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## Yoga for kids: Fast and noisy, fun and healthy

Photo 1 of 2 | [Zoom Photo +](#)

Nathan Springfield and Addison Vachon balance small stuffed animals on their heads to practice a yoga position during their recent Little Family Itsy Bitsy Yoga class in Dover.

By **Rachel M. Collins**

March 20, 2008 6:00 AM

Amelia Tomassetti may be only 19 months old, but as soon as instructor Lisa Flynn called out the "tree pose," Amelia and many other toddlers in the room slowly drew one leg up at an angle to the other and then clasped their hands above their heads.

"Last night in the kitchen she started singing 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,' and doing the poses," said mother Meredith Tomassetti of Nottingham.

It's no surprise the young children remember the catchy tunes and the movements.

Many begin as infants and toddlers with the ChildLight Yoga program — which offers classes for everyone from babies to teens from North Hampton to South Berwick, Maine.

Ollie Kinnison, of Rochester, has been attending classes since he was eight weeks old, according to mother, Hillary Kinnison.

"It's wonderful," she said. "As an infant, he slept better and now he enjoys the interaction with the other kids and playing the games."

Though Ollie isn't quite old enough to voice his opinion, when Flynn

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### GO & DO

To learn more about the location, times and costs of yoga classes being offered in the area by ChildLight Yoga LLC for infants through teenagers, visit [www.childlightyoga.com/classes.php](http://www.childlightyoga.com/classes.php). The company also offers enrichment and school-based programs and workshops. For information, call Lisa

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pulled out the small blankets used to rock the children back and forth individually, he noticeably scurried for his turn.

Flynn at 781-3323.

His 1-year-old buddy Grayson Gilpatrick also began to fuss when he didn't get an immediate opportunity to be swaddled in the blanket while two adults swung it back and forth gently singing "Rock-A-Bye-Baby."

He quieted as soon as he was laid in the blanket for his turn.

"They really get it," said Samantha Gilpatrick, of Rochester, the mother of Grayson who is just beginning his second session of Tot Itsy Bitsy Yoga. "He really enjoys it and he gets a big smile on his face when he gets here."

Undoubtedly, as children arrive at the Dover Yoga Studio for the Little Family Itsy Bitsy Yoga class for those 4-years-old and younger, as well as their siblings, most can't wait to run into the studio and begin.

Though there are one or two children who seem to prefer running around the room at least some of the time, even their parents claim when the kids return home they often sing the songs and practice the movements.

Certainly, repetition is a large part of the 45-minute yoga sessions.

To begin, each class emphasizes simple yoga techniques, Flynn said.

Holding hands in a large circle, the children and their parents first take deep breaths to "breathe in" as they pull together in the circle's center and then "breathe out" as they return to their places.

Next is the "happy sitting pose," in which they reach their arms "way up to the sky to say hello to the sun."

With no pause, the children and parents do a series of yoga movements — but with kid-friendly names and gestures like "scooping peanut butter out of a big jar," the "butterfly pose" and the "tree pose."

Ring around the "yogi" is next, sung to the tune of "Ring Around the Rosie."

During that song, singing kids and parents modify the traditional lyrics to "inhale, exhale, we all feel grand" and "Om delightful, om life is fun."

"Yoga with kids is a whole different ballgame," Flynn said. "Introducing yoga to kids is much more fast-paced and much noisier than traditional yoga."

Although in an adult class, breathing exercises are likely done in a quiet, relaxed setting, breathing exercises for the young ones involves a lot of scampering, singing and yes, sometimes even shouting.

"It's kid-friendly," Flynn said. "But they still get the benefits of yoga. It really helps with focus, balance and flexibility."

It also offers a dose of relaxation in what often is a hectic day, especially for teenagers, she said.

For instance, Flynn does many yoga workshops with classroom teachers.

"I show them how to bring the breathing techniques into the classroom," she said. "That way they can have a 60-second breathing exercise, for example, right before students take a test."

Flynn began teaching yoga to babies and youngsters about five years ago after she realized what a benefit it was for her family.

"I noticed when my two very young children (Brooke and Jack) would join my morning yoga practice, it was not only fun for them, but seemed to improve their focus and mood as well," she said. "While researching yoga for babies, toddlers and older children, I quickly realized the benefits of yoga can be enjoyed by people of all ages."

After attending training, she began teaching — founding ChildLight Yoga LLC in 2005, she said, "to encourage an early practice of yoga and relaxation ...; to provide children with a foundation for lifelong wellness — body, mind and spirit."

"I'm just really trying to give the kids and the parents an opportunity to try things," Flynn said. "I give them the tools, the songs, the techniques, the activities that can bring a family together."

Mindy Clark, whose daughter Alyssa was a participant in the Tot Itsy Bitsy Yoga in Dover, said she and her daughter look forward to the classes.

"It's fun," she said. "It's something to come out and do together in the morning. She does all of this stuff at home too."

Cari Quater, whose 21-month-old, Noah, also is in the tot class said that after a year of the sessions her son has "really come out of his shell."

"He was very shy at first," she said. But now Noah can't wait to pull the scarves out of the bag during class to play peek-a-boo with his mother and friends.

"I like the bonding," Quater said. "And he brings it all home to his Dad, the songs, the movements, so we can all do them together."

Certainly, it's music to Flynn's ears that the kids are so comfortable with making yoga a part of their lives.

"Even when we're driving in this area she'll say, 'Down dog, down dog,'" said Alison Collity, of daughter Stella.

And like any Itsy Bitsy Yoga fan, Stella knows that means a yoga stretch done with your hands out in front of you and your legs straight and has nothing to do with a real dog at all.

Think you or your group should be profiled in Get off the Couch? Contact Rachel Collins at Rcollinsme@aol.com.

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