

YOGA GUIDE FOR GILLIAN



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WHY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS USE YOGA

Social Skills

- Yoga is a non-competitive exercise, which is important when working with children who struggle with motor skills. Yoga simply asks for you to do your best. There are also many partner yoga poses that children can do together, encouraging socialization and fostering partnership.

Attention

- Studies show that doing yoga can increase a child's ability to focus and reduce hyperactivity and other maladaptive behaviors.

Gross Motor Skills

- Yoga works on balance, coordination, strength, motor planning and so much more. It increases core strength and postural control, which children need in order to sit up straight in their chairs.

Fine Motor Skills

- Many yoga poses encourage weight bearing into the hands. This helps to strengthen the muscles of arms, forearms, and hands.

(Koenig, Buckley-Reen, & Garg, 2012)

MOUNTAIN POSE

This pose is the foundation for all of the standing postures and improves posture, groundedness, stability and confidence (Yoga Basics, 2018).

Encourage her to engage core and relax shoulders



Have her place palms up

Have her to firmly plant feet on the floor

To begin the yoga routine, start with this pose, breathe and hold for 4-6 breaths (inhaling, holding, and exhaling for 3 counts each).

Modification: Bring hands to heart center pressing through the palms.

TREE POSE

This pose increases balance, focus, memory and concentration. It also strengthens the ankles and knees (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Help place sole of foot on either side of knee joint

Encourage her to press foot firmly on the floor

Flow from Mountain Pose into Tree Pose. Breath and hold for 4-6 breaths. Release. Repeat on other side. Release back into Mountain Pose.

Modifications: A) Bring the arms out to the sides for more stability. B) Practice next to a wall, placing a hand on the wall for support. C) Place foot higher or lower as needed but not directly on joints.

CRESCENT MOON POSE

This pose deeply stretches and opens the sides of the body and improves core body strength, balance and concentration. It strengthens the ankles and knees, improves circulation and energizes the entire body. (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Have her
raise arms
above head

Encourage a
gentle bend to
each side of body

Flow from Mountain Pose into Crescent Moon Pose. Breathe and hold for 2-6 breaths. Release. Repeat on other side. Release to Mountain Pose.

Modification: Have feet wider apart.

WARRIOR I POSE

This pose strengthens the legs, opens the hips and chest and stretches the arms and legs. Warrior I develops concentration, balance and groundedness. This pose improves circulation and respiration and energizes the entire body (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Provide stability to core as needed

Encourage knee bend of front leg

From Mountain Pose flow into the Warrior I Pose. Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths. Release. Repeat on other side. Release arms but keep legs in place.

Modification: Keep the hands on the knees or the hips.

TRIANGLE POSE

This pose engages every part of the body, strengthens the core, opens the hips and shoulders. It also stretches the legs (Yoga Basics, 2018).

Help position her and have her reach toward ceiling

Encourage her to look upwards to hand



Encourage her to keep her back leg straight

Flow from the Warrior I Pose into the Triangle Pose. Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths. Release. Repeat on opposite side. Release to Mountain Pose.

Modification: Use a yoga block on the floor to support the lower hand.

CHAIR POSE

This pose strongly strengthens the lower body while stretching the upper back. This posture invigorates and energizes the whole body (Yoga Basics, 2018).

Encourage her to bend her knees like she is sitting in a chair



From Mountain Pose flow into the Chair Pose. Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths. Release.

Modifications: A) To make this pose less challenging, place the hands on the knees. B) To make this pose more challenging, reach the arms toward the ceiling and gaze up.

RAG DOLL POSE

This pose lengthens the spinal column and stretches the backs of the legs and the back muscles. This posture stimulates digestive, nervous and endocrine systems (Yoga Basics, 2018).



*Encourage her
to straighten
legs*

Flow from Mountain Pose into the Rag Doll Pose. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. Release arms, placing palms on the ground.

Modifications: A) Hold on to the backs of the ankles, B) Clasp the elbows behind the legs, C) Place hands on yoga blocks.

DOWNWARD DOG POSE

This pose deeply stretches the back, opens the chest, and builds upper body strength. This posture stimulates the brain and nervous system, improving memory, concentration, hearing and eyesight (Yoga Basics, 2018).

Encourage her to press her hands and feet into the mat



From Rag Doll Pose flow into Downward Dog Pose. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. Release onto hands and knees.

Modifications: A) Use blocks under the hands or head. B) Place a folded towel under the wrists. C) "Walk the Dog" for a deeper hamstring stretch.

CAT POSE

This pose stretches the middle to upper back and shoulders. It also strengthens the upper arms, forearms, and hands (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Flow into cat pose. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. Release.

Modifications: A) Place a folded blanket under the knees to protect them B) Flow between Cat Pose and Cow Pose, inhaling into Cat and exhaling into Cow.

