



Yoga and Mindfulness
At Home

Active Kids = Active Minds'

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BOKS is an initiative of Reebok and the Reebok Foundation

YOGA AND MINDFULNESS

BOKS and Tara Stiles (founder of STRALA Yoga) have teamed up to bring you some fun yoga and mindfulness activities to enhance your BOKS class.

STRALA Yoga is a revolutionary approach to guiding feeling and movement, which leaves you feeling healthy, creative and happy. It is not necessarily about the yoga poses, it's about connecting with yourself while guiding the movement in the simplest way with the least amount of stress and effort. STRALA focuses on the process of feeling good rather than the outcome. This, in turn, creates an atmosphere where kids can connect with themselves and their movement and not worry about getting into certain poses. Kids will get the opportunity to engage in slow movements to see how they feel and how their body responds. When we are mindful in our physical activities, we are aware of how our body feels while moving.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND STRALA

Stresses in life have caused adult humans to constantly be in a “stress and survival” or a “fight or flight” response (release of cortisol and endorphins into our system) which is designed to mask pain or even create a feeling of euphoria so we are able to escape an immediate attack. It is meant to help us survive but not live. But we're now living under attack. Adults have become addicted to stress on a chemical level and we put it in everything we do (work, exercise, health and healing practices).

This isn't a sustainable strategy for performance. It can lead to problems such as obesity, digestive disorders, weakened immunity, chronic pain, depression and anxiety. STRALA is designed to activate the body's relaxation response by breathing deep, matching your breath and body together, and moving your whole body in harmony with itself. It's important for our kids to make a connection with themselves at an early age so they can respond to stress in a healthy way. By teaching our kids how their bodies feel in a relaxed state and breathing through movement, they may be better equipped to have a healthy response to everyday stresses. For more information visit www.stralayoga.com

STRALA AND BOKS

We have compiled a list of fun activities that you can try at the end of your BOKS class when the kids are getting ready to go to class or breakfast or even at the end of the day when they are getting ready to go home. Always remember, it's not about being in the correct pose, it's about connecting the kids with their breath and movement.

Tips on Mindfulness in BOKS

- Explain why yoga and mindfulness is important.
- Have a signal (shutting off the lights, having them lie down, or get into their mindful bodies by sitting up straight without slouching but still relaxed) to let the kids know it's time to do mindfulness activities.
- Kids should spread out in the space so they have enough room.
- Speak in a calm tone.
- Start with the body-breath connection activities first so kids learn to relax and breathe and then progress to the other activities.
- Natural movement activities can be used individually or combined to flow from one activity to another.
- Allow 5-7 minutes for activities.

A NOTE FROM TARA

It's not the yoga that heals you. It's you that heals you.

I was lucky as a kid to grow up with a healthy dose of mindfulness without the side of pretense. My parents led by example that it was important to take care of our bodies by eating close to nature, take care of ourselves and each other by acting with kindness, and take care of our surroundings and the planet by being mindful of our daily actions. We recycled everything from milk cartons to old clothes. Picking up trash in ditches was a fun weekend activity.

It may have seemed strange at the time, but this way of being instilled the philosophy of yoga in my life in a real-world and super useful way. It is just how they live and it makes a lot of sense. For me, the way of being came first and the poses second. I was introduced to the physical practice of yoga in my teens, when I really needed it.

Physical yoga provided a vocabulary of movement and pretty great structure for practicing how I wanted to be. Healthy, connected, radiant and happy. Picking up cans in the ditch was one way to practice. Moving with ease during simple and challenging moments alike on the yoga mat is another. Essentially both led to the same place, and how we are in one moment is how we are in everything. We have an opportunity to practice with everything we do.

With STRALA we address how we are first, learning a way of being easy in body and mind. We practice being gentle with ourselves, and responsive in our movement to who we are and how we feel. This combined way of being and moving leads us to some pretty spectacular results. We become sensitized to how we feel and responsive to what we need to be radiantly healthy. We become pretty great care givers of ourselves, and from this place have a firm ground to help others.

