

© Find this article in the
Energy magazine

Sept/Oct 2024 Issue

SUBSCRIBE HERE:

EnergyMagazineOnline.com



Yoga's Impact on Children's Active & Energetic Brains

Ultimately, yoga equips children with lifelong skills that extend far beyond the mat, preparing their energetic brains to face future challenges with a centered and focused mind.

Lauren Chaitoff, Founder & Chief Visionary Officer at Yogi Beans

Many of us come into the practice of yoga and other healing modalities later in life. Can you imagine if you were introduced to such practices earlier on, and what the effects could have been on your mind, body, and heart? How could your childhood have been different if you had an early awareness of the mind-body connection and your energetic body?

As the owner of [Yogi Beans](#), a children's yoga and wellness company, I am reminded every day how incredible the practice of yoga is for developing bodies and minds, and how important it is for children to have access to a yoga practice that resonates with them – exactly where they are in childhood.

I was introduced to yoga in college. I realized that I had a lot of anxiety as a young girl. Tools and

techniques that utilized breath, and provided methods to cultivate mindfulness, would have greatly benefited my elementary and adolescent years. This is one of the reasons it has always been my mission to help children become healthier and happier by introducing them to yogic practices at an early age. At Yogi Beans, our curriculum teaches children universal yogic principles that instill healthy habits, and provides for a synthesis of practical skills and wisdom to help guide children to the deeper understanding of themselves and their true potential.

Today, children are growing up in a world that is increasingly centered around screen time and social media. Impersonal “likes” and “hearts” can offer instant reward; yet, our reactions, over time, can foster an ingenuine sense of self-worth. It has been scientifically proven that time spent on screens and social media have an adverse effect on children's



mental health and overall well-being. Unfortunately, the brains of children have been rewired: instead of making social connections, taking age-appropriate risks, and playing with each other, they are isolated, sedentary, and glued to a virtual world.

All is not lost! There are many ways that parents, educators, and caregivers can help children tap into their inner-self and instill positive energy into their whole being. Our experiences introduce children to the Yogi Beans Four Pillars, which represent the interconnected relationships inherent in each child's whole being. Constituting 108 integrated values across the pillars of mind, heart, body, and social, our holistic framework for wellbeing is the basis for our character-building curriculum and evidence-based practices.

The four pillars are:

1. MIND LIGHT: *A clear and open mind is key*
Mind Light values engage our mind and benefit our mental wellbeing to achieve clarity and openness of the mind that allows for our inner consciousness to shine through. (**Examples:** focus, concentration, present moment awareness.)

2. HEART LIGHT: *A happy heart is beautiful*
Our hearts connect us to the world – it is through the energy of the heart that we create our world, where our passions come to life; it's how we learn what truly matters most to us and to others we love. (**Examples:** values related to Social Emotional Learning, including empathy and compassion.)

3. YOGA BODY: *Love your body to health*
When we take care of ourselves and understand the magnificence of our human body we get to fulfill our potential and create lives that we love. (**Examples:** values related to physicality and movement such as balance, flexibility and strength.)

4. YOGIC WAY: *Let's grow together*

When we show up authentically, and contribute our gifts, we can become a gift in both our communities and in life. (Examples: community, cooperation, friendship.)

Through yoga activities, exercises, and content based around the values associated with each pillar, children gain practical, everyday skills for real world use that serve as an antidote to the pangs and social emotional, environmental conditions of modern day life.

Below are four activities related to the Yogi Beans Four Pillars that are simple to implement and easy to do, Try them out!

BELLY BREATHING (MIND LIGHT)

Belly Breathing helps children regulate when they are having big feelings. This exercise is used to mitigate stress and anxiety because it has a calming effect on our parasympathetic nervous system. Empirical studies have shown that attention to breathing is associated with reliable differences in resting respiration rate. We always tell our students "When we change the way we breathe, we can change the way we feel!"

Try it: Take your hands and place them on top of your belly. Inhale and try to make your belly get big like a balloon, Try using a favorite stuffed animal on your belly and using your breath to "rock" it to sleep.

WELLNESS MEDITATION (HEART LIGHT)

Wellness Meditation can be practiced anytime you want to feel safe, secure and grounded.

Try it:

May I be Happy. May I be Healthy.

May I be kind. May I be caring.

May I be safe. May I be loved.

May I know all is well.

(Repeat)



When we feel safe in our bodies, our nervous system feels calm and balanced, and we are more easily able to regulate our feelings. Yoga provides children with various coping skills to help them navigate through uncomfortable feelings, and recognizes that, just like the weather, our feelings are always changing.

MOUNTAIN POSE (YOGA BODY)

Mountain pose is a simple yoga pose that can help children find steadiness and stillness and can be done practically anywhere! When we still and quiet the body we can become more easily aware of a busy mind. For children, standing silent and still is a practice that can be done in short increments.

Try it: Ask your child, or student, to stand straight, with their feet together or slightly apart. Be strong and straight as a mountain. Ask children how it feels to stand in Mountain pose with their eyes open or closed.

MIRROR GAME (YOGIC WAY)


Mirror game is a game about focus and connection. Practicing yoga and mindfulness with a partner or friend can make the experience more enjoyable and playful, especially for children!

Try it: Pair off children and have them sit crossed-legged facing their partners. Ask them to choose who will be the leader and who will follow. Have both children hold their hands up so that their hands are very close to each other, but not touching, Partners should lock eyes, too! The leader will begin to move their hands in different directions at varying speeds. The person who is mirroring copies the exact same moves of the leader. After about a minute and a half, switch roles.

As children navigate through various stages of growth, yoga serves as a consistent anchor, promoting resilience, emotional intelligence, and a harmonious balance between body and mind.

Incorporating yoga into the lives of children provides them with a valuable outlet for their abundant energy, and can foster a myriad of developmental benefits. Engaging poses and mindfulness exercises can enhance physical strength and flexibility and coordination. And mindful breathing and relaxation techniques can help regulate emotions, which can make it easier for children to manage stress and maintain a calm and alert state.

The energetic brain of a child, constantly buzzing with curiosity and excitement, finds balance and focus through yoga. Ultimately, yoga equips children with lifelong skills that extend far beyond the mat, preparing their energetic brains to face future challenges with a centered and focused mind. ☺

 Learn more about author Lauren Chaitoff by visiting www.yogibeans.com



YOGI BEANS®

108

AWESOME

Yoga Poses

FOR KIDS

STOMP Like a Dinosaur!
FLUTTER Like a Butterfly!
BREATHE Like the Sun!