

Read From the Heart

Library Programs to develop focus, comprehension and community



Asana and Pranayama Guide Ages 3-10

Diane Hamilton and Courtney Schroeder

*With gratitude to  our many teachers
from the largest to the littlest*

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Basic Alignment Safety

It is helpful to keep the following tips and reminders in mind as you model for and observe children practicing asana. When children take a posture, it may be the general shape of the pose. By age seven, or if you feel the need to adjust, use these tips to offer verbal cues. Hands-on adjustments may be warranted for some children with special needs, or may be welcomed by some older children. Adjustments may cause children to feel self-conscious, especially at vulnerable ages, and for this reason, we recommend allowing children to grow into poses at their own pace.

Standing Postures

- ❖ Protect the neck by keeping it relaxed and maintaining length in the back. The head and neck should be a continuation of the spinal alignment, and should remain comfortable.
- ❖ To correct overarching backs in flexible children, lengthen from the hips to the head and draw the belly toward the spine.
- ❖ To correct hyperextended knees, protect hamstrings or protect lower backs, bring a soft bend to the knees.
- ❖ In postures where the front knee is bent deeply, be sure the front of the knee points in the same direction as the toes, and that the knee extends no farther than directly over the ankle.

Twists

- ❖ In side bending postures, encourage students to maintain the integrity of the pose by focusing on extension more than flexion. Ensure that students are able to come out of the pose using strength of the legs and core.
- ❖ Lengthen the spine before twisting and maintain that length once in the posture.

Inversions

- ❖ A child should always have an adult spotter during inversion practice, helping them enter and exit the posture with care. Take turns and be near a wall or support.
- ❖ Shoulder stand and plow stimulate the thyroid so do not emphasize these postures in children's classes, as their thyroid develops. Never turn head to side during shoulder stand (candle pose).
- ❖ In headstand, almost no weight should be on the head; teaching this posture is not recommended.
- ❖ L-Dog (wall-handstand) and handstand are recommended; as all support is coming from the arms.
- ❖ Down Dog is the most basic inversion. Practice on mats or in a space with reference points (edge of carpet or wall) to help develop proper alignment.
- ❖ We challenge children's minds, emotions and attention all day long. Notice if there is fear around challenging their physical bodies. Name the fear and attend to it. Remind children that in yoga we are all perfectly competent in every moment exactly as we are, and that we are an important part of a greater whole. If the fear is about safety, try giving one-on-one attention to each child in turn.

Common mistakes in downward dog

- ❖ Too much weight on the outside of the hands. Push through the palm point of the first finger or lift the pinky finger
- ❖ The upper back curls. Lift the armpits, roll the shoulder blades toward the outside of the shoulders and widen the space between the hands.
- ❖ The lower back curls. Lengthen the stance between the hands and feet, lift the hips high and allow the heels to remain off of the floor. Widen the space between the feet. Lift the navel toward the spine and lengthen from the sit bones to the chest.
- ❖ The heels turn inward rotating the legs. Have older children glance at their feet for a moment to self-correct.
- ❖ The wrists hurt. Create space between the wrists and the arms. You may achieve this by pressing the fingers into the mat and lifting through the center of the palm as if protecting a blueberry. This will engage muscles that slightly lift pressure off the palms. Some find a yoga wedge alleviates wrist pain. Children's wrists are still developing, so allow them to come out of postures whenever they feel uncomfortable.

Seated Postures

- ❖ Keep knees in alignment. Strengthen thighs and hamstrings to support the knee joint.
- ❖ Blocks or blankets can be placed under the sitting bones in order to keep knees below hip level.
- ❖ Seated Forward bends: A rounded back puts pressure on lower spinal discs. Instead, keep a flat back with long spine and shoulder blades on the back. Extend forward from the heart and collarbones.

Hand and Knee Poses (such as cat/cow)

- ❖ Be sure shoulders are over wrists, knees over ankles. Lift navel and side ribs.

Plank & Push-Up

- ❖ Can cause stress to young wrists. Be sure hands are under shoulders, fingers spread. Use core strength to hold pose, elbows hug ribs in push-up. Bring knees to the floor to reduce pressure, and with young children, hold the posture for a shorter time.

Backbends

- ❖ Wheel and bridge risks: can stress wrists, shoulders or back if alignment is off. Be sure feet are hip distance apart, feet parallel or toes slightly turned in. Lift into the pose on an inhale.
- ❖ After back bending, pause a moment lying flat, then follow with a gentle forward fold such as child's pose.
- ❖ Begin a backbend by curling the tailbone under, then lift the front abdomen and the heart.
- ❖ In backbends, focus on opening the heart, feeling compassion toward oneself and others.

Balancing Poses

- ❖ In poses such as tree, confidence is always first, especially with children. Taking tree for an example, there are many expressions of the pose, from a version of tree where the second foot is barely lifted off the ground and the hands are folded at the heart, to a version of tree where the second foot is resting on the inner thigh and the arms are stretched overhead. Do not rest the lifted foot against the standing knee. Stand near a wall or friend for support.

Children's Yoga Anatomy Basics

Skeletal System

We are born with over three hundred bones; as we grow, some fuse together and by the time we are in our twenties, we have 206 bones. Children like to know they have more bones than adults!

Growth plates, areas of developing bone, are weaker than ligaments and tendons in children, and are a common location of childhood bone fractures. Growth plate fractures can affect future bone growth.

We recommend against any postures that put pressure on the neck, without the guidance of an MD/ND/DO, PT, OT or certified yoga therapist.

Take care of the lower back, which is often especially flexible in children, by tucking the tailbone, lifting the heart and drawing in the core.

Children's heads are proportionately bigger than adults, so balance may be affected. Growing bones will also affect children's coordination and balance.

Use yoga postures as an opportunity for children to find balance from other postures they have been in, whether they have been sitting on the floor, sitting at a desk, squatting, standing or walking.

Call attention to relaxation of the jaw, as children can be prone to clenching teeth in anxiety.

Joints

WRISTS: Wrists are soft, as cartilage is still developing into bone, so children should take care not to hold downward dog or plank for longer than their own inclination before the age of five.

ELBOWS: In poses such as plank, avoid hyperextension of the elbows.

SHOULDERS: Tendons and ligaments are still developing. The socket of the scapula is quite shallow; it is not designed for stability in bipedals. The shoulders have more range of motion than other joints, but because they are loose and delicate, they are more susceptible to injury. Forward hunching at school desks makes shoulder injuries more likely in weight bearing poses such as downward dog. In any pose, draw the shoulders away from the ears, lift the armpits from the heart and hug the shoulder blades around the back ribs.

KNEES: Soften the knees in forward folds and avoid hyperextension in poses such as triangle by pressing outward through the shinbone. Overextension can become habitual, weaken knee joints and thigh muscles (which support the knee joints), and can cause long term damage and hamstring injury. As hinge joints, knees are designed to move only one way, unlike ball and socket joints. To avoid injury, in lunge postures, keep the back thighs lifted, front knee over ankle, hips facing forward and front thigh drawing toward pinky toe side of front foot.

HIPS: Encourage floor time! Rock the baby, play telephone, cross ankle over knee for a chair stretch. Children tend to lose hip flexibility during elementary school years.

FLEXIBILITY vs. STABILITY: Encourage flexible and double-jointed children to stay within a standard range of motion in ball and socket joints. If a child is hyper-flexible, encourage them to strengthen the muscles around the joints by “hugging muscle to bone” or “tightening the muscle.” Show them how to do this, as it will benefit them in the long term, even if hyperextension makes them feel more flexible and pretzel-like now.

WARM-UPS: Protect and lubricate the joints with warm-up, especially during changes in weather.

Muscular System

Muscles need fuel, food, water, and oxygen, to function well, so drink plenty of water (muscles are 75% water), breathe deeply, and eat well (vitamins and minerals) to encourage best muscle performance. It takes most of our face muscles (40-43) to frown, while it takes only half as many to smile. Invite children to relax facial muscles into a soft smile. Eye muscles can become highly strained during the school day. Follow reading or screen time with three minutes of eye muscle stretches.

Because bones are growing faster than muscles; tendons and muscles can become tight and easily strained. Also, the nervous system may have trouble adapting and children may at times be uncoordinated, clumsy, or weak. Emphasize muscle engagement. This will bring a balance of strength and flexibility. Note that when rubber bands are stretched too far without being strong, they break. Beginning at age three, children experience growth spurts, causing growing pains that may affect them mostly at night. Growing pains also happen during puberty—stretching and heat may help. Jumping and high impact will exacerbate pain, so encourage gentle and restorative postures.

Respiratory System

By twelve, the respiratory system is fully developed. Younger children have smaller airways than adults. Their immune systems are developing and they tend to be sick and stuffy more often, so their upper airways may also be blocked with mucous. Account for this with tissues during breathing exercises and plenty of breaks to catch breath during active games. Through age five, children also breathe more shallowly and quickly, and tire more easily. The breath can energize, relax, heat or cool the body at all ages.

Nervous System

The left brain controls the right side of the body and the right side of the brain controls the left side body. The part of the brain that connects the two is the corpus collosum. Cross-lateral arm and leg movements strengthen the corpus collosum, balancing the sides of the brain. Alternate nostril breathing also balances the right and left hemispheres and creates a sense of peace and balance.

Twists and all deep breathing stimulate the nervous system and help unravel, release and detoxify. Be prepared for emotional responses. Offer the opportunity for restful activity and breath work as part of a yoga program.

Endocrine System

Many children have difficulty sleeping. Yoga and relaxation practices stimulate the pineal gland to produce melatonin, serotonin, and noradrenaline, which are hormones that induce sleep. Encourage children to practice yoga daily, including a few gentle stretches or a simple relaxation before bed.

A Sampling of Poses by Category

Earth poses: volcano, mountain, river, tree, forest, ocean breath, flower, rock

- ❖ Vehicles: car, boat, rocket ship, bicycle, plough
- ❖ Poses that move: downward dog, giraffe, crab, snake, frog, penguin, dinosaur, lizard shuffle, bear, cow, duck (yogic squat), warrior walk (warriors 1 or 2), log roll
- ❖ Inversions: l-dog, legs up wall, handstand, headstand, plow, candle, dolphin/forearm stand, dinosaur, downward dog
- ❖ Animals: pigeon, eagle, dolphin, butterfly, swan, giraffe, starfish, monkey, rabbit, mouse, cat, cow, dog, crab, donkey, elephant, snake, owl, dinosaur, snake, penguin, lizard, frog, tiger, hyena
- ❖ Poses for energizing a dull class and channeling the energy of a chaotic class: Belly breathing, ring the bell, sun salutations, all vinyasas, cat-cows, donkey, rocket ships, rocking chair, l-dogs, handstands, crow, frog leaps, flying butterfly, lunge-runs
- ❖ Calming poses: criss-cross/lotus, child's pose, rag doll, savasana, legs up the wall, bridge, most supine poses, knee to chest, seated forward bend
- ❖ Poses for sadness/depression: child's pose, rag doll, legs up the wall, cat pose, backbend (bridge/wheel/camel), headstand and all inversions, fish, snake
- ❖ Poses for anger: lion's breath, alternate nostril breathing, dragon breathing, ujayii breath, chair
- ❖ Poses to reduce anxiety and increase concentration and confidence: donkey, eagle, mountain, rainbow, crow, tree, half moon, handstand, legs up the wall, lion, (reclined) hero, warrior, and just>this mindfulness practice.
- ❖ Poses to bring energy into balance: Tree, eagle, crow, dancer, half moon, rainbow, warrior tree, flower, extended hand/toe, flying butterfly
- ❖ Morning Yoga: Sun Salutations are typically practiced in the morning to welcome the sun.
- ❖ Yoga before sleep: rock and roll, reclining butterfly, gentle twists, child's pose, legs up the wall (gentle inversion), starfish, savasana.
- ❖ Arm balances: plank, push-up, rainbow, firefly, scale, crow, wild thing, dolphin, slide.

Children's Asana Guide

Airplane



Eka Pada Vasisthasana Variation: From plank pose, bring one hand directly under the nose and lift the other arm to the sky. Roll onto the side of your lower foot and bend the knee of your top leg, bringing that foot to the floor in front of you for balance. Take off, land, then fly home again on the other leg!

May Also Be: Llama, Elpaca, Spinosaurus

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, legs and arms.

Anteater



Utthita Balasana: In child's pose, extend both arms above head. Lift armpits toward sky, relax heart down and stretch fingers long.

May Also Be: Rat, Beaver, Muskrat, Mole

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Soothes the mind, relaxes the body. Releases the lower back. Reduces external sensory input. Brings focus inward.

Boat



Navasana: Sit on the buttocks with feet flat on the floor in front of you. With arms lifted straight forward for balance, slowly lift one foot up off the ground, then the other. Feel your strong belly and leg muscles, feel your tailbone against the floor. Row that boat! Lighten the mood with some jokes!

May Also Be: Seal clapping feet and hands together, ice cream cone, valley, root vegetable

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, hip flexors and spine. Stimulates kidney, thyroid, and intestine. Relieves stress and improves digestion.

Bow



Dhanurasana: Lie flat on belly. Tuck tailbone down toward floor, lengthen belly and lift heart up away from floor. Bend knees and take hands to or toward ankles.

Makarasana: Clasp hands behind head with elbows reaching outward for Sea Monster Pose.

May Also Be: Skydiver, bumblebee, belly rock-n-roll

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens muscles of spine, buttocks, backs of arms and legs; stretches shoulders, chest, belly, and thighs. Relieves stress, indigestion, lower back pain. Improves posture, therapeutic for fatigue, flatulence, constipation, indigestion, and lower back

Bridge



Setu Bandha Sarvangasana: Lie on the floor, feet bent in, with fingertips reaching heels. Lift hips from the floor, open chest/heart. Roll a ball under the bridge. Sing London Bridge and come down on the words “my fair lady.”

May Also Be: Wart, secret passageway, door to animal den, sleeping giant’s snoring belly

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches chest, neck, and spine; calms brain and alleviates stress; stimulates abdominal organs and lungs; relieves anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, insomnia. Therapeutic for asthma and sinusitis.

Bus

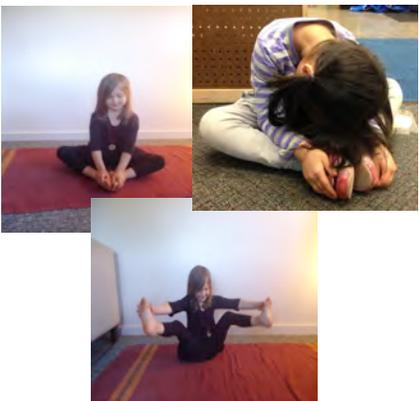


Dandasana: Sit with legs extended straight to the front, arms to steering wheel. Flex toes up to ceiling and sit up tall. Turn right (lean right). Turn left (lean left). Drive up a hill (lean back), down the hill (fold forward). Beep the horn! Where should we go today?

May Also Be: driving a car, truck, train, roller coaster, sled; Row a canoe or kayak by cradling one calf in both arms and circling calf with a rowing motion.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the sides of the body. Releases the hamstrings. Strengthens the core when leaning back, lengthens the spine when folding forward.

