

# Sacred Threads

## Lesson 4: Yoga

3.10.2019

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**Objectives:** Introduction to basics of yoga with visiting instructor.

**Materials:** Flipchart, reserved space in Foote Room, inform parents/youth ahead to wear appropriate clothing for yoga.

**Time allotments** suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

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### 1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
  - ▶ If you’ve practiced yoga, what’s your favorite pose?
  - ▶ Do you have a regular spiritual practice? What is it?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

### 2. Silly Fun: Tree Pose (5 minutes max)

We say that Unity is a place where people lead lives of integrity, service, and joy. We say that at church we find and keep our balance. So in the spirit of yoga.... who can stand on one leg the longest, in a tree pose, *with their eyes closed?!?!*



### 3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

**Teacher reads:** (from a saying in the yoga community)

*“Yoga is not about touching your toes, it is what you learn on the way down.”*

### 4. Four Forms of Yoga (15 minutes)

**Question for youth:** What word in English shares a common derivation with the word “yoga.” (Hint: “yoga” comes from the Sanskrit root yuj, meaning “to join/unite” or “bring under discipline.” What joins/unites or brings under discipline oxen? Yoke!)

**Teacher summarizes:** Yoga is a path of discipline that brings us and unites us with the Divine. Yoga is Hinduism's path for uniting one's self with that of the Divine residing in our very being.

Just as we have seen how flexible and diverse Hinduism is as a religion, this also holds true for yoga, with varying paths and practices for different kinds of people. But Hinduism identifies four basic schools of yoga that echo four basic spiritual personality types: **reflective, emotional, active, and meditative-mystical**. Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Raja Yoga. While a Yogi or Yogini may focus exclusively on one of these approaches to yoga, the vast majority of practitioners more commonly practice a blending of the four traditional types of yoga.

- **Jnana Yoga:** Jnana Yoga is the path of knowledge, wisdom, introspection and contemplation. It involves deep exploration of the nature our being by systematically exploring and setting aside false identities.
- **Bhakti Yoga:** Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion, emotion, love, compassion, and service to God and others. It is the most popular among the yoga forms, and all actions are done in the context of remembering the Divine.
- **Karma Yoga:** Karma Yoga is the path of action, service to others, mindfulness, and removing our egos while fulfilling our life's work or karma in the world.
- **Raja Yoga:** Raja Yoga is a comprehensive method that emphasizes meditation, while encompassing the whole of yoga. It directly deals with spiritual energies and transcending thoughts of the mind.

## 5. Exploring Yoga (30 minutes)

**Guest yoga teacher summarizes and brings selective emphasis to following, in leading introductory practice to yoga:**

- **Position (Asana):** Stress the importance of postures that allows energy to flow throughout body. Class can begin with some basic, simple postures including those for meditation (sitting upright, basic *mudras* or hand gestures that facilitate meditation)
- **Breathing (Pranayama):** Discuss the role of breath and methods of breathing, such as when to breathe through the nose (to preserve current state) or through the mouth (to energize the body) or combinations. Have youth practice bringing focus to the breath, or counting breath in meditation.
- **Mantras and Tantric Yoga:**
  - Introduce the six basic vowel sounds (ah—ee—i—o—oo—uh) and have youth breathe in and intone these vowels as they exhale. As they sound the tones, ask youth to concentrate and focus on the point between their eyebrows.
  - Next introduce the basic mantra “Om” or “Aum” as a sacred spiritual symbol in Hinduism as well as other Dharmic religions. *Om* is one of the most important

spiritual incantations made during recitations of spiritual texts, during *puja* and private prayers, in ceremonies of rites of passages, and during meditative and spiritual activities. *Om* is a spiritual symbol for the Atman (soul, self within) and Brahman (ultimate reality, truth, divine, supreme spirit, cosmic principle), and contains all six basic vowel sounds.

- Have the class chant *Om*, concentrating on the sound while breathing out long and slow.
- Introduce the seven *chakras* (energy centers) of the body, which support meditation by focusing thought on subtle but important structures within the body. In place of *Om*, have youth chant the related mantra while focusing on each chakra:
  - 1) Base of the spine/tailbone (red) – focus of strength and survival: chant “I am”
  - 2) Lower belly (orange) – focus of empathy with others: chant “I feel”
  - 3) Navel (yellow) – focus of energy and power: chant “I grow”
  - 4) Heart (green) – focus of love: chant “I love”
  - 5) Throat (blue) – focus of articulating our feelings: chant “I speak”
  - 6) Between eyebrows (indigo) – focus of mind, “third eye”: chant “I see”
  - 7) Top of head (violet or white) – focus of the soul: chant “I know”

**6. Extinguish the chalice**, saying together:

*“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”*

**7. Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets