



The Benefits of Yoga and Meditation Instruction in Schools

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Educators and researchers have recommended incorporating yoga and meditation into school curricula for the last 40 years. Since then, numerous research studies have documented the usefulness of yoga and meditation as part of the school experience. Almost all of these studies examined “stand alone” yoga and meditation programs, because very few schools integrate these practices into the curriculum. Childhood and adolescence are times of great stress and transition, but yoga and meditation practice can help students through these exciting periods of development.

Test Anxiety

An early study indicated that after 18 weeks of meditation there were significant improvements in test anxiety (Linden, 1973). A recent pilot study found that meditation was a feasible and acceptable intervention for anxious children (Semple, Reid, & Miller, 2005).

Increasing Attention

Peck and colleagues studied the effects of yoga on attention. After 3 weeks, students’ time on task increased to an average of more than 80% (Peck, Kehle, Bray, & Theodore, 2005). Meditation and relaxation were found to reduce the nonattending behaviors of behaviorally disturbed children relative to control children who practiced relaxation only during a 5-day intervention (Redfering & Bowman, 1981).

Cognitive Performance

Several studies have found improved cognitive performance in schools that include regular meditation as part of the school day, as compared to schools that do not (Warner, 2005).

Body Satisfaction

Meditation has also been shown to improve body satisfaction in children with low body satisfaction and poor physical coordination (Clance, Mitchell, & Engelman, 1980).

Physiological Indicators of Stress

After 6 months, girls in a yoga group showed a decrease in breath rate and a more regular breathing pattern relative to controls (Telles, Narendran, Raghuraj, Nagarathna, & Nagendra, 1997). Research has shown that teaching yoga and meditation is good for teachers, too! Meditation has been shown to reduce teacher stress and burnout (Anderson, Levinson, Barker, & Kiewra, 1999; Winzelberg & Luskin, 1999).

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