

# I AM YOGA

## Using Yoga & Mindfulness Interventions to Foster Social-Emotional Learning in Toddlers & Preschoolers

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2019 Lyla M. Spelbring Endowed Lectureship & Conference

# Learning Objectives

## **Attendees will understand:**

- × The rationale for using a mental health promotion & prevention framework with young children
- × The evidence for using yoga & mindfulness interventions with young children

## **Participants will experience:**

- × Yoga & mindfulness interventions used with young children
- × The adaptation of yoga & mindfulness interventions for individuals and groups of varying ages


## **Participants will begin to build:**

- × Efficacy for using a mental health promotion & prevention framework within their own practice
- × Resources for providing yoga & mindfulness interventions



I Am Yoga (Book by Susan Verde, Song by Emily Arrow)





*Why promote positive  
mental health for  
young children?*



# 15,000,000

children & youth meet the diagnostic criteria for a  
mental health condition



# Public Health Approach to Mental Health

## Tier 3

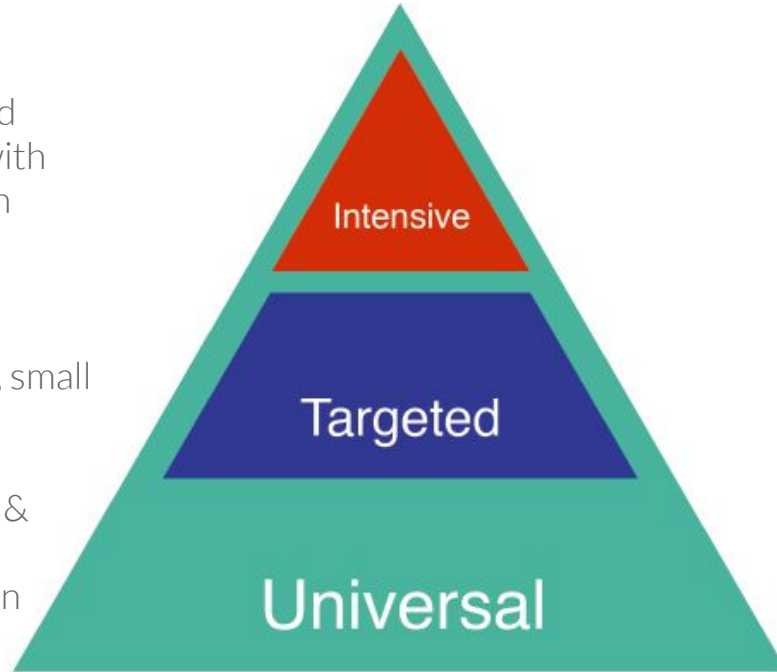
- Intensive, individualized supports for children with identified mental health challenges


## Tier 2

- For children at risk
- Promotion, prevention, small group interventions

## Tier 1

- School-wide strategies & programs
- Promotion & prevention
- For ALL children





*Why use yoga &  
mindfulness to  
address the mental  
health needs of young  
children?*

# Promoting Positive Mental Health

## First Pillar

### Importance of Positive Emotion & Enjoyable Experiences

- Joy, contentment, pleasure, optimism, happiness
- Positive emotions experienced during an activity promotes further participation, exploration, and mastery
- **Reflection:** What activities bring about positive emotions in children and youth you interact with?
- **Suggestion:** Help children explore a range of activities and identify those that add meaning and joy to their lives

## Second Pillar

### Personal Strengths and Core Virtues

- Humor, love spirituality, kindness, artistic talent, curiosity, persistence
- Building and using one's personal strengths fosters deep emotional satisfaction
- **Reflection:** What personal strengths are unique to each child you work with?
- **Suggestion:** Help all children identify their unique signature strengths and engage in activities that support and cultivate their expression (e.g. artistic talent, volunteer work)

## Third Pillar

### Positive Institutions

- Environmental factors such as families, caring adults, and programs that foster character strengths and positive emotions
- **Reflection:** Do the settings where children learn, socialize and play foster positive emotion and personal strengths?
- **Suggestion:** Consult with teachers, administrators, and youth workers to create and/or adapt activities and the environment to promote positive experiences



