

Half Sun Sequence

Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energizes the mind and body • Brings fresh oxygen to the brain
Cues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin standing tall at the top of your mat. Press down actively through your feet. Now, lift your head towards the ceiling standing up tall and proud. Lengthen your spine and relax your shoulders away from your ears. Mountain pose. 2. As you breathe in extend your arms forward and up lifting your fingertips towards the ceiling. Extended mountain pose. 3. Breathe out through your nose and fold forward over your legs reaching for your toes. You can keep a slight bend in your knees and you should feel a lengthening through your back. This is pose three, forward fold. 4. Now, breathe in and reach your arms all the way back up over your head extending your fingers towards the ceiling. 5. Breathe out and land in mountain pose where we began.
Photo	



Benefits of Yoga + Mindfulness for Students

ACADEMIC BENEFITS

- Promotes a learning-ready state by helping students be more present, calm, relaxed and comfortable (11) (17) (55) (53) (56).
- Positively impacts students' academic performance (28) (51) (53) (55).
- Enhances focus, attention, concentration, comprehension and memory (8) (18) (39) (35) (31) (41) (55) (56).
- Enhances executive function by combining the cognitive and neurological benefits of physical activity (3) (14) (25) (43) with breathing exercises and mental focus techniques, and by increasing activation in the prefrontal cortex and serotonergic system (7) (55).
- Promotes thinking and boosts memory (56).
- Stimulates auditory processing and responsiveness (56).
- Expands imagination and creativity (56).

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- Provides opportunities for beneficial motor breaks throughout the day (23) (50) (55).
- Enhances flexibility, strength, and physical well-being (9) (34) (40) (52) (55).
- Improves mind/body awareness and self-awareness (10) (42) (55).
- Improves physiological outcomes such as respiratory muscle strength (15), heart rate variability (5), and stress reactivity (22) (55).
- Increases circulation, uptake of oxygen, and functioning of hormones (56).
- Encourages motor development on both sides of the body (56).
- Increases balance, coordination, and overall body awareness (56).
- Strengthens the immune system and helps manage chronic illness (56).
- Relaxes the body, promoting better sleep (56).

SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Encourages community and connectedness within the classroom (10) (21) and respect for oneself and others (16) (22) (55).
- Offers a non-competitive alternative to sports that supports PE and health standards. (55).



EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

- Provides students with healthy ways to express, balance, and regulate their emotions and behavior (2) (13) (12) (44) (55).
- Cultivates balanced psychological and physiological responses to stress, such as improved stress management (33), reduced problematic stress responses (19) (32), and decreased cortisol concentrations (6) (55) (56).
- Provides opportunities for reflection, patience and insight, thereby reducing impulsivity, hostility, and reactivity (22) (24) (38) (55).
- Reduces anger, depression, and fatigue (20) (49) (55).
- Eases anxiety and tension (such as pre-test or performance jitters) (1) (24) (36) (55).
- Enhances resilience and coping frequency, thereby helping students adapt and cope with negative life events (30) (42) (54) (55).
- Improves confidence and self-esteem (4) (47) (55).

BENEFITS TO TEACHERS

- Has beneficial effects on outcomes for classroom teachers, including increases in calmness, mindfulness, well-being, and positive mood, improvements in classroom management, physical symptoms, blood pressure, and cortisol awakening response, and decreases in mind and body stress (26) (27) (29) (3) (46) (48), thereby supporting a positive classroom climate, teacher effectiveness and student outcomes (45) (55).
- Yoga can be offered to staff as a tool for self-care; a way to help manage the stress of the profession; reduce burnout, and maintain emotional balance in the classroom (56).

References:

(1) Bellinger et al., 2015; (2) Bergen-Cico et al., 2015; (3) Best, 2010; (4) Bhardwaj & Agrawal, 2013; (5) Bothe et al., 2014; (6) Butzer et al., 2015; (7) Butzer et al., in press; (8) Case-Smith et al., 2010; (9) Chen & Pauwels, 2014; (10) Conboy et al., 2013; (11) Dai et al., 2015; (12) Daly et al., 2015; (13) Dariotis et al., 2016; (14) Diamond & Lee, 2011; (15) D'Souza & Avadhany, 2014; (16) Dubey, 2011; (17) Eastman-Mueller et al., 2013; (18) EHUD et al., 2010; (19) Feagans Gould et al., 2012; (20) Felver et al., 2015; (21) Finnan, 2015; (22) Fishbein et al., 2015; (23) Fox, 1999; (24) Frank et al., 2014; (25) Fumoto et al., 2010; (26) Harris et al., 2016; (27) Jennings et al., 2013; (28) Kauts & Sharma, 2009; (29) Kemeny et al., 2012; (30) Khalsa et al., 2012; (31) Manjunath & Telles, 2004; (32) Mendelson et al., 2010; (33) Miller et al., 2014; (34) Mohanty et al., 2015; (35) Napoli et al., 2005; (36) Noggle et al., 2012; (37) Nosaka & Okamura, 2015; (38) Parker et al., 2014; (39) Pradhan & Nagendra, 2010; (40) Purohit et al., 2016; (41) Quach et al., 2015; (42) Ramadoss & Bose, 2010; (43) Ratey, 2013; (44) Razza et al., 2013; (45) Roeser et al., 2012; (46) Schussler et al., 2016; (47) Sethi et al., 2013; (48) Sharp & Jennings, 2016; (49) Sibinga et al., 2016; (50) Sibley & Etnier, 2003; (51) Singh et al., 2016; (52) Verma et al., 2014; (53) Wang & Hagins, 2016; (54) White, 2012; (55) *Yoga 4 Classrooms*. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 Oct. 2016; (56) *Childress & Harper*, 2015



Trauma-Informed Yoga Teaching Tips

- I. **Eyes can be open or closed.** *Invite* students to close their eyes *if* it feels comfortable and safe. If not, give them an option for how to complete the exercise with their eyes open. For example, students can softly gaze at a spot on the floor or ceiling. Students can still get the full benefits out of breathing and relaxation with their eyes open as they can with their eyes closed.

- II. **No touch.** Never touch students. Use verbal cues to help them find the right postures. Even if students give you “permission” to touch them (i.e. give an adjustment, etc.) there is still a power difference between student and teacher. To avoid any issues or discomfort, do not touch students.

- III. **Carefully consider the space and layout of the mats.** Many students, with trauma histories, or just teenage insecurities, will be self-conscious or even fearful if they know someone is behind them. Set up the mats in a way where no student has someone behind them (try a circle, square or two rows facing each other). Also consider if all students have a visual on the door and other details that will help them feel more emotionally and physically safe.

- IV. **Choice of words is critical.** Avoid requiring or commanding students to do things. Instead, try inviting or suggesting things to students. Giving choice creates emotional safety and allows students to enter into the yoga at their own pace and speed. It is normal for hesitant students to watch before engaging and engaging slowly when they do decide to try (ex: trying 1-2 poses and then just sitting and watching the rest). Be aware of your choice of words and how students are responding to your vocabulary throughout class.

- V. **Be aware of your expectations for what the pose or exercise “should” look like.** Students with trauma histories are holding trauma and tension in their bodies that they are unaware of and many poses and exercises will be inaccessible to them. Instead of focusing on the pose “looking right,” help students focus on where they are feeling stretches and sensations in their bodies. Every student’s pose will look different, and it should because all kids are different. Also, consider that certain postures (such as laying flat on your back in final relaxation pose) will seem very unsafe for students with certain trauma



histories. Give many choices and options so that students can access each pose in a way that feels safe and supportive emotionally and physically.

- VI. Let students know what's coming next.** This practice is good for ALL kids, but is particularly important for students with trauma histories. Surprises can be scary and evoke big emotions for students who have lived through or are currently living through chronic stress or trauma. Let students know the plan for the class, what's coming next and what to expect. This is particularly important for turning off lights at the end of yoga class.
- VII. Set clear norms and enforce them.** Knowing what the rules and expectation are for yoga class and knowing that you, as the adult, are going to respectfully enforce them makes everyone in the room feel safe emotionally and physically.
- VIII. Use the word "safe" . . . A lot.** Studies show that just repeatedly using the word "safe" makes students feel more safe. Insert this word throughout class.
- IX. Final relaxation pose can be vulnerable.** Set this pose up very intentionally so that students can feel safe and actually relax. Cues such as: "Remember we are in a safe and supportive environment"; "No one is going to come in or out of the room while we relax"; "We are all participating together. No one is looking at you or going to approach you during this time"; etc. Also, give something to engage students' minds so that they can relax their bodies. Strategies such as guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, music and yoga nidra are great to keep students' minds engaged.



