

Yoga can help kids with ADHD reduce anxiety symptoms

Greene, Amanda 

Research, NOVA Research Company

. *Star - News* [Wilmington, N.C] 27 Dec 2007: .

Abstract (summary) Indexed by ProQuest

Like all **yoga** lessons, this one starts with paying attention to your breath. But, instructor Christy Lewis makes it a game.

"Think that you have a balloon in your stomach," Lewis tells her students. "And you have to fill that balloon up and then let it out again."

Lewis has to take a different perspective and **add** a touch of silliness with this class. Many of her pint-sized pupils have attention disorders, making it difficult enough for them to sit still at school - let alone concentrate on breathing deeply.

"Children with this problem have a tendency to internalize their emotions," Lewis said, "and **yoga** helps them let go of that energy."

Starting Jan. 12, Lewis will offer a five-session workshop called **Yoga** for Kids with **ADD & ADHD** at Laughing Hearts **Yoga**, a new studio in Wilmington. **Yoga**, she said, can help children improve their focus and reduce their anxiety.

Lewis has been teaching therapeutic **yoga** for years to special populations such as addicts and one-on-one **yoga** therapy sessions. Her impetus to begin a **yoga** class for children with attention disorders started with her 8-year-old son.

Each night before bed, Lewis does a **yoga** routine with her son, Gabe Gallan, who has attention issues. Their nightly routine includes breathing, stretching and shouting positive affirmations.

"It's fun and it's relaxing and it helps me be with my mom," Gabe said. "My favorite move is Partner Down Dog," where he puts his feet on his mom's back while his hands are on the floor.

"It helps him a lot. It's game time for him," his mom said. "It's a time for us to be together exclusively. No TV. No music."

Each of Lewis' classes will begin with free play and movement. She'll teach **yoga** techniques in the main part of the class, illustrating each move with metaphors that children understand. All of the poses have animal names so it's easy to make each move appeal to kids, she said.

For example, "There's a hip stretch where you lay on your back and pull your legs in, and I call that the Dead Bug," Lewis said. "We'll also do an obstacle course so we'll put out the props on the floor and they have to get across with a certain set of rules."

The class is for children who are taking medication for **ADD** or **ADHD** as well as for children who are not. To help parents, Lewis will provide resources such as book referrals and a journal. She hopes parents will use the journal to keep track of their children's television habits, as well as other environmental factors that might interrupt their child's learning process.

Hayden O. Kepley, assistant professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, agrees that **yoga** can help reduce children's anxiety symptoms, but notes there is no evidence that it reduces the "core symptoms" of **ADHD** - inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity. Scientifically, only certain medications, behavioral management training and educational interventions have been proven to address those symptoms, he said.

Lewis agrees. The most important thing to remember about the class, she said, is: "It's not a cure. It's a tool.

"This can be a place that these kids can get together socially and not that they're going to a place where they are going to be fixed."

Indexing (details)

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[Lewis, Christy](#)

Title

Yoga can help kids with **ADHD** reduce anxiety symptoms

Authors

[Greene, Amanda](#)

Publication title

[Star - News](#)

Publication year

2007

Publication Date

Dec 27, 2007

Year

2007

Publisher

New York Times Company

Place of Publication

Wilmington, N.C.

Country of publication

United States

Source type

Newspapers

Language of Publication

English

Document Type

News

Copyright

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