

# Yoga can have social benefits for children in care, says a new study

December 13 2016, by Charlotte Anscombe

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Credit: University of Nottingham

A new study from The University of Nottingham has found that a certain type of yoga could potentially help to improve the health and psychological wellbeing of children in care.

The study, 'Kundalini Yoga as Mutual Recovery: A feasibility study including [children](#) in care and their carers,' published at The Journal of Children's Services, found that the practice of Kundalini yoga in care homes, when both staff and children are involved, can lead to both individual and social benefits.

Corporate care is far from perfect, with evidence showing that children in care are still among the most vulnerable in society. Research for the Department for Education has also shown that children in care have a higher degree of physical and mental health needs than their not-in-care counterparts, and in comparison to children who are in other forms of

care, such as foster care.

## **'Creative practice as mutual recovery'**

This new study was carried out under the belief of 'creative practice as mutual recovery', and looked at the idea that shared creativity, collective experience and mutual benefit can promote resilience in [mental health](#) and well-being among communities that have been traditionally divided (e.g. children's home staff and children).

The study was carried out by experts from The University of Nottingham's Institute of Mental Health in conjunction with external collaborators Mark Ball, Edge of Care Hub Manager at Nottingham City Council (Children and Families), Emily Haslam-Jones, Kundalini yoga teacher at Yoganova and David Crepaz-Keay from the Mental Health Foundation.

The experts tested a 20-week Kundalini yoga program in three children's homes situated in the East Midlands. The program was evaluated according to recruitment and retention rates, self-reporting questionnaires from the participants and semi-structured interviews.

The findings show that yoga practice in children's homes, especially when participation is high, has the potential to encourage togetherness and mutuality and improve health and psychological outcomes for children in care, as well as within the workforce.

All the participants reported that the study was personally meaningful and experienced both individual (i.e. feeling more relaxed) and social benefits (e.g. feeling more open and positive).

## **Far-reaching social benefits**

Individuals reported that the yoga sessions helped to show them beneficial exercises that they could use in various contexts, such as before going to bed, or during emotionally challenging times at work as well as at home.

The social benefits were also far-reaching with some participants reporting that they felt more positive, open to others and, as a consequence, had seen an improvement in their social lives and out of work.

Some staff and residents noticed that other people also interacted more positively with them.

Dr Elvira Perez, a Senior Research Fellow at Horizon, member of the Institute of Mental Health, and lead author of the study, says: "The findings are very exciting as they suggest that the practice of Kundalini [yoga](#), involving both staff and children in care, is a plausible intervention that can lead to individual and social benefits. This could have potentially huge, wide-reaching benefits for children in care as well as for all the staff working in residential settings.

"The study has generated a number of valuable guiding principles and recommendations that might underpin the development of any future intervention for children in care and the staff working in these homes."

**More information:** Kundalini yoga as mutual recovery: a feasibility study including children in care and their carers:

[www.emeraldinsight.com/eprint/.../Q9HKEJ7FSSVI6QZ/full](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/eprint/.../Q9HKEJ7FSSVI6QZ/full)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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