization allows us to connect with our inner wisdom (intuition), find creative solutions and reach cherished goals.

## How to Effectively Use Visualizations

### CONSISTENCY

- Time
- Place

### RECEPTIVITY

- Emotional state: enjoyable and upbeat
- Resistance: explain goals (reduce stress, learn more easily, improve memory, get along better, be more creative)

### FOLLOW-UP

- Allow sharing – discuss, art, write, move

### TRUST THE PROCESS

- Don't force it
- Improvise – change positions, physical contact, fiddle object, movement

## 5 Steps to Creating Visualizations



**Resource** Clarke, Carolyn, *Imaginations: Fun Relaxation Stories and Meditations for Kids*, Carolyn Clarke, 2011

## Notes



# Mindfulness

## What is Mindfulness?

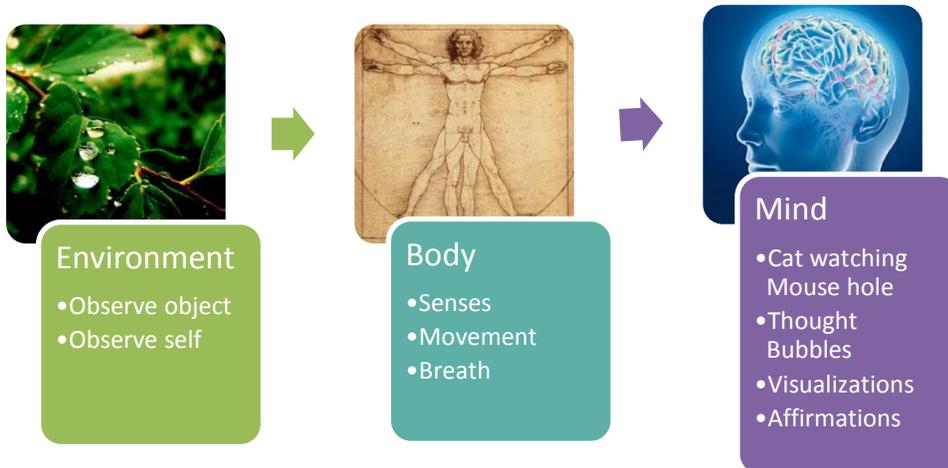
“the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn

*Paying attention, here and now, with kindness and curiosity*

## Mindfulness for Children

Here are a few guidelines when employing mindfulness techniques with children.

- Use clear, concrete & descriptive activities which engage creativity and imagination
- Start with short time periods (30 sec to 1 min), lengthen gradually
- Create success, keep it fun
- Move from external to internal (environment→body→mind)



YouTube Videos <http://www.youtube.com/user/homyogachick>

Dr. Dan Siegel interview

<http://yogainmyschool.com/2011/06/15/mindfulness-for-youth-with-dr-dan-siegel/>

# Mindfulness Activities

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## Stick Art

watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0llc0v5g82Q&feature=plcp>

## Cooked Spaghetti

watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEV3njRYgsw&feature=plcp>

## Add One

read <http://yogainmyschool.com/2009/09/04/useful-and-fun-yoga-games-add-one/>

## Body Chalk Board

read <http://yogainmyschool.com/2011/05/03/kids-yoga-games-body-chalk-board/>

## Do You Hear What I Hear?

read <http://yogainmyschool.com/2010/09/10/do-you-hear-what-i-hear-mindfulness-games-for-kids/>

## Rope Walking

watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xc-mcyv6VWY&feature=plcp>

## Notes

# Meditation

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Meditation for children helps them to find quiet calm and tap into their inner stillness in order to discover personal peace. Meditation comes in various forms many of which involve movement or sound. Successful meditation for children with special needs invites focus and attention, encouraging social bonding, joy and confidence. It does not require sitting still for very long.

**Rhythm** Humans have a deep connection to rhythm starting with the rhythm of a mother's heartbeat. Creating and repeating various rhythms balances, soothes and allows children a creative outlet. You can generate rhythms by clapping, tapping, snapping, stomping and using basic instruments such as rhythm sticks, shakers, drums, tambourines, chimes, etc.

**Mudra** Mudras are hand positions that seal the energy of your body and mind. These can be used as a self-regulating tools and help to develop fine motor skills and body awareness while providing sensory stimulation. You can use formal yoga mudras many of which are found in Marsha Therese Danzig's book *Children's Book of Mudras*. Alternatively observe children and create personal mudras from hand positions they already use creating purpose and meaning for the movements.

**Chanting** One of the keys to chanting is the use of calming vowel sounds. When using chants with children keep it simple and short. Feel free to create your own chants and encourage children to do the same. Some yoga chants include:

- Sa Ta Na Ma <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tk5VjAjXp5U>
- Om Ah Hum <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmVZCAVbz7M>
- Rockin Yogis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlubL8jZSUs>

**Movement** Various forms of purposeful, mindful movement are meditative. Sun Salutations, Seated Circling, Rope Walking, tracing labyrinths help calm the mind, focus attention and connect body to breath.

**Imitation** Encourage children to imitate movements of a partner/the teacher. Playing follow the leader games such as Animal Imitators and Do As I'm Doing helps develop vital social skills and mirror neurons. Moving slowly and purposefully creates a feeling of calm peacefulness whereas faster movements or adding music generates energy.