I'm thrilled that STRALA is now a part of BOKS, helping so many kids connect with themselves, get and stay radiantly healthy, and feel fantastic in the process. Having a little one now (our baby Daisy is 2 months old), I feel the importance personally of putting our attention on the wellbeing of children.

How we are is ultimately the experience we give to others.

I learned growing up how I wanted to be, and in my teens I learned a vocabulary of movement to continue this practice.

When I was a teenager, tension and rigidity had started to find their way into my life, as it does for most of us at some point or another. Learning a physical practice that matched the sensibilities and mindset I discovered as a kid was mind blowing. I realized we collect stress not through the things that happen in our lives, but in how we choose to live.

The coolest part is we can learn and practice a better way to deal with the simple and challenging moments alike. It begins with dropping the tension, and re-learning how to be in alignment with our selves through a mindset that says no pain no gain is a myth, and our best path to accomplishment is in feeling good every step of the way. It continues through a practice of natural movement in our lives, that agrees with our mindset.

Of course it's really challenging sometimes to change our mindset. It's so familiar to us, it's in all our habits, and we're comfortable here. We wear our stress with a badge of honor. If we're exhausted, we must be working hard and achieving big things. If we're super-frazzled, we must be headed toward our goals.

The tricky reality of living this way, soaked in stress, is our mind and body cannot function properly. In tension mode we can accomplish some things, but we eventually break down. In tension mode we fall out of the flow of possibilities. Our body literally can't maintain optimal performance in these conditions, and to put it simply, is always preparing for battle. This is a strategy that works for the short-term, and when real dangers are present. But it's not a strategy we can sustain, and it doesn't work when the obstacles we face are mostly inside of us.

When we're living in stress and tension mode, we collect more stress and tension, and eventually break down. When we live in harmony with our self, anything is possible.

Yoga is a wonderful practice with a rich vocabulary of movement. It allows us to get into our whole body and move in every direction possible, so every part of us can come into harmony with every other part. But the problem we run into with our yoga is the same problem we run into in our lives. We make it about nailing a pose, and hitting a goal. We bring our tension and stress along with us for the ride.

The amazing thing is, we come to yoga to de-stress and gain health and wellbeing, but it's impossible to separate how we are in the rest of our life from how we are for those moments when we're here to practice mindfulness. So we need to practice how we are, as a way to replace the old habits that don't work so well with new ones that do.

We need to practice shifting our mindset from stiff and tense to soft and fluid. We need to believe in ourselves, and believe that when we stay in the process and focus on moving naturally, in alignment with ourselves, we'll achieve more than when we force, push and struggle our way through life. This is a massive shift in how we are, and when we're brave enough to take a look at how we are right now, we have massive opportunity to cultivate how we would like to be.

This isn't about becoming great at yoga. It's about becoming great at you. When you shift your attention away from the goal of a pose and onto yourself, you'll be able to achieve so much more with grace and ease. You'll be able to drop the tension and stress that lead to so many of our problems, and you'll feel fantastic along the way.

You have everything you need, right inside, waiting to be discovered.

ACTIVITIES

BODY-BREATH CONNECTION

Breathing is the foundation for how we experience our lives. When we are relaxed we naturally breathe deeply, our bodies soften, and our minds are calm. When we are stressed, we breathe short and fast, our bodies stiffen, and our minds are frazzled. Here are some ways to visualize the STRALA breath-body connection with your kids and is the foundation for all other STRALA movements:

Up and Down

Have your kids all lie down on the floor and close their eyes. Have them put their hands on their stomach (belly). Focus their attention on how their belly goes up and down as they breathe. As the kids are focusing on their breathing the trainer can say:

- Every inhale opens a door. Every exhale walks you right through.
- Each inhale creates space. Each exhale moves you into the space.
- Every inhale fills you up. Every exhale relaxes you.
- Every inhale lifts and does the work for you. Every exhale softens or relaxes you right in.
- Repeat.



