



SHANTIGENERATION

Guiding Teens to Bring Mindfulness to Life

PARTNER YOGA FOR TEENS TEACHER'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Shanti Generation's Partner Yoga for Teens DVD and teacher's guide provides educators with instructions for 10 mindful sequences designed exclusively for teens.

Each five-minute sequence can enhance the physical, mental, emotional, and social health of adolescents, including neurotypical teens and those with special needs, such as autism. Through physical practices grounded in the development of support, compassion, and teamwork, Partner Yoga for Teens offers youth the tools to more effectively address the negative impacts of bullying and peer pressure.

This guide provides teachers with the information and tools necessary to implement Partner Yoga for Teens in the classroom and school. The program can be implemented in a single class, per grade level, or, for the most impact, as a school-wide initiative. Each five-minute session can be practiced on its own or, for more in-depth practice, consecutively. The program has the flexibility to meet the needs of a variety of students, classroom structures, and school programs.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through Shanti Generation's Partner Yoga for Teens, students will:

- a) Improve strength, flexibility, and endurance
- b) Learn and practice effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- c) Develop breath awareness and apply in yoga and daily life
- d) Co-create a supportive environment with diverse individuals
- e) Identify and express feelings and listen empathically to others
- f) Make connections and build relationships with peers

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Students and teachers can return to these overarching investigations throughout the practice of Partner Yoga to expand learning and deepen understanding.

- Why do people practice yoga? What do we learn from practicing partner yoga?
- What does effective communication look like, sound like, or feel like?
- How do we measure our growth in the practice of yoga?
- What do healthy relationships have in common?
- What is collaboration?

WHY PARTNER YOGA FOR TEENS?

Partner Yoga for Teens sequences provide tools and opportunities to:

- improve nonverbal and verbal communication
- reduce fatigue, relieve stress, enhance mood
- improve focus and concentration
- enhance respect for self and others
- increase awareness of abilities and limitations
- stretch and strengthen the body
- develop mindfulness and breath awareness



BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH

For more than 3,000 years, yoga enthusiasts have enjoyed the benefits of the mind and body connection that the practice emphasizes. In addition to developing physical strength, balance, and flexibility, yoga has been shown to reduce stress, diminish anxiety, improve mental clarity, and enhance mood. Experts also agree that a regular yoga practice can improve concentration and decision-making skills, promote a healthy body image, and reduce the incidence of disruptive classroom behaviors. The practice of partner yoga specifically develops trust, compassion, and communication—all aspects of healthy relationships.

Shanti Generation was founded in 2009 in response to a need for youth-centric yoga and mindfulness resources. Our programs are informed by over 16 years of fieldwork with youth in schools, community centers and yoga studios. We merge simplified yogic techniques in a progressive, developmental style of education that meets social, emotional, mental and physical needs of young people.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

In 2011, Harvard Medical School conducted a study on how a yoga practice would benefit the psychosocial wellbeing of high school students. Researchers replaced regular physical-education classes with yoga postures, breathing exercises, relaxation, and meditation instruction. The study demonstrated that students achieved improved mood and reduced stress and were able to maintain those benefits beyond their non-yoga counterparts.

A 2012 study conducted by Yoga Journal revealed that over 20 million Americans practice yoga and that a majority of those people experience immediate and ongoing benefits. Benefits have been shown to include enhanced metabolism and other biological functions as well as reduced stress hormones and tension. Yoga practitioners also enjoy increased muscular strength and enhanced cardiorespiratory function. Beyond physical benefits, yoga has been shown to elicit improved emotional and mental states, an enriched sense of self, and a heightened connection to others and to our surroundings. Partner Yoga for Teens has addresses all these benefits of a yoga practice, but focuses in on the potential psychosocial and emotional benefits.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Partner Yoga for Teens provides tools for a fun, invigorating, and reflective yoga practice. Teachers and administrators with little to no experience with yoga can safely implement this program by following the instructions on the DVD. Below are some tips to help get the most out of Partner Yoga for Teens DVD.

WHO: Any group of teens can benefit from Partner Yoga for Teens. It is highly recommended that students choose their own partners, at least in the beginning. This will build the opportunity for students to select a partner with whom they feel safe. Over time, learning can deepen by having students change and work with randomized partners but begin with student choice. Ideally, students also have the choice to participate. Partner Yoga will be most effective if it is the student's own choice to take part in the program. If a student is reluctant, she can observe, or manage the DVD player, or participate in another way that feels safe until she is ready. With time and encouragement, all students generally choose to join.