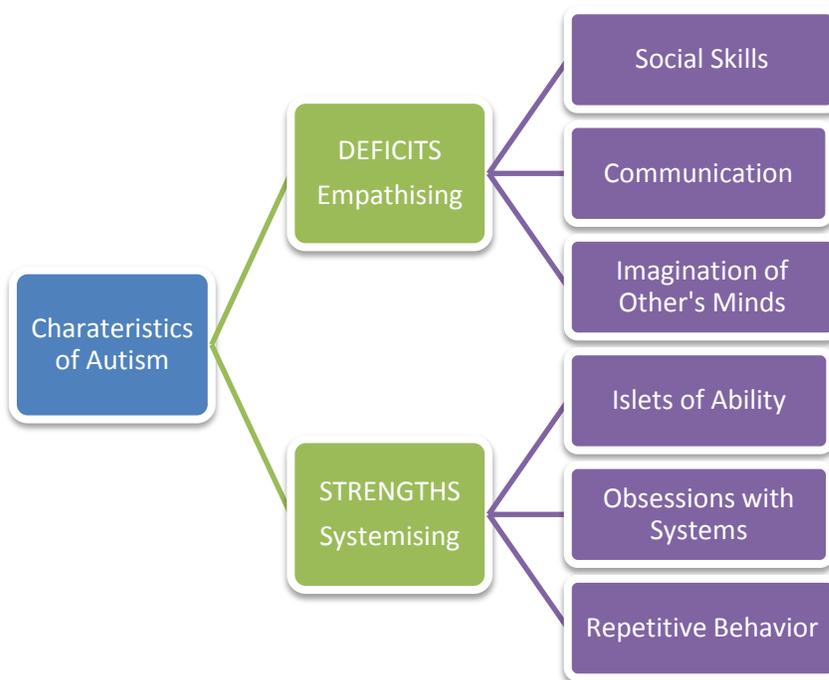
Enjoy this interview w Aruna Kathy Humprhys on Meditation for Kids  
<http://yogainmyschool.com/meditation-for-kids/>

# Autism

## What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurobiological condition that can affect the normal function of the gastrointestinal, immune, hepatic, endocrine and nervous system. Autism symptoms range in presentation and severity. At the most severe is Autistic disorder. At the least severe is Asperger syndrome.

ASD is characterized by a triad of deficits and a triad of strengths.



There are numerous co-occurring symptoms which may be present in individuals with ASD. These include:

- Anxiety
- Sensory sensitivity
- Motor abnormalities
- Language
- Seizures
- Sleep disturbances
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Immune dysfunction

## Notes

# Yoga for Autism

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## **Develop Cardio-pulmonary Functions**

Pranayama (yogic breathing) is calming and alerting assisting children with ASD to function at their best. A focus on proper functioning of the heart and lungs benefits many co-occurring symptoms of ASD.

## **Cultivate Proper Digestion/Elimination**

Relief from digestive ailments and constipation can be found through practicing twists (IE: Simple Seated Twist, Reclined Twists, and other abdominal condensing poses such as Wind Relieving Pose).

## **Increase Calm and Reduce Stress**

Relaxation techniques, visualizations, affirmations and breathing exercises teach students essential self-soothing skills. In addition yoga breathing and poses soothe the central nervous system by burning off excess energy and increasing internal sensitivity.

## **Strengthen and Tone the Body**

Yoga poses provide low-impact exercise for the bones and muscles while expanding and improving range of motion. Always adapt poses to meet the child's body and abilities. Use common names to which the child can relate.

## **Improve Social Skills**

Yoga is social by nature. Everyone can participate and benefit from practicing yoga. Partner poses are especially effective at improving social skills, communication skills, team work and cooperation. Yoga games encourage turn taking, waiting, rules of play and other social skills.

## Notes

# ADHD

## What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder involves a lack of focus, fluctuation in focus, inability to refocus or obsessive focus.

## Common Signs of ADHD



### Inattention

- Easily distracted
- Quickly bored
- Struggle w instructions



### Hyperactivity

- Constantly fidgeting
- Talk non-stop
- High energy

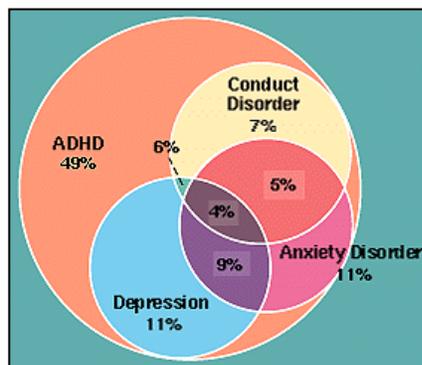


### Impulsivity

- Lack of restraint
- Difficulty waiting
- Interrupt frequently

## ADHD Includes a Variety of Disorders:

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Major Depressive Disorder (MAD)
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)



## Notes

# Yoga for ADHD

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## **Provide Physical Outlet and Challenge**

Yoga provides a valuable physical outlet to help release pent up energy. Sun Salutations, standing poses, Kundalini kriyas and arm balances are all effective at releasing excess energy. The wide variety and intensity of poses and breathing techniques provide options for calming and alerting.

## **Increase Calm and Reduce Stress**

Relaxation techniques, visualizations, affirmations and breathing exercises teach students essential self-soothing skills. In addition yoga breathing and poses soothe the central nervous system by burning off excess energy and increasing internal sensitivity.

## **Improve Co-ordination and Body Awareness**

Yogic practices of moving the body in synchronization with the breath helps to increase body awareness and fluidity of movement. In addition Balance poses and cross body movements such as Twists connect the right and left hemispheres of the brain and improve co-ordination.

## **Develop Focus and Concentration**

Mindfulness techniques, balance poses (IE: Tree, Eagle, Dancer, Half Moon, Warrior III), and breathing exercises assist students in learning to focus, pay attention and stay on task. Reduce visual distractions and place a child with ADHD far from windows, doors, other active students.

## **Improve Social Skills**

Yoga is social by nature. Everyone can participate and benefit from practicing yoga. Partner poses are especially effective at improving social skills, communication skills, team work and cooperation. Yoga games encourage turn taking, waiting, rules of play and other social skills.

## Notes

# Sensory Processing

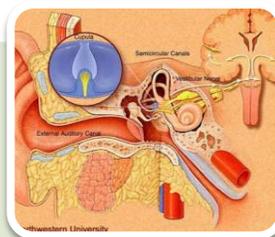
Children with ASD and ADHD often experience problems with their sense of touch, smell, hearing, taste and/or sight. In addition, difficulties with mobility, coordination, sense of balance and knowing where they are in space may be present.

