

Fantastic journey


The practice of yoga during pregnancy.
By Sally Parkes

Pregnancy is the largest emotional and physical transformation a woman's body will undergo. A woman also becomes more aware of her body and of the many physical and emotional changes that come with being pregnant. She may start experiencing lower back pain, nausea, slower digestion, fluid retention or muscle cramps. These do not affect all women though they all are fairly common symptoms of pregnancy.

With the appropriate yoga practice, however, many of these issues can be addressed and slowly the mother will feel more balanced as she harnesses her energy and her body begins to function at a more optimal level.

Gentle and rhythmical movements for the lower back and pelvis ease back and hip pain whilst supported *savasana* will help with disturbed sleep patterns and give the mother some uninterrupted time with her baby. Deep steady breathing such as *ujjayi* will increase mental focus and deep internal strength. Focus should always be placed on asana that are grounding and work with the *Apana Vayu*, our downward energy. This encourages the mother to stay grounded and helps her body prepare for birth, as this is all about physically and mentally letting go and working with nature's forces, and not against them.

The mental act of 'letting go' and the acceptance of 'what is' is useful as it helps to nurture a sense of peace, allowing what is not needed for the next chapter in a mother's life to simply drop away. Making space for a baby and for mothering is a yoga practice in itself and should never be under-estimated.

Yoga teaches us to be mentally strong and encourages us to go with the flow. It helps us to realise we cannot control everything and prepares us for the unexpected, allowing us to adapt to unforeseen situations. These skills can be applied at any time of life but are especially effective during pregnancy and birth; it leaves us with more space to enjoy the journey from pregnancy into motherhood. 

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