

31 - It's Nothing a Little Breathing and Yoga Can't Fix

Original Air Date: 10/6/21

Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Host Dr. Shipley Speaker: Hello everyone and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Host Dr. Heald Speaker: Twice a month, we will come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to try.

Don't forget to subscribe to this podcast to get notifications about future episodes.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Today, we have with us a wonderful colleague who is doing some really cool things with yoga. Dr. Chris Sorensen serves as an associate professor in the Department of Education and Liberal Arts at the University of Arizona Global Campus.

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here. It's been great being able to kind of bring yoga, you know, something that you traditionally just think that you have to go to a studio, right, to go do.

And it's been great kind of bringing it to teachers and students in more academic classroom settings.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: So, Chris and I had a nice little chance to start off the talk and our week by just talking about how we use yoga and how we use that breathing and balance to kind of set the tone for us. Chris, your title for the ECE conference is It's *Nothing a Little Breathing and Yoga Can't Fix.*

Wow, spot on with that. Can you tell us a little bit about why you got into yoga?

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Yeah, so originally, I got into yoga for the same reason a lot of people do, and that's probably for the physical aspect of it. I had some lower back issues, and I would always hear, oh, well, yoga is great for individuals with yoga back or with back pain.

So, I gave it a shot and, you know, it did it. It had benefits for me physically. But what kind of really caught me off guard was the impact that it also had on me mentally.

I wasn't aware that there is much more to yoga than just the physical, right? There's a whole breathing aspect to it, a mental and kind of bringing the mind, the body and the breath together. And it was just amazing how just breathing or some mindful movement, the impact that that can have on your mental state. So, yeah, got into it for the physical and found out there was just so much more to it than that.

Yeah, so obviously you don't want to be actually driving, right, while you're doing any type of activity other than staying focused on the road, right? But, you know, I will say there have been times where, you know, you're at a stop sign, you're at a stoplight, just doing some mindful breathing, just some very deep breaths, right? Just inhale in, bringing the breath all the way down to the belly. You feel the belly expand and then long breath out. So, something as simple as that.

Yeah, if you're feeling any type of anxiety on your way to work or on your way home from work, right, which we all experience, you know, in this day and age. Yeah, it can literally be done anywhere at any time, you know, within reason and, you know, being safe. Yeah.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Chris, I love that. And I think it's so when we bring that level of consciousness to the intentionality of yoga, it does help just bring that balance. So obviously a lot of our listeners are educators, and they have days where they're very active with children or they're very active in our case.

We do sit a lot and, you know, obviously teach using the online platform. Can you take us through any recommendations or suggestions that you have, in addition to that breathing, that we might be able to integrate in into our day to bring a level of mindfulness, but also that physical aspect to our, you know, settings?

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Yeah, I mean, and the thing is, again, like, you know, when you're doing yoga, it doesn't have to be, you know, going to a studio and doing a full hour class. It can be easily integrated 30 seconds to a minute just to give you kind of that quick break that you might need.

So, you know, say you're transitioning between activities in the classroom with your students. You know, we know our minds are all over the place. And so, you might want to bring their focus right to a single point before you transition into that next activity.

You could do something as simple as just some neck rolls. So, you just have them sit up nice and tall. You know, you cue them just to bring the right ear down to the right shoulder, glide the chin down to the chest, making your way over to the left side and then just returning back to the right.

And you just kind of you take them through that motion for 30 seconds. You might have them do some shoulder rolls, you know, just rolling your shoulders in one direction. Maybe you start with really small circles and then you just get bigger and bigger.

And then you can reverse directions. You might have them do some wrist rolls. So just rotating their wrists in one direction, opening and closing the hands.

Again, something that you can do for 30 seconds. And those three examples, students didn't even have to get up out of their chair. So, you didn't have to you didn't have to move students around the classroom.

Everyone stayed right where they were, you know, from one activity transitioning to the next. But what you did in either of those situations was that you really brought their attention to a single point, really having them focus on a specific movement. And it almost kind of helps them to reset the mind before you move on to your next activity.