WHAT: To practice Partner Yoga for Teens, teachers will need to gather: a television, projector or computer with a DVD player or internet streaming capabilities that will allow students to follow along as the exercises are described and demonstrated. Yoga or tumbling mats are helpful to provide grip and comfort for students during exercises but it is also possible to practice on a clean, non-slippery floor or a flat, grassy area. Supplemental materials might include journals for students to reflect on their experience and chart paper to record student responses to Essential Questions. Students should be advised about appropriate clothing to wear the day before participating in Partner Yoga for Teens. Clothing should be loose and comfortable. Clothing that is too tight or short is best avoided. Students can wear clothing similar to what they would wear for gym class. Students can also look to the teens in the Partner Yoga for Teens DVD for examples of what to wear.

WHEN: Because some poses involve twisting and bending at the waist, it is not recommended to practice Partner Yoga for Teens immediately after lunch. Use Partner Yoga for Teens in the way that makes the most sense within your school setting. For example, it might replace one session of PE per week or be used daily as a way to open the class and/or as a release at the end of the class. The practice can be of special benefit during stressful times, such as testing. It can also provide a warm-up to facilitate discussion and healing if the school or community experiences a trauma. Note: It is most beneficial if practiced regularly, whether in short daily sessions, longer weekly ones, or in another routine.



WHERE: The practice of yoga requires little space or equipment, though each pair will need enough space to move freely. Because concentration and focus is essential to a successful session, a quiet space is especially beneficial. Some recommendations include: practicing in the school gym with workout mats, shifting tables aside in classrooms to make space to practice on the floor, or taking the class outside to a flat, grassy area to practice Partner Yoga for Teens.

HOW: Partner Yoga sequences may be performed one at a time, or consecutively, enabling teachers to tailor Partner Yoga practice based on available time. Throughout, when presenting Partner Yoga for Teens, try to adopt a curious and supportive attitude. The yoga practice should be a time during which everyone can relax and feel safe.

Step 1: Start with the Introduction. Watch it together and allow students time to comment and/or ask questions. Before moving on to practice the Partner Yoga sequences, teachers and students should watch each one together. Watching and listening before practicing the sequence will support student learning and increase success when students try the Partner Yoga together. Use this time to allow students the opportunity to understand what they will be doing and to answer any questions. Some students may want to mimic the movements on their own while watching support kinesthetic understanding.

Step 2: View and practice sessions 1-3 along with the final sequence, Rejuvenation Do these four sequences several times with partners before proceeding on to the other sequences. In particular, “Rise and Fly” is the most advanced sequence and should be attempted after students have experience and/or only for students that feel comfortable and ready to try something new.

Essential Questions: As makes sense for your class, provide one or more Essential Question for discussion before starting, at some point in the middle (whether weekly or bi-monthly), and at the end of the program. This will expand the conceptual and social emotional potential of Partner Yoga and support student development. In particular, guide students to reflect on ways to apply tools from yoga—mindful breathing, working together, listening—in their daily lives. It can also serve as an informal assessment to gain a sense of what students are learning and taking away from the program and help teachers know what to adjust, emphasize, or articulate more clearly for each group of teens.

WHY: In addition to all the benefits listed on page 1, allow students themselves to find the ways in which Partner Yoga for Teens is beneficial for them. Some ways to do this could be: create a board or chart in the classroom where students can record ongoing replies to one or more Essential Question; take time at the end of each session for students to talk in small groups or as a whole about what they learned; another option is for students to keep a journal documenting their progress and experience. (If you plan to read the journals, let students know that beforehand.) Use these informal assessments to help you determine the pace and frequency of Partner Yoga for Teens for your particular group of students.

PARTNER YOGA FOR TEENS SEQUENCES

Partner Yoga for Teens sequences are designed to provide maximum physical, social, and emotional benefits. Each five-minute sequence is fully narrated and demonstrated by teens. The sequences can be performed individually or sequentially. The following provides an overview of each sequence:

I'VE GOT YOUR BACK

Featured Poses: Easy (cross-legged) pose, Forward fold, Supported backbend

Emphasis: Listening, breath awareness

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Provide and receive support

Physical Benefits: Stretches spine, hips, upper and lower back, shoulders, and chest

ESTABLISH TRUST

Featured Poses: Diamond pose, Mountain pose, Chair pose

Emphasis: Finding balance, respecting self and other

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Build trust with a partner

Physical Benefits: Strengthens legs, stretches shoulders and chest

TAKE A STAND

Featured Poses: Mountain pose, Tree pose, Ally bow

Emphasis: Feel your strength, share your strength

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Hold own center while supporting someone else

