

SPEAKER:

Recording in progress.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

Hello and welcome! Welcome everyone! I'm Kristina Graff, my pronouns are she and her and I'm the head of social impact here at Yoga Alliance. I'm also your host for today's Webinar Yoga For Adolescent Mental Health: Understanding The Developing Brain.

Welcome to today's Webinar, Yoga For Adolescent Mental Health: Understanding The Developing Brain. As people enter the room and answer the poll, I'm gonna go ahead and introduce today's presenters. It is my pleasure to welcome Pooja Sharma and Doctor Margaret Jessop.

I will talk about each of our presenters. Pooja is a mom and studio founder and is also known for his love of philosophy. Pooja specializes in yoga and meditation for babies through teens and in meditation and philosophy. Through philosophy, her goal is to masterfully detail the texts of yoga traditions in a digestible way and guide students to make an actionable plan for all of the stages of life.

As a yoga educator, she often leads training programs in local schools for staff and teachers. And we also have Doctor Margaret Jessop, who was introduced to yoga while attending UC Berkeley. It was a perfect counterpoint to her rigorous training with the rowing team.

After visiting her undergraduate degree in psychology, she worked as a preschool teacher and she was facilitated (unknown term) each day at naptime. Margaret went back to school and has been working with children and youth ever since. She completed her training during the pandemic and has been incorporating them in her workshops for parents and children for the past eight years.

We will also drop this information in the chats you can read the information I just highlighted. They will be diving into the topic on how to foster adolescent development, including lesson plan tips and classroom techniques.

One final note before I handed off: today's workshop is eligible for CE credits and techniques, trainings and practice. Instructions will be shared in the chat below. And with that, I passed the mic over to Pooja and Margaret to get started.

POOJA SHARMA:

Thank you so much for that wonderful welcome. Welcome everyone from Yoga Alliance. I'm Pooja and this is Margaret along with me. We have spent time on this presentation and I'm about to share my screen so you can jump in and see. Here we go!

Yoga for adolescent mental health: the changing brain and how yoga can help. Feel free to -- start dropping in your questions because we love to hear what everyone has to say. Here's an overview of what Margaret and I will talk to you about today.

Margaret will talk about two topics about adolescents, changes within the adolescents from a generalist brain to specialist, how the changes in the brain are creating different mental health concerns, vulnerabilities, drop-in level of dopamine and the impact on mood. She is also going to talk about how adolescents see and behave with their peers, that impact on home life to focusing on peers and building skills of identifying intentions of others, increasing risk taking behavior, and belonging versus fitting in.

Then I will shift into how do you leverage all of this knowledge in your classes? For those of you joining us who are teaching kids today or adolescents, start throwing in some of the questions you have about the length of class, age group, what to teach, how to set it up, as well as any questions for Margaret along some of the things you are saying in a classroom setting that you want to talk about because the age groups are so different when you start getting into ages 6 to 8 versus the adolescents.

I've been teaching kids for so long and I feel like my groups that are adolescent, the age range has actually changed. Meaning I used to have 13 to 15-year-olds but now it seems like some of the 11-year-olds need to get into that class.

With that, I'm going to hand it off to Margaret and we will start with understanding the adolescent mind.

MARGARET JESSOP:

Thank you so much! That was such a lovely overview for all of us. I do want to give a quick acknowledgment to Doctor Dan Siegel, we will be pulling information from his book. I included the reference to that at the end of this presentation. It's a book called Brainstorm and it is a lovely tool for both adults and adolescents to read.

If you want to dive deeper into any of these topics, that is the resource I would encourage you to consider. I am wanting to remind everyone what adolescents is from a brain perspective, from the

changing brains perspective. I want you to ask yourself right now: are you an adolescent? Some of you are going to say yes and some are going to say no.

And now if I tell you the adolescent changing brain is in this time span of 12 to 25, how many have to shift their category? Alright, you got a little mental note of that.

For those of you in adolescence, welcome! And for those of you who have passed through that time period, I would like you to take a minute to go back to adolescence and think about all of the different experiences you had, thanks you were learning about or trying out, and just remember if you can all of the different pieces to you that have helped build you into adulthood.

