

Course information:

Early Years Yoga Module **(parents, babies, toddlers and children doing yoga** **together from birth to four)**

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Sitaram Partnership / September 2006**

Synopsis

This course is about the conscious and positive use of physical and emotional contact between parents, babies and children through the application of yoga to promote joy in family life. It trains yoga teachers to run sessions for parents and children together in a variety of modes and contexts, and to share (through modelling and teaching) the yoga approach to ethics, respect, kindness and harmony in family life.

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1. Background

- a. As the mainstream popularity of yoga grows, and many more yoga practitioners start families, there is an increasing demand for an approach to yoga which attends to the needs of parents and children together.
- b. The UK is well-supplied with training courses for teaching yoga to children in classes apart from their parents, and some of these courses include elements of practice for adults and children to do together, but as yet there are no courses that specifically aim to train yoga teachers to work with family groups, and to share effectively the practical benefits of the yogic approach to family life in the wider sense (outside of the class).
- c. Neither are there as yet any courses which equip parents to learn how to share yoga with their children within the family setting, or in informal groups where adults and children can practice together. Unlike other courses, the Sitaram Early Years course offers a sustained examination of the needs of older babies, toddler and pre-schoolers, and gives detailed attention to the physical and emotional needs of the parents (or carers) doing yoga with their babies. The course also provides theoretical and practical training for understanding and handling family dynamics within the class and promoting the application of yogic approaches to parenting outside of the class.
- d. To teach genuinely appropriate, helpful, fun and safe yoga for family groups comprising adults and children from birth to five is a form of applied yoga therapy for which yoga teachers require further specialist training.

2. Suitable applicants

- a. Yoga teachers with recognized training qualification from any tradition, especially those with experience of working with children / babies / pregnant women.
- b. Trainees on the Life Centre teacher training course with a special interest in this application of yoga, and a minimum of two years personal practice.
- c. Since many of those keen to learn more about this form of specialist yoga are likely to have developed their interest out of an experience of teaching children's yoga, or from practicing with their own children, priority be given in the first instance to yoga teachers who are parents, yoga teachers who already teach children's or baby yoga, yoga teachers with other kinds of teaching experience involving children (e.g school teachers, nursery nurses, child development specialists, family therapists) and then to trainee yoga teachers.
- d. A non-certificated 'family and friends sharing' route for non-yoga teachers is available. At the course leader's discretion, on a case by case basis, a small number parents/teachers without yoga teaching qualifications may be accepted onto the course. Such applicants would need to provide evidence of two years of yoga practice in the form of two references from yoga teachers with whom they have studied/practiced. This 'family and friends sharing' route involves the same level of attendance and completion of all assignments, with the exception of the teaching assessment, which is not required. Upon completion of the 'family and friends sharing' route, a certificate of attendance is received. This may be upgraded to a teaching qualification in the event that the applicant subsequently completes a recognised Yoga Teacher Training Course.

3. Aims of the Course

- a. to provide an holistic approach to the practical application of yoga for families of parent/s and children from birth to four.
- b. to enable students to re-consider pertinent aspects of yoga philosophy in relation to this major period of change in family life, and offer a practical framework for the integration of these philosophical and spiritual approaches to the teaching of family yoga both as a 'class' and as an approach to family life and parenting.
- c. to encourage a critical awareness of a range of different attitudes to family yoga practice (both within different traditions of yoga practice, and in a wider cultural sense) in order to empower students to evaluate others' perspectives and develop a clear rationale for their own approach to the uses of yoga for family groups.

4. Course objectives / Intended learning outcomes Students will be able to:

- a. plan and teach family yoga courses, classes (and individual sessions) which support infant and child development from birth to five, and promote positive parent and child interaction.
- b. teach holistic family yoga courses and classes which include asana, pranayama, relaxation, nada yoga, meditations, narrative yoga sequencing, and yoga games; also to share the yogic foundations for promoting harmony, respect and positive relationships in family life.
- c. plan and teach (groups and individuals) yogic approaches to physical and emotional contact with children including handling and carrying newborns, toddlers and young children. To teach these skills with an informed understanding of their impacts upon the dynamics of parent / child relations, and parental posture, strength and vitality.
- d. demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the key principles of anatomy and physiology relevant to infant-child development and the impact on adult bodies of parenting (including e.g lifting, carrying, comforting and lactation) such that yoga can be taught safely to these students.
- e. demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the key social and psychological changes characteristic of the transition to parenthood, and from infancy to pre-school.
- f. teach with an informed sensitivity to the emotional and spiritual experiences of parents, babies and young children.
- g. teach within appropriate safety guidelines for this type of yoga practice

5. Teaching contact hours, time-frame and tutors

- a. The course runs over a period of five months, spread over six days. See schedule overleaf. The first and second meetings are be relatively close together, with the final meeting coming after a longer gap to allow sufficient time for the completion of class observations and case studies between second and third meetings .
- b. Each weekend would run from 0930 – 16.30 (with an hour for lunch on each day), thus making a total of 36 hours contact teaching time.

Proposed schedule

For details of each session named here please see full listing overleaf

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Friday 20 Oct	Sat 21 Oct	Sunday 22 Oct	Friday 15 Dec	Sat 16 Dec	Sun 25 Feb 07
.....2/3 sessions between 0930 – 13.00 each day as shown.....					
Introduction to course and demo class	Baby yoga B (sitting to moving)	Interactive and partner yoga for big people and little people.	Baby yoga A & B recaps	Demo class and sharings from practical assignments	Introductions and sharings
Philosophical and spiritual framework			Toddler yoga		
Infant reflexes and movement patterns	Ayurveda, Touch points and yoga with babies.	Touch relaxations and more on Ayurveda and yoga	Meditations with toddlers and young children	Pranayama with toddlers and young children	Teaching practice and assessment with feedback
..... The yoga of eating together: LUNCH Break between 1300 and 1400 each day as shown.....then 2/3 sessions between 1400 and 16.30 as shown each day					
Prenatal bonding using sound and movement	‘Back to normal’? Social and cultural pressures of parenting	Family dynamics	Class planning – prepare for spontaneity Sharings from experience.	Musculo skeletal systems – stressors and cautions parents and children	More feedback from assessments
Baby yoga A (birth to sitting)	Narrative sequencing and ‘mini-tales.	Child protection policies and legal and ethical guidelines	Breastfeeding and parent support structures		Practicalities of setting up and running classes
On the road – living family yoga	Recuperative and energizing yoga for parents	Relaxation responses and suggestions for family groups.	Yoga games for family groups	Personal development – reflective practice and accessing the inner teacher	Review – Q&As from case studies – Wrapping up.

- c. To draw in the necessary specialist expertise, and to provide a valuable degree of variation in the teacher-student dynamics, the contact time is shared between the course leader (approx 28 hours) with support from visiting tutors with expertise in osteopathy, family therapy, ethno-paediatrics (the study of global child rearing patterns), ayurveda, massage, anthropology, and child development (each offering one 2 hour session). This division of contact time is a necessarily rough approximation at this stage.
- d. In practice, across each meeting, students would be engaging largely with the course leader, but with significant input from visiting tutors with different areas of specialization. The lead tutor for the course would be Uma Dinsmore-Tuli (PhD; expertise in postnatal yoga, baby yoga, children's and family yoga, yoga and women's health, yoga therapy). Contributing tutors include Sophia Ansari (BA, BWY Dip, expertise in postnatal and baby yoga, ayurveda and massage), Nichola East (BSc zoology, MA anthropology; expertise in postnatal and baby yoga) on the evolution of human movement patterns; plus Yinka Vogel (BSc, registered osteopath, BWY teacher) on the impact of parenthood on the musculo-skeletal system. Also to be confirmed, contributions from existential psychotherapist Naomi Stadlen (author of What Mothers Do).

7. Content : a brief outline of 20 key topics to be covered

- a. pre-natal bonding through yoga: sound, movement, meditations and relaxations.
- b. Spiritual and philosophical frameworks of yoga for early years groups – the galactic perspective. Relating the framework of yoga practice to the practicalities of early years family groups.
- c. Pranayama for early years – theory and practice, physiology and psychology.
- d. musculo-skeletal system: impact upon maternal / parental posture in the year after birth; hormonal changes; adjustments to baby-carrying; weakness, imbalance, back pain and how yoga asana and pranayama, and postural awareness can help; impact of carrying increasingly heavy children up to age five.
- e. infant reflexes and childhood development: anatomy and physiology of early movement, balance and pose: explorations through asana.
- f. yoga for babies and toddlers: This is divided into three sections as follows: Baby Yoga A (for babies from newborn to sitting, approximately 6 months: carrying, lifting, soothing, walking, basics of integrated contact, passive/assisted movements, integration of massage and yoga), Baby yoga B (for babies from sitting to moving/crawling approximately six months to one year: development of carries and lifts, challenges and games to match developmental stage, integrated yog contact), Toddler Yoga (for toddlers from crawling to walking approximately from one year to two- and a half: class management issues, integrated yoga contact, balance, poise and fun through yoga). There is also a review session, and guidance on the blurred boundaries and interchange of practices across different age groups, including integration of babies into general classes.
- d. breastfeeding: how lactation works; postural adjustments for feeding mothers; feeding meditations; class dynamics with feeding pairs; support for all feeding mothers.
- e. Family dynamics in groups and at home : yoga principles for harmony and balance.
- f. Child protection issues – the key legal requirements, insurances, enhanced disclosures, procedures and policies. BWY code of ethics.
- g. Yoga and Ayurveda in childhood and parenting: helpful frameworks for understanding, marma points, constitutional frameworks

