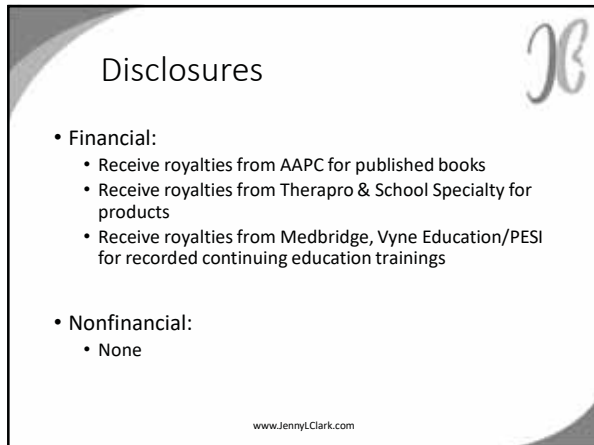


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Course Objectives

- 1. Examine current evidence illustrating health and wellness needs in the pediatric population to substantiate application of therapeutic interventions.
- 2. Analyze health-related challenges in prevalent childhood disorders to correlate a common need across a diverse population of youth.
- 3. Develop a repertoire of occupation-based wellness interventions for youth that can be applied to home, school, and community settings.

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Identifying Wellness Needs in the Pediatric Population Through Evidence-Based Practices

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Prevalent Childhood Disorders & Deficiencies: Evidence to Support Wellness Intervention for Health Promotion & Prevention

- Anxiety
- SPD
- ASD
- Virtual Autism
- Internet Gaming Disorder
- ADHD
- Nature Deficit Disorder

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Anxiety

- Yoga has been shown to significantly reduce anxiety among children, adolescents, and adults with varying results among populations and clinical conditions
- (Chugh-Gupta, Baldassarre, & Vrkljan, 2013; Weaver & Darragh, 2015)
- Yoga contributes to the reduction of anxiety, and students and teachers view Yoga as valuable with positive changes in students' anxiety, behavior, and self-regulation
- (Weaver, 2016)

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SPD & Yoga

- Yoga supports the sensory systems by regulating arousal levels
- Yoga provides vestibular, proprioception, & tactile input through movement, muscle contraction, weight bearing, & deep breathing
- The practices involved in yoga (poses, deep breathing, relaxation) offers therapeutic tools to complement the sensory-based interventions Occupational Therapists use with children with sensory processing difficulties
- (Campbell & Martin, 2017)

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Autism & Yoga

- Yoga helped children with ASD increased concentration, focus, organization and relaxation after 25 yoga sessions
- (Oldenberg, 2004)
- Yoga yielded significant improvements in motor imitation, behavior at home, and family relationships
- Researchers also hypothesized that guided imitation of therapist body positions stimulated mirror neuron activation, resulting in improved sense of self
- (Radhakrishna et al., 2010)

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Virtual Autism



- Early exposure to screen-time can cause neurochemical and anatomical brain changes that mimic Autism
- (Heffler & Oestreicher, 2016)


- 66.6% of children exposed to ≥ 3 hours per day of screen time had language delay, short attention span, hyperactivity
- (Hermawati et al, 2018)

- 2 French doctors studied the affect of eliminating screen time in children diagnosed with autism
- Autism symptoms entirely disappeared 1 month after eliminating screen time
- <https://www.madinamerica.com/2017/08/virtual-autism-explain-rising-asd-diagnoses/?fbclid=IwAR1MC76f1GW4DsXfZP9BLGf88EPL35H7tBvMwXOkedJKBuiddpGKLW9qeWw>

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Screen Time for Children? Problems & Recommendations




- More than 1 hr/day (AAP recommended screen time in preschoolers) results in lower measures of myelination tracts (white matter) in brain development, affecting language, literacy, and executive fx skills.
- (Hutton, et al, 2019)
- Increased screen time correlates with decreased developmental milestone performance in children ages 36-60 months
- (Madigan, et al, 2019)
- Higher amount of screen time is related to lower fine motor skills.
- (Webster, et al, 2019)

- World Health Organization Screen time recommendations (2019)
- Infants under 12 months should not be exposed to electronic screens
- Children ages of 2 and 4 no more than 1 hour of "sedentary screen time" each day
- Children under 5 should also get more exercise and sleep in order to develop healthy habits to stave off obesity and diseases

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"Internet Gaming Disorder"



- **The DSM-5**
- Withdrawal symptoms when gaming is taken away (sadness, anxiety, irritability)
- Inability to reduce playing, unsuccessful attempts to quit gaming
- Giving up other activities, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities due to gaming
- Deceiving family members or others about the amount of time spent on gaming
- The use of gaming to relieve negative moods, such as guilt or hopelessness
- A person must engage in this behavior for at least 12 months

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ADHD

- Studies examining the effect of physical activity on ADHD symptoms in children have found statistically significant reduction in the severity of ADHD symptoms when an OT wellness program is implemented
- (Smith, et al. 2013)
- Additional research indicates that "green outdoor settings" reduces symptoms in children with ADHD
- Environmental psychologist Stephen Kaplan states "natural environments engage the mind effortlessly thus helping with *attention restoration*, giving the brain a break from deliberate direct attention"
- (Kuo & Taylor, 2004)

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ADHD & Yoga

- ADHD symptoms significantly decreased in children after 8 yoga sessions during inpatient stay child psychiatry unit
- (Hariprasad et al., 2013)
- Yoga helped increase time on task for students with ADHD in educational setting (Peck, et al., 2005)
- Yoga has a positive impact on executive functioning skills in children with ADHD. 8-week yoga program improved sustained attention, discrimination function, significantly better reaction time and response accuracy compared to control group
- (Chou & Huang, 2017)

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Nature-Deficit Disorder

- '**Nature-Deficit Disorder**' is a term coined by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods* (Algonquin Books, 2004)
- Children are spending less time outdoors resulting in a wide range of behavioral problems
- 3 Causes:
 - Parental fears (keeping children safe from dangers outside)
 - Restricted access to natural areas (decrease in green spaces)
 - Time spent using electronic media (Some studies suggest the average time spent on electronics= 44 hours per week)

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Evidence to support the importance of exposure to nature/green space 

- **Children who grow up living near green spaces have 55% less risk of developing mental health disorders later in life**
 - (Aarhus University, 2019)
- **There is a positive correlation between the “greenness” of the school area & school-wide academic performance**
 - (Wu, et al, 2014)

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Blue Space Neuroscience 

“There is something about being in water and swimming which alters my mood, gets my thoughts going, as nothing else can.” - Oliver Sacks

- Blue space refers to exposure to water such as rivers, springs, lakes or the ocean (walking on the beach)
- Reduces stress (just getting your feet wet), boosts creativity, reduces depression, improves cardiovascular health due to ↑ PA
- **The science behind the myth:**
- People living near blue spaces report higher levels of physical activity (Gascon, et al 2017)
- Interaction with blue space has a positive effect on mental health (Gascon, et al 2017)
- Water fountain sounds manage anxiety (Abd El Aziz A. N, et al 2012)

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Get Kids Moving! 

- What is the common denominator among these children with special needs?
- **Reduced physical activity!**
- <https://www.gocomics.com/foxtrot/2019/06/23>
- Physical activity improves childhood cognition, executive functioning, & brain health (Hillman, et al, 2014)
- Studies show that kids who play outside are happier, more focused, less anxious
 - Stimulates social interactions
 - Increases physical activity
 - Improves problem solving
 - Enhances creativity
- <https://www.childrenandnature.org/research-library/>

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What all the research indicates is that wellness is important for active engagement & participation in childhood occupations

- Playing/Physical activity: muscle strength, balance, flexibility, endurance
- Eating healthy food: nutrition, energy, stamina
- Quality sleep: alertness, focusing, concentration, learning
- Friends/social skills/relationships: emotional regulation, self-esteem

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Therapists Role in Pediatric Health & Wellness

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AOTA 2025 Vision

- Vision 2025: *Occupational therapy maximizes health, well-being, and quality of life for all people, populations, and communities through effective solutions that facilitate participation in everyday living.*
- The profession of OT supports Health, Well-Being, and Quality of Life
 - A humor camp for children with autism to help them interact socially
 - Embed strategies for *all* students throughout the learning environment
 - Sensory-friendly venues: movie theaters, museums, NBA, restaurants
 - <https://www.understood.org/en/community-events/blogs/in-the-news/2018/05/04/nba-creating-sensory-rooms-at-over-half-of-its-arenas>
 - <https://www.chuckecheese.com/events/sensory-sensitive-sundays>
 - <https://blueskypit.com/2019/05/13/sensory-rooms-aviations-latest-trend/>