And this idea of the brain moving from a generalist to a specialist comes from this concept of the super learning capacity of the brain. Early in life, 0 to 12, the brain can learn anything at super speeds. And that takes in a lot of information and wires it into the brain.

And so the more we understand that piece, the better we will understand the next transition that takes place. Let's go ahead and move to the next slide.

So your brain, all of our brains are filled with neurons and neurons, literally as many in your brain as there are stars in the galaxy. It is the most complicated thing on the planet. And in that super learning phase of 0 to 12, we are taking in all sorts of information that's getting wired into the brain. So that we don't have to think about it and it gets wired in so once we learn to walk, we don't have to keep remembering. It's wired in and becomes natural for us.

With that super learning phase, you are going to probably imagine there are some things that you will continue on and do in life and there are some things that you might not. And this is the concept of coming from a generalist, I will learn anything and everything, to maybe I'm going to pick and choose and become a little more specialized in what it is I want to spend my time doing.

Next slide. This is what it looks like. This is what real, live patterns of neurons connected to each other through practice start to look like. This is an actual picture of what the inside of our brain looks like. It's unbelievably amazing and complicated, and we are trying to simplify it so this all makes sense.

So with that visual in mind, as we move from a generalist to a specialist, we have to prune back the neurons that were not being used anymore. If you played an instrument in the early years and decided

it's not the right one for you, your brain is no longer creating neurotransmitters to keep those neurons alive and well and strong.

So neurotransmitters are to our brain, what sun and water are to our plants and earth. They are a part of the system, so if we stop watering something, it prunes back. That's normal and it's supposed to happen. It's meant to let -- room be created in the brain so that we can do more.

In the process of creating space, it turns out some mental health vulnerabilities can emerge. It's normal. So we know one of the reasons this was looked into was that we were seeing the onset of most challenging mental health problems emerging in the adolescent years - that's the normal period for the brain, if it's going to have a challenge, is going to show itself.

And just so I can clarify challenge or stress, stress is a change in our physiology. And the more we know and understand that, and Yoga Teachers, you are the best and already ahead of the game because you are already working in the body and organizing your knowledge of yourself around what you feel inside of the body.

For some people that's not as intuitive as it is for the group that's with us today, but these changes in physiology our heart rate, and our breath, when we get stressed our shoulders move forward and we feel it in the chest. Our blood flow changes and our gut can stop when we are stressed, so then we feel pain and we might feel like we need to use the restroom more often.

Difficult concentrating outside of the body because the body keep sending us all these messages so we cannot settle in. So yoga helps with all aspects of both stress, from what's changing in the brain and mind, and in the body.

What I just described is called the fight, flight, or freeze response and it starts in a very small part of the brain called the amygdala. By the way, you can download this handout from my website and it's in my workbook, and for more information on this topic specifically, the Yoga Alliance Pooja and I hosted in February, there's more about this on this presentation if you want to dive a little deeper into the specifics around this but for the sake of our conversation today, stress is a change in physiology and it starts from this really tiny spot in the brain called the amygdala, which I like to call the hornet, especially with children so that they can have a visual.

These mental health, these are the building blocks of normal -- stress response, but overwhelmed can create vulnerability into meeting the marks for say an anxiety disorder or a difficulty, or others.

So here's another piece to what's happening inside the brain. We are living our lives 0 to 12 and maybe you remember this transition where life seems pretty cool and you could get really excited about smaller things, and now all of a sudden the world seems a little heavier. Maybe things feel a little more serious and maybe even it feels like things got sad in your mind - this is also what's part of happening in adolescents.

We get a drop in a neurotransmitter called -- dopamine but now that level comes down in adolescence. It seems kind of cruel that at such an early age it can happen as 11 or 12, depending on what Pooja was saying, we are seeing younger people having these experiences because adolescents is different for everyone based on how their body works but once this dopamine drops, in order for the brain to re-create that normal feeling or baseline feeling, we have to do things to create dopamine for ourselves.

