Yoga and Mindfulness in the Classroom: Tools to Improve Self-Regulation, Learning, and Positive Climate

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INTRODUCTIONS

• Who are we?
• Who are you?
• What are challenges which today’s youth face?
• How can you help?
• What will you learn today?
OVERVIEW...

What will we do and what will you learn?

- Introductions/purpose
- Opening sequence
- What is Yoga and Mindfulness?
- Research/Scientific Evidence
- Sahuarita Intermediate School Yoga Project
- Yoga and Mindfulness in Schools
- Resources/Yoga 4 Classrooms®
BEFORE WE BEGIN...
LETS GET READY TO LEARN

Sample “Morning Meeting” Sequence:
Balancing/Community-Building

Chime Listening / Pass the Chime
Mountain (with Balloon Breath, Crescent Moon & Waterfall)
Washing Machine
King Dancer
Special Place
BEFORE WE BEGIN...
LET’S GET READY TO LEARN

Mountain

1. Stand up tall and strong with your arms at your sides and your feet about hip distance apart. Rock back and forth on your feet a few times until you find a comfortable center – this is your mountain base. Find a small unmoving object across the room in your line of vision. Focus your eyes on this object. This is your “Focus Point”.

2. Inhale as you raise your shoulders towards your ears. Exhale and roll them back and down. As you do so, notice your weight go into your feet, anchoring you solidly to the ground. Relax and focus on your breath.

· Standing Crescent Moon. Begin in Mountain. Inhale your arms up and bring your hands together above your head. Relax your shoulders away from your ears. Exhale as you bend your upper body gently to one side. Feel the stretch in your waist and outer arm. Inhale to bring yourself back to center. Exhale as you bend gently to the other side. Repeat using the flow of your breath to guide your movement.

· Waterfall. Begin in Mountain.
  a) Inhale as you draw your arms to the front and up over your head, allowing your back to arch slightly.
  b) Exhale and slowly come into a forward bend, swinging your arms all the way down and then up and behind you. Repeat, following the flow of your breath. Inhale up, exhale down.

· Mountain or Tin Soldier. Have a friend gently test your stability. What happened? Mountains will remain grounded and steady. Tin soldiers will fall off balance as they are typically holding their breath and bodies too rigidly. If you find yourself being a tin soldier, try again by taking a deep breath in, then exhaling to relax your shoulders and body. Imagine you have anchors in your feet. Ask a friend to gently test you again. Are you a Mountain?
BEFORE WE BEGIN...
LET'S GET READY TO LEARN

Balloon Breath
Calm. Focus. Clarity.

1. Begin in Standing or Sitting Mountain with a tail, straight spine. Close your eyes and place your hands gently on your lower belly.

2. Imagine that your belly just turned into a balloon. Slowly inflate the balloon by breathing in through your nose. Feel your belly expand as your balloon fills with air.

3. Slowly deflate your balloon by exhaling the stale balloon air out through your nose. Repeat 4-6 times. Notice how you feel.

**did you know?**

Normally, we use just 25% of our lung capacity when breathing. Shallow breathing deprives us of the oxygen we need to function at our best. Balloon breathing calms our bodies, while an increased supply of oxygen helps us think more clearly and feel great.

Based on The Role of Your Own Imagination by Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D. (a recognized member of the National Association for Children’s Therapy) and Copyright © 2013 by Professional Resource Press, Inc.
BEFORE WE BEGIN...

LET’S GET READY TO LEARN

Washing Machine


1. Being in Standing Mountain with your feet at least hip distance apart.
2. Keeping your feet in place, relax your knees and begin to turn your upper body from side to side. Allow your arms to be loose and floppy so that they wrap around the back and front of your body as you turn.
3. Close your eyes and notice if there is something you would like to wash out – anger, hurt feelings, worries? As you swing your arms from side to side, imagine you can feel those things being washed out and away from your body and down into the ground.
4. Once clean, slow down the wash cycle and come back to Standing Mountain. Take one long, slow inhale and exhale.
5. Using both sets of fingertips, begin to gently tap yourself. Begin at your head and tap all the way down the front of your body. Tap all the way back up the backside of your body. Tap down each arm, beginning at the shoulders. Now, wrap your arms around yourself and tap your sides. Switch your arms and do it again.
6. End with Flying Bird Breath, inhaling your arms up, exhaling them down. Notice how you feel.

Shake and Freeze. This can be used in place of, or in addition to, Step 5 above. To dry off after the wash cycle, body parts are called out by the teacher/leader. Begin by calling out the head, then shoulders, arms, hips, etc. working your way down the body until the entire body is shaking and wiggling. Shout out “Freeze!” to challenge the group to bring their bodies to stillness as quickly as possible. Repeat for several rounds. For extra fun, try playing music to shake off and dry, and stopping the music as the signal to freeze.

