



YOGA FOR TEENS:
AN EVIDENCE-BASED CURRICULUM
TEACHER'S GUIDE

YOGA ED. YOGA FOR TEENS BUILDING BLOCKS:
TEACHING TEEN'S YOGA, TEACHER'S GUIDE, FIRST EDITION.

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Created in the United States of America.

YOGA 

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INTERNAL PRACTICE

The internal practice of yoga education is based on one principle: **be the yoga you teach**. Practicing the yoga tools and life skills we wish to nurture in our students allows our work to emerge from an authentic place. The internal practice allows us to utilize yoga tools to empower our teaching. In this section, we will focus on building the five pillars of our internal practice: **self-awareness, authenticity, curiosity, self-compassion, and empathy**.

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the state of consciously being present to thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Self-awareness allows us to bring clarity to our internal state. Instead of reacting blindly to experience, we give ourselves the mental space that allows us to slow down and examine our thoughts objectively. This creates perspective and freedom to choose the most effective path.

Practicing self-awareness physically rewires your brain. By consciously directing your focus to your internal experience, you promote positive changes in brain areas associated with attention, decision-making, emotional stability, and empathy.

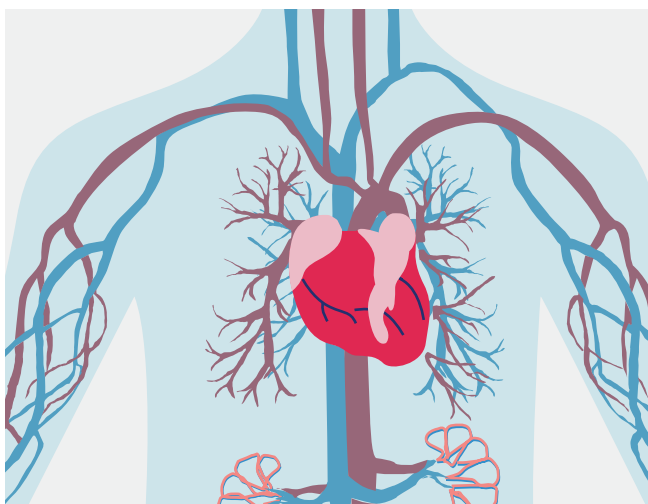
When working closely with children and teens, we may encounter specific words or actions that cause us to react strongly. These are known as triggers and are often connected to our own unresolved emotional experiences from childhood. Triggers can cause us to transfer and superimpose our own experiences onto the adolescents we work with.

Self-awareness is like a muscle. The more you use it, the easier it is to use.

Cultivating self-awareness in your teaching allows you to recognize your own past experiences and reactions as they are triggered. This awareness empowers you to shift from a place of reactivity to a place of clarity, where you move through your own past to recognize the present experiences of the children and teens in front of you.

THE CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

The cardiovascular system consists of the heart, blood vessels, and blood. The heart is the key organ in this system. The heart's function is to pump blood through the body. With every heartbeat, blood delivers oxygen and nutrients to the cells and removes waste from the body.



Cardiovascular Development

Adolescents have lower cardiac outputs than adults at any given level of oxygen uptake. As a result, their hearts must beat faster to oxygenate their body tissues (MacGregor, 2008). During exercise, heart rate speeds up to increase blood flow and oxygen delivery to the muscles. Heart rates may reach between 200 beats per minute during exercise. Heart rates at rest and during exercise gradually slow as adolescents' hearts increase in size and capacity. Over the course of adolescence, resting heart rate and basal metabolic rate decrease approximately 20%.

You can obtain your students' approximate maximum pulse rate by subtracting their age from 220.

Hemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygenated blood from the lungs to the muscles. Hemoglobin concentration in males increases due to rising levels of testosterone, while females have lower concentrations. Because of this difference, males often have more physical stamina than females.

Cardiovascular Health

Yoga is a physical activity that promotes heart health in adolescents (Woodyard, 2011; Birdee et al., 2009). While not all yoga is aerobic, yoga practices that do not increase heart rate can still improve cardiovascular health. Research suggests that yoga can reduce blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, mediate blood sugar, and/or increase heart rate variability (McCall, 2007). A regular yoga practice can have significant effects on the management of obesity, a strong risk factor for heart disease (Rioux & Ritenbaugh, 2013).

