Founded in 2005, Niroga is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that brings:

Transformative Life Skills (TLS)

to individuals, families, and communities through the integrative practice of dynamic mindfulness, including Mindful Movement, Breathing Techniques, and Meditation. The Sanskrit word, Niroga, means “freedom from disease” or integral health—health of body, mind, and spirit.

Niroga programs are widely viewed as evidence-based and trauma-informed, and a cost-effective front-line prevention and intervention strategy for education and mental health, positive child and youth development, and violence reduction. Independent research with students in urban schools has demonstrated that TLS can reduce stress and increase emotional awareness and regulation, enhance school engagement and distress tolerance, and alter attitude towards violence.

Transformative Life Skills—Curriculum Scope and Sequence
The full TLS curriculum is four units comprised of eleven lessons, plus one lesson dedicated to reteaching concepts. TLS can be implemented in 15-minute, 30-minute, or 60-minute sessions. In most typical implementation scenarios, three lessons per week are delivered, and a unit is completed in a month. Each lesson focuses on a particular theme and introduces a new posture.
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Unit Overview

In yoga we focus mainly on “self,” building self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-knowledge. However, yoga is not meant to be selfish! We do yoga to become stronger and to be our best selves more often, so that we can then reach out to those we care about and to our communities. The intent of this Unit is to reinforce what we have learned so far, and to apply it to our personal relationships and the larger community in which we live.

In yoga, success and joy come not through force or manipulation, but from paying attention to and accepting yourself—just as you are—in this moment. When you practice yoga, you take personal responsibility for your well-being and meet your needs without aggression or violence. Practicing acceptance and nonviolence toward yourself is the first step to being able to practice them toward others.

As we become more self-aware, we notice how our thoughts and feelings are affected by others and how we, in turn, affect how others feel. We come to understand more deeply how we are all dependent on each other. At the same time, yoga shows us how much we have in common, allowing us to see others as people just like ourselves. Through yoga we develop empathy, self-regulation, and a deep understanding of our interdependence, so that we can strengthen our relationships and make positive changes in the world in which we live.

Unit Objectives

- Understand how having healthy relationships relates to self-regulation, self-awareness, and stress management
- Understand the impact of behavior (thoughts, words, and actions) on self and others
- Enhance empathy for self and others
- Develop an understanding that we are all connected and interdependent

State Content Standards

5.3.G Use a decision-making process to analyze when it is necessary to seek help with or leave an unhealthy situation.
7.2.S Demonstrate conflict resolution skills to avoid potentially violent situations.
7.6.M Practice setting personal boundaries in a variety of situations.
**Curriculum Lesson Plans Key**

Text for Unit 4 lesson plans include:
1. Overview and lesson plan information
2. Narrative text—scripts for each lesson’s section and mindful movement, breathing, or meditation instruction
3. Commentary for instructors reference

**Narrative Scripts**

Instructor narratives to students are shown in shaded boxes, per the example shown below.

The bolded “Say:” text introduces this formatting, and the following shaded boxes indicate when text is “live script” for student instruction. When text is parenthesized, this indicates a brief lesson plan comment, and is not read to students—per the “(Pause.)” shown in the example, below.

Text blocks outside the shaded boxes are instructor reference and lesson plan commentary—not script that is read to students.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Say:** Begin to notice the rhythm of your own breath. Is it fast or slow? Deep or shallow? Take a few moments to notice the rhythm of your own breath. (Pause.)

Now take a moment to find your pulse by pressing your fingers against the inside of your wrist, or under your jawbone, or on the left side of your chest.

Text shown between the script shade-boxes is intended for instructor reference, and contains lesson plan or topics commentary. This text will not be read to students.
Unit 4. Lesson 4.1
Your Behavior Affects Your Environment

Lesson Overview
In this lesson students will practice linking Eagle Pose with Warrior III. The benefits of these poses include:
- Promote circulation of the blood in the hips
- Relieve stiffness in the shoulders and sacroiliac region
- Strengthen the muscles in the legs, abdomen, and back
- Improve balance and concentration

Lesson Objectives
Main Activities
- Students will reflect upon the impact their behavior has on their family, school, and community.
- Students will practice noticing how the behavior of others in yoga class affects them, and practice re-centering themselves when they get distracted.

