



YOGA LAB *by* Yoga Utsav

Why is yoga for kids important?

Practicing yoga is important for kids for many of the same reasons it is important for adults. Yoga helps kids to relax, relieve stress and anxiety, sleep better, improve emotional regulation, increase empathy, and improve mood and affect.

For kids, however, stress is something they are only just learning about, and they often don't know what it is or how to handle it. It's up to us to provide them with effective and appropriate tools to help them manage their emotions.

Amazing Benefits of Yoga for Kids:

1. Yoga Improves Memory and Cognitive Functioning

Yoga helps to improve memory and cognitive function by creating focus within. Practicing yoga requires concentration of both the mind and the body. We have to pay attention to the movement of our bodies and how our breathing coordinates with those movements.

Some yoga poses, particularly balancing poses, require that you concentrate more than other poses.

When kids practice yoga, they are essentially practicing their ability to focus on the task at hand. In their day-to-day lives, this translates to better focus and cognitive functioning at school, leading to improved academic achievement.

2. Yoga Improves Social Relationships

Yoga is typically regarded as an individual activity. While that is partially true, there is a social component to yoga. We go to yoga classes with other people and take part in the yoga community where we can share our experiences with others.

For kids, the entire yoga practice is a social one. Yoga for kids typically includes songs, games, and other fun activities that get kids moving together and learning from one another, particularly with partner yoga poses. This creates a positive, engaging environment in which kids can have fun, talk to one another, and learn to trust one another.

Yoga also helps to cultivate increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and empathy within kids, which translates to more positive relationships with others by reflecting their positive attitude toward themselves onto others.

3. Yoga Improves Sleep

Getting the body moving before bedtime is an excellent way to improve sleep. When we are stressed or overwhelmed, our bodies are tense and our minds are full, reducing our ability to sleep well. This is also true for kids.

We tend to think that kids “have it easy,” and that they don’t feel stressed, but this simply isn’t true. Kids aren’t stressed about finances or getting to work on time, but they are stressed out by their schoolwork and peer relationships.

Practicing yoga helps kids to relieve stress by using their breathing to calm the mind and the nervous system. The physical practice of yoga also helps to relieve tension and release negative emotions held physically in the body, helping them to fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

4. Yoga Improves Strength and Breath Control

Yoga takes some strength – both mentally and physically. When practiced regularly, we notice many physical and cognitive changes within ourselves, particularly increased flexibility, upper body strength, and mental clarity. All of this newfound strength has much to do with the breath.

When we breathe harshly or quickly, we increase muscle tension, reduce focus, and heighten our **fight-or-flight response**, all of which have detrimental effects on our minds and bodies.

Teaching proper breathing techniques, and building physical and mental strength from a young age, helps to reduce the chances of obesity, depression, and depressive symptoms, as well as increases self-esteem, self-confidence, and improves overall wellbeing.

5. Yoga Increases Determination and Perseverance

Yoga is a fun activity for kids, in a non-competitive environment, in which they can learn new yoga poses and breathing techniques. When something is fun for kids, they always want to know more.

Kids also love the feeling they get when they master the thing they think they cannot do. For example, Crow Pose. While it's so much fun for kids to practice, it can be difficult. But when they learn how to practice the pose and continue to practice it, they are very excited and want to show everyone the new thing they learned at yoga class!

This determination and perseverance leads to the feeling of excitement. When this happens, kids will do anything to keep that feeling. In their day-to-day lives, kids will learn that sticking with something, even when it is difficult, pays off and they will want to bring that feeling of excitement to other areas of their lives.

6. Yoga Improves Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to recognize and change your behavior, thoughts, and emotions based on the situation at hand. Self-regulation skills help kids solve problems and adjust to new challenges, as well as help to set and achieve both short- and long-term goals.

By paying attention to our minds and bodies, we look inward to better understand our thoughts and feelings. Practicing yoga helps kids to understand and manage their

emotions based on the situation.

For example, if a child is frustrated at school, they are less likely to be paying attention to any new material, therefore not retaining any of that information and falling behind in class.

But, by learning to reflect inward and recognize what they need in certain situations, kids can learn to manage their emotions and handle the situation effectively and appropriately.

7. Yoga Improves Independence and Coping Skills

As mentioned above, yoga is both a social and individual activity. One of the benefits of practicing an activity that is both individual and social is that it helps kids to recognize what “individual” and “social” mean.

Kids rarely do things on their own. After all, they are kids! It’s up to us adults to make most of the decisions for them. However, it is still important that they learn how to do things on their own. Practicing yoga is a great way to introduce independence to your kids because their practice, and what they get out of their practice, is theirs and only theirs.

By increasing independence in practice, we are also helping kids to develop their coping skills. As kids, they will have the support of their family and the comfort of familiarity. But this changes as they grow into adolescence and adulthood – peer pressure, graduating high school, going to college, and getting their first “real” job.

It is important that kids learn how to be independent and cope on their own while they have the support and guidance from those around them. Otherwise, they will be left with no coping tools under their belt when the time comes for them to be on their own.

8. Yoga Improves Mood

Like any physical exercise, practicing yoga helps kids to release their negative thoughts and feelings, bring about mental clarity, and feel better about themselves. When we do something physical, such as yoga, we release endorphins, creating

feelings of calm and happiness.

Yoga is also a fun activity in which kids can be silly, play games, and be with their friends in a non-competitive environment, while also learning so much about themselves!

9. Yoga Reduces Stress and Anxiety

Improving mood also means reducing stress and anxiety. Those same endorphins that increase mood and affect also reduce stress and anxiety.

Did you know that we physically hold negative emotions in our bodies, usually in our necks and lower backs? **Sometimes experiencing negative emotions is a good thing**, but only in small doses.

For kids, it is important that we teach them the balance between negative and positive emotions. When we are ready to let go of all of that negativity, practicing yoga helps to reduce stress and anxiety by relieving tension throughout the body, literally releasing the built-up negativity kids have stored within their bodies.

The Takeaway

All of these benefits make it clear that yoga is an important tool in our children's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Practicing yoga is something we do for ourselves, as adults, to help us unwind and reduce stress. Why shouldn't we do the same for our kids?

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