

Chaos to Calm

Yoga Basics for Busy Families



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Create a “Calm Corner”

Together with child(ren):

- ♥ Choose a location away from furniture, bookshelves, toys, screens and major foot traffic.
- ♥ Clearly delineate space with a carpet, yoga mat or masking tape.
- ♥ Choose any appropriate decor to contribute to the space.
- ♥ Choose a couple blankets/fabrics that will be dedicated to the space.
- ♥ Fill a clean, soft sock with rice and close it with a rubber band, as an eye pillow.
- ♥ Add your glitter jar to the space, and one or two other optional props.
- ♥ Initiate the space with a positive family fun time.

❖ Using the space:

- ♥ Continue to invite positive family use of the space to practice breathing & calming.
- ♥ Ensure that adults in household model use of the space two times per week.
- ♥ Choose to use the space when visibly triggered in front of children.
- ♥ Become calm before leaving the space.
- ♥ Invite children to use the space when they need calm, but maintain it as opt-in only.
- ♥ Low lighting and quiet music can be helpful.

❖ Rotate any of the following props through the space, as age-appropriate:

- ♥ ‘Eye pillow’ sock filled with rice
- ♥ Cushion/throw pillow as meditation seat
- ♥ Child’s timer or hour glass
- ♥ Homemade yoga or breathing cards
- ♥ Bubbles, feathers, cotton balls, pinwheel or Hoberman sphere
- ♥ Stones
- ♥ Yoga book
- ♥ Stuffed animals representing yoga poses

Manage Energy and Emotion

Grounding poses for anxious or flighty energy: volcano, **mountain**, river, tree, forest, ocean breath, flower, rock

- ❖ Poses to clear angry or frustrated energy: standing washing machine, rocket ship, bus, giraffe, crab, penguin, dinosaur, lizard shuffle, bear, warrior walk 1 or 2, log roll, **lion**, **lion's breath**, dragon breath, cobra, snake breath, **coyote breath**
- ❖ Poses for exploring a new perspective: l-dog, legs up wall, handstand, headstand, plow, bicycle, candle, dolphin/forearm stand, dinosaur, **downward dog**, **wild thing**, rainbow
- ❖ Poses for channeling chaotic energy: belly breathing, ring the bell, sun salutations or other vinyasa flows, cat-cow, **donkey**, rocking chair, l-dog, handstand, **crow**, flying butterfly, lunge-runs, boat
- ❖ Calming poses: criss-cross/lotus, **child's pose**, rag doll, savasana, legs up the wall, bridge, knee to chest, seated forward fold, **ujayii breath**, bumblebee breath
- ❖ Poses for sadness/depression: legs up the wall, cat pose or child's pose followed by bridge, wheel or **camel**, all inversions, fish, cobra
- ❖ Poses for impatience: **chair**, plank, push-up, slide, woodchopper breath, forced huff exhale
- ❖ 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, flower, table extensions, flamingo, flag, flying butterfly, **alternate nostril breathing**
- ❖ Yoga before sleep: **rock and roll**, reclining butterfly, firefly, supine twists, child's pose, legs up the wall, starfish, savasana.

Breathing

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, try making a pinwheel from scratch. Children can usually spin the blades with their breath by age 3.
- ❖ Feather Breathing
Hold your feathers first and notice them - the colors, the softness or texture. Touch them against your cheeks. Begin by 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. With your child, blow feathers back and forth.
- ❖ Cotton ball breathing
With or without straws, blow cotton balls 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, catch it in your other hand, or and pick it up with your toes (“toga”), then repeat!
- ❖ Bubbles
For children, blowing bubbles is 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. Can our emotions or thoughts be like bubbles?
- ❖ 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 your child into relaxation.

Straw breathing

Take a straw and hold it up to your palm. Blow out and feel the air you make. Does it feel warm or cool. Breathe in through the nose, blow out through the straw. Have your child blow bubbles into cups of water. Extend the exhale by blowing bubbles for as long as possible.

❖ 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

Sit criss-cross, bringing a hand to the belly. Invite your child to breathe deeply into his/her belly. The hand on the belly goes in and out with the breath. 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 your child 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

Begin by blowing up a balloon. Have child place their hands on their belly and breathe deeply to create a “balloon.” Ask what color the balloon is. Take 3-5 breaths like this. Then let the balloon you are holding go. It will pffft wildly through the air. Now try with your body. 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.

❖ 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 your child. Now introduce your child as the conductor, “Ladies and gentleman, now Malakai 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, shoulders to ears, inhale through the nose. Exhales splay the fingers wider, stick the tongue way 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, this breath is 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.
- ❖ **Dragon Breath 2 (kapalabhati)**
Sitting criss-cross, 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 "hisssss." 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**
Practice a series of different animal breaths. Cow breath (inhale through nose, exhale mooooooo), Lion breath, Snake breath, and so on. Let your child choose the animals, as they are often naturally drawn to the release their body needs. 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 “BZZZZZZ” as long as possible (this breath is also called humming breath).