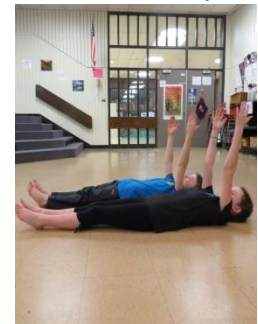
Right arm up/Left arm up

Have your kids all lie down on the floor or be in a sitting position. Have them put their hands on their stomach (belly).

- Lift right arm up into the air above their head. Lower the right arm back down and place on their stomach.
- Lift left arm up into the air above their head. Lower the left arm back down and their stomach.
- Lift both arms up into the air above their head. Lower both arms back down and place on their stomachs.

Now try the same activity but focus on breathing throughout the movement. Have the kids close their eyes and put their hands on their stomach. Focus their attention on their belly going up and down.

- Take a big inhale through your nose and lift right arm up into the air above their head. Exhale through your mouth and lower (or soften) the right arm back down and place on their stomach.
- Take a big inhale through your nose and lift left arm up into the air above their head. Exhale through your mouth and lower (or soften) the left arm back down and on their stomach.
- Take a big inhale through your nose and lift both arms up into the air above their head. Exhale through your mouth and lower (or soften) both arms back down and place on their stomachs.



Ease Experiment

This activity shows the kids what it feels like to move when their body is super tense and then how they feel to move with ease. When your body is tense it is hard to move which can be a little stressful. Frustration can build which can lead to anxiety and then stress levels can increase.

- Tense up your whole body. Clench your muscles, make tight fists and scrunch your eyebrows.
- Keeping your body tense now try and walk around the room. Does it feel like a robot? Does it feel good? Does it seem hard to move?
- Now relax and shake out your body.

- Take a deep breath in (inhale) and lift your arms out and up above your head. Take a long breath out (exhale) and bring your arms back by your side.
- Take a few more deep breaths. Now try and walk around the room. How does your body feel now? Was it easier to move around like this or like before when you felt like a robot? Ask the kids how they felt and let them explain what they were feeling.

NATURAL MOVEMENT

Natural movement is about softening, support and flow. It focuses on softening our joints and muscles as we move and initiating movement from the middle of our bodies, our hips and bellies, so we remain fully supported. Natural movement helps us move more efficiently with the least amount of effort. It also helps us move through each moment with ease, making the whole process of moving more enjoyable. Have your BOKS kids start by doing each yoga move individually. When they are familiar with each pose put them together to have them continuously flow from one pose to another. Remember it's not about doing the pose correctly. It's about breathing from one movement to the next while softening their muscles and joints. To see Tara take you through some continuous movements click [HERE](#).

Wiggle Test

Have your kids stand up with their hands down by their side.

- While not moving your legs, rotate your core (stomach, back, shoulders) from left to right.
- As you move with your core, keep your arms relax.
- Watch your arms rise up by just moving your core.
- Repeat 3 times.



Thumbs to Heartbeat

Have your kids sit down on the floor legs crossed in front of them. Hands down by their side.

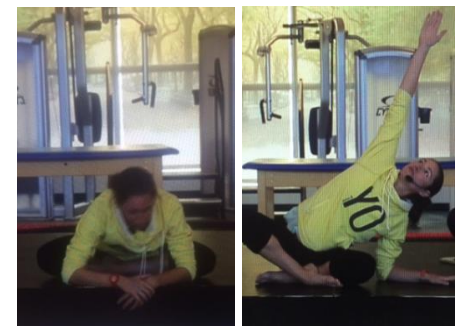
- Big inhale and bring your arms up, put your hands together.
- Exhale while bringing your thumbs to your heart.
- Keeping your thumbs on your heart take a big inhale through your nose, easy exhale out through your mouth. Repeat 3 times.



Tip Over

Have your kids sit down on the floor legs crossed in front of them. Hands down by their side.