So those are three simple activities that you can easily integrate into the classroom.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: I love that. And you know what else I love is the fact that you use just in your explanation right there, you know, the visual aspects.

So, as you were talking about the neck rolls, I was very mindful in, you know, coming to doing the movement with your words and also just the vocabulary for our youngest learners. You know, chin. Think about that as they're learning that.

So that is so amazing. I love that. Dr. Shipley, did you have something that you wanted to add?

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Sure.

Chris, I know that you've been doing this for a while. So how if I'm teaching, can I integrate this in a quick way? Do I need to teach my students? Is it something that we can just jump in and do? Because, you know, sometimes between transitions, you have two or three minutes. Is this something we would model for our students? How can we have a teacher really just know that she can do it and not have to plan it into her day?

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Yeah,

Yeah, that's good. Right. We have such limited time in the classroom.

Right. And that transition time between activities is it's so it's so important. But like in all three of those examples, you wouldn't have to, you don't necessarily have to do all three.

I mean, you can just do one. Right. So, you can just pick one movement.

As far as the language with our young learners, the vocabulary like Dr. Hill was mentioning, it's great to incorporate learning about different parts of the body. But you don't necessarily have to refer to it as yoga. Right.

That's a term that they're probably not going to comprehend at those younger those younger ages. So, you can just say movement. Right.

You take like a or a brain break, a movement break. Right. So whatever type of vocabulary you want to use, you know, the teacher has some flexibility.

But again, it can be as short as 30 seconds. And it really is about just having the student's kind of shift their mindsets and their attention to something else. Right.

That's going on before you make that transition to the next activity.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: I love that. And I love the fact that when we have that intentionality, it also brings them to a place of hopefully, you know, being in their own daily practice, being independent with that.

You know, maybe our children start the day every day now with a neck roll because they, you know, learned it in class and found the benefits of it. So that's so cool. Dr. Sorensen.

OK, so as we wind down, we always leave our listeners with three takeaways. So, in thinking about your presentation and thinking about the podcast today, can you just give us three strong takeaways that we can give to our learners?

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Yes. So, I would say, number one, it can be easily integrated throughout your day.

Right. As we talk, it can just be as simple as bringing in one single movement. Right.

For 30 seconds to don't be intimidated by the word yoga. Right. You hear the word yoga.

You just there's pictures and scenarios that you put in your head of what it has to be, something that yoga has to be when, you know, yoga just boils down to mindful movement. You mentioned the word intentionality and just some mindful breathing as well. And then also there is a connection between the nervous system and breathing.

Right. So, if and if you if you're anxious, if you just intentionally, if you're mindfully just taking nice, big, deep breaths, that can actually create that sense of calm that you might that you might need throughout the day. So those would be some big takeaways.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: I love that. So, I want to remind everyone that is listening that Chris did present at an early childhood conference back in August. And we would like you to take a look at the notes section and we will guide you on how to get to his session.

So, you can actually watch him doing some of these motions live. But as we wrap up, Chris, what is a challenge that you have for our listeners?

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: So, I would challenge you to integrate just two shorts, you know, we'll just call them yoga breaks, you know, maybe one in the morning, one in the afternoon, three to five minutes. Again, don't look at this as something that you have to set an entire hour.

You know, maybe, you know, that's where you'll you'll end up. But start small, you know, start with a few minutes, that time set aside in the morning and then maybe in the afternoon and just start there and see and see where that takes you.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: That's amazing.

We are so happy that you are here with us today. This is such an important topic and something that teachers can just implement into their classrooms very quickly and really change the trajectory of their day, in my opinion. So, Chris, thank you so much for being here today.

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Oh, well, thank you guys so much for having me. It's been a pleasure.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: And again, we will direct you in the notes section on how to get to his actual live presentation so you can see him doing yoga movements.

Thank you, Chris.

Dr. Chris Sorensen Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Thanks, Chris.