**A Parent's Guide to Using Yoga at Home with Neurodivergent Children**

**Introduction**
Yoga can be a calming and fun activity that helps neurodivergent children develop strength, flexibility, and focus. It is a great way to connect with your child and help them relax. This guide will walk you through simple yoga practices that you can do at home with your child.

**1. Create a Safe and Calm Space**

Before starting yoga, it’s important to set up a space where your child feels comfortable and safe.

* **Choose a quiet spot** in your home where your child won’t be distracted.
* **Make the space soft** and cozy. You can use yoga mats, soft blankets, or cushions.
* Keep the lighting soft to create a calming environment.
* **Remove any clutter** that might distract or overwhelm your child.

**2. Keep Sessions Short and Simple**

Yoga doesn’t have to be long. Short, simple sessions work best, especially for neurodivergent children who may find it hard to stay focused for too long.

* **Start with 5-10 minutes** a day and slowly increase the time as your child becomes more comfortable.
* Do just a few poses at a time, focusing on the ones your child enjoys.
* End the session when your child starts to lose interest—keep it positive and fun.

**3. Choose Simple and Fun Poses**

Introduce basic yoga poses that are easy for children to follow. Use fun names to make the poses interesting!

**Here are a few poses to start with:**

* **Mountain Pose (Standing Tall)**
Stand up tall like a mountain. Keep your feet on the ground, hands at your sides, and take a deep breath. This helps with balance and feeling grounded.
* **Tree Pose (Balancing Tree)**
Stand on one foot and rest the other foot against your leg, hands above your head like branches. If this is hard, your child can use a wall for support. This improves balance and focus.
* **Cat-Cow Pose (Stretching Cat)**
On hands and knees, pretend to be a cat. Arch your back like a cat stretching (Cow Pose), then round your back like a scared cat (Cat Pose). This helps stretch the back and improve body awareness.
* **Child’s Pose (Resting Child)**
Kneel on the ground, bring your arms forward, and rest your head on the floor. This is a great pose to help your child relax and feel safe.
* **Cobra Pose (Baby Snake)**
Lie on the belly, press hands into the ground, and lift the chest up like a snake lifting its head. This strengthens the back and helps with posture.

**4. Use Your Breath**

Teaching your child to focus on their breathing can help them relax and feel more in control.

* **Balloon Breath**: Ask your child to pretend they are blowing up a balloon. Breathe in through the nose, filling the belly like a balloon, and then slowly breathe out through the mouth.
* **Bunny Breaths**: Take 3 short, quick breaths through the nose and then breathe out through the mouth. This can be a fun way to practice deep breathing.

**5. Use Visual and Verbal Cues**

Children, especially those who are neurodivergent, may benefit from clear instructions using both words and actions.

* **Show the pose** and then gently guide them through it.
* Use simple language like “Stand tall like a tree” or “Stretch out like a cat.”
* If needed, use picture cards of yoga poses to help your child visualize the moves.

**6. Be Patient and Encouraging**

Every child is different, so it’s important to let them go at their own pace.

* **Praise their efforts**, not perfection. Celebrate the fact that they are trying!
* If your child struggles with a pose, that’s okay. Let them come out of the pose and try again another day.
* Yoga should feel fun and not like a task, so encourage them to explore the poses in their own way.

**7. Incorporate Play**

Making yoga playful helps engage your child. You can:

* **Turn poses into a game** (e.g., play “freeze” during poses or make animal sounds).
* **Create a story**: Act out a simple adventure where you use poses. For example, “We are going to climb a mountain (Mountain Pose), then walk through the forest (Tree Pose), and see a snake (Cobra Pose).”

**8. Practice Relaxation**

After doing a few poses, end the session with relaxation to help your child calm down.

* **Savasana (Resting Pose)**: Have your child lie on their back, close their eyes, and imagine a peaceful place (like a beach or a forest). Play soft music or guide them through imagining the sounds and smells of that place.
* **Hug Pose**: Ask your child to hug themselves, wrapping their arms around their body, which can feel comforting and help them feel safe.

**9. Make Yoga a Routine**

To help your child get used to yoga, try making it a regular part of your day.

* You could do yoga together in the morning to start the day calmly or before bed to relax.
* Encourage your child to use yoga when they are feeling overwhelmed or anxious.

**10. Be Kind to Yourself and Your Child**

It’s okay if every session doesn’t go perfectly. The goal of yoga is to feel good and connected with your body, so allow your child to have fun and explore their own way of moving. Celebrate small successes and keep the atmosphere light and supportive.

**Final Thoughts**

Yoga can be a wonderful way to bond with your neurodivergent child and help them manage stress, improve their focus, and gain confidence. By creating a positive, playful environment and keeping things simple, you will both enjoy the benefits of this practice.

This guide helps parents introduce yoga to their neurodivergent children in a gentle, fun, and accessible way. Let me know if you'd like to adjust any part of it!