

to work with a coach and/or another unbiased professional partner, it is possible that you may develop your own potential in the role of being your own guide. The remainder of this article is designed for those do-it-yourselfers to experience the power of coaching by trying on a self-coaching tool. For increased impact, we suggest working with an unbiased partner to answer the questions.

Happiness Inventory (Awareness Tool)

- Consider some of your internal thoughts right now in relation to the following areas of your life: work, relationships, health/well-being, recreation/play, dreams.
- For each category, write down all the thoughts you notice yourself having.
- Note if they are positive (life affirming) or negative (discouraging) and rate accordingly.
- Next, think back to what you've shared with others in relation to each of these categories. What do you hear yourself saying to others about these parts of your life? And indicate if what you are saying to others is life affirming or discouraging.
- Lastly, ask yourself what actions you have taken in each of these categories.

Once you have your own list as shown above, ask yourself: "What is getting in my way of doing what I am thinking?" "How does what I am saying to others agree or disagree with what I am thinking?" "How do my actions align with my thoughts?" "What am I learning as I explore the connection between my thoughts and actions?"

Consider working through these questions with an unbiased listening partner or coach.

Feroshia Knight, MA, CPC is an internationally known coach, consultant, facilitator, trainer, and founder of Baraka Institute: Leadership Development and Coach Training Center. To learn more about your values and how your thoughts are guiding your future, or if you have specific questions and would like to ask a coach visit BarakaInstitute.com/na.

Stress-Proofing Kids through Yoga



by Jim Gillen

As Lynea writes with her husband Jim, a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-500), in their award-winning book *Yoga Calm for Children*, "When children are given the opportunity to come to stillness and share from their hearts, beautiful things begin to happen. They cultivate their own compassion and sensitivity and begin caring deeply for one another. They begin to create an inner peace that they can draw on at any time."

Children stream into the Monday night class. Soft music plays as the lights are dimmed and the kids take off their shoes, placing them outside the door. David, a fourth-grader who struggles with ADHD, walks in with his blue yoga mat slung over his shoulder. He sighs deeply and says, "I really need this class today. It's rough out there!"

David is right. It is rough out there, and the mounting pressures on children are taking their toll. Our modern environment provides an ongoing assault on a child's developing nervous system. Over-stimulation has become a way of life. Everywhere there is noise, electronic visual stimulation, academic and social pressures, and often frenzied adults. The result? Sky-high levels of stress, which can lead to unhealthy habits and illness.

It's no wonder, then, that nervous system disorders such as anxiety, depression, and ADHD are now commonplace, and that families, schools, and all others responsible for the care and upbringing of children are seeking solutions.

When Oregon school counselor Lynea Gillen began to see more and more children struggling with such problems, she turned inward. Reflecting on how yoga had helped her survive three parental deaths before she was 19, she was inspired to blend yoga with her counseling specialty, social and emotional skills-building.

Reducing children's "sensory diet," practicing physical yoga and calming techniques, and communication and social skills development are at the heart of Lynea's approach. Here are just a few of her favorite stress-busting activities:

ONE-MINUTE VACATION:

Turn off lights, phones and all electronics. Rest your head and think of your favorite place in nature. Where are you? Who's there with you? What is it like? This activity relaxes and develops positive thoughts and imagination.



- The challenge and stimulation that comes from strengthening the body through physical yoga poses.
- An opportunity to experience beauty in themselves, in each other, and in the environment.

Also key in reducing children's stress is providing an environment that is quiet, safe and supportive. Lynea's counseling room has become just such a refuge. Decorated with fresh flowers, art and beautiful objects from around the world, the classroom is a place where children's natural inclination to beauty is drawn out. They are taught to be supportive and compassionate toward one another. They are motivated to make our world a safe and beautiful place. As one of her fourth grade students stated, "In this class, our bodies and our hearts are safe."

The idea of finding a way to relax is catching on in her school. In fact, one day as her students were practicing, the principal came in to participate and "just relax with all of you."

For more information, call 503-977-0944 or visit YogaCalm.org.

VOLCANO BREATH: Breathe in, pause and take hands over head, exhale slowly taking hands down and back together. Excellent for getting "big emotions" under control.



PULSE COUNT: Place two fingers along the groove next to your windpipe and press gently until you can find your pulse. Close your eyes and count your pulse for 30 seconds. This activity develops awareness of "how fast our engine is running," and is self-soothing.



WOODCHOPPER: Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and knees bent. Interlace hands and take arms overhead. Chop down towards the floor with a grunt. Fun, a great release and a quick energizer for those sluggish times of the day.



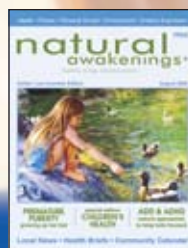
TREE POSE: Lift one foot off the floor and balance for 10 seconds. Grounds, focuses and energizes.

According to Lynea, four components are critical to yoga's appeal and effectiveness in reducing children's stress. It should give kids:

- An opportunity to experience being relaxed in the body.
- A sense of play and authentic interactions with adults and peers that don't involve any technology.



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