



Centering On Me

**A Stretching, Controlled
Breathing and Meditation
Curriculum for Kids**





Lesson 1: The Importance of Stretching

Objective:

This lesson will introduce stretching and allow for the children to become familiar with muscles in the body that need to be stretched regularly.

At the end of this lesson participants will be able to answer the following questions:

- When should children stretch?
- What are three muscles that should be stretched every day?
- What are the benefits of stretching every day?

Key Teaching Points:

- Stretching is an important part of daily activity and physical activity
- The large muscle groups in the body and how to stretch them
- Stretching decreases the chances of getting hurt when we play and can help relieve stress

Lesson preparation and Suggestions:

- Read over some information about stretching
- Watch out for the children not stretching properly – review good stretching and bad stretching

Materials Needed:

- A Chart
- Markers
- Paper roll / Body outline handouts/ sidewalk chalk

Lesson 1

The Importance of Stretching

Stretching – Does it Count as Physical Activity?

Exercise is defined as: the moving of our muscles in various ways to keep fit.

?? What are some activities that you think about when you think about exercise?

- *Let the kids name activities and write them down on a flip chart or chalkboard/whiteboard*

Physical activity is defined as **any** movement of the body that can lead to better fitness and more energy.

?? How many of you do some sort of exercise or physical activity everyday?

?? What are some of the good things that we get from exercise and physical activity?

- *Let them list and write down- i.e. feel better, have fun, play with friends etc.*

Being physically active also helps our bodies. Our bodies get many good things from being active such as:



Stronger bones

Bones are the individual structures that make up the skeleton, which supports the muscles, organs, and other tissues of the body.



Stronger muscles

Muscles are the tissues of the body that, when contracted, produce movement. They are made of long cells and are attached to bones with tendons.

3 Parts of Being Fit

There are three things that we have we are physically fit people –

- 1) Greater endurance
- 2) Greater strength
- 3) Flexibility

Endurance is when can move for long periods of time.

?? Can you name any examples of times when you need endurance?

- *Some examples you may offer: if you were “it” playing tag and you had to chase everyone down, taking a long walk, going to a long swim*

Strength is being able to lift things and move things around that may be heavier than we are used to carrying.

?? How many of you have helped mom or dad move something that was heavy before?

?? What are some other times when we use our strength?

Flexibility is being able to bend down to tie your shoes.

?? How many of you can touch your toes now?

- *Allow children to try and touch their toes*

Many of us get our physical activity while we are out at recess or playing in our backyards.

?? What kind of activities did you all do today?

- *Write activities onto Chart/ whiteboard/chalkboard*

Wow! You all did a lot of activities today – let’s decide which activities belong to which category: endurance, strength or flexibility.

- *If possible connect back to activities that are listed on chalkboard/whiteboard and determine whether they were endurance, strength or flexibility.*
- *Add up all of the activities for each category (endurance, strength, and flexibility) and discuss which are more popular and why.*

We often do not do enough activities that help us in our flexibility. Stretching can help us reach our toes to tie our shoes, which is important, but it can also help us from getting hurt when we are playing games and doing other physical activities. Stretching is important because we do not want to get hurt. By stretching you will prevent injury when you are doing activities such as running and jumping.



Safety First

A. Always think about the following when we are doing physical activities:

- We want to have fun and be safe, so we must always listen.
- Our little bodies can only stretch so far – we do not want to hurt ourselves – so it is important to listen to our own bodies as well.

- Increasing physical activities, including stretching, should happen over time. You should not try to do too much at first. Its ok if you cannot stretch as far as you think you can.
- Wear proper clothes when you are exercising and have the proper equipment when needed. Do you play soccer with football pads on?

Stretching Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Stretch after a warm up.
- Perform them slowly to avoid injury.
- Listen to your body and don't try to overextend yourself - stretching is not supposed to hurt.
- Practice holding your stretches for 10 seconds, holding for more than 30 seconds does not give you extra benefits.
- Breathe through the stretches.
- Remember that it takes time to become more flexible.

Don't

- Bounce through your stretches, you should be slow and steady.
- Overstretch repeatedly and for long periods of time , you can actually pull or strain your muscles and cause yourself an injury.
- Hold your legs or arms stiff while trying to stretch around them, your knees and elbows can be a little bent
- Stretch before a warm up when your muscles are cold.
- Skip the stretching before a run or other intense physical activity.

Stretches

Let's do some stretches now. We are going to start with the tops of our heads and stretch all the way down the body.

First we warm up – walk in place or around the room for 3- 5 minutes (also can do step touch and arm movements, want to get the body temperature up and the blood flowing before you stretch). You must warm up to prevent injuries while stretching, DO NOT go straight into stretching.

Start by stretching the head and neck

- *Why is this important?* This help keep range of motion of your neck – turning to look at action, ball movement, or opposing player movements – things you would have to do when playing a game.
- If you would like to close your eyes you may do so, or you could choose to look down to the floor.
- Slowly, tilt the head right and hold for 20 seconds. Then slowly bring your head back to neutral position – Repeat on the left side. Do this 3 times - right and left.
- Slowly nod your head yes 10 times.
- Slowly nod your head no 10 times.

