



# HIPPOCAMPUS

Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing  
among Young People through Yoga



## PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Short Version

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## IMPETUS FOR THE HIPPOCAMPUS PROJECT

The Hippocampus Project was designed to support young people in their wellbeing with a special focus on disadvantaged young people across Europe. Using an 8-week programme we introduce young people to the concept active self-care going forward.

The programme is called Hippocampus as this is the part of the brain that grows during yoga according to Neuroscientific research and it is the part of the brain that is connected to learning and memory.

This document is only a summary of the programme and NOT DESIGNED TO OFFER A FULL MANUAL FOR TEACHERS. Please refer to [www.hippocampusproject.eu](http://www.hippocampusproject.eu) for the full manual and join the [www.teenyogafoundation.com](http://www.teenyogafoundation.com) course for training on delivery.

## DEVELOPMENT

The programme was delivered in 5 countries in various contexts and was adjusted according to feedback from these different contexts: A school in Spain, Refugees in Italy, Youth out of school in Belgium, Asylum seekers in Norway and a school in UK with high disadvantage quota. Some contexts demanded an 8-day programme rather than an 8-week programme although we felt this to be suboptimal. Others outlined the importance for more support for the teachers, which was implemented.



## THE PROGRAMME

The programme consists of

1. A 5 day face to face or 5 week online training course  
([www.teenyogafoundation.com](http://www.teenyogafoundation.com))
2. A comprehensive manual
3. Resources for teachers and students
4. A programme to teach school teachers or youth workers
5. A programme to teach young people. (<https://hippocampusproject.eu>)
6. A follow on app. (Yuva Yoga app <https://yuvayoga.org>)

The staff (teachers or youth workers) are taught an hour of yoga every week to embody the practice themselves and they are also taught some simple practices to teach to the young people.

In simple terms, the programme looks like this:

### **Week one**

The basics of yoga, what it is and what it isn't (myth busting).

Sun salutation as a form of warm up. Also ways to relax, such as legs up the wall. Also introducing the idea of a body scan. We also teach how the mind and body are connected and how to start noticing this connection. We teach how exactly relaxation works in the body on a physiological level. We teach them how to share a simple stretch in the chair with the students, targeting the neck, shoulders and spine.



## **Week two**

This week is about introducing the idea of de-stressing by breath and movement.

We introduce such practices as belly breathing, twisting and chair posture among others.

We teach them to share belly breath and tension release with students.

## **Week three**

This week focus is about focus. We introduce balancing postures and maybe even shoulder stand if it feels right to do so, also square breathing among others, which we share with the students

## **Week four**

Clearing the mind, using the brahmari breath and also introducing yoga nidra if the group feels ready for it. For the students, they learn forward bend and twist in the chair.

## **Week five**

Compassion is this week's focus. We introduce the metta meditation. They are also introduced to self massage as a way of soothing, they can share these two with the students.

## **Week six**

Joy is the focus and aim of this week. We introduce play and imagination into this class.

They learn to share some focusing and grounding techniques with students.

### **Week seven**

We learn about checking in and start to empower the teachers to find out what their specific needs are at any given point and how to address those needs. We use the mindfulness labelling method to start this journey. They then share these skills with students.

### **Week eight**

This week focus is on how to release tension, physical or otherwise. We also introduce Lions breath for them to share with students.

### **Week nine**

Here the teachers get to practice teaching and empowering the students to teach each other too.

## **STUDENTS PROGRAMME**

### **Week one**

Nourishing – we outline what yoga is busting any myths as well as introducing the basics of the asana and breathing.

### **Week two**

Building focus – here we introduce the square breathing to the students and the notion of focus. Particularly how we can affect our attention span by our movements and breathing.

### **Week three**

Building Trust – how do we grow trust and what does that feel like. Trust in asana and trust in relaxation.

### **Week four**

Compassion for myself and others. Checking in with my body and how it feels,  
Relaxation introduction.

### **Week five**

Metta meditation – Breathing - ujjayi breath. Partner postures.

### **Week six**

Joy - looking for joy through creativity, fun, joy, partner postures and pinnacle postures.

### **Week seven**

How do we develop radical self-care?

Looking at adapting the postures to fit mood and temperament, using the Mood Cards to make sure that we become more adept at the impact yoga has on the mind.

### **Week eight**

Here the students start to teach each other vital pieces of yoga practice that will help them going forward.

## CONCLUSION

ANYONE WISHING TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROGRAMME NEEDS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE HIPPOCAMPUS CONSORTIUM TO REGISTER FOR A COURSE TO DELIVER IT CORRECTLY AND TO AVOID ADVERSE EFFECTS. THIS IS NOT A MANUAL AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A TRAINING COURSE, BUT IS A SUMMARY OF THE OUTPUT OF THE PROJECT.

The intention is for this programme to continue to evolve and develop with help of all those who take part and forms a collaborative project moving in various cultures and times and ages.

Thank you for reading.

