

# Toward Expert Consensus on Guidelines for the Use of Yoga in the Treatment of Anxiety for Children and Adolescents

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## Abstract

**Problem Statement:** Despite clinical evidence to support the use of yoga as a treatment option for children and adolescents with anxiety, clinical practice guidelines do not exist.

**Purpose:** This project used the modified Delphi technique to determine if consensus exists on the need for clinical practice guidelines among experts in the fields of child and adolescent psychiatry, psychology, and yoga. Additionally, this project aimed to determine if consensus exists on what should be included in clinical practice guidelines for the use of yoga as a therapeutic intervention for anxiety in children and adolescents.

**Methods:** Three rounds of questionnaires were used to survey identified experts in psychiatry, psychology, and yoga. Quantitative data were collected to describe the sample and to determine consensus using frequencies and percentages as measure of central tendency, and ranges as measures of dispersion. Qualitative data were gathered, and a textual content analysis was performed.

**Significance:** Establishing expert consensus on the need for clinical practice guidelines for the use of yoga as treatment intervention for children and adolescents with anxiety has the potential to improve access to safe and effective mental health care for children and adolescents who might otherwise go untreated.

## Introduction

Pediatric psychiatric mental health is a high priority topic.

Anxiety disorders are the most commonly identified psychiatric disorder in children, and the earliest mental health concern to present, with a median age of 6 years at initial diagnosis.

However, 80% of children with anxiety do not receive treatment for this mental health condition.

Current research highlights a need for pediatric mental health interventions which are effective, have low perceived stigma, are easily accessible, span multiple languages and cultures, and are of low risk to the child. Yoga interventions have the potential to meet this need.

## Background

### Physiological benefits in adults:

GABA  
Serotonin  
Dopamine  
Alpha and theta EEG waves  
Parasympathetic response

Norepinephrine  
Systolic & diastolic blood pressure  
Resting heart rate  
Sympathetic response

### Psychological benefits in adults:

Identification of subconscious problems  
Living in the present  
Acceptance as a precursor of change  
Desensitization  
Habit reversal  
Coping with negative emotions through  
Relaxation

Overall anxiety and depression symptoms

### Benefits in children:

Coping skills  
Confidence  
Self-awareness  
Relaxation

Stress  
Anxiety

## Project Description & Design

Modified Delphi method using a series of three questionnaires to survey identified experts in child & adolescent psychiatry, psychology, and yoga (N = 111).

Quantitative data were used to:

- Describe the sample
- Determine consensus

Qualitative data were used to:

- Identify themes

A score of 80% or higher was interpreted as consensus

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval received through Otterbein University (HS # 18/19-02)



Figure 1: Bali Kids Guide. (2018). Boat Pose. Retrieved from <http://balikidsguide.com/kids-yoga/>

## Questions?

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## Outcomes

### Round One Questionnaire

**Asked: Is there consensus among experts on the need for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines?**

- Consensus was found among identified experts in psychiatry and psychology (80%) on the need for evidence based clinical practice guidelines
- Consensus was *not* found among identified yoga experts (29%) on the need for evidence based clinical practice guidelines

### Round Two Questionnaire

**Asked: What are the most important items to include in clinical practice guidelines, and who should develop the guidelines?**

- Subjects ranked *benefits*, *risks*, and the *items* which they felt should be included in clinical practice guidelines.

#### Benefits

- Emotional regulation and/or self-regulation
- Focus on the here and now
- Mindfulness or calming the mind
- Physical exercise or stretching
- Body awareness
- Breathing

#### Risks

- Emotional triggers (negative memories, emotional discomfort, and trauma)
- Physical injury (muscle strains and sprains)

#### Items

- Indications
- Contraindications
- Safety measures
- Professional boundaries
- Risks
- Type of assessment to perform
- What age children and adolescents can practice yoga without a parent
- What age children and adolescents can start practicing yoga
- What type of yoga to use

### Round Three Questionnaire

**Asked: Is there consensus on the risks, benefits, and items which should be included, and who should write the guidelines?**

- Consensus was established on risks (86%)
- Consensus was established on the benefits (100%)
- Consensus was established on items that should be included in evidence-based clinical practice guidelines (100%)
- Consensus was also found (100%) among subjects that if the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) developed guidelines using the risks, benefits, and items outlined in the questionnaire, these guidelines would be beneficial to their practice

## Conclusion

Psychiatric and psychological mental health care providers would benefit from the development of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines.

Guidelines should:

- Be operationalized
- Be disseminated
- Incorporate feedback

## Limitations

- Inconsistent response to Round Two Questionnaire
- No yoga professionals responded to the Round Three Questionnaire
- Questionnaires were not standardized
- PMH-APRNs represent a disproportionately large response rate to all three questionnaires
- Low Response Rate:
  - Round One 15%
  - Round Two 8%
  - Round Three 6%

## References