## Sensory Systems



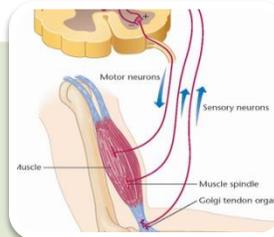
### Tactile System

- Discriminatory
- Protective



### Vestibular System

- Accelerate/Decelerate
- Posture
- Balance



### Proprioceptive System

- Muscles/Joints
- Where in space

## Yoga for Sensory Processing

### Tactile

#### BARE FEET

Encourage children to go without shoes or socks. Footwear diminishes sensory feedback. By going barefoot the natural development of the arches is promoted and full foot activity and range of motion is encouraged. Play Toe-ga to further increase foot awareness and mobility. <http://yogainmyschool.com/toe-ga-kids-yoga-sorting-game/>

#### PARTNER POSES

Working with others stimulates the senses. Coming into, holding in stillness and moving out of poses requires contact, verbal and non-verbal communication, sensitivity and awareness. For many children with sensory sensitivity firm touch

## Notes

and heavy pressure is calming. Partner poses have the added benefit of social interaction and training.

#### **FINE MOTOR SKILLS**

Simple mudras help develop fine motor skills, focus the mind and provide purpose to hand movements. Poses which require connecting the hands to the earth (Table position, Cat, Downward Facing Dog, etc.) stimulate the reflexology points of the hands, strengthen muscles and tendons, and promote full range of motion. Movements such as spider walking the fingers, extending the reach all the way through the finger tips, and tenting the hands further develop fine motor skills. The meditation Sa Ta Na Ma is particularly effective at refining motor skills and developing pincher grasp.

#### *Vestibular*

#### **POSTURE**

Yoga's emphasis on proper alignment, lifting the heart, standing/sitting tall, taking complete breaths assist in the development of healthy posture. In addition yoga helps children increase in confidence and body awareness.

#### **BALANCE POSES**

Balance poses (Tree, Flamingo, Eagle, Hunting Cat, Dancer, Warrior III, Half Moon) stimulate the vestibular system via the subtle corrections of the body as children shift in and out of balance. Encourage children to focus on one spot (see Drishti below), tune into their breath and use their arms to support balance.

#### **INVERSIONS**

Inversions (when the head goes below the heart) are fabulous for stimulating the sensory system. Most children love inversions and find them calming. Maintaining contact with the ground through hands/feet, shoulders or back helps children feel grounded and increases proprioception. Effective inversions include Bear Walk, Downward Facing Dog, Ragdoll, Bridge, Supported Shoulder Stand, Legs Up the Wall. Avoid inversions if there is a history of seizures, heart disease, neck injury or instability, or headache.

## Notes

**DRISHTI** Drishti is a gazing technique which develops concentration. In yoga drishti is a focal point where the gaze rests. Calming the gaze (outer vision) assists with creating inner awareness and calms the mind and body.

### *Proprioception*

**BODY AWARENESS** Yoga develops body awareness of both the outer body (where you are in space, how much room you take up, etc.) and the inner body (sensations, feelings, etc.)

**ALIGNMENT** Teaching correct alignment in poses is vital yet needs to be done with a playful attitude and in accordance with emotional, physical and mental maturity and development. Poses that are key to developing an awareness of alignment are Mountain, all Balance poses, Back to Back Breathing.

**FLOWS** Moving through yoga poses to the rhythm of the breath is known as flow. The most common example of this are Sun Salutations. Flows are a form of moving meditation and are soothing. Encourage children to develop their own flows increases creativity and allows them to take ownership of their practice.

### *Visual*

**IMITATING** Each yoga class children are required to imitate the instructor and other class participants. This requires copy and repeating behaviors, expressions and language which are key social and development skills. Instructors can also imitate students thereby fostering leadership skills and developing social and emotional connections.

**SEQUENCING** Sequences are developed when poses are linked together and repeated. Sequencing helps students develop memory and organization which may lessen anxiety due to predictability. Using yoga pose cards, stuffed animals or other visuals is highly

## Notes

encouraged when sequencing to provide visual support. Some students will insist that the poses are ALWAYS done in the same sequence

## Auditory

### LISTENING

In yoga auditory instructions are supported by demonstration and physical movement as children move in and out of poses. At times touch is also employed to direct attention to specific areas or muscles. This multisensory communication supports learners. Participating in yoga develops attentive listening skills and promotes following directions in sequential manner. Instructors need use vocabulary appropriate to the age and ability of students, using only the words required to achieve goals. Tone of voice is also important. Keep the voice upbeat and fun during poses and slow and soothing during relaxation.

### MUSIC

There are numerous ways to incorporate music into kids yoga classes. Singing instructions is often more successful than speaking them. Purposeful use of songs to support poses is highly encouraged. For example: Singing *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* while practicing Boat Pose. Listen to this interview w Kira Willey <http://yogainmyschool.com/kira-willey-music-yoga-and-life/> and read more about the [Benefits of Music in Kids Yoga Class](#). Chanting is calming and provides auditory and vibrational stimulus. Incorporating simple rhythm instruments (drums, rhythm sticks, tambourines, etc.) is also recommended.

### SILENCE

Comfort in silence is one of the beauties of yoga and one of the most difficult things to share with children. Provide opportunities in every class to experience silence. Do not rush. Allow students to practice in silence for part of your class. Aim for brief moments of calm, silence whether in movement, holding a pose, meditation or relaxation.

## Notes

### *Interoception*

<b>INTERNAL SENSATIONS</b>	Yoga encourages internal awareness and listening to our intuition. Meditation, silence, breathing exercises, visualizations, mindfulness and attention to the third eye chakra all promote an awareness of the inner body and voice.
<b>BREATHING</b>	Turning the attention toward the breath increases internal awareness. If children are comfortable suggest they close their eyes while practicing breathing exercises thereby increasing internal awareness as visual stimulus is decreased.
<b>VISUALIZATIONS</b>	Visualizations allow children to tap into their imagination and creativity. During visualizations children are able to create detailed worlds through mental images.
<b>MINDFULNESS</b>	See p. 20-21
<b>MEDITATION</b>	See p. 22

### *Emotional Well-Being*

<b>CALMING TECHNIQUES</b>	Changing the rate of your breathing has more impact on your emotions than any other activity. Exhales are calming and stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system. Lengthening the exhales triggers the relaxation response and promotes overall well-being. The 4 B's to Self Calm, Back to Back Breathing, Heart-Belly Breath, Swimming Stuffedies, Take 5, Child's Pose, Rag doll Pose and other forward folds and Sushi roll are calming.
<b>BREATHING</b>	See p. 3-10
<b>AFFIRMATIONS</b>	See p. 16-17
<b>VISUALIZATIONS</b>	See p. 18-19
<b>MINDFULNESS</b>	See p. 20-21
<b>MEDITATION</b>	See p. 22

