



Monthly Newsletter

March 2007

This Month's Topics: The Benefits of Yoga for Children and Our Annual Survey

Our two year anniversary is March 21st! It is truly unbelievable how quickly time flies! We just want to say thanks for your support and thanks for the privilege of taking care of your children. We would also like to take this opportunity to get constructive feedback in order to provide even better service to you! Our annual survey is provided in a second attachment. You can return this survey online by emailing it to admin@paofdurango.com or returning it in the mail to: 1199 Main Ave., Ste #205, Durango, CO 81301. Thank you and Happy Spring! Pakhi, Amanda, Taylor and Stephanie

Yoga for Kids

When presented in a child's language, yoga can help counter the stress experienced by young people living in a hurry-up world.

http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/210_1.cfm

By Marsha Wenig

Our children live in a hurry-up world of busy parents, school pressures, incessant lessons, video games, malls, and competitive sports. We usually don't think of these influences as stressful for our kids, but often they are. The bustling pace of our children's lives can have a profound effect on their innate joy—and usually not for the better.

I have found that yoga can help counter these pressures. When children learn techniques for self-health, relaxation, and inner fulfillment, they can navigate life's challenges with a little more ease. Yoga at an early age encourages self-esteem and body awareness with a physical activity that's noncompetitive. Fostering cooperation and compassion—instead of opposition—is a great gift to give our children.

Children derive enormous benefits from yoga. Physically, it enhances their flexibility, strength, coordination, and body awareness. In addition, their concentration and sense of calmness and relaxation improves. Doing yoga, children exercise, play, connect more deeply with the inner self, and develop an intimate relationship with the natural world that surrounds them. Yoga brings that marvelous inner light that all children have to the surface.

When yogis developed the asanas many thousands of years ago, they still lived close to the natural world and used animals and plants for inspiration—the sting of a scorpion, the grace of a swan, the grounded stature of a tree. When children imitate the movements and sounds of nature, they have a chance to get inside another being and imagine taking on its qualities. When they assume the pose of the lion (Simhasana) for example, they experience not only the power and behavior of the lion, but also their own sense of power: when to be aggressive, when to retreat. The physical movements introduce kids to yoga's true meaning: union, expression, and honor for oneself and one's part in the delicate web of life.

A Child's Way

Yoga with children offers many possibilities to exchange wisdom, share good times, and lay the foundation for a lifelong practice that will continue to deepen. All that's needed is a little flexibility on the adult's part because, as I quickly found out when I first started teaching the practice to preschoolers, yoga for children is quite different than yoga for adults.

Six years ago, I had my first experience teaching yoga to kids at a local Montessori school. I looked forward to the opportunity with confidence—after all, I'd been teaching yoga to adults for quite a while, had two young children of my own, and had taught creative writing for several years in various Los Angeles schools. But after two classes with a group of 3- to 6-year-olds, I had to seriously reevaluate my approach. I needed to learn to let go (the very practice I had been preaching for years) of my agenda and my expectations of what yoga is and is not.

When I began to honor the children's innate intelligence and tune in to how they were instructing me to instruct them, we began to co-create our classes. We used the yoga asanas as a springboard for exploration of many other areas—animal adaptations and behavior, music and playing instruments, storytelling, drawing—and our time together became a truly interdisciplinary approach to learning. Together we wove stories with our bodies and minds in a flow that could only happen in child's play.

The kids began to call me Mrs. Yoga, and I called them Yoga Kids. We continued to work and play together until our creations bloomed into a program and video called *YogaKids*. The program combines yogic techniques designed especially for children using Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner, an author and professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, describes eight intelligences innate in all of us—linguistic, logical, visual, musical, kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal—and emphasizes that children should be given the opportunity to develop and embody as many of these as possible.

In keeping with this theory, *YogaKids* integrates storytelling, games, music, language, and other arts into a complete curriculum that engages the "whole child." We employ ecology, anatomy, nutrition, and life lessons that echo yogic principles of interdependence, oneness, and fun. Most of all, our program engages the entire mind, body, and spirit in a way that honors all the ways children learn.

Taking the Practice Home

If you're planning to teach yoga to kids, there are a few general things to know that will enhance your experience. The greatest challenge with children is to hold their attention long enough to teach them the benefits of yoga: stillness, balance, flexibility, focus, peace, grace, connection, health, and well-being. Luckily, most children love to talk, and they love to move—both of which can happen in yoga. Children will jump at the chance to assume the role of animals, trees, flowers, warriors. Your role is to step back and allow them to bark in the dog pose, hiss in the cobra, and meow in cat stretch. They can also recite the ABCs or 123s as they are holding poses. Sound is a great release for children and adds an auditory dimension to the physical experience of yoga.

