

YOGA-BASED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A RESOURCE FOR PEACE COUNSELLORS AND OTHERS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IMPACTED BY VIOLENCE



This resource, created as part of the Reaching Out with Yoga (ROWY) project*, offers some yoga-based activities to use in group or individual sessions. It is informed by ROWY participants' feedback, as well as by conversations with the PEACE counsellors themselves. We hope this contains some ideas that you, and the children and youth you work with, enjoy!

What this resource is and what it is not

A selection of ideas for bringing yoga activities into your sessions with children and youth. It is not a teacher training manual. We hope it inspires creativity and FUN! Please seek additional training and resources for more fulsome information and guidance (see the Resources section at the end).

Safety considerations

The main focus is on safety and not pushing anyone past their physical limitations. Encourage children and youth to listen to their bodies and only move in ways that feel comfortable, and not in ways that cause pain or tension. Emotional safety is also key. Ensure that they are choosing if and how they are participating. Offer options for different ways to participate.

Teach what you know

It's important to stick with teaching what you know and not go beyond that. Use the activity ideas as a guide. You might also incorporate your own ideas based on previous experience or training.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

EACH TIME YOU INVITE CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN YOGA-BASED ACTIVITIES, BE SURE TO MENTION THE FOLLOWING:

Your body, your experience

This could sound like: *"You are in charge of your body. You decide what works for you and your body today. We don't want you to feel anything painful. Everyone's body is different, so we will try to do lots of different movements and activities so there's something for everyone."*

Co-create agreements (if not already done)

This could sound like: *"What do each of us need to enjoy this time together today? There might be some things we all need, and there might be some things that are different for me than they are for you."* Then, have them call out what they need and prompt as needed. E.g. listening to each other, being able to choose what I want to do, having my own space, etc.

Encouraging, building confidence

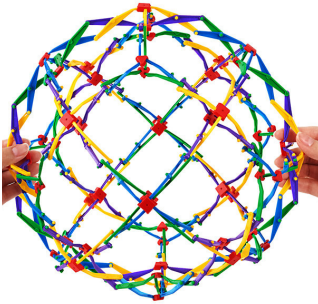

This could sound like: *"We all have different bodies and interests. Some movements are easy for some of us, and harder for others. Sometimes we just need more practice, so keep trying if something feels hard – but not if it hurts. It usually gets easier and more fun as we all learn together!"* Also, try and notice/comment when someone is progressing to encourage them.

*Reaching Out with Yoga was a 5-year research project co-facilitated by BC Society of Transition Houses and Yoga Outreach which implemented trauma-informed yoga for women, children and youth, in transition house, second stage house, and PEACE programs throughout BC. Data was gathered from participants about what worked, what didn't work, what impacts on health and wellbeing were experienced, and what was most useful and approachable in terms of yoga and mindfulness in anti-violence settings.

YOGA-BASED ACTIVITY IDEAS


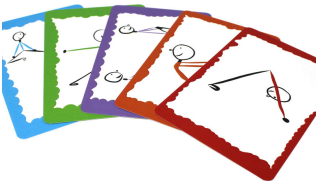
1. BREATHING

Breathing supports self-regulation, calming, and grounding, which can be a nice start to individual or group sessions. It can also support interoception, where kids have a chance to “look inside” and get curious about how their breath is feeling and how breath might be connected to how their body/mind is feeling.




ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS	AUDIENCE	SUPPLIES
<p>Breathing Ball</p> 	<p>Stand or sit across from each other or in a circle (if in a group). Start by doing a few cycles of breath (inhaling and exhaling) together. Breathe in when you expand the ball, breathe out when you contract the ball. Then, pass it back and forth, or around the circle (if in a group) so each person leads a deep breath in and a deep breath out. The breathing ball sphere is a great visual for the expansion and contraction of our lungs.</p>	<p>Children’s lung capacities are much smaller than adults’ so use a quicker pace than what you would for your own.</p>	<p>Individual or group</p> <p>Any age</p>	<p><u>Hoberman sphere</u> or use hands opening apart and coming back together</p>
<p>Breathing Buddies</p> 	<p>Have each person choose a stuffed animal or bean bag (or bring one to a session), then have the child(ren) or youth lay on backs, placing the item on their tummy. Invite them to take deep breaths in and out, feeling and watching the item go up and down. Doing this at the end of the session is a nice way to transition into rest.</p>	<p>Invite children and youth to keep their eyes open or closed, whatever they feel most comfortable with. Some children might not like to lay on their backs. They could also lay on their stomach and place the stuffed animal on their lower back.</p>	<p>Individual or group</p> <p>Any age</p>	<p>Stuffed animals or bean bags or anything slightly weighted</p>

