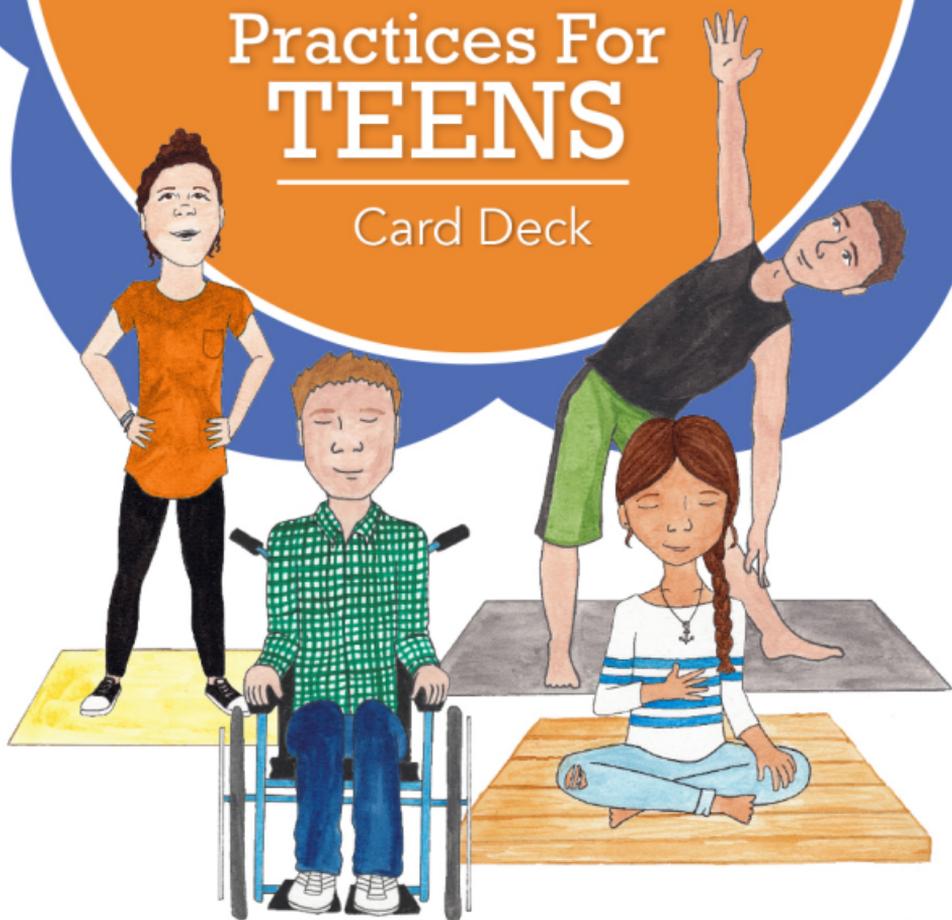


Yoga & Mindfulness

Practices For
TEENS

Card Deck



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Mayuri Gonzalez, E-RYT, RCYT & Argos Gonzalez, M.Ed
Illustrated by Karen Gilmour



Welcome

Yoga and mindfulness have a lot to offer. The practices on these cards can help you get stronger and more flexible, manage feelings of anxiety, learn to navigate challenging situations without becoming overwhelmed, and much more. But perhaps the most important thing these practices can help you with is the ability to be more connected to yourself—your body, your mind and your emotions. When you are more connected to your own experience you can make better choices about how to care for yourself and how to respond to the world around you.

As you explore the activities on these cards, the most important thing is to notice what's happening with you. What are you feeling in your body, in your mind, and in your emotions as you try the activities? Does your experience change or stay the same as you hold poses, or as you try them multiple times?

As you practice, do what feels right to you and trust your own body. If something doesn't feel right (if it hurts, makes you uncomfortable, freaks you out a bit) pause and check out your feelings, and then make a decision about what to do that works for you in the moment. Have fun, work hard, and be curious about your experience.



The Five Elements

The cards in this deck are split into five activity types, or elements, that together offer you a complete experience of yoga and mindfulness. You can do them one at a time, or try combining one card from each element for a longer practice session.

