Animal Yoga

### STRESS-FREE OUTDOORS ZONE – OUTSIDE

REMEMBER TO GET PERMISSION FROM AN ADULT BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE!

**Materials:**

* Blankets, towels or mats
* Papers, pencils (optional)

**Steps:**

Girls find a place outdoors to create a stress-free zone.

**SAY:**

*When our bodies move enough, rest enough, and get the right fuel, we tend to get less upset and worried, we stress less! But sometimes we need to make time to find a way to feel less stress.*

*Today we will find a place outdoors to become your "stress free zone." Sometimes people ease stress after they move around--like dance and jump or run. Sometimes people ease stress by find a quiet place and doing something restful.*

*Find your de-stress zone. You can lay a blanket out under a tree. You can find a place to draw or write. You can dance to music in your head. You can sing a song to yourself. You can lie on your back, look at clouds and listen to the wind in the trees! Choose whatever you want to do that will make you feel relaxed. Just make sure to do it in a way you aren't disturbing your neighbor who is also de-stressing!*

After about 10 minutes or so, talk with a parent or guardian about the following topics:

*Describe what your de-stress zone was like--where was it and what did you do? Were there sounds that were calming for you, like the wind in the trees, bird sounds, or water running in a brook?*

*Was there a difference in your heart rate? Your breathing? Did you feel happier when you were in your de-stress zone?*

*If you were to create a stress-free zone at home or in your backyard, where it would be? What would you do?*

### ANIMAL YOGA

**Materials**

* Yoga mat or towel

**Steps**

Remove your socks and shoes.

**Note to volunteers:** Keep girls with special needs in mind and adapt the poses for their abilities. If they are physically unable to join in, include them by having them act as a yoga coach by calling out an activity.

**SAY:**

*Staying fit means working more than just your muscles that you can see* -- *it also means keeping another muscle* -- *your brain* -- *in shape as well. It's hard to do that if we are worried, stressed, or upset about something. So this activity will give you one way to help you feel better.*

*Has anyone ever heard of yoga? Yoga is a type of exercise that began in India more than 5,000 years ago. It uses breathing and stretching together to help relax your mind.*

*So before we begin practicing yoga, we need to first find our breath. Breathing is something we do all day long, but concentrating on your breath and breathing in and out slowly can help your mind.*

*Let's try it. Breathe in through your nose slowly and out through your mouth. As you breath, try and feel the breath fill your belly, then your ribs, then your chest, and then let it out that way too.*

*Let's take a few moments and concentrate on your breathing. Lie down on your backs, and just breathe slowly.*

As they do this, you may want to remind them to go slowly and to concentrate on feeling the air fill their chest, and then letting it out.

**SAY:**

*Now that we have practiced breathing, let's put it with some yoga moves. Yoga is not just about relaxing, it's a great workout!*

*First, spread out so everyone has some room. Yoga usually begins with breathing and stretching exercises. You did the breathing, now let's do some stretching. First, let's do the mountain pose to stretch.*

*Mountain Pose*

*1. Stand tall with your feet together, arms at your sides.*

*2. Your shoulders should be relaxed.*

*3. Make sure your weight is distributed evenly through your feet.*

*4. Take a deep breath and raise your hands overhead, palms facing each other with arms straight.*

*5. Read toward the sky with your fingertips.*

*Hold for 10 seconds.*

*Now we'll try some other yoga poses. I like doing animal poses, because they are fun and really make you happy when you do them. But don't worry if you can't do the pose exactly. Everyone's body is different. If something hurts, you definitely shouldn't be doing it. Raise your hand and I'll change the pose for you.*

Go through the poses below, walking them through the steps and reminding them to breathe. Move on to the next pose after it seems like everyone has gotten it. **Note to volunteers:** Do as many poses as you think there's time for. The key is to keep it fun.

*Upward Facing Dog Pose*

1. Begin on the floor, lying on your stomach

2. Bring your hands up by your shoulders, palms on the floor

3. Inhale, press your hands into the floor

4. Straighten your arms, lift your head and torso up as high as you can, keep*ing* your elbows close to your body

5. Hold this position, breathing easily

6. Exhale, return to the floor, leading with your chin

7. Breathe deeply and hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute

*Frog Pose*

1. Squat on the floor, balancing on your toes, knees spread wide, hands on the floor between your legs.

2. Look up and inhale.

3. As you exhale, straighten your legs and lower your head toward your knees.

4. Return to squatting position, then repeat.

*Cat/Cow Pose*

1. Lay down on your back.

2. Start in the Table pose, by kneeling on hands and knees. Make sure hands are below shoulders, and knees are below hips.

3. Inhale, look up to the ceiling, and allow your belly to sink toward the floor (Cow pose).

4. Exhale, round your back towards the ceiling, and look at your belly (Cat pose).

Repeat. Have girls meow in Cat pose and moo in Cow pose to encourage breathing.

*Shark Pose*

1. Begin on hands and knees in Table pose.

2. Exhale, straighten knees and lift hips.

3. Hold your head between your upper arms, do not let it hang or press heavily into the floor.

4. To release, exhale and bring knees to the floor.

Explain to kids that they are the fins on the back of a shark, poking out of the water. To encourage breathing, have them make the "Jaws Theme" sound while holding this pose.

**Keep It Girl-Led Tip**

After doing some of the poses listed here, have girls make their own animal yoga poses that seem relaxing to them!