

Family yoga for self-esteem and stronger caregiver-child relationships: A pilot study

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Abstract

Children's participation in yoga is becoming more widespread as a practice to promote physical health and psychological well-being. Previous research of yoga programs for children indicate that children respond well to yoga-based interventions and are receptive to the therapeutic benefits, both physical and emotional. There is extensive research examining the benefits of children's yoga, however there is a paucity of research examining the potential benefits of family yoga. In this study the relationship with the primary caregiver is utilized in order to engage children and their caregivers in yoga and other mindfulness-based activities together. The purpose of this research is to assess the effectiveness of a Family Yoga program to increase children's self-esteem and enhance caregiver-child relationships. Self-esteem and close caregiver-child relationships are strong indicators of mental wellness for children and families. As there is minimal professional intervention required for children and their caregivers to practice yoga together it is a resource worth further investigation in regards to mental wellness. For the Family Yoga program children between the ages of 7 and 9 participate in a 60-minute yoga class with their primary caregiver once a week for an eight-week period. N = 13 child; N=13 caregiver; Child Age M=8. Quantitative results are analyzed using a paired t-test to examine changes in the child's self-esteem and the strength of the caregiver-child relationship, using both caregiver reported and child reported measures pre and post intervention. Qualitative results are analyzed using content analysis to examine the perceived benefits of the intervention from the perspective of the participants. Quantitative results show a statistically significant increase in children's self-esteem and closeness in the relationship with their primary caregiver. In the qualitative results, caregivers identified enhanced closeness in the relationship with their child, confidence of their child developing and benefiting from the opportunity to know their child better. The quantitative and qualitative results suggest that the Family Yoga may improve children's self-esteem and enhance closeness in the caregiver-child relationship, leading to prospective improvements in the mental well-being of children and families.

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