- **CONNECT:** Activities that help you connect to your own feelings or thoughts, to the world around you, and to other people
- **BREATHE:** Different ways to use your breath, and explore the impact that it has on your energy level and emotions
- **MOVE:** Yoga practices that help you build strength, balance and flexibility, explore what your body is capable of, and develop your own personal power
- **FOCUS:** Activities to help you notice what your mind is working on, strengthen your ability to focus and learn to manage distractions
- **RELAX:** Opportunities for your mind and body to rest and restore

How To Use These Cards

Choose a Single Card: Choose just one card for a short 1-5 minute practice. Consider starting with a yoga seat, and ending with final relaxation each time you practice, even if you are only doing one activity.

Create a Sequence: Combine 3-7 cards for a longer practice. Try choosing a card from each of the categories: Connect, Breathe, Move, Focus, and Relax. See the “Putting it All Together” cards for some ideas, but feel free to mix it up and do what feels right for you.

Bringing Energy Up and Down: Check out the arrows on the right side of each card to learn more about how the activity might affect your energy level. An ↑ for energizing, ↓ for calming, or ↔ for neutral. As you choose your card or cards for practice, consider what your body needs at that moment. If you have time for a longer sequence, you might want to bring your energy up first, then bring it down for a final relaxation. Remember that practices affect people differently, so if a card says it will bring energy down, but you feel like it’s bringing your energy up, trust your body and your own instincts and decide if another practice would be better for you in that moment.

Group and Partner Cards: Some cards will ask you to work with a group of people or a partner. These cards are meant to help you connect with your friends and explore ways to get to know each other and have fun. Some cards have questions or suggestions, but feel free to add or adapt them as you and your friends see fit.

If You See in the instructions: This is an indication that a pause is needed. Take a few moments between instructions to notice your experience. Usually about 5 seconds is a good amount of time to start, and if longer feels right for you, take as long as you'd like.

Yoga mat or no yoga mat?: Most practices can be done anywhere you are, with or without a yoga mat. You may want to use a mat (if you have one) to make the surface less slippery, or to have a clean space where you feel comfortable laying down, but if you feel good without a mat then it's no problem not to use one.

Eyes open or closed? Many of the practices in this deck invite you to reflect on your inner experience. Sometimes closing your eyes will help you do this, but at other times it may not feel safe or comfortable to close your eyes. Make your own choice, and if closing your eyes doesn't feel right you can always focus on one spot and keep your gaze there.

More Resources: Visit littlefloweryoga.com for additional resources.



FINDING YOUR YOGA SEAT



Finding Your Yoga Seat



Choosing your yoga seat is like finding a home base for your yoga practice. It's important that it's comfortable for you, and that you are able to rest in this position. You might choose a yoga seat for yourself that is on the ground or on a yoga mat, or you can have your yoga seat be in a chair. It's up to you, and may change from time to time. The idea is that you choose a way to sit that feels steady, comfortable, and that lets you sit up tall.

Sit down and notice what your body is doing—is it leaning to one side? Is it tilting forward or leaning backwards? Do you feel comfortable? Now experiment with different ways to place your legs and feet. You can try sitting with your legs crossed, or in a position called “Easy Pose” with one ankle in front of the other, or with one ankle on top of the other. If you are in a chair, try placing your feet flat on the ground.

Once you have chosen your leg position, sit up tall. Imagine what your body would feel like if you were very proud, and also a little bit relaxed. Each time you take your yoga seat, see if you can find this feeling.

Each time you practice, consider starting in your yoga seat with a few steady breaths.

CONNECT



Gratitude Body Scan



There are many ways to practice gratitude, and research suggests there are connections between our wellbeing and our awareness of what we are grateful for.

Sit comfortably. Notice your breath as it moves in your body.... Observe your breath coming and going, and recognize that your breath is keeping you alive all day, even when you aren't paying attention to it. Take a moment to appreciate and feel gratitude for your breath.