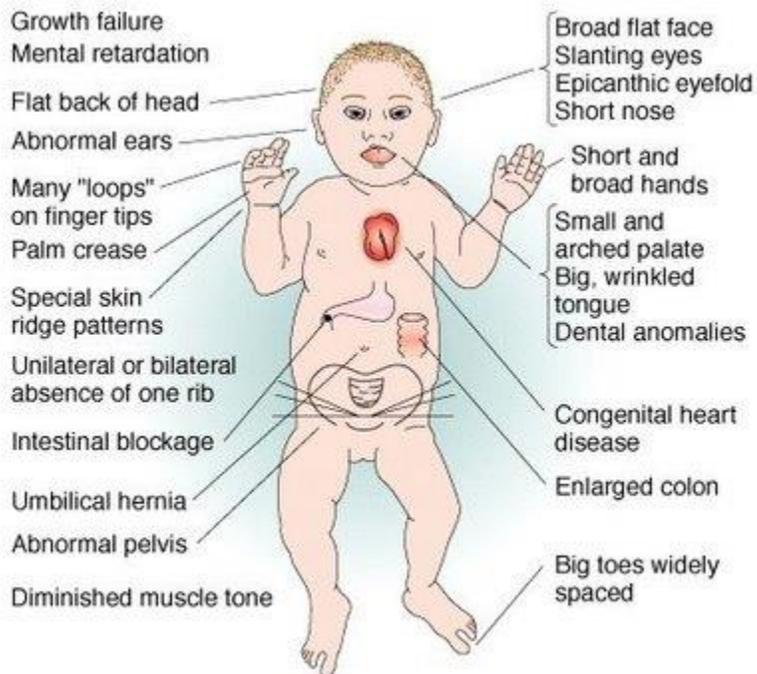
## Notes

# Down syndrome

## What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a congenital disorder arising from an error in cell division resulting in an extra 21<sup>st</sup> chromosome (Trisomy 21). The condition leads to impairments in both cognitive ability and physical growth ranging from mild to moderate. Each child with Down syndrome is unique and they will develop at their own pace.

## Physical Characteristics of DS



## Conditions Common with DS

- Hypotonia (low muscle tone)
- Congenital heart defects
- Pulmonary hypertension/respiratory problems
- Hearing and vision difficulties
- Intestinal abnormalities
- Thyroid dysfunction

## Notes

# Yoga for Down syndrome

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## **Engage with Music Therapy**

Chanting, drumming, mantra repetition, meditation and relaxation to music are all ways to incorporate music therapy into a yoga practice. Sounds promote, maintain & restore mental, physical emotional and spiritual health while encouraging creativity and self-expression.

## **Develop Cardio-pulmonary Functions**

Breathing exercises and games (p.3-10) are especially beneficial for children with congenital heart defects common with DS. In addition they also help ease pulmonary hypertension, relieve nasal congestion and build the immune system.

## **Strengthen and Tone the Body**

Low muscle tone (hypotonia) is characteristic with DS. Yoga standing poses such as Mountain, Tree, Warrior and Triangle help to correct flat feet, weak ankles and unstable knee caps, as well as improve muscle strength throughout the body.

## **Provide Thyroid Stimulation**

Thyroid dysfunction is often a concern for children with DS. Yoga practices of jalandhara bandha, Bridge Pose and Shoulder Stand stimulate the thyroid gland. \*\* If atlanto-axial instability exists (between C1 atlas and C2 axis) Shoulder Stand should be avoided\*\*

## **Cultivate Proper Digestion/Elimination**

Relief from digestive ailments and constipation can be found through practicing twists (IE: Simple Seated Twist, Reclined Twists, and other abdominal compressing poses such as Wind Relieving Pose).

## Notes

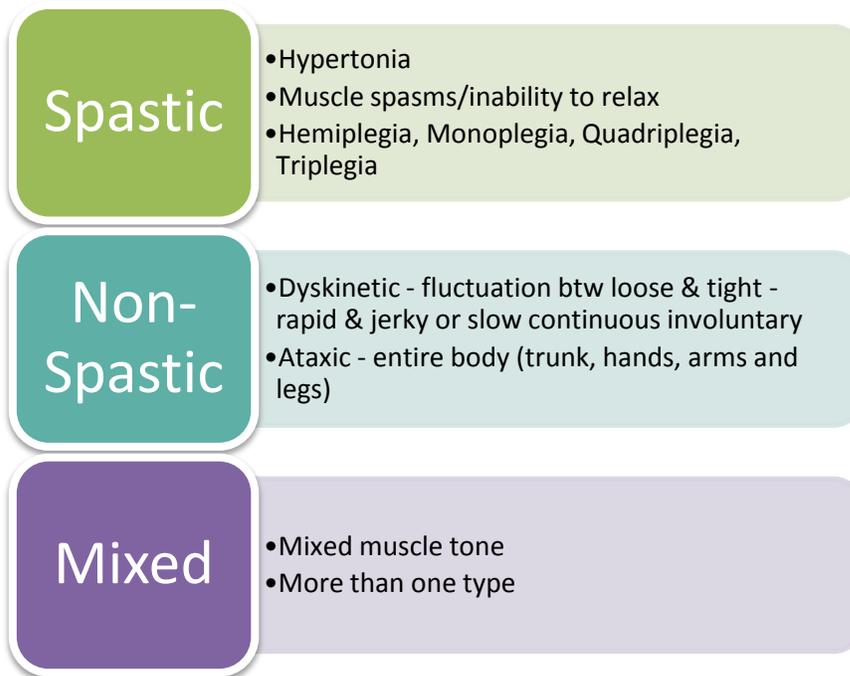
# Cerebral Palsy

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## What is Cerebral Palsy?

Cerebral Palsy is a broad term to describe a group of chronic disorders affecting body movement and muscle coordination. It is caused by damage to the motor control centers of the brain resulting in limited muscle tone, movement and motor skills.

There are three major types of CP.



