

## Therapeutic Yoga for Special Needs

Can the practice of yoga help the special needs child? Absolutely, according to Dr. Yana Kofman, director of Pediatric Therapy and Yoga of Morris, LLC. Dr. Kofman is a licensed physical therapist and is trained in the Sonia Sumar Method of Yoga for the Special Child®, which is a comprehensive program of Yoga techniques designed to enhance the natural development of children with special needs. This style of yoga is gentle and therapeutic — safe for children with developmental



disabilities including autism and Down syndrome. It also provides an effective treatment for children diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities. It can be practiced on an individual basis or in group settings.

Yoga for the Special Child® is an integrated system of age and developmentally appropriate hatha yoga asanas (poses), eye exercises, specialized breathing exercises, music and sound therapy and relaxation techniques. It's been shown to enhance gross motor skill acquisition and guide each child to find his or her own inner peace and serenity. It is noncompetitive, emphasizing harmony and optimal effort.

"When my assistant tells our clients 'Miracles happen here,' I tend to get embarrassed and humbled. . . . I see an amazing potential in a child when they first arrive and embark on the journey of achieving milestones," says Dr. Kofman. "Many times, the child is not ready to follow directions or understand how to move in space. I always start with the 'less is more' approach where I focus on establishing a bond first and foremost."

According to Kofman, any child wants to please and be accepted. So she works via manual and movement therapy to make a special connection of safety and comfort. As the bond deepens, she can introduce the expectations of mature movement patterns, breathing, following directions, and patience, guiding the child to improve and strengthen fine and gross motor skills, speech and language, emotional stamina, and cognitive range.

"I love to watch a child smile, and with joyful hugs be part of their journey of happy miracles. And after five years of providing therapeutic yoga services full time in my Morristown studio and over 14 years of being a physical therapist, I am gradually beginning to accept the miraculous changes that can happen if you simply let your mind believe it's possible. Then it becomes possible!"

*Pediatric Therapy & Yoga of Morris, LLC, is a private practice and a pediatric holistic center located in Morristown. It specializes in pediatric developmental disorders by providing children with special needs with a depth and breadth of therapeutic yoga. Contact Dr. Yana Kofman at [TheWholeChildNJ.com](http://TheWholeChildNJ.com), call 973-944-0555 or email [TheWholeChildNJ@gmail.com](mailto:TheWholeChildNJ@gmail.com).*

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