# strong evidence

supports using yoga to improve children's mental health  
and social participation

# moderate evidence

supports using yoga to improve children's self-regulation

# emerging evidence

supports using mindfulness to improve self-regulation  
and executive functioning



# *Yoga Groups at the Children's Institute*



# Group Session Outline

Session Focus/Goal: Emotion regulation, self-regulation

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Warm Up/Transition Activity         | <i>I Am Yoga</i> song by Emily Arrow                             |
| Review Yoga Ground Rules            | Be kind to yourself<br>Be respectful of others and of our things |
| Calm: Breaths, Mindfulness Exercise | Balloon Breathes<br>Volcano Breathes                             |
| Active: Yoga Flow                   | Cat<br>Cow<br>Downward Dog                                       |
| Active: Yoga Play/Game/Song         | Freeze Yoga  |
| Calm: Social-emotional Activity     | <i>My Magic Breath</i> - Book                                    |
| Calm: Closing Activity              | I am strong, kind, brave, friendly, wise mantra                  |



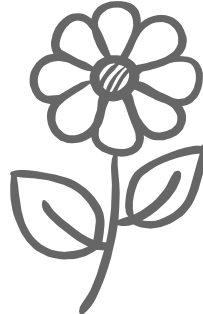
# Calm: Breathing & Mindfulness

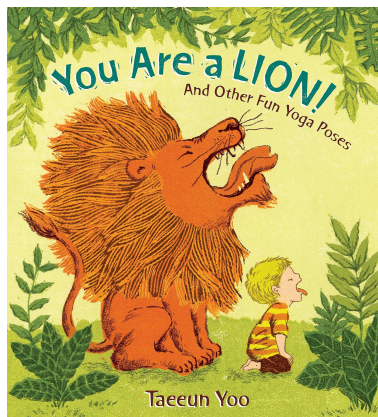
## BREATHING EXERCISES

- × Belly Breathing
  - × Hoberman Sphere
  - × On backs
- × Balloon Breaths
- × Volcano Breaths
- × Bunny Breaths
  - × Puppets!!!
- × Lion Breaths
- × Bee Breaths

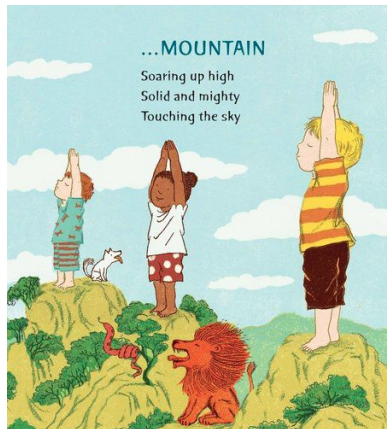
## MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