Try it again with the eyes closed, focusing on the sound. Ask your child how it feels on the lips.

Try the same breath a third time, eyes covered with fingers and thumbs closing the ear flap; ask your child what they notice. Repeat 3-5 times. Then ask how your child feels. In variation, have the bee 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. Similar to elephant or woodchopper breath, but fully relaxed and slow.

❖ 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. “Light” your child’s firework with your “matches,” or try a big display!

❖ Flying bird breath

Seated or standing, inhale: lift your arms (wings); exhale, lower. Try this as a family, 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, lets reach 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 your child. As a variation, bring out a larger Hoberman, or make your Finger Sphere larger, until the breath is as big as can be! Can your 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**
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 your child crayon or chalk. On a chalkboard or large pieces of paper, have your child begin to draw their breath (breathe in, draw a line up, breathe out, draw down; children will sometimes have creative variations). Draw your own breath along with your child.
- ❖ **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 child, 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 your child lay comfortably and give him or her 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. A book is a nice noticeable weight on the belly, but a beanie baby, toy or stone also work very well.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Breathing stones - Find the quiet place**

With a stone on your child's belly, guide them to notice the stone flowing up and down on the waves of their breath. Then see if they can notice the moment of pause between each in-breath and out-breath, and between the out-breath and in-breath. Ask them to notice if there is quiet or stillness in that place of rest during breathing.

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.

❖ Orange

To begin teaching visualization, have your child sit down in a circle and set an orange in front of them, but out of reach. Have your child 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 your child has 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 your child close their eyes if it’s comfortable for them. Say a few words such as “dancing elephant.” Ask your child what they saw (in detail) or, better yet, give them paper to draw it.

❖ Happy Place

Offer your child the opportunity to create their own visualization in great detail. Begin by sitting comfortably or lying down. Ask where is a place that makes them very happy. This place can be real or imagined. There is no ‘right’ place. Once your child is 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. If there is time after sitting up/opening eyes, allow your child to share about their experience. If time is short, ask simply how they are feeling. Be sure to let your child know that they can always return to the happy place in their minds, whenever things feel tough.

❖ Colors/Light

Have your child 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 your child to sit up and share. Alternatively, suggest that your child’s body fills 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.

Relaxation

❖ Body Scan

Practicing the body scan meditation is a way to bring awareness to each part of the body. With our simple breath and awareness, tension may melt on its own (and may not). Have your child lay comfortably on the floor. Have them 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, soften, relax. Move through the body in this way, describing the parts of the body, the lower leg, knees, thigh, hips, and the belly. Continue the scan through the back and chest, the heart, and the shoulders. Include the face, throat, ears and any parts you or your child would like.

❖ Tense and relax

Great for younger children, this practice mimics the body scan but instead of simply noticing body parts, ask the child to tense, and then relax. This can be easier for younger children.

❖ 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.

❖ 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.

Affirmations

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

- ❖ I make wise 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.

Tree



Do this pose to feel steady and balanced.
Send roots into the earth and stretch branches to the sky.

We grow and change like trees.
We are connected to trees with our breath.

Wind Breath



Wind is the instrument of my breath.
Prana moves inward then outward, again and again.
My body can move with my breath.
Steady the mind with a light wind, cool the mind with a forceful wind.

Flower Pose



I am bold, bright and beautiful.
I find my center, breathe, and imagine my flower in detail.
I am opening. I am unique.

Lake Pose



Do this pose when you are feeling excited or angry.
Strengthen muscles in belly and back.
Take the strong energy of water and create a quiet lake.

Mountain Yoga Pose



Do this pose to feel solid, grounded and confident.
Press feet strongly into the earth and stand up tall.
Be clear about what you stand up for.

Down Dog Yoga Pose



Do this pose to feel have fun or change perspective.
Press into your fingers and feet, and lift your hips high.
Do this pose when you are feeling playful, silly or frustrated.

Lion Yoga Pose



Do this pose to guard and protect your kingdom.
Do this pose when you feel righteous, crowded or violated.
Puff heart, shoulders up, eyes wide, claws strong, tongue long, Roar!

Warrior 1



Do this pose to feel strong and brave.
Like a warrior, I am nervous and excited.
I breathe and know I am ready.

Mouse Yoga Pose



Do this pose to feel calm and quiet.

Do this pose in the evening.

Do this pose when you are feeling afraid, sad, excited, tired or mad.

Eagle Pose



Do this pose to find balance and vision.
Focus the eyes and create openness in hips and shoulders.
I am here. I am centered. I have purpose.

Donkey/Deer Pose



From Down Dog, bring heart over hands and kick heels into the air.
Build arm strength, core balance and coordination.
Do this pose to build physical stamina and mental focus.
Use this pose to channel or deplete energy.

Owl Pose



Do this pose for quiet reflection and flexibility.
Observe your surroundings.
Feel thoughtful, meditative and open.