

Tessa Venuti Sanderson explains
how yoga supports her parenting.

When I was pregnant with my first child, I imagined that all the meditation practice I had done over the years and the hypnobirthing course I had attended would result in a chilled-out baby. How naive I was! My wonderful daughter has proved to be a high-spirited being who always wants to be on the move and liked to be wide awake for a few hours in the night all through her first year.

My yoga practice sustained me through those early months of the fourth trimester, then juggling a toddler and a newborn, and now two daughters of 5 and 2. However, what my yoga practice looks like has changed beyond recognition.

Rather than formal seated meditation and regular sprints on my yoga mat, it is a series of moments where I remember to stop and breathe. Although I try to find 10 or 15 minutes most days to practise yoga nidra (a specific relaxation technique), which is incredibly restorative both physically and emotionally, it is the mindset that yoga has given me that is most valuable in parenting. A few times in the day I remember to be



grateful in this moment, right now. I try to practise self-kindness, especially when I feel I'm not living up to that ideal of being a 'good mother'. I trust that I have all the resources to be a loving mum; that I am enough as I am. As time goes on, I lay my mat out more. The children go under the downward dog tunnel and make up new poses, bringing a spontaneity to my practice that was much harder to find before. Sometimes I'd prefer to just be able to focus in the pre-children way,

but most of the time I can't see the pure joy in having them bustling around, being themselves and teaching me to live in the moment.

Tessa Venuti Sanderson is a pregnancy and mother & baby yoga teacher who specialises in nurturing the mother. She has created a DVD, *Mother & Baby Yoga*, for this purpose. www.tessayoga.co.uk



Seahorse's Magical Sun Sequence: How All Children (and Sea Creatures) Can Use Yoga to Feel Positive, Confident and Completely Included by Michael Chiswick, illustrated by Sara Peacock, Singing Dragon

This picture book uses the story of the Starfish brothers - with stiff backs, Eel in a wheelchair, and Crab, who is high competitive, to demonstrate how Seahorse's Magical Sun Sequence can be adapted to suit each individual's needs.

The basic sequence is very simple, but Michael Chiswick writes that children find the pattern very soothing and, as the story shows, just doing these simple moves can help us loosen our bodies and feel more positive about ourselves. There are some more challenging sequences as part of the story. This book is very sensitively written. For example, the Crab sequence is done on a chair to help those who might feel overwhelmed standing in an open space. Posters of the sequences are available free to those who own the book.

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