Begin to shift your attention to your feet.... Notice any sensation you may be having. Are they tired or relaxed? Cold or warm? Shift your attention to one leg—from the calf muscle to top of your thigh.... Does your leg feel strong or tired? Notice your other leg. Do they feel the same or different? What are the ways that your legs and feet support you? Can you think of some reasons to be grateful for your legs and feet?

Bring your attention to your belly. Is it tense or relaxed? Do you feel any sensations of hunger or fullness? Take a few breaths and notice your chest.... Does it move as you breathe in and out? How have your belly and chest supported your wellbeing today?

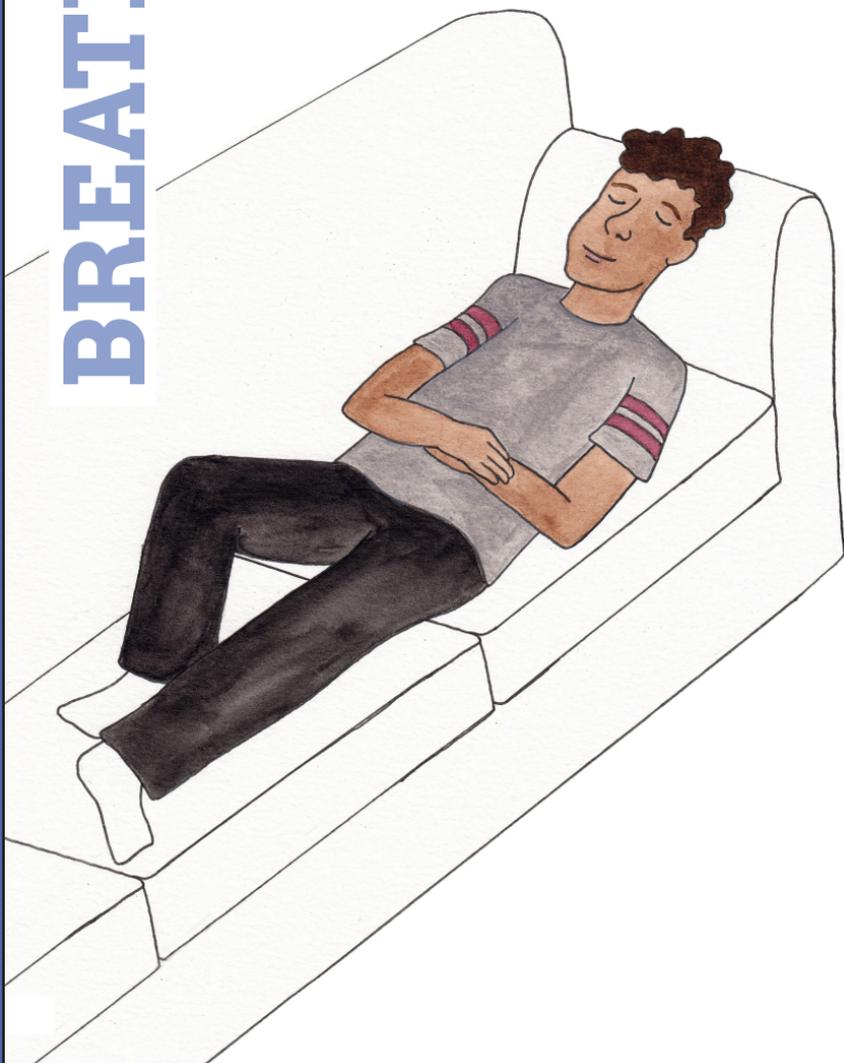
Now think about your arms and hands. Do they feel tired, tense, or relaxed? What are your hands touching? What role have your hands and arms played in your life today?

Can you think of some reasons to be grateful for your belly, chest, arms, and hands?

Bring your attention to your face. Does your face feel relaxed? Do you feel any sensations around your jaw or forehead? How about your head and the back of your neck? Your ears? Take a few breaths and consider all the ways your face, eyes, and ears have supported you today.

It's easy to overlook how awesome, interconnected, and complicated our bodies are. What are some of the things that you're really thankful your body helps you achieve?