Butterfly/ Flying Butterfly



Baddha Konasana: Sit upright. Bring soles of feet together, knees splay out to sides. Legs are butterfly wings—gently flutter them. Bring your antennae up (arms or hands). Fold nose to toes and go to sleep.

Upavishta Konasana B: Stretch wings by straightening one leg at a time. Can you fly with two legs extended?

May Also Be: diamond, treasure, a cut, a bundle of sticks, reading a book, Archeopteryx; one leg lifted and drawn back for archer

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches hips, hamstrings, inner thighs, groins, knees. Stimulates abdominal organs, helps relieve anxiety, therapeutic for flat feet and asthma. Improves balance and focus. Helps body get rid of disease and fatigue.

Camel



Ustrasana: Kneel. Press thighs forward and lift heart. Bring hands to lower back and begin bending backward, continuing to lift heart to the sky. Perhaps reach hands to heels. Hang head back only if comfortable, very last.

May also be: jewel, wheel, sun, cloud, hill, cave opening

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the front of the body, opens the chest, strengthens the back and legs. Heart opener.

Candle (age 3-6)



Viparita karani: Lie flat on your back, lift your feet up high. Wait for your candle to be lit. Make a wish! Blow out the candle!

May also be: chrysalis/cacoon, firefly with twinkling toe lights, sloth, bat, opossum, campfire, lantern, umbrella, spaghetti eating pose (teacher eats up all the cooked spaghetti noodles)

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Calms the mind and stimulates the thyroid. Improves digestion and helps with headaches and sinus issues.

Candle (age 7-12)



Salamba Sarvangasana: Lie on back. Slowly lift legs straight up and over head until toes land on the floor in plow pose. From plow, bring hands to the low back, elbows shoulder width apart. Bring legs up so that feet come toward ceiling, eventually one line of energy from shoulder through toes.

Anatomical focus/benefits: Stimulates thyroid, calms brain, stretches shoulder and neck, improves digestions, reduces fatigue, tones legs

Restriction: Children and adolescents in puberty should not do shoulder stand or plow for long periods as these postures stimulate the thyroid, which is still developing. Young children should practice the above version of this pose which avoids strain on the neck.

Cat



Marjaryasana: Begin on all fours in table, with wrists under shoulders and knees under hips. Round your spine up, tuck chin and look at belly button. Meow. Alternate with cow pose for angry cat (hiss), happy cat (purr).

May Also Be: Leopard, cheetah, bobcat, tiger, etc. Tunnel, doorway, hut

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the spine and engages the core; relieves stress and tension. Revitalizes bloodflow to the nervous system.

Chair



Utkatasana: Stand with your feet together, bend your knees and drop your bottom as if sitting down into your chair. Lift arms up into the air, point toes forward and palms inward. Have some children be chairs, and some be tables. Pretend to sit in the chairs and eat off the tables.

May Also Be: “Stop and Wait A Minute” Patience Pose, “Hold On” Empowerment Pose, thunder, horseback rider, toilet pose, animal sitting on a branch/log, rainforest understory, hold up the world, carry heavy object

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens the legs, shoulders and core. Builds heat and increases heart rate. Good for flat feet and stretching the achilles tendon.

Chameleon



Utthan Pristhasana: Begin in plank pose and bring one foot between the hands into lunge. Take both hands to one side of the foot. When possible, release elbows down and rest on forearms. Catch a bug with your tongue! What color are you today?

May Also Be: lizard, dinosaur, spy, stealthy mover, chainsaw

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the hip flexors, the hamstrings and quadriceps; moves hips through full range of motion.

Child's Pose



Balāsana: Come to knees, bring bottom down onto heels and round down into a ball, like a mouse. Stroke your whiskers. Nibble cheese. Squeak squeak. Relax arms wherever comfortable.

May Also Be: mouse, dumpling, rock, seed, snowball, jack in the box (before popping up), popcorn kernel. Place one elbow on floor in front of forehead and extend forearm up for rhinoceros. Spread both arms out wide from the shoulders and look up for triceratops.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Soothes the mind, relaxes the body. Releases the lower back. Reduces external sensory input. Brings focus inward.

Cobra



Bhujangāsana: Come onto your tummy, flat. Place hands under shoulders and slowly lift heart up from the floor. Drop shoulders away from ears. Hissssss. Snakes slither (perhaps under dog tunnels), slowly dance to the music of a snake (roll spine), and coil back into child's pose for snake rest pose.

May Also Be: Lift bottom up off the floor for caterpillar pose. Caterpillars crawl with a scoot propelled by the knees, replacing hands under shoulders and bottom in the air after each scoot. Use a three-part “chuff chuff chuff” to lift up into a long train.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Opens the chest; strengthens the back and legs.

Cow



Bitilasana: Start in table with knees under hips and wrists, elbows, shoulders in line. Center head. Inhale, lift sitting bone and chest toward ceiling, belly sinks toward floor, gaze up. Moo. Are the cows brown? Black and white?

May Also Be: Sheep, goat (hang lower jaw down), buffalo (shrug shoulders up to ears), pig (turn left or right to look at curly tail for a side stretch).

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches front torso and neck, provides massage to spine and belly organs; relieves stress.

Crab



Catuspadapitham: From bus pose, bend the legs, place hands behind, palms facing in. Press into the floor and lift belly/bottom high. Dance to one side, dance to the other. Do the crab can-can. The Crab hokey pokey, beach race, soccer match. Give high fives with your feet.

May Also Be: table, bridge, rainbow, spider, variation of wheel for children under five.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches spine and back; opens the chest and shoulders. Beginner backbend.

Note: Be aware of developing wrists through age five.

Crescent Moon



Chandrasana: Begin in mountain. You may interlace fingers and point first finger toward sky. Breathing out, lengthen and then bend to the side.

May Also Be: waterfall, watering can, something tipping, a banana (peel one side, peel the other side, chomp), opening and closing something such as a door, book or window. May also perform this stretch seated.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the side body, strengthens core and obliques, and improves balance.

Criss-Cross Easy Pose & Half-Lotus



Sukhasana: Children are usually naturally able to find a comfortable seat, but a rolled towel, wedge, or block under the bottom or blocks under knees can be more comfortable. Ears over shoulders, shoulders over hips, spine long.

Ardha Padmasana: Some children like to show how they can become a pretzel in half (or full) lotus. As needed during class, come back together by singing “Criss-Cross Applesauce, spoons in a bowl” (spoons are hands in lap).

May Be Used: during breathing and mindfulness activities; for seated stories; as a posture on its own; with hip circles for wind or tornado; with spinal flexes for a camel ride; as a base for shoulder, arm, neck, and eye stretches.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Improves focus. Calms the mind. Opens the hips and groins.

Crocodile



Vishnuasana: Lie on your side, arms long overhead. Arms are crocodile jaws. Open and snap closed. Lift top leg for tail. Roll from side to side via the belly. Lift jaws and tail. Clasp fingers for sharp teeth.

Can Also Be: Side relaxation pose, sidewinder, sidewalk, train track, stretched rubber band

Variations: With one elbow bent, palm on ground, scissor legs for scissors or chopsticks. Lift the top leg up straight for a challenge - this works the hips and tones the inner and outer thighs. Maybe the legs are giant dinosaur jaws ready to chomp!

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Improves balance. Strengthens the core. Stretches the sides and torso. With tail strengthens inner and outer thigh and hip.

Crow/Crane

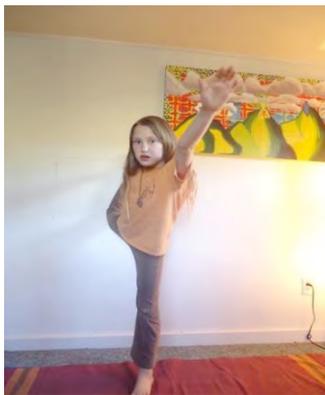


Bakasana: Squat with wide knees and bring palms down to ground directly under the shoulders. Come way up onto tiptoes with heels touching and knees toward armpits. Then tilt forwards maybe lifting one foot and then the other off the ground. Have kids place pillow or jacket near forehead for safety. From age six, wrists and arms have more strength lifting feet from the ground. Older children can jump from crow to chaturanga!

May Also Be: any bird or bug, butterfly coming out of a cocoon

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, wrists and arms. Builds balance, coordination, confidence and patience.

Dancer



Natarajasana: Standing in mountain, take hold of one foot, pulling it against your bottom behind you. Lift opposite arm up to the sky. Slowly tilt forward from hips while pressing back foot into hand. Find grace, even in wobbles. Find a gazing point in front of you. Smile.

May Also Be: Watering can, fairy, princess, messenger, telescope, sighting of land, rocket to the moon

Variations: Use a wall for balance. Lift foot up to knee or squeeze thigh in front of body for one-legged balance preparation. Variations may be heron, flamingo, flag, rhino.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Improves balance and concentration. Strengthens the legs and ankles. Stretches the shoulders, chest groins and abdomen.

Dinosaur



Prasarita Padottanasana: Spread the legs wide with feet parallel. Bend forward and hold ankles, bending knees if needed. Lift one leg, then the other, clomp-clomp-clomp. Dinosaur race? In a dinosaur-specific class, this is Ankylosaurus.

May Also Be: a giant, a troll, a monster. Release hands long to be a waterfall or a garden rake, alternate hand to toe motion for windmill, plant seeds from one foot to the other, look after the animal that just escaped, bat hanging in a cave

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the spine and the lower back. Improves coordination and balance.

Dolphin



Ardha Pincha Mayurasana: Begin on hands and knees; bend elbows, rest forearms on ground. Lift hips to the sky, draw shoulder blades down back, gaze between legs. Make dolphin noises—every dolphin has its own whistling sound. Let's hear yours! Oh, and dolphins sleep with one eye open.

May Also Be: whale, Stegosaurus, flying fish, rolling hills, hiker hiking up and down a mountain

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Calming, relieves stress. Strengthens arms and legs. Stretches shoulders, hamstrings, calves. Relieves headache, insomnia and fatigue, back pain.

Donkey



Eka Pada Adho Mukha Svanasana: In downward dog, press the palms into the ground and spread fingers wide. Bring heart forward and *where safe*, look through legs then kick carefully up into the air (flip-overs are possible). Great handstand prep.

May Also Be: horse, pony, deer, jackal

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Great energy release, exercises gluteal muscles and low back. Increases confidence. Powerful.

Downward Dog



Adho Mukha Svanasana: Spread the fingers, press palms into the floor and lift hips to the sky. Look at belly button, press heels to floor. Bark. Wag your tail! Line up into a dog tunnel. Make your dog pant with quick abdominal breathing. Help students with low arm tone to keep their head off the ground, preventing neck strain.

May Also Be: pyramid, tunnel, fox, wolf, coyote, bear walk (opposite hand/foot), wolf

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the shoulders, spine, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands. Strengthens the arms and legs. Wakes up tired minds, helps with sinus issues and improves digestion.

Counterindication: Students with Down Syndrome-related or other heart defects

Dragonfly



Advanced Eka Pada Salabhasana: In locust pose, set chin on the floor and bend one knee so that the sole of the foot on the same leg faces the ceiling. Bring the other leg up in the air, keep it straight and land it on top of the flat foot. Interlace your fingers with arms under your belly or behind your back.

May Also Be: swan, diver, other bugs, birds or dinosaurs

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the shoulders and spine. Activates kidneys, improves balance and coordination.

Eagle



Garudasana: From mountain, lift eagle wings wide to the side, bend at the elbows, bring elbows toward center and wrap one elbow over the other. Bend knees and sit down on eagle's branch; find balance on one leg and if possible, cross the other leg over and wrap it around. Focus eagle eyes on a distant spot.

May Also Be: hawk or other bird of prey, jungle vine, curvy line for art or geometry class, braided hair, hugging friends

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens legs; stretches the ankles, calves; and shoulders; stimulates vision and purpose; improves balance and concentration.

Extended Hand/Leg



Dandayamna Bharmanasana: Begin on all fours, aligning shoulders over wrists, knees under hips. Lift one leg behind you, using a strong belly. Now lift the other arm straight forward. Feel as though arm and leg are pulling away from one another; lengthen and get long. To add challenge, touch opposite fingers to toes above back or opposite elbow to knee under belly.

May Also Be: swimming, reaching, moving, crawling; for giraffe eating from tree, keep both knees on ground and lift one arm straight up to the ceiling, twisting body sideways, use hand to munch leaves from the tree

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Lengthens spine; strengthens core; improves coordination and balance.

Extended Side Angle



Utthita Parsvakonasana: Standing with feet wide, turn one foot to the side and bend that knee. Extend torso long and bring forearm down to rest on the bent knee/thigh. Extend the other arm overhead and along upper ear, creating a long line of energy down the side body. Children often need additional verbal cues to bend the knee.

May Also Be: going up and down hills, giraffe, Brontosaurus, launching rocket, watering can, teapot

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens and stretches knees, legs, ankles. Stretches groins, spine, waist, chest and lungs, shoulders. Stimulates abdominal organs. Useful for constipation or backache.

Firefly (beginner)



Tittibhasana: Begin in yogi squat. Place palms on the mat and move pelvis forward so arms and trunk of body are between the legs. Bend elbows and bring weight into upper arms, lifting feet from floor. Stay here or straighten the legs, toes facing forward, legs parallel to floor. Stay here or straighten arms as much as possible.

May Also Be: spider, backpacker, a surprise, a sunrise

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens arms and wrists, tones belly, improves balance, deepens hamstring and hip flexibility, brings new strength and perspective, opens chest.

Fish



Matsyasana: Lie on your back. Lift your heart until your chest lifts up off of the floor. As your chest lifts up, your head may want to hang backward and upside down. Use your elbows and forearms for support. Keep your legs long.

May Also Be: key, banjo

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens arms, tones belly, brings new perspective, opens chest.

Note: Avoid any pressure on the neck. Head should not be supporting weight in this pose.

Flamingo



Eka Pada Ardha Uttanasana: From mountain pose, find a focus point for your eyes. Balance weight over one leg. Lift the opposite foot up to knee-level, with bent knee directly forward. Make flamingo wings with arms and if balanced, fold torso forward from the hips.

May Also Be: crane, cane, sugar cane, corn

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens ankles and legs, stretches hamstrings, builds sense of equilibrium and confidence.

Flower



Vikasitakamalasana: Sit on your bottom with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Take your palms, like a closed book, in between your knees. Open your knees, open your book, lift up one petal (calf) then the other. Balance on your sit bones and smell your flower. Grow your flower petals out wide and return to center. In a circle, take hands and become a garden. Bring thumbs and forefingers together for Flowering Lotus.

Dandayamna Baddha Konasana: For a nest, bring arms in a circle above legs and wrap fingers around toes or wrists around ankles.

May Also Be: a pot, bowl of soup, treasure, jewel

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, opens hips, develops coordination and improves balance. Both uplifting and grounding.

Forward Fold



Uttanasana: From mountain pose, fold forward from the hips. Relax the head and neck, soften knees; relax fingertips or hold opposite elbows. Rock back and forth, side to side.