## Common Challenges of CP

- Muscle Tone
- Coordination
- Balance
- Seizures
- Speech and communication difficulties

## Notes

# Yoga for Cerebral Palsy

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## **Develop Pulmonary Awareness**

Pranayama (yoga breathing) is highly effective at relaxing the muscles throughout the body and increasing range of motion in the ribs, chest and lungs. Developing awareness of the body's movements during the breath and training in diaphragmatic breathing is essential. See p.3-10.

## **Encourage Flexibility**

A focus on lengthening the muscles and improving range of motion is vital to encourage proper development and prevent atrophy from lack of use. Take your time; move slowly and mindfully through each pose, exercise and activity.

## **Adapt Poses for Floor Yoga**

Implementing yoga poses which use the floor as the area of support is key to allowing those with CP to relax and not worry about balance. Suggested poses include: Reclined Twists, Forward folds, Back bends, Cat/Cow, Cobra, Sphinx, Fish, Happy Baby.

## **Utilize Yoga Props**

Using props such as straps, blankets, bolsters, blocks, chairs, etc. is helpful to allow support of the body while encouraging proper alignment and relaxation.

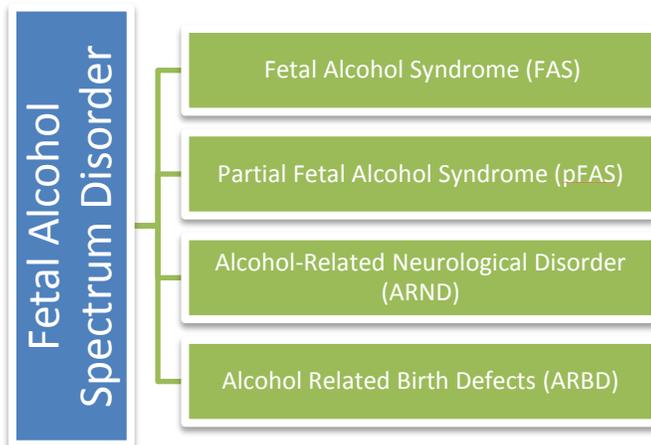
## Notes

# FASD

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## What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term referring to a range of disorders (physical, behavioral and cognitive) caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.



## Common Symptoms of FASD

Each individual with FASD is unique. They may exhibit any combination of the following in a range of mild to severe.

- Slow growth
- Deformities of the joints, limbs and fingers
- Vision and hearing problems
- Learning disorders
- Heart defects
- Kidney problems
- Poor co-ordination
- Short attention span
- Hyperactivity
- Anxiety
- Poor impulse control
- Communication challenges

## Notes

# Yoga for FASD

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## **Improve Co-ordination and Body Awareness**

Yogic practices of moving the body in synchronization with the breath helps to increase body awareness and fluidity of movement. In addition Balance poses and cross body movements such as Twists connect the right and left hemispheres of the brain and improve co-ordination.

## **Increase Calm and Reduce Stress**

Relaxation techniques, visualizations, affirmations and breathing exercises teach students essential self-soothing skills. In addition yoga breathing and poses soothe the central nervous system by burning off excess energy and increasing internal sensitivity.

## **Develop Focus and Concentration**

Mindfulness techniques, balance poses (IE: Tree, Eagle, Dancer, Half Moon, Warrior III), and breathing exercises assist students in learning to focus, pay attention and stay on task. Reduce visual distractions and place a child with FASD far from windows, doors, other active students.

## **Strengthen and Tone the Body**

Yoga poses provide low-impact exercise for the bones and muscles while expanding and improving range of motion. Always adapt poses to meet the child's body and abilities. Use common names to which the child can relate.

## **Improve Social Skills**

Yoga is social by nature. Everyone can participate and benefit from practicing yoga. Partner poses are especially effective at improving social skills, communication skills, team work and cooperation. Yoga games encourage turn taking, waiting, rules of play and other social skills.

## Notes

# Yoga Poses

## Butterfly (Baddha konasana)

Sit with the legs in front of you, knees bent and the soles of the feet touching/kissing. Allow the knees to fall open to the sides. Sing “Fly Like a Butterfly” as your knees gently float up and down with the rhythm. Bring your head toward the feet as you “sleep like a butterfly.” Stretch each arm up individually as you “stretch like a butterfly.”



## Bridge

Lie on your back. Bend the knees and place the soles of the feet on the ground. Teacher may want to hold onto child’s feet to ground and create greater body awareness. Inhale lift the hips off the ground. Teacher may need to assist so that child understands which body part moves with the breath. Exhale and lower the hips to the ground. Sing “London Bridge is Falling Down” with building up as you inhale and lift the hips and falling down as you lower back to the ground.

## Child’s/Lady Bug/Seed/Rock (Balasana)

Kneel low, rest your head on the floor in front of you. Place your hands anywhere it is comfortable. Relax and breathe. Enjoy feeling peaceful, quiet and safe in this pose. Add gentle touch/massage to child’s back to increase sensory perception and practice social skills.

## Cobra (Bhujangasana)

Lie on your stomach with your hands below your shoulders. Inhale, press your hands into the ground and lift your heart and head upwards. Pull the shoulder blades down the back creating space for a long snake neck. Exhale with a HISSSSSSS as you lower to the floor. Repeat. You can add a snake dance to play with various versions (baby snake, teenage snake, Daddy snake).

## Cross Body Crawl

Stand tall. Lift the right knee and touch it with the left hand/elbow. Lower. Lift left knee and touch it with the right hand/elbow. Repeat. This action connects the right and left hemispheres of the brain increasing neuro-connectivity and balancing mental activity. Add music or a chant to improve rhythm and extend the activity.

## Notes

## Dancer (Natarajasana)

Stand. Bend the right knee, grasp the foot behind the hip with the right hand. Use a wall if necessary for support or reach the left hand above the head. Teeter totter forward, lifting the right leg up behind and opening the chest. Inhale return to upright. Exhale and lower to standing. Repeat on the other side.



## Double Dancer

Stand facing a partner. Place a hand on your partner's shoulder. Use the other hand to grasp the foot behind your hips. Lean gently toward your partner coming into Dancer. Lower and repeat on the other side.

