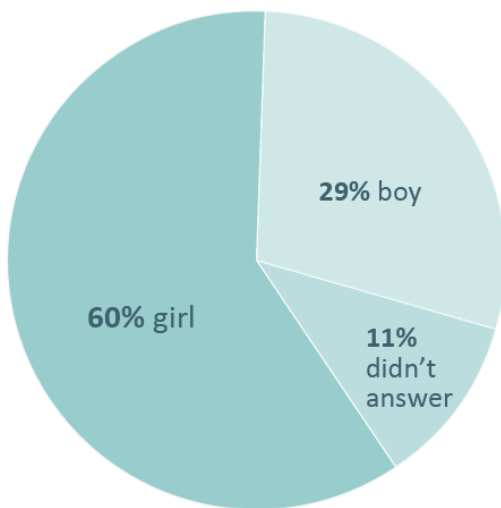




## WHAT DID WE STUDY AND WHO PARTICIPATED?

Reaching Out with Yoga (ROWY) was a 5-year collaborative project between the BC Society of Transition Houses and Yoga Outreach. The ROWY research project looked at how participating in trauma-informed yoga (TIY)<sup>1</sup> can impact the health and well-being of women, children and youth who have experienced violence, and of front-line staff working in the anti-violence sector in British Columbia. This report shares the key findings from the **children and youth participants**.

59 children and youth with experiences of violence participated in the Reaching Out with Yoga project.



- Their **average age** was 9.5 (ranged from 4-18)
- Their **gender** was 60% identified as a girl, 29% identified as a boy, 11% didn't answer

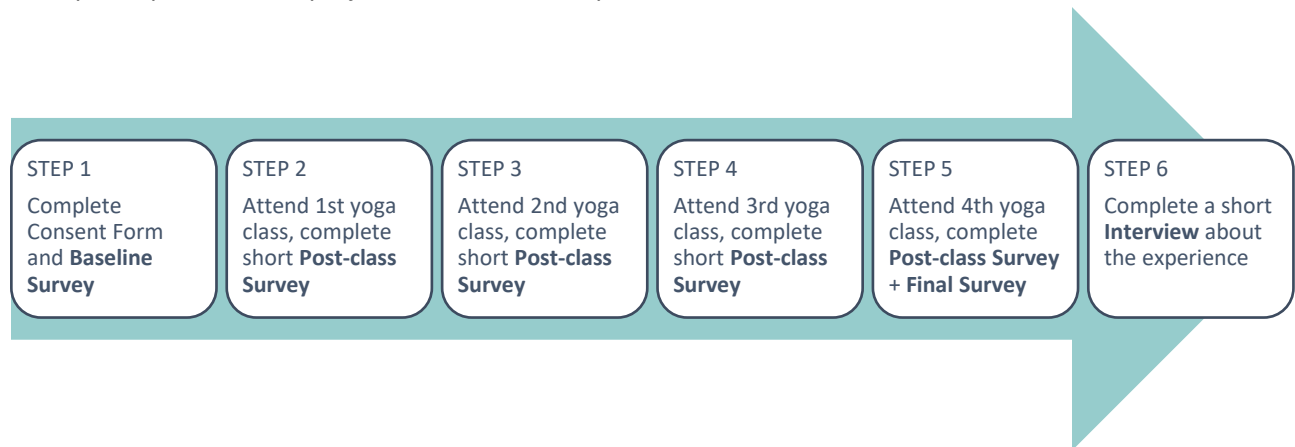


<sup>1</sup> Trauma-informed yoga adapts traditional yoga techniques for the specific health and safety needs of individuals. Yoga teachers trained in trauma-informed yoga provide simple, clear instruction, using invitational (rather than directive) language and offer variations to the postures. It uses breathing, mindfulness and movement practices to reduce the impacts of trauma by focusing on choice, empowerment and safety.

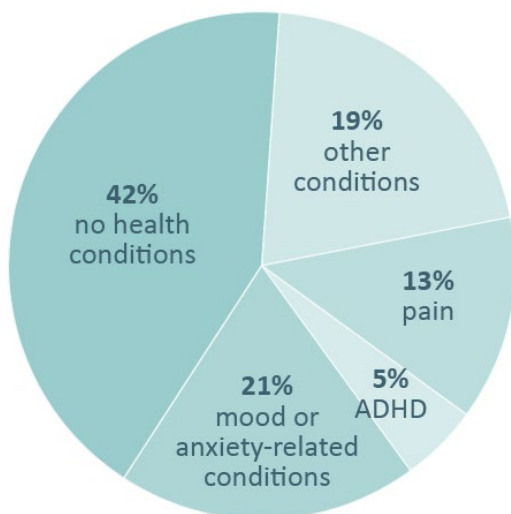


## HOW DID WE STUDY TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA IN PEACE PROGRAMS?

Children and youth who were connected to a PEACE Program<sup>2</sup> in one of the 6 project sites in BC were invited to participate in 4 or more trauma-informed yoga sessions. We asked children and youth to complete surveys before and after they participated. The surveys asked questions about their health, experience of yoga, stress and coping. They were also invited to participate in an interview at the end of their participation in the project to share their experiences.