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Sensory Friendly Venues

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Systematic Review of Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention for Children and Youth

- Evidence exists for the effectiveness of occupation- and activity-based intervention programs that focus on play, leisure, recreational activities & stress management activities
- (Arbesman, et al, 2013)

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Health promotion in Pediatric Therapy


- Therapists create health-promoting activities for children to enhance physical & emotional well-being
- Research indicates that complementary health approaches, physical activity, exposure to nature, yoga, and meditation can be effective therapeutic strategies



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Wellness interventions for children & youth are crucial for healthy bodies & healthy minds!



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Wellness Intervention in Pediatric Therapy

- Deep Breathing
- Meditation/Mindfulness
- Nature
- Yoga-Based Movement



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Wellness Interventions for Children & Youth: Deep Breathing, Meditation, & Mindfulness

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‘Just Breathe’
Sensory Mindfulness

https://amysmartgirls.com/short-film-just-breathe-helps-kids-deal-with-emotions-1b4f91dac5ad?fbclid=IwAR3wziWOk4wRC4eouyAdbBjezc4GhCk-3AC56Pa_JDDUPcpsITD7hLf1OaU

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How To Make a Sensory Glitter
Bottle for Mindfulness

- **What you need:**
- Water bottle
- Clear glue
- Glitter
- Warm water
- Food coloring
- Small funnel (optional)
- Hot glue gun to seal bottle
- **Directions:** Fill bottle 1/3 full of glue. Add glitter, start with 1 Tablespoon. Fill bottle with warm water. Leave 1" space at top. Add food coloring. Cap bottle and seal with hot glue gun.

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Wellness Intervention for
Children & Youth:
Deep Relaxed Breathing

- Breathing at the rate of 5-6 breaths/minute reduces anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, & emotional dis-regulation
- Conscious attention to breathing patterns effects the ANS for regulating physiological response to stress
- Anatomy of Deep Breathing:
 - Diaphragm muscle separates thoracic & abdominal cavities
 - Intercostal muscles b/w ribs help chest cavity expand outward
 - Collarbone, sternum, back & neck muscles expand cavity upward

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Creative Ways to Teach Kids Deep Relaxed Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing) 

- Balloon breath
- Horse lips breath
- Breathing Props:
 - Blowing bubbles
 - Blowing streamers



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Balloon Breath

Watch video
Let's Practice

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Horse Lips

Take a long slow inhalation through nose, then exhale through mouth allowing your lips to vibrate

Let's Practice

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Meditation/Brain Breaks for Children & Youth
"Hocus Pocus Everybody Focus"

- What is meditation?
 - Re-directing attention, shifting thought, guiding concentration
 - A focused process of self-regulation
 - Gives the brain a resting break: Restorative & Rejuvenating
- Meditation for children & youth helps improve:
 - Increased self-esteem
 - Enhanced attention span
 - Enriches connectedness with others
 - Supports emotional regulation
 - Relieves stress
- Free Guided Meditation Exercises for kids
- <https://blog.mindvalley.com/meditation-for-kids/>

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Deep Relaxed Breathing & Meditation


- Works on HPA axis (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis)
- HPA axis controls Sympathetic Nervous System (fight or flight) and Parasympathetic Nervous System (rest & digest)
- Decrease SNS activity while increasing PNS activity
- Reduced heart rate & blood pressure

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Meditation/Brain Breaks for Children & Youth: Using the Senses to Integrate Brain & Body for Self-Regulation

- Vestibular - Moving meditation walking around school, navigating an obstacle course
- Proprioception – Progressive muscle relaxation meditation
- Tactile – Sensory tubs with nature items, home made hand fidgets
- Visual- Coloring meditation; kids color mandala picture, look out window, have green plants in classroom
- Auditory- Listening meditation; Use nature sound app – Relax Melodies
- Interoception- Body scanning meditation
- Cardiovascular- Deep breathing, make it fun using imagination



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Mindfulness for Children & Youth 

- What is Mindfulness? Purposefully paying attention in the present moment, without judgment
- Sensory Self-Regulation = Mindfulness
- Tune in to what you are doing and how you are feeling using the senses
 - Focus on breathing
 - Attend to your emotional state
 - Bring attention to your body while moving
- Mindful Moments
- <https://circles.projecthappiness.org/documents/mindful-moments.pdf>
- Creative Problem Solving: Social Skill activities for Emotional Self-Regulation
- <https://sociallyskilledkids.com/social-skills/>

