



YOGA FOR CHILDREN:
AN EVIDENCE-BASED CURRICULUM
TEACHER'S GUIDE

YOGA ED. YOGA FOR CHILDREN FOUNDATIONS:
TEACHING CHILDREN'S YOGA, TEACHER'S GUIDE, FIRST EDITION.

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Created in the United States of America.



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INTERNAL PRACTICE

The internal practice of yoga education is based on one principle: **be the yoga you teach**. Practicing the yoga tools and life skills we wish to nurture in our students allows our work to emerge from an authentic place. The internal practice allows us to utilize yoga tools to empower our teaching. In this section, we will focus on building the five pillars of our internal practice: **self-awareness, authenticity, curiosity, self-compassion, and empathy**.

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the state of consciously being present to thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Self-awareness allows us to bring clarity to our internal state. Instead of reacting blindly to experience, we give ourselves the mental space that allows us to slow down and examine our thoughts objectively. This creates perspective and freedom to choose the most effective path.

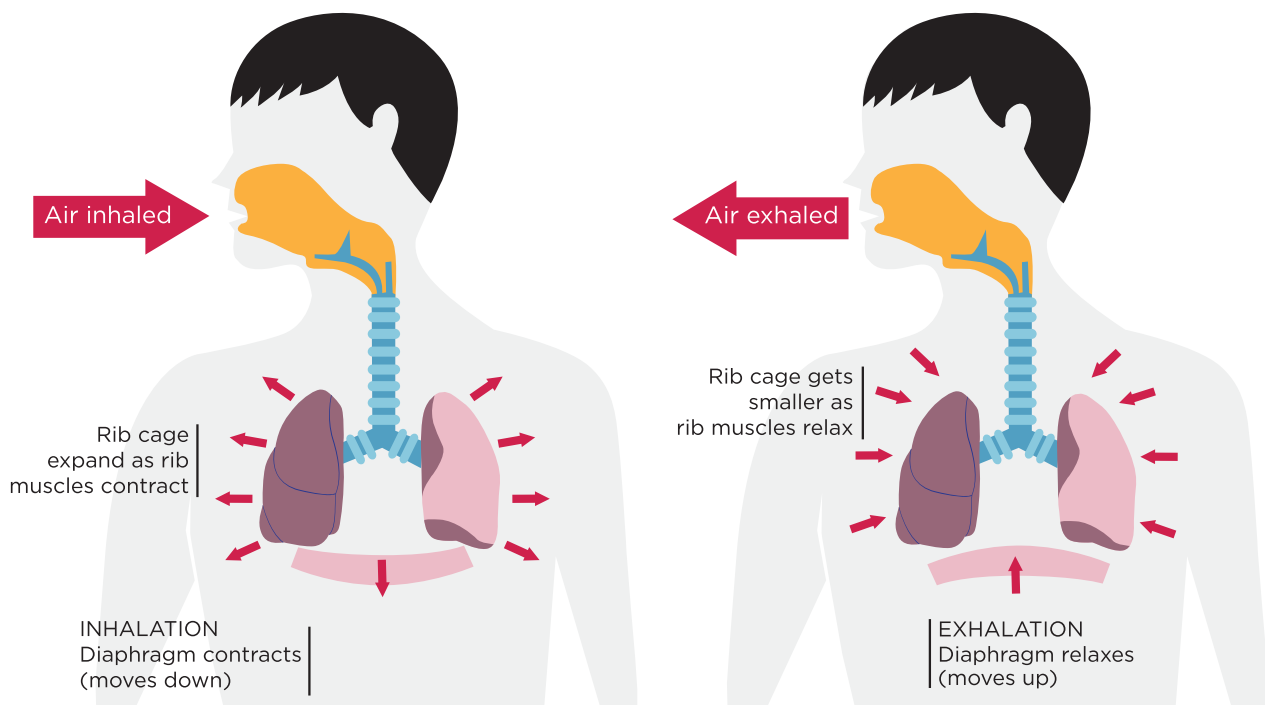
Practicing self-awareness physically rewires your brain. By consciously directing your focus to your internal experience, you promote positive changes in brain areas associated with attention, decision-making, emotional stability, and empathy.