And what that looks like an adolescents is risk-taking. We see adolescents being willing to take risks. They are really good at it! They know how to do it better than us, as adults who have passed the 25-year-old mark. They are willing to do things that adults are not. Testing limits and abilities, and yoga needs to be part of this and we can help them work on meaningful risk's, things that get the dopamine levels going but don't necessarily put them in harm's way.

Alright, so that's the first part, the kind of internal shifting that's going on in the brain. Now we are going to look towards more on what is going inside the internal brain. Let's shift to the other side. The first thing that is pretty critical to be aware of, especially if you are the parent hosting an adolescent in your home, they are really needing to connect more with their peer group then with the family.

This can be really challenging for those of us who have already moved through it because we love our children and we want to have them around us. They need to be with their peer group. In fact, without connections outside of the home they are more likely to be expensing anxiety and depression.

With that connection with their peer group, they survive and in the world. They need them. This is just a side note, this is why sometimes these devices that they use, they feel like it's their lifeline, literally to their friends and their connections. Us as adults end up getting some challenges or power struggles with them around that. I will say a little bit more about that in the next slide.

We have the movement from home, to the focus being out there in the peer group. Next, they are developing skills of assessing others intentions. So let's just think about that for a moment and step back. Even as adults for the adults on the call, we are still working on skills of assessing others intentions.

But this is the beginning of where they are even acknowledging this is an important part of their survival and being able to stay connected.

So meanwhile, if we look at the culture that we are in right now, we have these devices as primary sources of interaction with peers. And unfortunately for all of the good those devices can create, they lack an ability to assess intention of others. We cannot see facial expression or tone in the voice, so it causes a lot more internal tension in terms of developing these skills of being present, face-to-face with others, and learning how to understand the attention of others.

This creates a little more added tension that is adding, we are pretty sure, that is adding to some of the depression and anxiety we are seeing in our adolescent population. So listening skills can help, when we get to the second half we can circle back to that idea, if people have questions about that and where Yoga Classes can really be helpful for helping teach listening skills.

And Pooja, I could pause here and save this until the end if you think we need to pause and make sure there's time for you. I can circle back to the belonging versus fitting in just so we don't run out of time.

POOJA SHARMA:

I think we are doing great. I think if we can take a quick pause after the slide, we can maybe transition over.

MARGARET JESSOP:

This is a really lovely concept in looking at the difference between belonging and fitting in. The research around this was done by (Name) Brown she consolidated a lot of amazing information. This quote really ties it all together. I put her books reference in the back of the presentation as well.

We have to belong to ourselves as much as we need to belong to others. Any belonging that asks us to betray ourselves is not true belonging. (Reads)

And why is this important within the context of adolescence is they are trying on understanding who they are. They are trying on all sorts of different pieces to their identity. And there is a fine line sometimes in the adolescent years, of belonging in your peer group and feeling like one with them, or that they can relate to you well versus having to shift or take away some part of yourself in order to feel like you are belonging.

But the difference between the two is if we are fitting in, we have left a part of us aside and that causes internal --ill rest. Because intuitively when we are at the end of the class and integrating everything we have done, feeling like we are belonging to herself, that is the feeling that yoga can start to help cultivate awareness, that we want to be able to take that feeling out into the world and into the interactions with her peers in order to be able to assess, "can I figure out who this other person is? Am I trying to fit in? Or am I allowing myself to feel whole? And belong for who I am?" Because that mindset allows for a brain to feel calm, anxious free, and actually far more aware in assessing others' intentions then when we have left a part of us behind.

I hope that makes sense and I'm sure there's going to be questions but I will pause there so that we can check-in with what's coming up for folks. And then we will get into some more specific strategies for Yoga Classes with -- Pooja.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

We've got some specific and generic questions.

POOJA SHARMA:

It might be easier if we keep it up.

MARGARET JESSOP:

Fair.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

From the top of your remarks, someone wanting to know what was the name of the book that you referenced really early on?

MARGARET JESSOP:

It's called Brainstorm and it's in the last slide.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

That's going to be in the slides. Brainstorm by Doctor Dan Siegel.