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Mindfulness Strategies:
Nature & Sensory Self-Regulation
for Children & Youth 

- Associate the principles of sensory integration with nature
- Vestibular – Hiking, walk garden labyrinth, run outside
- Proprioception - Climb playground equipment, climb trees
- Tactile - Feel the texture of a tree trunk, dirt, leaves, rocks, walk barefoot on different textured surfaces; grass, sand, pebbles, water
- Auditory - Listen to nature sounds; water, wind, animal sounds

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Mindfulness Strategies:
Nature & Sensory Self-Regulation
for Children & Youth 


- Visual – Look at trees, plants, & flowers
- Olfactory - Smell fresh air, pinecones, flowers
- Gustatory& oral sensory - Taste garden vegetables/herbs
- To engage executive functioning skills, talk about 1-2 nature facts specific to the object

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Interoception & Its Role in Health & Wellness for Children/Youth

- What is Interoception? The perception of emotional states & physiological feedback from the body
- Examples; hunger, thirst, sleepiness, need to go to bathroom, pain, muscle aches, heartbeat, itching, emotion identification
- Interoception center - Insula
- Associated w/ Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)
- Assists with self-regulation
- Helps maintain homeostasis



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Interoception & Its Role in Health & Wellness for Children/Youth


- Interoception is important for the self-regulation of health-related behavior
- Children with higher IS performed better in the physical performance task
- IS was positively correlated with the extent of light PA levels in the morning and afternoon
- IS interacts positively with the degree of PA in children
- (Georgiou et al, 2015)

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Mindfulness Strategies: Helping Kids Improve Interoception Awareness for Sensory Self-Regulation

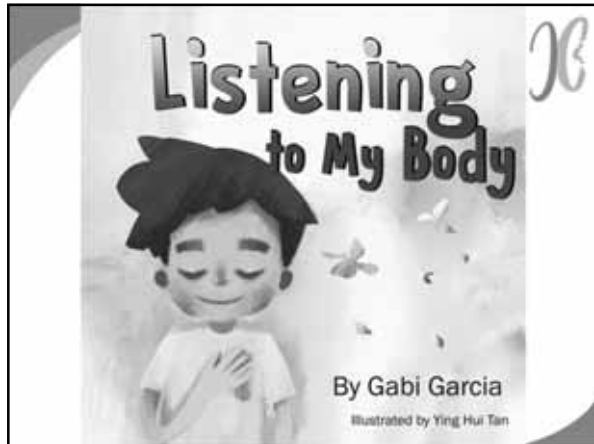
- Develop internal awareness (Interoception)
- *Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body*
- "Arnold has swallowed the Magic School Bus! Now, instead of seeing an exhibit of the human body at a museum, the class is taking a look at Arnold's stomach, his intestines, his bloodstream, and more from the inside on this heart-stopping field trip."
- <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/ms-b-inside-the-human-body-by-joanna-cole/>



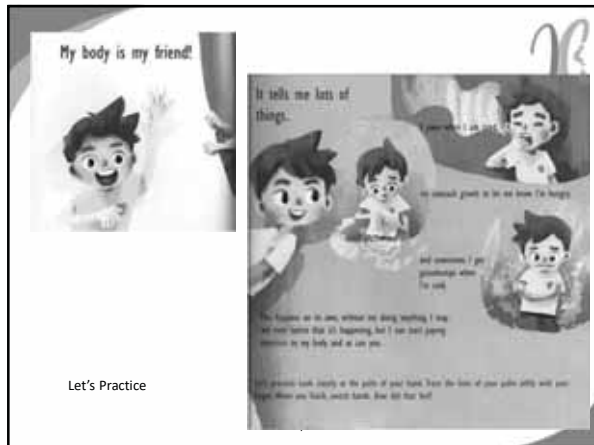
Live demo; show & talk about Magic School bus book

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Deep breathing, meditation & mindfulness promotes health and wellness and helps children get focused in the moment

"Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it's called the present."

