

Parry Sound District Best Start Network

Month 6: Stretch it Out and Balance

Preschool

Bean Bag Balance Activities

You will need: 1 bean bag per child, and a line made of masking tape.

Tape one or more lines or shapes on the floor to make a “balance beam”.

- *Round 1: Balance while walking on Tape* – Tell the children to walk with their feet only on the taped line.
- *Round 2: Walk and Step Over Bean Bags* – Place a bean bag in the middle of the line or taped shape. Tell the children to walk on the tape again and this time, when they come to the bean bag, they must step over the bean bag.
- *Round 3: Squat and Pick-Up a Bean Bag* – Tell the child to walk on the tape. This time when they come to the bean bag they must squat down (while still keeping their feet only on the tape), pick up the bean bag and walk the rest of the way on the tape carrying their bean bag.
- *Round 4: Carrying the Bean Bags in Different Ways* – Tell the children to walk on the tape and carry their bean bag, but this time they must carry their bean bags on their shoulders, head, foot, etc.

Body Part Challenge

Explain to the children that balance is just holding yourself up and not falling over.

You will need: 2 hula hoops or 2 jump ropes made into a circle or 2 mats

You then need to call out directions one at a time and allow children the time to complete each task. Use the directions below and add your own.

1. Stand up with one foot in each hoop.
2. Balance with one foot in one hoop and one hand in the other hoop. (only those body parts can be inside of the hoop. The other body parts can be either off of the floor or on the floor outside of the hoops).
3. Put two hands in one hoop and two feet in the other hoop.
4. Put only one hand in one hoop and two feet in the other hoop.
5. Put only your bottom in one hoop and one hand in the other hoop. (Feet must be held off of the floor or outside of the hoops).
6. Put one hand and one foot in one hoop and one foot in the other hoop. (The other hand must be off of the floor or placed outside of the hoops).
7. Put one knee in one hoop and one knee in the other hoop.
8. Put one knee in one hoop and two hands in the other hoop.

9. Put one knee in one hoop and one hand in the other hoop. (All other body parts must be held off of the floor or outside of the hoops).
10. Put two knees in one hoop and two elbows in the other hoop.
11. Put two elbows in one hoop and one knee in the other hoop.
12. Put your bottom in one hoop and one elbow in the other hoop.
13. Put two heels in one hoop and two hands in the other hoop. (Preschoolers will probably have to have their tummies facing the ceiling for this one and it may be challenging for preschoolers to decide how to do this task).
14. Put one hand and one knee in one hoop and one hand and one knee in the other hoop.
15. Put one elbow and one knee in one hoop and one elbow and one knee in the other hoop.

Adaptations:

1. Add visual cues: Use masking tape to tape 2 hoops to the wall. Use pictures or drawings of the body parts (hands, feet, bottom, knee, elbow) and tape the body parts in the hoops on the wall. You can give the children both the spoken directions and the visual directions. When the children have learned to follow the spoken directions along with the visual directions, then use only the visual directions (by taping the body parts inside the hoops on the wall) and help preschoolers develop a new skill, following directions visually.
2. Make Index Cards to Give Directions: Write or draw different combinations of body parts on index cards. Turn the index cards face down. Choose two cards at a time to decide what body parts go in the hoops.
3. Use 3 hoops: After preschoolers have mastered this game with two hoops, try using three hoops for more problem solving and flexibility benefits.
4. Use Specific Coloured Hoops: Give preschoolers one hoop (all the same colour) and another hoop that is a different colour (all the same colour). So for example, each preschoolers would have one red hoop and one blue hoop. Give instructions by naming the colour of the hoop. Example: Put one foot in the blue hoop and two hands in the red hoop.
5. Letter or Word Recognition: After placing the hoops on the floor, write two different numbers or letters on index cards and tape the cards inside of the hoops (or make mats with different letters or numbers). For example, you might write the letter O and Q on 2 index cards. Give instructions by naming the letter inside the hoop. Example: Put one heel in the "O" hoop and two hands in the "Q" hoop.

Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes on a Dime

Cut out a circle from construction paper that is large enough for your child's feet. Do one for yourself too! Place the circle on the floor, have your child stand on the circle and sing "Head and Shoulders". The object is to stay on the circle.

Body Pretzels

You will need:

Body part flash cards (www.esl.kids.com/flashcards/bodyparts.html), or you can make your own by drawing simple pictures of body parts on pieces of paper.

1. Divide the flash cards into two piles: One pile for upper body parts (finger, hand, ear, neck, elbow, shoulder, etc.) and another pile for lower body parts (ankle, leg, knee, toe, etc.). Include the belly button and back in the lower body part pile and the tummy in the upper body part pile.
2. Shuffle the piles and turn them face down.
3. Choose a card from each pile.
4. Make a guess – The child is asked to make a guess as to whether they think they can touch the 2 body parts together.
5. Body Pretzel – Now the children try to touch the two body parts together.

Balance Beam

Make a balance beam from a sturdy board (10-15 cm wide and 2.5 m long). Start teaching your child how to move along the board on the ground. Once she is comfortable, make the board into a balance beam by raising it up. Place in on solid supports, like cement blocks, no more than 25 cm off the ground. Make sure it won't tip over. Now she can try walking along the raised board, holding your hand if she wants to.

Paper Plate Skating

You will need two round paper plates for each child. Explain to the children that they are to put one paper plate under each foot and use them as skates. Their feet must stay on the plates in order to move the plates around on the floor. Have the children try skating with the paper plate skates on different floor surfaces to see which works best for them.

Paper Plate Skating Variations:

1. Add music: play music while the children skate.
2. Four plates: Give four plates to each child and let them skate on all fours: hands and feet or hands and knees.
3. One Plate Sitting Down: Have the child sit down and try only one paper plate under their bottom and scoot around using their hands and legs.

References:

Canadian Child Care Federation, Canadian Institute of Child Health. (2004). Moving and growing (2nd ed.). Physical activities for twos, threes and fours. Ottawa (ON): Canadian Child Care Federation and the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

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Yoga for Balance

* Adapted From *Itsy Bitsy Yoga* by Helen Garabedian

Star



1. Stand in front of your child with your feet 18 to 24 inches apart. Your child's feet should be about 8 to 12 inches apart.
2. Inhale as you stretch your arms outward until they are horizontal.
3. Rock or teeter from side to side as you sing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

Twinkle, Shift your weight to the right foot, and lift left foot to the side

Twinkle Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

Little Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

Star Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

How I Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

Wonder Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

What you Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

Are Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

Up, a - Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

Bove the Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

World Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

So high Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

Like a Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

Diamond Shift your weight to the left foot, lift the right foot to the side

In the sky Shift your weight to the right foot, lift the left foot to the side

Mountain



1. Stand two feet in front of your child.
2. Bring your feet together. Emphasize how the sides of your big toes can touch.
3. Press your palms together in front of your chest.
4. Take a deep breath in and feel your head reaching to the sky as your feet press down into the earth.

Feet together! – Stand and bring the sides of your feet together so that your big toes touch.

Big toes touch! That's it! – Look down at your toes. Clap the sides of your big toes together, prompting your child to bring his feet together.

Bring hands together – Press your palms together in front of your chest.

You do it – Float your palms 2 inches apart

Hands together! – Press palms together

Mountain pose! – Hold the pose.

Big breath in!

Nice tall Mountain pose!

Tree



1. Stand in front of your child.
2. Place one foot on the side of your shin.
3. You may help your child find her balance by holding her hand.

You do Tree pose! –Encourage your child to try Tree pose/

Lift one foot, Tree pose! – As you exhale, emphasize the lifting of one foot.

You do it, foot here, foot here! – Show your child where to place her foot.
(on the side of her shin)

That's it! Good Tree pose! – Help a younger child by holding her hand or
Connecting the lifted foot to the shin.

If your child is not holding your hand for balance continue.

Now bring hands together – Press your palm together in front of your chest.

Hands together, good job!

