

Why yoga for children?

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I am a kids yoga teacher and a mother of two daughters, 6 years old Yvette and 2 years old Simone. When parents bring their children to the yoga class, I always ask them the same question: why do you take children to do yoga? The answers are various: interest in yoga, hyperactivity, lack of self-confidence, attention deficit, play with friends ... and the child does not like the school gym class and sports. Does yoga help? As a counter question, parents often ask me: what can yoga do for children?

Love and Respect

Children are very sensitive about negative comments and aggressive behavior. Compared with many sports, yoga is non-competitive and non-violence. It helps children to learn about their body and be aware of it. In the yoga class, children are taught to feel and to connect their body. As I learnt from my own teacher Gosta, when you do the Marjariasana (cat posture), move your knee towards your elbow and try to give a kiss to your knee. If you feel pain with your knee, be gentle with it and never force it. It is not about winning. As the song from Yogi Bhanan, we sing in the class "I am the light of my soul. I am beautiful. I am bountiful. I am bliss. I am, I am."

Animals and Nature

Children learn quickly by imitating the movements of animals. Butterfly flapping its wings, dog peeing and shaking its legs, trees standing on the mountain, flamingos dancing with friends, owls hooting in the night ... All of these postures develop body movements and muscle control. Most importantly, it teaches children to pay attention to the relation between the body and the environment. In the summer time, I take children to the park and we do

yoga in the natural environment. Standing like a tree, imagining the root growing deep into the earth and feeling the breeze ... kids yoga in nature, we all love it!



Movement and Balance

Young children are usually active. However, as an influence of modern life, children spend more and more time warming up only their thumbs while using iPad, smart phones or other electronic devices. Whether a yoga posture is done by standing, jumping, sitting, backward and forward bending or lying down, it is all about movement and balance. Yoga helps children develop physical strength and learn how to use the muscles in various ways. For preteens and teens, they like physical challenges. For example, once children know how to do a Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (half wheel), they are enthusiastic to learn how to make a Urdhva Dhanurasana (full wheel).

Focus and Relax

Practicing yoga encourages children to clear their mind, maintain a greater sense of inner strength and improve the concentration. As one of the most popular breathing exercises, we start the class with a deep breath in, stretch our arms and imagine we are holding a big balloon above the head. Try to hold the balloon and the breath for 5 seconds and then slowly breath out and put down the balloon. Keep calm and focus. Such breathing exercises and relaxation techniques help children manage their emotion in a positive way, specially to deal with stress and anger. Scientific study [1] shows that yoga effectively prevents bullying in elementary school.



Fun and Cool

As a teacher and mother of two, I believe that children learn best when they are having fun. That's why we use a lot of props in the class, such as balls, feathers, ropes, animal models, scarf, music instruments and even chopsticks. Children are naturally curious and creative. They learn by imitating animals, singing songs, dancing and playing games. For pre-teens and teens, it is very important to be cool. For the first time upside down, the head stand on the wall, children are excited. After practising, when they can hang upside down in the rope from the tree, they are so proud of themselves and ask me to take photos. Children are enthusiastic to explore and to show off the cool postures to parents and friends, which brings them a lot of joy and confidence.



Why yoga for children? Parents may notice the benefits, but the best judges are the children themselves. I will never forget seeing a 7-year-old student doing the sun salutation on the playground. As the Indian philosopher Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar said, true education (self-knowledge) enlightens human life.

Reference:

[1] Yoga prevents bullying in school, Dee Marie, Grace Wyshak, George H. Wyshak, 2006