FAMILY ACTIVITY: SUPERHERO POSE

In this activity, youth will explore how our physical postures can impact our internal states. Initially, we will reflect on what superhero powers we admire and why. Then we will practice the superhero pose as well as other poses and think about how they change our thoughts and emotions.

Research tells us that certain ‘expansive postures’, like the superhero pose (feet at shoulder width, hands on hips, shoulders back, chin up), not only project power, but also cause us to feel more confident and powerful. Some emerging research indicates that these poses cause our bodies to produce hormones and neurotransmitters that trigger these powerful and effective feelings. This physical action produces a more goal oriented mindset, increases optimism, risk-taking behavior and pain tolerance, increases production of testosterone (dominance hormone), increases sense of personal control, and reduces the production of cortisol (stress hormone).

MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Materials
- None required

Instructions
1. Superheroes and Superpowers
   a. Begin by discussing superheroes and superpowers
   b. Brainstorm what superpowers we would like to have
2. Superhero Pose: One thing that most superheroes have in common is that they are confident and powerful. They believe that they can rescue people or save the world. One of the things that makes people confident or not is how they sit or stand.
   a. Stand how superheroes stand- stand up straight with feet hip width, hands on hips, shoulders back, chin up- also see pictures- for 1-2 minutes
   b. Reflect on how you feel- suggested questions below
3. Other Power Poses and Yoga Poses
   a. Repeat the process above- do a pose and reflect, with other poses you or your children know.
   b. If you need more ideas try the poses on the pages 3 & 4 of this document.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

For Superheroes and Superpowers conversation
1. Who is your favorite superhero?
2. What superpower do they have that you would like to have? Why?
3. Aside from your favorite superhero- if you could have any superpower what would you choose?

After Superhero Pose
1. How do you feel?
2. Did it make you feel powerful? Confident?
3. Are there times when it might be helpful to stand in a superhero pose and make yourself feel more confident?
   a. If youth do not suggest this, point out that if they are feeling nervous or anxious- like before a big game, test, presentation- they could use this to feel more confident. Pausing
to do a power pose can be helpful.

After Other Power Poses and Yoga Poses
1. Are there other ways that you stand/sit/position your body that make you feel a certain way?
2. Can you show us any ‘pose’ that you use?
3. How does that pose make you feel?

IDEAS TO INCLUDE YOUNGER SIBLINGS! (ADAPTATIONS FOR 0-5 YEAR OLDS)

- Toddlers and preschoolers can easily join in and attempt basic yoga postures. Focus on safety (Little ones are adventurous, so it’s important to exercise caution). As you try the poses talk about being aware of your breath and body during each of them.

REFERENCES, MODIFICATIONS, & EXTENSIONS

References
- Read more about the benefits of power poses [here](#).

Extensions
- You could further explore how different poses impact our bodies by participating in a longer Yoga or Dance class and then facilitating conversation about what poses felt strong, restful, confident, or exposed/vulnerable.
**Tree Pose**
Begin in Mountain. Imagine roots growing that connect you to the earth. Bend one leg and place the sole of that foot on the inside of the standing leg, anywhere between your ankle and knee. Balance. Grow your tree branches to the sun.

**Classroom Management**
Use this pose after students have been sitting for long periods and need to refocus. Add a deep breathing technique like “Take 5” while holding balance.

**Social Emotional Learning**
Stand in a circle or in partners and grow branches towards each other. Grow a forest. Connect hands and support each other. Each tree is different, but all are a part of the forest. What is special about your tree?

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**Mountain Pose**
Stand with your feet hip width apart. Arms at your sides, fingers stretching to floor. Press down through your feet but feel your head rise like a mountain. Notice how tall you feel.

**Classroom Management**
Instruct students to stand in Mountain pose while they are “lining up” or transitioning.

**Social Emotional Learning**
Practice effective communication and assertiveness skills using this pose.

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**Eagle Pose**
Stand in Mountain to start or stay in a chair. Bend your arms and cross your elbows. Twist your forearms and press your palms together. Untangle yourself and repeat on the other side.

**Classroom Management**
Practice periodically throughout the day to prevent hunched shoulders and increase the flow of energy. Twisting increases blood flow to the brain and releases tension in the shoulders, back, and wrists.

**Social Emotional Learning**
This is an inward focus pose and gives children direct feedback of their body tension. Follow up with deep breathing.
Warrior Pose
Start in Mountain and take a big step out with right foot. Turn your hips toward the right leg, bend right leg. Stretch arms out to your sides.

Classroom Management
Use this pose to practice focus and to generate energy. Use in conjunction with other poses or alone. Use when class is struggling with instruction or learning something new or challenging.

Social Emotional Learning
Discuss the meaning of the word “warrior”. What does it imply? What do you need to be powerful? Discuss inner power and integrity.

Child’s Pose
Begin sitting on heels or sitting in chair at desk. Bend at hips and fold forward, letting your shoulders drop and arms relax. Place forehead on floor or on desk and gently turn head from side to side while breathing slowly.

Classroom Management
Ask students to use this pose to measure the speed of their breathing. Challenge them to notice it and try to slow it down.

Social Emotional Learning
Use this pose to calm and quiet excited, anxious, or extremely energetic students. This pose is an inward pose, so can also be used as an option for students who wish to “tune in” after experiencing strong emotions or unexpected behavior.

Downward Dog Pose
Begin on all fours pose. Bend your toes forward and spread your arms forward like dog paws stretching out. Lift hips to the sky and lengthen your back. Let neck float between arms. This can also be done with hands down on a chair.

Classroom Management
Use as a “system reset” to raise energy levels immediately. Adding “barks” or asking students what kind of dogs they are adds fun and spontaneity.

Social Emotional Learning
After doing the pose, ask students how their perspective changed when hanging upside down. Discuss perspective and how it pertains to friendships, big vs small problems, and how we all see things a little bit differently.