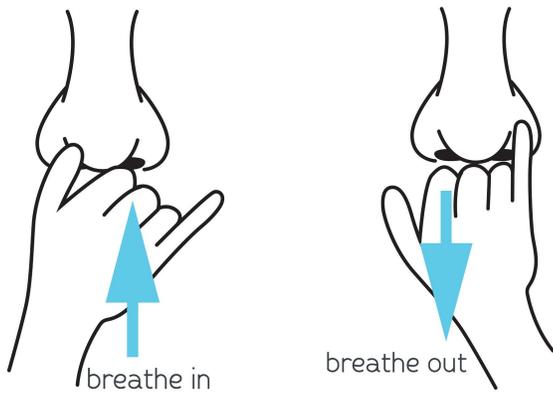
Tips for Success:

- Introduce the mindfulness tools to students when they are calm. Find a comfortable, quiet environment and teach one new practice at a time. This way, youth will already be familiar with the practices when they are emotional and need help calming down.
- Tell young people the benefits of each practice and how it can help them.
- Use repetition when practicing mindfulness. This way young people master the practices, which allows them to integrate them into their daily lives.
- Reflect with young people after the mindfulness practice. Ask them how the practice impacted their brain (thoughts + emotions), body, and breath.
- Slowly and calmly cue young people through one practice at a time. Complete the practice for 3-10 minutes to allow youth to calm and focus their minds.
- Remember that young people feed off of our energy as adults. If your emotions are also running high, try these mindfulness practices for yourself as well.

Belly Breath

<p>Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange is greater. Requires less energy than chest or upper breathing. • Improves focus, helps to clear the mind, reduce stress
<p>Cues</p>	<p>“In order to do belly breaths, we are going to sit up tall, with our hands on our bellies, and feel our bellies expand as we take long breaths in through our nose. Then, we will feel our bellies contract as we take long breaths out through our nose. We will focus all of our attention on noticing our breath. If you notice your brain wandering or get distracted by other thoughts, simply draw your attention back to your breathing again and again.”</p> <p>“If you would like to close your eyes you can do that now, knowing that you are in a safe and supportive environment and that we are practicing together. If you prefer to keep your eyes open, find a spot on the floor to look at and keep your gaze there during the entire practice. Lengthen your spine and relax your shoulders away from your ears as you place your hands on your belly. Take a long, deep breath in through your nose, filling your belly into your hands like a balloon. Take a long, controlled breath out through your nose as you empty your belly. Great job taking a deep belly breath! Continue taking long, even breaths in and out through your nose, feeling your belly rise and fall with each breath, like ocean waves, as we take nine more belly breaths together. I will count our breaths backwards from nine to one.”</p> <p>“Breathe in and fill your lungs and belly, nine. Breathe out slowly and empty your lungs and belly, nine. Breathe in and fill up, eight. Breathe out and empty, eight. Breathe in, seven. Breathe out, seven.”</p> <p><i>[Continue counting down the belly breaths for students until you get to one.]</i></p>
<p>Image</p>	

