

THE BENEFITS OF YOGA FOR TEENS

The Stresses of School

In today's society teenagers are always on the go - they tend to never stop and take a breath. A full day of academics, after-school sports, and other extracurricular activities creates a mentally and physically demanding environment for many teens. Chores, after-school jobs and homework further compound this stress. When they're not working, teens are constantly engaging in social interactions through texting and various forms of social media. This lifestyle leaves little, if any, time for personal reflection and relaxation from the day's events.

Yoga is a wonderful addition for any teenager's life. While it may seem unnecessary to add yet another activity, yoga should be viewed as time to breathe and recharge from daily challenges and triumphs. Teens are highly susceptible to burnout syndrome, depression and unhealthy anxiety levels. Yoga helps teenagers unplug from technology and the stresses of school, allowing them to slow down during a time when everything seems to be moving so quickly.

What are some benefits of Yoga?

Yoga is well known for its numerous mind/body health benefits. Practicing yoga aids in an overall understanding of one's body, which in turn can lead to ideal postural alignment. Yoga also develops muscle and bone strength, increased joint mobility, lengthening muscles, and coordination & balance, all of which can help prevent injury. Perhaps the most pertinent aspect of yoga for teenagers is its ability to foster self-confidence and self-love.

Teenagers have a tendency to be extremely judgmental of their physical appearance, especially in a world where social media and "selfies" are so prevalent. Yoga helps teens appreciate their body by encouraging self-trust and cultivating gratitude for what their body can achieve. Yoga also promotes a deep level of compassion and kindness towards others, teaching teens to have an open-mind and to overcome critical tendencies towards others. Through scientific research & personalized testing, numerous studies have concluded that yoga also aids in test-taking abilities and reduction of anxiety levels.

Reasons why Teens choose Yoga

- Creates time to unplug from technology, social stress and academic pressures
- Develops a mental sanctuary
- Is a wonderful form of physical exercise while increasing flexibility
- Can aid positively in performance abilities for other afterschool sports
- Releases stress / anxiety and teaches stress-managing techniques
- Reverses depression and develops techniques to manage depression
- Builds new friendships and social encounters

My Personal Experience with Yoga

By my sophomore year in college I realized something had to give. I needed a change, a transformation from the day to day repetition of my actions. Between the mental pressures and stress of auditions, dance rehearsals, grades, work, and the social trials and triumphs of adolescence, I was in dire need of a spiritual makeover. Yoga became my sanctuary, the forefront of my freedom. I happened upon my first yoga class during my second year of

college. I remember feeling elated, as if the weight pushing down upon my mind had been lifted. After that first class, I made sure to attend yoga at least twice a week. While it was difficult to fit another activity into my already full schedule, I cannot emphasize the difference I experienced both physically and mentally on the days I chose to practice yoga.

As I reflect back on my high-school experience, I now recognize the immense difference between how I managed stressful situations, treated my body, how I thought about myself, and how I interacted with others before yoga. I have profound gratitude for the practice of yoga and all it has allowed my body, mind and spirit to accomplish. Had I discovered and implemented the practice earlier, it would have positively impacted several aspects of my adolescent years. One of my strongest passions is helping teens find *their* peace of mind, their inner mental strength and, by doing so, helping them to ultimately achieve new heights of success in their daily lives.