## Eagle

**Low:** Stand. Cross the right leg over the left. Extend the arms in front of you crossing the right arm over the left, bringing palms together and intertwining the fingers. Bring your hands down and toward your body resting them on your chest with the fingers turned up toward the face. Pause here and breathe. This is a calming version of Eagle. Try closing the eyes and maintaining balance. Unwind yourself and repeat on the other side.

**High:** Stand. Find a spot to focus on (drishti). Bend the knees. Cross the right leg over the left, lifting the right toes off the ground if possible. Fly your wings out wide to the sides then cross them with the right arm winding under the left. Finger tips (wing tips) coming to the sky. Sink in the hip, sitting on your branch. Count down (3, 2, 1) and fly away, releasing the pose, spreading the arms wide. Repeat on the other side. This is an invigorating version of Eagle.



## Half Fish

Lie on your back. Prop up on your elbows lifting your head and back off the ground. Breathe deeply and open the chest. Make fish lips to your friends. Can also be done seated in a chair or standing by clasping the hands behind the back and lifting the heart. Inhale and open the chest. Exhale and release.

## Half Moon

Come into Table Position. Extend the right leg behind you. Place the right hand on the right hip. Begin to stack the shoulders one on top of the other, turning to face the side wall. Float the foot off the ground. Reach the right hand up toward the sky. Spread the fingers and imagine they are a twinkling star in the night sky. Lower gently. Repeat on the other side.

## Notes

## Half Moon – Back to Back

Kneel beside your partner. Extend the outer leg. Place the outer hand on your hip. Stack the shoulders leaning into your partner behind you. Float the extended leg up off the ground. Reach the top arm up toward the sky touching your partners hand/arm. Breathe. Slowly lower. Switch places with your partner and repeat.

**Basic breathing guidelines for *asana* practice include:**  
**Inhale as you expand, lift or open your body.**  
**Exhale as you contract or close your body.**

## Legs Up the Wall

Sit sideways very close to the wall. Roll onto your back swinging the legs up the wall. Experiment with various leg positions: 1) legs straight up the wall 2) soles of the feet together and knees out to the side 3) legs straight and extended wide. Resting together creates a sense of connection and community.

## Mountain

Stand, feet together or hip distance apart. Press your feet firmly into the ground. Lift from your belly to the crown of your head. Roll shoulders up, back then down, opening through the chest. Hands are by the sides with fingers reaching for the floor. Stand tall, firm and immovable like a mountain.



## One Legged Forward Fold

Sit with your feet extended in front of you. Bend on leg, placing the sole of the foot on the inner thigh of the opposite leg. Inhale and lengthen the upper body. Exhale and fold over the extended leg. Hold for a few breaths. On an inhale come back to sitting tall. Repeat on the other side.

## Pizza Pie

Sit with both legs extended and wide apart. Imagine you are making pizza. Ask children what steps need to be followed to make pizza. First: Roll out the crust being sure to have it reach all the way to your toes on both sides. Next: Spread the sauce. Then: Grate cheese over one knee, one foot, the other foot, the other knee and in the middle. Add toppings as suggested by children. Place it in the oven by lifting arms high overhead then lowering to

## Notes

grasp toes. Count down from 10 for the oven timer. When you reach 0 the buzzer sounds and the oven door opens (lift arms up overhead). It smells delicious. Energetically eat your pizza.

### Rag Doll

Stand with feet apart. As you exhale flop over, head and arms hanging down, knees bent. Relax and breathe. Pretend to finger paint on the floor. Slowly return to a standing position. Also can be done while seated by opening the knees and rag dolling yourself in between the legs.



### Sphinx/Seal

Lie on your stomach. Place your hands in front of you, resting on your forearms with elbows below the shoulders. Pull the shoulders away from the ears. Relax and think Sphinx-like thoughts while you enjoy this simple backbend.

### Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar)

A repetitive series of poses linked together with the breath. Below are directions for Sun Salutation A and an easier version Kneeling Sun Salutations. This is an example of flow and is a form of moving meditation.

Mountain. Inhale lift arms overhead. Exhale forward fold, Inhale extend, looking up. Exhale step back to plank and lower to the ground. Inhale cobra. Exhale downward facing dog. Breathe. Inhale step forward and extend. Exhale forward fold. Inhale lift arms overhead. Exhale mountain.

**Kneeling Sun Salutations**

Inhale reach up

Exhale baby pose

Inhale table

Exhale downward dog

Inhale plank

Exhale downward dog

Inhale table

Exhale baby pose

## Notes

## Sushi Roll

Lie across your yoga mat at one end. Grasp the edge of the mat and roll yourself up. Unroll yourself when you are ready.



## Tree

Stand tall. Extend your arms out to the sides. Shift your weight to the left side and kickstand your right foot against the left ankle. If steady lift the right foot off the ground. Once the foot can come off the ground, experiment with arms positions: hands in Namaste (in front of the heart), hands in Namaste extended overhead, hands extended overhead and wide apart, create whatever type of tree you like.

## Two Trees

Stand beside your partner. Hold hands. Lift the outer foot and rest it against the inner leg turning the knee outwards. Touch the palm of your outer hand to the palm of your partner's outer hand. Breathe and balance. Release and change sides before repeating.

## Forest

As a group stand in a circle. Hold hands or stand palm to palm with those beside you. Everyone lift one leg bringing the foot to rest on the other leg. Feel how it is to balance with friends. Is it easier or harder than alone? Raise your hands up and down and see how that changes/impacts the pose. Lower the leg and repeat with the other foot.

## Triangle

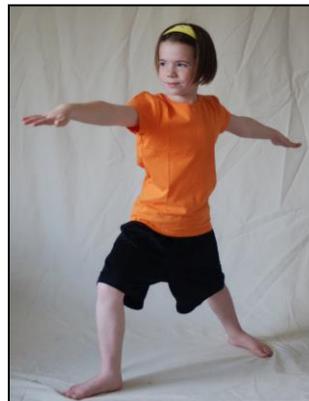
Stand, legs wide apart. Turn the right foot out 90 degrees. Raise arms to shoulder height. Keeping legs straight, reach the right arm forward and then tip yourself over so that the hand connects with the leg. The left arm reaches for the sky above. Imagine yourself to be a pyramid or a kite or count how many triangles you made with your body.