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BEFORE WE BEGIN...
LET’S GET READY TO LEARN

King Dancer

1. Begin in Mountain and find a focus point.
2. Shift your weight to your left foot and raise your left arm in front of you for balance.
3. Bend your right knee to lift your foot up behind you. Reach back with your right hand to grab the outside edge of your foot.
4. Keep your hips facing forward, chest open. Breathe and balance here for several breaths or as long as you can stay balanced on one foot.
5. Slowly return to Mountain before switching sides.

- King Dancer Challenge.
  Come into Dancer as described. Press your foot into your hand as you bend forward at the hips. Turn your left hand palm-side up and bring your arm into a gentle curve. Hold the pose for several breaths before switching sides.

- Hop and Balance.
  While in King Dancer, try hopping in place while turning in a circle. Switch legs and try hopping and turning the other way. Is one side or direction easier than the other?

- Double Dancer.
  Face a friend. Connect same side hands above. Both partners reach back for his outside foot. Leap into each other’s eyes. (Try not to giggle). Support each another in balance and focus. Hold for several breaths or count together by 1, 2, 3, 5, etc.
Begin in Desk Rest or Sitting Mountain with eyes closed. Bring your awareness to your breath. (Guide students to Balloon Breathing or Count Down to Calm.)

Let’s find a special place of your very own today. Imagine you are in a beautiful field. It is a clear day and the sky is a brilliant blue. There are daisies in bloom all around you. You hear the birds singing in the distance.

Suddenly, you notice there is a path in front of you. You follow it to a wide and pretty building in your favorite color. It has a large door in the front. As you get closer, you notice the door has your name on it. Open the door and step inside. Notice where you are. Perhaps it’s a beautiful location outdoors, or a cozy room. It might be a place you know, a place where you feel safe, secure, and peaceful. Or it might be a new place. Picture it now...

This is your Special Place. Here you are safe, peaceful and content. This is a place where you can relax and feel good about yourself. You can do whatever you’d like in your Special Place. You can talk to a special friend, dance, play or just rest and do nothing.

You can choose to have some alone time, letting your imagination guide the way to what would help you to feel relaxed. Perhaps you’d like to lie down, read a book, or play a quiet game. Or maybe you’d prefer not to be alone. If you’d like some company, think of all your favorite people, animals and things. You might invite them to join you in your Special Place. Anyone and everything that enters through the door accepts and appreciates you because you are you, and they love you just the way you are.

This is your Special Place, created by you for you. Remember who you really are - important, unique and special. Take some time now to enjoy your Special Place...

When you are ready, take a long, slow deep breath in through your nose. Exhale, “Haaa” through your mouth. Very, very slowly sit up now. Breathe in and out deeply once again, before gently opening your eyes. Notice how you feel.
WHAT ARE YOGA AND MINDFULNESS?

What do you know about yoga and mindfulness?

How would you describe yoga and mindfulness?

How can Yoga and Mindfulness help students to learn?
WHAT IS YOGA?

- Yoga means “to yoke” or “unite” – a system of connecting the whole self: body, mind, and spirit. (breath)

- Ancient system of holistic healthcare - designed to empower health, happiness and a greater sense of self

- Yoga today is practiced worldwide within many diverse cultures

- Involves mindful breathing, movement (*dynamic mindfulness*) and awareness-building and focusing activities
YOGA AND MINDFULNESS

Steeped in Mindfulness:

Mindfulness: an open, undivided, non-judgmental, non-reactive, present-centered attention to and awareness of what is happening within as well as around oneself.

Mindfulness practices improve a set of mental abilities to:

- adaptively and effectively shift attention when needed
- successfully self-regulate the feelings and stress
- concentrate deeply on an object, task or thought
- be open to experience
- free the mind from habitual, automatic thinking
- nurture and appreciate all subjective experiences
Yoga Practices (postures, breathing, relaxation, meditation)

↑ Mind-Body Awareness
↑ Mindfulness
 ↑ Attention
↑ Concentration/Cognition
↑ Self/Social Awareness

↑ Self-Regulation
↑ Emotion Regulation
↑ Stress Regulation
↑ Resilience
↑ Equanimity
↑ Psychological Self-Efficacy

↑ Physical Fitness
↑ Flexibility
↑ Strength
↑ Balance
↑ Respiratory Function
↑ Physical Self-Efficacy

↑ Behaviors, Mental State, Health & Performance
↑ Mood, ↑ Well-Being, ↓ Psychological Disorders,
↑ Positive Behaviors, ↓ Negative Behaviors, ↑ Physical Health,
↑ Cognitive/Academic Performance, ↑ Relationships, ↑ Quality of Life

Research on yoga interventions in schools is in its early stages, however initial results are promising.