Shoulder rolls

- *Why is this important?* Many sports and activities require the arms to swing or sway. It also loosens up the arm socket and prepares for the next stretch.
- 6 rolls counter clockwise (up, back and down)
- 6 rolls clockwise (up, front and back)

Across the body arm stretch and triceps stretch

- *Why is this important?* Again, loosening up the arm sockets is important for throwing and catching.
- Right arm lifts and moves across the front of the body – use the left arm to pull the right a little closer to the body (hold 15 seconds)
- Bring right arm, up and over the back of the head (like you are going to pat yourself on the back) (15 seconds)
- For a deeper stretch you can hold your elbow
- The left arm (15 seconds each pose) repeats the same movements

Shoulder lifts

- May substitute shoulder rolls again
- Lift shoulders high as possible and hold 10 seconds, and let them drop down
- Repeat 5 – 8 times

Side stretch

- *Why is this important?* After sitting at a desk all day, this should feel good! This uses a range of motion that children do not always get during the school day.
- Reaching down the right side of the body – feel like you right hand is reaching for the floor – hold 10 seconds
- Take a deep breath in and reach a little further down (hold 10 seconds)
- Repeat to the left side

Bending down to touch toes

- *Why is this important?* This will stretch out the back and help with good posture.
- Take 10 counts to roll down
- Hold for 10 counts
- Take 10 counts to roll up
- Repeat 3 times

Back stretch

- *Why is this important?* This is another stretch that is good for the back and important for posture.
- Clasp hands in front and push hands forward while standing still, round out your shoulders (reach 3 times for 5 seconds each)
- Clasp hand behind or reach as far behind you as possible and reach back pulling your shoulder blades together (reach 3 times for 5 seconds each)

Quad(ricep) stretch

- *Why is this important?* This is good for the legs which hold our weight every day.
- Hold onto table or wall as needed
- Bend the right knees and hold onto foot or ankle (hold 20 seconds)
- Repeat to the left side

Calf raises

- *Why is this important?* We use our calf muscles to go up steps and reach high for things. This stretches them out.
- Raise hands out to your sides for better balance
- Feet should be together
- Lifting up on to your toes (10 times)

Hamstring stretch

- *Why is this important?* We cannot forget the backs of our legs. This stretch works the muscles that are mainly used when we bend down to pick something up.
- Start by standing with both feet together
- Extend right foot out and flex the foot
- Reach the right hand over the right foot
- Bend the left knee and get a deeper stretch
- Hold 20 seconds
- Stretch flexed foot towards the ground

- Peel toes back up to flexed position
- Repeat on the other side

Ankle rolls

- *Why is this important?* Our ankle joints hold up our body all day long. They are one of the most important joints for our balance.
- Bring right heel up off of the ground
- Make small circles clockwise (10 counts)
- Reverse and make small circles counter clockwise (10 counts)
- Set down right heel and lift up the left

Good morning stretch

- *Why is this important?* After you have done all of the other stretches, this stretches your whole body together!
- Reach right arm up and left arm out to side
- Reaching for 5 seconds and switch arm positions

My Stretching Body Project

This project allows the children a chance to learn about where the muscles are that they have just stretched. If there is time, allow children to show their “bodies” to the group and answer the discussion question below.

Option A

Let each child find a partner or assign partners as needed.

Take turns drawing the outline of each of their bodies lying down.

Once both outlines are completed:

- Each child can fill in facial features and/ or clothing as time permits.
- Label the stretches that go along with the body part on the outline.

Option B

Print off enough body outlines so that each child has their own.

- Allow time for each child to make the body his or her own.
- Label where each of the stretches go on the body.

Option C

Take the group outside and use sidewalk chalk.

Assign partners and use the pavement to trace everyone’s bodies.

- Each child can fill in facial features and/ or clothing as time permits.

- Label the stretches that go along with the body part on the outline.

Discussion question for group:

?? Which stretch felt the best and why?

References

Focus on Flexibility. Accessed on July 23rd, 2010 at

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stretching/HQ01447/METHOD=print>



Lesson 2: Breathing

Objective:

This lesson will introduce the importance of breathing and how certain breathing techniques can help relax the body.

At the end of the lesson participants will be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the benefits of breathing techniques to help one relax?
- When can you do breathing techniques?
- What are some of the situations that breathing techniques can help with?

Key Teaching Points:

- Breathing techniques can help the body relax, even when we are excited or stressed about something going on.
- You can use the breathing techniques in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons.

