

TREE

BENEFITS

Energizes and calms. Develops balance and focuses attention. Strengthens postural muscles. Good for students with attention difficulties as it demands their immediate attention.

TIME

30 seconds to 2 minutes

ACTIVITY

- Stand with legs and feet together.
- Shift your weight onto the left foot.
- Slowly bend right knee and draw the right foot up, placing the sole as high as possible on the inner leg (i.e., ankle, shin, or thigh) without strain.
- Activate your body and press standing leg down, rooting yourself like a tree to the earth. Press palms together in front of heart to help with balance.
- Then, stretch arms and head up like branches to the sky, while rooting your standing leg.
- Repeat on the other leg.

VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Dancing Trees: While in the pose, take the right arm back and the left arm forward, then switch, taking the left arm back and right forward.
- Try the pose with your eyes closed!
- Time students, lengthening holding times as the students grow stronger.
- Imagine a loved one holding the standing leg down to the ground.
- Have a few students who are good at the pose demonstrate. Have the class focus for them and then ask them what they think the demonstrators used to keep their balance. Write their strategies up on the board.

NOTES

Balance stimulation activities like Tree develop both vestibular and proprioceptive systems, which play a key role in perception, spatial awareness, and the development of motor, tactile, auditory, and visual brain systems. These activities are foundational to efficient brain processing and both academic and athletic performance. Additionally, balance treatment ameliorates anxiety and increases self-esteem in children with balance disorders.

Neurological screening tests indicate that 90 percent of children by age 5 to 6 should be able to balance on one foot for 10 seconds (Mutti, Martin, Sterling, et al, 1998).

To prepare for Tree, use Roots (p. 85), Tree Circle (p. 93), or just balance on one foot at a time. For trouble balancing, place one foot on top of the other, or try the pose with the back against a wall for support.