Alice Morse Earle

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Occupation-Based Wellness Interventions for Children & Youth in Nature

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Nature Break

Nature Moments video

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The Sensory & Motor Benefits of Nature Experiences for Children & Youth

- Animals
- Plants
- Trees
- Insects
- Birds



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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Animals

- Zoo: Learn about animals & their habitats
- Petting Zoo: Tactile experience petting, feeding animals
- Pet store: Easily accessible
- Humane Society: Community volunteering
- Take care of a pet at home (fish, turtle, bird, hamster, rabbit, cat, dog) Develops responsibility & social skills
- Animal-Assisted Therapy
 - Dolphins <https://islanddolphinscare.org/>
 - Dogs <http://autismservicedogsofamerica.com/>
 - Horses <https://www.equestriantherapy.com/hippotherapy-kids-special/>

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Dolphin-Assisted Therapy




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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Plants & Trees

- Plants: Visit a Botanical garden or Nursery Store
- Identify flowers & plants: Work on reading skills, handwriting skills, executive functioning with organizing thoughts & info
- Collect nature items & teach about sensory qualities
 - Tactile/textures of tree bark, leaves, grass, pinecones, search for 4 leaf clover (visual figure-ground)
- Snap photos of nature & make a scrapbook
 - Cutting, pasting, handwriting skills



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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Plants & Trees

- Trees: Feel the bark, hug a tree, sit in shade, rake leaves & jump
 - Provides tactile input, deep pressure proprioception input, muscle strength, gross motor skills
- Climbing a tree (pretend a jungle gym or climbing wall is a tree)
 - Motor planning: navigating a course
 - Proprioception: using muscles for heavy work
 - Vestibular: gravitational security
- Leaf rubbing art project, pressed flowers
 - Fine motor, bilateral coordination, finger/hand strength



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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Insects

- Gross motor
 - Squash the bug jumping activity
 - Yoga poses pretend insects (dead bug pose)
 - <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/games-for-kids-buggy-imitation/>
- Insect games
 - Fly swatter & flashcards
 - Plastic bugs hidden in sensory bin
 - Bed Bugs™ game with tongs




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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Insects

- Insect art projects
 - Paper lady bugs
 - Coffee filter butterfly
 - Small paper plate lacing spider web
- Edible snack art
 - Ants on a log (celery, PB, raisins)
 - Gummy worms in chocolate pudding
 - Marshmallow & licorice spiders



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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Birds

- Identify & learn about types of birds in your ecosystem. Look at photos, listen to their unique sounds from an app
 - Executive functioning skills
- Listen for bird sounds outside
 - Auditory processing/localization
- Make a pine cone & PB birdfeeder
 - Fine motor skills, bilateral coordination, sensory tactile & olfactory




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Nature Experiences for Children & Youth: Birds

- Look in sky or trees for birds/hawks
 - Visual scanning/tracking skills
- Feather painting
 - Fine motor art
- Bird yoga poses (e.g. stork)
 - Gross motor skills
- Shredded wheat bird's nest with candy eggs
 - Oral sensory/motor



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Meaningful Occupation in Nature for Children & Youth
Get kids outside - Parents will benefit too!

- Playgrounds & Parks
- Hiking with kids
- Biking with kids
- Camping
- Fishing
- National Parks
- Geocaching
- Painted Rocks
- Therapeutic Gardening

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Explore National Parks with Kids


- Jr. Park Ranger program
- <https://www.nps.gov/kids/jrangers.cfm>
- Junior Ranger motto "**Explore, Learn, and Protect!**"
- The NPS Junior Ranger program is an activity based program
- Interested youth complete a series of activities during a park visit, share their answers with a park ranger, and receive an official Junior Ranger badge and Junior Ranger certificate.



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Meaningful Childhood Occupation in Nature: Geocaching with Kids

- A geocache is a physical treasure hidden by a member of the geocaching community with coordinates posted online to the location of the geocache
<https://www.geocaching.com/play>
- There's an app for that...(create an account & download app)
- Be safe. Have fun!
- What to bring: items for trading, pencils to log name & date, water/snacks, sunscreen, bug spray, watch for dangers (i.e. poison ivy, snakes), flashlight, first aid kit
- <http://runwildmychild.com/geocaching-with-kids/>



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Meaningful Childhood Occupation
in Nature :
'Painted Rocks'