BREATHE



Calming Breath



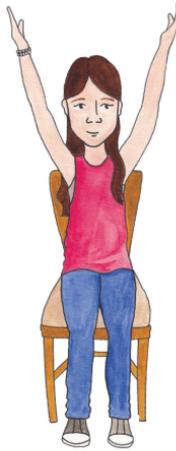
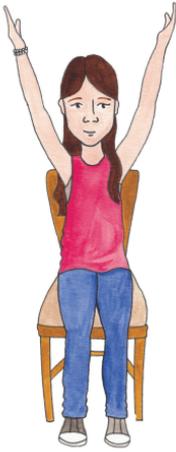
Usually in your breathing practices the inhale and exhale are the same length, but in this activity the exhale is longer than the inhale. This helps your body turn on something called the “relaxation response” and may help you to feel calmer or more settled.

You can do this practice with your eyes open or closed, and with your body sitting up or laying down. Get comfortable and breathe through your nose for a few breaths. Begin to silently count your breathing pattern, for example *inhale one, two, three; exhale one, two, three...* Make sure that the count isn't too long and that you can comfortably inhale and exhale.

Once you are breathing at a steady pace for a few rounds, start to make your exhale longer than your inhale. You can start by counting *inhale one, two, three; exhale one, two, three, four, five*. If this feels okay, try *inhale one, two, three; exhale one, two, three, four, five, six*.

See if you can release the air little by little in a slow and steady stream until your lungs are empty without holding your breath. Continue this pattern for as long as you feel comfortable. When you're ready to finish, come back to an even breath for a round or two, and then open your eyes or look up.

MOVE



Half Sun Salutation



A Sun Salutation is a simple six-part sequence you can do standing or sitting in your chair. This is the chair version.

To begin, sit toward the front of your chair with your feet on the floor and your spine tall.

1. Circle your arms up overhead, stretching your fingertips up to the sky.
2. Bend forward at your hips leaning over your legs and bring your hands down towards your ankles
3. Lift up half way, keep your spine long and bring your hands to your knees
4. Release down over your legs and let your head dangle.
5. Press down into your feet, begin to lift your torso and reach your arms up overhead.
6. Bring your hands down to your legs to finish.

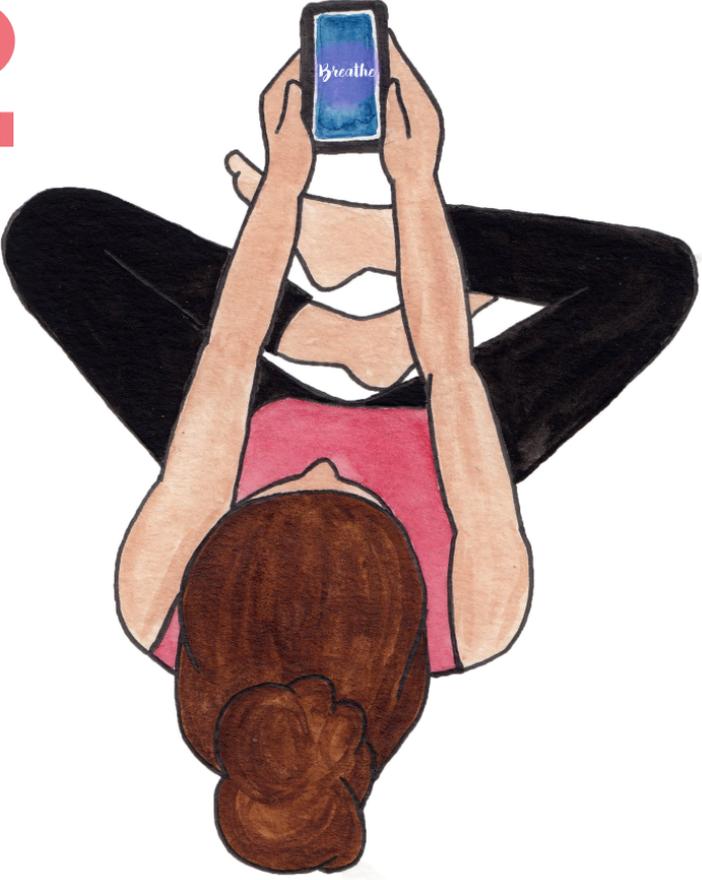
Repeat this sequence a few times to get familiar with the movement pattern.

