

ARTICLE AND TIPS: Yoga Helps Kids Reduce Stress

Self-Care

CWK Network

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-- Jennifer Keller, yoga instructor

Researchers have found that yoga can help children and teenagers blow off steam.

After just three yoga classes, Rebecca has already found that the relaxation and deep breathing comes in handy. She says, "[It helps] when I bicker with my sister."

Fighting with siblings, playing sports, busy school schedules -- experts say that today's children and teens are stressed.

"They have the exact same deadlines that we do and the exact same fears," says Jennifer Keller, certified yoga instructor. "Not having enough time to do what they want to do, or not being able to please everyone that's around them or say the right thing -- it's exactly the same, just on a smaller scale."

Yoga can help. According to a new study from California State University at San Bernardino, yoga can relieve anxiety as well as increase motivation and concentration, even outside of the yoga class.

"[Yoga] will carry over into other situations like a soccer game or a play where [children] can focus on their breath and let go of anxiety and be more present in what they're doing," says Keller.

Keller adds that there are limitations to the yoga movements kids can do. "There are postures that I wouldn't introduce to children. I'm not going to put a child in a headstand, and normally I wouldn't ask a child to do a drop back and a back bend."

But done right, experts say, yoga can teach kids ways to handle stress and techniques they can use for the rest of their lives.

"Like now I can do certain belly breathing and it helps... calm me down," says Rebecca.

Tip Sheet

- Yoga has been shown to help hyperactive and attention-deficit children, who often crave movement and sensory/motor stimulus. Yoga helps channel these impulses in a positive way. (Lisa Orkin, yoga teacher and therapist)
- Sound is a great release for children and adds an auditory dimension to the physical experience of yoga. Have them listen to music or recite ABCs while practicing. (Marsha Wenig, yoga instructor)
- Tips for doing yoga:
 - Wear comfortable clothing.
 - Make sure your muscles are warmed up before you start.
 - Never force your body into a posture or try to go beyond your limits. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - Look for a class with an instructor who has experience working with children and/or teens.