A fairly general question, what are practical ways to help teens overcome self-consciousness and self-criticism, that may prevent them from exploring themselves and support?

POOJA SHARMA:

It's a phenomenal question and I was looking at that in the Q&A. We can start discussing for a few minutes and we will come back as we talk more.

What I would say is it's really important as we look at the adolescents group, one, what age groups you are putting together and what are their abilities? A younger age groups at 11 to 12 years old, kids are so open to exploring. It's easier to put 5 to 10-year-olds together. Whereas when you start to get older the adolescent group, it is easier to put small groups together, maybe 11 to 13.

The other thing is looking at what their skill set is, meaning some of these kids are coming in because they are not doing any physical activity at all and the parents are trying to get them to move.

You also have kids coming in who are dancers, gymnasts, and athletes. You almost start like with the adult classes, you sorta need to start thinking about how to put your adolescents together. This question feeds into that because they are so concerned about other people.

For example in a kids class, I love setting kids up in a circle and a group structure. They love to see and that's how they learn, by seeing each other and the teacher. They want to show you where there camel is. They think it's all fun.

You start getting to an adolescent age, " I don't want anyone else looking at my body when I'm doing this," part of this answer is that you want to start integrating breathing, intention setting, meditation as part of the class.

So just as he would, and more so then with the kids class, if anyone out there is teaching adult classes and you also teach adolescents or kids, I always suggest to set up your adolescent group more similar to your adult class.

The specific answer is (unknown term) should be part of your class, meditation should be part of your class and (unknown term) should be a part of it. We can talk a little bit more about the listening skills as well, so that all of that starts helping in making the classroom - you as the teacher has to set the tone



that we are here to have fun together and this is a safe space for you to let go of the stresses that are outside the door and really just give yourself a place of healing and just letting go.

So we'll talk a little bit more but that's a little bit of insight as to that question. Great question!

MARGARET JESSOP:

I think that covers so much really well and I would only add that fitting in for some adolescents, they may think they need to wear yoga clothes and look like, people who say they are going to yoga and putting their hands in front, whatever it is they feel yoga represents is not feeling like it belongs to them. Yet, right? I don't know. Do we have blue jeans and -- T-shirt yoga day?

There are endless ideas that start to come when you see where that feeling of fitting in is feeling foreign and not right, and how we have to honor that. That student into them and themselves. We want to help them integrate in somehow.

POOJA SHARMA:

For adolescents, trying Crow is such a fun pose. There are certain poses based off your groups, who has that body that can do it versus doesn't. That plays a part. There's so much that plays a part on how you set up a class as a teacher to make those kids comfortable.

Kristina, what other questions do we have?

KRISTINA GRAFF:

We actually have a beautiful bunch of questions that's blossoming in. There's so many that are covering the role of dopamine, risk-taking, fitting in a belonging. Do you want to keep going with the Q&A? Or do you have some or slides that you want to present?

POOJA SHARMA:

Is there anyone specifically that's specific around the brain? Or are they starting to transition into class?

KRISTINA GRAFF:

There's one specifically about dopamine that are wondering-

POOJA SHARMA:

Maybe address those and we will move back to the presentation.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

One is whether the drop is due to hormonal changes that occur during -- puberty. The other one is someone who is over 25, and whether dopamine levels are still low beyond that range?

MARGARET JESSOP:

Neurotransmitters are stress hormones and part of what we call these chemicals the brain produces better like hormones. They are part of the system, however I think it's important to note that adolescents, we traditionally think of adolescents as the change in hormones we think of maybe for women the changes that are happening in the body but the brain is multifaceted.

So it's a yes and they are separate pieces to all of the changing hormones. For the question around risk-taking in later years, well Congratulations, you have mastered staying and adolescent mode, which is such a joy, right? It doesn't necessarily mean your levels are high or low but are you still able to find that meaningful in your life. Unfortunately for some of us, and I can say I am one of the is, when we get past 25, we actually have a harder time figuring out what risks we are willing to take and that could be for so many different reasons.