Regular physical activity during adolescence promotes cardiovascular health and allows the heart to grow to its healthy maximum (MacGregor, 2008).

Yoga increases relaxation and decreases stress. Stress prepares the body for a "fight or flight" response by increasing heart rate and blood pressure. Chronic stress can increase the risk of heart disease. By reducing stress, yoga may improve cardiorespiratory health and fitness (Galantino et al., 2008).

Rest pose practiced regularly for 12 weeks by adolescent females may significantly reduce blood pressure (Birdee et al., 2009).

Benefits of Yoga: The Cardiovascular System

- Increases blood flow
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers cholesterol levels
- Normalizes blood sugar
- Increases heart rate variability
- Lowers risk of heart disease

SUPPORTING LEARNING THROUGH YOGA EDUCATION

Our brains are built to learn and relearn. As a result of the experiences we have and the lives we live, our brains are constantly reorganizing pathways, forging new connections between brain regions, and even creating new brain cells (Kempermann, 2002). In other words, our experiences are constantly changing our brains.

How we navigate our adolescent years directly influences how we live the rest of our lives.

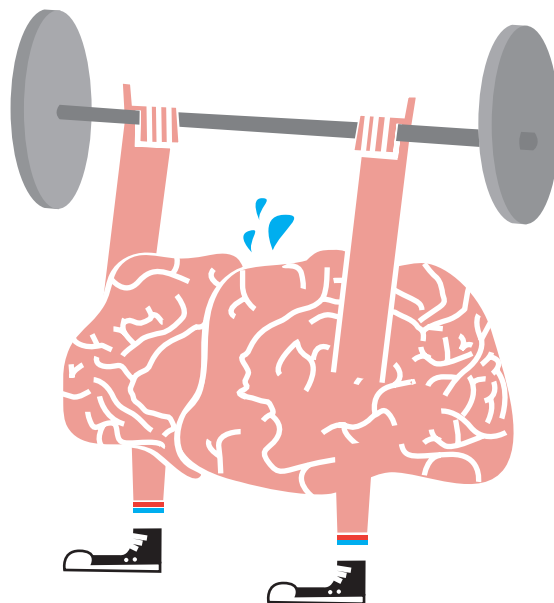
This ability to adapt as a result of experience is known as neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity gives us enormous potential for growth. We have the ability to change the way we think and behave at any point in our lives. Because we change through our experiences, the more we use a skill or thought process, the stronger, easier, and more fluent it becomes.

Our brains are like muscles. The more we use a skill or thought process, the stronger and easier it becomes.

Yoga education supports brain-based learning by teaching skills and encouraging thought processes that promote learning in the brain. Yoga Ed.'s teaching philosophies, classroom management techniques, and yoga activities are designed to help educators teach more effectively and help students learn more effectively.

Yoga education supports brain-based learning in the following ways:

- Movement
- Cognition
- Emotion
- Social Learning





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FEELING BREATH

Benefit:

- Increases breath awareness
- Increases physical connection with the breath

Instructions:

1. Placing both hands on your rib cage, feel your ribs on the front and back of your body. Inhale, feeling your rib cage move and expand.
2. Exhale, feeling your rib cage close.



Feeling Breath 1



Feeling Breath 2

Tailoring Tidbits:

Challenge students to hold their breath for an extra moment at the top of the inhalation and try to take in one more sip of air as if sipping through a straw before exhaling. By taking in more “sips” of air, students expand their lung capacity and create more space for breathing.

SUN SALUTE A

1



2



3



4



5A



5B



6



7



8



9



10



11



Physical Benefit:

- Lengthens the spine
- Strengthens and stretches the ankles, knees, quadriceps, hamstrings, hip flexors, buttocks, abdominals, chest, shoulders, back, arms, wrists, and neck
- Warms up and synchronizes the breath and body

Mental Benefit:

- Builds focus
- Develops willpower
- Stimulates the mind

Gaze Point:

See individual postures.