Lesson Preparation and Suggestions:

- Read over materials
- This class has many choices for what you would like to do – please read through and plan accordingly

Materials needed

- Relaxation CD
- CD player
- Smooth Rocks or glass Rocks (optional)
- Feathers (one per child) (optional)
- Bubbles (optional)

Lesson Two: Breathing

Background

Unfortunately, children are displaying signs of anxiety and stress at a younger age. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as many as 1 in 10 young people have some sort of an anxiety disorder. Research has shown that often these children are learning this stress and pressure from their parents. The good news is they can also learn some stress relieving techniques as well.

Breathing for Relaxation

Deep breathing is the fastest way to calm the body. Taking in deep breaths starts a relaxation response, and therefore can benefit children struggling with anxiety or other stress related disorders.

Breathing exercises can also calm children down before bed after an exciting day or take some of the stress away before a test or speaking in front of the class or group of people. By taking the time to focus on breathing the body is basically being told to calm down and let the tension out. Think of the expression "take a deep breath!"

Breathing Exercises for Children

The nice thing about breathing techniques is that they are always available and easy to do. Kids don't need permission from a teacher and no one has to know. It does not require the latest and newest technology.

It is important for children to learn how to do relaxation breathing and meditation correctly, especially if a child has a breathing condition such as asthma.

Breathing

- *If you have an Organ Annie or similar object – this may be a good opportunity to incorporate the two lessons together.*

?? Have you ever stopped to think about how many breaths you take during one minute, one hour, one day? How many do you think we take in one minute? - One hour? One day?

- *Let them guess: answers - 20 – 25 per minute / 1200-1500 per hour/ 28800 – 36000 per day.*

Breathing is something that we all do naturally and we do not have to think about it. If we had to think about breathing we would not be able to do very many other activities.

?? Where are our lungs located?

When we take a big breath of air in, our lungs fill up and expand. When we exhale, all that air leaves our lungs and they get smaller.

Breathing is also an important part of exercise and stretching.

When we have to breathe harder or faster it is usually because we are doing some sort of physical activity.

?? What types of physical activity make you breathe faster and/or heavier?

- *You can refer back to the previous lesson's list for ideas from students.*

When we breathe more, like after a run or hard physical activity, we are bringing more oxygen to the cells in our bodies. Sometimes breathing can help us stretch better or do things with more power. When we are stretching, taking a deep breath in and letting it go can actually make the stretch go a little further and a little deeper. Just like we did last week –

?? What is one stretch that we did last week?

- *Let children tell and/or demonstrate, and then the whole class does the stretch.*
- *Let as many children demonstrate as you would like or as time allows.*

Breathing also helps when we are feeling stressed or angry.

?? Can everyone imagine a time when they were angry or stressed?

?? Did you get shaky or hot?

It is normal for our bodies to feel that way once in a while. But we can also help to calm our bodies down and not feel so angry by taking deep breaths.

This is how you take a deep breath.

We are all going to practice deep breathing right now.

- Show them how the following:
- Make sure that you are standing or sitting up straight. (Did you know that the lungs can expand more and fit more air when they are up tall and straight?)
- Put your hands on your stomach and feel your belly move in and out as you breathe.
- Ask the children to join you.
- Remind them to sit or stand up straight and place their hands on their bellies.
- Talk them through: “take a deep breath in slowly filling up your lungs, and blow all of your air out slowly”

Safety first:

We are going to do some breathing exercises. If you feel funny or lightheaded then just continue with the activity but breathe as you would normally breathe.

Breathing games

There are 7 different options for games and breathing exercises. Pick two or three or as many as time allows for the children to play and experiment with their breathing.

***You will want to play calming music during these games.*

1. Flying Feather

- Keeping a feather off of the floor with your breath to show how much we can do with our breath
- For this exercise each child will need his or her own feather
- Mark a starting and finish line
- Have each student blow the feather across the room, keeping it in the air with only breath
- Do not allow the children to handle the feather

2. Stone circles for breathing

- Each child should have a stone/ rock
- Each child should be sitting in a comfortable place in a comfortable position (or they can lie down).
- Start with just counting breaths (2 counts for the inhale and 2 counts for the exhale)
- Once you feel they are breathing evenly add the thumb motion
- Circle the thumb or finger clockwise for the inhale
- Circle the thumb or finger counter clockwise for the exhale
- Suggest to students that two circles in each direction are enough
- Continue this relaxation exercise for a few minutes
- Encourage the children to take home the stones and use them whenever they feel stressed out

3. Breath Counting

- Sit in a comfortable position
- Gently close your eyes and take a few deep breaths
- Let the breath come naturally without trying to influence it (you are looking for a quiet and slow breath, but depth and rhythm may vary from child to child)

- To begin the exercise, count "one" to yourself as you exhale.
- The next time you exhale, count "two," and so on up to "five."
- Then begin a new cycle, counting "one" on the next exhalation.

Only count to "five," and count only when you exhale. Once you reach "five" on the next exhalation, return your count to "one".

4. Breathing/ Filling with Colors

- Start in a comfortable position
- Take a few even breaths
- Using imagery describe the following:
 - Picture the inside of the body as full of warm red air
 - Each person is surrounded by cooling blue air

Verbally coach the children to imagine breathing in the blue air through his or her nose and blow the red air out of his or her mouth.

