Asanas for Autism and Special Needs

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Population of children with Special Needs yoga can support

- ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- Fragile X
- Prader Willi
- Down Syndrome
- Learning Disability
- ED (Emotionally Disturbed)
- ADD/ADHD
- SPD – Sensory Processing Disorder
- Landau Kleffner
- OHI – Other Health Impairment
- Children with behavioral challenges
- LPD – Language Processing Disorder
Common features and challenges of children with special needs

- Anxiety
- Difficulty with expressive and receptive language or LPD Language Processing Disorder
- Difficulty regulating and expressing emotions.
- Difficulty with self-regulation of their arousal states
- Lack of coping skills
- Limited body awareness
- Sensory challenges or SPD – Sensory Processing Disorder
- Limited social skills
- Irregular sleep patterns
- Digestive Problems
- Limited fine and gross motor skills
Benefits of yoga for children with Special Needs

- Self-Regulation
- Balance
- Coordination
- Flexibility
- Increases Self-Esteem
- Improves Concentration and Focus
- Hand-Eye Coordination
- Coping Skills
- Social Skills
- Increases strength

- Self-Confidence
- Increases language and communication
- Supports healthy digestion
- Increases energy
- Supports fine and gross motor skills
- Decreases anxiety
- Supports more regular sleep patterns
- Supports healthy expression of emotions
How to incorporate yoga for children with special needs in the classroom or after school program

- Pictures of poses/breaths posted in the environment
- Yoga word walls with pictures
- Laminated yoga schedule with removable PECS
- Yoga thematic unit – All about yoga
- Video of children or adults doing yoga (make a yoga video)
- Visuals to support memory and imagination for poses, breath-work and guided imagery.

- Yoga games
- Chair yoga
- Yoga corner/relaxation space (space in the room for yoga breathing and poses)
- Yoga emotions/breaths choice board
- Art projects
- Teach Body Parts and directional concepts such as left/right and top/bottom.
Yoga poses and breath to decrease anxiety and encourage relaxation

- Child’s Pose (Balasana)
- Rock (Balasana with arms to side)
- Rag Doll (Uttanasana)
- Rolly Polly/Sponge Pose
- Butterfly (Badha Konasana)
- Happy Baby (Ananda Balasana)
- Resting Pose (Savasana)
- Ujjayi (wave) breath
- Balloon Belly Breathing
- Let it Go Breath
- 3 part Breathing
- Alternate Nostril Breathing
Yoga poses and breathing to calm, rejuvenate and energize the body and mind

- Cat/Cow pose (Marjariasana & Bitilasana)
- Shark pose (Salabhasana)
- Bridge Pose (Setu Bandha Sarvangasana)
- Frog Pose (Ardha Bhekasana)
- Cobra (Snake) Pose (Bhujangasana)
- Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar)
- Bee breath
- Bunny Breath
Yoga poses to increase balance, strength, focus and self-confidence

- Mountain Pose (Tadasana)
- Warrior 2 (Virabhadrasana 2)
- Tree Pose (Vrksasana)
- Airplane (Dekasana)
- Flamingo
- Star pose (Utthita Tadasana)
- Triangle pose (Trikonasana)
Breathing to support communication, self-regulation and expression of emotions such as anger and anxiety

- Lions Breath (release fear/anger)
- Snake Breath (release fear/worry/anger)
- Dragons Breath (Release anger/heat in the body or mind)
- Let it Go breath (Release fear/worry)
- Volcano Breath (Release anger/heat in body/mind)
Chair Yoga

- Seated mountain
- Forward fold
- Apple picking – cross midline
- Heel lift – inhale lift heels, exhale back to floor
- Seated twist
- Cactus arms
- Open book/close book – inhale open, exhale close
- Eagle arms/Self-hug
- Neck Rolls
- Hook ups
- Stretch ears

- Shoulder Shrugs (Inhale – “I don’t know”, Exhale - “let it go”)
- Palm stretch - fingers clasped, stretch front of palms forward
- Squeeze Orange Juice - inhale - open fists/exhale - closed fists
- Caterpillar to Butterfly- hands clasped behind neck inhale expand elbows/exhale elbows together in front of face
- Tug of War – palms facing opposite directions, clasp fingers, pull fingers in opposite directions.
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