May Also Be: rag doll, wind-up doll, swinging or jumping monkey, waterfall, rain, snow, ticking clock, jellyfish; for ostrich, lift tailbone to rear, bend elbows at sides and fold your long neck forward to eat from the ground

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Calms the mind; relieves stress; stretches hamstrings, calves, hips; strengthens thighs and knees; relieves headache; improves sleep and digestion; therapeutic for asthma and sinusitis.

Frog/Yogic Squat

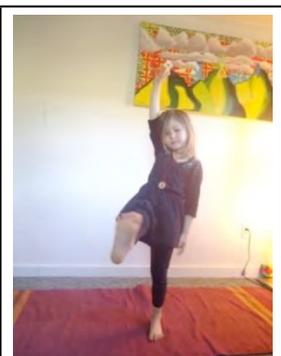


Malasana: Squat on floor, knees spread, feet as parallel as possible, heels to floor if possible (can roll mat or use block if needed); bring elbows to inside of knees, hands together. Frogs bring hands to floor and begin to hop. How high can these frogs hop? Woah! That's high.

May Also Be: walnut, acorn (with palms overhead), troll, old woman, ketchup bottle or water fountain about to squirt, rocket ship ready to blast off, rooster; grasp opposite elbows behind back for turkey, peacock or duck

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Tones legs and increases hamstring flexibility; strengthens core, ankles, groin, and back of torso.

Giraffe

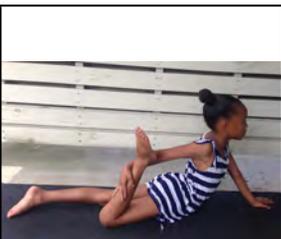


Hasta Padangusthasana Variation: Stand tall in mountain. Lift one arm as your long neck and lift the opposite leg up as high as you can while you keep it straight. As you walk, switch opposite arm/opposite leg. What do giraffes have that are very long? Their tongues are almost two feet long (18-20 inches)! Try leaving one arm up while alternating legs. Do you think giraffe necks get tired?

May Also Be: flag, ladder, toucan, ropes course walker

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Lengthens spine, stretches hamstrings, improves coordination and balance.

Grasshopper



Ardha Bhikasana: Begin on your belly. Tuck your tailbone and lengthen your abdomen. Press your hands against the floor and lift your head and upper torso. Support yourself with one arm and reach back with the other hand to grasp the same-side ankle. Stay strong across your chest and don't collapse your shoulder into the supporting arm. Did you know the number of cricket chirps can tell us the ambient air temperature?

May Also Be: cricket, locust, baby dinosaur, "half-frog"

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches front of body; strengthens back; stimulates abdominal organs; increases body heat; awakens mind.

Half Lotus Forward Fold



Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana: From mountain pose, find a focal vision point and center weight over one leg. Lift the other foot up into the opposite hip crease, lengthen spine and slowly fold over your lotus petal. Relax the head and neck, relax fingertips or hold opposite elbows.

May Also Be: nighttime flower, resting flamingo, tent

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches hamstrings, ankles, hips; improves balance; relieves headache; improves sleep and digestion; therapeutic for asthma and sinusitis.

Half Moon



Ardha Chandrasana: Begin in triangle pose, facing to the right. Bring your left hand to left hip, bend your right knee and reach right hand about twelve inches in front of right foot, reaching for the floor or a block. Straighten your right leg as you lift the left leg parallel to floor. Reach your left arm toward the sky; older children may gaze upward.

May Also Be: sailboat, tipping teapot, pair of scissors, falling star, falling snowflake, porcupine

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, ankles and thighs; stretches the groins, hamstrings, calves, shoulders; opens chest and rotates spine; improves balance and coordination; relieves stress; improves digestion and elimination.

Handstand



Adho Mukha Vrikshasana: Practice near a wall or tree, one child at a time. Prepare with crow, donkey kicks and L-Dogs. If children are ready, spot them as they place hands shoulder-width apart, two inches from wall. Have them align hips over shoulders over wrists as much as possible and then use donkey kicks to bring their feet up to the wall, with or without assistance. Draw shoulder blades back. Some children are fearless and can perform handstand without a wall; maintain that a spotter is required.

May Also Be: cicada, stick bug, empty bag

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens shoulders, arms, and wrists, stretches belly, improves sense of balance, calms the brain and helps relieve stress/mild depression and elimination.

Happy Baby



Ananda Balasana: Lie on back, bend knees and take hold of feet; keep the soles of feet facing up to the sky. Press feet upward into hands and pull hands down toward the ground. Rock from side to side to feel like a happy baby.

May Also Be: bug on its back, flea, fly on ceiling, spider hanging from web, sloth, bear cub, otter, nut, somebody who has fallen over.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Massages the back. Opens the hips. Calms the brain and alleviates fatigue.

Headstand



Salamba Sirsasana: Practice near a wall for safety. Come to hands and knees facing the wall. Place forearms on the ground with elbows a forearm's distance apart; interlace fingers together and place the head on the floor, nestling the back of the head into the hands. Draw the shoulder blades away from the ears; press firmly into forearms, which are bearing the primary body weight. There should be almost no weight on the head. When ready, lift one leg, then the other, with knees bent or straight, using the strength of the core. If child wants to put weight on head, return to dolphin pose or handstand.

May Also Be: change of perspective, break in the day, nutty professor, rabbit ears, clown, trapeze artist

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: All inversions are calming and relieve stress/mild depression. Strengthens arms, legs, spine and core; improves circulation especially to the brain and alleviates fatigue.

Hero



Virasana: Begin on knees; keep knees together and separate feet apart. Nestle bottom between the feet. Keep soles of feet facing upward.

May Also Be: groundhog peeking up, rabbit, chipmunk, coming up for air

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches thighs and ankles, improves posture. Great pose for seated meditation.

Hockey Player

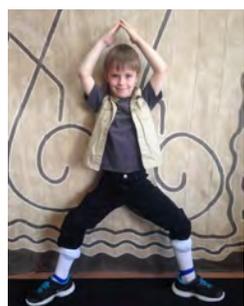


Parivrtta Utkatasana: Start from chair pose with feet parallel and pressing into the floor strongly. Bring your palms together in front of your heart. Without moving your hips or knees, twist from your shoulders to one side. Press your elbow against the opposite knee to spin your chest out to the side. Keep both knees aligned.

May Also Be: Harry Potter, witch with broomstick, downhill skier, sweeping, question mark, Jackie Paper, kangaroo

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens hip flexors, adductors and gluteals; improves range of motion in ankles; stretches calves; increases proprioception in feet; stimulates abdominal organs and heart.

House



Utkata Konasana: Form a wide-legged stance and bend knees as deeply as possible. Test your limits, keeping legs strong, back straight and knees wide. Join palms together over your head to form a roof or flame.

May Also Be: fire, phoenix, goddess, king/queen, emperor, igloo, steeple

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches hips, groins and chest; tones core muscles, quadriceps, upper arms and back; increases circulation, creates heat; creates space in the pelvis.

Hyena



Vyaghrasana Counterpose: From Tiger pose, draw the extended leg into the chest, knee to belly, drawing the navel up and rounding the spine like a tricky hyena. Try Tiger, Hyena, Tiger, Hyena.

May Also Be: child or animal crawling, hiding or embarrassed

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, wrists, arms; improves balance and coordination.

L-Dog

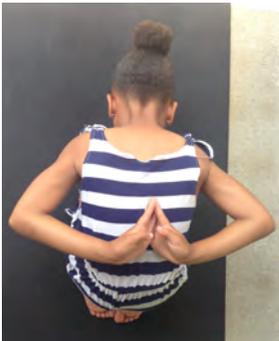


Ardha Vrikshasana: To line up for this posture, sit with back against the wall. Mark the place where your feet are, stand up, then place hands down at that spot. Walk feet up the wall, coming up to an L shape. Relax neck. If children walk feet higher than 90 degrees, remind them to pull in their bellies to avoid overarching lower back.

May Also Be: bat, sloth, opossum, new perspective, hallway

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens arms, back, core, and shoulders. Releases tension in neck. Inversions are beneficial for depression, exhaustion, or feeling down.

Ladybug



Paschima Baddha Namaskar Balasana: Begin sitting on heels. Reach arms behind back, placing palms together or grasping opposite elbows. Fold forward as far as comfortable, taking forehead toward floor.

May Also Be: any beetle, burrowing animal

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: relieves pain in shoulders, arms, wrists, fingers; strengthens knee joints; boosts confidence and reduces depression.

Legs Up Wall



Viparita Karani: Lie on back and scootch bottom as close to wall as possible. Bring feet up the wall, arms overhead or to the side. May use this pose when children need to concentrate, as before a test, or just before bed/savasana.

May Also Be: ladder to the moon, tap for a maple tree

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Calms and rejuvenates the mind; enhances concentration; relieves tired/cramped legs and feet; stretches back legs, front torso and back of neck; relieves backache or headache.

Lily Pad

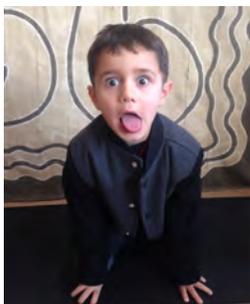


Supta Virasana: From hero pose, bring hands to either side of hips and lean torso back. Come onto forearms; if comfortable, continue down until back is flat on the floor. Do not strain back or knees.

May Also Be: sleeping, resting hero, lily pad

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches quadriceps. Increases flexibility in the knees, hips, and spine.

Lion



Simhasana: Sit on your knees with bottom on heels. Tense lion claws on your thighs, make wide lion eyes, inhale through the nose. On the exhale, stick the tongue out long and curl it toward the chin. Get ready to Roar! Send maximum energy through fingers, eyes and throat, while making a “haaaaa” sound with the breath. Take 2-3 lion breaths.

May Also Be: silliness, silly child or animal, antagonist, frustration, release

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Releases tension in body, especially facial muscles, neck and throat; provides mental and emotional release.

Locust



Salabhasana: Lie flat on belly, lift arms, upper torso, and legs; draw shoulders down the back; inwardly rotate thighs and extend legs long; breathe!

May Also Be: airplane, bird (wide arms), fish out of water, seal with clapping fins, swimmer, superman, lake/sea/ocean

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens muscles of spine, buttocks, backs of arms and legs; stretches shoulders, chest, belly, and thighs. Relieves stress, indigestion, lower back pain. Improves posture; therapeutic for fatigue, flatulence, constipation, indigestion and lower back pain.

Lunge



Ardha Mandalasana: Begin in mountain pose, step one leg back into runner’s lunge, heel lifted. Hands frame the front foot. Jump-switch the legs to “run” in place for an energy release.

May Also Be: roadrunner, iguana, lizard. preparation for warrior one and two. Lift arms out to the side for flying dragon.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens and tones legs and back, releases tension in hip and groin, relieves backache, builds stamina, strength, and flexibility.

Lunge Twist



Parivritta Anjaneyasana: Begin in lunge pose, right leg forward. Lift hands up to heart and twist to the right, pressing left elbow to outside of right knee. Extend leg long and spin chest upward.

May Also Be: looking over the shoulder, switching directions, being chased

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens quadriceps and gluteals; stimulates abdominal organs, improving digestion; cleanses blood and organs; stretches psoas and hips; improves balance and concentration.

Mermaid



Eka Pada Rajakapotasana: Begin in pigeon and curl your back leg behind you by bending your knee. Keep your pelvis facing forward and lift one arm up to sing like a mermaid. There are mermen too!

May Also Be: paper, wall, tree trunk; for rain reach arms up to the clouds; extend arms straight overhead for Tulip Poplar

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches thorax, abdomen, shoulder, neck; energizes spine; stimulates digestive fire in belly.

Mountain



Tadasana: Bring the feet parallel, under the hips. Lift the thigh muscles, drop the tailbone, pull the front ribs in, lift the heart, shoulderblades down back, ears over shoulders, steady gaze, strong and unmoving as a mountain.

May Also Be: paper, wall, tree trunk; for rain reach arms up to the clouds; extend arms straight overhead for Tulip Poplar

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches shoulders, hips, neck; energizes spine; stimulates digestive fire in belly.

Owl



Marichyasana: From bus pose, bring one foot up to knee position; lift that foot over to the other side of your knee and place your foot flat on the floor. Use your arms to hug your bent knee in toward your chest and twist gently to one side. Keep spine upright and crown lifting. Did you know owls don't move their eyeballs at all? But we do! Turn your eyes as far as you can, gazing to the side. Owls must use their necks. What does your neck feel like in this pose?

May Also Be: looking or reaching behind for something such as soup ingredients or to pick a flower; take both legs to one side and one arm in the air for mermaid

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches shoulders, hips, neck; energizes spine; stimulates digestive fire in belly; encourages observation, perspective and reflection.

Pigeon



Eka Pada Rajakapotasana: Begin on all fours. Pull one leg up and bring that foot close to the opposite hand. Extend other leg back and lower your pelvis down as far as comfortable. Support yourself with arms or lift arms up and down with the breath. Optional: slowly release torso forward over the bent leg.

May Also Be: chipmunk, squirrel (look up the tree, curl your tail)

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the hip flexors and thighs. Opens the hips, shoulders, and chest. Hip openers invite emotional and physical release.

Plank/ Push-Up



Phalakasana: Begin in downward facing dog. Shift the body forward so shoulders are over wrists, body one long line of energy. Draw in the core. Drop or lift the hips to be one long strong plank of wood. Spread the fingers wide and be careful not to hyperextend elbows. Bring knees to the ground to relieve strain, especially for developing wrists.

Chaturanga: Bend elbows, pressing them tight in toward ribs, squeeze shoulder blades along back, and lower entire plank partway to the ground.

May Also Be: tunnel, surfboard, log

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens arms, wrists, spine and core.

Plow (age 7-12)



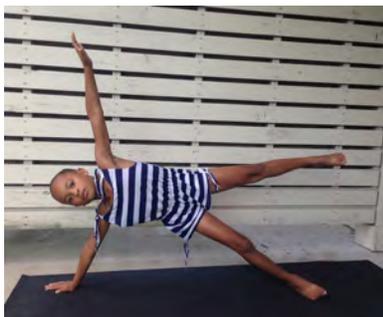
Halasana: Lie on back, bend knees up and press hands down by the side. Lift legs, using hands to steady, then let the legs tip all the way up and over head. Clasp hands together. Head should not move side to side; keep gaze directly up.

May Also Be: tunnel, surfboard, log

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Calms the mind, reduces stress, aides sleep; stimulates the thyroid and abdominal organs; tones the legs; strengthens and opens neck, shoulder, abdominal and back muscles.

Note: Do not hold this posture for extended periods of time, to protect developing thyroid glands.

Porcupine



Eka Pada Vasisthasana: From airplane, lift upper leg up into the air. Watch out, I might poke you with my quills! Where do porcupines live?

May Also Be: falling leaf, star or snowflake; South American tree porcupine, African porcupine; opportunity, dare or “challenge”

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stabilizes core; builds wrist, arm and shoulder strength; develops balance, stamina, willpower and persistence.

Polar Bear



Uttana Shishosana: From table, drop elbows down to the ground. The snow is cold; breathe in and blow long slow breaths of warm air onto your cold paws! Tired bears might like to hibernate in a twist pose.

May Also Be: “puppy,” grizzly bear, black bear

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the spine and shoulders; steadies the mind; calms the breath; lowers the heart rate.

