

Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents and Caregivers

By Dion Betts, Stacey W. Betts

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Having successfully used yoga to combat the stress of their own busy lives, Dion and Stacey Betts discovered its potential for their son Joshua, who has Asperger Syndrome.

This fully-illustrated book combines the authors' professional expertise with their experience of parenting, offering a range of gentle and fun yoga positions and breathing techniques that are effective in dealing with the increased levels of anxiety, disorientation and tactile sensitivity often found in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs).

The authors give step-by-step descriptions of warming-up, strengthening, calming, and tension-releasing exercises that are suitable for reducing coping mechanisms, such as hand-flapping, and increasing muscle tone, muscle strength and body awareness. They also offer a range of short and long sequences that can be tailored to fit the needs of the individual child.

Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders is ideal for parents and caregivers who want to use simple yoga techniques to help children with ASDs overcome some of the symptoms of the disorder.

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Editorial Review

Review
'I am a professional educator who has children with autistic spectrum disorders. Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders is great because it gives a method to help children and adolescents with autistic spectrum disorders lead more typical lives. There are so few other effective solutions to address problems of heightened anxiety, poor motor coordination and strength, and weak self-regulation for children with autism spectrum disorders. Researchers have shown that yoga benefits individuals by aiding in stress reduction, reducing anxiety, increasing body awareness, strength, and flexibility, and increasing self-regulation. Yoga poses and breathing techniques could provide a useful intervention to increase the quality of life for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders.' --- Nancy J. Patrick, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist and Autism Consultant, Assistant Professor, Messiah College, Harrisburg, PA, USA

'Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders is a well written and easy to follow guide for parents, caregivers, and even professionals. This book is the first of its kind and addresses the real needs of children within the autism spectrum. Providing simple and effective techniques, the book gives hope to families that children with autism spectrum disorders can lead lives feeling less stress and happier. The book puts the pieces together; providing expert information about autism spectrum disorders and excellent specialized instruction. The book provides the right combination of knowledge and sensitivity making this a must have for all of us. The authors recognize that the true teachers are the children; this is what makes it a truly great book.' --- Thea Griffin, M.S.W. Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), Certified Professional Kripalu Yoga Teacher, Certified Kripalu DansKinetics[copyright] Teacher, Albany, NY, USA

'I've been practicing yoga for five years with a Certified Yoga Teacher. I have a grandson with Asperger Syndrome who has been doing yoga for about a year. He does especially well with a modified Tree Pose and the modified Spinal Twist. Both poses are relaxing and keep his arms occupied. The Tree is wonderful for strengthening his muscles and helping his balance. The Spinal Twist is a very gentle twist that is good for his upper torso. These yoga poses have helped him release energy in a positive way rather than him "flapping" his arms. I believe that Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders is an excellent resource for many families who need to find ways for their children cope with Asperger Syndrome. This book has allowed me to share my love of yoga with my grandson and feel like I contribute to making his life a little bit better. I am grateful to have access to this wonderful resource.' --- Judy Waldman, Former Elementary Teacher, B.S., Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Review
In my 14 years of experience as a speech therapist and eight years of experience as a practicing Certified Yoga Teacher, I have found yoga to be the most effective form of therapy for children with Asperger Syndrome. As a result of using yoga with children with Asperger Syndrome, I have found that these children display increasing overall attention, and greater awareness of their environment as well as increasing overall socialization skills with other children. (Judy E. Stasek, M.S., CCC-SLP, and Certified Yoga Teacher)

I've been practicing yoga for five years with a Certified Yoga Teacher. I have a grandson with Asperger Syndrome who has been doing yoga for about a year. He does especially well with a modified Tree Pose and the modified Spinal Twist. Both poses are relaxing and keep his arms occupied. The Tree is wonderful for strengthening his muscles and helping his balance. The Spinal Twist is a very gentle twist that is good for his upper torso. These yoga poses have helped him release energy in a positive way rather than him “flapping”

his arms. I believe that Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders is an excellent resource for many families who need to find ways for their children to cope with Asperger Syndrome. This book has allowed me to share my love of yoga with my grandson and feel like I contribute to making his life a little bit better. I am grateful to have access to this wonderful resource. (Judy Waldman, Former Elementary Teacher, B.S., Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA)

The book is a guide and there is a chapter on how the guide should be used. It suggests a basic yoga sequence that may be used for a child with ASD. Empahsis is on a well rounded practice to give physical and mental benefits. The postures are divided into four sections: Warm-Ups, Strengthening, Release of Tension and Calming…The postures described are simple and need not be physically demanding and have clear step-by-step instructions. There are also some lovely photographs of Stacey, the mother, assisting and encouraging Joshua into postures. The aim is to help the child connect improve coordination and balance. The focus that comes from trying and holding postures can improve concentration as well as promote a sense of achievement and enjoyment. Attention to the breathing can promote good health and an awareness of the breath helps an awareness of the body. It can then become a tool to use at times of stress, agitation, anger or boredom. (British Journal of Occupational Therapy)

This fully illustrated book draws on the authors' understanding of autism spectrum disorders and also their enthusiasm for yoga and the ways it can be used. It offers step-by-step descriptions of gentle and fun yoga positions and breathing techniques that are effective in dealing with the levels of anxiety, disorientation and tactile sensitivity often found in children with ASDs. The book is easy to follow and aimed at parents and caregivers…This book gives hope that children with ASD can lead lives feeling less stressed and happier by experiencing daily yoga. It gives you the confidence to have a go. (Good Autism Practice.)

This fully-illustrated book combines the authors' professional expertise with their experience of parenting, offering a range of gentle fun yoga positions and breathing techniques that are effective in dealing with the increased levels of anxiety, disorientation and tactile sensitivity often found in children with autism spectrum disorders. (E-Motion)

This is a fantastic book. The introduction explains clearly why the book has come into existence and how you or a caregiver can relax and exercise a child with Autism Spectrum Deficiency. If your child suffers from ASD then there are ways to modify positions to make them easier to get into and following the instructions very easy. This book is recommended to anyone with an interest in teaching yoga to children with learning difficulties. (Yoga Magazine)

About the Author
Dion E. Betts is a special education administrator, adjunct professor, writer, and presenter. His main interest is investigating the experiences of individuals with disabilities and finding ways to help them have satisfactory home, community, and school experiences. He is also co-author of Homespun Remedies: Strategies in the Home and Community for Children with Autism Spectrum and Other Disorders, also published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Stacey W. Betts has been a yoga practitioner for ten years. She is currently on leave from the practice of law and is a homemaker. As an attorney, Stacey assisted families with children with disabilities and women with domestic relations issues. Stacey and Dion live in Lancaster, PA with their five children, one of whom has Asperger Syndrome.

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Arturo Lamb:

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