

Connecting With Others in Healthy Ways (CWO) additional questions:

Eventually Group Yoga & Mindfulness for Teens Intervention Proposal

1. Describe how the intervention includes intentional activities to have people CWO.

Yoga and Mindfulness are both means of connecting with our own selves more deeply and finding peace within ourselves. However, these practices also include specific activities for participants to connect with others, both physically and spiritually. For example, we often work with another student to do partner poses - two students using each others' body weight to go deeper into a posture, or support one another. It's a lot of fun, and very suited to the teen age group that we are targeting. Spiritually, practicing yoga and MFN encourages compassion and kindness and works on the idea that, by finding peace and calm within ourselves, we can then direct it outwards towards others.

2. Describe how the intervention increases participant's reliable support by increasing their social network.

Everyone, including teenagers, need a support network - people around them whom they can trust, and with whom they can find common ground. Practising yoga engenders a mutual love and understanding among practitioners, and participants very quickly feel they are part of something much bigger than them, that they have a 'tribe', a Moai (community), made up of people of like mind and a desire to be a force for good in the world. In addition to peers, it is also common for students to form an attachment to their yoga teachers and see them as mentors and another trusted adult that they can talk to and from whom they can seek support.

3. Describe how it connects one demographic with another in a measurable way (kids to adults, teens to children, men to women, community to community, gov't to constituents...).

Yoga is for everybody and every body! It is an excellent intergenerational activity and lifestyle that holds no boundaries in terms of who can practice. Despite being seen largely as a female pursuit, men and women practice alongside each other, and more and more boys are becoming interested in yoga as a means to stay strong and tackle stress. Babies as young as 6 weeks can do yoga with their mums and there are many benefits for both parent and child when families practice yoga together. A yogic lifestyle encourages longevity, so that we see many people in their 60s, 70s, 80s and even 90s embracing the benefits of yoga and MFN, and one is certainly never too old to begin! For the teens that develop a deep interest in yoga, I would very much like to encourage them to assist me and my teachers in classes for younger children, so that they might be seen as very positive examples and inspire the younger generation to live healthy, active lives.

4. Describe how it provides education and /or training in either interpersonal skills or self-improvement skills (e.g. Stress management, meditation).

Research with adults suggests that contemplative practices such as meditation and yoga impart a variety of benefits, from improved attention to reduced stress. Increasingly, these practices are being adapted for use with children, including teens, and introduced into childhood education in order to foster the development of key self-regulation skills required for academic achievement and emotional well-being. Adopting yoga and Mindfulness has been shown to provide many self-improvement skills in the areas of academic, cognitive, and psychosocial benefits., including:

- The ability to cope with and self-regulate negative emotions, such as anger
- An improved level of self-awareness regarding stress and stressful situations
- less anxious behavior, such as fidgeting, and a reduced cortisol level which can help control weight and heart health
- Improved body image and therefore reduced likelihood to resort to disordered eating behaviour
- Improved relationships both at home and amongst peer groups
- Drop in behavioural referrals at school
- An improvement in their positive affect and a decreased level of anxiety
- Improved academic grades.

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