Rabbit



Sasangasana: Begin sitting on heels. Interlace your fingers behind your back. Now bring torso to thighs as you bring the top of your head to the floor. Lift your clasped hands as far up as comfortable—listen closely with your rabbit ears!

May Also Be: “puppy,” grizzly bear, black bear

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Elongates spine and improves circulation; relieves tension in neck, back and shoulders; provides relief from sinusitis, colds or congestion, tonsillitis, laryngitis, upper airway allergies and glandular problems. This pose will clear the airway for bunny breath through the nose!

Rainbow



Utthita Vasisthasana: From plank, stack feet and rotate sideways. Have supporting wrist in same plane as shoulder but slightly in front, creating a very slight angle with the floor. Extend top arm over head, lengthening along side body. Imagine you are a rainbow stretching across the sky.

May Also Be: one color of the rainbow, gold, riches, “excellence,” gate, fence, road builder

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens wrists, arms, belly and legs; stretches wrists, side body and backs of legs; improves balance

Modification: For developing wrists and young balancers, take lower knee to the floor for support.

Reverse Warrior

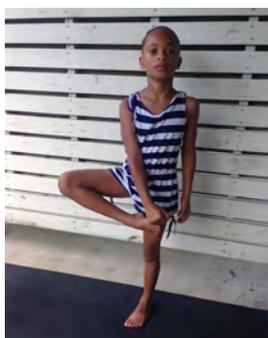


Viparita Virabhadrasana: Begin in Warrior II Pose, hips open to side wall. Now keep the front knee bent as you reach your back hand down your back leg. Breathing in, sweep front arm up, palm facing behind you. Kids tend to unbend their front knee here, so you can remind them or not be attached.

May Also Be: waterfall, thunderbolt, dancer, crescent moon, moon moving across the sky, spacecraft landing on Mars

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens legs, improves flexibility in spine, opens hips, brings power to the core, and increases self-confidence.

Rhino



Beginner Hasta Padangusthasana: Begin in Mountain. Firming energy and balance through one leg down into the ground, lift the other leg up and hold onto the big toe. Lengthen spine and torso up and away, shoulders level and neck straight, ears over shoulders.

Supta Hasta Padangusthasana: Try this pose with your side body or back lying flat on the ground.

May Also Be: Iguanodon, claw, shark, tooth

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens feet, ankles, legs, hips; stretches core; develops focus, confidence and balance

Ride a Bike



Apanasana: Lie on your back and squeeze your knees up to your chest. Draw tailbone down toward mat and tuck chin in toward chest. Pedal as on a bicycle. Go up the hill sloooooowly, down the hill quick quick quick. Where should we go today? When you arrive, squeeze knees back in to chest once more.

May Also Be: fussy baby, spinning wool

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens the core; stretches the hamstrings as you pedal and press up through alternate heels; releases low back pain; stimulates digestion.

River



Paschimottanasana: Sit up straight with your legs together, stretched out in front of you. Point both feet straight up towards the ceiling. Inhale lengthen, exhale lift arms up and over the legs, reaching thigh, shin, or sides of the feet. Flow like a river.

May Also Be: river drinker, walrus, sandwich, closed door, folded kite, pulling covers up in bed

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the hamstrings, stretches and lengthens spine, relieves digestive problems, invigorates nervous system, calms mind.

Rock the Baby



Dandasana Variation: Sit tall with legs stretched out in front of you, toes somewhere between flexed and pointed (“flointed”). Draw one leg in toward the chest, cradle the knee in the crook of the elbow, draw shoulders down the back and keep a long spine. Aw, the baby is crying. Rock the baby, side to side, front and back. Who wants to give their baby a kiss? Oh wait, it’s twins! Pick up the other baby. You may use this pose just after happy baby, another hip opener, if the happy baby starts crying!

May Also Be: rowing or paddling a kayak, canoe or rowboat; steering a vehicle, snowmobile or sled

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches and opens the groins and hips; releases stress and emotional storage.

Rocking Chair



Vajrasana Variation: Begin sitting on bottom with knees bent up and feet flat on the floor in front of you. Hug arms around knees to squeeze them in tight. Sit up tall and press spine backward. Tuck chin down to chest, reaching forehead toward knees for a strong back stretch. Slowly roll backward and back up again, several times. Optional: rock all the way to feet and stand up during each rocking motion.

May Also Be: rock-n-roll, knitting

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Massages spinal muscles and vertebrae; increases spinal flexibility; reduces drowsiness and stiffness; soothes the adrenals and tones the kidneys; relaxes nervous system.

Rocking Horse



Urdvha Chakrasana: Lie on belly. Begin with a few rounds of locust. Then lift feet up toward bottom, take hold of ankles, press feet backward into hands, lift the chest and roll back onto the thighs.

May Also Be: archer, sun, tugging, strength, compassion, bowl, basket, donut, bagel, nest

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Intense heart opener; relieves fatigue, anxiety, menstrual discomfort, respiratory ailments and constipation; strengthens back and improves posture; stimulates organs of abdomen and neck; stretches psoas and front of body.

Scale



Tolasana: Beginning in half or full lotus, press the palms into the floor in either side of the hips. You may use blocks here, depending on length of your arms/torso.

May Also Be: mountain above the cloud, tent, teepee

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens wrists, arms and abdomen. Encourages perseverance and increases confidence.

Savasana



Savasana: From bus pose, bend knees and bring feet flat on the floor. Place forearms and palms on floor and lean back onto elbows; lower torso vertebrae by vertebrae until back of head rests on floor; stretch each leg long and allow legs to drop gently to the sides. Stretch arms long, palms facing up. Scan the body from head to toe for balance and relaxation; include the jaw, tongue, eyebrows, collarbones, kneecaps, ankles, etc. Ensure the diaphragm is free from tension and bring focus to the breath moving in and out of the body.

May Also Be: snow, sand, resting, sleeping, night sky

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Alleviates nervous tension, migraines, insomnia, fatigue; soothes nervous system and mind; enhances recovery from illness.

Slide



Purvottanasana: Begin in bus pose. Place hands six inches behind bottom, on the floor, palms facing in. On an inhale, lift the hips, draw the shoulders down the back. Drop head back without compressing in neck. Try rolling a ball down all the slides!

May Also Be: board, bridge, ramp, hedgehog, anteater, pelican

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens arms, wrists, legs; stretches shoulders, chest and ankles; increases proprioception.

Standing Star



Utthita Tadasana: Begin in mountain. Spread legs wide but keep a steady stance. Lift arms to shoulder height. Now reach out through fingertips and the top of the head while pressing through feet into the floor. Imagine sending energy from your heart out through all five points of your star. How far can you send the energy?

May Also Be: five or the fifth, expansion, sharing

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Opens chest; tones arms; lengthens and aligns spine; improves posture.

Split



Hanumanasana: Begin in lunge with knee to ground. Lean forward, pressing fingers into block or floor. Slide rear leg back. Stop when you feel a stretch but no discomfort, then begin to straighten the front leg. Front knee should point toward the ceiling, back toes point straight back, foot is engaged. This posture is best introduced with older children who are prepared to take time and listen to their bodies. It is often an opportunity for lessons on comparisons and judgments.

May Also Be: five or the fifth, expansion, sharing

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches thigh, hamstrings, and groin.

Starfish



Utthita Savasana: Lying down on your back, spread arms and legs wide. Reach through your fingers and toes! Can you imagine drawing all the love of the world inward through your star, swirling it inside of you and then sending it outward again? How does a starfish? How does a starfish move?

May Also Be: prickly bush, echinoderm, fallen branches, resting star, fallen snow, fall leaves, tree roots, snow angel that moves with breath

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Relaxes the body and mind. May choose to do a guided (ocean) visualization here

Supine Twist



Supta Jathara Parivartanasana: Lie on back, perhaps riding your bicycles on a journey. Time to turn: draw knees into chest, drop legs over to one side. You may straighten the bottom leg here. Look over the opposite shoulder, keeping both shoulders on the mat.

May also be: turning airplane, number 5

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches the gluteals; stretches and releases spine; can relieve back pain; detoxifies and massages internal organs; stimulates kidneys, bladder and intestines; calms nervous system.

Swan



Hamsasana: From cobra pose, draw the feet up toward the head. Tuck the tailbone to avoid crunching the low back; extend through the entire front and back body. Do not compromise integrity of the pose in order for feet to reach head. Encourage kids to practice at home. Little by little, it gets easier. Ham is the inhale sound, Sa is the exhale.

May Also Be: crystal, goose, quail

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches and opens the spine; stretches quadriceps; encourages focus, flexibility, practice and patience; creates spaciousness for breath and spirit.

Telephone

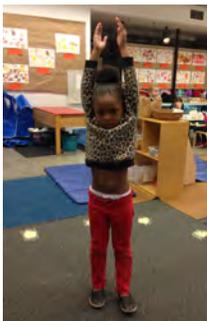


“Hasta Pada Konasana”: Ring, ring. Hello? This posture is useful in stories and many children can reach their phone to their ears. Dial numbers on your feet. Take turns calling one another. Or have the phone ring suddenly mid-class when attention wavers. When the kids answer, say, “Hello? Is anybody there? I’d like to order a Tree Pose, please.” See “Foot Phone” in the Activities section.

May Also Be: a yummy snack

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Opens the hips. Stretches the hamstrings.

Tulip Poplar



Tadasana Urdhva Baddha Hastasana: Begin in mountain. Lift arms to the front and all the way overhead. Reach through fingertips while pressing through soles of the feet. Interlace fingers and press palms toward ceiling. How fast do tulip poplars grow? Try growing up from a seed. Turn pose sideways on the floor to become a rolling log. What do we use every day that comes from trees?

May Also Be: rolling log

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Boosts confidence; treats depression; corrects flat feet; strengthens knees; reduces arthritis and sciatic pain; stretches shoulders, arms wrists and fingers; activates and tones the torso, abdomen

Thread the Needle



Parsva Halasana: Come to hands and knees; get ready to thread your needle. Take the “needle” in one hand, and thread it through the “eye of the needle” under opposite shoulder. Rest your shoulder, ear and cheek on the mat.

May Also Be: reaching into a log, tunnel or under a bed; tickling a loved one; picking up dishes that fell off the table

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Releases shoulder, neck, back, massages internal organs.

Tiger



Vyaghrasana: Begin in table. Lift one leg up, keeping a 90 degree angle at the knee and sole of the foot toward the ceiling. Lift the gaze up for a slight backbend. Tail can curl or flick up and down.

Eka Hasta Vyaghrasana: Bring weight onto one arm, or begin in extended hand-leg pose. Grasp one ankle with the opposite hand.

May Also Be: pig, leopard, jaguar or any four-legged with a tail.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens core, wrists, arms, hamstrings and gluteals; lengthens and stretches spine; improves balance and coordination.

Tree



Vrikshasana: Standing tall in mountain, root one foot into the ground, spread toes wide, and make a very strong trunk (legs and torso). Begin with hands together in front of heart, then grow branches, sway in the wind and find balance. Choose a focal spot for your eyes then lift one foot and place the heel of that foot against the ankle of your standing leg. As balance steadies, bring foot higher, above or below the knee. Bend elbows, wrists, and ankles for boughs and branches. What kind of tree are you? Try folding forward like a Weeping Willow. Use breath to see what trees will blow over.

May Also Be: tall plant, sunflower

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens the legs and back. Improves balance and opens the shoulders and chest. Stretches the waist and expands the ribcage.

Triangle



Trikonasana: Stand with feet one leg-length apart, bring arms to T. Turn left foot out and lean to the left. One hand down, one hand up. Gaze up without straining neck. Count angles and triangles or sing I’m a Little Teapot.

May Also Be: teapot, the action of going “this way and that way” in stories, a windmill, a sailboat, a falling star, kite

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens thighs, knees, ankles. Stretches hips, hamstrings, calves, shoulders, chest spine. Stimulates and improves digestion.

Turtle



Kurmasana: From butterfly, bring hands into the center of the legs. Loop hands under the legs from the inside and reach them around the ankles from the outside. Fold torso forward and tuck forehead toward toes to hide inside shell. Draw shoulder blades down the back and peek up to say "Hello!" Breathe inside the turtle shell, or breathe in when peeking up and breathe out when hiding in shell. Try finding a flower and moving directly into flower balance.

May Also Be: droopy flower, shyness, quiet

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Quiets the mind; increases flexibility in the hips; tones the abdominal muscles and strengthens the back.

Upward Facing Dog



Urdhva Mukha Svanasana: Begin in chataranga (yogic push up), shoulders over wrists. Roll forward over toes, press tops of feet into floor, lift torso up and let thighs sink toward floor. Be sure to lift heart and keep shoulders away from ears. Now howl at the moon!

May Also Be: howling wolf or coyote, walrus, elephant seal

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens the arms, wrists and core; increases the flexibility of the spine; opens heart and chest; counter stretch for hunching at a school desk.

Volcano



Anjali Mudra Variation of Utthita Tadasana: Begin in mountain pose, palms together in front of the heart. Feel some grumbling at the base of your mountain, deep in the earth. Breathe. Breathe. Stay calm. On an exhale, the volcano erupts, you jump up, arms go overhead and circle back down.

May Also Be: squirting bottle, carbonation, chemical reaction, kite, rocket, excitement; or slowly the movement can be a meditation for leaf or feather, steadiness

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Releases tension and energy, stretches and exercises legs.

Waterfall



In traditional yoga, Waterfall pose is a supported variation of legs-up-the-wall pose. This standing version of Waterfall is a common pose in children's yoga. Begin in mountain pose, With your hands, feel the water flowing down the river. Let the water flow as you breathe in and lift your arms up, up and over the falls! Keep hips over ankles as you bend back. Some children may want to carry the water all the way into wheel pose. Alternatively, start in the backbend and fold forward for the waterfall.

May Also Be: sunflower, sun or moonshine, goal, celebration.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches front body; elongates spine; tones neck; strengthens ankles, knees, hips and abdomen; encourages confidence, happiness and proprioception.

Warrior 1



Virabhadrasana I: Begin in mountain; take a big step back with one foot. Bend your front leg deeply while pressing into the heel of the back foot. Reach arms up and overhead, gaze forward and up.

May Also Be: character in a story, hot lava or jungle underbrush walk, sweeping with a broom, high ropes course

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens shoulders, arms, legs, ankles and back; Opens hips, chest and lungs; improves focus, balance and stability.

Warrior 2



Virabhadrasana II: Stand with your feet wide. Turn to one side and turn that foot out so your toes and eyes are pointing in the same direction. Lift your arms up to shoulder height and extend them long. Gaze over your fingertips as you bend your front knee, but only bend as far as you can stay balanced between the front and back of your pose.

May Also Be: surfer, story character, skateboarder, snowboarder, spell-caster, strength of character, willpower, peaceful warrior

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens and stretches the legs and ankles; opens the chest, lungs, groin and shoulders; energizes core; builds stamina.

Warrior 3



Virabhadrasana III: From Warrior 1, lean into front leg, lift back foot off the ground, send it out long and strong. Pivot at your hips, lifting the back leg as you lower your torso down. Stay steady and balanced, keep your arms extended long, or to the side for wings. Compare your balance on one side to the other.