When working closely with children and teens, we may encounter specific words or actions that cause us to react strongly. These are known as triggers and are often connected to our own unresolved emotional experiences from childhood. Triggers can cause us to transfer and superimpose our own experiences onto the children we work with.

Self-awareness is like a muscle. The more you use it, the easier it is to use.

Cultivating self-awareness in your teaching allows you to recognize your own past experiences and reactions as they are triggered. This awareness empowers you to shift from a place of reactivity to a place of clarity, where you move through your own past to recognize the present experiences of the children and teens in front of you.

Respiration



The breath is central to yoga practice. Yoga uses a variety of breathing exercises to achieve a balance between the body and the mind. Consciously breathing in a gentle and even way produces physiological changes in the body. Yoga breathing exercises reduce stress, improve mood, and energize the mind.

Benefits of Yoga: The Respiratory System

- Increases cardiorespiratory endurance
- Increases respiratory muscle strength
- Increases lung compliance
- More efficient oxygen intake
- Greater control over respiration

SUPPORTING LEARNING THROUGH YOGA EDUCATION

Our brains are built to learn and relearn. As a result of the experiences we have and the lives we live, our brains are constantly reorganizing pathways, forging new connections between brain regions, and even creating new brain cells (Kempermann, 2002). In other words, our experiences are constantly changing our brains.

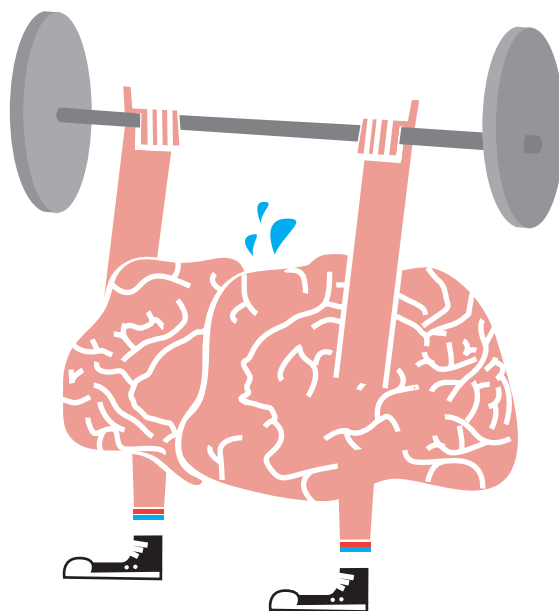
This ability to adapt as a result of experience is known as neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity gives us enormous potential for growth. We have the ability to change the way we think and behave at any point in our lives. Because we change through our experiences, the more we use a skill or thought process, the stronger, easier, and more fluent it becomes.

Our brains are like muscles. The more we use a skill or thought process, the stronger and easier it becomes.

Yoga education supports brain-based learning by teaching skills and encouraging thought processes that promote learning in the brain. Yoga Ed.'s teaching philosophies, classroom management techniques, and yoga activities are designed to help educators teach more effectively and help students learn more effectively.

Yoga education supports brain-based learning in the following ways:

- Movement
- Play
- Emotion
- Social Learning





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YOGA 

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RAINBOW BREATH

Benefit:

- Integrates the mind, body, and breath
- Warms up the spine

Instructions:

1. Place your hands on your knees. Inhale and rock forward, pressing your knees against your hands and arching your back like a rainbow.
2. Exhale and rock backward, pressing your hands into your knees and rounding your back.



Rainbow Breath 1



Rainbow Breath 2

Tailoring Tidbits:

For a more visual exercise, sit up tall, close your eyes, and imagine you are a rainbow. Breathe in your favorite color. As you breathe out, let that color surround you. Repeat for several breaths.

DOWNWARD DOG



Physical Benefit:

- Energizes the body
- Strengthens the quadriceps, hip flexors, abdominals, neck, and arms
- Stretches the feet, calves, hamstrings, back, chest, shoulders, and palms

Mental Benefit:

- Increases calmness
- Relieves stress

Gaze Point:

Navel

Instructions:

1. Begin in Table Pose.
2. Inhale, tuck your toes under.
3. Exhale, press into your hands and lift your hips up towards the sky.
4. Breathe.
5. Inhale and look forward to come back to Table Pose.