COW POSE

This pose stretches the middle to low back and hips and lengthens the spine. It also strengthens the upper arms, forearms, and hands (Yoga Basics, 2018).

Encourage her to gaze upward

Have her lower tummy



Flow into the Cow Pose. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. Release.

Modifications: A) Place a folded blanket under the knees to protect them. B) Flow between Cat Pose and Cow Pose, inhaling into Cat and exhaling into Cow.

COBRA POSE

This pose opens the chest and strengthens the core, arms, forearms, and hands. It also aligns the spine and invigorates the kidneys and nervous system (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Encourage her to push through her hands

Have the tops of her feet on the ground

Flow into the Cobra Pose. Breathe and hold for 2-6 breaths. Release back onto hands and knees (Table Top Pose).

Modifications: To reduce strain in the low back: A) Increase the bend in the elbows, B) Walk the hands further forward, C) Lower onto forearms and elbows.

CHILD POSE

This pose calms the body, mind and spirit. It gently stretches the low back, massages and tones the abdominal organs, and stimulates the digestion system (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Encourage her to sit back onto her heels

Flow into the Child Pose from the Table Top Pose. Breathe and hold for 4-12 breaths. Release by placing the palms under the shoulders and slowly inhale up to a seated position.

Modifications: A) Place arms by sides to give shoulders a rest. B) Place one arm under for a good shoulder stretch. C) Place a pillow under hips to provide support

BUTTERFLY POSE

This pose stretches the inner thighs, groins and knees, improving flexibility in the groin and hip region. It helps in intestine and bowel movement (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Encourage her to bring outer knees down

Flow into the Butterfly Pose from a seated position. Breathe and hold for 4-6 breaths. Release.

Modifications: A) If hips are tight, sit on a pillow or bolster to reduce the tension and stress on your hips, knees, and back. B) Sit up against a wall to provide extra support. C) For a deeper stretch, bend at the hips and place palms or even forearms onto the floor.

HALF LORD POSE

This pose opens, lengthens, nourishes and realigns the spine. This pose stimulates the nervous and digestive systems (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Encourage a gentle twist of the spine

Have her hook elbow on knee to increase twist

Flow into the Half Lord Pose from a seated position. Breathe and hold for 4-7 breaths. Release.

Modification: Place a yoga block under the hand behind your back.

HAPPY BABY POSE

This pose releases the low back, lengthens and realigns the spine, strengthens the legs, and opens the hips (Yoga Basics, 2018).

Encourage her to grasp feet and gently rock back and forth



Flow into the Happy Baby Pose. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. Release by exhaling and lowering the arms and legs onto the floor.

CORPSE POSE

This pose is essential to practice at the end of every yoga practice. This posture rejuvenates the body, mind and spirit while reducing stress and tension (Yoga Basics, 2018).



Encourage her to relax and breathe

Flow into this last pose. Stay in this pose for 5 to 15 minutes. Release by slowly deepening the breath and wiggling the fingers and toes. Then reach the arms over your head and stretch the whole body. Exhale and bend the knees into the chest and roll over to one side. When you are ready, slowly inhale up to a seated position. "Namaste. "

Modification: Place a bolster or blankets under the low back and/or knees.

BREATHING BREAKS FOR GILLIAN

Deep controlled breathing can increase focus and attention. It also improves pro-social behaviour, enhances daily happiness, and increases levels of calm while decreasing stress and anxiety.

From a neurological or physiological perspective, deep controlled breathing slows the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and sharpens the mind's ability to focus and learn by supporting the higher brain function taking place in the frontal lobes.

Despite all the amazing benefits, telling a child to just breath probably isn't the best idea. So why not make it more fun for them and even for you.

ROAR LIKE A LION

This is a great breathing technique that Gillian will be sure to love. Encourage Gillian to sit or stand and take a deep breath in for a least 3 counts. Hold the breath for 3 more counts. Then exhale for 3 counts by roaring like a lion. This is a great technique to use whenever Gillian is mad, upset, or simply needing to calm down.

BUZZ LIKE A BEE

This is also a great breathing technique. Again, encourage Gillian to sit or stand and take a deep breath in for a least 3 counts. Hold the breath for 3 more counts. Then exhale for 3 counts by buzzing or humming like a bee. This is a great technique to use to calm and soothe anxiety for Gillian.

These are only two of the many types of animal breathing breaks. There are so many more out there and can be so beneficial for Gillian. Practice these techniques on a regular basis or whenever it fits the situation.

REFERENCES

- Koenig, K., Buckley-Reen, A., Garg, S. (2012). Efficacy of the Get Ready to Learn Yoga Program Among Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Pretest Posttest Control Group Design. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 66(5):538-546. doi: 10.5014/ajot.2012.004390.
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