



Teaching Chopra Health to Children and Teens

Susan Chapman

Learning about the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda is just as important for children and teens* as it is for adults. There are ways that you, as a *Perfect Health: Ayurvedic Lifestyle* instructor, can share this information to help ensure that young people can benefit from Ayurveda throughout their lives.

When teaching young people, consider what is appropriate for their respective ages. As you lay the foundation for what you are teaching, relate to them at their level, using language and examples that they can understand. For example, you can ask small children how they feel when they go to bed too late or when they play video games for too long.

Teenagers, too, can provide information on how they are feeling, particularly when they are under stress from school or personal situations, and can understand why it is important to live a healthy lifestyle.

With young children, the information you present to them needs to be very basic. Visual imagery is useful in helping them understand Ayurvedic ideas. Pictures of the night sky, trees blowing in the wind, fire, water, and earth are excellent tools to help explain the elements and doshas. Talking about kid-friendly foods can help them learn the six tastes. Creating simple scenarios about how to deal with their emotions, such as when a friend doesn't share, can enable them to begin to connect with their emotions and address them. Talking about colors, smells, and sounds can help them begin to think about their surroundings, and discussing bedtimes and brushing their teeth can start the process of creating rudimentary Ayurvedic daily routines.

In general, you can teach many of the *Perfect Health: Ayurvedic Lifestyle* concepts to teenagers much as you would to adults, realizing that the examples you use will be more effective if they relate to their current stage of life.

You can teach young children meditation and mindful movement, but keep in mind that their attention spans will be shorter. A good rule of thumb for timing young children's meditations is to have them meditate as many minutes as they are old—a five-year-old would meditate for five minutes, a ten-year-old for ten minutes, etc. Older children and teens are better able to meditate for a full thirty minutes. Mindful movement for younger children can be in the form of walking or running—asking them to think about their feet as they walk or run, much like a walking meditation. Children and teens also tend to enjoy yoga. The former group does particularly well when the poses have animal names and names from nature.

Younger children need to have parents or caregivers directly involved as they learn about Ayurveda, and these individuals should be physically present when you teach. Teenagers may not necessarily want to have the adults in their lives with them as they learn, but they do benefit from the modeling behavior their parents or caregivers exhibit. Therefore, teenagers also benefit from having adult role models who regularly incorporate Ayurveda into their lives.

For people of all ages—young children, teens, and adults—spending time in nature reconnects them with the true self and is very grounding. Therefore, it is important that people spend time outdoors; walking barefoot in the grass or on the beach; gazing up at the night sky; or practicing what is known in Japan as *Shinrin-yoku*, “forest bathing,” which engages all five senses and can be meditative. Reconnecting with nature is an activity that families can share, and it helps children and teens reduce their time in front of computer, tablet, phone, and television screens, while enabling adults to move away from their devices, as well. Spending time together in this way helps to build strong, healthy connections with others and with our natural surroundings, which is also a vital part of Ayurveda.

**Note: Since these students are minors, be sure to obtain written permission from their parents or legal guardians before teaching them the Perfect Health: Ayurvedic Lifestyle course.*

About the Author

Susan Chapman is a Chopra Center Certified Vedic Educator who has earned instructional certifications in *Primordial Sound Meditation*, the *Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga*, and *Perfect Health: Ayurvedic Lifestyle*. Susan also holds a Master of Arts in Yoga Studies, a 500-hour yoga certification, and a certification in yoga therapy from Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles, California. Susan is currently enrolled in a post-graduate certification program in yoga therapy at LMU, which she will complete in the spring of 2020.

Susan offers meditation, yoga, and Ayurvedic lifestyle instruction in corporate, academic, online, and private settings. Additionally, as a professional writer, Susan writes extensively about these invaluable practices.

Susan and her husband, Jake, who is also a Chopra Center Certified Vedic Educator, are parents to four adult children, with whom they often share this ancient wisdom.