

Lesson: Flexibility and Yoga

Supplies Needed:

- 2.6_LV_FLEXIBILITY-AND-YOGA-VISUALS

Goals:

- Students will understand the importance of moving our bodies.
- Student will understand how flexibility helps the body.
- Students will learn yoga poses to be used to relax when tense or stressed.

Lesson:

Last month we talked about exercise. Who can tell me why exercise is important?
(Exercise helps your body stay healthy.)

Exercise strengthens your heart, lungs and muscles. It helps you feel energized, prevents disease, help you sleep, and enables you to maintain a healthy weight.

Who remembers how much exercise we should get every day?
(At least 60 minutes)

There were three types of exercise we discussed:

1. Cardiovascular exercise helps build a strong heart.
2. Strength exercises help build strong, sturdy muscles.
3. Flexibility exercises help lengthen and loosen our muscles.

Raise your hand if you know what it means to be flexible.
(It means that you move your muscles with ease.)

When we sit for long periods of time, the muscles in our legs, hips, neck, and back can become very stiff. In order to loosen our muscles, it is important to stretch them.

Today we're going to talk about yoga. Not only does yoga help us become more flexible and loosen our muscles, it also helps us to relieve stress and to calm down.

Does anyone ever feel really wound up after a birthday party? Really excited after running around outside? How do you calm yourself down after playing outside so you can focus on homework or sit down for a family dinner? How do you calm yourself down when getting into bed?

(Read a book, close eyes, think about sleeping, breathe slowly, etc.)

Practicing yoga is a great way to remain flexible and to reduce stress. Yoga is a combination of breathing exercises, physical postures, and meditation that has been practiced for more than 5,000 years. Today we're going to do some yoga poses.

First, though, we are going to center ourselves. Centering is also part of yoga, and is how we are able to focus when we do the more challenging poses. We'll center by doing a breathing exercise called Breathing through the Nose.

Let's take a few minutes to wake up our bodies! We will do this by being very still so that we can really pay attention to what is going on around and inside us. Let's have everyone sit up straight. We're going to play with our breath and see if we can become more relaxed. Everyone have a seat on the floor, nice and straight, with your heart facing me. **(Wait for them to get positioned.)** Great! Let's start.

Close your eyes, sit up straight, and relax all of the muscles of your face. Now begin to slowly breathe through your nose **(Demonstrate slow nose breathing.)** Imagine that the air you are breathing is the most beautiful purple mist going in and out through your nose. Now watch the purple move in and out right at the tip of your nose. You can play with making the breath more relaxed; one way is to watch the purple mist flow in and out like gentle waves on a beach. Let's count five more slow breaths in our minds--- and when you're done, breathe however you want. **(Wait for 30 seconds.)**

Notice how you are breathing now. Is it different than before? Notice how you feel. Did breathing through your nose change your feelings? Now you can blink a few times and open your eyes.

Now that we are centered, I am going to show you all the poses in the routine we will do. Please watch from your seats and pay attention to the position of my body. Then, we will all do the poses together a few times. **(Demonstrate how to do the poses, using the visuals to help demonstrate.)**

Now let's do them together. Stand in a spot where there is at least two to three feet of open space ahead and behind you, and at least an arms length of open space on

each side. When we practice yoga we want to breathe deeply, focus on one spot, and not talk. This helps us concentrate and relax.

(Walk the class through the Sun Salutation Routine on the following pages. The first time through, focus on helping them learn to do the poses properly. At the end of the sequence, you can step one leg forward at a time and return to Mountain Pose. Repeat as many times as you like. After the first time through, be creative by using animal sounds to cue the poses. You can repeat the Sun Salutation as many times as you like based on the amount of time you have for this exercise.)

Repetition builds endurance, increases energy and helps you greet the day with vigor.

(Have fun! If you have extra time, see if the kids have any favorite stretches or yoga poses they want to show to the class.)

Okay, everyone take your seats. What did you think of the yoga? Do you think you know it well enough to teach your family a few poses? Who can remember why it's important to stretch?

(When we sit for long periods of time, the muscles in our legs, hips, neck, and back can become very stiff.)

Yoga is a great way to relax at the end of the day. Maybe you can try doing some yoga with your family before you go to bed!

Mountain Pose/Arms Over

Head: Begin by standing still with your arms at your sides (at right). Then stretch your hands above your head (below). Fill your body with breath on a big inhale as you stretch upwards.



Forward bend: Exhale as you bend forward from the waist/hips, keeping your legs slightly bent if your hamstrings (back of legs) are a bit tight. Let your arms dangle or fold at the elbows and clasp the opposite elbow.



Monkey pose: From your forward bend, lift your head and look forward as you inhale. Flatten your back as you put your tips of your fingers on the floor or on your shins. Make a monkey sound: “ooo ooo”—this is the monkey pose!



Plank pose: Draw both legs back into plank pose. Make sure the hands are under the shoulders and the back is straight-this pose makes your arms strong! Pull in your tummy muscles to stay strong!



Cobra pose: Lower your chest to the floor and your chest forward and up. Feel the stretch in the front side of your body. Make a cobra “hiss”.



Downward dog: Press into your hands and feet to raise your tush into the air. Keep your core (or tummy area) strong. Bark like a dog if you want...”woof woof!”

