Yoga for Teens Health

The causes of childhood obesity are well-known and complex. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that as many as 18% of adolescents are overweight or obese. Lack of physical exercise and poor nutrition are the leading culprits. Here's how yoga can help children and teens release excess weight and transform their thinking about food.

1. Yoga is non-competitive. Children and teens suffering with obesity are often discouraged from competitive sports that require speed and agility. Yoga offers an alternative in a non-competitive, compassionate format. Yoga will increase heart-rate and provide much needed cardiovascular support without requiring youth to compare themselves to others. In yoga, everyone wins. For youth facing obesity, this is key. If a child knows he does not have the skills to win, what will motivate him to participate in competitive games? The last thing a child living with obesity needs is to be labeled a "loser."

2. Yoga encourages youth to discover their own motivation for being physically fit. By it's nature, yoga practice brings us into closer connection with our innate drive for health. Rather than being motivated by making a certain grade or being on a winning team, yoga practice reveals the personal benefits of increased strength and flexibility, balance, and the ability to focus. Life-long health depends on one's own motivation towards self-care. The ability to self care begins with awareness of self and body. Yoga builds self awareness by asking children and teens to pay attention to their bodies and breath.

3. Yoga practice works with the mind as well as the body. As a mind-body fitness practice, yoga classes for children and teens address the choices we make for our mind-body systems. Youth learn how their nutrition choices effect how they feel

physically. With regular yoga practice, we feel better. When we feel better, we are more likely to make wise choices about what we eat.

4. Yoga practice works to expand consciousness of overall health and well being. Children and teens dealing with obesity find a safe place in yoga to cultivate a positive sense of self that contributes to confidence. Children have expressed to me time and again how much yoga practice helps them feel more able to participate in other physical activities.

Yoga alone cannot fix the problem of childhood and teen obesity. We need to address the issue of access to nutritious foods. Companies likeRevolution Foods are doing just that by providing healthy lunches to participating schools. Yoga does offer multitudes of benefits that can be part of the solution. In closing, consider how stressful it must be in this image driven media age to be an overweight or obese child or teen. The well documented stress reduction factors of yoga practice are a powerful start to transforming health for youth suffering with the debilitating disease of obesity.

Inspire a child or teen to get up off the couch and practice some yoga!