Now you can explore adding the rhythmic use of your breath to this movement pattern.

1. Inhale and circle your arms up overhead, stretching your fingertips up to the sky.
2. Exhale and bend forward bringing your hands down towards your ankles.
3. Inhale to lift up half way, keep your spine long, and bring your hands to your knees.
4. Exhale and release down over your legs and let your head dangle.
5. Inhale and lift up, reaching your arms up overhead.
6. Exhale and bring your hands down to your legs to finish.

Repeat a few more times synched with your breath. You may wish to explore how it feels to move though the sequence slowly or a little more quickly. When you are finished, sit in your tall yoga seat for a few breaths and notice how your body is feeling.

FOCUS



Mindful Tech



Does technology play a huge role in your life? Have you ever thought about your relationship with technology and the impact it may have on you? In this activity you'll bring mindful awareness to your cell phone and learn a bit about the role it plays in your life.

Sit in a tall and relaxed manner and take your phone in your hand without doing anything else. Take a couple of breaths as you look at and hold the phone without interacting with it.... How does the cell phone feel in your hands?

Do any thoughts arise? Are there any emotions associated with the cell phone? Do you feel any sensations in your body?

Open the text messaging app on the phone and without reading any of the messages, scroll through the messages.... Take a couple of breaths as you scroll.... Do any thoughts arise? Are there any emotions associated with the messages on the cell phone? Do you feel any sensations in your body?

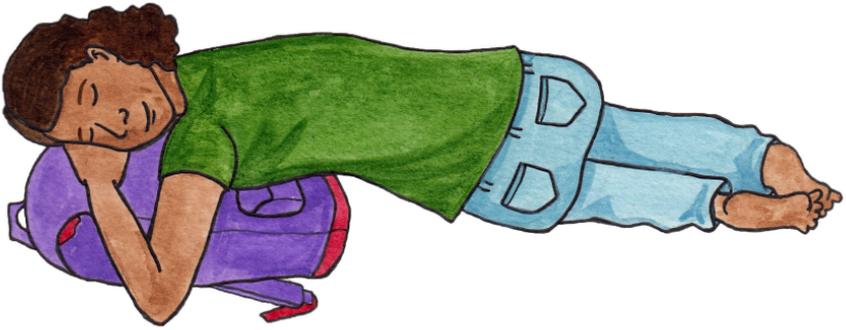
Close the text message app and take a couple of breaths....

Now open to one of the social media apps that you use and scroll through it without interacting or engaging with the app.... Take a couple of breaths as you scroll. Do any thoughts arise? Are there any emotions associated with the images, postings, or messages on the social media app? Do you feel any sensations in your body?

Place the phone down and take a few breaths noticing anything that has changed since the beginning of the activity.

In your day-to-day life, whenever you reach for your cell phone, can you take a few breaths before you interact with it? Notice any thoughts, emotions, or sensations that arise before you call, text, or post.

RELAX



Restorative Twists



This gentle twist releases your lower back and uses compression to massage your abdominal organs. To practice this pose, you will need a backpack, pillow or bolster. If you are using a backpack and it feels lumpy underneath you, you can always place a jacket, towel, or blanket over the top of the backpack to make it feel more comfortable and soft beneath you.

Start sitting with your right hip against your backpack or pillow and your legs to the left. Point the backpack or pillow longways in front of you like a runway. Take a deep breath and lift your spine straight up getting as long as you can. As you exhale, turn your chest to face over the backpack or pillow and lay your chest on top.

Relax your arms, and turn your head in either direction. Make any adjustments you need to feel as comfortable as possible and hold the pose for several minutes. As you rest, stay connected to the feeling of the breath in your body and see if you can let yourself be completely supported by the backpack or pillow underneath you.

