

# Yoga for Kids

Helping kids deal with everyday pressures.

by Cara Southwood

Lakeridge Kids  
Sept. 2008

Our children live in a fast-paced world with busy parents, school pressures, incessant lessons, video games, malls, and competitive sports. We usually don't think of these influences as stressful for our kids, but often they are. The bustling pace of our children's lives can have a profound effect on their innate joy – and usually not for the better.

It is very alarming how many children are suffering from psychosomatic disorders, such as sleeping disturbances, eating disturbances, headaches, poor posture and stress related to this pressure. Yoga greatly helps kids to cope with day-to-day pressures by bringing the body, mind and spirit into balance.

When children learn techniques for self-health, relaxation, and inner fulfillment, they can navigate life's challenges with a little more ease. Yoga at an early age encourages self-esteem and body awareness and fosters cooperation and compassion.

## No pressure

Yoga for children combines stretching exercises and posture (in the form of fun movement and games) with correct breathing. It helps the child be more alert, flexible (in mind and body), stronger, healthier and more confident. Other benefits of yoga include:

- aerobic conditioning
- isometric and isotonic muscle strengthening
- relaxation,
- breath control, and
- better focus.

A children's yoga class allows a child to engage in physical activity in a non-competitive environment. The pressure is off! The children can journey inward and begin to connect with who they



are and accept and even rejoice in their own individuality. They are respected for their differences, and can be creative and move in a way that resonates with their own body. Yoga gives our children a way to relax and just be with themselves.

## Fun postures

Children are always open minded and energized about learning new things. That's especially true with yoga. They often want to learn more about the philosophy and try new poses. They like to journey with their bodies and minds to weird,

wonderful places. Through the postures of yoga, for instance, children can become different animals, and experience the natural world around them.

Yoga boosts camaraderie. Kids often encourage each other with friendly words and gestures. They cooperate with each other to create postures and shapes with their bodies. And most importantly, they have fun.

## Everyone equal

Yoga class also gives pre-teens and teens a place to feel welcome and accepted no matter what they weigh, their ethnicity or religion, or who their friends are. Everyone is equal in a yoga class.

And all of the skills learned upon the yoga mat can be applied outside of the yoga studio. For instance, teens can use the breathing techniques learned in yoga to relax and calm down in a stressful situation.

The practice of yoga can help soften the rough edges of childhood.

*Cara Southwood is a pre and post-natal teacher, children's yoga teacher and Reiki practitioner at Balanced Life Yoga. [www.balancedlifeyoga.ca](http://www.balancedlifeyoga.ca), 905 428-2300.*