## Triangle – Back to Back

Stand back to back with a partner. Step the legs wide apart. Decide on side to tip toward and turn that foot out 90 degrees. Reach and tip connecting with your partners back

## Warrior II

Stand, legs wide apart. Keep your hips and shoulders in line with your feet. Turn the right foot out 90 degrees (this is your forward foot). Inhale and raise the arms up to shoulder height. Exhale and gently



## Notes

bend the forward knee. Gaze forward. Repeat affirmations: “I am brave, I am strong.” Return to standing. Repeat on the other side.

### Warrior – Back to Back

Stand back to back with a partner. Step the legs wide apart. Decide on a side to be the forward side. Continue as Warrior II feeling your partner behind you throughout the movements. As you raise arms connect by touch hands to arms. A wonderful pose for developing proprioception and social skills.

### Warrior III/Airplane

Stand with one foot in front of the other as if taking a step. Take your arms out to the side (like airplane wings). Teeter totter yourself forward and lift the back leg off the ground. Breathe & balance. Bank the plane by gently leaning to one side, then the other. Come up as you land the plane. Repeat with the other leg in front.

**Starting from the ground:** Stand with one foot in front of the other as if taking a step. Bend forward and gently touch the ground/some blocks/a wall. Lift the back leg off the ground, stretch through the back toes.

### Linked Warriors

Stand side by side with one foot in front of the other. Place arms over shoulder. Lean forward together, while lifting the back foot off the ground. Support your partner and balance together.

### Wind Relieving

Lie on your back, legs extended. Hug the right knee into the chest. Hold for a few breaths. Release and hug both knees into the chest. Hold and release. Hug the left knee into the chest. Hold and release. Repeat the entire pattern this time hugging the knees into the armpits.

## Notes

# Kundalini Kriyas

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## Body Rolling

Place a number of mats on the ground in a line. Encourage children to roll down the mats as if they were rolling down a hill. Repeat until tired.

## Finger Claps

Raise both arms overhead. Clap fingers to palms. Continue for 15-60 seconds. It will become difficult and clapping will slow. Lower arms and relax. This is extremely quick way to calm finger/hand fidgeting.

## Frog

Squat with knees out to the side like a frog, hands on the floor in front of you. Imagine you are catching flies with your tongue. Rippit/croak like a frog. Dive into the water by lowering the head and lifting the hips (standing forward fold). Return to the frog squat. Repeat the dive 10x. Jump as high as you can 3x.

## Seated Circling

Sit in Easy Pose (criss-cross). Place hands on knees. Begin to make slow circles with your torso. Inhaling as you come forward. Exhaling as you move back. Speed up (if desired). Continue in the same direction for 10-20 circles. Slow down and come to the center in stillness. Breathe. Repeat circling in the opposite direction.

## The Shakes

Bring your hands beside your ears, close but not touching the head, elbows to the front. Vigorously shake your hands continuously for 1 minute. Keep breathing throughout. As a teacher provide timing cues (half way done, 15 seconds left) to provide time reference and encouragement.



# Yoga Games

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## Animal Imitators

Find some fun music to play while you imitate how various animals move: walk tall like a giraffe reaching for leaves in the tops of the trees, lumber like an elephant swinging your trunk, inch along the ground like an inchworm, slither like a snake, fly like an eagle, waddle like a duck, jump like frog, swing from the trees like a monkey, scuttle like a crab, stomp and roar like a T-Rex, etc. It's great to have visuals of the animals—photos, stuffed animals, small toys—which you can randomly choose to change the movement without stopping the activity.

**Variation:** *Animal Yoga Freeze Dance:* stop the music now and again and have everyone freeze in position. Fabulous game to play along with the book *Move* by Robin Page.

## Ball Pass

**Supplies:** a rubber spikey ball, beach ball, basketball-sized Nerf ball, or other soft ball that the feet can grasp.



Have everyone sit in a circle. Pass the ball from person to person using only your feet! The person receiving the ball has to 'catch' it with their feet, and so on around the circle.

Young children and children with adaptive needs may have poor muscle tone and have difficulty with this task. They can play by rolling the ball with their feet to the next person. The idea is to build core & leg strength rather than to pass and catch perfectly. Encourage the children by saying "Just do your best! Let's have fun!"

Older children can play by 'throwing' and 'catching' (with feet) to anyone within the circle, or by passing it while doing Plow Pose.

Expand the game (for children 6 and up) by pairing auditory processing with the movement much like musical chairs: play music while the ball is being passed. Randomly stop the music, and when the music stops, everyone has to 'freeze' including the person with the ball. Music starts, play continues.

## Notes

Increase difficulty and sensory processing by adding a second ball, possibly of a different size, weight, colour and texture, to be passed around the circle.

### Body Smooshing

Have a child lie on the floor. Using a large exercise ball begin to roll it over the child's body starting at the feet and working up the legs, and torso, then down and up each arm in turn. Go slowly providing as much sensory input as possible. You can even tell the child what part of their body you are smooshing as the ball touches it: "Now I'm smooshing your legs." Spend as much time as wanted on each area. Have the child roll over and repeat on the other side. This feels fabulous and is extremely useful for children with sensory processing issues.

### Body Tracing

Provide each child with a ball – larger balls are often easier. Starting in a seated position finger roll the ball around your body always keeping at least one finger on the ball. It's as if you are tracing the outline of your body with the ball. Move into other seated positions (i.e. seated forward fold, seated wide angle forward fold, Marichiyasana, etc.) and repeat. If you need to bend your knees to maintain contact with the ball, that is fine. It is more important to continuously touch the ball passing it from one hand to the other as it goes around your body.

### Do As I'm Doing

This is a version of Follow the Leader. Choose a leader to pick a yoga pose or activity. Sing the song as you practice the pose.

Do as I'm doing, follow, follow me  
Do as I'm doing, follow, follow me  
If I do it high or low, if I do it fast or slow  
Do as I'm doing, follow, follow me  
Do as I'm doing, follow, follow me

### Freeze Dance

Begin by reviewing a few suggested yoga poses. [Mountain](#), [Warrior](#), [Eagle](#), [Tree](#), [Dancer](#), and other standing and balance poses work especially well with this activity as they are easy poses to assume when dancing around a room. Next, turn on some music. Fun, up-tempo



## Notes

tunes work best. While the music plays everyone freestyle dances around the room. When the music stops everyone must freeze in a yoga pose...become a statue.

