



YOGA FOCUS

WHY YOGA IS SO GOOD FOR YOUR CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

In a fast-paced world of competing demands and distractions, yoga provides an opportunity for families to slow down and connect with each other while res-setting the body and mind, writes yoga teacher *Leah Chandler*.

To me, yoga is all about the connection. The connection with your breath, your mind and your body. Considering the busy world we live in, and the multiple demands and distractions we encounter, this is a connection that we can all benefit from strengthening. This is why I always recommend that clients introduce it into their own life and the lives of their family members. Yoga enables them to learn some valuable lessons and adopt some useful tools to help them be fit and well enough to better manage the everyday demands of family life.

Yoga teaches us how to pace ourselves: it is a chance to learn to slow down and for families to connect with each other and explore the benefits of mindful movement, both together and individually. For most of us, children included, our world is very fast paced and full of competing and conflicting demands. This is a chance to reset the mind and body while focusing on moving and breathing.

It teaches us to 'switch off' and helps us focus

Research overwhelmingly confirms that ever-increasing numbers of the population suffer from depression and anxiety and are obese or overweight. Children and young

people, in particular, are feeling the pressure of life due to being 'online' or 'on' constantly. Use of antidepressants and suicide rates in young people are of great concern. Yoga teaches us to leave the world of stress and pressure behind and create a calmer, more relaxed state.

It can be tailored to suit your client's needs

Yoga has many poses, sequences and styles that can be tailored to suit a person or a family's needs. It can help people of all ages and improve a variety of health issues.

It is amazing for people with special needs

People of all ages that have special needs find yoga very helpful, especially those with a diagnosis of ADHD, ADD, Asperger's and autism. This is because yoga can provide tools to help self-regulate and cope with sensory issues, poor coordination, balance and shallow breathing.

Yoga has amazing benefits for everyone, at every age

Families come in all shapes and sizes, and, of course, in all ages. The nature of

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yoga makes it something of a rarity among physical disciplines in that it is able to accommodate, and benefit, people of all ages, even when practised as a group.

Yoga:

- is non-competitive – it's all about your own journey
- develops body awareness and builds concentration
- teaches how to manage stress through healthy movement, meditation and relaxation
- develops muscle strength, balance, posture and flexibility, and is low impact
- helps to develop a positive self and confidence
- can help to decelerate the ageing process and increase energy and vitality
- helps to connect families through movement and play.

Yoga can complement any fitness program

I have worked with many clients who focus on training for specific sports, as well as those who do so in order to simply stay healthy and well. Whatever their reason for exercising, I always encourage clients to add yoga to their workout regimes.

It's not hard to recommend

Introducing yoga to your clients can be as simple as recommending a good yoga teacher and style that you know will be right for them, or, finding a suitable yoga tutorial video online that you think will resonate with them. There are a number of family-specific yoga classes available that help family members connect with each other through yoga and play therapy. Just search online for 'family yoga' and you may be surprised by the choice in your local vicinity, particularly if you live in a metropolitan area. Of course, if you are a yoga teacher as well as a fitness professional, you can teach clients and members simple sequences that they can take home to their families.

Recommend places to make it more fun for a family

Yoga can be practiced in the home, in the backyard, down at the beach or at the park. Kids love it when it's all about the fun – and so do adults!

How long should you recommend?

Any yoga is good yoga! If a client or their family hasn't done much yoga before,



THE QUICK READ

- Practising yoga as a group allows families to slow down and connect with each other
- The nature of yoga enables it to accommodate, and benefit, people of all ages when practised in a group setting
- People with special needs, especially those with a diagnosis of ADHD, ADD, Asperger's and autism, often find that yoga helps them self-regulate and cope with sensory issues, poor coordination, balance and shallow breathing
- Families can benefit from even short yoga practices of a few minutes, as long as the activity is fun!

recommend that they do it for even 5 to 10 minutes by themselves. Initially, this could just focus on learning to breathe well. Remember, in order for it to become a regular family activity, the practice should be kept simple and fun for all family members!

Yoga really does provide some amazing tools for our clients to feel more connected to body and mind, and if they learn to share these tools with their families, they will have a more connected and calmer household. **N**

Leah Chandler

Leah is a yoga teacher and fitness professional and the founder of Kids-Fit Australia. She loves teaching kids and families – including her own family of five – how to keep fit for everyday life. Leah is the founder of Family-Fit Online which helps families connect, laugh and play together through learning the basics of fitness, food, relaxation and fun.

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Take care of yourself with yoga

I also recommend that fitness professionals learn yoga and mindfulness techniques for themselves. The physical techniques can help us move better, and learning mindfulness and relaxation techniques can help us 'switch off' after another long and busy day training clients and working on our businesses. We are always striving to improve the lives of others, but it is vital to our own wellbeing – and career longevity – to also work on improving our own.