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Yoga classes for babies in US



Washington, June 24: Yoga has been popular in America for quite some time now, with all kinds of adventurous variations having emerged over the years.

But so far, babies have been mostly ignored in this craze for 'asanas' (yogic poses). But now, that's all set to change with a new but growing trend - 'baby yoga'. It's yoga for tiny tots, some as little as two months and others almost a year-old.

At the "Karma Kids" yoga studio in lower Manhattan, adults are not really welcome unless they have a wee one in tow. So, on most afternoons, the colorfully designed yoga room is crowded with new parents and their little ones. The parents do their "asanas" and the babies get to stretch, clamber over their mothers (and occasionally, father) and also have some fun in the process.

Yoga instructor at 'Karma Kids', Shari Vilchez-Blatt, explained what drove her yoga studio, which focuses on children, to extend classes for babies as well.

"Babies do yoga naturally on their own, when they are on their bellies and they first start to push up their head, that's the cobra pose and when they first start to push themselves up to try to come to stand, they are in their downward dog pose. Its something that happens so naturally, it kind of makes sense, we're a kids yoga studio, so to include babies just made so much sense here with the idea that - to start them at a really early age and once they start walking, they would move into another class," said Blatt.

The idea is that by getting babies into yoga so early, there is a good chance that they would stick with the regime and go on to do yoga as teenagers and eventually, adults. Blatt points out several benefits of yoga for babies. By massaging internal organs, Blatt says that this yoga helps reduce constipation and relieve gas. She also thinks it makes their tiny bodies more flexible and creates a healthy sense of self.

While the baby yoga classes are about health, they're also as much about just having fun and getting mothers and fathers out of the confines of home. One new mother. Julia Loudon, who visits baby yoga classes with her eight month old baby Sage, confesses that the point is not to get the poses absolutely right but also to have fun and interact with other parents in the class. She also thinks Sage is getting smarter thanks to yoga.

"It's not as serious obviously here because you have to focus on where you're baby's going especially when they start moving around. But the babies love it. My daughter has - every time we brought her here, when we brought her home, even that night, she would be doing a new skill. I mean that's what really kept me coming here to be honest," said Loudon.

One of the chief benefits of doing baby yoga, parents point out, and that is the opportunity it gives new parents to come out of their respective cocoons. Most agree that it helps with mild forms of post-partum depression.

Maureen Araneo, another mother at the baby yoga class, whose seven and a half month old daughter, Alice seemed to be having a good time clambering over and under her mother, said that leaving the house to do yoga did wonders for her.

"For me, I can say it was great to get out of the apartment, especially because I had her in late Fall, early winter where you're feeling very trapped and isolated. So, I would say it was helpful for me. I don't know how it is for other people, but staying out around new moms, their babies was a good thing," Araneo said.

Chris Lopata was the only father one afternoon at the 'Karma Kids' baby yoga class. But he's not the only one to come for baby yoga, according to Blatt.

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Fathers do pop in often, especially if their work schedules are flexible.

Chris was there with his wife Trista and their twins Riley and Mason.

"It's good for the babies, but it's also a good way to start you getting physical again, like Jesse just said, I think that's - it's just your back hurts, everything hurts from, especially with the twins. So I think it's a great thing to jump-start you into being physical again," said Chris.

When asked just how big the 'baby yoga' trend is, Blatt points out that she thinks it isn't just a fad that will fade away. She says that there are a handful of studios in New York that offer baby yoga and that she sees a lot more parents getting into it. For one thing, babies really sleep well after their dose of stretching and playing with other babies. And that is certainly sweet news for sleep-starved new parents.

Bureau Report

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