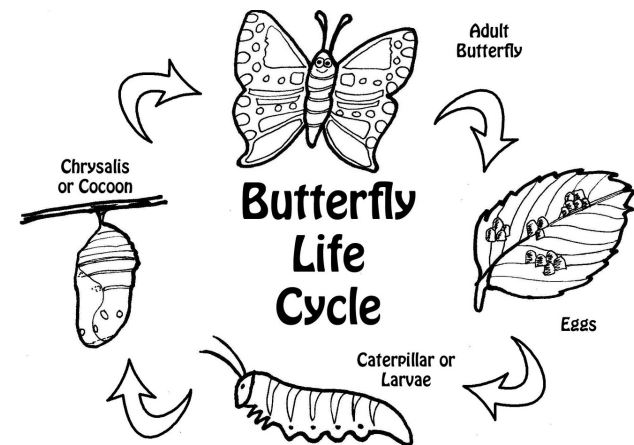
2. MOVING

Moving and warming up the body and muscles, getting energy flowing, and getting 'sillies' out can assist with concentration.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS	AUDIENCE	SUPPLIES
<p>Shake and Stop</p> 	<p>Counsellor starts to shake or wiggle their body until all the kids join and then freezes and waits for all kids to stop. Repeat a few times. You can invite the children and youth to lead as they become comfortable. If one-on-one, take turns being the leader.</p>	<p>Remind the children and/or youth to stay in their own spaces and be aware of their own and others' moving arms and legs.</p>	<p>Individual or group Any age</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>We're All Teachers</p> 	<p>Lay a selection of yoga images or cards out to choose. If you don't have yoga images, invite them to think of an animal and a form (pose) to represent that animal. Sit across from or beside each other (individual) or in a circle (group) and take turns teaching the form or animal. This is a great activity to practice being attentive listeners and patient teachers. Most children and youth love to be the teacher!</p>	<p>If you're using a yoga card deck, select simple postures that are easy to teach for this activity. Some card decks contain advanced postures which aren't appropriate for beginners.</p>	<p>Individual or group Any age</p>	<p>Yoga cards</p>
<p>Freeze Dance</p>	<p>When the music starts, invite everyone to move around, dance or wiggle in any way they like. Get silly! When the music stops, invite everyone to freeze in place. This can be a yoga form or any body position.</p>	<p>Remind the children and/or youth to stay in their own space and be aware of their own and others' bodies.</p>	<p>Group Any age</p>	<p>Music player</p>


2. MOVING, continued

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS	AUDIENCE	SUPPLIES
<p>Life of a Butterfly</p>   	<p>Talk about the life cycle of the butterfly. You could connect them to the different emotional states we all have.</p> <p>Egg: curl up as small as you can, option to be sitting or laying. <i>"Sometimes we feel like being quiet and we want to curl up and hide away"</i></p> <p>Caterpillar: crawl or lay, tummy down, slither around <i>"Sometimes we might feel like we want to be a caterpillar slowly moving around investigating."</i></p> <p>Cocoon: sit with knees to chest or forehead to floor, in a little ball. <i>"Sometimes we feel like being quiet in our cocoon because we're busy taking care of ourselves and growing."</i></p> <p>Butterfly: sit with soles of feet together, knees open, option to bounce knees up and down. <i>"Sometimes we feel like we want to be out in the world flapping our wings and exploring."</i></p> <p>Children/youth can also create their own movements for each of these stages. They can do each stage together once, then invite them to choose the movement that matches what they're feeling for a few breaths.</p>	<p>Show images of the stages of the life cycle, or read a book about the butterfly life cycle.</p> <p>For the butterfly pose, kids can sit on a pillow or a book to make it easier on their hips, and encourage them to have their feet out in front of them.</p>	<p>Individual or group</p> <p>Younger age</p>	<p>Book or image about the butterfly life cycle</p>



3. RESTING

Practices to do at the beginning, middle and/or end of a session/group. Having a rest 'station' set up for children and youth to step away from group activities when they'd like, is also a useful option.