5. Elevator Breathing

- Start with everyone laying comfortably on their backs
- Have them observe the natural inhalation and exhalation of their breath
- Allow at least one minute for everyone to settle down and begin the following dialog:

Your breath is an elevator taking a ride through your body.
Breathe in through your nose and start the elevator ride.
Breathe out and feel your breath go all the way to the basement, down to your toes.
Breathe in and take your elevator breath up to your belly.
Hold it. Now, breathe out all your air. (Pause)
This time, breathe in and take your elevator breath up to your chest.
Hold it. Now breathe out all your air. (Pause)
Now breathe in and take your elevator breath up to the top floor, up through your throat and into your face and forehead.
Feel your head fill with breath. Hold it.
Now breathe out and feel your elevator breath take all your troubles and worries down through your chest, your belly, your legs, and out through the elevator doors in your feet.

6. Isolate Body Parts

- Have everyone lie on the floor
- Take a few minutes to have everyone take a few deep breaths at their own pace
- Next tell everyone to tighten their toes, to scrunch them up really, really tight
- Then tell them to relax her toes, taking a deep breath as they do
- Next, have them tighten their knees and the top of her leg thigh muscle
- Then relax and take a deep breath
- Guide the children up the body, proceeding to the abdomen, arms, hands, fingers, face, etc.
- Remind them to take deep breaths with each muscle release
- Lastly, have them feel as though they are tightening up every muscle in their entire bodies and release

7. Bubbles

- This activity encourages deep breathing, allowing a child's body to relax
- Have the children find a comfortable position
- Have the children all of their worries
- Explain to them that this exercise will help to blow out those worry bubbles so they can feel more relaxed
- Using a bottle of bubbles, tell the children to think about anything that upsets them
- Imagine blowing that concern into the bubbles as they blow into the bubble wand
- Tell them to picture the worry in the bubble as it drifts away
- When it pops, explain that the worry has popped outside of him and can't bother him anymore

Discussion Questions for the group:

- Do you feel more relaxed after the games?
- Do you think it is hard to concentrate on just breathing?

References:

Deep Breathing Exercises for Kids accessed at <http://www.livestrong.com/article/105565-deep-breathing-exercises-kids/#ixzz14ipTE3gm>

Teaching Children Deep Breathing Exercises accessed at <http://posturown.com/teaching-children-deep-breathing-exercises/>

Breathing: Three Exercises accessed at <http://www.drweil.com/drw/u/ART00521/three-breathing-exercises.html>

Bedtime Stress Busters for Kids: Ways to Help Children Relieve Tension Before Bed accessed at <http://www.suite101.com/content/bedtime-stress-busters-for-kids-a42636#ixzz14ioc3Wiv>



Lesson 3 – Meditation, Its Active Relaxing!

Objective:

This lesson will provide an introduction to meditation and present different types meditations.

At the end of the lesson participants will be able to answer the following questions:

- What are some of the ways that meditation relaxes a child?
- What are some different ways to meditate?
- What are the four elements of meditation?

Key Teaching Points:

- Although meditation is usually used with adults, it provides physical and psychological benefits to children.
- As long as the children are old enough to follow directions, any child can participate in meditation.
- There are many different ways to meditate.

Lesson Preparation and Suggestions:

- Read over and understand materials.
- Practice meditating yourself.
- Decide on the CD story that you would like to use before the class.

Materials Needed:

- CD player
- Soft music CD
- Guided Meditation CD

Lesson 3: Meditation - It is Active Relaxing

Background

Relaxation and meditation help children to relax and calm the mind. Relaxation techniques were believed to be for adults only but children can benefit from them too. In this day and age, even kids have to deal with stressful situations. Situations are different for each individual child, but stress could stem from school activities, parental and grade pressure, and also in keeping up with peer competition.

It may seem as though the world is overly competitive these days. Children are often pressured to be the best at everything that they do. Unfortunately, stress has become a part of their daily lives. Here are the top ten relaxation techniques for children:

Top Relaxation Techniques for Children

Deep Breathing: This activity helps the children relax by slowing their breathing rate, which then lowers their heart rate. Teach children to take a deep breath, hold that breath for a few seconds and then release it. This will enable the children to relax.

Music: Play for the child his/her favorite music. Certain tunes, instrumental pieces and other forms of music have the power to soothe both mind and body. Having calming music to accompany any relaxation is an easy way to calm the mind.

Exercise: Ask the child to relax his/her muscles. Ask the child to focus on different muscles of the body and try relaxing them one at a time. The child should start with stretching the arms and progressively his/her body. Physical relaxation eventually leads to the relaxation of one's mind.

Meditation: Meditation is the best kind of mental exercise. This exercise does not challenge your brain; rather it allows children to rid their minds of problems and distractions.

