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# MailOnline

## How do you make a bunch of nine-year-olds improve their grades? Just make them lie on the floor... and meditate

By [Andrew Levy](#)

UPDATED: 07:12 GMT, 13 April 2011

At such a tender age, they probably don't know their salamba kapotasana from their trikonasana.

But that hasn't stopped these primary school children benefiting from a spot of yoga.

Weekly lessons in the ancient discipline have helped to improve concentration and even raise academic performance among pupils as young as four, say their teachers.



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**Meditation: A teacher takes school pupils in Essex through some relaxation techniques, which are said to improve concentration levels**

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**Standing tall: Teachers say yoga has taught the youngsters body awareness**

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## STRESS? TRY BEING A CORPSE

■ The discipline of yoga was first laid out in writing in the Yoga Sutras a little over 2,000 years ago.

■ Colourfully titled postures include adho mukha svastasana (downward-facing dog), savasana (corpse pose) and halasana (plough).

■ Yoga has about 30million practitioners worldwide.

■ The practice has been found to have a number of health benefits, including lowering blood pressure, reducing stress, helping with depression, and providing relief from back problems.

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### Stress GRAPHIC

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The hour-long classes, which include guidance on how to control breathing using meditation techniques, are being trialled at ten infant and junior schools in Essex.

And while the use of a £20,000 Government grant to fund the lessons will doubtless raise a few eyebrows, especially at a time of economic hardship, teachers insist they are having a positive effect.

Angela Hutchinson, head of Bournemouth Park Primary School in Southend, said the yoga classes – arranged by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council – teach children ‘how to find their own space’, adding: ‘They think it’s fantastic.’

Helen Reader, the deputy headmistress at Thorpedene Infants’ School, in Shoeburyness, Essex, added the classes were having a ‘calming’ effect.



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Younger students tackle a simpler yoga pose. The classes have been introduced in a number of schools in Essex

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PUGH



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Dave Read, 52, one of several instructors helping the children, dismissed the suggestion that bringing yoga into schools was an 'airy-fairy' idea.

The former history teacher said: 'It is ultimately about improving concentration and grades.

'Children are under increasing pressure and this gives them support.'

Yoga dates back around 5,000 years, originating in India, and is aimed at helping people attain spiritual insight and tranquillity.

This is not the first time it has been suggested that the discipline can benefit younger students.

In 2009 Riverside Primary School in Rotherhithe, South East London, scored a 100 per cent pass rate in Sats tests in English, maths and science after pupils were taught breathing exercises by a yoga teacher before the exams.



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[Lucy Pearce](#), Bournemouth, Dorset, 2 years ago

I think this is a fantastic idea. I went through a very traumatic 2 years with my eldest son due to anxiety and worry and anger because no one understood. I think it's a must. There is so much anger and violence in the world today, teaching children to deal with life in a calm relaxed manner is surely a positive thing and one to be encouraged and rolled out across the country.

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[Marcia](#), Arlington, VA, USA, 2 years ago

Would teachers lead children in prayer to relax them? No, of course not. Prayer is seen as religious. However, Yoga is just as religious as prayer. In fact, the asanas honor various Hindu deities. Each pose is very specific and has a spiritual origin and purpose. It's both an insult to Hindus to use Yoga this way (as a relaxant) and an insult to others who are prohibited from their faith being promoted in the schools.

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[Jane Allen](#), Watford, 2 years ago

My daughter went to a yoga class every week when she was 6 - not because I had a great belief in it but because the woman who ran the class was my neighbour and I felt I should support her! We did definitely notice though an improvement in concentration and she slept better after doing the class. Unfortunately the class has stopped or I would certainly encourage her to do it again.

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[L.B.](#), Waiting for the weekend, 2 years ago

What the teachers mean is that it helps them because the kids are quiet, and they the teachers do not have to do anything except think about their next paid, over long holiday. - Ex Pat, Spain, 13/4/2011 7:53 Considering you left UK and went to Spain (ghastly country) you obviously feel you need an extra long holiday with all the other ex pats! The majority of teachers already use this type of technique - delivered in different aspects - but really good teachers want to inspire their class and if the children are rested/relaxed they will be keen and attentive - hence why children of all ages should have regular bed times and get a good nights sleep. Ex Pat please stay in Spain - but I guess as soon as you require the NHS you'll be back demanding treatment from our already overstretched medical fraternity, oh which no doubt you will also believe are overpaid!

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[gobo](#), fraggle rock, 2 years ago

Used to play a game with my two kids called sleeping logs the one that slept longest won. Worked a treat until they got older and sussed it out. Happy days

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[Dee](#), Athlone, Ireland, 2 years ago

Teach them lots more useful things in life as well... Transactional Analysis, typing, shorthand, basic physics/philosophy/logic/economics/electrics/plumbing etc, plus ethics, child-rearing, diet and nutrition, negotiation skills, etc, etc.

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[Mrs. B.](#), G.B., 2 years ago

Nothing new in the 60's we had a rest period at the primary school I went to.

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[James](#), London, 2 years ago

There was a study made with students spending time meditating before an exam, after taking exams they had not meditated before. It was found that their results improved quite markedly when they had been using meditation. As well as having a calming effect, it makes the mind more aware and alert and makes the memory more accessible. Some of the greatest minds throughout history have used this technique to their advantage. It also improves your health and well being and gives you a much more positive outlook to the day - It is such an excellent tool for life that it should be taught in all schools.

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[Chris Wiseman](#), England, 2 years ago

Yoga, meditation, etc etc are merely fashionable names in their respective times for relaxation. Sure, it can help to be guided to some degree in how to relax though that is very simple to do. Relaxation before a task does help one to focus better but it is not necessary at all to lay on the floor just as it is not at all necessary to assume peculiar body distorting positions in other so called disciplines. Merely sitting comfortably and knowing how to relax (very simply taught) one can slow the heart rate to half normal rate during rest and after 10 to 15 minutes can enable anyone to increase their concentration considerably.

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[Tony](#), Surbiton, 2 years ago

Whats new? As a primary school child in the 60's we had a sleep period after lunch. If we all relaxed a bit more, stopped watching the TV violence, stopped filling our heads with 'noise' often called music, we'd all be better off.

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