**Dendrite Dance™**  
Adapted from Anne Gilbert’s BrainDance©

**Breath:** Take three big breaths in a row starting each breath rolling down to the floor on the exhale and drawing your arms up over your head in the inhale. Really exaggerate the breath and make it as big as you can. Our typical breath only uses 10% of our lung capacity. It is oxygen that feeds our brain.

**Touch:** Give your body from your toes up to your head invigorating taps, then squeezes, then a light brush. Do three different types of touch, one for deep pressure, one for waking up, and one for light touch. Each type of tactile touch is having a different affect on the nervous system to wake it up for learning.

**Upper and Lower:** First work with your upper body and twist your spine, swing your arms, roll your shoulders and shake hands. Any movement that occurs above the waist and involves the upper extremities is appropriate. Stretching side to side is also good for the upper body. Next, move the lower body and march in place, swing one leg and then the other, shake a leg and then the other, try jumping up and down (two and three year olds favorite activity).

**Body Side:** This can be done in a number of ways. Start with opening the body up like a wide book. Then close one side of the body using the same arm and leg and open the book again into a wide stance and go to the other side. Next try to glue the same elbow to knee, making one side of your body short, meanwhile stretch the opposing side out long with the arm over head. You will be alternating sides and it looks like a Gecko climbing up a wall!

**Cross-Lateral:** This brings opposite sides of the body together at the same time. Take the opposing elbow to the knee and alternate sides. You will be reminded of Jane Fonda’s Aerobic workout. This can also be done crossing behind you touching the opposing hand to foot.

**Spin:** Give yourself a big hug and gently turn around in one direction and then the other. In between your different directions press your hand down on top of your head and wait until you no longer feel dizzy.

**Breath:** Finish how you started and note how much freer, fuller and expanded your breathing has become. Take three large breaths from the floor to the ceiling with the arms moving with your inhale and exhale.
The unification of both sides of the brain enables you to relax and concentrate at the same time. In order to learn, the physical body needs to be deeply relaxed, the breath free, the emotion stable and the mind focused. People tend to learn best in a relaxed and calm atmosphere, not a regimented one, where they can hold “attention without tension.”

– Liz Lark, *Yoga For Kids*

**The Brain Benefits Of The Dendrite Dance™**

- Touch lets us know where our body is in space. Touch also produces Serotonin and Nerve Growth Factor, supporting feelings of well-being and physical growth.

- The balancing mechanism in our inner ear (Vestibular) needs to be stimulated for healthy Kinesthesia. There are nerves to every muscle in the body that extend from the Vestibular system, making it vital to our mental and motor planning, sensory processing, and brain maturation.

- Proprioception is the inner awareness of our joints and movements through space. It is vital for acquiring a sure sense of ourselves (body image) and how to navigate the world.

- Movement based on the three patterns infant’s progress through during the first year of life, the Basic Neurological Patterns (Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen); stimulate all of the nerve pathways in the brain, organizing the neural networks for efficient processing.

- The first two movement patterns work on the low reptilian brain and the cross lateral pattern integrates the two sides of the brain for cross communication and complex problem solving.

- The capacity to plan sequences of movement for specific tasks whether it is writing or eye movement for reading, involve using motor patterns in complex sequences. The Dendrite Dance™ develops motor planning.

- Breath provides oxygen and blood to the brain (brain food) and releases chemicals that balance behavior and calm the mind.

- Attention to Task is a complex process of filtering, attending, evaluating, and responding that involves many different parts of the brain. A well-developed “map of me” gained through motor activities is the precursor to the gateway for learning – attention.

- Developing and maintaining neural networks is not intended to occur apart from the body. When we dance we become efficient and fulfilled movers and thinkers.