May Also Be: bird, plane, ice skater, roller blader, an elephant jumping over a fence, hose shooting water, submarine, a dragon breathing fire

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Strengthens the legs, ankles, torso and shoulders. Improves balance and concentration.

Washing Machine



Parsva Sukasana - Kundalini Variation: Sit in a comfortable cross-legged seat. Bring arms straight out to the side and bend forearms up at the elbow. Inhale twist left, exhale twist right. Spin this way, spin that way. Fast cycle. Gentle cycle. If there is no electricity, wash clothes by scrubbing hands, wringing wrists, shaking water and hanging on a line. Ask if clothes are dry yet? Maybe yes, maybe no, I don't know: nod head, turn head and shrug shoulders. In the classic kundalini breath, hands come to shoulders, thumbs in back.

May Also Be: dryer, spinning top or hoop, dizziness

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Releases and energizes spine; moves energy upward; improves digestion; relieves backache; stretches upper body; energizes mind.

Wheel (age 5+)



Urdhva Dhanurasana: For children ready to move beyond bridge or crab, wheel offers the benefits of a deep backbend while also being an inversion. To come into full wheel, lie on the back, bend knees, feet parallel. Bring palms of hands beside shoulders, fingers toward feet. On an inhale, lift hips off the floor, pressing evenly into hands and feet. Be sure crown of head is above the floor elbows are parallel (not splayed). Straighten arms and legs as possible. Press heart and armpits forward. Tuck chin in to chest to come down, lowering slowly and with control. Rest with neutral spine before taking a rounded forward bend.

May Also Be: rainbow, tunnel, arch

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches and strengthens spine, strengthens arm, wrists, leg, and core. Increases energy and therapeutic for mild depression, asthma, and back pain.

Wide-Legged Seated Forward Bend



Upavistha Konasana: From easy or bus pose, spread the legs wide with feet flexed, toes and knees toward ceiling, thighs engaged. Reach forward between the legs with a long spine. To stir ingredients, you may lift one leg and stir it (as though the leg were a ladle) or stir with the body, making large circles. After setting a timer, use arms to “tick, tock” up and down toward toes.

May Also Be: “bored” character; stirring stone soup, porridge, cake, pancakes; kneading dough; grinding grain; putting cake in or out of the oven; playing with a baby.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches and strengthens spine, strengthens arm, wrists, leg, and core. Increases energy and therapeutic for mild depression, asthma, and back pain.

Wild Thing



Camatkarasana: Begin in rainbow pose. Step the top foot behind, arch the back, drawing the heart open and the top arm and gaze behind you. With a spotter, you might flip all the way to wheel. This posture, also called flipped dog, is also achieved by flipping a downward dog (more advanced).

May Also Be: “bored” character; stirring stone soup, porridge, cake, pancakes; kneading dough; grinding grain; putting cake in or out of the oven; playing with a baby.

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Opens chest, lungs, shoulder, front of legs and hip flexors; strengthens arms, shoulders and upper back; encourages positive attitude and flexible mind.

Wind



“Pawanasana”: From mountain, bus, criss-cross, wide-legged seat, or sitting on heels, bring hands to hips. Take a big belly breath in and blow it out slowly as you pivot your torso in a circle from your hips. Make the sound of the wind, softly and loudly. Fast wind, slow wind. For a storm, add rain, thunder and lightning.

May Also Be: whirring

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Slows breath, slows heart rate, cools body, releases anger and frustration.

Woodchopper



Prasarita Padottanasana - Kundalini Variation: Begin in mountain. Spread legs wide apart; keep knees facing forward. Get ready to chop a log. Big breath in as you raise your axe up overhead, big “Ha!” breath out as you fold forward and chop wood. Repeat several times. What can we do to protect our forests?

May Also Be: raising or lowering a flag, marking a spot, hammering, digging

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Opens lungs; releases tension; strengthens abdominal muscles; stretches hamstrings; builds heat; energizes core power.

Wolf



Thai Goddess Pose Variation: Come sitting on heels, with toes tucked under, so that body weight is creating a stretch across the back and front of the foot, and the calves. Spread knees apart and lean on your paws. Arch your back and howl. Relax your face and pause from howling.

May Also Be: fox with nose in the air, mouse sitting up, groundhog

Anatomical Focus/Benefits: Stretches muscles of the feet and lower leg; encourages equanimity during intensity; releases vocal energy; enhances positivity.

Group and Partner Pose Guide

There are many benefits to group and partner poses, including trust, communication, cooperation, connection, creativity, playfulness! Best with children who are familiar with one another already.

Back to back breathing



Sitting comfortably, legs out or legs crossed, bring bottoms together and lean against one another, still sitting upright, breathing as you feel how one another's breath goes into the back. This posture is calming, and draws focus both inward and into connection with others.

To further illustrate three dimensional breath, children may take turns, one coming into child's pose and the other placing a hand on her or his back, feeling the breath. The partner in child's pose will also feel the breath filling the back body, as well as the belly pressing the thighs.

Back to Back Dog



Standing heel to heel, come into downward facing dog. Gaze at each other through your legs. Both partners lift the same leg ("you can say right leg, left leg, right leg, left leg)," or have partners lift opposite legs so their feet come to touch. Invites connection and coordination.

Big House



Begin in mountain, hands overhead and palms touching. Slowly walk back, keeping fingertips touching for as long as you can, bending at the hips and keeping a straight spine. How big can you make your house? Don't collapse! Invites humor.

Boat 2



Begin sitting close together with wide legs. Press feet together, bend and lift one leg; bend and lift the other leg, boat! As a challenge, lift the arms, sweep legs underneath and come into Partner Boat with legs together. Go back and forth between the two boats!

Bunk Beds



One child comes into crab pose. The second child stands straddling the legs of the first bunk, then brings hands to shoulders, first one, then two, before pressing into the shoulders and lifting feet to partner's thighs. Stack of crabs? Bunk beds? Windows?

Great for building strength and confidence.

Butterfly Friends



Baddha Konasana in pairs: Both partners come into butterfly, toes touching, or one partner's feet can surround the other partner's feet. Sit tall before folding forward, heads/antenna touching.

Bring hands to either your own feet or your partner's feet and open them like a book. What are you reading? Then bring hands to one another's shoulders and give a little massage.

Candle on a rock



One partner takes child's pose, as the rock, while the next comes to lay down and scoots close enough to lay her or his bottom on the bottom of the rock. An alternative to shoulder stand and a nice assist on the sacrum of the partner who is the rock. On the count of three we'll blow out the candles...and then switch! This is also called Waterfall.

Cat Cow Rolls



First partner comes into table position and second partner lays sacrum to sacrum over top as in rainbow on a rock. The first partner begins to roll through cat/cows, giving the top partner a nice heart opening massage. Take turns.

Chair Swing



Come into chair pose, facing one another as in partner chair. Take hands, and swing open, leaning away from one another for support. Don't let either foot come up off the ground!

Child's Play



One child comes into child's pose, reaching arms out front. The second child steps close enough that the child in child's pose may take hold of her or his ankles. That child then comes forward into a downward dog, perhaps walking hands up and down the back of the child in child's pose.

Compass



In fours, come into plank one at a time, bigger friends first, legs resting on one another. Which way is north?

Can also be the letter T, fallen trees, a pinwheel or fan

Connecting Children



Near the end of a partner yoga session, or toward the end of class, have children pair up (or switch partners), and come into child's pose facing one another, arms outstretched, hands touching or holding hands. Guide the children to send love (or kindness) from their heart, down their arms, into the partner's hands, body, and heart.

Crescent Connection



Come to one knee in a crescent lunge position with back leg lowered (check to be sure it's not splayed out). Lowered legs are side by side here. Slowly lean back at the same time, reaching for one another's hands. A lovely backbend, heads may come to touch.

Daisy



Lie on backs, feet in, arms outstretched. You are now a daisy flower! This pose invites calm and connection and you may choose to take your final rest this way.

May also be spokes on a wheel

Dog Tunnel



Have children or adults line up in downward dog to make a tunnel. One at a time the first dog in the tunnel crawls/slithers through (a puppy or a snake), coming to form the last dog in the tunnel. Then the next child goes through, and so on. Great for fun and the practice of patience and turn taking. Children must know what to do if their arms get tired, to avoid collapsing on the child within the tunnel.

Door



Begin in mountain facing one another, feet touching. Take hands, lean away from one another, finding a point of balance like a scale. Then swing out to the side: ta da! Swing in, swing out, opening and closing the door. Great fun.

Double dog



One child comes into downward dog. The next places hands facing the same direction about leg's length away from the first dog's hands. Pressing into the palms, and with support as needed, the second child steps one foot and then the other onto the first dog's back, coming into an L-Dog.

May also have second child on the other side, placing hands one leg's-length away from the down dog's feet. L-Dog lifts feet to sacrum/ bottom of down dog.

Elephant Chain



One elephant stands in front of line with one arm out as their trunk. The other arm reaches through the legs as the tail and the next elephant takes hold of the tail with their "trunk." Continue until the class forms a chain. Then try out your elephant noises as you stomp around the room.

Fire



Come close together in a circle and take a variation of candle pose. Let's warm up by the campfire. We brought vegan marshmallows to roast over all those flames (tickle their toes). How about a good campfire song?

May also be a sunflower or a dahlia flower

Flower in the Sunshine



Come to lie down, heads in the center of the circle. Hands can come together with friends at the sides or place hand on belly. Relax. Feel the sunshine on your flower face.

Do not underestimate the power and connection of a class lying still together. Variation, lie on bellies and look into one another's eyes (expect giggles).

Flying Bird



Flying Bird is the Down Dog of AcroYoga. Base partner lies face up on the mat with knees bent and flyer stands at his or her feet. Base raises his or her legs partway, engaging the leg muscles. The flyer leans against foot soles of base, pressing her hip creases against them, tightening the muscles of the abdomen. Flyer fingers face forward, base turns fingers out to the side. Both flyer and base arms must be straight and aligned. Now the base uses core and engaged legs to lift the flyer from the floor. The flyer engages leg muscles and straightens torso to fly. When the flyer feels balanced, she or he can let go of the base and lift arms up into Flying Bird. The flyer can also bend forward at the hips into Falling Leaf, from where the base can offer a back massage.

All AcroYoga must be done with a spotter. Chair, Throne, Side Star, Whale and Dandasana are all beginning AcroYoga postures that can be tried with spotters in appropriate situations.

Forest of Trees



Take tree pose, palms of branches touching neighbors. Face in first, getting a feel for your balance as a group. Turn around and try the other leg. Is it easier to keep balance facing toward or away from one another? A forest comes in handy for storytelling!

May also be a crown, a circus ring, a fence

Garden



Sit in a circle. Come into butterfly pose, tuck the hands through the legs, taking hands around the circle. As with Flower, group Garden strengthens the core, develops coordination and improves balance. The posture is both uplifting and grounding at once. The group poses offers support, connection, and fun. What kinds of flower are in this garden?

May also be flying butterflies

Golden Gate Bridge



Stand close together and facing one another, lift and clasp hands. Take a few steps back and fold forward from the hips, maintaining a long spine. Similar heights help maintain alignment here.

Have a seat



One child in child's pose, the other sits on her bottom. This feels GREAT to the partner in child's pose, and it's funny to sit on one another, but respect is a must for safety (in all partner poses).

Ladder



One partner comes into a strong, straight plank with feet slightly wider than usual. The second partner (smaller or about the same size), presses hands into the first partner's ankles, tops of feet to upper back (or shoulders if too tall), without digging toes into partner's back. Both partners breathe and use core muscles. How many rungs on your ladder?

Increases confidence and cooperation.

Lizard on a rock



In pairs, have one child come into child's pose while the other child comes into reclined hero (lily pad), leaning back for a stretch that supports the hero and deepens the release in child's pose. Ahhhh, a lizard suns herself on a little rock. It's a beautiful day.

Back bending partner may also sit with legs crossed or straight out in front, if it is more comfortable.

London Bridge



Begin in mountain, take hold of opposite wrists, and step back as you lower into chair pose, stopping when arms are taut in front of you. Use one another for strength and balance, as other children (or trolls) go under the bridge.

Massage Train



In a group of three or more, come to wide-legged seat, legs surrounding one another. Place hands on one another's shoulders as you ride the train. Light massage optional.

Roller Coaster Variation: lift your arms, swing one way and the other, forward, then back. Up, up, up, up, wheeeee!!!!

Moons



From Triangle Friends, take a challenge and see if you can bend into the front leg, rest the hand about a foot in front of you (both), and then lift the back leg, coming into partner half-moon pose. Wobbling is fine! You're in this together.

Partner Boat



In pairs, come together with legs bent, feet touching. Take hands. Lift one leg, lift the other, and then see about straightening the legs. Try to maintain an upright posture. As in single boat pose, this is an excellent core strengthener as well as balancer. See if you can let go hands, roll back, and come back up to boat, taking hands again!

Alternate with Boat 2 pose

Peace Sign



Tell the world how you feel with a human peace sign. Try making other shapes and letters from yoga poses as well. Tell the children what to make or let them help decide. Great for geometry yoga; how many shapes can you make? Encourages cooperation and connection.

Pinwheel



In a circle, come into slide pose. Now you're a pinwheel. *Pinwheel, pinwheel spin it around. Look at my pinwheel and see what I found.* You may even try shuffling toward one side or the other, spinning like a pinwheel or top.

May also be a flower or a wheel with spokes.

Rainbow



About two arms lengths away from one another, both partners come into plank pose. Roll to one side to come into side plank (rainbow). Bottom arm should be just under the shoulder (you may fold top leg and bring foot to floor for balance if needed). Top arm lifts up and over, touching fingertips with the other half of the rainbow.

Rainbow on a rock



One partner takes child's pose and the other sits sacrum to sacrum, arching back to become the rainbow spread over the rock. Relaxing backbend for one partner and soothing forward fold for the other. Most size children can interchange top/bottom, but pay attention to size discrepancies. Parents can reach around and hold the child on top, stretching shoulders as well as securing child so she or he can relax. Partner on bottom presses up to lift friend out of pose.

Variation: The rainbow places feet her by the ears of the partner in child's pose (whose arms are by his sides), and lays over that way. Same benefits.

Recliner



Partners sit back to back, bottoms touching, sitting tall in dandasana (bus pose). Slowly, the partner who is the chair, leans forward (to her or his comfort), as the other partner leans back in the recliner. Ahhhh. Sip some lemonade.

Savasana



Great final partner pose, and perhaps final pose of the day; come lying down with ear touching a partner's ear. Settle in. If you have done other partner poses, children will feel connected already and this relaxation seals that feeling; as they soften in and relax, guide them to consider how we are, all of us, connected.

Sawing Wood



Sitting in dandasana, toes touching, reach forward, bending slightly in the knees, to reach one another's hands. With soft knees, straighten legs and gently row back and forth, keeping a straight back on the way down, and a strong core on the way up (the "up" partner may lean slightly back).

May also be rowing.

See Saw



Come into a seated wide-legged position with feet touching. Reach out and take hold of one another's hands. Breathing in, breathing out, draw one another forward and back as a see-saw, being careful not to pull quickly or too hard, and each partner maintaining a flat back on the way down, drawing in the core as you pull back.

