



YOGA – A WELLNESS STRATEGY
Presented by Shaunneka Hewitt
SummerUp 2022
Course Description

Course Name: Yoga – A Wellness Strategy

Who Should Apply: You are a Black youth, Ontario resident, and you are keen to explore new approaches for better physical and mental wellness. You are open to trying something different. As well, you fit into one of the following two categories:

- You will be enrolled in any of Grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 in September 2022.
- You will be enrolled in post-secondary studies in September 2022.

Visit the SummerUp Website: <https://lileaders.com/summerup/>

What

In 2017, the Toronto District School Board released the results of a student and parent census survey. The survey targeted students in Grades 7 to 12 and explored how students feel about their educational experience, physical health, and emotional well-being. [The results?](#) “When compared with the census from five years earlier, fewer kids in Grades 7 to 12 enjoy school, feel a sense of belonging and a connection with their teachers. Also, fewer are physically active, eating healthily, and report feeling good about themselves, while more say they’re often nervous, stressed, and worried about grades. Also on the rise, is the amount of time spent on screens, especially on social media.” This was before the COVID-19 pandemic which so severely disrupted teaching/learning as well as normal patterns of student social interaction. We now know that the pandemic has significantly heightened levels of anxiety and stress among high school students.

What about post-secondary students? Studies show post-secondary students are just as vulnerable to mental health challenges – a large portion being overwhelmed by schoolwork, exhaustion, and anxiety.

Invariably, proposed remedies include healthy behaviours such as nutrition, exercise, sleep, physical energy, and managing emotions. SummerUp 2022 offers one approach – yoga as a physical and mental wellness strategy. How do we encourage students to consider yoga as a way for being more physically active and as a tool for enhanced mental wellness? This yoga course will teach students the fundamentals of yoga with the hope that this yoga practice will continue as a mode for mitigating anxiety and stress long after the SummerUp course has ended. *“Derived from the Sanskrit word “Yuji,” meaning yoke or union, yoga is an ancient practice that brings together mind and body. It incorporates breathing exercises, meditation and poses designed to encourage relaxation and reduce stress.”* ([heathline.com](#))

Over a span of six sessions, this course will introduce students to the fundamentals of building a personal yoga and meditation practice. All sessions will begin with guided meditation and/or Pranayama (breathwork) followed by a physical yoga session. In addition to teaching foundational yoga postures, students will be introduced to various types of yoga (i.e. Yin, Hatha, Vinyasa, etc.). Each session, a different meditation and/or breathwork technique will be introduced, giving students several techniques to utilize on their own. The sessions will progress as follows:

Session 1: Guided meditation followed by foundational yoga postures

Session 2: Guided meditation with 3-part breathwork followed by yoga flow

Session 3: Focused breathwork followed by yoga flow

Session 4: Nadi Shodhana (alternate nostril breathing) followed by yoga flow

Session 5: Kapalabhati (breath of fire) followed by yoga flow

Session 6: Independent meditation and/or breathwork followed by power yoga flow and ending the series with calming Yin postures. Students will be encouraged to begin session 6 using one of the previous meditations and/or breathwork techniques or use their own, prior to the yoga flow session.

To support ongoing learning and ownership of their own practice, students will be given the opportunity to journal at end of each session. The goal is to make yoga and meditation accessible.

Why this Matters

The joy of this yoga exercise course will be enhanced by students exercising as a group. However, students will be encouraged to develop a [personal exercise role identity](#) which will inspire the student to continue this exercise activity when the group sessions have ended.

Generally, this SummerUp course in yoga and meditation will enable you to:

- increase mental flexibility, resulting in improved focus and concentration, over time,
- increase the leadership ability to manage reaction to challenges,
- fostering positive physical awareness and supporting physical activity goals,
- cultivate connectivity with nature, community, and self,
- develop broader cultural awareness, and
- benefit from group association and support.

Specifically, at the end of this SummerUp course on yoga and mediation, students should be able to:

- develop a general understanding of various yoga and meditation methods
- access foundational yoga postures
- via journaling, create a basic, personalized yoga practice, using knowledge obtained about postures and yoga flows, and
- improve mental and physical balance and strength.

Admission Details

Who: You are a Black youth, Ontario resident, and you fit into one of the following two categories:

- You will be enrolled in any of Grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 in September 2022.
- You will be enrolled in post-secondary studies in September 2022.

As well, you are interested or curious about yoga and mediation. You have a desire to improve:

- mental focus, mindfulness, and concentration
- balance, flexibility, range of motion, and general athleticism

Admissions Process: All eligible applicants will be considered for admission. Refer to application deadlines at <https://llileaders.com/summerup/> Applicants will be required to attend a course orientation.

Campus Site: This course will be offered at interesting outdoor or indoor sites which are located in downtown Toronto. All sites will be accessible by public transit and have adjacent parking facilities.

Start/Stop Dates: *Yoga – A Wellness Strategy* will be offered over six Saturday morning sessions. Each 90-minute session will commence at 10:00 a.m. and end at 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Pattern: Here are the meeting dates for this 6-session yoga and mindfulness course:

Week 1: Saturday, July 9 (10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.)

Week 2: Saturday, July 16 (10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.)

Week 3: Saturday, July 23 (10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.)

Week 4: Saturday, August 6 (10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.)

Week 5: Saturday, August 13 (10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.)

Week 6: Saturday, August 20 (10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.)

Dress: Inasmuch as this course involves physical exercise, we require students to dress appropriately. A SummerUp T-shirt will be provided.

Parent Role: This course will include students over age 18, as well as students under age 18. For students under age 18, we deliver this course in partnership with parents and legal guardians. We ask parents to ensure students arrive and depart the yoga venue safely and on time; that they are fed well in advance of each session, and that they are encouraged to pursue at-home yoga practice. Where space permits, interested parents may have the option of joining a yoga session.

Mode: This course will be delivered in-person. An online version will not be available.

Course Faculty

Shaunneka Hewitt: Shaunneka Hewitt, a registered yoga instructor and a teacher with the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) for the past 12 years. On her journey to build resilience during challenging times, Ms. Hewitt immersed herself in the practice of yoga and meditation. In 2014, Ms. Hewitt was inspired to embark on **200RYTT** training, eager to share her knowledge with others. She went on to gain additional certifications, expanding her expertise. Her additional professional certifications include **Restorative Yoga, Yoga Fit Sweat, Yin Yoga, Body Jam Lesmills, and Thai Massage LV1 +2**. Leading both private and group yoga sessions, Ms. Hewitt weaves yoga principles and mediation tools into every session, empowering learners to explore and nurture their own practice.



During the pandemic, Ms. Hewitt expanded her reach virtually. Her YouTube Channel, **Yoga with Shaunneka**, has impacted many, with over 150 videos and 200,000+ views.

Special Note:

SummerUp is a program designed to serve and support the personal and professional aspirations of Ontario's Black youth. The program is developed and presented by the **Lifelong Leadership Institute (LLI)**, and it is primarily funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The quality of the SummerUp experience is assured by the contributions of a diverse group of individuals, educators, institutions, and corporations. All are committed to championing the well-being, development, and advancement of Black youth. The Lifelong Leadership Institute also offers the **Leadership by Design** program which provides extensive leadership-development opportunities to Black youth.

The **SummerUp** 2022 program is primarily funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