For some people things that did not make them anxious before now can make them anxious in the older years because of this finishing and coming into another adult mind. But I guess and the perfect world, we are all able to find some meaningful risk of some activity that we can keep pushing ourselves to learn new things and try new things. And to get a both little anxious and excited about it. And then start to feel so good, right? Because we have that dopamine from doing the things.

Maybe for us adults who are way past 25, we just don't have to do as risky things to get a little bit of that dopamine.

POOJA SHARMA:

Awesome! Let me go back to the presentation and then we will save time, there's so many great Q&As coming up. Now let's move into some strategies for class.

Let's talk first about what's the appropriate age group? As we discussed a little bit already, we talked about the idea that when you're looking to teach kids, and I teach babies from 12 weeks old all the way up through adults, so I've had many different class sizes and age groups.

What I've seen is that for adolescents, there is, I feel kids from 10+ can be put together. Now, this is where what I said before, what I would like to do is, if you are a newer teacher to teaching adolescent kids, I would think about what is your sweet spot for age? There's a natural tendency to gravitate towards.

If you want to teach more 10 to 11-year-olds, then maybe you look to get a group of four kids in the beginning to start. As you feel more comfortable, you can have the classes be bigger and you can have the age ranges a little bit more but 10 to 12 seems to be a good age group, and then 13 to 15.

When you start getting to people who are 16+, now it depends on where you are teaching. If teaching at a studio, you might talk to the manager or whoever is running the classes, can those people maybe start coming into the adult classes.

If you are teaching at the gym, you may not have control over this. It might be a general class that you are teaching at media community center and its yoga for adolescents and you get a age range that comes in. Where you have control over setting the age range, think about grouping 10 to 12 together, 13 to 15 together, and if you have enough students think about creating groups where you have those students who have, do activities such as dance and athletics, we work a lot with groups of soccer teams. So you have to really look at what their ability is. And then you might want to pair the kids were not as athletic.

Maybe they are new to yoga and moving their body. Use those parameters to help you set what age groups and what class sizes.

Let's talk a little about - as you guys hear this, put into the chat what you have come across because that will be more meaningful to answer questions about any specific concerns or questions you have as we are putting this together.

Let's talk about ideal class length. When you have babies, 12 weeks plus, your class is going to be 45 minutes but part of that time is for the moms. You need to give them all the same skills on how to relax and time to bond with each other, this idea of belonging and talking to other moms.

When you have kids who are three, four, and five, their attention span is a little bit less. For adolescents, age starts becoming an interesting idea because some teachers have said they are trying to do a 75 minute class. I think that might be a little bit too much because you also want to think about how long you will keep their attention span, right?

My ideal has always been 45 minutes, maybe 60 minutes, and this is where you use your set about the class. Maybe 15 minutes of the 60 minute class is for meditation and building those skills. Whereas 30 minutes of the class is about movement, and 10 minutes about (unknown term).

You really have to think about the elements of your class - ideal class length of 45 minutes works really good for this. 60 minutes would be the maximum length of time I would recommend.

Going back to what Margaret presented, what are your objectives? You can't have too many objectives as a teacher. I've met teachers who want to teach them a pose that shows them risk and we want to help them relax. We want to teach them sun salutation A, that might be too much for one class, so you have to think about an overall structure where your structure for each class works.

Let's next talk about lesson planning tips. The circle idea works very well. As you move into adolescence, they are little bit more shy, or depending on who's in the class. Then you start thinking so-and-so is in this class and I don't want them looking at me. I don't want people to think about what I'm wearing versus the other child. I like to set this group up as you would an adult class.

Have them set up in rows with their mats a certain distance apart. Maybe you can play with the lighting if you are in a yoga studio. That is a great idea because it helps them, these are the elements you are using to help them focus more on themselves. How do you start using the environment to help the child, help the adolescent start focusing on themselves, as opposed to everyone else in the room.

I would not use music. I would choose when to use it, maybe use some meditation music, it's a way for them to use that music as a way to relax but you are not playing songs throughout the class because your idea of songs that you like might not be the same as the group. What's the music? I don't like this song or this person.