Laughter: Laughter, popularly referred to as the best medicine, is an excellent relaxation technique for children. All of us love to laugh. Laughter is also good exercise for the facial muscles as it relaxes most of the muscles of the face. Laughter creates a positive note in one's mind and is thus one of the best relaxation techniques.

Toe Tensing: This is a method of drawing tension down to the toe. This is a fairly simple exercise that involves lying on the back. Ask the child to pull his/her toe muscles towards the face and hold to the count of ten. Repeat the exercise.

Visualization: Experts say that picturing the things you love can make you feel relaxed. Allow the child to imagine something nice that they love while the eyes are closed.

What is meditation?

The term *meditation* means activities that work to increase quietness and physical relaxation, to improve how we handle things such as stress, or to cope with feelings or thoughts. Most types of meditation have four elements in common:

1. **A quiet location.** Meditation is usually practiced in a quiet place with as few disruptions as possible. This can be particularly helpful for beginners but it may also be hard to find. Do your best to find a quiet place.
2. **A specific, comfortable posture.** Depending on the type of meditation being done, meditation can be done while sitting, lying down, standing, walking, or in other positions, even dancing.
3. **A focus of attention.** Focusing one's attention is usually a part of meditation. For example, you may focus on words, an object, your steps, or breathe.
4. **An open attitude.** Having an open attitude during meditation means letting distractions come and go. The key is to realize there is a distraction and try to focus again.

Meditation can be designed for toddlers, preschoolers, school age kids - everyone! It is important is that position, place and meditations are modified to suit the age and abilities of the children.

Children are ready for meditation when they are able to follow directions, have control of their movements, and can control breathing at the same time. Within each age group there are challenges in getting the children to relax, but once the children have learned the technique, much like breathing techniques, they can do it almost anywhere at any time.

Here are 6 keys to leading a meditation:

1. Learning even, regular breathing gives instant stress relief on a moment's notice. The regular, even breathing can calm the physical body.
2. Following directions within a meditation develops memory. The more you are at ease with the meditation the easier it is to focus.
3. Longer meditations give the body and mind time to relax.
4. If you have an overly active group of children, a dance meditation or walking meditation usually will work to calm them down. You do not HAVE to be still all of the time.
5. Meditation is non-competitive – children can relax and work to their own ability.
6. Meditation can be done individually or in a group setting. It is important for children to realize that they can do this on their own, too.

The following meditations are in this lesson:

Movement Meditations

Walking meditation

Dancing meditation

Guided Meditations

Guided meditation on being compassionate

Guided meditation on sharing

CD Meditation

Indigo Dreams

You may use one or several meditations throughout the lesson.

?? Do any of you ever feel stressed or angry?

Today we are going to learn another way to help get rid of those types of feelings. Remember last week we talked about the importance of breathing.

?? Did any of you practice deep breathing during the week?

?? What are some of the ways that we relax?

- *List and write on white board / flip chart*

Another way that we can help ourselves relax is through meditation.

?? Have any of you ever heard of meditation?

- if they have ask what they think that it is

Meditation is another way for us to relax and calm our bodies. Today we are going to try to meditate.

Walking meditation

Time: 10 to 30 minutes

- Before you set out on the walk, check to see that no one is thirsty or hungry as these can be distractions to the meditation.
 - *If everyone carries a small water bottle and they have had a snack - all needs should be met for the walk. You may want to bring a bag with items such as tissues, band-aids, and other "emergency" items. Don't forget the sunscreen, maybe hats with brims and dress appropriately for the weather.*
- Begin by picking a path or trail your group already knows so everyone can concentrate on the walking.
- The group can be in single file or bunched together, but you will need to be the leader so that you are able to set the pace for the walk.

- Once you start, walk at a slow pace for half a minute to warm up the muscles.
- Remind your group that today you are learning a walking meditation.
- The first part of the walk is learning to coordinate breathing with the walking rhythm.

Here's how to explain:

Take 2 walking steps for every breath in. And, take 2 walking steps for every breath out.

Let arms swing at your side. Your body should want to do that naturally.

- Tell the children you are now doing the first 2 parts of walking meditation: the breathing and the arms swinging.
- Practice this pattern of regulated breathing with arms swinging in opposition for 5 minutes or more while the group remains silent and concentrates on making the walk second nature.
- For the next part of the walking meditation, the rhythmic breathing/walking pattern should not stop; in fact it should not stop for the entire rest of the walk.
- The children need to keep with the pace that you set.
- ?? Ask the children to start thinking about how to show family and friends at home and school that they love them.
- ?? Ask the kids to think and plan one way they can do a helpful task after the meditation.
- Ask the kids to use the rest of the walk for quiet time

If you have a Walking Meditation with a younger group of children:

- Gear the walking meditation to learning how to swing arms forward and back in opposition to the walking pattern.
- ?? Ask the kids to think of ways to share nicely with other children.
- Leave out the directions for regular breathing.
- Finish the walking meditation by sitting down in a circle and giving each person a turn to tell the group how they thought that they could share nicely with others.