Warrior



1. Stand near your child in Mountain pose and inhale deeply.
Ready, Warrior pose!
2. As you exhale, jump your feet and arms out. Give the jump a “pssst” sound effect.
Pssst!
3. Find comfort. The knee of the front foot bends so it is aligned over the ankle. The toes of the front foot point forward. The back foot turns outward at a 45 degree angle.
4. Extend your arms long and strong. Extend your fingertips away from the body with the palms facing down. Relax your shoulders.
Warrior pose!

Repeat Warrior several times.

Ball



1. Invite your child to sit beside you on the floor. Be sure the area behind you and your child is clear.
2. Remain seated as you put your feet flat on the floor, with your knees bent and at chest height.
Let's sit like a ball!
Sit like me!
3. Show your child how to hug her thighs by wrapping and clasping your hands under your knees. Your chest should be close to your thighs as you sit small like a ball.
Now, hug your legs.
Give your legs a hug,
Good hug, nice Ball pose!

Level 2

That's it, not ready... - sit in Ball pose while hugging below your knees.

Lean back – slowly begin to lean back

Lean back and lift your toes! – Lift your feet and toes a few inches off the floor. Continue to hug your legs.

Boat



1. Come into Ball pose.
Come into Ball pose.
2. Extend your arms and hold the back of your thighs.
Arms long,
3. Lean back and balance on your bottom as you extend your legs one at a time.
Arms long and reach one foot up to the sky.
4. With your hands holding the back of your thighs, extend both legs long and high.
Reach foot up to the sky! Good!
Reach other foot up, up, high!
5. Look at your toes and lift your head and feet upward.
Straighten your legs!
Look at your toes!
6. When your child is first entering Boat pose, please place one palm 2 inches behind or on your child's midback. This will give your toddler the support and balancing assistance he needs when beginning Boat pose.
Nice Boat pose!

Song for Boat Pose:

Row, row , row with me

Gently up the stream

Verily you're the cutest kid (or girl or boy)

I have ever seen!

References:

Garabedian, Helen (2008) *Itsy Bitsy Yoga for Toddlers and Preschoolers*. Cambridge (MA): Da Copa Press

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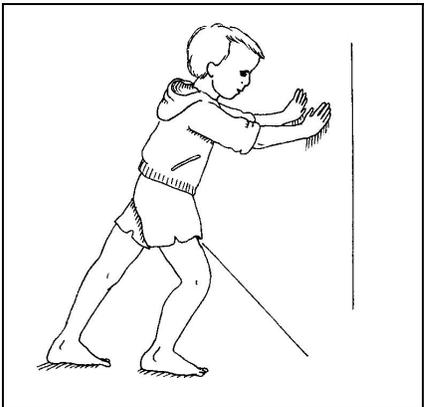
NOW, LET'S STRETCH IT OUT ...

Hamstring Stretch



The hamstrings are the large group of muscles at the back of the thigh that tend to shorten as we get older due to the increased amount of time that we spend sitting. This is a great way to stretch these important muscles – have your child sit with their bottom right up to the wall and keeping their back straight, have your child try to straighten both knees. Ask them to sit this way for all of the commercials while they watch their favourite television show.

Calf Stretch



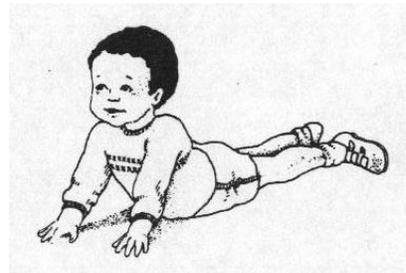
To stretch the lower leg muscles at the back of the calf, have your child stand facing a wall, with the forward leg knee flexed and the back leg knee extended. Ask your child to shift the weight forward until they feel a gentle pull in the back of the back calf. Hold this position for 30 to 60 seconds 3-5 times. Don't forget to stretch both legs!

Good Morning World

Lie flat on your stomachs, facing each other, with your hands on the floor underneath your shoulders.

Pretend to fall asleep. Stay relaxed with no sounds or movements. “Wake up” saying “Good morning world” and raise your upper body off the floor. Your hips, legs and feet stay on the floor.

Lie back down and relax.