May also be a boat.

Stirring Variation: Mix the soup together, moving with held hands in a circular motion.

Shoulder stretch



First be sure everyone is ready to be gentle and respectful. It is important to take care of our shoulder joints. Facing the same direction about a foot apart, partners clasp one another's wrists. The partner in front leans away, as the partner behind remains steady. In this stretch, having a taller or bigger partner in back makes most sense. A great heart opener and counter stretch to the school desk/office/modern lifestyle!

Sledding



Taller partner takes dandasana, spine upright. Second partner sits on his or her lap and also takes dandasana, leaning against chest of first partner (not quite pictured here). Here we go sledding. Lean one way; lean the other way. Whoa we're going to crash (tumble off)!

This may also be a car or a pony ride (first partner, especially great for parents, bumps legs up and down for the pony ride).

Snake Stretch



One partner comes down on her or his belly. The partner stands straddling her at the hips. Partners take hold of one another's wrists, and the standing partner lifts gently. Go sloooowly and the partner on top should lift as the snake breathes in, slowly and gently opening the snake's shoulders and chest.

Snowperson



Bigger partner comes into child's pose—that's one snowball-- and the smaller partner climbs on top curling into child's pose as well, creating a snowperson.

May also be two scoops of ice cream.

Supported camel



One partner sits up on her or his knees and the other comes to lay down so that feet press into the lower back. The first partner releases back into camel pose, reaching for the ankles (or staying up on knees and just arching back a touch). This supports the posture and helps the partner in camel avoid overarching in the lower back.

This posture should be practiced with slightly older children who are able to focus on assisting one another.

Supported Warrior



Come into a line or a circle. Ground into the standing leg and take warrior 3. Take hold of the foot in front of you. In a line, you make a long airplane or a bird with countless wings, or simple dancers at ballet! In a circle, you become a gate, a circle of warriors, or dancers.

Take Two



With a partner, take hands and come into any yoga pose you each choose, staying connected. Pictured here, a warrior and a tree. If needed, partners may drop one hand, but maintain connection. The creative flow here is unending, as is the silliness potential. Pair with music and a light mood.

The Box



One partner sits in dandasana. The other positions her hands near the feet of the first partner and steps one foot and then the other into L-Dog. The first partner supports her legs in an L. It's a rectangle, it's a box. If it's solid, a friend can crawl through.

Three Dogs



Two children take downward dog, facing one another, fingertips touching. With assistance (as needed) the third child climbs up (hand, hand, foot foot) and takes downward dog, pressing feet into lower back/sacrum of one dog, and pressing hands into the same area on the other (assisting their stretch). Exact placement of hands and feet depend on everyone's height.

Aw, three dogs playing together!

Tiger Chain



Everyone comes into tiger pose in a line, reaching forward and taking hold of the foot in front, then lifting the opposite leg for a tail. And...roar!

May also be a train.

Topsy Turvy



Take back to back wide legged forward folds (dinosaur), soften the knees, feet facing parallel (or slightly pigeon toed in). Reach underneath and take hold of one another's hands. Hello there!

With care, you may deepen one another's stretch by slowly and softly pulling your partner toward you as you lean away a touch.

Tree Backs



Stand back to back, interlace arms, and come into tree pose, with the same leg or opposite leg bent. See which way feels more balanced. Close your eyes!

Great for a quiet connection.

Tree Hug



Standing side by side, take your time coming into tree pose, standing legs beside one another. As the foot of your bent leg comes to shin or thigh, wrap arms around one another in a hug. You may also bring front palms together in namaste (anjali mudra). A great support to balance and a sweet partner pose. Great for parents and children.

Trees in a Forest



In a line or a circle, take tree pose and take hands, lifting arms together overhead. You are now trees in a forest! Play fairies in the forest or try to blow the trees in the wind. Or close your eyes and sway together.

Triangle Friends



Take back to back triangles, holding hands at the top. All tangled together! Feel free to lift gaze toward your held hands but do not strain the neck.

Tunnel



About two arms' lengths away, both partners come into a half forward fold, backs straight, taking hands/wrists so arms are taut, and stepping back a bit if needed. Some cows might come through the tunnel, and maybe some snakes and lizards...

Warrior Ones



Begin standing side by side in mountain, and then step opposite feet forward, so bent legs are beside one another, grounding the back heel, and lifting the arms to the sky. Powerful together!

Warrior Threes



Stand in pairs, side by side, arms around one another's shoulders. Together begin to fold forward into Warrior Three. You are each a wing of a bird or an airplane. Come into a longer line for geese flying together!

Or stand in pairs, arms-length apart, facing one another; come forward into the posture, arms stretched out front. Take hands to support one another.

Warrior Twos



From partner warrior one, turn the hips to the side, be tall against one another, perhaps hold hands. Be proud, strong warriors of the heart!

Waterfall



One partner comes to downward dog, while the other stands with feet surrounding down dog's feet, leans back, and takes a nice backbend. Be careful if this places too much pressure on the low back. To come out, the top partner presses into the feet and lifts, as the bottom partner begins to stand, with support from a spotter as needed.

Wheel Tunnel



If an older child or adult has full wheel practice, they may take it, while smaller children crawl through. Wheel tunnels can be taller than dog tunnels, so easier to crawl through.

Who needs a wall



Do Legs Up the Wall pose but use one another's legs as the wall, bringing bottoms as close together as possible, and relaxing. Works with four as well. A nice alternative to savasana. With multiple legs together, try balancing a body on top. The weight will benefit the ankles and hips in this pose.

Breath Awareness, Activities, and Techniques

Relaxing: longer exhale, holding after the exhale, left nostril breathing, slow pacing

Energizing: longer inhale, retaining after the inhale, or right nostril breathing, quick pacing

Balancing: equal inhale/exhale, equal holding, alternate nostril breathing

As a rule: extended breath retention is not recommended for children, use caution with energizing breath techniques, and invite children to return to a natural breath at any time. Five to seven repetitions of any breath is appropriate for beginners.

- ❖ Pinwheel
Mostly for younger children, bring a pinwheel and either pass it around or go around holding it up for the children, so each can blow the pinwheel. Children can usually spin the blades with their breath by age 3.
- ❖ Feather Breathing
Bring a feather for each child. Hold your feathers first and (practicing mindfulness), notice them. The colors, the softness or texture. Touch them against your cheeks. Begin holding the feather close, and find a breath that gently ruffles the feather. Move the feather away from your face slowly; how far can your breath reach? Then blow the feathers into the air. See who can keep their feathers up, and for how many breaths. Take partners and blow the feathers back and forth.
- ❖ Puff ball breathing
Bring puff balls (pom poms) and, using straws, blow them across the room. You can have races or cooperatively work to get all the puff balls from one side of the room to the other. Blow the puff ball from your hand and pick it up with your toes (“toga”), then repeat!
- ❖ Bubbles
For the youngest children, blowing bubbles is simply an opportunity to practice breath awareness. Without our breath, the bubbles could not go. For some children, this might be frustrating, as making bubbles takes practice. If a child is having difficulty, use it as an opportunity to teach (and practice) patience. Follow one bubble with the breath or the mind, until it pops.
- ❖ Fog the Windows
Hold one hand up, palm toward the face. Open the mouth wide and on a long exhale, “haaa” a breathe out into the palm, as if fogging up a mirror. Inhale and breathe out into the opposite palm. Repeat, swapping palms with each breath.
- ❖ Ujayii Breath
This breath is created by constricting muscles in the back of the throat, which naturally slows the breath. Learn by practicing a ‘Darth Vader’ ocean sound on the out-breath, exhaling with a wide open mouth. After time, breathe in through the nose and out through the nose, while maintaining the throat constriction and the ocean sound. Alternate names for this breath: Ocean Breath, Darth Vader breath, Sounding Breath. Benefits of Ujayii breath include creating internal heat, drawing focus inward, enhancing calm, releasing tension and stress. Use your own ujayii breath to soothe children into relaxation.

Straw breathing

Take a straw and hold it up to your palm. Blow out and feel the air you make. Ask the children if it feels warm or cool. Breathe in through the nose, blow out through the straw. Have the children blow bubbles into cups of water. Extend the exhale by blowing bubbles for as long as possible (extending the exhale calms the body). Use the straws to blow cotton balls across a carpet square or a section of the room.

❖ Dog Panting Breath

Shitali pranayama: for those who can curl tongues, stick the curled tongue through an “o” of the lips (like a straw). Tongue curling is genetic so be sensitive to those who can’t (they may simply create an “o” with the lips). Breathe in through the curled tongue/ “o”, and out through the nose. This breath cools the human body in the way panting cools a dog’s body. Because it has a cooling and calming effect, dog panting breath may be used if a child feels overheated or anxious.

❖ Soft belly breathing

Sitting criss-cross, bringing a hand to the belly. Invite the children to breathe deeply into their bellies. The hand on the belly goes in and out with the breath. Have the children hold up a fist with other hand. Breathe in, breathe out, open one finger; in, out, open the next finger, until all five fingers are open. Let the children know that if they feel frustrated or upset at any time, or too excited, they may use this breath, counting all the way to five. At that point, if they need more time to calm down, they can always switch hands and go again.

❖ Become a Balloon

This is most fun when you bring an actual balloon into class. Begin by blowing up the balloon and holding it out to the children. Have the children place their hands on their own bellies and breathe deeply to create a “balloon” in their belly. Ask what color the balloon in their belly is. Take 3-5 breaths like this. Then let the balloon you are holding go. It will pffffff wildly through the air causing giggles. Now you try. Start in a squat. Breathing in, blow up (standing slowly with the breath). At the top of the breath, arms are overhead like a balloon. Remember that through age five, children breathe more shallowly and quickly, and most children have smaller lung capacity than adults, so time your breath to theirs. Exhaling, pffffff down to the ground, moving your body like a let-go balloon. Children love this but be sure there is enough space so nobody is clonking heads or running into one another.

❖ Balloon Breath 2

Sitting cross legged, inhale lift arms over head to blow up balloon; exhale arms open to sides and release air all the way. Create an arm variation for a hot air balloon.

❖ Conducting the Breath

With a small stick, you are the conductor. “And now, I will conduct the breath. When I lift the stick, breathe in; when I lower it, breathe out.” Then, with great exaggeration, lift and lower the stick, paying attention to the natural length of an in and out breath for the group as a whole. You may give other children a chance, introducing them with great aplomb: “Ladies and gentleman, and now Kaley will kindly conduct our breath.”

❖ Shape Breathing

Using your finger or conductor stick, make shapes. Anytime you lift the stick, breathe in, lower the stick, breathe out, and when you move the stick from side to side, hold the breath. Staircase breathing is fun here, (breathe in, hold, breathe in more deeply, hold), but don’t carry this on for too long in either direction. Triangles, squares, rectangles. See what happens if you do a circle!

- ❖ **Lion's breath (Simhasana)**
Sitting on your knees, claws to thighs, inhale through the nose. Exhales splay the fingers wider, stick the tongue out and curl it toward the chin. Muscles in throat and neck contract, (gaze toward eyebrows), and breathe-roar (usually a "haaa" sound). Take 2-3 lion's breaths, which are especially useful for releasing anger. Lion's breath playfully releases tension in the body (particularly facial muscles, neck, throat) as well as the mind.
- ❖ **Dragon Breath**
As with lion's breath, it's useful with high energy or tension. Breathe in the cool calm air through nose, out the hot dragon breath through the mouth, with or without the tongue extended. Repeat several times, until the child finds calm. May also be used during games and stories when a dragon appears.
- ❖ **Dragon Breath 2 (kapalabhati)**
Sitting criss-cross, you demonstrate this ferocious dragon breath before the children begin. Exhale sharp, forceful, audible through the nose as you pull the belly in toward the spine. Air will come back in by itself (passive inhales) so focus on the forceful out-breath. Repeat quickly 3-5 times and then breathe normally.
- ❖ **Rabbit breathing**
Find a comfortable rabbit seat (on knees is nice). Breathe in through the nose three or four times, quickly, like a bunny, while twitching the nose. Then breathe out slowly. Alternatively, breathe in slowly and breathe out in three or four short exhales. Repeat a few times.
This is an energizing breath, either way.
- ❖ **Snake Breathing**
Inhale through the nose, exhale "hissss." Extend the hiss as long as you can, stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system to create calm. Like lion and coyote breath, snake breathing also allows a child to stake out his or her space in this world, which creates comfort and confidence.
- ❖ **Elephant breath**
From standing, inhale lift arms together overhead like a trunk, exhale, lower the trunk (your arms) into a forward fold and make a trumpeting/elephant sound. Or start in warrior one and as you exhale spray water (pshhhhh) as you come into warrior three or waterfall pose. Imagine spraying a rainbow glitter shower over yourself.
- ❖ **Coyote breath**
Sit in hero pose as a wolf or coyote. Take a big inhale and on the exhale, gaze up and howl up at the moon. As a variation, start in downward dog and come into upward dog on the howl.
- ❖ **Zoo or Farm Breathing**
Begin together practicing all different animal breaths. Cow breath (inhale through nose, exhale moooooo), Lion breath, Snake breath, and so on. Let each child choose an animal and practice. Then, on the count of three, inhale and make a wild animal rumpus!

Bee Breath (Bhramari)

Begin in a comfortable seat, or in bee pose. Take a breath in through the nose before exhaling out “HMMMMMMMM” or “BZZZZZ” as long as possible (this breath is also called humming breath). Try it again with the eyes closed, focusing on the sound. Ask the children how it feels on the lips. Try the same breath a third time, eyes covered with fingers and thumbs closing the ear flap; give a specific end time before children close their ears and eyes (stop when you hear the bell ding, or hum for two breaths and then stop). Ask the children what the notice. Repeat 3-5 times. Then ask the children how they feel. In variation, have the bees fly around the room and then call them back to the “hive” for another round.

❖ Sunrise, Sunset

Standing in mountain, lift arms and inhale: sunrise. Fold forward and exhale: sunset. Great during stories if you'd like something to take many days. “The days went by. Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise, sunset.”

❖ Firework Breath

Sitting comfortably, palms touching, inhale lift the arms to the sky (the firework going up), clap (the firework explodes), wiggle fingers as you bring hands to sides and make a “psshht” sound as your beautiful firework fizzles down. This breath can also take the form of squat pose up to standing pose as the firework rises before exploding. Take turns, going around the room to “light” one firework and then the next with your “matches,” or do all at once for a big display of fireworks.

❖ Flying bird breath

Seated or standing, inhale: lift your arms (wings); exhale, lower. Try this in a group, holding hands. Also called fairy breath. Try a variation for butterfly breath by raising arms (antennae) directly forward and overhead, then relaxing the antennae again.

❖ Volcano breath/rocket ships

In a yogic squat stand with palms together, inhale and then, on the exhale, explode (or take off, if you're a rocketship).

❖ Flowers and Candles or Dandelion breath

“Okay everyone, let's reach into the center and pick a flower. What kind of flower do you have? Now pick up a candle. What color is your candle? All right now hold up your flower (hold up one hand). Hold up your candle (hold up the other hand). Now smell your flower (sniff), blow out the candle (whooooo); smell the flower, blow out the candle; smell the flower, blow out the candle. One more time, smell the flower, blow out the candle. Okay now put your flower and candle in your pocket in case you need it later. Anytime you're feeling frustrated or sad or need to calm down, you can take them out.” (Put yours in your pretend pocket). If doing dandelion breath, smell your yellow flower and then blow your dandelion seeds.