So think about that. When you are structuring a class, give your overall class, just like when we have adult classes, (Name) and I left a changeup the way we do things because risk-taking, the way you introduce risk for an adult class is that you do (unknown term) and move through the poses and ends with breathing.

For adolescents, they like that structure as well. A little bit of structure is good because it gives them a sense of knowing what's coming. Instead of maybe an opening circle where they go around and introduce themselves, you might just ask them questions, "who's feeling really tired today? Who wants to try to do oppose that they never tried before?"

Ask them yes and no questions in the beginning just to center the energy and then you can use those questions as a way to set your intentions for the class. Think of an overall structure for your class. I always love with this group that you set an intention at the beginning, you do some breathing exercises, and then have them do some floor poses. They are very grounding. You are grounding the earth and your environment. Because you are not standing, you are not as focused on looking at everybody else and this is were also as a teacher, a simple pose such as a forward fold, you might start working around the room. "So-and-so can touch my toes but I cannot touch mine yet,"

This is were also the language you use as a teacher is so important. To think about the same words you would use across all of your classes with adults and little kids, "can you touch your knees?" We forget as teachers and start treating adolescent children - I call them children still because even if you are 25, there's still so much learning that you have to do.

What happens is we start getting serious with this group. What I think as a teacher is important is not to get so serious with this group, but to make them feel comfortable. You still have to learn voices that you teach but also adding that little bit of playfulness. As everyone does their forward folds, "can everybody touch their needs or ankles?" Teaching them that this is where I can go, what can you do?

Setting up your structure for class. As you start getting to this group of 10+, games is something that you have to really pick and choose based off of the class. They might turn more into exercises where you start doing partner poses, or you start doing, you sit together and you do listening exercises.

You have to think about that's why those couple of questions at the beginning are also helpful for you to set up those couple of activities that you might add into your class.

Chanting is another question I get a lot. "Do you chant with this group or talk about chakras?" "Do you do energy anatomy? Do you introduce philosophy and how do you do that?" And I think again, you have to first get used to the group.

Just as you enter a school year, you are getting used to your new teacher as a student, same way you have to treat this group as these are your students, you are getting used to them as students, and as that relationship grows - if it's an ongoing class and it's a group you are seeing regularly for a few months, then as they start becoming comfortable you can introduce maybe a philosophy concept. Maybe introduce energy anatomy. However initially, you want to make it very focused - I also like to tell this group what we are going to do today.

We are going to work on this and then we are going to work on these poses. As you go through poses, why, what are the benefits and what are they getting out of it? That's very important to them as well. And then meditation. At every class you and with meditation. And things like (unknown term) become part of your class.

This is going back to the question of self critiquing and being conscious about everybody else, if you make it a standard part of your class, some of that goes away because they realize every class they will be doing this. We will be breathing and meditating every class. We will be going proposes every class.

Just as you have adults who don't like certain poses or always want to do certain poses, same way, you will have this group, you will have students that want to do this pose every class and as a teacher it's your job to listen and hear them but then also explained that you may or may not get to that post every time because you want to go through different learnings. As a teacher, your job also is to help them grow in their practice.

So here again classroom techniques. This group also, when to demo? When you are teaching little kids for example you need to show them camel and then you have to have each one do it to make sure they are doing it appropriately. This group is the same idea: you want to show them the post but you may not have each one show you the pose. For this group, you will treat them more into adult class way. You may not want them each to go around and show each one their camel.

We will start with the camel by the hands on the lower back. We will push the shoulders back and open the chest. So gradually build the pose for them, as opposed going to the ultimate expression right away because as a teacher you don't want to create that situation and make them feel self-conscious.

So again, this is where you need to build it from the ground up as a teacher and move slowly so that they can feel the post. Where that risk-taking comes into play, and this is where you have to manage, there are some kids who are going to be able to get their elbows all the way to the ground and the ultimate expression of camel and that's wonderful but this is how you say we are all going to do this version 1st, then we are going to do this version, and if the rest wants to try this advanced version, we will do it now while the rest of you are in child's pose. You add the element of taking away the self-consciousness.