- h. Yoga interaction and touch, integrating massage and touch relaxations with yoga practice
- i. Recuperative and energising yoga for parents: developing an appropriate approach; compassion and mindfulness for students and teachers; teaching issues for asana and pranayama including post-caesarean recovery; timing and flow in classes; contra-indication, prohibitions, precautions, modifications and creative improvisation.
- j. 'back to normal?': social and cultural pressures and expectations - the impact on new parents; staying at home and going back to work: how yoga can help with issues of self worth and confidence, and adjustment to new roles.
- k. support structures and networks: NHS postnatal care - how it works; sources of help and support; conflicting advice from experts - yoga to help empower parents to trust their own feelings; referring students to specialist help; developing the supportive and nurturing function of the family yoga class group.
- l. emotional and spiritual concerns: transition to parenthood, and from infancy to childhood; relations with family and friends; postnatal depression; use of yoga for reflective and comforting purposes for parents and children : relaxation, pranayama, nada yoga and meditation.
- m. personal development of family yoga teachers: reflective practice; journal-keeping; debriefing of own experiences; keeping counsel; establishing and maintaining boundaries with needy students; self-nurturing - developing an appropriate yoga practice for oneself.
- n. Narrative yoga sequencing and yoga games : use of myth, drama, pace and character to sequence meaningful yoga stories and games for families in class and at home.
- o. Partner yoga for families: poise, strength, trust and challenge - teaching paired asana work to parents and children, including baby carrying as 'pair yoga'.
- p. Practicalities of class planning for family groups: setting up, running, advertising, registrations, locations etc.
- q. Yoga in family daily life and 'on the road': principles for eating, sleeping, traveling and and being together: the practical application of yoga philosophy: yoga to create security, rhythm and ritual.
- r. Touch relaxations for family yoga groups: massage 'stories', use of pressure points and calming massage sequences for parents and children.
- s. Meditations and visualisations in early years groups – strategies, timings, placements and and practicalities.

8. Resources and teaching methods

- a. books / articles: a draft bibliography is found at the end of this document. Some texts would be recommended as preparatory reading prior to embarking on the course, and from other texts relevant extracts would be taken to support the course handouts. Such extracts /articles would be 'set reading' prior to each weekend, to provide students with a share point of reference for informed discussion of key issues / controversies in the field.
- b. course manual and handouts: clear and simple to summarise teaching input on topics outlined in the previous section.
- c. charts, diagrams, model pelvis and spine: to facilitate understanding of anatomy and physiology.
- d. DVDs, slides and videos: seeing real people doing baby-yoga and family yoga sessions
- e. small group work: for discussion of controversial points raised in reading and practice
- f. pair work: for detailed application of practical issues in teaching e.g. modification and adjustment
- g. teaching practice: each student teaching whole class group {see comments on assessment below}
- h. case studies: used as examples in course leader's talks; also demonstration sessions with 'real life' mums, babies and family groups. See also assessment and assignments.
- i. flip-chart and white board for notes and diagrams to explicate tutor's talks and record small group report-backs
- e. sharing and de-briefing of own experiences [following the assignment on this topic [see below]