❖ Hoberman/Finger Sphere breathing

Use a mini Hoberman sphere in your hands, or make a sphere with your hands by pressing the tips of your fingers together and spreading your palms apart. Inhale as you expand the sphere; exhale as you close it. After three breaths, pass the sphere on to the next student. If you have two spheres, pass one each way. Children who aren't holding a sphere can breathe with a child who is, or practice patience. As a variation, bring out a larger Hoberman, or make your Finger Sphere larger, until the breath is as big as can be! Can a child even crawl inside your sphere and do a yoga pose?

Snow Angel Breath

Lie down on your back. Inhale, spread arms and legs wide, exhale, close them. After a few rounds, stand up (carefully!) and examine what you've "made!"

❖ Back to back breathing

Take partners. Begin in child's pose, feeling the breath fill the belly so belly touches the thighs. Notice how the breath fill the back (and the whole body, three dimensionally). Partners may take turns placing their hands on one another's backs, really feeling the breath. Come to seated, back to back, breathing into one another. Lean back a little. Relax.

❖ Drawing the breath

Hand each child crayon or chalk. On a chalkboard or large pieces of paper, have the children begin to draw their breath (breathe in, draw a line up, breathe out, draw down; children will sometimes have creative variations). Have each child pass their crayon or chalk to the next person so the breath drawings become more colorful.

❖ Alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana)

Nadi Shodhana is a powerful breathing exercise, which balances two sides of the brain and brings the attention deeply inward. Practice just before stillness, savasana, test taking, homework, or whenever centered attention is beneficial. Bend the first two fingers of the right hand to the palm. Begin with an exhale. Then, closing off the right nostril with the thumb, inhale through the left nostril. Close off the left nostril with the right ring finger. Exhale and inhale through the right nostril. Close off the right nostril with the thumb, then exhale and inhale through the left nostril. Continue this, switching nostrils after each inhale, for several minutes. The younger the children, the shorter you should keep this practice. End with an exhale through the right nostril, release the hands down, and breathe normally. You may also experiment with this breath. For example, inhale through one side and exhale through the other. Notice the effect.

❖ Waves of Breath

Have the children lay comfortably and give each a book. "Rest your book on your belly and let it ride on the waves of your breath. Breathing in, it goes up; breathing out, it goes down. Your belly is the ocean for your book. In...out. In...out. (Pause here). Feel the belly go up when you breathe in, down when you breathe out. Allow yourself to rest here for another moment." This is a short practice for younger children. With older children, with or without the books, you may invite them to notice thoughts or feelings as they come, and as they pass away, just like waves. You can also have them imagine the story unfolding into the ocean, or lead into a visualization.

❖ Breathing Song

*Breathing in, breathing out. Breathing in, breathing out.
I am blooming as a flower; I am fresh as the dew
I am solid as a mountain; I am firm as the earth. I am free.*

*Breathing in, breathing out. Breathing in, breathing out.
I am water, reflecting what is real, what is true.
And I feel there is space, deep inside of me.
I am free, I am free,
I am free." ~Thich Nhat Hanh*

❖ Breathing stones - Notice the stillness

Stones can be incorporated into breathing practice in countless ways. This exercise combines mindful senses with the concept of a breathing buddy.

This practice is best done after the children have the concept of belly breathing. Send around a basket of stones and have each child choose one. As a child receives a stone, she or he should sit with it, feeling whether it is smooth or rough, warm or cold. What colors are there in each stone? How does it feel on one's cheek? Once everyone has had a moment with their breathing stone, have the children lie comfortably on their backs, head in toward the center, if in a circle.

“Lay your stone on your belly button, either inside or outside of your shirt. Notice how the stone feels—maybe a little bit heavy. Let your eyes close if it's comfortable for you, and begin to notice your breath in your belly. As you breathe in, your stone goes up; as you breathe out, the stone goes down. Breathe in, stone goes up; breathe out, stone goes down. (Pause). As you breathe in, feel the breath fill your belly all the way as the stone goes up. As you breathe out, feel the breath empty as the stone goes down. (Pause). You might notice that the stone pauses when your belly is full, and pauses again when the belly is empty. In....still. Out....still. Without doing anything, your breath finds that stillness. You always have a still quiet place inside but it might be easiest to notice it during the stillness between the breaths. That still quiet place is with you when you're playing with friends; it's with you when you're reading a book, when you're having a fight, when you're happy, or sad. It's with you all the time and you can always come back to it by simply noticing your breath. (In....still. Out....still). (Pause here, and then ring a bell or ask the children to come to sitting when they are ready).”

Ask the children how this was for them, and come back to it often. They may not notice the space between the breaths right away and it may take some time to understand how to access that same stillness in the midst of life.

With older children (and even adults), we still find the stone helpful but you may do a similar practice without a stone, simply noticing the breath and the in-between. This practice is titled Rest in Amy's Saltzman's CD for teens, and Jewel on her CD for children. Following her example you might invite the older children or teens to “just give it a rest,” to let go of problems with friends or boyfriends/girlfriends and parents. To forget about homework and stress and just be with the breath, for now.

❖ Breathing stones - Count the stones

Give each child a pile of stones. Have them sit comfortably and place the stones to one side. As you breathe in, lift a stone from one side and, breathing out, set it down on the opposite side. Continue breathing until all stones are moved, or until all stones are back to the original side, or until you signal the end.

Visualization

If children practice and perfect their ability to create or see visualizations, their concentration, creativity, imagination and ability to manifest will benefit. Visualizations are endless. Allow your imagination to be inspired by your day with the children. See the resources section for books with visualizations for children.

❖ Orange

To begin teaching visualization, have children sit down in a circle and set an orange in the center. Have the children focus their attention on the orange. “Notice the skin of the orange, the color, the dimply texture. With eyes open or closed, imagine what it would be like to pick the orange up; feel the weight of it in your hands. In your mind, roll the orange from one hand to the other. Now imagine peeling the orange, the gritty bits beneath your fingernails, the stickiness. Once it’s all peeled, smell the orange. And finally, take a segment from the orange. Imagine taking a bite and holding the bite in your mouth a moment before swallowing. Feel the juice go down your throat...” You may continue the visualization as long as you like, but once you’ve finished, and the children have opened their eyes, discuss how this was for them. Could they see the orange clearly in their mind’s eye? How did their body react (perhaps they salivated, or felt hungry). Besides an excellent visualization practice, this exercise truly demonstrates the power of the mind.

❖ Imagine This

Have the children close their eyes if it’s comfortable for them. Say a few words “Dancing elephant.” Ask the children what they saw (in detail) or, better yet, give them paper to draw it.

A slight variation, if you’d like to demonstrate how powerful our thoughts are, try saying: “Do not think about a dancing elephant.” Often, we try to avoid thinking about things we don’t want. Just as in this example (although this is a pleasant thought), trying to avoid our thoughts usually leads to more and more of that exact thought. We can avoid thought awareness by drowning the thoughts in habitual activities (watching TV, eating donuts, going for a run) Sometimes, we must face a thought/feeling and let it pass. The more impermanent we realize thoughts and feelings are, the less we will suffer when they arise. You don’t need to explain all of this to young children, but you can say, “Wow. When we tried not to think of something, we thought of it even more.” For older children, you can help them notice the impermanence of thoughts and feelings at opportune moments.

❖ Relax on a Cloud Visualization

Lay back and imagine that you are floating on a cloud in the sky. Imagine your cloud. Maybe your cloud is very big, taking up the whole sky, and you are in the center. Or maybe this is a small cloud, just big enough for you and you alone. The cloud is puffy, soft, and billowing, and you don't have to do anything at all. You can just lie here, and let everything go.

The sun is shining over you. There is a soft breeze, and your cloud is floating over the earth. Maybe your cloud is way up high, and you feel like you are flying, floating. Or maybe you are very, very close, nearly touching the ground, and your cloud is staying quite still. This is your cloud and it goes where you want, and you don't have a care in the world.

Relax into your cloud, sink in. Right now, you can let everything go, because the sun is shining over you, filling your body with warmth and light, and your cloud is rocking you, white in the brilliant blue sky.

You can float over anything you like...countryside, butterflies... You pass over forest and rivers, schools, and towns. Sink into your cloud...float away. Relax...

Now it is time for the cloud to bring you back home. Feel your cloud bringing you down, gently, gently, slowly, slowly, to the ground below. When you are lying firmly, the cloud dissolves, melts away gently, as you find yourself on the earth again. Hear the sounds around you, arrive in the present moment. Wiggle your fingers and toes, slowly at first, and then shrug your shoulders a little. Bend your arms or legs. Open your eyes, and notice what you see. Continue to rest for a few moments. When you are ready, turn over on your side and slowly push yourself up to sitting criss-cross, and together, we'll invite the bell and go into our day, refreshed from a special journey on a cloud in the magical sky.

❖ Happy Place

Offer the children the opportunity to create their own visualization in great detail. Begin by sitting comfortably or lying down. Ask each of the children to think of a place where they feel very happy. Particularly with young children, it helps to go around and share the place before beginning the visualization. This place can be real or imagined. There is no 'right' place. Once the children are settled, ask them to simply be in their 'place.' Ask them what sounds they hear. What they see, smell, and taste. Take your time on each of the senses but be sure your questions are general, as the places the children have chosen may vary widely. If there is time after sitting up/opening eyes, allow the children to share about their experience. If time is short, ask simply how each child is feeling (and always be available for the children after class to share more detail). Be sure to let the children know that they can always return to the happy place in their minds, whenever things feel tough.

❖ Colors/Light

Have the children lie back, close their eyes, and let their bodies fill with any color, with whichever color they picture first, or the relevant color from a story. Beginning with the toes, ask the children to let the color fill them. First the feet, then up the legs to the knees. Filling the whole leg. Imagine the color filling the belly, the heart, the face. The color can radiate out, filling the room. Optionally, move through several colors or a rainbow. After a few moments of silence, invite the children to sit up and share. Alternatively, suggest that the children's bodies fill up with light. In this case, you might consider sending the light or love out to specific people/animals/ places, and then to all beings, at the end of the practice.

❖ Spider on a Web Visualization

Yoga is about being connected to all things.

Imagine you are a spider on a web that is larger than this room, larger than this school, larger than the state of New York.

You can send out energy from your body to the very edges of the web, way out in outer space.

You are also deeply, deeply aware of all things that are connected to your web, and to everything inside of your spider body.

You know how fast your heart is beating (put your hand over your heart and feel it now), you know where your breath is flowing (take a deep breath in to your belly and feel it flow out), you know if you are hungry or tired or uncomfortable.

Also, you can feel the feelings of all things touching your web.

Close your eyes and imagine someone that is sick or hurting on your web.

They need your help.

Take a deep breath in, getting energy from way up in outer space.

Send this energy through your healthy mind and toes and fingertips to your friend on the web that needs help. Imagine them becoming healthy.

Match their breath to your breath. Breathe in. Breathe out.

❖ Chasing Clouds For a Clear Mind Visualization

Imagine you are looking up at a sky full of grey clouds.

Each cloud represents some negative thoughts and feelings.

Take a big breath in and as you breathe out, imagine blowing one grey cloud away.

Breathe in again and blow away another cloud.

I'm going to leave you here for a few breaths, chasing away clouds from your sky.

(pause)

Soon you catch a glimpse of blue sky.

You remember the way the blue sky feels when the clouds are away.

Take a big breath into your heart and feel the warmth of the sun shining from the blue sky.

The warmth of the sun is like the happiness you feel when your heart is shining.

Take another big breath in and blow the rest of the clouds in your sky away.

Relax under the blue sky and warm sun.

Remember the way this feels,

Your most clear, most beautiful, wise and wonderful self, shining.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Relaxation

If you are practicing yoga outdoors, consider moving to a shady place or indoors for relaxation. Play soft music or lower lighting if indoors. Pay attention and if you have noise and light challenges, consider eye pillows or using fabric or blankets to cover and child and bring focus inward. You may need to set boundaries regarding hands-to-self, especially if children are close together. Always be sure it's okay if you are going to touch a child who is involved in relaxation. Even a child who is normally comfortable with touch may prefer to be left alone.

❖ Body Scan

Practicing the body scan meditation is a way to bring awareness to each part of the body. Often when we have an unpleasant situation, we feel tension in the jaw or belly. The idea of this practice is to simply be mindful of sensations that may arise. With our simple breath and awareness, tension may melt on its own (and may not). Notice any sensation without judgment. Begin by having the children lay comfortably on the floor and let them know that you will be noticing the body, without needing to move or wiggle the body parts.

Begin by breathing in and bringing the breath, and attention, to the feet. Have the children notice how the feet feel in socks or shoes, or how the air feels between the toes. Notice if the feet feel tired or worn out. When you breathe out, simply let the feet be.

Move through the body in this way, describing the parts of the body, the lower leg, knees, thigh, hips, and the belly. When you are scanning the belly you might say, "Bring the breath into the belly. Notice if your belly feels tight or tense, or if the belly feels soft and relaxed. You don't need to change anything. Simply notice any feeling as the belly rises, and falls.

Continue the scan through the back and chest, the heart, and the shoulders. Then begin with the fingertips, and hands (don't be surprised if children wiggle extremities—you may simply remind them that in this practice we are noticing our body without needing to do anything). From hands, notice the arms, elbows, and shoulders. From there, notice the neck, and finally the face and head. Often there is some creasing or tension in the face. A child might be feel pain or tension anywhere in the body, so as you move through, be sure to remind them to simply notice and allow whatever they feel, to bring the breath to the body part, and let it be. Inhales move to new body parts, and an exhale softens into what is. End by taking some deep breaths, feeling the whole body on the earth, before coming to sit.

❖ Tense and relax

Great for younger children, this practice mimics the body scan but instead of simply noticing body parts, asks the children to tense, and then relax. This can be easier for younger children than simply bringing breath and awareness to the body part.

Variation: Try using a magic wand to wave over or touch gently the parts of the body as you go through the practice (in smaller groups or spaces, you may be able to touch your wand to everyone's feet, knees, and so on, but in larger groups, you may only be able to use the wand on one or two children per body part).

❖ Ear Rubbing

Using your thumbs and fingers, give your ears a lovely massage all the way from the top to the bottom. Ear rubbing relieves stress and calms the mind. You may do this at any point in class when the children need to come back to focus, saying that you need to get your ears ready for (whatever you're doing next).

❖ Ripples on a pond

Sitting cross-legged, hold the palms cupped together in the lap. Take a few breaths. Now lift the palms toward you. This is your pond. Breathing in, notice anything that is bothering you. Breathing out, blow your cares into the pond, let the ripples pass away.

❖ Blow Your Cares Away

In this practice, bring bubbles for each child (or share a non-spill tub). Ask the children to bring to mind anything that is worrying them, or any feelings that are difficult for them. You may go around and share here if the children are comfortable, but they may also be silent. Then, tell the children to blow the bubbles and, with the bubbles, to blow their worries away.

❖ Music

Playing soft music, perhaps the same soft song toward the end of each class, can elicit a relaxation response. Older children can share music they find relaxing.