Alternate Nostril Breathing

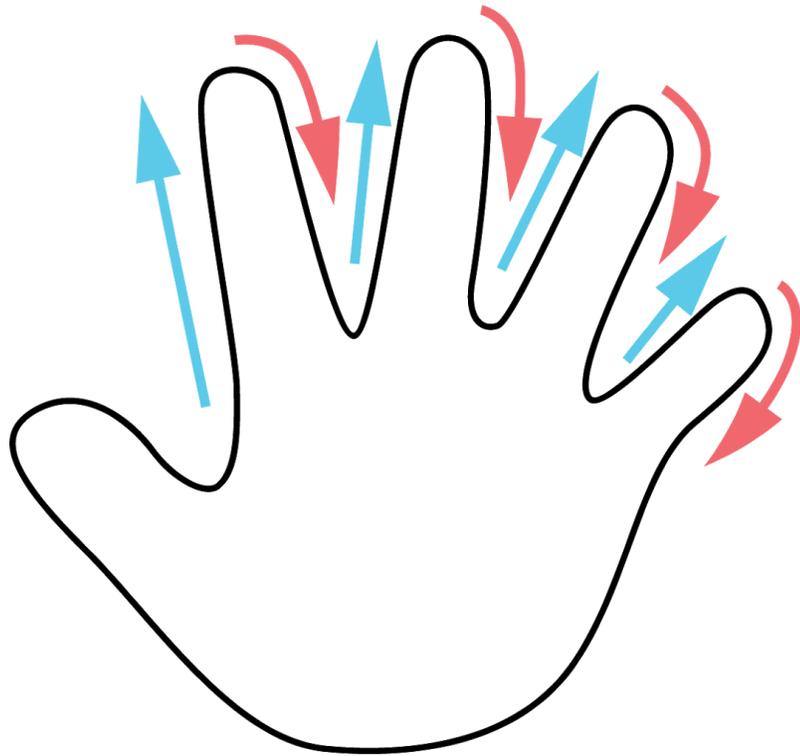
<p>Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange is greater. • Improves focus, helps to clear the mind, reduce stress
<p>Cues</p>	<p>“Sit up tall to prepare for our breathing practice, alternate nostril breathing. Take your right hand and make a fist and then stick out your pinky and your thumb making a ‘surfer dude’ hand. Turn your palm to face you. Now use your thumb to press your right nostril closed and take a full breath in through your open left nostril. Pause. Use your pinky to press your left nostril closed and release your thumb, opening your right nostril. Breathe out slowly through your right nostril. Take a full breath in through your open right nostril. Pause. Use your thumb to press your right nostril closed and release your picky, opening your left nostril. Breathe out slowly through your left nostril. Repeat this for ten more rounds on your own. If you feel comfortable, you can close your eyes to help you focus on your breath”</p> <p><i>[Continue modeling alternate nostril breathing as students complete five more rounds.]</i></p>
<p>Image</p>	



Tracing Breath

<p>Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange is greater. • Improves focus, helps to clear the mind, reduce stress
<p>Cues</p>	<p>“During tracing breath, we breathe deeply in and out through our noses as we trace our hands. Start by sitting up tall and extend your right hand forward. Open your fingers wide. Take the index finger of your left hand and place it at the base of the right hand thumb. As you breathe in through your nose, trace your index finger up to the tip of your right thumb. As you breathe out, trace your index finger down your thumb. On your next breath in, trace your index finger all the way up to the tip of your right index finger. On your next breath out, trace your index finger down your right index finger. Breathe in and trace your index finger up your middle finger. Breathe out and trace your index finger down your middle finger. Breathe in and trace your finger up your ring finger. Breathe out and trace your finger down your ring finger. Breathe in and trace your finger up your pinky. Breathe out and trace your finger all the way back down to the pinky side of your wrist. Now, repeat the practice four more times on our own. If it feels comfortable, try closing your eyes and focusing all of your attention on your breathing and the sensation of your left index finger moving against your right hand.”</p> <p><i>[Allow time for students to complete four more rounds of tracing breath. Model the practice as they complete it on their own]</i></p>

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trace fingers and
breathe in, breathe out



Reflect:

What changes did you notice to your brain, body, and breath?

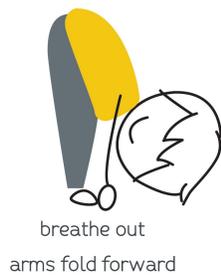
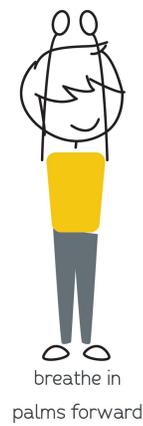
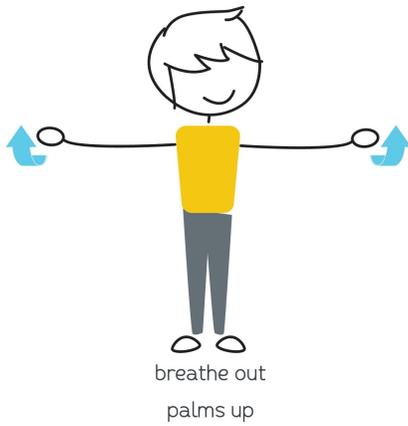
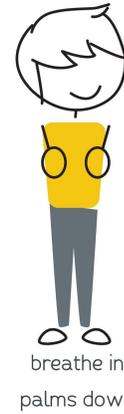
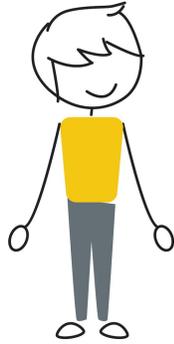
How might you use these practices in your work with students?