Cues:

You are making an upside-down V shape with your body. #3

Gently try to straighten your arms and legs. Allow your head to relax as you look towards your belly button. #4

Creative Language:

Spread your fingers wide like the five points on a star. #1

Walk your dog by bending your knees side to side. #4

Grade:

Pre-K to K; 1 to 3; 4 to 5

Other Anatomical Focus:

Inversion

Modifications:

Notice	Reason	Modification
Weight in arms or roundedness in the back	Tight hamstrings	Bend at the knee
Fingers closed	Lack of awareness	See creative language #1
Wrists lifting off mat	Weak arms, tight hamstrings, or lack of awareness	Bend at the knee
Shoulders dropping into ears	Tight shoulders or tight hamstrings	Bend at the knee

NATURE KIDS

(Individual / Group)



Directions:

Students name five or six structures found in the natural world. The teacher and students decide on yoga poses that best portrays each structure. For example, Rock Pose portrays a boulder. Once the group decides on a pose for each structure, students set up a natural landscape around the room.

Variation:

To disperse high or aggressive energy, use a storm theme for nature structures.

Skills:

- Creativity
- Listening
- Imagination
- Memory

SPECIAL PLACE



"Close your eyes, breathe, and rest. As if you're falling asleep, let go of all thoughts. Just feel your breath. I'll wait for everyone to settle, sigh and melt, release any wiggles, movement and tension. When you're silent and still, I'll know you are ready to listen. With every breath, you become more and more relaxed... great.

"Imagine a door. On the door is your name. It is a beautiful and inviting door. You know that it opens to a special place that is just yours. Go inside your door now and look around you slowly. Is your special place outside in nature, surrounded by trees, and maybe a stream or lake? Or is it indoors - a cozy and quiet room with everything you like in it? Is it a place that you know and love, or a new, magical place that lives in your heart? Notice everything you can so that if you wanted to later, you could draw a picture of it.

"In your special place, you feel safe and happy. It is perfect. It even smells good. Being here allows you to fully relax and be yourself. So, get comfortable and take some time now to just enjoy being. Feel your love for yourself and others; listen to the silence that opens your heart and connects you to your own wisdom and truth. In your special place, you find answers and understanding. Let's all be there for one minute. I will time it and tell you."

Pause for a few moments.

"Now it's time to come back to the room. Gently begin to wiggle your fingers and your toes. Take any final stretches that feel good to you on your back or your side. When you are ready, come back to a comfortable seated position at the top of your mat."

LESSON 5: Body

NASPE Standards: 2, 3

Grades: 1-3

Equipment: Yoga mats, human body poster, human body anatomy books/pictures

Theme	Body
Concept	What are the different parts of my body?
Time In (Breathing) 1-3 minutes	Feeling Breath
Discussion 3-5 minutes	<p>Brainstorm body parts with students. Have students point out body parts on posters, in books, and themselves. Ask students what the different parts of the body do and how they are connected. Include internal parts (i.e. organs, blood, bones) as well as external parts (i.e. knees, shoulders, neck).</p> <p>Use visuals when discussing body parts. Link the visual with the kinesthetic as much as possible. Have students move a body part they name, then point it out in book.</p>
Warm-Up 5 minutes	<p>Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes</p> <p>Encourage students to sing along with you. Vary the speed and use different voices to get students warmed up and to keep them engaged. Repeat at least 3-4x.</p>
Yoga Postures 15-20 minutes	<p>Rock, Downward Dog, Mountain, Star, Folding Star, Twisting Star, Mountain, Rag Doll, Plank, Cobra, Bow, Rock, Pretzel Twist, Forward Fold</p> <p>Coach students to be aware of the different parts in their body and how they move.</p>
Game 5-10 minutes	Yogi Benders
Partner Work 5-10 minutes	<p>Front-Facing Chair / Back-to-Back Chair</p> <p>Coach students to be aware of how the connection of their body parts supports one another in the poses.</p>
Relaxation 3-5 minutes	Tense and Release
Project/ Homework/ Assessment 3-5 minutes	Exit Ticket: Write the names of 3 body parts you learned about today.

Yoga Ed. Exit Ticket



Name _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Yoga Ed. Exit Ticket



Name _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Yoga Ed. Exit Ticket



Name _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____