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS	AUDIENCE	SUPPLIES
Resting (laying or sitting quietly)	<p>Invite children and youth to lay on a mat, cuddle a blanket or stuffed animal, or sit. You could play soft, ambient music or just have silence.</p> <p><i>"It's time to give ourselves a few minutes to rest our bodies after moving".</i></p>	Everyone will want to rest in different ways, so it's important to offer options.	<p>Individual or group</p> <p>Any age</p>	None
Colouring	Have some colouring pages and supplies handy for kids who want more 'active' rest time.		<p>Individual or group</p> <p>Any age</p>	Colouring pages and felts, crayons or pencil crayons
<p>Mind Jar</p> 	<p>Fill jar 1/5 with glue, fill the rest of the jar with warm water. Add something to float around when shaken (i.e. sparkles or glitter, option to add food colouring). Put the lid on tight, shake it up and let it settle. The acts of shaking, then watching the water and floating objects settle can have a relaxing effect on the brain. Kids can each make their own mind jar and use it when they'd like to, or you can have one for the group.</p> <p><i>"This is what our brains are like when we're excited or having a hard time concentrating. Let's watch the sparkles settle. This is what our brains are like when we're feeling calm and relaxed."</i></p>	Remind the children and/or youth to stay in their own space and be aware of their own and others' bodies.	<p>Individual or group</p> <p>Any age</p>	Jar, glue (clear school glue ideally, white will work), sparkles/glitter, warm water (distilled if possible) More info here

RESOURCES



1. TRAINING

[Yoga Outreach Core Training™](#): Offers yoga teachers skills to build trauma-informed and strengths-focused classes, and to make their teaching more accessible in order to reach individuals who may be facing multiple barriers (i.e. violence, PTSD, addictions, mental health challenges).

[New Leaf Foundation Training](#): Yoga Teacher training specific to children and youth. *"Best practices for making yoga and mindfulness more inclusive and accessible for more people."*

2. ONLINE VIDEOS

NOTE: Watch videos before using them in your session to make sure they will be useful for your specific group, child or youth. Before using them in your sessions, go through the 'BEFORE YOU BEGIN' section on Pg. 1.

Trauma-sensitive Yoga Classes for KIDS from *Yoga Ed* (~ 15 min each)

[What is Yoga](#)
[Emotions and Feelings](#)
[Calm Body, Calm Mind](#)

Trauma-sensitive Yoga Classes for TEENS from *Yoga Ed* (12-15 min each)

[What is Yoga](#)
[Emotional Regulation](#)

'Cosmic Kids' Yoga for Kids YouTube Channel

[Introduction to Kids Yoga](#) playlist of classes (10-30 min each)

['Walking through the jungle'](#) Activity (5 min)

['Peace Out Cosy Cats'](#) Guided Relaxation (8 min)

[Yoga Practice for Youth](#) with *Yoga Outreach* Volunteer, Erika Houston (22 min)

Yoga for Kids ['Play in the Park'](#) from *Yoga with Adriene* (32 min) (more advanced, better for kids 10+)

3. OTHER RESOURCES & TOOLS

Zara's Big Messy Day: children's mindfulness [book](#) and [video](#)

Yoga cards: [Yoga Pretzel cards](#) or [Trauma Sensitive Kids Yoga cards](#)

