



9 POSITIVE WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR CHILD

BODY-BASED TOOLS FOR PRACTICING TOGETHER

YOGA ed.



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AN INTRODUCTION

With the 2020 pandemic, those of us who fulfill roles as caregivers—parents, grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, more—find ourselves trying to do the impossible. The whole world is still learning how to get through our day-to-day tasks as we redefine “normal,” some of us are working from home in jobs that were never meant to be remote, and we caregivers bear the responsibility of providing for our children’s education, getting them the support they need and the opportunities they deserve in order to learn and grow.

It’s hard enough to provide for a growing child, or to educate them, or to care for their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Simultaneously taking on all three of these roles, plus juggling

their schedules and other needs even as we juggle our own, is a recipe for overwhelm, burnout, stress and anxiety.

If you’re experiencing any or all of these feelings, know that you are not alone. In a recent study by Kaiser Health, 53 percent of adult respondents reported feeling significantly increased stress and anxiety from the impact of COVID-19-related restrictions on their lives.

What we know about emotions is that they have a lasting impact on our bodies and minds, whether we consciously acknowledge them or not. In particular, negative emotions that are prolonged and unaddressed can take a toll on youth and adults alike.

Stress sinks its way into the body, leaving us feeling exhausted, disoriented, alone. Stress puts us in a constant state of alarm, ready to fight for our lives, to freeze in place, or to run away at any moment. Without intentional care, stress can build a wall of separation between you and your loved ones and your own self-awareness.

If you are feeling stressed out, the youth that you care for are feeling that way too.

Families across the globe are seeking connection with their families and within themselves, but they find their focus constantly drawn to external demands. With overloaded task lists, scarce resources, unpredictable time constraints and a growing sense of fatigue, doing one more thing seems utterly impossible, even if that one thing is the sense of connectedness we want more than anything.

As a bridge of connection, Yoga Ed. has created a simple toolkit: 9 Positive Ways to Connect with Your Child.

In this toolkit, you will:

- Understand how to identify when you and your child are feeling disconnected, and
- Learn 9 body-based practices to support and nourish the relationships between caregivers and children.

With these tools, you are equipped to guide yourself in a responsive approach to connecting with your child and with yourself. We invite you to get grounded in your body, which provides the essential foundation for us to work from a place of response rather than reaction. Through sharing this toolkit, we hope to help nurture the life-giving connections that will sustain us in these tough times and beyond.



CONNECTION: **HUMMING BREATH**



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Inhale through your nose.
2. Exhale, making a “hmmm” sound, like the sound of a bee.

BENEFITS:

- + Focuses the mind
- + Increases relaxation

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + Use this practice to allow your breath and body to unite. You may also do this together with your child to promote a sense of connection.

CONNECTION: **MOUNTAIN**



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin in Mountain Pose.
2. Inhale, bring your hands to your hips.
3. Exhale, bend your knees deeply.
4. Inhale, reach your arms up and overhead.
5. Breath.
6. Inhale, straighten your legs to return to Mountain Pose.

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + Use this practice to regain confidence and feel grounded when you're feeling anxious or nervous.

PHYSICAL BENEFIT:

- + Strengthens the ankles, calves, knees, quadriceps, buttocks, spine, back, abdominals, and arms

MENTAL BENEFITS:

- + Builds focus
- + Develops willpower

CONNECTION: **OCEAN BREATH**



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Inhale through your nose.
2. Exhale, open your mouth with a “hahhh” sound, making the sound of an ocean wave.

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + Use this breath as part of your morning wake-up routine to stimulate healthy energy at the start of your day.

BENEFITS:

- + Calms the mind
- + Releases tension in the neck and lower face

CONNECTION: **DOUBLE TREE**



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin in Mountain Pose next to your partner.
2. Inhale, bring your outside foot like a kickstand to your inside leg.
3. Exhale, bring your inside palm to touch your partner's.
4. Inhale, press into your partner's palm, reaching your arms overhead.
5. Exhale, bring your outside arm up to the sky.
6. Breathe.
7. When you and your partner are ready, slowly bring your arms down and replace your feet on the floor, returning to Mountain Pose.

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + This practice gives both you and your child an opportunity to ask for and receive support.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS:

- + Lengthens the spine
- + Strengthens the ankles, calves, knees, hamstrings, abdominals, back, and neck
- + Stretches the quadriceps, hip flexors, chest, and shoulders

MENTAL BENEFITS:

- + Develops communication
- + Improves focus

CONNECTION: **WALKING CONSCIOUSLY**

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use the following script, or adapt the language to suit you and your loved one(s).

1. *“Let’s walk around the room as we embody these words: integrated, committed, balanced, aware of your center.”*
2. *“As we walk this way, say aloud or think this affirmation: ‘I am strong, centered and committed.’”*
3. *“Now, let’s walk around the room, staying safe, but imagining that we have no center! What if all our body parts just moved independently?”*
4. *“What would this kind of walk say? ‘I am...’?”*
5. Allow time for everyone to notice how the new walk feels.
6. *“Let’s return to centered walking and repeat that affirmation again: ‘I am strong, centered and committed.’”*
7. If you have time and space to discuss, ask a few self-awareness questions. For example, “Imagine moving through your life like that. What would that be like?” or “Which walk expresses how you’re feeling today?”

