

## How Yoga Can Help Children with Autism & Other Special Needs

Yoga Can Influence These Children's Behaviors and Even Their Moods.



Carolyn Foster, Yahoo! Contributor Network

Apr 12, 2009 **MORE:**

How Yoga can help special needs children. Yoga may seem a strange choice of activity for children with autism, ADHD, and other special needs but I am here to tell you that Yoga works wonders. Once you think about it, you can understand how Yoga could influence these children's behaviors and even their moods. We have been doing Yoga at home for years and it is a daily ritual in our schedule. Morning Yoga is more active than nightly Yoga and times when frustration and meltdowns permeate our day, we do more stress releasing Yoga such as the "Volcano".

I can't tell you how this started. My only early memory of starting Yoga with my daughter was trying to find some way to calm her and help her focus on non-distressing things in her environment (she was extra sensitive to sounds back then) or even a tool to help her block out the stimuli that upset her. It was amazing how well doing Yoga helped calm her and slow her down when her instinct was to run away and hide from all of the sounds around. Purchases followed of every Yoga tape for children known to man and even beginning adult Yoga DVDs. Here are a few reasons why I love doing Yoga with my child who has autism:

### **1. Yoga helps teach listening skills.**

When the child does Yoga, they are in one spot and move little. So their attention is on how to do the Yoga pose. They listen to how their bodies are supposed to move into the Yoga pose.

### **2. The stretching in Yoga helps relieve stress in children's bodies.**

Stretching the child's body helps release stress from tightened muscles. They feel better after a Yoga session.

### **3. Challenging Yoga poses teaches the child not to give up.**

The child learns perseverance in the face of defeat. Their bodies may not do a pose in Yoga perfectly but will if they practice it.

#### **4. Deep breathing in and out in Yoga also helps children relax and relieves stress.**

Don't forget the deep breathing when practicing Yoga with children. This will help them calm down and could teach them to calm themselves in tense situations outside of doing Yoga. If a child is amped up, Yoga's deep breathing can help them relax.

#### **5. Yoga can slow overactive children down.**

Yoga can't be done without a still body and slow movements. Children quickly learn this and start slowing their bodies down when it is time for Yoga. This can help them do the same during other times as well.

#### **6. Concentration is improved with Yoga for children.**

Children have to concentrate to get the Yoga movements right. This will work on their concentration difficulties and increase learning.

#### **7. Children who are easily agitated can benefit from Yoga.**

Many Yoga poses are good tools for releasing frustration, anger, and agitation in children. Combined with the deep breathing, children will acquire new tools to use in their daily life to work on calming themselves down.

#### **8. Aggressive children learn Yoga poses and deep breathing to help them stop being overly aggressive.**

This is one of the greatest aspects of doing Yoga with children. They can learn tools to prevent them from being overly aggressive when angry. Doing a specific Yoga pose or two can help children calm down and not hurt anyone when they are angry. These Yoga poses will be dependent on the specific child. My child knows what Yoga poses are best for her when she is getting angry and will stop to do them.

#### **9. Doing Yoga with your child is a fantastic family activity for togetherness.**

Yoga is great for the whole family. Even out of shape, overweight individuals have no problem with most of the beginning poses and can work on stretching their bodies. Unlike jogging or basketball, no skill is involved. Even if you are unable to do some poses or your child has issues with a pose, working towards that goal of doing it, will encourage persistence!

### **10. Children with physical mobility issues can do Yoga too.**

Children with physical mobility issues will be able to do the Yoga poses to the best of their ability. Remember it does not have to be perfect to work on calming, stretching, and moving their bodies. It is a good confidence booster!

WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT:

[SPECIALYOGA.ORG](http://SPECIALYOGA.ORG)

[EVERYKIDSYOGA.COM](http://EVERYKIDSYOGA.COM)