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Yoga for Stretching

** Adapted From Itsy Bitsy Yoga by Helen Garabedian*

Cat



1. Begin on all fours as in Table pose. Palms are shoulder-distance apart. Knees are hip-distance.
2. In Cat pose, lower your chin towards your chest as you tailbone tucks under. Your spine arches upward like a cat.
Look at your belly
3. Press your hands into the floor so your shoulders stay lifted. Feel the rounding of your spine as your midback reaches up to the sky.
Meow!

Cow



1. Begin on all fours as in Cat or Table pose. Your palms are shoulder-distance apart. Your knees and feet are hip-distance apart.
2. In Cow, tilt your hips and nose upward as your belly button presses downward.
Look up, head up.
Mooo! Exhale belly button to floor
Mmm.. Inhale and return to Table pose

Twisting Cow



1. Twisting Cow offers a sideways stretch of the spine and torso.
2. To twist your cow, come onto all fours.
Ready
3. Level your back as in Table pose and look over one shoulder. Your hips can stay in place as you twist towards the shoulder you're looking over.
Twist. Turn your head to left side
Cow! Look back over your left shoulder
Moo! Settle in the twist bringing left shoulder closer to stationary left hip
Mmm... Inhale loudly as you return to centre.

Child



1. From Table pose, drop your bottom to your heels.
Sit on your feet like this
2. Stretch your arms as far forward as possible.
Now, stretch your arms
3. Invite your forehead to rest on the floor.
Ahh! Child pose.

Down Dog



1. In Down Dog, you'll make a triangular shape with your body. It's best to give your child a profile of the pose as you demonstrate it.
Watch me, Down Dog!
2. Begin in Child pose. This sets the proper hand and foot alignment for Down Dog.
3. As you inhale, lift your head and hips upward, passing through the Cow pose.
4. Begin to exhale as you curl your toes under and straighten your legs.
5. Press your hands downward into the floor. Also press your heels down for a nice Down Dog stretch!
6. Say hi to your child before you lower out of Down Dog pose.
You try Down Dog!
Down Dog!
That's it!

Lunge



1. Start by facing your child in Down Dog pose.
2. During Lunge pose, note that your hands and front foot should form a horizontal line. Your chest rests on your front thigh and the back leg remains extended. Your eyes happily gaze forward at your child.

Let's do Lunge pose.

Step one foot forward.

See one foot forward?

See my foot between my hands?

Now, you try, you try Lunge pose!

Step one foot forward.

Step one foot forward.

Good step forward.

Good – that's Lunge pose!

Cobra



1. Lie down on your tummy.
Come on your tummy
2. Place your forearms on the floor and align your elbows under your shoulders. Gently squeeze your elbows toward your ribs.
Hands go here.
3. Open your palms and press all ten fingers into the floor. The middle finger of each hand should face front.
4. Press your shoulders down, away from your ears.
5. Pull your chest forward, and gaze upwards.
Lift your head like me!
6. Encourage your child to lie down like you.

Ready to hiss like a cobra?

Exhale as your tongue touches the back of your bottom teeth.

Mmm... Inhale deeply

Hiss... Exhale as you wiggle your head from side to side

Mmm... Inhale deeply

Hiss... Exhale as you wiggle your head from side to side

Continue hissing for as long as your child would like. When he is finished, dramatically collapse onto the floor and rest.

Danda



1. Invite your child to sit with her legs together and extended.
2. Now, position yourself across from your child.

Let's – stretch your legs out long and flex your feet.

Danda – Inhale, allowing the crown of your head to reach tall.

Clap toes – Clap your big toes together. Pause with excitement.

Point your big toes outward at a 45 degree angle as the heels stay together.

Clap toes – continue

Clap toes – continue

Danda – Excitedly clap your hands together

Repeat the toe-clapping Danda trick for as long as your toddler likes. If you're feeling silly,, double-it-up! Clap your hands and toes at the same time!

References:

Garabedian, Helen (2008) *Itsy Bitsy Yoga for Toddlers and Preschoolers*. Cambridge (MA): Da Copa Press

Stern, L., Steidle, K. (1994) *Pediatric Strengthening Program Reproducible Exercises*. San Antonio (TX): Therapy Skill Builders.