- × Kira Willey Mindful Moments for Kids on YouTube
- × Flower Breath





# Active: Yoga Flow



# NOCTURNAL ANIMAL YOGA



1. Pretend to be a bat.

2. Pretend to be a toad.



3. Pretend to be a fox.

4. Pretend to be a coyote.



5. Pretend to be an owl.



KIDS YOGA  
STORIES

# PIRATE YOGA

\*5 easy yoga poses for kids\*

1. Pretend to be steering the ship.



2. Pretend to be a plank.



3. Pretend to be a mermaid.



4. Pretend to be a pirate ship.



5. Pretend to be a treasure chest.



KIDS YOGA  
STORIES

# FEELINGS YOGA

1. Pretend to be a grateful giraffe.



2. Pretend to be a finicky flamingo.



3. Pretend to be a caring koala.



4. Pretend to be an excited elephant.



5. Pretend to be a frustrated frog.

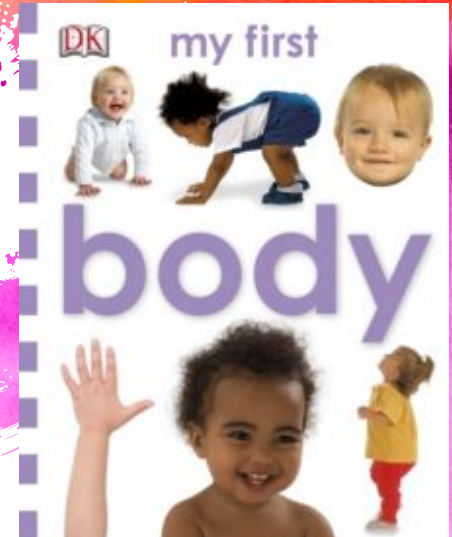


KIDS YOGA  
STORIES



# Body Awareness

- My First Body Book
- Felt Body Puzzle
- Simon Says Activity



# Active: Yoga Games

## GAME EXAMPLES

- × Simon Says
- × Animal Game
- × Scavenger Hunt
- × Musical Yoga
- × Freeze Yoga
- × Obstacle Course
- × Yoga Grab Bag
- × Wind in the Trees

## AREAS OF FOCUS

- × Self-regulation
- × Following directions
- × Start-stop
- × Personal space
- × Yoga pose recall
- × Turn-taking

# Social-Emotional Activities

## BOOKS

- × My Magic Breath
- × I Am Yoga
- × I Am Peace
- × My Mouth is a Volcano
- × I Was So Mad
- × Bernice Gets Carried Away
- × How Dinosaurs Stay Friends
- × Rachel's Day in the Garden
- × The Way I Feel
- × Hands are not for Hitting

## COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

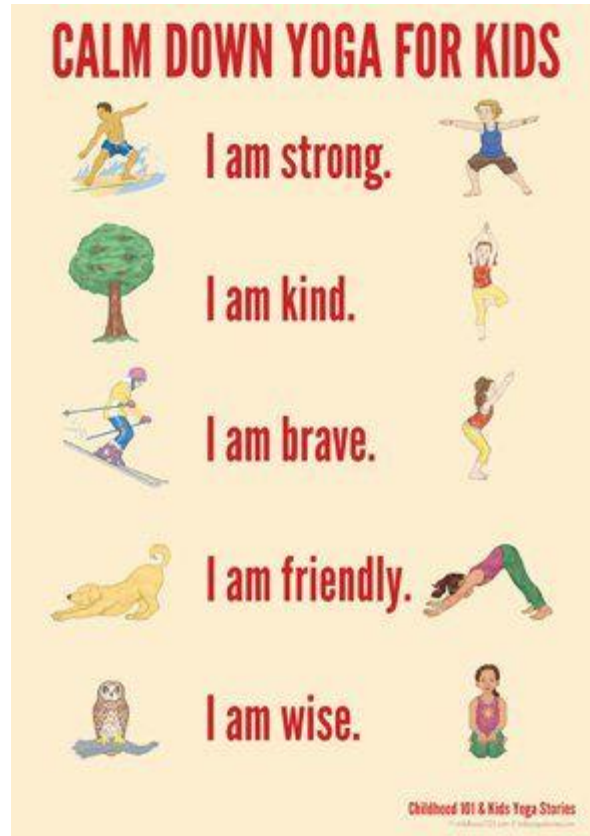
- × Parachute
- × Passing Objects (like Hot Potato)
- × Have children take turns leading poses
- × Simon Says
  - × Upgrade by having children as leaders
- × Partner Poses
- × Yarn Ball Activity



# Anecdotal Outcomes

- × Gives common language
- × Prompting problem solving became easier - using language from yoga interventions
- × Improved self-regulation
- × Being able to name emotions and convey that to adult
- × Kids looked forward to it
- × Kids went home and told parents, families did yoga together
- × Improved personal space, able to stay in personal space
- × Teachers' perceptions of student capacity
- × Increased participation for kids who otherwise didn't participate in group activities

# Closing Activity



An abstract background featuring a large, textured splash of purple and red watercolor paint. The splash is centered and has a rough, irregular edge with many small droplets and splatters extending outwards. The colors transition from a deep purple in the center to a lighter, more reddish-purple towards the edges.

# Questions?