❖ All deep breathing

See the breath awareness section above. Bringing breath into the belly activates the parasympathetic nervous system, bringing a feeling of calm.

Affirmations

An affirmation is a short, positively-worded phrase that affects the subconscious mind to reprogram feelings, behaviors and attitudes. Examples of affirmations are:

- ❖ I make wise choices.
- ❖ I make respectful choices.
- ❖ I make healthy choices.
- ❖ I am loving and kind.
- ❖ I am strong and tenacious.
- ❖ I find balance with ease.
- ❖ I can bend and accommodate.
- ❖ I am prepared and skillful.
- ❖ I feel calm under pressure.
- ❖ I am intelligent and I trust my instincts.
- ❖ I am courageous and adventurous.
- ❖ I am happy and full of laughter.
- ❖ I care for the earth, my family and myself.
- ❖ Each day I try my best; with hands to self I let my friends relax and rest.
- ❖ I am mindful and aware of others.
- ❖ I recognize and honor my feelings.
- ❖ I reflect and choose my actions.

Affirmations are usually simple and sweet, easy to repeat. Use an affirmation for long enough that the repetition becomes effortless. Children can help create their own affirmations of the day/week/class/session (individually or as a group). Affirmations can also take the form of creative metaphors for young children or variations on a class theme.

Metaphors:

- ❖ My body is my house.
I keep my house clean so that I can move through it easily.
I keep my house in good repair so that it will last a very long time.
I keep peace and love in my house.
- ❖ Like a snowflake I am soft.
Like a snowfort I am strong.
I get winter rest to sing a springtime song.
- ❖ Like a willow, I bend.

Affirmations can be used at the beginning of class to reinforce intentions or “rules” for the yoga session. Use between one and three phrases: simpler for younger children, more complex for older ages. Put simple motions to the affirmation; this may decide if the affirmations are done while seated, standing or moving.

Affirmations can be used at any time during the class, planned or spontaneously. If you notice a child acting nervous, call out “I am confident!” Introduce younger children to some big words and explain them; “Confident means ‘I can do it!’” During tree pose, say “I am balanced.”

Affirmations can be introduced or repeated at the end of class, to reinforce lessons from a story or mindfulness practice. Children can create or illustrate affirmations, then creatively use, post or gift them. Invite kids to ask their whole family to share in reciting the same affirmation for one full week and then ask questions about their family’s experience.

Another way to close out class after final relaxation is to learn a brief chant and practice the repetition, usually including arm, hand or finger movements. Following the relaxation, children are generally still, calm and focused, in the perfect state for seated chants. It is a final moment to embody the practice or lesson of the class, to wake from stillness and re-enter the world in a place of positivity and confidence. At times, affirmations may turn into chants, or chants into melody. Some of our favorite chants for repetition are:

- ❖ I begin with my breath; I return to my breath...
- ❖ Peace begins with me...
- ❖ I honor me and empower me to be who I am...

Savasana

Final Resting Pose



- ❖ **Make lemonade**
Help the children go from movement to stillness by making some lemonade. A tense and relax exercise, let them know you're going to make some lemonade. "Okay, let's squeeze our feet as tight as we can. Tighter. Tighter. Aaaand....relax. Now squeeze your legs as tight as you can..." Go through the body. For younger children, no need to be too specific here. Bellies. Shoulders. Your whole body (into a tight ball). "Now squeeze your face up, make your lemonade face" (demonstrate a pucker) and on the count of three we'll plop down, make lemonade. One... two...three. Plop!" Here you go from your tight ball to a "plop" - savasana, flat out on the floor. Do this once or twice more and then move into final rest.
- ❖ **Breathing buddies**
Give each child a rubber ducky, beanie baby or book. These breathing buddies rest on the child's belly, which is the ocean on which the buddy swims. Riding on the waves of the breath, the buddy goes up, and down. Up, and down.
- ❖ **Breathing staircase**
The first child lies down on the ground and begins belly breathing. The next child lies with his or her head on the first child's belly (so this child's head should go up and down "like a breathing buddy.") The next child lies on the second child, and so on, until you have a staircase of breathing children. This may promote more giggles than relaxation, in which case, have a joke-telling session of laughter yoga! As a variation, do in pairs (great for parent/child classes).

- ❖ Choose a fairy
Go around with a wand, tapping or waving to “wake” children one at a time. After you have modeled this, you may assign a child to be the fairy, responsible for *gently* waking each friend.
- ❖ Crumbs for the bird
Ask the children to imagine they are resting by the sea, feeling the warm sun, and riding on the waves of their breath. Tell them to leave hold some imaginary crumbs in their palms for a seagull. Let them know that the birds are afraid to come eat the crumbs unless they are very, very still, but that when they are still, they will feel the bird come to eat the crumbs, and that will be their signal to sit up quietly. Use your finger as the beak of the gull to ‘eat’ from each child’s hand in turn.
- ❖ Raindrops
Let the children know that after relaxation, the rain will come down, tapping on their hands, or their forehead, to let them know it’s time to grow up into a flower. End class with a group of flowers!
- ❖ Spaghetti test
Let the children know that you’ll be coming around in a few minutes to do the spaghetti test. Tell them you’ll look for kids who are floppy like spaghetti. After a few minutes, go around and take their hands, shaking them gently to see if they’re cooked. If so, you may say: “Cooked,” “That spaghetti’s ready.” If a child isn’t quite relaxed, you might say it’s a little al dente or just say, “almost ready.”
- ❖ Bell on belly
Let the children know that after resting for some minutes/moments you will begin to come around and ring the bell on their bellies (if they want you to). They can signal this by placing hands on belly for “bell, please” or hands on the floor for “no thank you.” As they seem to soften, take turns laying a singing bowl on their belly and ringing it, so that they can feel/hear the sound and vibration. This also creates a mindfulness activity as children listen to the bell moving closer or farther away from them. After ringing on each belly, have the children sit up criss-cross, and give the bell one final ring.
- ❖ Third eye gem
Place a gem or stone on each child’s third eye, just above/between the eyebrows. Have the children lay still and mentally focus their awareness on the stone. The weight and location of the stone gives children an internal focus.
- ❖ Massage
You may go around and massage each child’s hands, feet, or head during savasana, if you ask permission first. You can use a signal such as hands on the belly if you are waiting for a massage today. Avoid any lotions or essential oils in order to avoid allergic responses.

Additional Resources

Yoga Card Decks

- ❖ Spiraling Hearts
- ❖ Adventures of Super Stretch
- ❖ Yoga Kids
- ❖ Yoga4Classrooms (Schools can buy these at a discount)
- ❖ My Daddy's a Pretzel

Books for Storytelling

We couldn't possibly list all of our favorite story collections here!

- ❖ *Storytime Yoga* by Sydney Solis
- ❖ AWaldorf & Enki websites/curricula
- ❖ *Healing Stories for Challenging Behavior* by Susan Perrow (includes tips for writing your own stories)
- ❖ All storytelling books by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss
- ❖ *Ready to Tell Tales* (David Holt and Bill Mooney)

Storybooks to Read to Children

It used to be easy to keep this list, but more and more books are being published every year, focused on introducing children to yoga and mindfulness through engaging stories and pictures. An internet search will be your best bet. Here are a few favorites:

Peaceful Piggy Meditation series by Kerry MacLean

Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda by Lauren Alderfer

Tibetan Tales for Little Buddhas and *Tibetan Tales from the Top of the World* by Naomi C. Rose

The Breathing Bridge by Annie Buckley

Starbright: Meditations for Children by Maureen Garth (a book of relaxation visualizations)

I Am Yoga by Susan Verde

Pieces of Gold: A Story about Sharing a Jataka Tale by Dharma Publishing

Zen Shorts by Jon J Muth

The All Seeing Boy and the Blue Sky of Happiness by Nick Kettles

Amy and Gully series by W.W. Rowe (for older children)

When Sophie Gets her Feelings Hurt by Molly Bang

Each Breath a Smile by Thich Nhat Hanh *The Hermit and the Well* by Thich Nhat Hanh *Namaste* by Diana Cohn

Ahn's Anger by Gail Silver

My Daddy's a Pretzel by Baron Baptiste

Babar's Yoga for Elephants by Laurent de Brunhoff

Aleph-bet Yoga: Embodying the Hebrew Letters by Stephen A Rapp and Hart Lazer

The Happiest Tree by Uma Krishnaswami

Ten Year Olds and Up to Adult: Thich Nhat Hanh *Peace is Every Step* (and other books)

Books on Teaching Yoga and Mindfulness to Children

- ❖ *Playful Family Yoga* by Teresa Aseneia
- ❖ *Yoga In School: A primer for Teachers and Parents* by Jacques de Coulon and Micheline Flak
- ❖ *Children's Yoga: Complete Guide* by Alessandrina Lerner
- ❖ *Fly Like a Butterfly* Shakta Kaur Khalsa
- ❖ *Once Upon a Pose* by Donna Freeman
- ❖ *Planting Seeds* Thich Nhat Hanh
- ❖ *Creative Yoga for Children* by Adrienne Rawlinson
- ❖ *Baby Buddhas: A Guide to Teaching Meditation to Children* by Lisa Desmond (toddlers)
- ❖ *A Still Quiet Place: A Mindful Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions*, an excellent 8 week mindfulness program by Amy Saltzman
- ❖ *Cooling Down the Classroom* by Carla Tantillo
- ❖ *Teaching Meditation to Children* by David Fontana & Ingrid Slack
- ❖ *Child's Mind* by Christopher Willard
- ❖ *Yoga for the Special Child* by Sonia Sumar
- ❖ *Yoga Games for Children* by Danielle Bersma & Marjoke Visscher
- ❖ *Children's (and Teen's) Book of Yoga* by Thia Luby
- ❖ *A Girl's Guide to Yoga* by Jeanne Finestone (Scholastic)

Books on Yoga and Mindfulness for Adults

- ❖ *Mindfulness in Plain English* by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana
- ❖ *Natural Wakefulness* by Gaylon Ferguson
- ❖ *The Key Muscles (and Poses) of Hatha Yoga (Vol 1-2)* by Ray Long
- ❖ *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (Commentary Sri Swami Satchidananda)
- ❖ *Light on the Yoga Sutras* (BKS Iyengar)
- ❖ *Yamas and Niyamas* (Deborah Adele)
- ❖ *Yoga Body: Anatomy, Kinesiology, and Asana* (Judith Lasater)
- ❖ *First Human Body Encyclopedia* (DK Publishing), some children's anatomy

Books on Mindful Teaching and Parenting

- ❖ *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Jon and Myla Kabbat-Zinn
- ❖ *Listening Effectively to Children* (A pamphlet by Patty Wipfler)
- ❖ *You Are Your Child's First Teacher* by Rahima Baldwin Dancy (Waldorf parenting/teaching)
- ❖ *Beyond the Rainbow Bridge* by Barbara J. Patterson and Pamela Bradley (Waldorf parent/teaching)

- ❖ *Seven Times the Sun* by Shea Darian (creating family rhythm)
- ❖ *Living Joyfully With Children* by Win and Bill Sweet
 - ❖ *When Things Fall Apart* (and other work by) Pema Chodron
 - ❖ *One Second Ahead* by Rasmus Hougaard
 - ❖ *The Awakened Family* by Shefali Tsabary
- ❖ *Buddhism for the Mothers of Young Children: Becoming a Mindful Parent* by Sarah Naphali
- ❖ *After Ecstasy the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path* by Jack Kornfield
- ❖ *Full Catastrophe Living* Jon Kabbat-Zinn (a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction—MBSR--book)

Children's Yoga Music and Meditation CDs

- ❖ Kira Wiley—*Dance for the Sun* (includes music tracks as well as verbal yoga instruction for children), *Kings and Queens of the Forest*, *How to Be a Cloud*, *Mindful Moments*
- ❖ Shakta Kaur Khalsa—*Happy, Calm, Rainbow Walk meditations*
- ❖ Snatam Kaur—*Celebrate Peace*
- ❖ Amy Saltzman's Still Quiet Place

Children's Yoga DVDs

- ❖ Yoga Kids series with Marsha Wenig
- ❖ Once Upon a Mat
- ❖ Shanti Generation: Yoga Skills for Peacemakers (for older children)
- ❖ Wai Lana Little Yogis
- ❖ Gaiam series with Jodi Komitor
- ❖ The Fingerlakes Library System has many additional options
- ❖ Cosmic Kids yoga on You Tube

Helpful Websites

www.stillquietplace.com

- Includes current research and articles on mindfulness with children and much more

www.whatmeditationreallyis.com

- A guide to meditation, for children and adults.

<http://www.winterfeastforthesoul.com>

- 30 days of meditation for children and adults.

<http://www.garrisoninstitute.org>

- Includes current research on contemplative education, including mindfulness.

Additional Trainings

- ❖ *Karma Kids Yoga*
- ❖ *Yoga Kids*
- ❖ *YoKid* (special needs training)
- ❖ *Mindful Practices*
- ❖ *Go Grounded* (special needs training)
- ❖ *Next Generation Yoga*
- ❖ *Radiant Child Yoga* (special needs training)
- ❖ *Still Quiet Mind*
- ❖ *Mind Up*
- ❖ *Global Family Yoga*
- ❖ You Tube

Diane Hamilton



Diane Hamilton has been teaching yoga to children since 2003. After taking a leave of absence from her veterinary career in 2005 to heal from Stage 3 cancer, it became evident that teaching yoga to children would be her life's work. From babies to high school, Indiana to India, Diane has taught thousands of classes in hundreds of classroom and community locations, working with children and families both individually and in groups. Diane has trained with Yoga Center for Columbia, Tai Sophia Institute, Sanskrit Institute, Radiant Child, YoKid, Yoga4Classrooms and Go Grounded. Diane's work with children encourages consciousness and connection with self, society and nature. In the corporate world, Diane trains adults in mindful, inclusive and collaborative culture focused on development of inner potential and non-violent communication.

As a lover of academics with an ADHD diagnosis, Diane is especially passionate about creating motion and music-based curriculums at the elementary level, engaging active children, teaching tools for focus, and reducing anxiety around reading and exam-taking. As a life-long athlete, Diane is passionate about establishing non-competitive options for physical activity at all ages. As a social justice activist, Diane prioritizes connecting beyond culturally created disproportions, disadvantages and discrepancies. Finally, as a cancer survivor and sister of a suicide-attempt survivor, Diane is passionate about the mind-body-spirit connection provided through yoga practice, and intimately aware of the importance of providing these foundational tools to vulnerable children.



Courtney Schroeder

Courtney Schroeder, mother of four (from toddler to teen), has 17 years of experience working with children in a variety of secular, spiritual and therapeutic settings, including public school classrooms, Buddhist Centers, and her own private preschool and yoga business.



With more than 400 hours of certified training in yoga and mindfulness, Courtney has studied with the Kaivalya Yoga Academy, Still Quiet Place, Mindfulness Education for Children and Yoga 4 Classrooms. She is a Vajrayana Buddhist practitioner and student of Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, and has received teachings with the Dalai Lama and other great masters. Courtney has practiced yoga since 1999 and she began training teachers in 2011.

Courtney is especially passionate about literature, storytelling and play, at all ages.