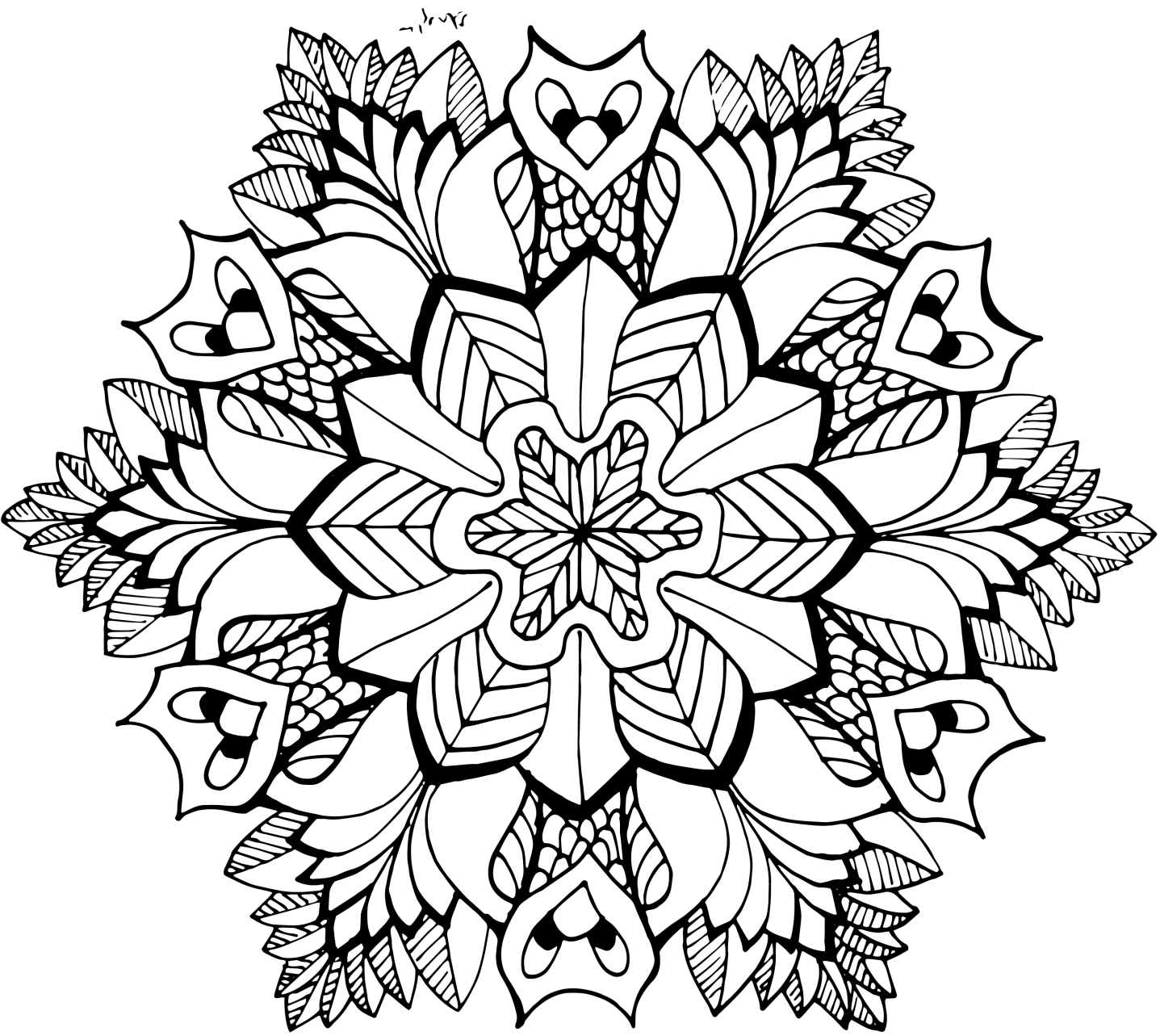
[Little Flower Yoga](#): yoga and mindfulness resources for children and youth

Colouring pages (see attached)

For more information about the Reaching Out with Yoga Project, PEACE Programs, or Transition House Services in BC, visit [bcsth.ca](#)