Children need to discover the world on their own. Telling them to think harder, do it better, or be a certain way because it's good for them is not the optimal way. Instead, provide a loving, responsive, creative environment for them to uncover their own truths. As they perform the various animal and nature asanas, engage their minds to deepen their awareness. When they're snakes (Bhujangasana), invite them to really imagine that they're just a long spine with no arms and legs. Could you still run or climb a tree? In Tree Pose (Vrksasana), ask them to imagine being a giant oak, with roots growing out of the bottoms of their feet. Could you stay in the same position for 100 years? If you were to be chopped down, would that be OK? Would it hurt?

When they stretch like a dog, balance like a flamingo, breathe like a bunny, or stand strong and tall like a tree, they are making a connection between the macrocosm of their environment and the microcosm of their bodies. The importance of reverence for all life and the principle of interdependence becomes apparent. Children begin to understand that we are all made of the same "stuff." We're just in different forms.

Think of yourself as a facilitator—the term we use in the YogaKids program—rather than a teacher. Guide your children while simultaneously opening your heart and letting them guide you. They'll no doubt invite you into a boundless world of wonder and exploration. If you choose to join them, the teaching/learning process will be continually reciprocal and provide an opportunity for everyone to create, express themselves, and grow together.

Some Additional Benefits of Children's Yoga

Cara Bessko

In addition to the fun and exercise, yoga provides many additional benefits to children:

- ?? Teaches children how to calm themselves.
- ?? Supports healthy respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems.
- ?? Promotes flexibility, balance, strength, and coordination.
- ?? Teaches self confidence and earth awareness.
- ?? Children have a lot of fun using their imaginations, bodies, minds and spirits!!



Join us for a FREE Yoga Class for Children ages 3-7

Class taught by Cara Besskó R.Y.T., certified Hatha Yoga Instructor for children and adults.

The class is held at Pediatric Associates of Durango on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of March and April at 3:20pm. (March 14th and 28th, April 11th and 25th)

Community Calendar and Events:

March 2nd, 9th, 16th, & 23rd- Infant Massage- Tender Loving Touch is holding it's next Infant Massage class series starting next Friday, February 2nd from 10-11 at the Smiley Building Studio 5. You will learn all the strokes you need to know to give a loving and nurturing massage to your new infant within four Fridays. The fee is \$60.00 for four classes. or \$20.00 each to drop-in. Infant massage fosters attachment and bonding between the infant and parent, relieves tummy discomfort associated with colic and relaxes the baby plus it teaches parents their baby's cues and creates a foundation for communication. This class is for parents with babies 3 weeks to pre-crawling age. For more information and to RSVP call **Nicole Johnson at 749-3323**. Nicole Johnson is a certified infant massage instructor through the International Association of Infant Massage.

April 1st, 5th, 6th, and 7th- The Wonderful Wizard of Oz- Fort Lewis College Mainstage Theater. April 5, 6, 7 at 7:30 PM Matinee: April 1 at 2:00 PM. Cost is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children. Please call 247-7089 for additional information.

April 10th-Craniosacral Therapy clinic led by **Dr. Paul Lee** will be held at Pediatric Associates of Durango from 1:30PM – 4:00PM. Children who are covered by CHP and Medicaid will be given a free session. Co-pay is the only required payment for insured patients and the remainder of the balance will be paid by your insurance company or handled by Dr. Paul Lee. Dr. Lee will be performing the therapy with his students. Please call Pediatric Associates of Durango at 970-259-7337 to schedule an appointment

April 11th - FREE Children's Yoga Class for 3-7 year olds. The class begins at 3:20PM at Pediatric Associates of Durango. This yoga class occurs the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month. **Please contact Pediatric Associates of Durango to reserve your child's spot in the class 259-7337.**

April 16th-Sixth Annual Wet N' Wild Easter Egg Hunt- Join the wet n' wild excitement by searching for prize filled eggs in the water. The Easter Bunny will be by to visit during the celebration, so don't miss out on the opportunity to have your picture taken with him for free, sponsored by Southern Lights Photos and Frames. The entire event will be broadcast live by 99.7 The Point. Ages 8 and under are invited to participate. **Durango Recreation Center Pool at 6:30pm**, cost \$1. Please call 375-7306 for more information.

April 25th - FREE Children's Yoga Class for 3-7 year olds. The class begins at 3:20PM at Pediatric Associates of Durango. **Please contact Pediatric Associates of Durango to reserve your child's spot in the class 259-7337.**

Pre-school story time every Wednesday and Saturday at 10:30am at the **Durango Public Library @ (970)-375-3380.**

Craft Time - Every Friday morning at The Durango Children's Museum. The Museum will present two separate crafts, one for toddlers and one for pre-school age and up. Pre-registration is not required. Museum members do not pay a fee; non-members pay standard admission to the museum to participate in Craft Times.