The surveys and interview questions asked participants about **demographics, physical and mental health status, physical activity levels, impressions of the yoga classes, and overall experience** being involved in the project.



Before participating in the TIY yoga program, children and youth answered questions about their current health status.

- 42% reported having no health conditions
- 21% reported mood or anxiety-related conditions
- 13% reported pain
- 5% reported ADHD
- 19% reported other conditions (e.g., autism, sleep difficulties, allergies, or gut-related issues)

<sup>2</sup> The Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE) Program for children and youth impacted by violence is a free, confidential program across BC. [www.bcsth.ca/support](http://www.bcsth.ca/support)

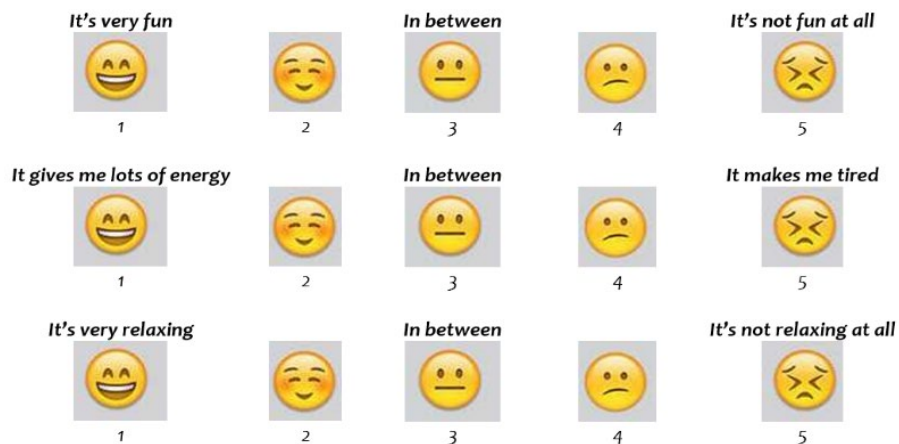


### WHERE DID THE PROJECT TAKE PLACE?



### WHAT DID WE FIND OUT ABOUT TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH?

Overall, the children and youth who participated in the yoga program rated it very highly. They found it **ENJOYABLE** (93% gave it a 1 or 2), **ENERGIZING** (89% gave it a 1 or 2) and **RELAXING** (78% gave it a 1 or 2) on the following scale:





We asked children and youth questions about their physical and mental states before and after they participated in the yoga program. As the sample size of children and youth who completed both baseline and final surveys is small (N=27) it is difficult to make any inferences from the data. In most indicators of physical and mental states (i.e., sleep, energy, ability to calm themselves down, feeling like they can solve problems, feeling like they can cheer themselves up and ability to focus) there were no notable changes. Participants did experience a decrease in worry, a change that approached statistical significance. The only statistically significant change was in an increase in tummy aches. This requires further exploration as to the cause, however one contributing factor may be that children and youth were often provided snacks prior to the yoga classes and this reported increase in tummy aches is possibly related to the participants eating prior to engaging in physical activity.



When asked about their experiences of the TIY classes, children and youth reported **learning self-regulation techniques** in the yoga classes such as breathing and grounding exercises, which they could use in their every day lives to **help them calm down, regulate their emotions and help them sleep.**

### MORE CALM, LESS ANXIETY

*"IT HELPED TO CALM MY ANXIETY DOWN AND MAKE MY STRESS FLOAT AWAY."*

*"I'VE LEARNED TO USE DEEP BREATHS AND FIVE FINGER THINGS [GROUNDING EXERCISE], LIKE THE BREATHING AND I'VE LEARNED TO TAKE DEEP BREATHS AND I'VE LEARNED TO CALM MYSELF IN SCHOOL."*

*"YOGA MADE ME FEEL RELAXED AND HAPPY."*

They also noticed **improvements in their mood** after the yoga classes, such as feeling happy, calm and relaxed. Some participants said that yoga can help when they're having a bad day.

### HAPPY, IMPROVED MOOD

*"YOGA MAKES ME FEEL EXCITED AND HAPPY."*

*"I HAVE USED THE BREATHING EXERCISES WHEN I WAS FEELING SAD. IT MADE ME FEEL BETTER."*



A majority of children and youth noted their enjoyment of the yoga related to connecting with others.

## ENJOYMENT, CONNECTION TO OTHERS

*"BEING ABLE TO TALK TO PEOPLE I CAN RELATE TO, LISTENING TO OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES,  
RELATING TO OTHERS."*

*"I ENJOYED DOING THE GROUP WITH MY SISTER. MY FAVORITE WAS DONG THE "CAT" YOGA."*

*"SOMETIMES I DO TREE POSE WITH MY MUM IN THE MORNING BEFORE SCHOOL. YOGA IS SO  
MUCH FUN."*

## INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

As part of the Reaching Out with Yoga project, a number of resources were developed to share the useful tools and practices and enhance the sustainability of the project. Please see the [BCSTH website](#) for access to free downloadable resources, online trauma-informed yoga videos, and links to more learning.

To integrate some yoga-based practices into your work with children and youth please see the '[Yoga-based Resources for Children and Youth](#)' resource for ideas and inspiration.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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