



# Yogability

How Yoga Can Help Build  
Concepts



# What is Yoga?



- ▶ **Yoga is a form of exercise, which originated thousands of years ago in India. The word yoga means ‘union’ which refers to the coordination of breath, body and mind. It is a fun and non-competitive activity that can be modified for a wide range of people and abilities and can be customized to work on specific skills such as balance, strength, and flexibility.**
- ▶ **There are many types of yoga. Two, which are commonly used with children with visual impairment, are Hatha, and Kundalini.**

# What is Yoga? Cont.

- ▶ Hatha is based on a group of positions that are paired with breathing exercises to increase flexibility, strength and balance.
- ▶ Kundalini yoga includes body and hand positions, music, singing and breathing exercises. The Kundalini program referred to here was developed for children by Shakta Khalsa (1998) with a focus on the use of sound and movement as vehicles for learning self-awareness and increasing self-control.



# How Does Yoga Help a Student With Visual Impairment?

- ▶ A child with visual impairments benefit from this system of exercise because it generally occurs within his personal space, and provides opportunities for him to move his body in ways he may not have experienced before.
- ▶ Yoga supports inclusion with sighted peers.



# Benefits of Yoga:

- ▶ **Improved energy and concentration**
- ▶ **Improved strength**
- **Improved flexibility**
- ▶ **Body concepts and body awareness**



# Benefits of Yoga:

- ▶ **Spatial awareness/positional concepts**
- ▶ **Improved balance and coordination**
- ▶ **Left/right concepts**
- ▶ **Crossing midline (motor development on both sides of the body)**



# What is Yoga Class Like?

- ▶ A Yoga class can consist of a single student and teacher, or a larger group.
- ▶ If a larger group is planned be sure to include other adults or competent students to assist individual students in assuming poses and following the teacher's instructions.
- ▶ Work with the other adults before starting the class to clarify roles as models, prompters, and shadows.





# Yoga Class Cont.

- ▶ **Come to a consensus of what type and how much prompting is expected and how it will be phased out. It is important to be clear about how the adults will interact with the students.**
- ▶ **Whenever possible, the adults should have an opportunity to practice the poses themselves before the classes begin.**



# Getting Ready for Yoga Class

- ▶ **Yoga class should take place in a quiet location with dim lighting.**
- ▶ **Each student has a mat she uses as her yoga space.**
- ▶ **The student removes her shoes (then places them beside or behind the mat) and sits (crossed-legged) on their designated mat.**



# Getting Ready for Yoga Class Cont.

- ▶ **Class begins with deep breathing and a welcome song.**
- ▶ **Next is the routine of postures, songs and breathing.**
- ▶ **Last is relaxation, in which the children lie on their backs and listen to a few minutes of calming music.**



# Modifications and Strategies

- **Control both artificial and natural lighting for students with low vision. Some students may need extra lighting when learning the movements but can have lower lighting after they have mastered the exercises. Be mindful of glare coming through windows, which may affect the student with photophobia. Either seat the student with her back to the window or close the curtains/blinds.**
- ▶ **If possible, let each students handle his own mat, including storing and retrieving the mat from a set location, and also learning to roll and unroll the mat.**

# Modifications Cont.

- ▶ Some students may need to sit and listen during several sessions to become familiar with the language and expectation before being ready to actively participate.
- ▶ The teacher can help the student learn positions by gently guiding his hands while describing the body parts and movement.



# Modifications Cont.

- ▶ **Some students have difficulty sitting up straight while sitting cross-legged. These students may benefit from sitting on the edge of a pillow or in a chair, or the narrow edge of a wedge cushion.**
- ▶ **If the student is seated in a chair, a pillow can be placed behind his back vertically along the spine to promote 'open' upright posture.**

# Modifications Cont.

- ▶ A student who uses a wheelchair, can stay seated in the wheelchair or can lie down on the mat. Many exercises can be adapted to use only the arms, and the student can be gently assisted to move other parts of the body. Note: consult with the student's physical or occupational therapist to ensure safety of movements.
- ▶ Yoga is a great opportunity to use the student's communication medium such as Braille, tactile symbols, object symbols, pictures, or print. A list of the different exercises is given to the student in her medium



*Namasté... and Happy  
Yoga!*

