



**JESSICA MCILVEEN**  
presents  
**KIDS YOGA THERAPY**

# BODY AWARENESS AND CONNECTION



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The following are the props used in these exercises that can be purchased from anywhere that sells yoga supplies: yoga mat, cards, resistance band.

This practice is around body connection and awareness. It works with the interoception system which helps us to feel what's happening in our body, for example when we are hungry, need to go to the toilet, feel sick in our body or have pain somewhere.

It is for times when our child's body doesn't feel like a safe place to be. It is important to focus on body awareness and reconnection because when we have children with complex needs such as anxiety, ADHD, autism, sensory issues. or there has been trauma in a child's life, the easiest option for them is to disconnect from their body. This is because their body is where the scary feelings are happening, so it's easier for them to disconnect.

This impacts their ability to self-regulate, to feel calm, happy, present and mindful, and to focus and learn new things. Children are so busy now with school, games, technology and have so much going on that there is limited time to be present with their body. This limits their ability to adapt to what's going on in their environment and regulate with their body instead of being fearful. We want to build curiosity and limit the fear.

The poses shown in this video are all about how to activate the interoceptive system and build that body connection. Here is the methodology for two different poses. Before you begin, ask your child to choose a card. In this case the butterfly card was chosen.

## 1. Butterfly Legs

- Both of you will sit up straight with your feet together. Most people will feel a stretch in their inner thigh.



- Move the legs gently up and down (like flapping wings) to warm them up a little.
- Start to lean forward creeping your fingers slowly as you do so until they feel uncomfortable somewhere.
- Ask them where it feels uncomfortable then get them to do it again and tell you where it feels uncomfortable.
- Ask them to stay in that position and take 3 big breaths in through the nose and out of the mouth. Then sit back up.

Now ask them to choose another card. In this case it was the shark.

## 2. Shark Pose

- Both of you lay flat on your belly and clasp your hands behind you.
- Wiggle as you raise the chest off the ground and ask them to continue wiggling as they raise their chest higher.

If they stop then ask them if they can go any higher.

- When they can't ask them if they can feel the muscles working in their back and whether they're working more on the top or the bottom.

Ask them if there are there any other muscles working?

- Place your finger on a few different parts of their back and ask them if that muscle is working really hard. If they say no keep trying until they identify which muscle is working hard.



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All you need to do is ask where they feel it in their body and whether it feels comfortable or uncomfortable. Try not to label it as good or bad. If there is no response take them back into a position where you know they would be feeling the muscle and ask them to connect with it. For example, in butterfly legs you know they would feel it in their thighs. Sometimes they need a little prompt either because they're so disconnected from their body and can't feel it, or they're just not present.

If your child requires a lot of physical input or it needs to be quite extreme in their body for them to feel (this can happen especially for children who have experienced trauma) you can use the resistance band.

They can use this in any pose. Ask them to hold an end in each hand and stretch it out by pulling it apart or they can put it around the bottom of their feet and stretch their legs out forward while holding the ends. This helps them to activate their muscles as much as possible if the yoga poses don't work on their own.

You can get creative in helping them to activate the interoceptive system. You may get them to lift a heavy rock while doing a yoga pose. It's all about creating body awareness.