School-based yoga and mindfulness interventions have been found to exert positive effects on several factors such as:

- Emotional Balance
- Attentional Control
- Cognitive Efficiency
- Negative Thought Patterns
- Emotional & Physical Arousal
- Reactivity
- Negative Behavior
- Concentration
- Mood
- Anxiety
- Self-Esteem
- Coping
- Resilience
- Classroom Behavior

Serwacki & Cook-Cottone, 2012, Case-Smith et al., 2010, Ehud et al., 2010, Khalsa et al., 2012; Mendelson et al., 2010, Noggle et al., 2012; Santangelo White, 2012; Telles et al., 2013.
Empirical research suggests that yoga and mindfulness practices at school may have a number of positive effects on student **health, behavior, attention and performance** (Butzer et al., 2016; Ferreira-Vorkapic et al., 2015; Khalsa & Butzer, 2016; Serwacki & Cook-Cottone, 2012).

Addresses the whole child, thus maximizing the development of **academic, social and emotional learning competencies** in addition to providing **benefits for teachers** and supporting **classroom and overall school climate**.

View meta-analysis and download the: Research Repository: Yoga, Meditation and Mindfulness for Children, Adolescents and in Schools

www.yoga4classrooms.com/supporting-research
THE EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS WHO INTEGRATE YOGA INTO A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

“OFFERING YOGA IN SCHOOL GIVES STUDENTS A LIFELONG SKILL”.
SAHUARITA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
3RD GRADE PROJECT

- Pre Survey
- 5 sessions
- Weekly Lesson Plan
- Post Survey Results
5 SESSIONS

- Breathing... Various breathing techniques/ Group work
- Focus/ Chime Listening/ Candle Gazing
- Poses/ Seated/ Standing/ Floor/ Balancing
- Journal
- Desk Rest/ Visualizations
1. I can explain what yoga is and tell 5 ways it can help me to be a better learner:
2. I know what mindfulness is and I can do it:
3. Which of the following are yoga poses: Mountain, Table, Down Facing Dog, All of the above, I don’t know
4. Learning yoga techniques can help me to: Have fewer fights, focus better in class, manage my stress, all of the above, I don’t know
5. I pay attention in class and have a positive attitude about learning.
6. A “brain break” is: Hurting my head, exercising my brain, doing a different activity, I don’t know.
SAHUARITA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
RESULTS

Yoga and Mindfulness in the Classroom
Sahuarita Intermediate School
2016
When my sister and I were fighting, I used some techniques at home that we learned in school. Breathing helps me calm down. Yoga and mindfulness help me to focus and pay attention. I know how to clear my mind to be a better listener and focus on the teacher. I know more strategies to be a better listener. I added a new pose in a play we were doing, the Praying Mantis!
BRAIN BREAK

“Take 5!!!”

Seated Stretch

“Just Be”
YOGA AND MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS

- Provides direct instruction on self knowledge and self-regulation
- Supports lifelong learning and a positive attitude
- Encourages and nurtures student resiliency
- Teaches mindfulness in making responsible choices that advance student development
- Supports RTI and PBIS initiatives, educational standards and ASCA Mindset & Behaviors for Student Success
• Improves students’ attention to self-concept

• Empowers students to be in control of their learning and achieve school success

• Relates life experiences to learning

• Encourages attention and focus, learning readiness
ASCA MINDSET & BEHAVIORS DOMAIN: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

• Self knowledge acquired allows students to better understand their interests, skills and motivation

• Assists in identifying potential career options

• Recognizes the individual’s contribution to the good of the community
Contributes to the following student skill set:

- Understanding the “self” in self control and personal responsibility
- Developing effective coping skills and problem solving to manage life’s stressors
- Adopting a structured, healthy lifestyle
- Encourages a sense of personal worthiness which includes a respect for individual differences of others
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the nation’s leading organization advancing the development of academic, social and emotional competence for all students.
## CROSSWALK OF ASCA, SEL, MINDFULNESS AND YOGA

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<td>Empathy and Compassion for Others</td>
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Illustration: Erin Hurley
Components of an effective school yoga program:

- Physical Postures/Exercises
- Breathing Exercises
- Meditation/Mindfulness
- Relaxation Techniques
- Philosophy/Psychology (SEL, character development)
How can these strategies be incorporated into the classroom or in counseling curriculum or activities?

When can these strategies be incorporated into the classroom in counseling activities?

First grade students and classroom teacher practice Balloon Breathing during a Y4C Residency lesson
How can teachers, staff and the school counselor benefit from yoga and mindfulness?

Teachers and staff benefit much the same way as students. Opportunities for yoga and mindfulness breaks during the day provide a structured, beneficial “time in” for self-care and recovery from classroom rigors leading to more mindful, compassionate teaching and learning.

School staff centering at the start of a staff meeting.
HELPFUL RESOURCES

Use your phone to sign up to receive a list of resources and helpful links:

1) Text Y4CINTRO to 44222
2) You will receive a text requesting your email address. Enter ONLY your email address. Note: School servers are often firewalled – you may wish to provide your personal email to ensure receipt.
3) Expect an email from us with a helpful list of resources and links.
4) Add lisa@childlightyoga.com to your address book to ensure the email is received in your inbox vs. spam folder.
Q & A
THANK YOU

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