9. Assignments and assessment

- a. Prior to acceptance on the course:
 - i. a two page account of why applicants want to do the course, what they hope to get out of it, and what they hope to contribute.
 - ii. A brief account of any family yoga / mother and baby /children's yoga class attended / observed by the student and their comments upon its usefulness. In the absence of suitable local classes to attend, this can include a review of any DVD or video of a suitable class (see list of videos at end of document). A pro forma is provided to guide the recording of observations
- b. Prior to the first meeting:
 - i. a three page reflective account of the applicant's understanding and experience of the value of yoga for young families - either based on their experience with their own child/ren, or through the provision of close support (personal or professional) for a family /ies during the early years. To include suggestions for how yoga did /or could have been of assistance during this time, for example asana, pranayama, philosophy.
- c. Prior to the second meeting (but very welcome any time prior to this):
 - i. Reports from observation of a minimum of three and maximum of eight family yoga classes (preferably taught by at least two different teachers): to include details of class structure, learning outcomes, students attending, special needs of students, comments on the group dynamics, student/teacher rapport, constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement (pro-formas to be used) If there is no local class available, then students may base their reports upon the demonstration class taught by the course leader during the first weekend, and make comparison with video footage of other classes (e.g. Sitaram DVD, Birthlight videos, and/or postnatal exercise videos).
 - ii. Explain how you think yoga might help in the following scenarios: 'colicky' baby at home, aged three weeks; over-tired baby (6 months) and exhausted mother at home; father with indigestion and two two-year old twins stuck in a jam on a long car journey; rainy day on a camping holiday with a six month old baby and a bored four year old; a party of four five year olds and their parents with lower back pain. This exercise is to raise questions as much as to provide answers.
 - iii. Write a one page A4 handout with simple 'dos and don'ts' to give to your students/friends/family who are doing early years yoga.
- d. Prior to the third meeting:
 - i. A case study, conducted over eight weeks of family yoga as taught either to a single family group, AND/ OR to a small class group. One of the families can be the trainee's own family, but if this is

the case then ideally the other case study should also provide an opportunity to teach outside of one's own family. (Except in the case of non-yoga teachers who are only expected to report on friends/family sessions). The case study should include: completed registration form and feedback form from students; class plans and reports for each session, indicating how the actual class taught differed from that planned, and why; reflective evaluations for each session and at the end of the eight week period on the teacher's perception of the effects of the class upon herself and upon the students taught. (Please use the pro formas provided) Feedback forms from students.

ii. Poster/flyer for family yoga class

iii. Preparation of one asana, pranayama and/or relaxation and/or meditative practice, to be taught to the rest of the group during the final weekend. To be accompanied by a short description and lesson plan of each practice taught.

iv. Devise a simple sequence of yoga postures including breathing and relaxation and appropriate child interaction / baby carrying practices for a family group including a new baby to do at home together at the following times: from birth to six months; six months to one year; when the baby is 18 months; when the 'baby' is three; when the 'baby' is four. Each should take about 20 minutes and be easy to follow on a daily basis. The family group may include older siblings, and the focus should be on a suitable practice for all family members to do together. Practices may include those prepared for assignment iii. above. Use the same pro-formas and provide the same level of detail as in assignment iii. above. Video footage, photographs and student feedback forms are all welcomed as a way to document the teaching and learning experience.

e. For final assessment and completion of module

h. During the final meeting, students will be expected to complete a group teaching exercise which will be assessed by the course tutor and a visiting assessor. Non-yoga teachers who are aiming for the 'certificate of attendance' only can opt not to do this teaching practice if they wish, but should participate in the session as a 'student'.

10. Preliminary bibliography, resources and pre-course reading.

A full annotated bibliography will come with the course manual, but in the meantime here are a few very useful books to read before and during the course, in order of significance:

1. Small, Meredith F. 1998. *Our babies, Ourselves: How Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Parent*. Anchor Books. New York. A gripping account from the field of ethno-paediatrics – the global study of comparative parenting styles. Gives an anthropological perspective on the trends in baby care.
2. Mendizza, Michael with Joseph Chilton Pearce. 2004. *Magical Parent, Magical Child: the art of joyful parenting*. North Atlantic Books.. A thoroughly inspiring and practical set of dialogues between the grandfather of magical parenting (Joseph Pearce) and Mendizza, who presents Pearce's theoretical perspectives in an accessible manner. A good intro to the source of Pearce's gripping wisdom – it hopefull will lead you to *Magical Child* itself.
3. Dinsmore-Tuli, Uma. 2006. *Mother's Breath : a definitive guide to yoga breath, sound and awareness practices for pregnancy, birth, postnatal recovery and mothering*. Sitaram and Sons. London. 163 pp. Comprehensive guide – the book I needed to have eight years ago , but ended up having to write myself. Includes a whole section written specifically for yoga teachers, and much on the use of yoga to promote bonding between mother and child.
4. Freedman, Françoise. 2000. *Baby Yoga*. Gaia. London/ Barrons New York. Practical programme for baby yoga from birth through to mobile babies. With a clear and sensitive exploration of the emotional aspects of the practices, especially the benefits of relaxation and letting go. Very useful. If you have trouble finding the Baby Yoga book, please contact me I have some copies
5. Stokes, Beverly. 2002. *Amazing Babies: Essential Movement for your baby in the First Year*. Move Alive Media. Toronto. Instructive picture sequences and an innovative approach to infant development allied with adult movement explorations (that look very like yoga!). A lovely guide for new parents and a helpful perspective for anyone working with early years.