Instructions:

1. Begin in Mountain Pose.
2. Inhale, arms reach up and overhead.
3. Exhale, hinge from the hips and fold forward.
4. Inhale, hands on the shins or ground, lengthen the spine, gaze up.
5. Exhale, step the legs back to Plank and lower into push up or tummy to ground.
6. Inhale to Cobra Pose or Upward Dog.
7. Exhale to Downward Dog.
8. Inhale, walk the feet forward to the hands, the hands on the shins or floor, find length in the spine.
9. Exhale, fold forward.
10. Inhale, rise as you arms reach up.
11. Exhale, lower your arms back to Mountain Pose.

Cue:

See individual postures.

Creative Language:

See individual postures.

Grade:

6 to 8; 9 to 12

DOWNWARD DOG



Physical Benefit:

- Energizes the body
- Strengthens the quadriceps, hip flexors, abdominals, neck, and arms
- Stretches the feet, calves, hamstrings, back, chest, shoulders, and palms

Mental Benefit:

- Increases calmness
- Relieves stress

Gaze Point:

Navel

Instructions:

1. Begin in Table Pose.
2. Inhale, tuck your toes under.
3. Exhale, press into your hands and lift your hips up towards the sky.
4. Breathe.
5. Inhale and look forward to come back to Table Pose.

Cues:

You are making an upside-down V shape with your body. #3

Gently try to straighten your arms and legs. Allow your head to relax as you look towards your belly button. #4

Creative Language:

Spread your fingers wide like the five points on a star. #1

Walk your dog by bending your knees side to side. #4

Grade:

6 to 8; 9 to 12

Other Anatomical Focus:

Inversion

Modifications:

| Notice | Reason | Modification |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Weight in arms or roundedness in the back | Tight hamstrings | Bend at the knee |
| Fingers closed | Lack of awareness | See creative language #1 |
| Wrists lifting off mat | Weak arms, tight hamstrings, or lack of awareness | Bend at the knee |
| Shoulders dropping into ears | Tight shoulders or tight hamstrings | Bend at the knee |

DOUBLE PRETZEL



Physical Benefit:

- Strengthens the abdominals and back
- Stretches the hip flexors, spine, and shoulders

Mental Benefit:

- Develops communication

Gaze Point:

Down the nose

Instructions:

1. Begin in Easy Pose facing your partner with your knees touching.
2. Inhale, bring your hands to touch.
3. Exhale, bring your right hand behind your back.
4. Inhale, reach across and high five your partner's left hand.
5. Exhale, reach for your partner's right hand with your left hand.
6. Joining hands, inhale and sit tall.
7. Exhale, turn towards your back arm.
8. When you and your partner are ready, untwist.
9. Repeat on the other side.

Cues:

Double high five your partner. #2

Grade:

6 to 8; 9 to 12

Modifications:

| Notice | Reason | Modification |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Difficulty interlacing the arms | Lack of awareness | See cue #2 |

TENSE AND RELEASE

This relaxation exercise is especially useful when frustrations and tensions are high. Use this exercise to help students return to a state of balance. Encourage students to notice how much tension they unconsciously hold. With the awareness this exercise develops, you and your students will learn when to use yoga tools to reconnect mind, body and breath.

“Close your eyes, breathe, and rest. As if you’re falling asleep, let go of all thoughts. Feel your breath. Without changing anything, notice your breathing. Is it fast or slow? Is it loud or quiet? Smooth or jerky?”

“Beginning with your hands, clench your fists. Press your arms tightly into your sides. After five seconds, relax. Let it go. Let your arms and hands be floppy. Breathe evenly while you are squeezing your muscles.”

Repeat by coaching students through tensing and releasing different parts of their body, including their face, arms, stomachs, buttocks, legs, feet, and toes. To tense the stomach, have students pull their stomachs inward. Once all body parts have been tensed and released, continue with the following.

“Tense all the muscles you can at the same time. Hold. Relax one last time. Notice if you feel any different. Notice your breathing. Has it changed? How?”

