

Giving Children Balance Through Yoga

Written by Shelley Lowther
Monday, 21 June 2010 07:13



You feed your kids a balanced diet, but do you teach them balance in other aspects of their lives? Have you considered yoga as a way to achieve this?

I wish that I had known about yoga when I was a child. I vaguely remember a very intense moment in first or second grade when I stabbed my math book with a pencil because I did not know how to channel my frustration. I wish that I'd known then what I know now. Many studies show that yoga not only helps kids with the obvious things like balance, coordination and body awareness, but it also helps kids deal with challenges, frustration and stress. When children learn relaxation techniques, such as Savasana, they are able to find an outlet for their stress, rather than turning it inward, often causing children to be withdrawn or depressed, or outward, sometimes seen in schoolyard fights and bullying.

As adults we often overlook the stress that children are under. What could kids possibly have to be stressed about?? You might be surprised. In today's world, kids are faced with a constant onslaught of (over)stimulation. Also, they are taught to compete and strive for excellence, which adds stress to their young lives. And while achievement is important, it is essential that children know how to relax. Enter yoga.

When kids learn yoga, thus breath and some meditation, at an early age, they are able to handle negative stress and excess energy in a positive and healthy manner. Many active kids crave movement, and yoga can help channel that energy in a positive direction.

Kids yoga classes include what we think of as traditional yoga, poses and breath, as well as stories, songs and games that not only teach relaxation, but also touch on other important skills. The very essence of yoga incorporates respect for oneself, others and the natural world, and kids learn these skills through song and games.

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Using three-part breath when the computer crashes, or practicing a tree pose when a younger sibling is driving them crazy are examples of tools children can acquire through yoga. They are remarkably effective, and can be taken anywhere, even into adulthood.

Would Child's Pose or Savasana have prevented my seven-year-old self from shoving a pencil all the way through a math book? As I take a deep breath.... I'd like to think so.