Physical Benefits: Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine; stretches hips, inner thighs, chest, and shoulders; improves balance and stability

WAVE OF GRATITUDE

Featured Poses: Mountain pose, Triangle pose, Warrior II, Ally bow

Emphasis: Fluidity, collaboration

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Practice alternating supporting and yielding

Physical Benefits: Stretches and strengthens thighs, knees, ankles, chest; improves balance; stretches hips, waist, and shoulders

BUILDING A FRIENDSHIP

Featured Poses: Diamond pose, Forward fold, Boat pose, Ally bow

Emphasis: Peace in rhythm, listening

Primary Social-Emotional Benefits: Recognize abilities and limitations, enhance calm, can also decrease insomnia

Physical Benefits: Stretches hips, legs, spine, shoulders, hamstrings and neck; enhances balance

LEAN ON ME

Featured Poses: Child's pose, Easy (cross-legged) pose, Diamond pose, Supported backbend, Ally bow

Emphasis: Relaxation, taking turns

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Enhance nonverbal and verbal communication, reduce stress and anxiety

Physical Benefits: Stretches hips, chest, abdominals, back, and neck

RISE AND FLY

Featured Poses: Child's pose, Double downward facing dog, Forward flying

Emphasis: Steadiness in challenge

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Develop focus and gain a sense of accomplishment

Physical Benefits: Stretches shoulders, hamstrings, calves, feet, and hands; strengthens arms, shoulders, chest, legs, and core

WE ARE DIVERSE AND CONNECTED

Featured Poses: Easy (cross-legged) pose, Partner infinity twist, Forward fold, Diamond pose, Ally bow

Emphasis: Ease and support

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Enhance calm and mood

Physical Benefits: Stretches chest, abdominals, shoulders, spine, neck, inner thighs, and hips

STRENGTHEN THE CORE OF FRIENDSHIP

Featured Poses: Diamond pose, Leg lift, Reclining spinal twist

Emphasis: Calm strength

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Enhance partnership and increase energy

Physical Benefits: Strengthens legs, hips, abdominals, and shoulders; stretches hips, abdominals, shoulders, and chest

REJUVENATE TOGETHER

Featured Poses: Savasana, ally bow

Emphasis: Rest and relaxation

Primary Social-Emotional Benefit: Encourage calm, release tension, and boost gratitude

Physical Benefits: Relaxation and rejuvenation

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCING PARTNER YOGA TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

We know it can be intimidating to try something new in the classroom. That's why we designed our curriculum to make the work of teachers easier while creating an environment that engages and empowers students. Here are our tips for successfully introducing a partner yoga program:

- Let the families know. We've provided a sample letter (Appendix F) that will introduce your families to Partner Yoga and explain the ways that their children will benefit from the program.
- Start small. It may take a few sessions for students to grow accustomed to working with partners and the sequences. Be patient, and stick with it.
- Be consistent. The more frequently and regularly you use our exercises, the more your students and classroom will benefit. As students become familiar with the techniques, they will look forward to the exercises.
- Have fun with it. As students demonstrate understanding and ability, invite them to take turns leading the exercises.
- Learn more. See Resources (Appendix H) for ideas about where to read, listen, watch, and learn more about yoga.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The Shanti Generation Partner Yoga for Teens DVD includes six video interviews with real teen yoga students. These clips are designed to be shared with students, parents, and faculty to demonstrate the positive impact that partner yoga can have on teens. With yoga experience varying between one and ten years, the teens represent a diverse community of learners including athletes, artists, skateboarders, and performers. Several of the participants live on the autism spectrum. Each teen shares insights as to how Partner Yoga has improved their lives in the following ways:

- Reduced bullying
- Increased sense of compassion
- Improved feelings of empowerment
- Enhanced dedication to community
- Enriched partnerships and trust in classmates
- Diminished stress

Visit our blog for ideas on utilizing this content in your classroom, including discussion points and inspiring quotes from teens. <http://shantigeneration.com/blog/>

COMPANION PROGRAMS

In addition to the Shanti Generation Partner Yoga for Teens DVD, we offer a unique curriculum that guides older children and teens through a personal yoga practice. This program can be used in tandem with the Partner Yoga for Teens DVD.

We are also completing a curriculum that cultivates mindfulness in the classroom. The practice of mindfulness has been shown to improve focus, manage stress, enhance self-awareness, and so much more. To learn more about these programs, visit our website at <http://www.shantigeneration.com>.





SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

APPENDIX A ABBY’S STORY: SHANTI GENERATION AND PARTNER YOGA

APPENDIX B WHAT TEENS HAVE TO SAY

APPENDIX C STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

APPENDIX D YOGA IN THE CLASSROOM: ONE TEACHER’S EXPERIENCE

APPENDIX E INTEGRATING YOGA INTO THE CURRICULUM

APPENDIX F LETTER TO FAMILIES

APPENDIX A

FROM OUR DIRECTOR, ABBY WILLS: SHANTI GENERATION AND PARTNER YOGA

One of the greatest joys of my life has been teaching yoga in schools for nearly two decades. I've found yoga to benefit all kinds of teens in every type of setting. When I became pregnant with my first child, I knew I needed to find a creative way to stay connected with this work, but not have to drive all over Los Angeles every day visiting dozens of schools each month.

I decided to invest my energy into co-creating Shanti Generation, a media company dedicated to serving youth with age appropriate yoga and mindfulness resources. Our first DVD, Yoga Skills for Youth Peacemakers, provides teens and teachers with numerous practices to develop a personal yoga practice.

Partner Yoga for Teens DVD naturally followed as our second resource, as I have witnessed how effective partner yoga is for teens. I recall one of the first times I guided teens in the partner practice. It was early in my teaching career at a middle school. Our class took place in a classroom shared with many other activities, including the school's board meetings. We showed up one day, very early in the year, to discover the board had occupied our classroom! We headed over to a nearby park for our class session, with no mats or other classroom resources.

My students needed some kind of anchor to find their way into the practice in the wide open space of a park. So, we used what we had: each other! Students found safety and security working with their peers. Their attention was immediately focused on their partner, rather than their surroundings.

I have found partner yoga to help teens feel less vulnerable and more engaged in learning. Rather than being a social distraction, partner yoga practice actually aids teens in developing healthier relationships based on the principles of trust, support, compassion and empathy.

I hope you will find our resources truly enriching to your classroom experience.

My Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Abby".

APPENDIX B

WHAT TEENS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT SHANTI GENERATION PARTNER YOGA

"A lot of times you only see the outer surface of people. Yoga helps you find an emotional connection." - Dante, 15

"Yoga can help you build friendships." - Bryant, 16

"You really build physically, emotionally, and in every aspect of your life." - Kimberly, 14

"It really helps me with sports." - Gyasi, 14

"When I finish yoga, I feel so full of love and energy and it makes me want to go out and help others." - Emma, 16

"When I take yoga class I feel like I can let go of any stress (and) anything that bothers me." - Kaya, 13

"It centers my body and my soul and I feel really calm when I'm doing it. Yoga helps me clear my mind and think of the important things I need to achieve." - Jonathan, 16

"There is just a different feeling you have with a person you've done yoga with. You have a bond that goes beyond the classroom." - Herson, 15

"It's not about the end result but the journey. When you take a journey toward a common goal with a group, it's even more memorable." - Reyna, 16

"It's about compassion and finding a common ground with people you wouldn't even normally talk to." - Rachel, 14

"It brings you closer to people you wouldn't necessarily be close to. Outside the yoga (class), you have a connection with that person and it brings everyone closer together." - Dante, 15

"We all have to deal with stress, and whenever I'm stressed out, yoga helps me stop, think, and overcome it." - Jonathan, 16

APPENDIX C

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Educators, parents, and medical professionals are recognizing the benefits of yoga for children and teens with special needs.

The Shanti Generation Partner Yoga for Teens has been effective with students who demonstrate heightened anxiety, poor motor coordination, limited self-regulation, as well as symptoms of stress, trauma, and/or autism spectrum disorders. The program combines yoga, character development, social skills, and physical fitness for all students, including those with special needs. Emphasizing ability rather than disability, the program specifically helps special-needs students:

- Increase focus and concentration
- Boost self-confidence and empowerment
- Develop personal relationships and connections with others
- Demonstrate compassion and empathy
- Reduce stress and develop coping skills
- Improve self-awareness and self-regulation
- Develop and increase strength, balance, coordination, and flexibility
- Cultivate a culture of acceptance
- Promote a healthy and active lifestyle

While most special-needs students can benefit from individual or partner yoga practice, it's important to consider the individual. We recommend obtaining approval from parents and doctors before beginning any type of exercise routine.



APPENDIX D

YOGA IN THE CLASSROOM: ONE TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

I was working as a bilingual elementary schoolteacher in the Pico Union area of Los Angeles in 1996 when I took Yoga Teacher Training. Like many new yoga teachers, I was very excited about the practice and wanted to share it with everyone!