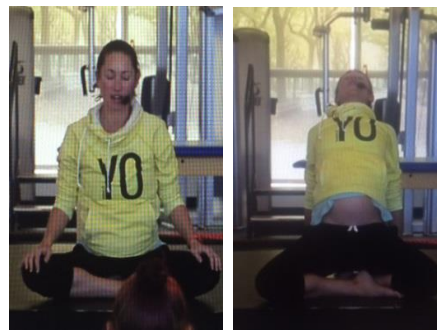
- Staying soft and easy, take a big inhale and tip over to your right side, pressing your right arm and forearm on the ground.
- Reach your opposite arm overhead and hang there for a few long deep breaths.
- Big exhale and bring your torso up through the center and reach to the other side.
- Repeat 1 time.



Forward and Back

Have your kids sit down on the floor legs crossed in front of them. Hands down by their side.

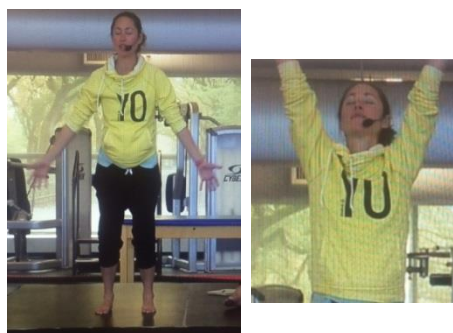
- Big inhale and walk your hands forward on the ground.
- Let your head relax and gently sway back and forth and breathe. Take a big inhale.
- Exhale and walk your hands back up to your sitting position.
- Big inhale and bring fingertips behind you and lift your bottom off the ground.
- Tip your head back and breathe. Big inhale.
- Exhale and bring your bottom back down and into a sitting position.
- Repeat 3 times.



Lift Up

Have your kids stand with their hands down by their side.

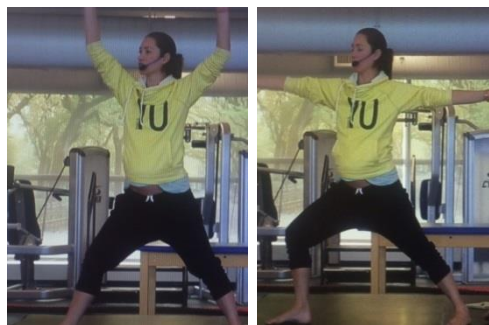
- Big inhale and lift your arms up over your head.
- Exhale and bring your arms back down by your side, sink or lower your hips down and bend your knees.
- Big inhale and lift your arms up over your head.
- Exhale and relax your arms and bring them back down by your side, sink or lower your hips down and bend your knees.
- Repeat 2 times.



Warrior 2 Pose

Have your kids stand with their legs slightly wider than their shoulders.

- Set your back heel down, toes slightly turned toward your right foot and take a big step to the right. Big inhale.
- Exhale and lower your hips so your front knee comes over your front foot, open your arms up parallel to the ground and turn your head toward your right arm.
- Big inhale and lift everything back up – arms go up over your head, hips back up to neutral or starting position, legs straighten, head looking forward.
- Exhale and lower your hips so your front knee comes over your front foot, open your arms up parallel to the ground and turn your head toward your right.
- Repeat 2 times.



Tree Pose

Have your kids stand with their hands down by their side.

- Big inhale and lean your body to the left, lift your right leg and place your right hand on your leg and pull gently up to your chest. Exhale to relax and put your right leg back on the ground.
- Big inhale and lean your body to the right, lift up your left leg and place your left hand on your leg and pull gently up to your chest. Exhale to relax and put your left leg back on the ground.
- Repeat.

- Big inhale and lean your body to the right, lift up your left leg and place your left foot on the inside of your thigh or calf (not the knee) of the right leg and hold. While holding try to exhale and relax for balance.
- Big inhale and lift your arms up over head and sway like a tree while keeping balance. Exhale to relax and bring your arms and leg back down.
- Big inhale and lean your body to the left, lift up your right leg and place your right foot on the inside of your thigh or calf (not the knee) of your left leg and hold. While holding try to exhale and relax for balance.
- Big inhale and lift your arms up over head and sway like a tree while keeping balance. Exhale to relax and bring your arms and leg back down.



Partner Tree Pose (Siblings Only!)

Have your kids stand next to their partner (shoulder to shoulder). They should have a little space in between them.