When you are ready you can repeat on the other side so your body is balanced.

GROUP AND PARTNER ACTIVITIES



Human Knot



Finding creative solutions to challenges is part of growing up. This activity is geared toward helping you work together with a group and problem solve, while at the same time having fun!

Get into a group of 6–8 people and form a large circle. Stand facing the center of the circle. Cross your arms at the wrist. Next, grasp hands with two different people across from you.

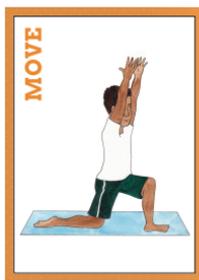
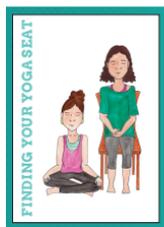
Now you must work together to try and untangle the knot without letting go of any hands. Change perspectives and look from every angle as you work with your peers. Be creative about how you get out of the knot.

Once you have untangled yourselves and are still holding hands, try leaning back, balancing your weight, and try to sit down, then stand back up again as a group.

What were some of the ways that you contributed to getting out of the knot?

What made this activity easy and what made this activity challenging?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



Recommended
Sequences to Explore,
Experiment with and
Make Your Own

FEELING CONFIDENT/RELEASING NERVOUS ENERGY

- Power Poses
- Segmented Energizing Breath
- Crazy 8s
- Balancing Table
- Low Lunge
- Downward Dog
- Warrior 1,2,3
- Downward Dog
- Be Here Right Now
- Legs on a Chair

ABOUT US



Little Flower Yoga is dedicated to bringing the life skills of yoga and mindfulness to children and families in developmentally appropriate ways, in a joy-filled environment. LFY serves thousands of students in school and community based programs, trains children's yoga teachers around the country, and offers continuing education to allied professionals including counselors, social workers, classroom teachers, and occupational therapists. LFY teachers are trained to engage, encourage, and inspire all children, while offering powerful tools to help navigate challenging emotions and experiences. Learn more at www.littlefloweryoga.com

Jennifer Cohen Harper, founder of Little Flower Yoga, is a leading voice in the children's yoga and mindfulness community. She is the author of *Little Flower Yoga for Kids: A Yoga and Mindfulness Program to Help Your Child Improve Attention and Emotional Balance*, and the co-editor of *Best Practices for Yoga in Schools*. Jenn provides therapeutic classes to children and families, and continuing education to mental health and education professionals. She is the board president of the Yoga Service Council, dedicated to making yoga accessible to all regardless of circumstance. Her work has been featured in prominent publications including *The New York Times*, *The International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Yoga Journal*, and endorsed by thought leaders including Daniel Siegel, MD, Sharon Salzberg and Congressman Tim Ryan.

Argos Gonzalez, MEd, is a teacher, lecturer, and mindfulness and yoga instructor. He has 13 years of experience teaching high school in the Bronx and teaches pre-service and in-service teachers at Hunter College School of Education in NY. Argos is certified through both Mindful Schools and Little Flower Yoga (LFY), and currently serves as the director of professional development for The School Yoga Project, a program of LFY.

Mayuri Breen-Gonzalez, E-RYT, RCYT, is a nationally recognized presenter, trainer and instructor in mindfulness and children's yoga, leading teacher trainings and continuing education seminars at renowned retreat centers such as The Omega Institute and IONS Earthrise Center. She has more than 25 years of experience practicing yoga and mindfulness, and provides therapeutic yoga classes to children and families as well as teaching yoga and mindfulness classes in schools and community centers.

Karen Gilmour has been drawing, painting, coloring and creating for as long as she can remember. Her art has been seen in books, on back to school supplies and on the walls of classrooms and kid's rooms. When Karen isn't creating art, she is busy as the director of Alluem Kids, an ever growing yoga program for kids, teens and families at Alluem Yoga in Cranford, NJ. You can see more of Karen's work by visiting: www.karengilmour.com

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