

# Youth Yoga Project



Julia Handelman  
[www.youthyogaproject.net](http://www.youthyogaproject.net)



Youth Yoga Project is a Columbus-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to providing access to yoga and mindfulness programming for young people to improve their physical, social, and emotional well-being and increase their academic success.

# Youth Yoga Project (YYP)

- Non-profit that provides access to yoga and mindfulness programming for K-12 students



Mindfulness  
Curriculum



YYP Certified  
Mindful School



Yoga for  
Students



Professional  
Development  
for Educators

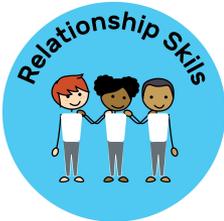
# Mindfulness Curriculum develops teaches Social-Emotional Learning competence

August-October

November-January

February-April

May



# Definitions

## **Definition of Yoga:**

Yoga is a set of practices that include **postures** or movement, **breathwork**, focused attention, and deep **relaxation**.

## **Definition of Mindfulness:**

Paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, *nonjudgmentally*.

# Why Yoga?

- SIMPLE:** Simple breathing, relaxation and mindful movement exercises teach students to use their body and breath to calm and focus their mind and emotions (move from their feeling brain to their rational/thinking brain)
- EFFECTIVE & LASTING IMPACT:** Yoga & mindfulness practices have been proven effective at calming the mind, body and nervous system and, once learned, can be used throughout the lifetime.
- COST EFFECTIVE:** After the initial investment in training and supplies to equip students & teachers with yoga tools, they can utilize these strategies at no-cost to themselves or others for their lifetime.

# BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

## COGNITIVE

Increases focus, attention, concentration, comprehension, and memory

Increases responsiveness to student needs

Enhances executive functions

Stimulates auditory processing & responsiveness

Expands imagination and creativity

## EMOTIONAL

Improves ability to manage stress

Strengthens resilience

Improves confidence & self-esteem

Reduces anger & sadness

Lowers cortisol concentrations

Decreases levels of anxiety & tension

Reduces impulsivity & reactivity

Increases ability to regulate emotions & behavior

## Physical

Increases flexibility, strength & well-being

Improves self-awareness

Encourages motor development

Increases balance & coordination

Strengthens immune system functioning

Increases ability to relax & sleep well

## SOCIAL

Improves respect for self & others

Increases sense of community & connectedness within the classroom

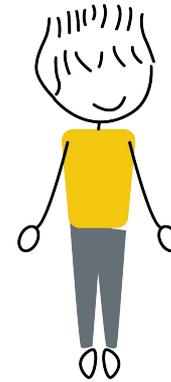
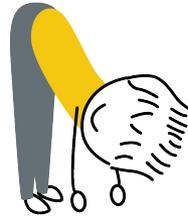
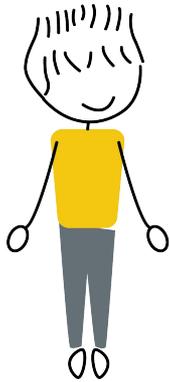
Supports healthy relationships at work and home.

# Breathing Practice

## Belly Breaths:

1. Tilt your chin down slightly and allow your eyes to close. If you prefer to keep them open, find a spot on the floor to look at about three feet in front of you and rest your gaze there.
2. Now, bring both hands to your belly and spread your fingers wide.
3. With your hands in place, take a long full breath in through your nose and feel your chest and belly fill up with fresh oxygen as your breath in.
4. Take a long, slow exhale out your nose and feel your chest and belly release and come back down through center.
5. Repeat this several times, feeling the natural rise and fall of your body as it breathes like the rise and fall of ocean waves.
6. After 5-10 breaths, release your hands, lift your chin and gently open your eyes.

# Mindful Movement: Half Sun Sequence



# Movement Practice

## **Seated Figure Four:**

Sit up tall in your chair.

Bring your right ankle onto your left thigh just above the knee making a number 4 shape with your legs.

Notice where you feel a stretch. Stay here for 3-5 breaths and then try the other side.

# Movement Practice

## Seated Twist:

Begin seated tall in your chair.

Breathe in through your nose and reach your arms overhead.

As you breathe out twist to the right, holding the back of your chair with your right hand and placing your left hand on the outside of your right knee. Look back over your right shoulder. Hold for three breaths.

Breathe in through your nose and come back through center lifting your arms overhead.

Breathe out and twist to the left, holding the back of your chair with your left hand and placing your right hand on the outside of your left knee. Look back over your left shoulder. Hold for three breaths.

Repeat several times warming up the spine and torso as you move.

# Tree Pose



# Relaxation Practice

## **Flying Guided Meditation**

# Reflection

How do you feel?

Which practice was most successful for you? Why?

When could you use these in your real life?

# Implementation Ideas

## **TIER 1:**

- Classroom Guidance unit on yoga & mindfulness practices for self-regulation.
- Start all classroom guidance lessons with “mindful minute” or “time in”
- Start a PLC at your school to help the classroom teachers learn yoga & mindfulness for self-care.
- Offer a professional development workshop for teachers and/or parents to learn how to help their students self-regulate using yoga & mindfulness.
- Start a library of yoga & mindfulness books.
- Include information about yoga & mindfulness practices in counseling newsletter.

# Implementation Ideas

## **TIER 2:**

- Start a small counseling group for students repeatedly referred for behavior consequences and teach them self-regulation techniques using yoga & mindfulness.
- Have mindfulness & yoga tools readily available in your office and make them a regular part of your counseling practice (mind jars, yoga mats with yoga cards, etc.)

# Implementation Ideas

## **TIER 3:**

- Work with your In-School Suspension teacher or detention teacher to teach yoga & mindfulness within those spaces.
- Explore opportunities with your administration to make discipline consequences more restorative (using restorative justice, incorporating mindfulness, etc.)

# Q&A