AUDIO CD /DVDS

Rather obviously, I recommend the full range of Sitaram CDs and DVDs because they work very well with our students and are tried and tested:

DVD triple set

Mother Nurture: Yoga for pregnancy, yoga for birth and yoga for postnatal recovery with babies.

Fully integrated programme across three DVDs for all stages of pregnancy, up to six months postnatally. Breath, movement, sound practices and deep relaxation in flowing sequences. Explanations and instructions by Uma Dinsmore-Tuli, demonstrations by Sitaram Partnership students.

Mother's

Breath triple CD set-

clear guidance for the practice of all the breath, awareness and pelvic floor techniques described in the *Mother's Breath* book. Separate discs for pregnancy, postnatally recovery, and 'mother's voice' techniques appropriate for both pre and postnatal practice.

Yoga babies: Songs for Yoga Babies and Relaxation for Mums

Yoga fun for mums and babes - do baby yoga and postnatal recovery yoga together. Recorded live in a class of mothers and babies, this CD has loads of action songs and rhymes to sing with your baby whilst you do yoga together. The words and actions are all on the inside cover of the CD. There is yogic humming and chanting to do with babies for a more calming practice at the end. The session closes with a deep relaxation practice for mums (or dads) to enjoy in a quieter moment. Audio CD 70 mins

Yoga Birth I

Deeply soothing, nurturing yoga for the pregnant woman to enjoy at home. All the best bits from the Sitaram Partnership pregnancy yoga sessions are here: gentle stretches, relaxation, key breathing practices to energise and calm (including the golden thread for use in labour). There is also a deep relaxation practice that includes a visualisation of the unborn child, and a deep relaxation breathing sequence to take you through contractions to the birth of your baby. Audio CD 70 mins

In addition, it's worth a look at
Wendy Teasdill's DVD *Yoga for Postnatal recovery*
Little Gems DVD *Simple Postnatal Yoga*
Little Gems new DVD *Simple Yoga for Birth*

For insight into the Birthlight approach to yoga with babies try the following:
Baby yoga DVD individual mother's of babies from birth to eight months go through routines with Françoise Freedman. Clear instruction on practices.

Baby yoga for Toddlers DVD – three different teachers show their approaches for yoga with mobile babies, including crawling babies (with Sally Lomas) and toddlers (with Françoise Freedman). There is a family yoga session with children from two to four – featuring Uma with no hair, and Sam Syer, a great baby yoga teacher from North London and their families.

Yoga with Babies – video recorded live in classes with Françoise Freedman – a charming short video with interviews with mothers following the class.

Singing Babies – DVD - Sally Lomas leads the songs in a class with mums and babies

All the above titles are available from our favourite yoga retailer **yogamatters.com**

Please note that Yogamatters offer special deals on multi-buys (mixed bags and multiples) on Sitaram products for teachers.

Other books you might find interesting:

Dorman, Helen and Clive. 2002. *The Social Toddler; promoting positive behaviour*. CP Publishing. Richmond Surrey Absolutely gripping 'child's eye' view of toddler behaviour and positive ways for adults to respond. Encouraging and revealing, required reading for anyone working with older babies and toddlers and/or their parents.

Eliot, Lise 2000. *Early Intelligence*. Penguin. London. Marvellous, gripping account of development of early intelligence, from moments after conception through to the fifth year of childhood. Packed with research evidence - a truly valuable reference.

Godard, Sally. 2002. *Reflexes, Learning and Behavior: a window into the child's mind*. Fern Risse Press, Eugene Oregon. A fabulous account of the development and sequence of the full range of reflexes – beautifully illustrated and described with great clarity. A superb reference on reflexes, and summary of the work of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological psychology (INPP)

Klaus, Marshall H & Phyllis H. 1998 *Your amazing newborn*. Perseus Books, Reading Mass.

Murray, Lynne & Andrews, Liz. 2000. *The Social Baby: understanding babies' communication from birth*. CP Publishing. Richmond. Marvellous collection of video photos showing the communicative abilities of babies - including immediate postnatal period.

Salter, Joan. 1987. *The Incarnating Child*. Hawthorn Press. Stroud. The Steiner perspective.

Stadlen, Naomi. 2004. *What Mothers Do, especially when it looks like nothing*. Piatkus. London. Absolutely indispensable. A thoughtful and perceptive account of mothering from an existential psychotherapist, mother and breastfeeding counselor. Full of insight. A kind, compassionate and open-hearted book.