Materials Needed
Main Activities
- Singing bowl or bell
- TLS Curriculum

Lesson Topics and Timeline
1. Student Overview
   - Review Expectations ........................................ 2 Minutes
   - Activate Background Knowledge............................ 3 Minutes

2. Acting, Breathing, Centering
   - Opening Bell and Focused Breathing..................... 2 Minutes
   - Mindful Movement and Pose of the Day ............... 6 Minutes

3. Mindful Breathing .............................................. 3 Minutes

4. Wrap Up
   - Silent Sitting and Closing Bell ............................. 1 Minute
   - Connection Questions ...................................... 3 Minutes
Student Overview

**Review Expectations (2 minutes)**
Review the expectations for TLS sessions, including:

- **Students clear desks**
  of all distractions including books, papers, food, cell phones, and music.

- **“One mic” rule:** one person talks at a time.
  If students have questions they can raise a hand or ask at the end of class. Assure students that there will be a few minutes dedicated to questions at the end of each session.

- **Students focus on their own body and breath.**
  That means not making comments about self or others, not touching others, not distracting others from their experience.

- **Students try their best to participate at all times.**
  They won’t know what works for them and what doesn’t unless they try it, and every day is a different experience. Standing aside and watching others is not allowed, as it makes students who are participating feel uncomfortable.

**Activate Background Knowledge (3 minutes)**
In response to the class environment each day, you may wish provide this information to students when you feel it would be best received—that may be at the beginning of class, weaved in to the poses, or before the final relaxation.

"The way we behave has a big impact on the people around us. Sometimes you might not think so, but every person is important, and together we create the environments that we share. Knowing that your behavior as an individual can positively or negatively affect the world around you can make you more aware of how you act. Understanding how our behavior affects our shared environment can help us feel more connected and to understand how we can influence our schools, neighborhoods, and communities."

**Activation Question 4.1**

"Can you think of something that you do that affects the environment around you? What impact does your behavior have?"

Provide examples of affecting physical environment, like littering, and examples of effecting classroom climate, like having side conversations while the teacher is talking.

"Today, you might notice that if those around you are peaceful and focused in yoga, their energy will affect you, and vice versa. Understanding how our actions affect our environment can help us understand how as individuals we can make a positive impact."
Acting, Breathing, Centering

Opening Bell and Focused Breathing (2 minutes)

Say: We will start our time together today by trying to focus our attention on a sound. I would like to ask you all to listen to the sound of the bell I am going to ring.

Try to keep your attention on the sound of the bell for as long as you can, and when you can’t hear it anymore, please raise your hand.

Ring bell or singing bowl.
-- Allow to vibrate to completion and until all students have raised their hands.
-- Then ask students to do the same thing, this time closing their eyes or looking down at their desks to focus just on their hearing, and ring the bell again.
-- Wait until all students have raised their hands.

Say: That was very good. Now I’ll lead you in a breathing exercise:
-- You can keep your eyes closed, or just look down.
-- Let all the air out of your lungs.
-- Now breathe in, breathe out.

Lead class in simple breathing, encouraging them to breathe deeply and smoothly. Continue for 3–4 rounds.

Then tell students that you are going to do the bell exercise one more time.

Ring the bell again, and students raise their hands when they can no longer hear it.
Mindful Movement and Pose of the Day (6 minutes)

NOTE: When teaching this lesson, take a few occasions to pause and bring students’ attention to the energy and/or noise level in the class. Invite students to notice whether the behavior or energy of those around them affects their own ability to focus. (for example, there might be a lot of side conversations that distract students, or the overall energy might be focused and grounded.)

This lesson’s Mindful Movement includes forward folding poses. You may wish to position students in a circle around the room before beginning the Mindful Movement section in order to avoid students having their backs to one another.

Mountain

Say: Let’s all stand up in Mountain Pose. Place your feet flat on the floor. Notice if you can feel your feet making contact with the floor. Lift the very top of your head up toward the ceiling. Notice how you’re breathing.

