

# Mindfulness-Based Yoga Interventions for ADHD in Children

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## DESCRIPTION

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders affecting children worldwide. Characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, ADHD can significantly interfere with academic performance, social relationships, and emotional regulation. While pharmacological treatments such as stimulants remain a mainstay of ADHD management, concerns about side effects, long-term use, and varying efficacy have led many parents and clinicians to explore complementary approaches. One such emerging intervention is mindfulness-based yoga—a practice that combines physical movement, breath control, and present-moment awareness to enhance self-regulation and attention in children with ADHD.

Mindfulness-based yoga is uniquely positioned to address several core deficits seen in ADHD. It integrates body awareness with breath and cognitive control, thereby promoting executive functioning, emotional regulation, and calmness. Unlike traditional physical activities that may further stimulate hyperactive behaviors, yoga emphasizes stillness, structure, and inward focus. These qualities can support children in developing greater control over their impulses and attention, and in improving their tolerance for frustration and stress.

Recent research has begun to highlight the benefits of mindfulness and yoga practices in pediatric ADHD populations. Studies suggest that even short-term, school-based or clinic-based yoga programs can yield meaningful improvements in behavior and cognitive functioning. In one pilot study, children aged 7 to 12 with diagnosed ADHD participated in an 8-week mindfulness-based yoga intervention, which included twice-weekly sessions of breathing exercises, postures, relaxation techniques, and guided meditations. Parents and teachers reported noticeable reductions in hyperactivity, increased attention span, and improved mood regulation. Children themselves expressed greater self-awareness and the ability to “pause” before acting impulsively—an essential skill often lacking in ADHD.

The mechanisms through which mindfulness-based yoga exerts its benefits are both physiological and psychological. Breath

control and slow, rhythmic movements activate the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing stress hormones and promoting a sense of calm. This shift in autonomic balance can counteract the constant hyperarousal often seen in children with ADHD. Additionally, mindfulness techniques help children become more aware of their thoughts and behaviors, offering an opportunity to make conscious choices rather than acting reactively. Over time, consistent practice may strengthen brain areas involved in attention and impulse control, such as the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex.

Another advantage of mindfulness-based yoga is its adaptability to various settings. Programs can be implemented in schools, clinics, or even at home with proper guidance. Teachers and school counselors have found that short, structured yoga and mindfulness sessions in the classroom can lead to better classroom behavior, enhanced focus, and reduced conflict. In clinical settings, yoga is often used as an adjunct to behavioral therapy or medication, supporting a more holistic approach to treatment. Moreover, parents can participate in these sessions, which not only improves family dynamics but also enhances the child’s engagement and consistency in practice.

Despite the promising outcomes, mindfulness-based yoga for ADHD is still an evolving field. Many of the existing studies are small in scale and vary in methodology, making it difficult to establish standardized protocols or long-term effects. Future research with larger sample sizes, control groups, and neurobiological measures is needed to better understand the extent and mechanisms of its impact. Nonetheless, the current body of evidence supports its feasibility, safety, and growing relevance in integrative ADHD care.

## CONCLUSION

Mindfulness-based yoga represents a promising, low-risk, and child-friendly intervention for children with ADHD. By fostering physical stillness, emotional awareness, and cognitive control, it offers a unique pathway to managing symptoms beyond medication alone. As awareness of integrative and mind-body approaches continues to grow, incorporating mindfulness-based yoga into educational and therapeutic programs can provide children with ADHD valuable tools for self-regulation, resilience, and long-term emotional well-being.

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