



Yoga, Pregnancy & Mothering: Giving Birth to Conscious Beings
Serving Pregnant Students & New Mothers in Yoga
Part I: What is our intention? What do we bring to the shared yoga experience?

1. Introduction – Consider your self
 - a. What do you bring to this yoga experience?
 - i. Why are you here?
 - ii. What is your intention in teaching yoga?
 - iii. What is your experience of birth?
 - iv. Is there a connection between yoga and giving birth?
2. Consider your student
 - a. Why is your pregnant student here?
 - i. Physical fitness; relieve discomforts or pregnancy; prepare for labor; to self nurture, relax and feel good
 - ii. Refining awareness of body, mind, spirit; connecting with baby, connecting with others for support
 - b.** Who is your pregnant student?
 - i. Experienced yogini, athlete
 - ii. Inexperienced working mother with little time for fitness or relaxation
 - iii. First, second or third time mother
 - c. What is happening to your student?
 - i.** She is giving birth to her self as a mother
 - (1) Loss of control/freedom
 - (a) Responding to powerful physiological changes
 - (b) Adapting to new challenges and limitations
 - ii. Opportunity for growth
 - (a) Enhancing self awareness, deepening relationship with body, mind and spirit
 - (b) Letting go of who she thinks she is and accepting who she's becoming – physically, emotionally, spiritually
 - (c) Recognizing lifelong habits and patterns
 - (d) Fostering self acceptance and compassion
 - iii. She is giving birth to a new human being
 - (1) Loss of privacy & freedom

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- (a) Never a moment alone
- (b) Making room in body and mind for another being
 - (i) Life becomes centered around baby's needs
- (2) Opportunity to love
 - (a) Out of ability to self-nurture arises capacity to nurture others
 - (b) Out of ability to be present with self arises capacity to be fully present with others (partner, baby, family members)
- 3. How can we best serve our students?
 - a. Acknowledge the powerful work they are doing
 - i. Connect – let student know that you see her – she is not alone
 - ii. Foster connection between students through sharing
 - b. Address their immediate needs
 - i. What stage of pregnancy is she in?
 - (1) Each stage has significant physical & emotional challenges
 - (a) Consider which movements and postures can be done safely for these stages
 - (b) Consider which practices can relieve physical discomforts, foster relaxation and build strength in preparation for labor
 - c. Offer yoga tools to support her process of self discovery
 - i. Yoga's Definition of Health is Unity: our sense of belonging & connection.
 - (1) We experience a sense of wholeness & integration within at the different levels of our being: bodies, minds, hearts & spirits
 - (2) We experience connection in our relationships with others & our world: family, friends, nature
 - ii. Yoga's Definition of Dis-ease of Illness as the stress of separation: a "dis-Unity"
 - (1) Separation arises from a lack of awareness of the different dimensions of our being, our connection to others & the world
 - (2) Separation leads to the stresses & strain that will often manifest as illness
 - iii. Yoga's Definition of Healing/The Koshic Model: cultivating awareness of physical, energetic, feeling & thinking, wisdom & spiritual bodies is our journey of healing & wholeness. You can use the Koshic model to help foster growing awareness of body, mind and spirit "on and off the matt"
 - (1) Daily practice of presencing: Pause, center, observe & respond
 - (a) Encourage daily practice of stopping, attuning to body sensations, sensing energetic state
 - (2) Growing awareness includes connecting with baby
 - (a) Encourage students to sense how their baby responds to life & practice

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- (3) Yogic breathing
 - (a) Entering the stream of breath just as it is
 - (b) Conscious breathing patterns with sound & movement
- (4) Yogic movement
 - (a) Postures & movements to support pregnancy
 - (b) Postures & movements to ready for birth
- (5) Yogic relaxation
 - (a) Yogic sleep
 - (b) Guided relaxation
 - (c) Meditation
- iv. Offer tools to enhance the ability to respond to change
 - (1) Model how to respond versus react through with awareness techniques
 - (a) Pause, acknowledge what is happening
 - (b) Breathe into sensations and feelings; allow them to move
 - (c) Adapt movements and poses to realize benefit
 - (d) Use pranayama to cultivate energetic states as appropriate
 - (e) Use relaxation to foster ability to remain calm and alert
- v. Cultivate ability to perceive inner truth
 - (1) Again – Pause, listen to what is being communicated
 - (2) Encourage student to connect with her inner wisdom
 - (3) Encourage student to trust her inner teacher – she can trust her body and her baby
 - (4) Encourage student to seek support with the many feelings that arise around being pregnant, giving birth and parenting
 - (5) Living & practicing with intention
 - (a) Sankalpa: encourage students to discover their own positive resolve