

Stretching the Mind and Body: The Benefits of Yoga for Children with Special Needs

PR Newswire [New York] 25 Mar 2010

Indexed by ProQuest

NEW YORK, March 25 /PRNewswire/ -- In 2007, when Kami Evans' daughter was diagnosed with hemi paresis, which is a mild case of **cerebral palsy**, she wondered: What can she do to help her? How active should she be? And how can she not be overprotective of her, especially when she goes off to school?

"The answer seemed to be involving my daughter in as many activities as I could. As a result, she was signed up for swimming, gym and music classes all by her first birthday. My daughter also had eight hours of physical and occupational therapy each week," said Mrs. Evans.

As many doctors have stated to Mr. and Mrs. Evans, "The brain is so plastic." Mrs. Evans continued, "And how active we remained with her treatment before she turned 24 months would impact how successful her recovery would be. We were on a mission."

Then they found **yoga**. When a class with a few participants got cancelled, they hired the instructor to lead the lessons out of their home. At 15 months, she started to crawl by incorporating the rocking table and downward dog poses in her movements. At 20 months, she progressed to trying poses such as mountain, squats and elevator. Every day she would get the movements more and more.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans saw such a difference in their daughter's development that they asked the instructor to come over three times per week. Meanwhile, they continued to take her to her usual classes and have her weekly eight hours of therapy sessions. But the **yoga** instruction was unique in that it was playful and enjoyable for her, prompting her to consider her time with the instructor as a play date.

When the instructor chose to pursue other interests, it encouraged Mrs. Evans to become certified. She first took a teacher training course at a Manhattan studio for children's **yoga**, followed by training and certification working with children with special needs.

"Not only did I learn more about her **yoga** practice and how it enabled her to become increasingly aware of her body and personal space, but I was able to share this with other families as well. Inspired by this journey, I opened a **yoga** studio for children in Manhattan. This led me to share the benefits of **yoga** for children in more locations throughout New York City," said Mrs. Evans.

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SOURCE Elahi Children's **Yoga**

Credit: Elahi Children's **Yoga**

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Word count: **434**

Indexing (details)

Subjects

Occupational therapy, Children & youth, Yoga; New York

Locations

[New York](#)

Title

Stretching the Mind and Body: The Benefits of **Yoga** for Children with Special Needs

Authors

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Publication title

[PR Newswire](#)

Publication year

2010

Publication Date

Mar 25, 2010

Year

2010

Dateline

NEW YORK

Publisher

PR Newswire Association LLC

Place of Publication

New York

Country of publication

United States

Journal Subjects

[Business And Economics](#)

Source type

Wire Feeds

Language of Publication

English

Document Type

News

Copyright

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