Young Yaghya in his first year at Mindstretch Preschool.

Yaghya in 2015, a child liberated by love and learning.

The Mindstretch Grade R class of 2015.

Reflections of a Mindstretch Parent

At my son Yaghya's 2015 graduation, Teacher Lindsey spoke of her pride in her boys, how hard they had worked, how much they had achieved, and how they had grown. Fighting back tears, she wished them future happiness and goodness.

Gratitude filled my thoughts. The memories rushed back: Yaghya's first interaction with Jennifer when just 30 months old, when he commenced HANDLE therapy; his first meeting with Teacher Shara in 2014; and his progression through Grade R in 2015. **These milestones mark the evolution of a caterpillar into a bright little butterfly.**

Yet, how does a caterpillar become a butterfly? As a mom, the answer came intuitively to me: unconditional love and acceptance make a child thrive. This is what Mindstretch offers. Its ethos is to recognise learners' challenges and work on their difficulties. But, at the same time, they prioritise individualised development plans to find ways to enhance each child's strengths. Love, encouragement, acceptance and patience are practiced at Mindstretch. This enables a learning environment with a homely feel.

Unlike Lindsey, my tears streamed. Unapologetically I cried throughout the process. Why was I crying? Because finding placement for my son at a suitable school had been such a struggle. I cried because the placement battle continued even after his time at Mindstretch Preschool came to an end. All parents with special needs children can relate to this anxiety and trauma. You call and leave messages everywhere, you contact friends of friends to establish what credible schools can be approached, you contact the Department of Education for assistance, and more. Eventually, you live on hope! Hope that your child will once again find a nurturing and caring learning environment.

Today, I can proudly say that Yaghya is at Vista Nova School. He even has a Mindstretch buddy in his Grade 1 class.

To the Mindstretch Team, I say THANK YOU and WELL DONE!

Sheeham

Mindstretch
Pinelands, Cape Town

E: jen@mindstretch.co.za
P: 021 531 5899
M: 083 444 4554
F: 086 518 9251
W: www.mindstretch.co.za

mindstretch® from labelling to enabling

© Mindstretch 2016

Yoga at Mindstretch Preschool Brought by Lionhearted Kids

By Lauren Pech

As our worlds become increasingly complicated by technology, social media and global developments, the demands on our awareness and attention increase. In trying to adapt, some of us just get busier and more stressed, until we have little quality downtime for ourselves — or for our children. Life becomes a white water rafting adventure without time to pause and reflect.

Originating in the east, Yoga has become popular in the west due to its beneficial effects on the minds and bodies of both adults and children. Practicing yoga allows us to pause and reconnect with our internal worlds. This promotes the optimal brain, immune and physiological functioning that is needed for us to grow and to meet life's challenges. With Yoga, we can also teach our children how to navigate their internal worlds, and so enable them to meet challenges with trust and confidence. This is what we do at Mindstretch Preschool through weekly yoga classes offered by Lionhearted Kids.

What is included in a Kid's Yoga session?

'Yoga' means 'Union' — to bring together or to integrate. Yoga practice includes intentionally connecting the mind and body through the use of postures, movement, breathing, attention and awareness. Each Kid's Yoga session is unique as children present with different needs on any given day. Our teachers typically combine breathing, yoga postures, music, singing, brainteasers and relaxation in a session. Aligned with the principles of Lionhearted Kids, our teachers use a mindfulness-based approach that involves unconditional awareness of the present moment. In this way, the teacher allows space for children to move into themselves and explore their inner worlds — including the emotional, mental and physical — in a supportive environment.

Finding inner stillness.

Lauren guiding a Lionhearted Kids Yoga class at Mindstretch.

What are the proven benefits of Yoga for children?

- ✓ Cultivates attention and awareness of the child's inner world
- ✓ Promotes body and emotional regulation
- ✓ Enhances connection to self and others
- ✓ Develops empathy
- ✓ Helps balance reactivity
- ✓ Develops intuition and insight
- ✓ Strengthens the nervous and immune systems
- ✓ Promotes memory and learning

About Lionhearted Kids

Lionhearted Kids is a non-profit organization. We nurture resilience in children and families. We do this by providing counselling and mindfulness-based therapies using play, yoga, art, music, therapeutic touch and support services to children, families and those who have a role in their lives. Lionhearted Kids envisions communities living to their fullest potential. For more information, please visit **www.lionheartedkids.org**.