Yoga was popular then, but not nearly as much as it is today, and it was certainly uncommon in the area where I taught. Poverty, overcrowding, and gang violence were primary challenges in the community. Many of my third graders were behind in reading or school in general. Needless to say, we had a lot of important things to accomplish in each short day. So one might wonder, why yoga? It was the students that taught me the answer to that question.

One day, brimming with enthusiasm and knowledge from my yoga teacher training, I decided to show the class some poses. I remember the magical quiet that settled over that room. To my surprise, they took to the practice as readily and with as much relish as I had. I think, more than anything, the sense of calm that mindful breathing and movement elicit had the most impact on them. Calm was a rare and cherished commodity. After that, we practiced yoga a few times a week. In that first class, it was one part of our day that was organic; it was not scheduled, but rather we practiced when one of the students would suggest it.

One session that stands out to me is the time that a particular student, who was relatively new to the country and still learning English, clearly remembered the Sanskrit name for Warrior Pose. Legs strong, head held high, and eyes steady, he called out “Virabhadrasana!” This boy had already overcome so much in his short life and he seemed to embody the pose like a natural. I had been conscious of explaining that we would be peaceful warriors but his memory of the ancient name, and the honesty with which he expressed it, surpassed such divisions.

I have taught yoga to children, teens, and teachers since that time. In some schools, it was part of an after-school program, held in the auditorium or on the grass. In other schools, students practiced on mats laid out on the tile floor. In one school, we started a yoga program with a whole room dedicated to the practice and students from every grade came for weekly sessions. I have taught 5-minute mindful breathing exercises to elementary school teachers sitting on hard chairs in libraries and yoga and art to parents and children in expansive museum spaces. There is no single way to teach yoga or partner yoga.

Currently, I teach art to university students and practice yoga at home. It provides a daily dose of calm and centering, and it's fun. Recently, one of my graduate students took a yoga teacher training and started teaching kids at a local elementary school. The circle of yoga—and the calm and connection it brings—continues to grow. Partner Yoga can stretch it to classrooms across the nation.

Annie Buckley

Artist, Writer, & Educator

APPENDIX E

INTEGRATING PARTNER YOGA FOR TEENS INTO THE CLASSROOM

INQUIRY

Post one or more Essential Question in the Classroom. Allow space for students to write, draw, or otherwise respond in a communal way.

Use the Essential Questions, or other questions that arise from the practice, as a focus in small or whole group class discussions.

Use the Teen Allies videos or the Partner Yoga Sequences and work with students to select a word of the week—compassion, collaboration, support, or something else—to be the focus for class and outside interactions.

ART

Use the Sequences as the inspiration for collaborative drawing. Students work in groups of three and take turns drawing a pair in the yoga poses.

Create a collage based on one of the themes from the sequences. Let students choose something meaningful to them from the sequences, whether it's relaxation, partnership, empathy, or something else.

Let students be inspired by the yoga sequences to create sculptures in clay or with found objects. These can be figurative, based on the poses, or metaphorical/poetic, based on the ideas or feelings of the sequences.

SCIENCE / SOCIAL SCIENCE

Yoga involves deep awareness of the body, mind, and breath. It can be integrated with units of study about the human body or emotions.

The practice and philosophy of yoga derive from India. Learning yoga can connect to the study of geography, history, or culture of India.

Students might investigate who practices yoga around the world and the ways that social, cultural, and economic forces impact the practice.

CREATIVE WRITING / LITERATURE

Students might create a play, story, or other narrative based on their experience of one of the sequences.

Yoga can elicit a variety of feelings, including states of calm or peacefulness; these feelings can be the inspiration for poetry.

DANCE / PHYSICAL FITNESS

Partner Yoga can complement and enhance PE programs.

Students can use yoga as a warm up or complement to Dance.

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE LETTER TO FAMILIES

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I would like to share an update on what is happening in our classroom this month and a few ideas for supporting your child's learning process.

[Here add 2-3 highlights on the months' curriculum. What are you covering? Are there any projects underway you want parents to know about? Is there a positive moment or event that stands out from the previous month? Presenting partner yoga in the context of what is happening in your classroom will help parents see how it "fits in" to their child's school lives.]

I also want to let you know that we have started to integrate partner yoga into our classroom activities. By taking a few moments each week to tune in to our bodies, breath, and mind, we are learning to stay present in the moment and de-stress. The resource I am utilizing was created especially for teens by Shanti Generation, a media company dedicated to guiding teens to live mindfully.

Feel free to ask your child about this process of learning partner yoga and remind them to bring the practice into their home lives'.

Thank you for all you do to support your child's school experience. Every bit of attention and encouragement means more than you may know.

Sincerely,