If needed, review the elements of Mountain Pose.
-- Feet parallel and hip-width distance apart
-- Legs strong and straight
-- Shoulders relaxed, spine long

If you’d like, press your hands together at your chest, and either close your eyes or look down at the place where your hands meet. Can someone lead us in 3 breaths, saying, “breathe in, breathe out”?

Choose a student to lead the breaths, making sure the student leads them slowly to allow for deep breathing.

Shoulder Stretch

Say: As you breathe in, stretch your arms out to the sides as far as feels comfortable to you. As you breathe out, cross your right arm straight over your chest, and use your left arm to pull it close. Keep your breath flowing, and notice any stretching or opening you might feel on your right shoulder. (Slowly:) Hold it for 3. ... Letting your shoulders relax a little ... 2. Breathing ... 1.

—Continued next page—
Shoulder Stretch, Continued

**Say:** On your next big breath in, stretch your arms out to the sides again.

As you breathe out, reach your left arm straight across your chest, pulling it in with your right arm. Keep breathing and notice if this shoulder feels any different than the other one did.

-- Holding for 3.
-- Relaxing the shoulders a little for 2.
-- And 1.

Good job, shake out the arms.

Half Sun Salutation

**Say:** Let’s practice some Sun Salutations. We’ll start in Mountain Pose with the hands together at the chest.

-- On your next inhale, raise your arms high reaching toward the ceiling.
-- If it feels okay, you can reach your arms back a little. Notice any sensations in your upper back and shoulders, if you reach back.
-- On the exhale fold forward as far as feels comfortable. You can fold forward a lot, feeling a stretch in the back of the legs. Or if you feel more comfortable you can just fold forward a little, letting your arms and neck relax and your upper back round.
-- Take a breath here and notice where you feel a stretch—maybe in your neck, or your back, or the back of your legs. Find a position where you feel a stretch but it’s not too much for you.

Pause.

-- When you inhale, place your hands on the fronts of your legs and experiment with flattening out your back like a tabletop. Feel the muscles in your back working as you do this.
-- When you exhale, relax and fold forward again.
-- Inhale, come back to standing, reaching the arms up.
-- Exhale, hands to the front of the chest, Mountain Pose.

That was one round.

—Continued next page—
Half Sun Salutation, Continued

Say: We are going to repeat that series 3 times, but with only 1 breath per movement. Try to keep your movement connected to your breath, and feel free to pause for a rest if you need to. Ready?

-- On your next inhale raise your arms high and maybe a little back.
-- Exhale, fold forward.
-- Inhale, flat back.
-- Exhale, fold forward.
-- Inhale, reach your arms straight up.
-- Exhale, hands to chest.

Repeat two more times.

When you finish, instruct students to stay in **Mountain Pose** and notice how they are breathing, notice if their heart is beating faster, notice the energy in their bodies. Have one student lead everyone in 3 breaths in **Mountain Pose**.

Eagle

Say: For Eagle pose, we’ll start by extending our arms forward. Cross the right arm on top of the left.

Here there are a few options for the arms:
1) The first option is to cross the arms above the elbows, and keep twisting the arms around each other until you can press the palms of the hands together.
2) The other option is to cross your arms once, and wrap your hands around your shoulder blades for a big hug.

Choose the option that works best for you. Everyone breathe in and stand up a little straighter, breathe out and notice if you can release your shoulders down away from your ears.

Now for the legs, come into **Chair Pose** by bending your legs. To do the full Eagle pose, cross your left leg on top of your right and balance on your bent right leg. If you prefer to focus just on the arms, stay in **Chair Pose** or stand with your legs straight as you do the arms. Either option is fine, just do what you feel will help you the most today.

(Student name) can you lead us in 3 breaths?

—Continued next page—
**Eagle, Continued**

*Say:* To come out of the pose, untwist everything and straighten your legs.

Let’s take a couple of **Trunk Twists** to release tension.

Lead students in a few **Trunk Twists**.

Then do Eagle pose on the opposite side:

-- Left arm on top of right, right leg on top of left.

Do some **Trunk Twists** again when you are done with the second side.

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**Warrior III**

*Say:* We’re going to practice Warrior III, but we’ll start with just holding it for one breath. Try your best to match your movement with your breathing here.