© Mindstretch 2016

Mindstretch Preschool's new Intermediate class is off to a great start, with the class fully enrolled. A key focus is on verbal expressive and receptive language skills, as we prepare our pupils for Grade R. We also promote motor coordination, spatial awareness and joy! As one parent put it:

"My son is loving his new school, very happy and singing in the mornings."

The new Mindstretch Intermediate class in full swing.

Our Mindstretch swimming program focuses on water safety, floating and diving, basic back and front swimming, and stroke development. Through swimming, we are able to improve the children's muscle tone, stamina, bilateral movement and coordination.

We also welcome children from outside the Mindstretch family.

Mindstretch Preschoolers go through their strokes.

Join us in Johannesburg on Feb 27 & 28 for a course describing new methods for dealing with learning and behavioural challenges. The training is suited to educators, doctors, therapists, parents and caregivers. For details, please see: www.mindstretch.co.za. As a Headmaster noted:

"Pupils love the exercises and teachers are understanding some of the barriers their pupils have to cope with, and they are making the necessary changes"

The HANDLE® Introductory Workshop in action.

Drumming is more than just a fun activity for energetic children. It promotes bilateral hemisphere integration, as each hand is controlled by the opposite brain hemisphere. This is why we hold percussion sessions at Mindstretch whenever we can, including at our recent Valentine's Day Social.

Turn to page 4 to learn more about basic drumming.

Group drumming at the Valentine's Day Social.

© Mindstretch 2016

Drumming Basics to Try at Home

All you need to start drumming is a drum — or, a thick book will work equally well. Keep your hands and wrists loose when drumming, and strike the drum with the middle part of your fingers. Say (or sing) 'Ta' for a regular beat and 'Boo' for a heavy beat (or any other words that you might prefer).

Pattern 1 – the Most Basic of Basics

- Play a steady, even beat: L-R-L-R-L-R... Sing along to the beat: Ta-Ta-Ta-Ta-Ta…

Pattern 2 – Adding Some Beat

- Play the second right-hand beat heavier than the others (use a heavy hand)
- Play L-R-L-***R***-L-R-L-***R***… Sing along to the beat: Ta-Ta-Ta-***Boo***-Ta-Ta-Ta-***Boo***…

Pattern 3 – Doing Double Beats

- Add an extra beat to Pattern 2 using your right hand (once you have it, use your left hand for the double beat)
- Play L-R-L-***R-R***-L-R-L-***R-R***… Sing along to the beat: Ta-Ta-Ta-***Boo-Boo***-Ta-Ta-Ta-***Boo-Boo***…

Continue to experiment with new drumming patterns, but keep it simple for children starting out. Have a child play a drumming pattern slowly at first, allow some time for it to imprint, and only then speed it up.

Remember, there are no mistakes, just the creation of new and different patterns!

As we move forward with Mindstretch Preschool's third year, I am excited about many new developments, not least our new Intermediate Class. It allows us to improve outcomes for even more children, as we prepare them for Grade R and their further education. In addition to Shehaam's wonderful letter on page 1, I have heard many other stories of how pupils from our Grade R class of 2015 are thriving in Grade 1. The following observation relates to a Mindstretch boy who is now at Oakley House:

"He is blossoming. I check his books whenever sent home and get an impression that he is doing very well. You'd be very proud of the foundation you laid."

I am proud, and particularly proud of the Mindstretch staff and collaborators who together build each child's foundation. Indeed, special thanks are due to Lauren Pech of Lionhearted Kids, who gives so freely of herself in providing Yoga at Mindstretch. I hope you enjoyed her article on page 2.

With appreciation, Jennifer
Mindstretch Founder and Preschool Principal

We Welcome Feedback and Subscriptions

- Email jen@mindstretch.co.za with comments or suggestions for the newsletter, and please follow us on Facebook to receive regular news updates (our page is titled 'Mindstretch Preschool, Training and Therapy').
- To receive the newsletter, please subscribe online at www.mindstretch.co.za/newsletter.

© Mindstretch 2016