Dance Meditation

Time:

- *10 minutes for stretching exercises*
- *5-10 minutes for dancing*
- *5-10 minutes for quiet meditation*

Dance Meditation combines the fun of dancing with a time for rest, relaxation, and quiet time to think about and let go of stress.

The 3 parts to the dance meditation are as follows:

- Stretching Exercises
 - Dancing
 - Quiet Meditation Time
-
- You'll need space to move around, such as a large room, or the center of a room with furniture pushed to the sides, or if the weather is nice - go outdoors.
 - Have your piece of music set up and ready to play as you begin your stretching exercises and continuing for the dancing.

- Turn music off during the quiet meditation or switch CDs to relaxation music.

Part I.

Stretching Exercises

The stretching exercises are important to do before dancing in order to warm up the muscles before dancing!

1. *Sitting cross-legged on the floor*
 - Backs straight to begin, hands resting on knees, eyes looking forward.
 - Gently round back letting head fall towards lap, the natural weight of body and gravity stretching the spine.
 - Gently return to upright position by unfolding from base of spine to top of head, eyes looking forward again.
2. *Still sitting cross-legged*
 - Backs straight, gently and very slowly twist upper body above waist from side to side.
 - Arms extended to sides, head following direction of the back arm.
 - Come back to center position.
3. *Now, extend arms overhead*
 - Stretch one arm higher and then stretch the other arm higher.
 - Alternate reaching up 4 times with each arm.
4. *Still sitting but with legs straddled (opened wide)*
 - Legs should be stretched but not tightened.
 - Backs up tall and straight to begin.
 - Turn body to face one leg.
 - Reach down to hold onto leg and with both hands and gently lean towards the leg, letting the weight of gravity help with the stretch.
 - Repeat with turn and lean towards the other leg.
5. *Now Standing*
 - Stand with legs slightly apart for balance.
 - Swing both arms alongside the body going front and back.
 - Reach both arms as high as possible towards the sky.
 - Finally rest arms at each side while standing straight.

Part 2 - Dancing and Moving

Now it's time to dance!

- You can use any kind of music you like.
- Ask the children to feel the rhythm and beat as they move.
- As the music goes faster or slower, try to match movements to it.
- Play various types of music and at various speeds.

Part III. - Quiet Time Meditation

At the end of your dance meditation is a perfect time to relax.

To begin, lie on your back or sit in a comfortable position.

- Imagine your body going as limp as a noodle.
- Breathe in count 1 - breathe out count 2 - and continue on with the even breaths while resting and being very still.
- Ask the children to listen to their own heart beats.
- Ask the children to listen to their own breath.

Guided Meditation on Being Compassionate

Time: 10 minutes

Learning how to be compassionate is important, because it is helping other people. Being compassionate is a mixture of seeing someone in need and helping make it better. Some examples are - someone gets a physical injury, or is sad and crying and needs comforting, or needs some protection if being bullied. We all need comforting when we are hurt or sad or need help.

To begin

- Begin by sitting up straight in your meditation place.
- Now, do a minute of even and natural breathing - breathe in 1 count and breathe out 1 count, and repeat this even pattern during the meditation.
- If you are sitting on the floor, fold in your legs and place your folded hands in your lap.
- If you are sitting in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the floor and place your hands in your lap.

Say this following in a slow manner:

Close your eyes and imagine yourself walking on the playground. Just ahead you see a girl you know named Mary who tripped and fell while she was playing soccer. You go over to her to see if she needs any help. You notice she scraped her knee and it is bleeding a little. You take a tissue out of your pocket and offer it to Mary, so she can hold it on her scrape for a minute to stop any bleeding. You also sit down with her and talk with her for a few minutes. After a little while, you walk with her over to her mother and carry her soccer ball too. You walk with Mary over to her mom. She thanks you and asks if next time you would play soccer with her.

- Allow a few minutes of deep breathing
- ?? When was a time when you helped out someone who was hurt or sad?
- Allow a few more deep breaths.
- Ask everyone to slowly open their eyes.
- Have everyone share with the group a time that he or she helped out a friend.

Guided Meditation about Sharing

From earliest times people have always shared with each other. Each person, parents and children, did their part for their family and community. For example, some people were hunters and brought meat or fish to the family and community. And some people were gatherers and collecting nuts, seeds, berries and other plant material to take home and share all around. It is still important that we share today even though we may not be hunters and gatherers!

Let's think about how we can share more with our families and friends.

To begin

- Start in a comfortable position
- Begin by doing even and natural breathing like this - breathe in 1 count and breathe out 1 count, and repeat this even pattern while sitting still and thinking.
- You don't need to say the numbers during the meditation. Just keep up the even rhythm of breathing.
- Regular breathing like this calms your mind and body and allows you to turn your thoughts to the meditation.