-- Breathe in, and lift your arms as high as feels comfortable.
-- Breathe out, lean your upper body forward and extend your right leg back, lifting it off the floor.

-- Breathe in, both feet back on the floor and arms up.
-- Breathe out, arms release down.

Let’s do the other side.

Remember, looking at a spot on the floor can help you keep your balance.

-- Breathe in, arms lift up.
-- Breathe out, lean forward and lift the left leg.
  Notice your standing foot pressing flat on the floor.
-- Breathe in, both feet on the floor and stand up straight.
-- Breathe out, arms down.

Can someone lead us in the breathing as we do this 2 more times on each leg?

Have one student say, “breathe in, breathe out” as you lead students in 2 more rounds of the sequence.
We'll start by coming into Eagle Pose with the left arm on top.

Choose the version of Eagle arms you would like to do:
1.) Either arms twisted up and palms together, or
2.) Arms crossed and hands grabbing your shoulder blades.

As you're ready, bend your legs into Chair, and if it feels okay, cross your right leg over the left. Keep your breath moving.

Pause for a few breaths.

Now we'll experiment with switching to Warrior III legs. It will help to keep breathing and focus on how your body feels rather than thinking too much.
-- When you feel you can, uncross your right leg and slowly extend it straight behind you.
-- Keep breathing.
-- If you lose your focus and come out of it, just try again.
-- See if you can keep your left leg straight.
-- Notice if you tense up anywhere else on your body as you try to balance.

(Student name) can you lead us in 3 breaths?

Pause.

Thank you. As you breathe in, you can put both feet on the floor and release your arms.

Ask students if anyone noticed they were holding their breath during the pose. Encourage them to try to keep the breath flowing, to practice staying calm during challenging situations.

Lead students in the poses on the other side, holding Warrior III with Eagle Arms for 3 breaths. When students are done, invite them to shake out their arms and legs or do some Trunk Twists, then come to seated.

Proceed to the “Mindful Breathing” section.
### Mindful Breathing — Noticing What Moves As You Breathe (3 minutes)

**Say:** Take a moment to sit comfortably with your back straight. If you’d like, you can close your eyes or just look down to help you focus on yourself. Bring your attention to your breathing. Without changing the way you breathe, just notice how you’re breathing right now. Notice if you’re breathing through your nose or through your mouth.

Pause.

Notice if your breath is deep or shallow, long or short. (Pause.)

Notice if your breath is smooth or uneven. (Pause.)

Does your breath feel cooler as you breathe in and warmer as you breathe out? (Pause.)

As you breathe, your breath affects your body. It actually moves different parts of your body as it comes in and out. Notice what parts of your body are being moved by your breath.

Pause.

Can you notice your chest move as you breathe? (Pause.)

What about your ribs? (Pause.)

Can you feel your breath move your belly? (Pause.)

Maybe you can even feel your back move, as your ribs go all the way around to the back of your body.

Pause.

Maybe you even feel your shoulders move a little. Take another 4 or 5 breaths, focusing on all the ways your breath moves your body.

Pause to allow students to breathe 5 more rounds.

**Good job.**
Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Silent Sitting (1 minute)

Say: We’re going to end class by sitting silently for one minute, just noticing your breathing and how your body feels.

Feel free to close your eyes or look down to help you concentrate only on yourself.

If you like, you can even put your head down and rest it on your arms.

Pause.

Notice your feet resting on the floor, your legs relaxed on the seat.

Notice where your arms and hands are; maybe you can allow your arms and shoulders to relax a bit more.

Notice how you’re breathing.

You might even allow the muscles of your face relax as you breathe.

Long pause, allow students to sit silently for remainder of the minute.

Closing Bell

Say: I will now ring the bell one last time. Listen to the bell, and when you can’t hear it anymore, please look up at me.

Ring bell and allow it to vibrate to completion.

Connection Questions (3 minutes)

Say: How is everyone feeling?

Is there a certain place where you feel the most relaxed and safe? If so, what makes that particular environment so peaceful for you?

Ask students if they have any questions about what we did today or about yoga in general. Let the students know when they will see you next and thank them for their participation.