Language. Always say the pose names. One of my pet peeves with teachers when they are teaching poses is they make up names for poses and I feel like whatever age group you are teaching, letting them know it's warrior one - yes you want to introduce Sanskrit, that's a decision you need to make, but warrior one is warrior one. We are teaching these life skills so that you are setting this up so hopefully they take some the skills with them as they keep growing and using them in their journey.

Now, questions about any of this matter coming up that we should address before you guys can take our contact information and we go from there? Now I will stop sharing and I know that the presentation has been dropped into the chat so you guys can all download it but let's go back to the Q&A.

MARGARET JESSOP:

I had a chance to read through some of the questions and a couple of them that connect, people are asking about trauma and how trauma might have an impact. And also connecting that with what we all went through during COVID and how basically we had to minimize a lot of our behavior and activities in order to manage the threat of the virus, and intuitively the question that was asked was whether or not that then decreased dopamine?

You can see there's a direct affect. If you can't go out and do things, meaningful risk doesn't mean risking your life, meaningful risk means you are doing an activity that's a challenge that you feel really good about, what you've done - that was another question: what is a meaningful risk?

A meaningful risk can come in so many different creative ways but for every kid it's going to be a little bit different. The brain remembers how to get anxious a little bit better than the average bear because everything we practice, we get better at, including the stress response.

I'm loving some of these questions because they are kind of seeing how our world, our culture created an environment that kind of allowed anxiety to get a little bigger. Anxiety's best friend is avoidance. Avoidance allows anxiety to get bigger. One of the best examples of meaningful risk that I notice on Sunday, I was in an integrated class from ages 60 to 16 - the teacher was amazing but this one series, we were going through warrior two, and we stopped and we wanted to bind.

One of the younger students when into a bird of paradise. Some teachers might get a little concerned when someone is moving beyond the instruction in the class but in that setting, the teacher was able to stand by and acknowledge that that was a younger person in the class, definitely in the class, she was able to stand out and do something a little bit bigger, and I bet her dopamine was heightened.

If we are thinking about it in terms of what's it doing for that individual, then maybe it's a little bit more manageable. Maybe we want to make sure they are still doing it correctly for the sake of not wanting anyone to get hurt but I thought that was a lovely example of meaningful risk in the context of yoga.

POOJA SHARMA:

I'm seeing some really great questions here. Kristina, do you mind if I jump to this one? I live in a very rural community, how can I attract students that have never done yoga before and convince them to come to class? I love this question!

I think with middle school, the biggest thing what you can do, have you approach the staff at the school? Talk to the principal and see if you can get a few minutes. Talk to some of the other PTAs and see if you can get a few minutes. Start with the front desk, who's at the office, and see who you can talk to.

When you meet with somebody, the principal or Vice Principal, or a guidance counselor or teacher, asked them, "what are some of the things that you are seeing in your classes?" Is there more stress or anxiety? Are kids struggling in PE? Get 3 to 5 ideas because I think the biggest thing when people are not exposed to yoga, they don't know what they will get out from it.

You want to break it down in a meaningful way. I will help you learn some techniques to help you manage your anxiety and stress. And help you calm your mind with some techniques and strategies that include meditation, yoga poses, that will help you stretch. And open your body.

If there's a group of runners at the school or maybe there's a sport that speak at the school, for runners we will help you with that hip flexibility to help you stretch your legs so you don't get tight. Soccer, that same idea applies. If you can find out a couple of things that are going on with the school and the students through members of the school, that will help you figure out those talking points to get your class together.

And then you can even start with the four week class or a six week class. Kristina, what other questions are starting to come up? There are so many as I look through these.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

I'm trying to find common things like both of you. I think trauma was addressed and also teens that are living in difficult and high stress situations. A couple others that I saw, one was consideration around



those with ADHD. Groups of boys only and there was a question about that. And there were a couple of questions related to adolescents who might end up in a Yoga Classes because it was one of the options for PE at school and maybe they were not quite choosing yoga, and it was more on a menu of options.