### I Spy

**Supplies:** a bag or pictures of a variety of animals and objects, each corresponding to a yoga pose.

Stand in a circle. Display all the object or pictures in the middle of the circle. The teacher starts by saying, “I spy ... something that is green and hops.” (Giving a description of one of the objects/pictures.) The children guess “a frog” and everyone practices [Frog Pose](#). The person to the right of the teacher then spies another object/picture and gives a description. Continue around until all the children have a turn at spying.

### Yoga Jenga

**Supplies:** Take a jenga game and write a different pose on each block. I took inspiration from the 60 poses included in [Once Upon a Pose](#).



Have a couple of kids set up the game by stacking three blocks across three blocks until a tower is formed.

Choose a child to carefully remove a jenga block. Perform the yoga pose written on the block. You can place the block back on to the top of the jenga tower in order for it to continue to build. If you don't want to repeat any poses during the class simply place the used jenga blocks off to one side. As well we more often than not simply run out of time long before the tower comes down. Choose another child and repeat until all children have had a turn. If the tower falls simply rebuild and continue to play.

## Notes

# Classroom Management Tips

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1. Have clear expectations with firm rules and boundaries.
2. Post rules and a daily schedule.
3. Be fair and consistent.
4. Believe in a child's ability to manage his/her behaviour in an appropriate way.
5. Discover what the child truly enjoys doing.
6. Identify skills and attributes you can reinforce.
7. Focus only on a few problem behaviours at a time.
8. Give directions in simple, straightforward language.
9. Acknowledge small steps towards improvement.
10. Use a reward system, tokens, stars, stickers or other ways to reinforce positive behavior.
11. Pause to gain attention before asking questions, moving onto next step, introducing something new.
12. Use natural consequences as often as possible.
13. When problems arise, use these questions to help children:
  - a. "Is what you are doing working for you?"
  - b. "What would work better?"
  - c. "What could you have done differently to avoid the problem?"
  - d. "How may I help you?"
14. Meet privately with the student about specific concerns. Always be respectful toward each other. Listen actively. Decide together on a behaviour plan.
15. Establish a courteous, working relationship with parents. Ask what teaching methods have been most effective. Communicate often.
16. When necessary/possible meet with the parents/other care givers so everyone can present a united front. Brainstorm ideas on ways to assist the student in improving his/her behavior. Agree on a behaviour plan. Follow through with appropriate positive and negative consequences.

## Notes

# Resources

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## Books

Clarke, Carolyn, *Imaginations: Fun Relaxation Stories and Meditations for Kids*, Carolyn Clarke, 2011

Danzig, Marsha Therese, *Children's Book of Mudras*, Color Me Yoga, 2011

Goldberg, Louise, *Yoga Therapy for Children with Autism and Special Needs*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2013

Hanauer, Craig & Kalish, Leah, *Teaching Yoga to Children with Special Needs Manual and DVD*, Every Kids Yoga

Sumar, Sonia, *Yoga for the Special Child*, Special Yoga Publications, 1998

## Flashcards

Learn with Yoga ABC Yoga Cards for Kids <http://www.sayitright.org/yoga.html>

Yoga for Small Spaces <http://addriya.com/shop/yss-office-school-chair-yoga/>

Yoga 4 Classrooms Card Deck <http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/activity-card-deck>

## Webinars

[Kids Yoga Academy](#) training webinars are held monthly. For a complete list of OnDemand webinars visit the KYA Store [eCourse listing](#).

[7 Tips to Teaching Yoga to Children w Special Needs](#) with Donna Freeman of Yoga In My School

[EMBRACE: Inclusive Yoga and Creative Expression](#) with Robin Schwoyer of Happy HeARTs Yoga

[Yoga for Children with ADHD](#) with Allison Morgan of Zensational Kids

[Yoga for Children with Autism](#) with Barbara Gini of BodyLogique

[Yoga Movement Therapy](#) with Lucy Rosenblatt of Yoga Movement Therapy

# Research

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Ayres, J. (2005) Sensory integration and the child. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.

Cuda, Amanda. Mat time: Yoga gives special needs children self-confidence, more socialization. *Connecticut Post*, 14 Jul 2005.

Krisanaprakornkit T, Ngamjarus C, Witoonchart C, Piuavhatkul N. Meditation therapies for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2010, Issue 6. Art. No.: CD006507. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006507.pub2.

Minor, H.G., Carlson, L.E., Mackenzie, M.J., Zernicke, K., & Jones, L. (2006). Evaluation of a mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) program for caregivers of children with chronic conditions. *Social Work in Health Care*, 43(1), 91-109.

Panagiotis, S., Ring, H A., MacAllister, C.J., Henderson, S., Barnett, A., Watson, P., Holland, A.J. (2012). Atypical Movement Performance and Sensory Integration in Asperger's Syndrome. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 42(5), 718-725.

Peck, H.L., Kehle, T.J. & Bray, M.A., Theodore, L.A., (2005). Yoga as an intervention for children with attention problems. *School Psychology Review*, 34(3), 415-424.

Powell, L., Gilchrist, M. & Stapley, J. (Nov 2008). A journey of self-discovery: an intervention involving massage, yoga and relaxation for children with emotional and behavioral difficulties attending primary schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*. 23, 403-412.

Singh, N.N., Singh, A.N., Lancioni, G.E., Singh, J., Winton, A.S. & Adkins, A.D. (March 2009). Mindfulness Training for Parents and Their Children with ADHD Increases the Children's Compliance. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. 19.

Singh, N., et al (2007) Mindful Parenting Decreases Aggression and Increases Social Behavior in Children with Developmental Disabilities. *Behavior Modification*, 31(6), 749-771.

van der Ord, S. & Bodgel, S.M. (2012). The effectiveness of mindfulness training for children with ADHD and mindful parenting for their parents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 21, 139-147.

<http://addriya.com/learning-movement/resources/yoga-research-yoga-children-with-special-needs/>