Title: Yoga & Movement For Every Ability

Summary: Angleman kids need more stimulation and exercise to assist them with mobility and most importantly body mind connection. It's all about quality of life. We want them to walk or be mobile to enjoy life more with their loved ones.

How it all started

- Noticed that my son Raffi, who is 30 with Angelman Syndrome (mutation), is starting to have a crouched gate, which means his hip flexors are tight due to sitting for long periods of time.

- Started looking for some physical therapy, but due to COVID I was faced with a lot of obstacles.

- Started working with him in August 2020.

- My husband and I are the only people that do yoga with him.

Goals in August

- Help him relax and stretch his hip flexors so he can walk better.

- He had never done anything like this before and nothing I was explaining made sense to him.

- He just wanted to play and didn't understand why we wanted him to do these strange moves.

We wanted to use the weighted pillow with sand which is about 16 lbs., but he didn't like it at first.

Progress in September

- We only see Raffi once a week, so we kept doing 10–15 min each week.

- He started to understand that it's quiet time and enjoyed the attention he was getting from us.

- He was getting better at things and understood the purpose of the mat and the belt.

In October signed up for Spiral Praxis online course

In this class I learned how to work with him and had clear vision of what I wanted to work on, which helped Raffi better understand what I am expecting from him.

Tried to use the hand markers

- It was very hard getting him to straighten his legs or sit cross leg.
- Looks like a simple task, but not really for him.
- Giving him a ball and sitting across from him made it easier.

Focused on these poses first

Mountain Pose

Triangle Pose

Down Dog with chair

Child Pose

We have tried many ways to do child pose, but the challenge has been to get him to keep his buttocks down and not lift it up.

Finally we are getting somewhere!

Started with rolled blanket for his ankles sitting and playing with the ball.

Then slowly moved him into the position by help of props.
- Bolster for his buttocks
- Used two blocks for his hand
- One block for his head

[Click here to watch the video](#)

Restorative pose at the end

- Don't skip the ending, which should always be restorative poses.

- Using weights are very good for releasing the tight hip flexors and groin area.


weighted pillow with sand

Sample practice

- We have now about 15 poses we can choose from.

- In each session we use 8 poses in 25 – 30 min. He is allowed to take breaks.

- Example of a complete sequence:

  1. Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose (Warmup)
  2. Belt around both legs (Warmup)
  3. Standing poses – Mountain and Starfish
  4. Down Dog Pose hands on the block
  5. Child pose first sitting on the legs then stretching forward
  6. Butterfly pose on top of bolster
  7. Savasana (corpse pose) face down with a sandbag on hips
  8. Classic Savasana face up
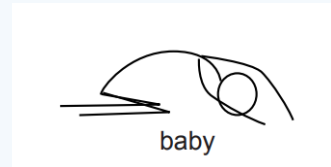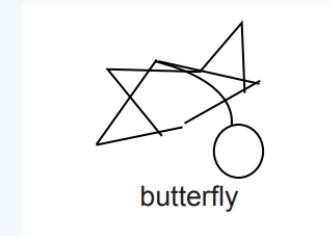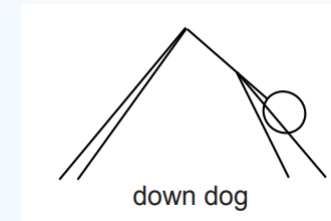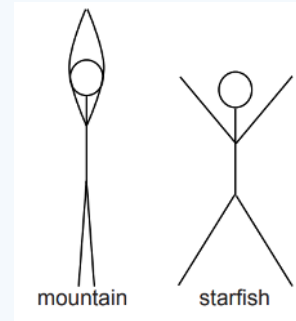
Steady progress

- He now does more complicated poses.
  - Click here for video

- We have also added:
  - Horseback riding
  - Swimming
  - 3 wheel bike at the park

- Posture has improved in 6 months and started walking better by March of 2021.
  - Click here for video

What's next

- Move yoga to his group home.

- Getting him used to doing it regularly.

- Using video or Zoom to encourage him to move.

- Add more movements such as rolling and jumping.

- Increase strength and flexibility.

- Final goal is to walk for 20 min to lunch.

Hilda Tourians, Certified Adaptive Yoga Teacher

Practitioner of yoga in the Iyengar method for over 15 years. Coach for executives in fortune 500 companies for over 30 years. Parent of an individual with a disability for over 30 years.

- Extensive experience with the challenges of individuals with disabilities
- Passion to help people with disabilities
- Leadership in non-profit organizations for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

Certifications

- Certified Adaptive Yoga Teacher from Spiral Praxis, Toronto
- The Kaivalya yoga method – 200-hour teacher training program, USA
- Bachelor of Computer Science, Bridgewater, MA

Thank you

For any questions reach out to me
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