

RELAXATION IN THE CLASSROOM  
THROUGH YOGA ACTIVITIES

# STRONGER CHILDREN

LESS VIOLENCE 2



**STRONGER CHILDREN – LESS VIOLENCE 2**  
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## RELAXATION IN THE CLASSROOM

### Why not experimenting with yoga activities?

Nowadays, in many pre-primary and primary schools across Europe, yoga exercises are being used and prove effective for children to:

1. relax
2. promote emotional balance and freedom of expression
3. develop awareness of own breathing and body
4. increase socialization
5. reduce anxiety, stress and aggressiveness
6. reduce bullism
7. nurture rational and emotional intelligence
8. enhance learning skills.

In the Stronger Children Collection of Activities, we would like to suggest some simple relaxation activities for pre-primary children as well as several easy steps to meditation for primary children. Teachers can safely experiment with them and might even want to deepen the practice through specific literature and/or yoga teachers specialized in yoga for children.

## Relaxing pre-primary children with yoga activities

### Introduction

The children and the teacher sit on the floor forming a circle; ideally they sit up on pillows. The teacher simulates to hold an imaginary basket placed between the arms and the legs. S/he will pretend to take several imaginary animals from the basket and will produce their movement by moving hands and arms.

As follows:

#### **1. In the basket there are... two snakes**

The teacher says that in the basket two snakes are sleeping. One of the two wakes up and goes up, and up... and up. When the teacher says "up", s/he moves the right arm upwards with a smooth wavelike motion. Fingers are closed to form the snake's while the arm reaches its maximum extension. At this point the teacher says: "And the snake goes down... down... and comes back to the basket", while her/his arm moves downwards wavelike until it rests on the right leg.

The teacher repeats the whole process with the left arm as the other snake is waking up...

The more the movement will be slow, the more the children, by imitating it, will be concentrated on their arm and on the action.

#### **2. From the basket... a butterfly is flying off**

The teacher says: "In the basket a butterfly is awakening..." With slow movements the hands are put behind the nape to form two triangles with the arms. With the back straight, the teacher says: "The butterfly flies... flies... flies" and moves rhythmically the elbows 4 times simulating the flap of a butterfly's wings. Each time the teacher says "flies", there is a flapping. After this movement, the teacher says: "And now it sleeps" and s/he moves the bust on the right side. S/he brings the elbows near to each other and keeps the pose for few seconds. Then, opening and closing the elbows, s/he repeats the formula: "The butterfly flies... flies..." and brings again the bust straight and the hands behind the nape.

- Repeat on the left side 4 times.
- To end the activity, the teacher says: "...and it goes back into the basket", while miming the initial basket again.

#### **3. From the basket... a cricket is jumping**

The teacher says that a cricket is coming out from the basket and puts her/his fingers on the head to mime the antennae of a cricket. S/he says "cree" and flexes her/his torso forward. Then s/he says again "cree" and puts her/his back straight again.

- Repeat 4 times.

#### **4. From the basket... a turtle is coming out**

The teacher unites the soles of the feet and forms a rhombus with the legs. S/he takes the feet with the hands and tries to bring the head towards the heels, through slowly flexing the torso forward.

The teacher says: "The turtle sleeps" and moves her/his head close to the feet as much as s/he can.

When then s/he says "the turtle is waking up", very slowly s/he comes back to the initial pose.

- Repeat 4 times.

#### **5. From the basket... many lions are coming out**

This activity will end the session. The children are in the circle with crossed legs. The teacher says: "From the basket... many lions are coming out." The children and the teacher emit a sonorous lion's and mime the paws and claws of a lion with their arms and legs.

## Relaxing primary school children with yoga activities

The ideal pose to develop the activities would be sitting with crossed legs on a pillow, but this can be uncomfortable for children and not easy to organize in a classroom of primary school children. An easier and practical pose will be sitting on a chair. Ideally the knees will form a right angle between thigh and calf. The feet will touch the floor, the spine will be right, the shoulders relaxed, the head right with chin slightly tucked in. The hands will rest on the legs with the palms up and the eyes will be closed or just kept lowered (half shut). This pose allows being relaxed but present.

### 1. Focus on breathing:

The first step will be to ask children to focus on their breathing, by being aware of their inhaling and exhaling. This awareness tranquillizes. The teacher explains that thoughts can occur and distract us and we only have to gently wait and let the thoughts go away, and then focus again on our breathing.

### 2. Image visualization:

The visualization technique is ideal with children, since they are naturally imaginative. With visualization we ask our mind to create specific images and to control thoughts.

After focusing on breathing, with a gentle voice, the teacher accompanies the children towards their visualizations. For example, s/he can suggest that the children are flowers. The teacher can say: "Now imagine that you are flowers... it's early morning... the sun is just rising... you are flowers... waiting in silence for the sun to appear... Little dewdrops moisten your petals... The sun is rising and your petals open.... slowly you are blooming...you open yourself to the sun".

The teacher brings the children's attention back to breathing: "Breathe naturally. Have a deep breath...feel your body and breathe... Have your eyes closed for one more minute and when you will be ready, open your eyes... You are back to this room now."

Alternatively, you can invite children to imagine that they enter a point within themselves where peace and safety exist, or any external place where they feel calm: "You are in a safe place... in a garden, or in a room... It is a place of peace and stillness... you are calm...".

To make younger children comprehend what they are going to do, teachers can introduce meditation as an activity for creativity and imagination. They can also be explained the benefits: the activities help release fears, become more confident and acquire serenity... Words and concepts used to explain can vary according to the children's age.

Teachers can ask children to talk about their experience of the activity, but only if they wish. If in their feedback they overdo with their imagination, control them with mildness and do not reprove those who could not be involved. Every child has his/her own pace and meditating should be an open and enjoyable experience.



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