BENEFITS:

- + Focus
- + Physical awareness
- + Spatial awareness

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + This practice is an opportunity to connect or reconnect with your environment, both in physical space and feeling space. You might do this on a walk together, or when you need some refocusing movement.



CONNECTION: To THE MUSIC

INSTRUCTIONS:

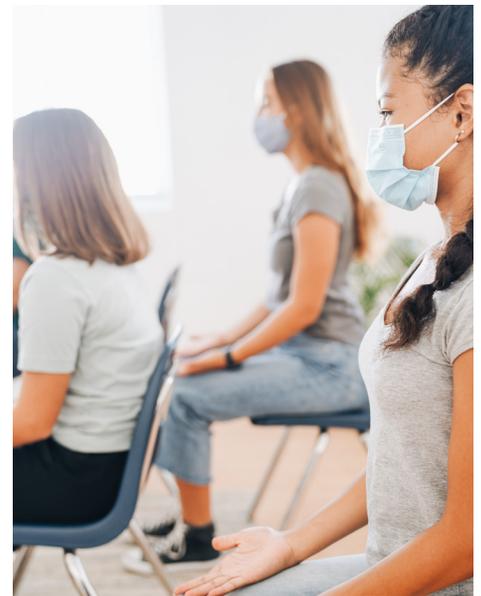
1. Students clear the space on their desks and around them on the floor.
2. Before beginning, students promise each other to stay in their own personal space and not to enter into someone else's space while the music is playing.
3. Start the music. Students close their eyes and listen to the music.
4. The teacher reads or paraphrases the following prompt:
"Listen with your whole body. You may sit or stand as you wish. Go in and allow the music to move you in ways that feel good. Where are you tight? How can you use your breath to soften, expand, or energize? Where do you feel resistance or rigidity? Can you dance with those places and see what they need? What parts of your body want to move? How do they want to move? Allow movement to organically evolve and develop into a flow. Dance with yourself in subtle, inner or overt ways. This is your time. You are free and safe to express whatever movement feels good to you right now. No one else can see you! You may breathe, stretch, swing, shake, wriggle, spin, sweep, writhe, bounce, tap, explode, unfold, anything."
5. When music stops, allow students time to complete their dance.
6. Ask students to open their eyes and notice how they feel as well as the quality of energy in the room.

BENEFITS:

- + Community
- + Creativity
- + Imagination

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + This practice is an invitation to connect with your child through freestyle movement. Use this practice as a brain break in the middle of the day, or as an opportunity to let go at the end of your day.



CONNECTION:

HEART WARMING

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read aloud or paraphrase the following script:

1. *“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.”*
2. *“With every breath, you become more and more relaxed... great. Let your body relax. Let your emotions be tranquil and get a clear, strong sense of who you are as you go inside yourself.”*
3. *“Release tension in your chest and focus your awareness in your heart. Repeat these words to yourself, ‘I am love.’”*
4. *“Allow your chest to expand and fill with breath. Be still in yourself as you repeat the phrase. Allow your gentle and tender nature to emerge as you allow love to flow in your heart. Be the most tender, loving person you can imagine being. Say, ‘I love everything about myself. I am my own best friend in life and I trust in love.’”*
5. *“Feel a flow of energy moving through your heart and down through your body as the love you feel expands to include people you know and care for. Keep expanding this love to include everything around you and eventually to include the whole planet. See the planet embraced in your arms and know that you are healing the world as you send love out from your heart.”*
6. *“Gently relax and be at peace with yourself as you realize that you are the source of love in your life.”*
7. Pause for two minutes.
8. *“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, and slowly open your eyes.”*

BENEFITS:

- + Community
- + Creativity
- + Imagination

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + This practice is an opportunity to be reflective with your child. You might offer this practice at the dinner table or before bedtime.



CONNECTION: **CONSTRUCTIVE REST**



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin seated in your chair with your feet on the floor, sitting up tall in your spine.
2. Inhale, reach your arms out in front of you.
3. Exhale, cross your right arm over your left and turn your palms towards one another. Interlace your fingers.
4. Inhale, turn your knuckles toward your body, bringing your hands through your arms.
5. Breathe.
6. When you are ready, exhale and untwist.

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + This practice is an opportunity to find a moment of stillness and relaxation together. You might use this as a way to transition from one task to another. This may allow you and your child to both feel complete with the one task before you step into something new.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS:

- + Relaxes the body
- + Releases tension

MENTAL BENEFITS:

- + Calms the mind
- + Eases symptoms of stress

CONNECTION:

WASHING OUT, TAPPING IN

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Students think of something they want to let go of and imagine it washing out.
2. Students stand with their arms hanging.
3. Students begin to twist from their hips so their arms swing out and wrap around them, first one way, then the other.
4. Repeat until students feel clean and clear.
5. Then, students think of something they want more of and imagine tapping it in.
6. Students start at the top of their heads and tap down their fronts to their toes, then back up to their heads. Students tap across both shoulders and down and up their arms.
7. Repeat until students feel refreshed and present.

PHYSICAL BENEFIT:

- + Relaxes the body
- + Energizes the body

MENTAL BENEFITS:

- + Calms the mind
- + Builds a sense of presence

WHEN TO PRACTICE:

- + Imagine you're exhausted as you're getting ready for dinner together. Before you sit down, you create this opportunity to shift the energy and create a connection together.



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www.yogaed.com

By Email: info@yogaed.com

By Phone: 310-471-1742 (US)