

# School-based yoga can help children better manage stress and anxiety

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Participating in yoga and mindfulness activities at school helps third-graders exhibiting anxiety improve their wellbeing and emotional health, according to a new Tulane University study published in the journal *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*.

Researchers worked with a public school in New Orleans to add mindfulness and [yoga](#) to the school's existing empathy-based programming for students needing supplementary support. Third graders who were screened for symptoms of anxiety at the beginning of the school year were randomly assigned to two groups. A control group of 32 students received care as usual, which included counseling and other activities led by a school social worker.

The intervention group of 20 students participated in small group yoga/mindfulness activities for eight weeks using a Yoga Ed curriculum. Students attended the small group activities at the beginning of the [school](#) day. The sessions included breathing exercises, guided relaxation and several traditional yoga poses appropriate for children.

Researchers evaluated each group's health related quality of life before and after the intervention, using two widely recognized research tools. The Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale-Peabody Treatment Progress Battery version was used to assess life satisfaction, and the Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory was used to assess psychosocial conditions and emotional well-being at the beginning, middle and end of the study.

"The intervention improved psychosocial and emotional quality of [life](#) scores for students, as compared to their peers who received standard care," said principal author Alessandra Bazzano, associate professor of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences at Tulane University School of Public Health. "We also heard from teachers about the benefits of using yoga in the classroom, and they reported using yoga more often each week, and throughout each day in class, following the professional development component of intervention."

Researchers targeted third grade because it is a crucial time of transition for elementary students, when academic expectations increase.

"Our initial work found that many kids expressed anxious feelings in third grade as the classroom work becomes more developmentally complex," Bazzano said. "Even younger children are experiencing a lot of stress and anxiety, especially around test time."

**More information:** Alessandra N Bazzano et al, Effect of mindfulness and yoga on quality of life for elementary school students and teachers: results of a randomized controlled school-based study, *Psychology Research and Behavior Management* (2018). [DOI: 10.2147/PRBM.S157503](#)

Provided by Tulane University

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