- Paint a smooth flat rock using acrylic paint & seal it
- Take photo of rock and post to Facebook page <https://paintedrocklife.com/>
- Hide the rock in parks, family-friendly hiking trails, playgrounds
- If you find the rock, post a photo.
- Keep the rock or hide it again!
- For teens - Write positive affirmations on rocks




Jenny's painted rocks
Facebook page: Dolphin65

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Therapeutic Gardening:
Benefits for Children & Youth

- **Motor Skills:** Facilitates grip strength, bilateral coordination, dynamic balance, core strength, UE mm strength
- **Sensory Input:** Watering hose pressure for proprioception, tactile touching water & soil, smell/taste plants, wear long sleeves/gloves for sensory sensitivity
- **Executive Functioning Skills:** Children learn basic information about plants: annual vs. perennial, sun or shade, watering needs, pretend play with fairy garden

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Integrating Therapeutic
Gardening in Pediatric Therapy

- **Therapy sessions:** Plant seed in paper cup, make a pretend garden with playdough smash flat to prepare dirt, poke with fingers to make holes, place small beads for seeds, use bug tongs to pick up pom poms to pretend to 'catch the bugs'
- **Fine motor skills handwriting/art activities**
- Write plant labels for garden, make birdhouses, wind chimes, garden art (pinwheel), plastic flowers in upside-down strainer



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Garden Themes for Kids: Sensory Gardens, Butterfly Gardens, Fairy Gardens

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Community Gardens for Kids are "sprouting up" 😊

- Lawrence, Kansas
- <https://www.growingfoodgrowinghealth.org/>

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Community Gardens for Kids are "sprouting up" 😊

- Fountain Hills, Arizona
- <https://www.fhcultural-civic.org/community-garden>

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Meaningful experiences
& activity in nature
promotes wellness in
children and teens



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Yoga-Based
Movement as
Therapeutic
Intervention for
Children &
Youth



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Benefits of Yoga-Based
Movement for Children &
Youth

- Improves motor coordination
- Promotes social interactions
- Increases strength & flexibility
- Improves quality of sleep
- Facilitates sensory body awareness
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Supports emotional regulation: sense of accomplishment, determination, self-esteem



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Yoga in Schools

- School-based modified yoga-based intervention
- 5 minutes of yoga integrated into school day
- Enhanced students' sense of belonging
- Decreased disruptive behaviors in the classroom
- Heightened students' self-awareness
- Contributed to higher level cognitive functioning
- Increased emotional stability
- Potentially decreased overall bullying behaviors in schools
- (Fauber et al, 2017)

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Yoga Poses for Children & Youth: Eye Pillows for relaxation

- Slightly weighted, can use bean bags or small bean bag animals
- Gentle pressure around the orbit of the eye decreases heart rate
- Stimulates vagus nerve (10th cranial nerve): regulates heart rate, digestion, & mood
- Triggers the parasympathetic heart-slowng reflex 'oculocardiac reflex'
- Kids do this naturally: Tired child rubs eyes, this stimulates vagus nerve, slowing heart rate to prepare for sleep

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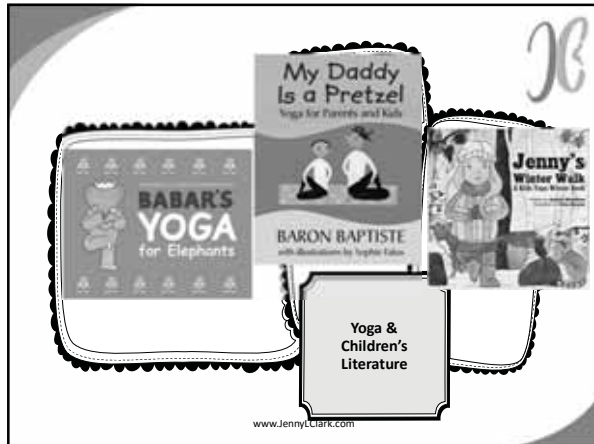


Live Demo/Experience Eye Relaxation: Rub hands together & place over eyes with gentle pressure on closed eye lids

