

Raising Little Yogis: 4 Reasons Yoga Benefits Kids

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Maybe you can't survive without your Thursday evening yoga class. It calms you down, it gets your heart rate going, it stretches out tight muscles, and it makes you feel like you just gained about 3 inches in height and in self-esteem. So if yoga does this for you, think about what it might do for your child who has to deal with his or her own set of stresses?

In typical yoga for kids classes, the same postures that you breathe and sweat through, are taught to your little ones, but in a more creative, playful and fun manner. Here are three reasons why having your child learn how to [do] down-dog is so important to their health and yours.



Enhanced flexibility: Keeping kids flexible is so important, especially since their day-to-day lives seem to become more stressful and sedentary as they clock hours at school and in front of the computer. Stiff muscles can lead to injuries later on, particularly in the lower back since hips and hamstrings tug on the lower back to compensate for their immobility. Kids tend to be a lot more limber and daring than most of adults. So balancing on one foot and being able to twist their bodies into some pretzel-like positions comes much easier to them than to us. But we used to be that limber!

Years of walking, sitting on chairs, engaging in Western exercise like running and cycling or years of not exercising at all, has stiffened us up. Take a quick jaunt back down on memory lane and remember how you could swing from limb to limb on a tree, legs and arms outstretched. Or remember how you could sit in a cross-legged position for hours as you colored for [hours] in your coloring book? For adults, even though that kind of flexibility may no longer seem like it's available to you, it is. But just as it took your hips and hamstrings decades to get to the stiff-place they are in now, it will similarly take you some time to soften those taut muscles and joints and get them moving again like when you were a kid.

Greater focus and attention: I've often wondered what would happen if we took a group of rambunctious kids and had them go through a 20-minute [yoga class](#) filled with closed-eye breathing and gentle postures. Could continuous and thorough yoga classes be a replacement or a therapeutic compliment to many of the pharmaceuticals being dispensed to children all in an effort to quiet them down? I don't know but a test experiment might [be] worth trying. It can't hurt.

Fosters self-esteem and body awareness in a non-competitive way: By drawing awareness on how their young bodies feel and the power and strength in their muscles, kids yoga improves self-esteem and helps children connect how what they do to their body affects how they feel.

This same kind of awareness can spill over from the yoga mat into the kitchen: Kids can learn to make better food choices by realizing how what they put into their mouths affects how they feel. With [childhood obesity](#) and diabetes rates at record levels, having children become aware of what they are eating, why they are eating and how much they are eating is indispensable



knowledge that can keep them feeling and staying healthy for years to come.

Creates a connection to Mother Nature: Today, so many children are so removed from nature and its surroundings. Whether they live in an urban area or whether their activity schedule leaves them little time to play outdoors, many of the children today don't feel a connection to nature. When yoga postures were devised thousands of years ago, the Indian sages developed postures by mimicking the animals and plants that they lived in tandem with. Postures like tree pose, lion's

pose, cobra pose and turtle pose all get their names and appearance from the creatures in nature. This provides a powerful connection to nature for children who don't enjoy such access to the natural world.

If you're curious about yoga for kids classes, inquire with your local yoga centers and look for a teacher who either has a certification from a yoga for kids training program like [YogaKids](#). There are also tons of DVDs for kids yoga. To make it more fun, do the DVD with them or invite some of your childrens' friends over for a yoga party.

Have fun!

The original article can be found at:

<http://stanford.wellsphere.com/weight-loss-article/raising-little-yogis-4-reasons-yoga-benefits-kids/27405>