

OCTOBER 2010 Chantalle Carr



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What are the Health Benefits of Yoga?

Should it be incorporated into a Physical Education classroom?

Positive Outcomes from Yoga in Teens

* Balanced Mind
* Improved physical agility, balance, coordination and alignment.
* Increased flexibility and strengthening.
* Regulates metabolisms
* Improves circulation
* Jumpstarts healthier nutritional decisions.
* Increased Energy5



The school setting can be a stressful environment for a lot of children, whether they are in kindergarten or it is their senior year of high school. There are a lot of different factors that can add to that stress including family issues and peer pressure. It can be hard for students to find that way or place to relieve all that built up stress throughout their day. Though students may not see a PE class as a way to help them de-stress, by bringing it to their attention and the other benefits physical fitness has, it can help students participate a little more in class. One way to help them stay active and keep them fit, as well as balance themselves (body and mind) is through the ancient practice of yoga. The stress children feel today can be detrimental to their health and negatively affect them academically. Yoga is not just calming but it can be challenging as well, working the students to better their poses and lives overall. It can really help students focus their thoughts and increase energy levels which will lead to positive results in academic aspects like increased attendance levels and higher grades.

In one research study, 19 boys were taken who had been clinically diagnosed with ADHD and split them into a yoga treatment group and a cooperative activities group 3. Though the yoga group did show improvements in factors like impulsive behavior, yoga is still an investigational treatment 1. This study is a good example of how yoga can be used to benefit certain students, and not just in the school setting.

## What is Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient practice of connecting and balancing out the mind and body through practicing different poses, also known as asanas, and breathing techniques 9. The combination of these practices can help calm the mind while stretching and strengthening the whole body. It can help improve flexibility and muscular strength and endurance 3.

This is not a high intensity exercise, but a slow and controlled one. Students will still be working themselves, just not in the way a cardiovascular exercise would. In the article The Health Benefits of yoga and exercise it says that once one starts doing the yoga techniques, it helps with the down-regulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, and the sympathetic nervous system (SNS). These are activated as a response to a physical or psychological demand on the body 7.

**Yoga compared to exercise**

Both yoga and exercise are great forms of physical activity. While exercise can be a high intensity activity to raise the student’s heart rates, yoga is an activity that requires a lot of control and concentration and even though it may be slower it still challenges students in a variety of ways.

In The health benefits for yoga and exercise, it reviews research that has shown that participating in yoga has equal to or more health benefits compared to just participating in exercise for different disorders or diseases.7 In one article, studies done on 37 men and women with depression on anti-depressants, participated in 20 yoga classes which resulted in a significant decrease in signs of depression, anger and anxiety 7. If there was a way to help reduce medications levels for your students, wouldn’t you want to do it? By incorporating this different form of exercise into a curriculum could be that way to help.

With all the benefits of yoga, it is a surprise it is not incorporated into more physical education classes. It may be harder to get the higher education levels to actually participate if it was an actual unit, but there are options to modify and change it so that these students want to come to class for their yoga unit. With yoga it is more than just a physical activity, it is also a spiritual and emotional activity to1. Students will learn how to access each of these dimensions, but they have to be willing to try first.

“…relieving certain symptoms associated with diabetes, multiple sclerosis, menopause, kidney disease, and schizophrenia. Exercise has been recognized as having insulin-like effects on blood glucose levels. Yoga has recently been found to have beneficial effects on blood glucose levels in individuals with diabetes and other chronic health conditions.”7

Yoga

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Exercise

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Eco friendly yoga mats.

Adult classes to help inform and train teachers as yoga instructors.

**Interested in starting a yoga class of your own at your school?**

Have a talk with either your athletic director or the head principal about including it in your curriculum. Please check out Yoga Ed at [www.yogaed.org/yeinschool.html](http://www.yogaed.org/yeinschool.html) to locate a professional instructor near you**!** 1

## Is it right for your School?

It may not be for everyone, but incorporating yoga into the curriculum could be the next step

Why it can work and the results:

