

SKY Breathing Helps Teen Girls Carrying the Heaviest Trauma, New UCLA Study Finds

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, August 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new study led by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles has found that a school-based program combining [SKY Breathing](#) with social-emotional learning helped the students who typically benefit least from mental health interventions: teenage girls carrying the heaviest histories of childhood trauma.

The findings, published in the [Journal of Research on Adolescence](#), evaluated [SKY Schools](#), a program of the International Association for Human Values (IAHV) that pairs a social-emotional learning curriculum with SKY Breathing (Sudarshan Kriya), a technique that uses specific rhythms of breath to help regulate the body's stress response.

Researchers randomly assigned two Southern California high schools, together 174 teenage girls, to receive the SKY Schools program either immediately or after a wait-list period. More than 93 percent of the students were Hispanic, and the two groups started the study at comparable levels of childhood adversity and social connectedness.

Girls in the intervention group who reported four or more adverse childhood experiences, a recognized marker of high childhood trauma, showed a 7 percent increase in social connectedness, a significantly larger gain than either their lower-adversity peers in the same school or students at the wait-list school. Because loneliness and social isolation are closely linked to depression, anxiety, substance misuse and academic failure, the researchers say the results suggest that low-cost, school-based programs can reach the students most at risk, a group such programs often help least.

"What's striking is that the girls who needed help the most benefited the most," said Dara Ghahremani, research professor at UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior and the study's senior author. "These are adolescents who have already faced significant adversity, and we found that a relatively simple, scalable approach combining social-emotional skills training with breathing techniques can help them feel more connected and develop a greater sense of belonging. When students are better able to regulate their own stress, they're better able to connect with the people around them."

"That connectedness matters enormously for protecting mental health during a developmental period when isolation can have lasting consequences," Ghahremani said.

About the SKY Schools Program

SKY Schools is a resilience and self-regulation program for students and educators, built around SKY Breathing alongside movement, games, and training in leadership and conflict management — one part of a broader social-emotional learning approach used in schools nationwide. SKY Schools has reached more than 173,000 students, teachers and parents across 265 schools in the United States since it began 17 years ago. Peer reviewed research has found that the program reduces impulsivity, improved self-esteem, and anger coping, strengthened identity formation, and reduced distractibility and self reported mental health days.

“The students who have faced the most adversity are also the ones most capable of transformation when they’re given the right tools. This study shows that breath-based nervous-system regulation can reach the young people that school mental health programs most often miss, and that finding should be driving district decisions right now. It drives our work in SKY Schools.” Said Elan Gepner-Dales - Executive Director at SKY Schools.

The results point to something schools can act on now. As districts nationwide search for low-cost, scalable ways to support student wellbeing, and amid persistent disparities in mental health access for Hispanic communities, the study offers early evidence that breath-based, trauma-informed social-emotional programs may be a promising tool, particularly for the students who need it most.

About IAHV and the Art of Living Foundation

The International Association for Human Values (IAHV) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1997 as a sister organization to the Art of Living Foundation, founded in 1981 by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Together the organizations operate in 182 countries, having reached more than a billion people through programs in health and wellbeing, education, disaster relief, prison rehabilitation, environmental restoration, and peacebuilding. SKY Schools is one of several education initiatives under the organizations' umbrella, alongside SKY Campus Happiness for universities and a network of free schools for underserved communities. 2026 marks the Art of Living Foundation's 45th anniversary.

1) Ghahremani, D. G., Oh, E. Y., Dean, A. C., Mouzakis, K., Wilson, K. D., & London, E. D. (2013). Effects of the Youth Empowerment Seminar on impulsive behavior in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(1), 139–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.02.010>

2) Newman, R. I., Yim, O., & Stewart, M.-C. (2024). Breathing life into social emotional learning programs: A Bio-Psycho-Social approach to risk reduction and positive youth development. *Journal of Adolescence*, 96(5), 1065–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12317>

3) Rovnaghi, C. R., Gupta, A., Ramsundarsingh, S., Newman, R. I., Shen, S., Vedelli, J. K. H., Reichert, E. L., & Anand, K. J. S. (2025). Using hair biomarkers to examine social-emotional resilience in adolescence: A feasibility study. *Comprehensive Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 22, 100287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpnec.2025.100287>

Kushal Choksi
The Art of Living Foundation
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/935416271>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.