How do you engage this mixed group of folks? Some have a lot of high energy, some may have low movement capacity, some may be highly focused or need focusing support. Those are the things: ADHD, boys only, and engaging students to find their way.

POOJA SHARMA:

I will start with the last one because I see two comments right next to each other about a weekly class, 14 to 17, I live in a small island in the Caribbean. Also teaching a group of students at a alternative high school. Both of these comments right next to each other. This is where if you are - this is a great example of getting thrown into teaching because you don't have control over the group, what you can do, a couple strategies that might work really well:

The first time you teach them just do a poll. "How many of you have ever done yoga before? How many of you have ever stretched before? How many are here because you thought it was the easiest choice out of all of them?" Get some information and make some of the questions a little fun.

And same way. Since you are with them for the year, the nice thing is that you are going to be with them throughout the year, whether it's a couple of times a week or whatever it is, then you can start developing a game plan. My background is (unknown term) and I will talk to you from that perspective.

So with this group, sun salute A might be my goal but you have to do it in a way that you are breaking it up for them, so you are teaching it in pieces and you said that expectation up. You get a sense what their bodies are like after you do that Q&A and maybe you just do some all floor poses in the first class C can get a sense of how they stretch and move. Can they do pigeon? And they do a forward fold?

And then the next class you can do standing pyramid or lunges, seeking it a sense of the groups sensibilities without actually telling them that. Maybe it will take a classes to learn it, and then maybe we will try to do 10 of them. This is where you are building in this goal for them to achieve and we will try to do 10 sun salute A and 10 minutes.

You are building in that element of fun and that cold an expectation in a meaningful way. Once you get them, now maybe we can try a crow. Now maybe we can try a post with a little more risk. It's just thinking through how you take this time you have set aside and can grow it over the time.

MARGARET JESSOP:

For one minute on attention issues, whether it's with hyperactivity or without, this is why I am so passionate about the yoga community. You all are on the front lines of helping with not only attention deficit, but all mental health related concerns.

Anyone who starts to build more awareness inside the body and the breath, and that peace that comes with those few minutes at the end of the class, you are by definition going to help with building attention and in understanding others.

The more we are tuned into ourselves and listen to ourselves, the better able we are to notice others and understand who they are. This is what you are all doing. You are just connecting the dots of what you are already doing.

POOJA SHARMA:

To really quickly answered that question really quickly about ADHD and gender only, if a child has special needs where they cannot function in a group setting, then I do individual one-on-one instruction with that child. That whole idea of belonging versus fitting, ADHD, there's a limit of stress that all students are going through whether it's your AP class or going to PE and not freaking out because you don't want to do the mile run.

There is that element that has to be addressed. My personal advice, do not do a separate class because it's something you want to address as a whole and as Margaret said, as we teach every student in her class about stress and ADHD, they will then go and teach their peers and that's the beautiful part. We are teaching them so that they can teach their peers.

Last comment about gender only. I would really think through why you would want to do a gender only class because here's one piece of advice: you don't want the idea that if it's only boys that they will heal faster, or it's only girls they will heal faster. There's an element of everybody being included in the class so we can all heal together. That something that we would have to - feel free in the presentation at the end, there is emails for both Margaret and myself, feel free to reach out with us with more specific questions that we can answer and give you a little bit one-on-one advice.

I know we are at time and we would love to keep going but I don't know if we can.

KRISTINA GRAFF:

You are welcome to stay on for a couple of minutes. The question about the boys only was specific example of a boys home, it's a nonnegotiable structure but I think your answer gives a lot of helpful information to everyone. There were requests for seeing a slide again and etc. All the information covered today and the recording will be shared. I've dropped into the chat where people can save it.

I want to say thank you Pooja and Margaret for this session. It covered so much: it was engaging and performative and we were grateful for everyone taking the time to attend. Please check out our events tab to register for other events. We hope to see you soon!

POOJA SHARMA:

Thank you guys so much!

MARGARET JESSOP:

Thanks so much!