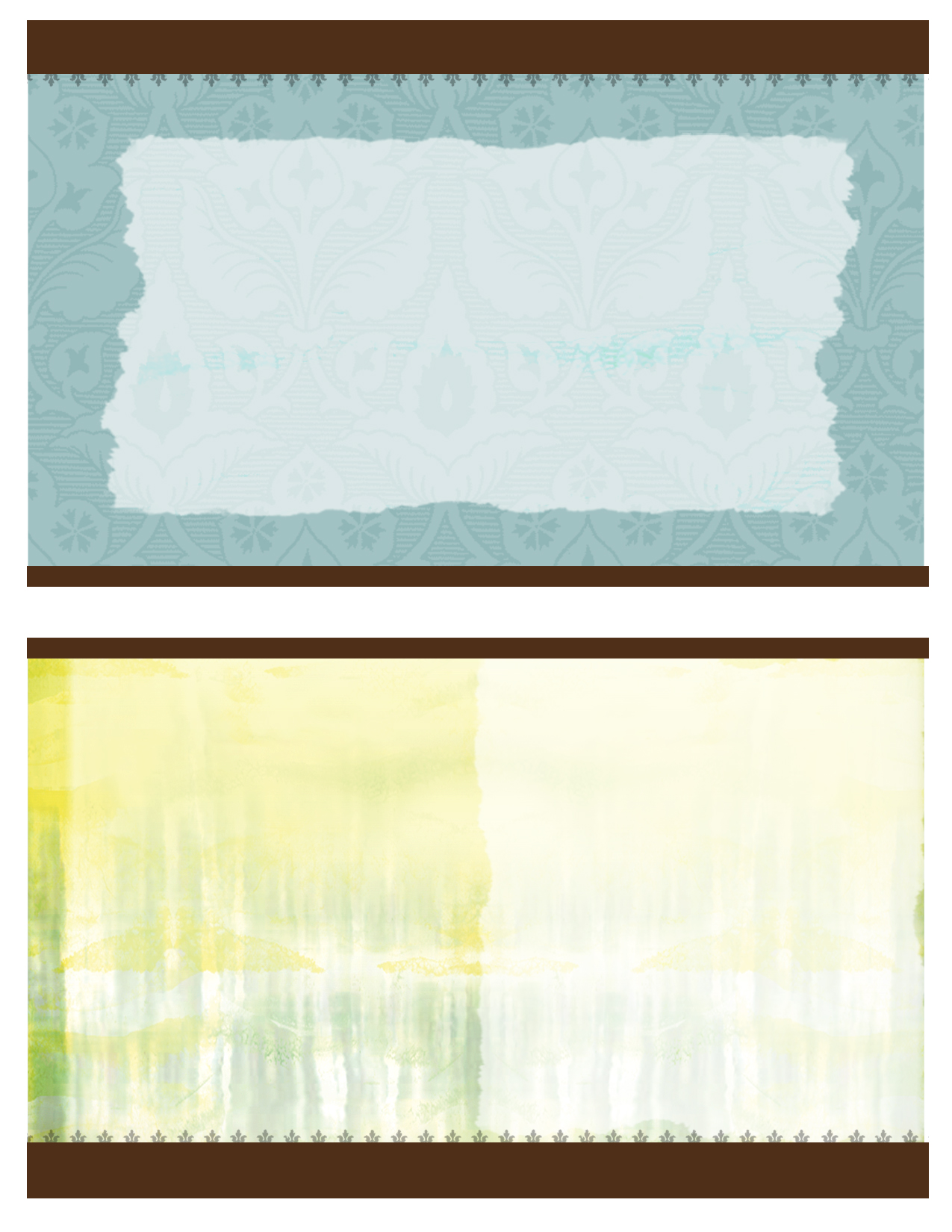
* First off the school needs to have a licensed/trained yoga instructor to help students fully experience the benefits of yoga.
* Giving the students an option of taking a yoga class instead of a PE class or having just a unit of it will help determine the ones truly interested. (Introduce a small class for one’s interested, or as after school group)
* “Colorado yoga instructor Michelle Fury has seen many students get a mental lift from yoga. “I constantly witness students who are anxious, depressed, and stressed use yoga to help them to focus, expend that energy, and then relax," she says.” 4
* The increased focus from yoga will boost concentration levels in other aspects of children’s lives
* It gives the students who are not particularly good at high intensity team sports another option to help stay healthy.
* Studies have proposed that yoga reverses the negative effect that stress has on the immune system by raising levels of immunoglobulin A and natural killer cells.5
* By starting children early and helping them learn about balance and making healthy life choices, those decisions will stick with them throughout life.

With all the mental, physical, emotional and health benefits resulting because of yoga, why is it not more common in school curriculums? It requires minimal equipment and gives the students a place to leave their stress behind. It gives students a chance to be creative and be physically active at the same time. By harnessing all these aspects of yoga, if taught appropriately, school settings could be a place the students want to be and not have to be.

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