

Fitness: Make some flexible friends: [FINAL Edition]

Kiddle, Jessica. *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh (UK)] 05 Aug 2006: 19.

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Abstract (summary)

Forget ballet, mini football or even Taekwondo, parents are now taking a holistic approach to their children's fitness and sending them to Junior **Yoga**. You might think it's impossible for your bundle of energy to achieve the zen-like calm needed for the downward dog but YogaBugs teacher Fenella Lindsell, founder of London **yoga** centre The Art of Health, says it is not only possible, but beneficial.

"**Yoga** is a great total body workout which children can enjoy in a safe and non-competitive environment," says Lindsell, who was one of the first to offer **yoga** classes for children. "It helps them work their core stability, especially their lower back and abdomen. It also helps them to maintain their natural flexibility and mobility, which they can lose once they start to conform to a classroom environment."

Research on the effect of **yoga** on children in the UK is scarce because the practice is still fairly new, but teachers and parents say that **yoga** also helps with imagination, concentration and memory retention as well as sleep patterns. Emotionally, **yoga** is said to help children under pressure to perform academically with their anxiety and confidence levels.

In America practitioners have also found that **yoga** is particularly good for those with special needs. A growing number of children with attention deficit, anxiety and learning disorders, as well as conditions such as autism, Down's syndrome and **cerebral palsy** are all embracing **yoga**. "Not only does **yoga** help children with special needs relate to other children but it can help them with their condition. **Yoga** is great for children with Down's syndrome for example who typically have low muscle tone and need to build their strength. It helps stretch out the limbs of a child with **cerebral palsy** which causes stiff, weak muscles."

Recommended for children aged between two and a half and seven, YogaBugs classes are now held all over Scotland. For details of your nearest YogaBugs class, tel: 0208 772 1800 or visit www.yogabugs.com

For classes for children aged eight to 12, visit www.yogadup.com

Baby **yoga** post-natal classes are held each week at Edinburgh's complementary health centre, Mulberry House. Tel: 0131-225 2012 or visit www.mulberryhouse.co.uk

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