Pause for a few moments.

“Gently begin to wiggle your fingers and your toes. Take any final stretches that feel good to you on your back or your side. When you are ready, come back to a comfortable seated position in your chair.”

INNER MOUNTAIN



“Close your eyes, breathe, and rest. As if you’re falling asleep, let go of all thoughts. Just feel your breath. I’ll wait for everyone to settle, sigh and melt, release any wiggles, movement and tension. When you’re silent and still, I’ll know you are ready to listen. With every breath, you become more and more relaxed... great.

“Imagine that you see a mountain. Notice everything you can about this mountain: its shape and height, its colors and qualities. Notice how calm, strong, steady, wise it is.

“Now imagine yourself as the mountain. Let yourself become strong, steady, solid and still. Whatever happens, bad weather or good, friendly hikers or not, you, the mountain stay the same. Your foundation is rooted deep into the earth and you are unshakable. Trust in your foundation and the strength that comes from being able to be with whatever comes, knowing that it will pass. Breathe and be. Breathe and be. Let everything come and go. You notice the world change, but you do not change with it. Thoughts and feelings come and go, but you, the mountain, remain... seeing, knowing, and being who you are: whole, perfect and magnificent.

“Now it’s time to come back to the room. Gently begin to wiggle your fingers and your toes. Take any final stretches that feel good to you on your back or your side. When you are ready, come back to a comfortable seated position at the top of your mat.”

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LESSON 13: Moods

NASPE Standards: 2, 4, 5

Grades: 9-12

Health Standard: 7

Equipment: Chart Paper, Music

| | |
|--|--|
| Theme | Moods |
| Concept | Can I change my mood on my own? |
| Time In (Breathing) 5-10 minutes | Easy Breath Share this quote with your students: "Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans." ~ John Lennon, musician |
| Discussion 5-10 minutes | What are moods? What creates them? Suggested Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you describe moods? Define mind-body state.• What types of moods do you have?• Do you feel you have any control over the? Why or Why not? Brainstorm inquires. |
| Warm-Up 15-20 minutes | Sun Salute A x 4 to Music |
| Yoga Postures 20-30 minutes | Mountain, Star, Warrior II (right side), Extended Side Angle (right side), Reverse Warrior (right side), Twisting Star, Mountain, Dancer, Mountain, Ragdoll, Downward Dog, Rock, Pretzel Twist, Peacock, Butterfly, Bat, Seated Forward Fold, Pigeon on Back |
| Game 5-10 minutes | Be a Mountain |
| Partner Work 5-10 minutes | Double Pretzel |
| Relaxation 5-10 minutes | Silence and Stillness with Music |
| Project/ Homework/ Assessment 5-10 minutes | Journal: Why All The Changes? Read "Why all the changes?" and ask students to journal their responses. |

LESSON 13: Journal Entry “Why All the Changes?”

Name _____ Date _____

The adolescent brain cavity is under reconstruction. Among the last connections to be fully established is the links between the prefrontal cortex, or the seat of judgment and problem solving, and the limbic system, or the emotional brain. These links are critical for emotional understanding and self-regulation.

As a result:

Everyday unhappiness reaches its peak in adolescence. The body has low levels of the positive chemical messengers including serotonin and dopamine.

The hormonally-regulated body clock shifts its settings. Sleep late, rise early.

Teenagers are biologically driven to take risks and seek pleasure and thrills.

Teenagers are highly emotional, tending to respond to perceived emotional content in situation rather than factual content.

Teenagers find it difficult to stop or interrupt an action once it is underway.

Teenagers are more likely to take risks when friends are watching.

Addictions begin in adolescence. Teenagers become addicted to nicotine faster than adults.

Discussion

1. From your own experience, would you agree that the above describes your tendencies at this time in your life?
2. Could this be evolution’s way of helping you separate from your parents and develop greater independence?
3. What characteristics of adolescence are not on this list but speak to your experience?

LESSON 13: Journal Entry "Why All the Changes?"

Lined writing area with 20 horizontal lines for a journal entry.