- Partners should hold hands (partner 1 uses their right hand, partner 2 uses their left hand).
- Partners take a big inhale and raise their hands up above their heads. Exhale.
- Partner 1 takes a big inhale and lifts up their left leg and places the left foot on the inside of their right thigh or calf (not the knee) and hold. Exhale to relax and put foot back down on the ground.
- Partner 2 takes a big inhale and lifts up their right leg and places the right foot on the inside of their left thigh or calf (not the knee) and hold. Exhale to relax and put foot back down on the ground.
- Now both partners do it together at the same time.
- Challenge the kids to see how long they can hold the pose.
- Repeat.



Partner Dance Pose (Siblings only!)

Have your kids face each other with their partner.

- Partners should hold hands (partner 1 uses their right hand, partner 2 uses their left hand).
- Partner one takes a big inhale and leans slightly forward on the right foot and reaches back with their left hand and grabs the left ankle.
- Pull gently on the left ankle so it starts to rise up near your buttocks.
- Exhale and put your leg back down.
- Partner two takes a big inhale and leans slightly forward on the left foot and reaches back with their right hand and grabs the right ankle.
- Pull gently on the right ankle so it starts to rise up near your buttocks.
- Exhale and put your leg back down.
- Now both partners try at the same time.
- Repeat.



Chair Pose

Have your kids stand with their hands by their side.

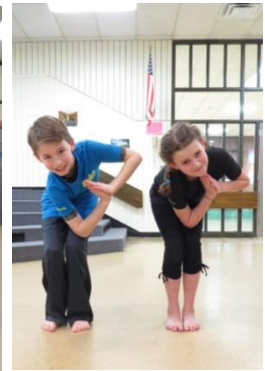
- Soften (bend) your knees and sink (lower) your hips
- Take a big inhale and lift your torso (core) up and bring your arms up overhead. Exhale and come back to a standing position
- Repeat 3 more times.



Twisted Chair Pose

Have your kids stand with their hands by their side.

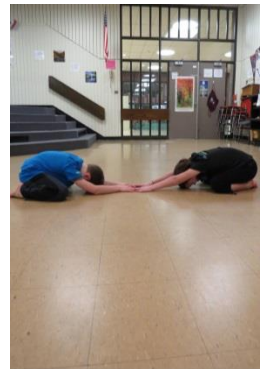
- Start with a chair pose (see above).
- Join your hands together with your elbows out
- Take a big inhale and twist to the left side and place your right elbow on left thigh.
- Exhale and come back to your chair pose.
- Repeat on the right side.
- Repeat 3 more times.



Child's Pose

Have your kids go on all fours (hands and knees on the ground).

- Bring the hips back so they are resting on your heels.
- Reach your hands forward and rest your palms on the ground.
- Hold and relax there. Breathe.



OTHER MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

Active Listening

Another way to practice mindfulness is to have your kids' focus on a resonating sound. You could use a bell, chimes, or even a mindfulness app from your phone. The idea is that kids' only focus on that sound and nothing else around them. Have the kids' close their eyes. Listen to all the sounds they hear around them (outside noise, people breathing next to them etc...). Now ask them to focus on only the sound you will make or play. When they can no longer hear the sound have them raise their hand. Challenge them to try and listen longer than they did the first time they tried.

Gratitude Activity

Gratitude is acknowledging what is good in life and is often associated with feeling a greater degree of happiness. Have your BOKS kids tell you what they are grateful for. Keep it fun and maybe even write it down on a giant poster board to hang up in your space. Remember it can be anything like "I'm grateful for my parents" or "I'm grateful for my teacher". Some other examples might be "I'm grateful for the delicious apple I ate yesterday" or "I'm grateful for the walk I had with my friend". As a trainer, give some examples to help get kids started.

Happiness BOKS

Bring in a box or a jar. Each day have the kids tell you one thing that put a smile on their face and write it down (have the BOKS kid of the week or another kid write it) and add to the BOKS box. At the end of the session count how many BOKS smiles you have in your box.

