

# Asana Built for Two

Want to make yoga a family affair? Here's a sequence to get you started.

**THERE'S NEVER A DULL**—or quiet—moment in Kate Rodes's yoga classes for kids. "Oh, it's never silent," she says, adding that chat-

ting, laughter, and audible groans are the norm. Just recently a little student quipped midpose, "I am not a cobra, Teacher Kate, I am a seal." Rodes's enthusiasm and accepting attitude during moments like these make her a great teacher—giggling is OK in her classes, as is saying a pose feels funny. She's learned plenty of tricks teaching at It's Yoga Kids, the San Francisco studio she opened with partner Michelle Wing in early 2006.

How can parents who want to practice with their kids follow her lead? First, says Rodes, know that your child might not be hooked right away. Like adults, kids want to be good at things, and yoga can seem strange at first. "By the third time it's usually not so foreign," Rodes says. She also encourages incorporating positions that your child already knows (like sitting cross-legged) into each session to build confidence. Once they are in a pose, tell them how many breaths they will stay in it, to help them feel safe. Finally, limit practices to 30 minutes or less and use language they'll enjoy and understand.

Most of all, says Rodes, make it fun, and your children will begin to feel stronger and calmer in their daily life. "Giving children the tools to feel confident is priceless," Rodes says. "Teaching kids how to relax and deal with their emotions is incredible."

## before you begin

**SET UP** Find a quiet spot in your home or yard to set up your mats.

**COMMUNICATE** Chat with your child about yoga. Let her know that it's a physical practice and that breathing deeply is important. Listen to her concerns and ideas. As you practice, compliment your child on her efforts. Create a sense of light-heartedness, and convey that yoga is meant to feel good and be fun!

## after you finish

**REST** Lie together in Floating on a Cloud Pose (also known as Savasana, or Corpse Pose). Encourage her to close her eyes, be still and calm, and pretend that her body is floating on a cloud. Hold for 1 to 3 minutes.

**CONNECT** Give your child a hug and thank her for practicing with you. Get her feedback by asking her what she enjoyed the most. Be open to your child's response.

## home practice

asana built for two

sequence by Kate Roades



**ABOUT THE SEQUENCE** During the sequence, remind your child often to breathe deeply through her nose. Hold poses for about 2 to 5 breaths. And check in every so often by asking her how a pose feels or where she is working hardest.

### 1 Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

Stand up straight with your feet together. Lift your toes up and spread them. Roll your shoulders back and place your hands on your belly. Take 5 deep breaths and feel your belly move. This pose can be called "home base" in yoga.

### 2 Crescent Moon Pose

Bring your left arm up toward the sky and spread your fingers wide. Keep reaching your arm long as you tip over to the right. Take 2 to 5 deep breaths and then switch sides. Remember to reach as high as you can before tipping over.

### 3 Rag Doll Pose

Stand with your feet parallel, hip-width apart. Take a big breath, then exhale and bend over, letting your arms and head be loose and hang toward your feet. Shake out your arms and nod your head "yes" and "no."

### 4 Ostrich Pose

Step your feet wide apart. Breathe in and reach both arms up. Exhale as you fold over. Place your hands on the floor or on your legs while you look through your legs. Ask your child why this pose is called Ostrich. (Answer: Ostriches sleep with their heads buried in the ground.)



### 5 Virabhadrasana II (Warrior II), with a partner

First try Warrior II individually. Then try it as a partner pose. Stand shoulder to shoulder and to the right of your child. Place the outer edge of your left foot next to the outer edge of her right foot (these are your "inside feet"). Step your outside feet wide and turn them out 90 degrees. Hold each other's inside wrists, reach your outside arms away from each other, and bend your outside knees to 90 degrees.

### 6 Partner Frog Pose

Try Frog Pose individually first. Stand with your feet parallel, hip-width apart. Lower yourself into a squat. (If necessary, bring your feet farther apart or rest your heels on a rolled blanket.) Place your elbows inside your knees and press your palms together at the heart. If you are tipping back, bring your head forward; if you are tipping forward, take your head back. After a few breaths, come out of the pose and try it together. Stand face to face, holding each other's wrists. Take a big breath, then lower into a squat as you breathe out.

### 7 Butterfly Pose

Sit face to face, pressing the soles of your own feet together. Scoot your sitting bones close to your feet. Interlace your fingers and place them around your feet. Sit up tall and take



2 to 5 deep breaths. If you want to deepen the pose, stick your chin out and bend forward. Instruct your child to breathe into her hips.

### 8 Mixing Bowl

Sit facing each other and extend your legs out wide into a V shape. Press the soles of your feet into the soles of your child's feet (or have your child place her feet higher on your legs, if she needs to). Reach forward and hold each other's wrists, hands, or fingers. Slowly begin to lean forward and back until you each feel a stretch. After a few breaths, rotate your bodies in a circle like you are mixing something in a bowl. Move one way and then the other, making sure to communicate if you want more or less of a stretch.

### 9 Mirror Me

Sit comfortably, facing each other. Bring your hands up, fingers spread wide, in front of your chest. Move your palms very close to your child's, until they are almost touching. Move your hands up, down, and side to side very slowly, while your child mirrors you. Then allow your child to become the leader. Encourage quiet focus and concentration. Practice this exercise as long as you like. Afterward, ask your child if she preferred leading or following.

### 10 Partner Breathing

Sit back to back and feel your partner's back move as she breathes naturally. Next, try to both make the in breath and the out breath the same length. Take 5 to 10 breaths together, enjoying the fruits of your hard work.



cut out  
and save!