Practice yoga to relieve stress

Lion’s Breath, Tree Pose, Four-Square Breathing, and Warrior Pose. These are names for yoga poses and breathing exercises that can help reduce stress.

Yoga is an activity that helps your body and mind. It can help you beat stress. Practicing yoga helps you slow down and think calm thoughts, says KidsHealth.org. When you breathe deeply during yoga, you can slow down your heartbeat if it’s going too fast, the website says.

Other experts say yoga can help lower your blood pressure too. If your blood pressure is too high, it can damage your arteries and heart, according to the American Heart Association. So yoga can be good for your heart.

The Healthy Outlook staff practiced some of these yoga poses and breathing exercises when yoga instructor Erin Connelly visited St. Raymond of Penafort in November.

(See Yoga on Page 2)

Did you know your heart is a muscle?

The Healthy Outlook staff recently researched information about the heart and blood vessels. They looked for facts on trustworthy websites.

The word “source” tells you which trustworthy website they used.

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Your heart is a hardworking muscle that pumps blood and oxygen all around your body.

Source: KidsHealth.org

Your heart beats about 100,000 times a day.

Source: Texas Heart Institute

A person’s heart beats about 60 to 100 times a minute. That’s what’s known as your “heart rate.”

Source: KidsHealth.org

Heart disease is often called cardiovascular disease.

Source: KidsHealth.org

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Yoga can help reduce stress

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Ms. Erin, who is a clinical social worker for United Way of Greater Philadelphia and New Jersey, said she has been practicing yoga for 10 years and teaching it for four years. She said she started yoga when she was dealing with stress in her life.

“It makes me a lot calmer,” she said. “I’m more focused and my monkey mind is not going as bananas.”

What’s monkey mind? Ms. Erin explained that sometimes your brain acts like a monkey—it gets all “excitable.”

“It’s when all your thoughts are bouncing from here to there. Sometimes we need to calm it down and focus,” she said. When she does her yoga poses or yoga breathing, she said, “it puts the monkey mind back in its cage.”

One research study in Australia found that women felt less stress after taking two yoga classes a week for two months. They were in better moods, more flexible, and lost weight around their waists.

Researchers have found that stress can affect your heart. Here’s how it works: When you are stressed out or upset about something, say experts at Harvard Medical School, your body produces chemicals that help you either fight (or face up to) what’s stressing you or help you run away from (avoid) it. That’s called the “fight or flight” response.

The chemicals make “the heart beat faster” and narrow the blood vessels, says the American Heart Association.

Stress can be a good thing if it motivates you to study harder for a test or do better at school, says KidsHealth. That’s the “fight” part.

But if you’re stressed out all the time, it can be unhealthy. Stress can cause your head to hurt, make it hard to sleep, or give you a stomachache. Long-term stress can lead to many health problems such as high blood pressure and heart disease, say medical experts at the Mayo Clinic.

You can even practice yoga breathing when you’re in school, said Ms. Erin.

One simple exercise is Four-Square Breathing. You can sit at your desk and inhale to the count of four, then hold your breath to the count of four, then exhale to the count of four, and hold your breath for four more counts. —By Healthy Outlook staff

How a vein is different from an artery

(Continued from Page 1)

Arteries carry blood away from your heart. Veins carry blood back to your heart.

Source: KidsHealth.org

Most heart disease happens in older people. Children can be born with heart defects.

Source: KidsHealth.org

Eating a lot of vegetables and fruits and whole grains is good for your heart health.

Source: Cleveland Clinic

One sign of a heart defect in children is an abnormal heart sound, like a whooshing, called a “murmur.” A doctor can hear it through a stethoscope. But heart murmurs are common in children and aren’t always harmful.

Source: KidsHealth.org

Focusing on heart health

The Healthy Outlook is reporting stories this year about how you can take care of your heart.

What is your favorite way to reduce stress? Let us know by writing a letter to the Healthy Outlook. We might print it in our next edition.