

# All Joy Wellness Program : Improving Quality of Life For Pediatric Clients and Their Caregivers

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## Belly Breathing

Hands are placed on the belly and chest, with eyes closed. Make your belly push out and then in. Breath is slow and regulated. We'll complete 5 breaths on my count.

## BACKGROUND

According to the national alliance for caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute (2015), 40% of caretakers feel emotionally stressed. Moreover, 20% said it caused financial problems and about 20% felt physically strained (2015). Despite the research, there are few resources available for caregivers, specifically those with children with disabilities.

Emerging interventions that help with physical, social, and emotional well-being for both caregivers and pediatric clients include group wellness practices such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness (Danucalov et al., 2013). This is demonstrated in multiple evidence-based reports. Nicole Cuomo the author of "Integrated Yoga: Yoga with a sensory integrative approach". Identified specific yoga positions that stimulate vestibular, proprioceptive, and parasympathetic systems (Cuomo, 2007).

Multi-week wellness program involving simultaneous groups for pediatric clients and their families has been shown to diminish risks factors (i.e. social isolation, lack of coping skills, lack of time for oneself) associated with caregiver burnout while also benefiting the clients (Mayo, 2020). Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness help pediatric clients with sensory regulation, social interaction, motor function, executive function, and pain management, across gender, age, or diagnosis (Semple, 2019). Providing group sessions allows for caregivers and clients to create a broader network of support and resources, with added benefit.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

All Joy Wellness Program is an 8wk program that meets once a week for an hour. We plan to have two groups that are simultaneously run by occupational therapists: one for caregivers and one for clients and their siblings. After identifying sources of caregiver burnout and challenges experienced by clients with physical and cognitive disabilities, both groups will utilize yoga, meditation, and mindfulness to address these barriers to wellbeing. Including siblings in the program, eliminates need for childcare so that caregivers can focus on selfcare such exercise, coping strategies for stress, and building a support network.

## FOCUSED QUESTION

What key components are instrumental in an evidence-based wellness program for caregivers and children with disabilities?  
What benefits could caregivers and children with disabilities experience from a wellness program?

## METHODS

### Phase I

#### Critical Analysis of OT Literature

- Completed literature review of 50 articles with EBSCOhost
- ✓ Analyzed 16 articles for:
  - Key terminology: caregiver burnout, barriers and support groups; sensory regulation; effects of "meditation", "yoga", and "mindfulness" on caregiver burnout and children with disabilities; caregiver burnout questionnaire; (2005-Present)
- ✓ Generated 1 draft of literature search matrix
- ✓ Received 2 rounds of feedback from mentor

### Phase II

#### Analyze and Compile Findings

- Analyzed literature search matrix and created caregiver needs assessment questionnaire. Attempted to pilot the instrument 2x, no response gathered.
- ✓ Generated 2 drafts of questionnaire
- ✓ Received 1 round of feedback from mentor

### Phase III

#### Program Development

- Analyzed literature for effective components to finalize details of 8wk wellness program
- ✓ Generated 2 drafts
- ✓ Received 1 round of feedback
- Referenced Nicole Cuomo's book *Integrated Yoga: Yoga with a Sensory Integrative Approach* for yoga instructions
- Created a pre & post test survey & a program satisfaction questionnaire
- ✓ Generated 2 drafts of survey and questionnaire
- ✓ Received 1 round of feedback from mentor

### Phase IV

#### Business Development

- Viewed OT websites and researched necessary components needed to create a website
- ✓ Generated 6 drafts of website
- ✓ Received 5 rounds of feedback from mentor
- Collaborated with mentor and billing personnel for service pricing, insurance coverage requirements, and required intake forms for program entry.



Health Matters (2020). How to avoid caregiver burnout. *New York Presbyterian*. <https://healthmatters.nyp.org/how-to-avoid-caregiver-burnout/>

## RESULTS

**Capacity:** Caregivers = 10-15, Children= 5-7

**Inclusion and exclusion criteria:** Children: 4 - 17 years, ability to understand all directions. Caregivers: all ages, ability to understand and follow directions.

**Pricing:** \$50 per class

**Forms/Questionnaires:** Complete application forms. Administer pre-test questionnaire before program, post-test questionnaire and program satisfaction questionnaire after end of program

\*\*First class start with introductions of caregivers and children in a large group before mindfulness activity and OT's discuss details of 8wk program\*\*

### Session Description:

<b>15 min</b>	Caregivers and children in large group sing hello song & complete mindfulness activity (ex: body scanning, mindfulness walk)
<b>40 min</b>	Caregivers and children split into groups with OTs leading each group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Caregivers: 1) Rose, thorn, bud activity 2) Set mantra and complete belly breathing 3) Yoga sequence 4) Belly breathing and shavasana</li> <li>▪ Children: 1) Set mantra and complete belly breathing 2) Yoga sequence 3) Belly breathing and shavasana 4) Art project to reflect how yoga made children feel example projects: mandala colorings, superhero strength poses)                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ use energy dials, music, and songs to help children with flow of yoga</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>5 min</b>	Come together as a large group- caregivers and children and sing goodbye song

\*\*For final class have children and caregivers reflect on positive and negative parts of program\*\*

*Upon request, an in-depth description of the program can be provided*

## BOTTOM LINE FOR OT

It is the responsibility of an occupational therapist to support individuals to engage in activities that improve quality of life and physical health. When working with children, there is an added layer of support needed for caregivers. It is imperative that therapists take into consideration of those caring for the clients. All Joy Wellness Program offers a unique community resource that not only supports children's development but also addresses the prevalent challenge of caregiver burnout.

A child who is dysregulated has difficulty developing the skills needed to engage in occupations that they would otherwise find meaningful such as socialization, motor development, and communication skills. (Ayres, 2005). Therapists help children learn self regulation skills to facilitate improvement in occupations. Therapists rely on caregivers to continue the work at home. If caregivers lack the resources and skills necessary to maintain a high level of care at home due to caregiver burnout, children's progression may be significantly hindered.

Occupational Therapists have the training and skills in musculoskeletal, neurological, and environmental systems to tailor wellness programs targeting caregivers and pediatric clients simultaneously. All Joy therapists would utilize these skills while teaching yoga, meditation, and mindfulness in a group setting. These personal health practices have been proven to help caregivers combat caregiver burnout as well as aid children with sensory regulation.

Given that there are limited evidence-based wellness programs that concurrently include pediatric clients and their families, All Joy Wellness Program would provide value to families needing OT services. In addition, there is little research on the effects of yoga, mindfulness, and meditation on caregiver burnout and sensory regulation in this population. All Joy Wellness Program not only creates opportunities for families but also contributes to the developing research in pediatric comprehensive care.



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## REFERENCES

References are available upon request