Moving Breath

<p>Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energizes the mind and body • Brings fresh oxygen to the brain
<p>Cues</p>	<p>“For this breathing exercise, we are going to connect one movement to one breath. Begin standing tall in mountain pose pressing your feet down and lifting your head up. As you breathe in, lift your arms out in front of you to shoulder height with your palms facing down. As you breathe out, open your arms out to the sides making a t-shape and open your palms towards the ceiling. Breathe in and reach your arms overhead with your palms facing forward as if you are lifting your arms on a roller coaster ride. Then slightly bend your knees and breathe out your mouth energetically making a “HA” sound, hinging from the hips and letting your torso and arms swing forward. End standing tall in mountain pose again. Great job connecting each movement to a breath! Let’s try moving breath five more times.”</p> <p><i>[Cue students through moving breath and demonstrate moving breath five more times.]</i></p>

Image





Reflect:

What changes did you notice to your brain, body, and breath?

How might you use this practice in your work with students?



Yoga Nidra

<p>Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes deep rest and relaxation • Calms the nervous system leading to lower stress and better health
<p>Cues</p>	<p>Use FREE App Yoga Nidra Lite</p> <p>During the practice, we are going to move our awareness to different parts of our body without moving our body. Our body will remain still as we shift our attention around our body. You can do this by repeating the name of the body part in your mind or imagining that it is lighting up a certain color as you focus on it. Let's begin.</p> <p>Start by focusing your attention on your breath. Take a deep breath in through your nose (pause) and out through your nose (pause). Notice the different parts of your body that are connected to the floor. Now think of a personal motto that you have for yourself. This should be a short, positive phrase that you to yourself, such as "I am strong" or "I can do this." Take a moment to identify your motto or short positive phrase (pause). Now repeat your motto to yourself three times in your own mind with full awareness and emphasis.</p> <p>Now we will begin rotating our awareness quickly around to the different parts of the body. Remember you can repeat the name of the body part in your mind and imagine it lighting up a certain color, but do not move your body. Become aware of your right hand. The right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the right wrist, lower arm, right elbow, upper arm, the right shoulder, right waist, right hip, right upper leg, kneecap, right lower leg, right ankle, right heel, the sole of the right foot, top of the foot, the right big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe . . . (pause). Become aware of the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the left hand, back of the hand, left wrist, the lower arm, left elbow, upper arms, the left shoulder, left waist, left hip, left upper leg, kneecap, left lower leg, left ankle, left heel, the sole of the left foot, top of the foot, the left big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe . . . (pause). Now to the back. Become aware of the right shoulder blade, the left shoulder blade, the spine, the whole back together. Now to the front. Become aware of the top of the head, the forehead, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the nose, upper lip, lower lip, the chin, the throat, the chest, the belly Now become aware of the whole back, spine and shoulder blades together . . . become aware of the whole front, head, chest, belly . . . the whole back and front together . . . the whole head . . . the whole body together . . become aware of the whole body together.</p> <p>Now shift your awareness to your breathing. Become aware of your natural breathing, feeling your belly rise and fall with each breath like ocean waves. Focus your attention on the breath as it moves in and out of your nose. We will count our breath backwards from 9 to 1 like this: 9 breathe in, 9 breathe out, 8 breathe in, 8 breathe out, and so on. Say the words and numbers to yourself as you count your breaths (pause). If you lose count, go back to 9 and start again (pause).</p> <p>Now stop counting and take a long, deep breath in and out through your nose. Now is the time to repeat your motto or short positive phrase to yourself again. Repeat the same short, positive phrase that you made at the beginning of the relaxation, do not change it. Repeat the phrase to yourself 3 times will full awareness and feeling. (pause)</p> <p>The practice of yoga sleep is now complete. Without moving your body, begin to bring your mind back to the room. Notice any changes in the way your brain, body and breath feel after relaxing today. (pause). Begin making small movements by wiggling your fingers and your toes. Slowly blink your eyes open if they're closed and sit back up on your mat.</p>



Reflect:

What changes did you notice to your brain, body, and breath?

How might you use this practice in your work with students?



RESOURCES + REFERENCES:

Book List:

For Trauma:

- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van Der Kolk
- *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming your body* by David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper

For Child and Brain Development:

- *Brainstorm* by Dan Siegel
- *The Whole Brain Child* by Dan Siegel

For Kids Yoga & Mindfulness:

- *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness* by Deborah Schoeberlien
- *Yoga Education for Children (Volumes One and Two)* by Swami Niranjananda Saraswati