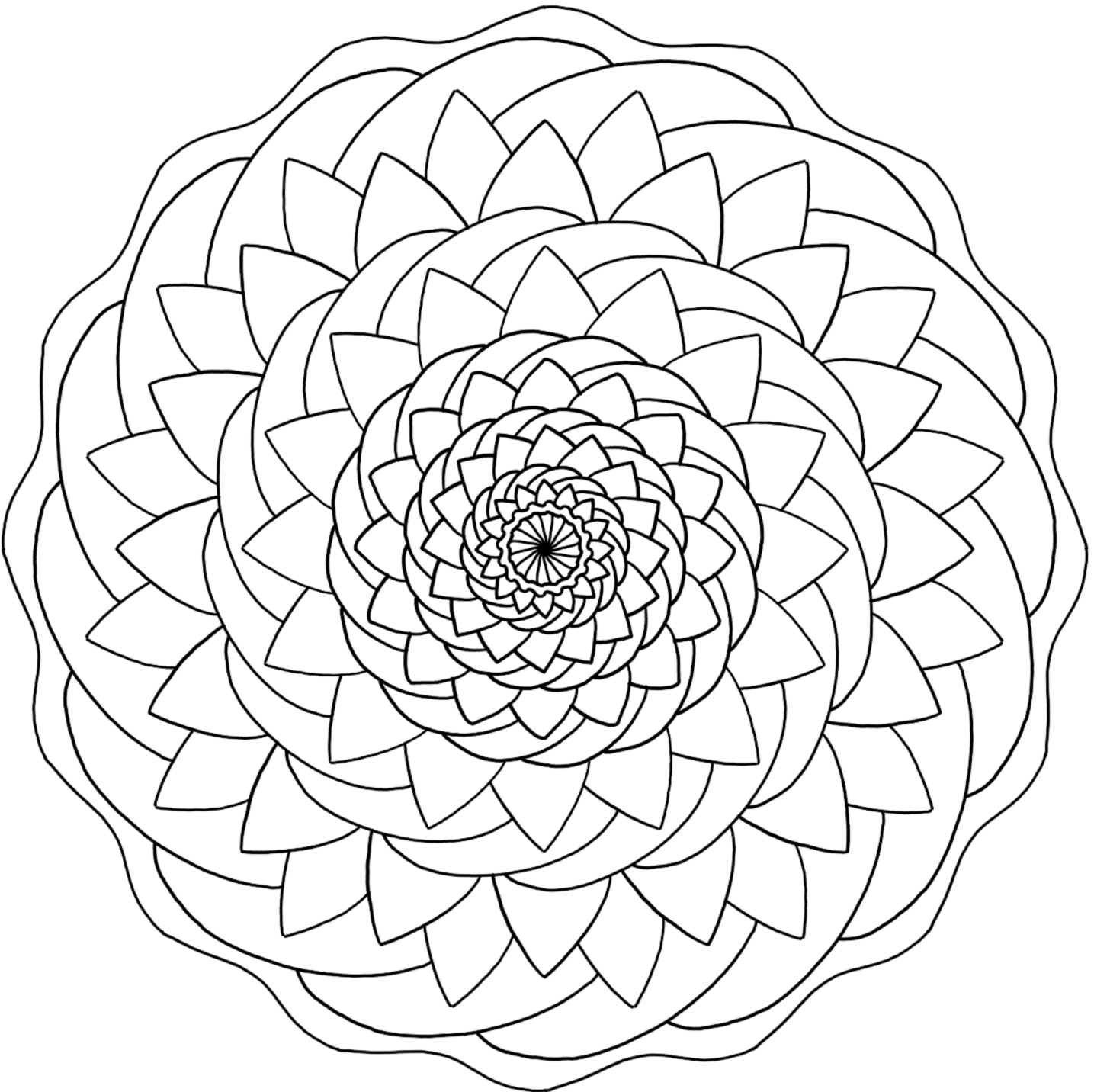
For more information about trauma-informed yoga, or the Yoga Outreach Core Training™, visit [yogaoutreach.com](#)

We want to acknowledge and thank all of the ROWY research participants; Transition House and Second Stage program staff; and, PEACE programs and counsellors who contributed to the success of the project and helped inform this resource.



OWls

More coloring pages at
mondaymandala.com



Breathe Calmly

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Yoga



Bunny