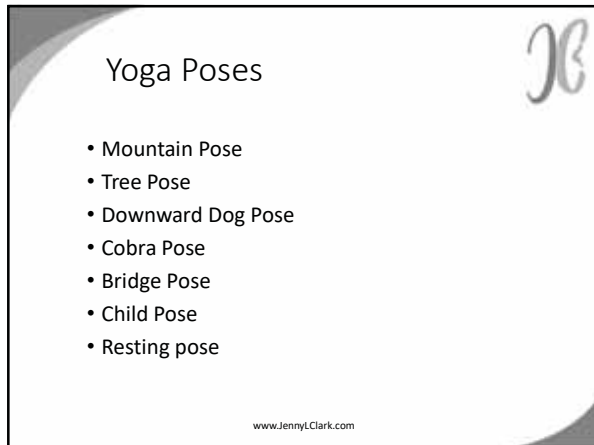
Let's Practice

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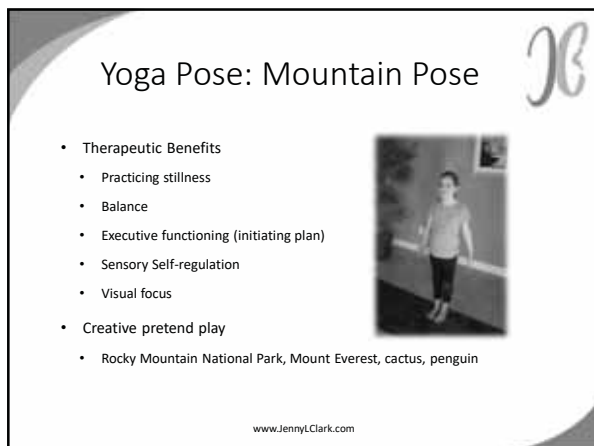
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Mountain Pose

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Yoga Pose: Tree Pose

- Therapeutic Benefits
 - Vestibular
 - Motor planning
 - Weight shifting
 - Balance
 - Visual focusing
- Creative Pretend Play
 - Forest trees, flamingo, stork



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Tree Pose



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Let's Practice

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Yoga Pose: Downward Dog 

- Therapeutic Benefits
 - Proprioception & Vestibular
 - UE joint stability
 - Stretches hips & back
 - Strengthens legs
 - Slows respiration
 - Head inversion – blood to brain – VP skills
- Creative Pretend Play
 - Wolf, coyote, pet dog, bear
 - Vocalize animal sounds

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Downward Dog Pose 


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Yoga Pose: Cobra 

- Therapeutic Benefits
 - Prone Extension - Sensory Alerting
 - Proprioception
 - UE joint stability
 - Deep breathing during challenge
- Creative Pretend Play
 - Reptiles, jungle, ocean themes; Snake, boa constrictor, seal
 - Hissing snake sound, seal sound



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Cobra Pose

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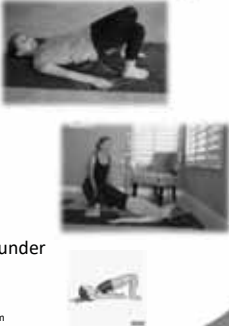
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Yoga Pose: Bridge Pose

- Therapeutic Benefits
 - Proprioception & Vestibular
 - Gravitational security
 - Motor planning
 - Strengthens lower back
- Creative Pretend Play
 - Lift the bridge for boats to float under
 - Skateboard ramp



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Bridge Pose

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Yoga Pose: Child Pose

- Therapeutic Benefits
 - Soothing pressure triggers parasympathetic nervous system
 - Proprioception
 - Motor planning
 - Stretches back muscles
 - Supine flexion - Sensory calming
 - Good for children with ASD
- Creative Pretend Play
 - Turtle, baby animal, seed, armadillo

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Child Pose

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Knees to Chest Yoga

- Knees to chest/Fetal position=Super sensory hug
- *Sensory soother and self-regulator helps to shut out the sensory world and learn how to self-regulate using your own body and breath.*
- Benefits: Releases endorphins to help decrease anxiety, aids digestion, activates lymphatic system

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Yoga Pose:
Savasana/Resting Pose

- Restorative
- "Even though we were in this pose for 1 minute, I feel so relaxed and rested like I slept a whole night!" (8-year old girl)

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There are only two ways to
live your life,
as though nothing is a miracle,
or as though everything is a miracle.



Albert Einstein

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Conclusion

- Integrating nature experiences, yoga poses, meditation, & mindfulness strategies into therapy can facilitate a child's growth & development
- It is my hope that this presentation has inspired you to get outside & enjoy nature
- When we practice wellness in our daily lives, we experience the benefits, this helps us to be better role models for children
- We do by example. We inspire. We make a difference!

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