Say this following in a slow manner:

- Imagine that you are having a party at school. All the kids are going to be bringing something to eat and share with the class. Think about your favorite food and how it is made. It should be something you really enjoy so you know for sure that the rest of the class will like it too. At the same time, remember that you will have a chance to eat other foods that your friends are bringing. So in this way, all the kids are sharing what they have with each other. One of the benefits is that you will have something new to try with and enjoy that maybe you have not had before - and you get to share your favorite food too!
- Allow a few minutes of even, natural breathing.
- ?? Think about a time when you have shared something of yours with another person. How did it feel? Think about a time when you did not share something and you could have? How did that feel? Let us take a few moments to think about how good it feels to share.
- Allow a few moments of quiet breathing.
- To finish your meditation take a deep breath and let it out.
- Open your eyes.

***Indigo Dreams* by Lori Lite**

This CD is optional – it contains four guided meditations.

- These guided meditations are designed to decreased stress and raise self awareness
- Different age groups for different CDs
- Ages 4 – 9 and ages 6 – 12

Reference

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Lesson 4: Combining Stretching, Controlled Breathing, and Meditation!

Objectives:

This lesson will focus on the combination of stretches, breathing, and meditation through different positions of the body that the participants will learn.

At the end of the lesson participants will be able to answer the following questions:

- What are some of the benefits to combining stretching, breathing, and meditation?
- What are some of the positions that provide a good stretch and time for breathing and meditation?

Key Teaching Points:

- The combination of stretching, breathing and meditation can help children handle the stresses that they encounter.
- Many of the positions used in the lesson are from nature which can help children connect with the world around them.
- There are many different positions that combine stretching, breathing, breathing and meditation.

Lesson Preparation Suggestions:

- Read through the lesson.
- Practice talking through and actually doing the positions.
- Create a “position” on your own before the class starts.

Materials needed:

- CD Players
- Soft Music
- Towel to lay on (optional)

Lesson 4: Combining Stretching, Breathing, and Meditation

Background

When we put stretching, breathing, and mediation all together, kids can benefit in a lot of different ways. This combination is also a lot of fun! Children can learn to stretch, breathe deeply, relax and concentrate and it helps to develop correct posture, body awareness and self-confidence.

Children live in a hurry-up world of busy parents, school pressures, incessant lessons, video games, malls, and competitive sports. We usually don't think of these stimuli as being stressful for our kids but they can be. Research has shown that stretching breathing and concentrating can help counter these pressures that they feel. Physically, this type of lesson helps their flexibility, strength, coordination, and body awareness. In addition, their concentration and sense of calmness and relaxation improves.

By having children use animals and plants as inspiration—such as stance of a cow, the grace of a swan, the grounded stature of a tree, they can connect with the world around them. When they pretend that they are a lion for example, they can experience the power and behavior of the lion. The physical movements introduce kids to different ways to express themselves.

As they perform the various animal and nature poses – encourage them to deepen their awareness of that item's purpose in nature. When they stretch like a dog, balance like a flamingo, or stand strong and tall like a tree, they are making a connection between environment and their bodies.

Guidelines for this lesson

1. Children under 6 can do up to 1 minute / exercise. The total time for the activity can be up to 15 minutes. You may lose them if it is much longer.
2. Children 6 and above can do up to 1 1/2 minutes / exercise and the kids activity can last up to 25 minutes.
3. Encourage the child to do the position correctly, along with the breathing, but don't force them into the position. Add lots of verbal encouragement.
4. Take frequent little breaks in between, during which encourage quiet and concentration but relaxation as well.
5. Always demonstrate the posture or exercise, rather than try to just explain it.
6. Encourage the children to practice with their eyes closed when appropriate. This will keep them from trying to watch others and allow them to concentrate on themselves. Plus, it may add a little challenge.
7. Remember even kids need to warm-up before doing stretching.
8. Never compare the children with each other.
9. Always remind the children to breathe.

When we stretch, breathe, and meditate at the same time we are strengthen not only our bodies but we calm our minds as well.

When we combine stretching, breathing and meditation, we will become more aware of our bodies and our minds. We will also use our imagination.

Today we will be talking about how we can pose like a dog, or a snake, or tree and we can imagine what it is like to be that thing. There will be times today when you will be asked to hold a position and you will have to be very still to be able to do that.

Warm Up

Let's start by warming up our bodies – 5 minutes of warm up

Option 1 – If the weather is nice, go outside for a five minute walk - use the breathing exercise while walking.

Option 2 – Warm up in the classroom with small routine that they will do in place.

Beginning Stretching, Breathing, and Meditation

Spread out in the room

We will start in a sitting position:

- Backs are up straight
- Hold your hands in your lap
- Close your eyes
- Begin to breathe in and out easily and evenly
- To yourself, silently count each breath in as one count and each breath out as one count
- Do 10 sets of even breathing (until you reach count 20) then just continue to breathe evenly

Next, keeping your eyes closed, I want you to think about your family and your friends. Think about something that you enjoyed doing with you family this week.

?? Can you picture it in your head?

?? What was your favorite part?

Next, think about something that made you upset this week.

?? What happened to make you upset?

?? What did you do about it?

?? Could you have done something different or said something differently??

Take 5 to 10 deep breaths.

Open your eyes.

Stretching Positions

Follow through the following positions in order. Talk through what you are doing and allow time for the children to get into the position.

Position #1 - The Leaf

- Sit with a straight spine
- Soles of feet together
- Hands on ankles
- Take a deep breath in
- As you exhale, gently round spine
- As you inhale, return to sitting straight
- Repeat 3 – 7 times

Position #2 - The Butterfly

- Sit with a straight spine
- Soles of feet together
- Hands on ankles
- Gently bounce knees toward floor 10 to 20 times
- Repeat 2-4 times

Position # 3 - The Cricket

- Sit with a straight spine
- Soles of feet together
- Hands on ankles
- Head and eyes look forward
- Take a deep breath in as the head looks up
- Exhale as the head returns forward
- Inhale and lean right ear to right shoulder
- Exhale and bring the head back straight
- Inhale as you lean the left ear to left shoulder
- Exhale as you straighten the head
- Eyes look forward throughout
- Repeat entire sequence 4 – 6 times

Position # 4 - The Baby Bird

- Sit with a straight spine
- Soles of feet together
- Clasp hands behind lower back (or place hands on floor behind you)
- Pull shoulder blades together slowly
- Take a deep breath in and tilt the head upwards
- Exhale holding the position
- Inhale still holding the position
- Exhale and bring head back to a straight position
- Repeat 5- 8 times

Position # 5 - The Chipmunk

- Sit cross-legged with arms out to sides
- Gently and slowly
- Inhale twisting upper body right
- Exhale while you come back to center
- Inhale while twisting the body left
- Exhale as the body comes back to center
- Now, stretch arms overhead
- Bend to the right side
- Come back to center
- Bend to the left side
- Come back to center
- Repeat whole segment 4 – 6 times

Position #6 - The Rocker

- Sit cross-legged with hands placed on floor at sides of body
- Transfer weight side to side (5-8 times)
- Place hands on top of shoulders and transfer weight side to side (5 – 8 times)

Position #7 – The Ball

- Sitting up tall
- Knees up and feet flat on the floor
- Lift feet off of floor
- Balance on tailbone for 10 seconds
- Repeat 4- 6 times
- You can extend time of balance depending on your age group

Position #8 - The Seal

- Sit with legs straddled
- Spine held as upright as comfortable
- Turn body to face one leg
- Reach down to hold onto leg with both hands and gently lean toward the leg
- Hold for 4 slow counts
- Slowly rise up
- Repeat to other leg
- Next, sit straight and place palms of hands on floor in front of body for support
- Point and flex feet and ankles in unison (8-12 times)
- Then point one foot while flexing the other foot (8-12 times)

Position # 9 - The Turtle

- Lie on back, legs touching
- bend knees into the chest
- Arms resting on floor above head
- Keep lower back pressed to floor throughout
- Extend legs towards sky while pointing toes
- Lower legs as far as possible while keeping the lower back on the floor
- Then fold arms and legs in
- Hold about 3 -5 seconds
- Repeat 3 – 6 times

Position #10 – The Starfish

- Lie on back arms and legs comfortably stretched
- Raise one arm at a time toward ceiling and lower (2-3 each arm)
- Next, lift one leg at a time toward ceiling and lower (2-3 each arm)
- Next, try lifting one arm and the opposite leg at the same time
- Lower both
- Repeat with opposite arm and leg raised and lowered (3-6 times)

Position #11 - Cat/ Cow

- On hands and knees with a flat back
- Take a deep breath in
- Exhale and let the back arch up toward ceiling (like a cat)
- Eyes are looking down towards floor
- Inhale as you flatten out the back
- Exhale as you let the back slightly slope down
- Eyes look forward and slightly up
- Inhale as you come back to a flat back
- Repeat 4-8 times

Position # 12 – The Mountain

- Standing with you feet together
- Back straight
- Arms by your side and palms forward
- Take several deep breaths
- Hold position for up to one minute

Position # 13 – The Tree

- Standing with feet together
- Lift the right leg up off of the ground
- Place foot on left leg right above the ankle
- The right knee should be pointing out
- Balance for 5 – 10 seconds
- Slowly lower the right leg down
- Repeat with left leg
- Repeat both legs 2- 4 times

Position #14 –The Chair

- Standing with feet together
- Bring both arms up alongside the ears
- Lower seat down towards floor as if sitting in chair
- Hold 5-8 seconds
- Straighten up to starting position
- Repeat 4- 8 times

Make your own pose

Let each child think of an animal, object, or plant and create a pose or stretch that they think resembles that animal, object, or plant. Allow them to work individually. During this time walk around and see if anyone needs guidance. When the time is up invite everyone to come to a circle and share and teach their pose/stretch.

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