

# pregnancy health

a unique approach to pregnancy by Tara Lee



Tara Lee by Karen Storrans www.taraandmary.com

I discovered Yoga while at university. A friend took me to a centre in Dorset where I took my first class. I really enjoyed it and felt wonderful afterwards. I started going every week and inevitably got more and more hooked! I fell into teaching accidentally having never intended on becoming a Yoga teacher. I was working as a production assistant for a documentary company and started off teaching my mother and her friends for fun. I gradually took on more and more students and classes. I attended various teacher training courses to expand my knowledge and experience of Yoga. My classes started growing and before I knew it I had become a Yoga teacher!

It was a similar story becoming a pregnancy Yoga teacher. I was just teaching friends who were pregnant and then their friends. I completed a few pre natal Yoga courses because I was always interested in the field. I was a bit nervous teaching until I had actually been through a pregnancy myself. One day a girl I had met on a teacher training course asked me to teach a few of her pregnancy classes at the Life Centre in Notting Hill while she was away. I turned up and was shocked to find there were 15 pregnant women in the class! Luckily it went well and a few weeks later I was offered a permanent weekly class plus a post-natal mother and baby class. This was the centre where I had always dreamed of teaching!

I went on to have two amazing pregnancies and births (1 caesarean, 1 natural) and developed my classes to share my experiences and help other women through their pregnancies. The classes grew and grew (to full capacity) and I became more and more passionate about helping women through their pregnancy and birth. I developed my own style, incorporating my knowledge as a Shiatsu practitioner and a 'birth Doula' and teamed up with Mary Atwood (the manager of the Life Centre at the time) to create a DVD.

'Pregnancy Health Yoga with Tara Lee'. We believed it was important to share the practice with people who couldn't make it to the classes. The feedback has been phenomenal and we have been inundated with requests for a postnatal follow up!

## About Pregnancy Health

by Mary Atwood

Pregnancy Health offers an holistic approach to pregnancy, involving Yoga and therapies. Established by me in 2007 during my own pregnancy, Pregnancy Health consists of two branches: pregnancy Yoga and pregnancy massage. Pregnancy Health's philosophy remains clear: to find the correct balance between safety and in-depth knowledge about pregnancy with a relaxed approach. Having a baby after all is one of the most magical and at the same time, most natural processes of life.

### Pregnancy Health Massage

The Advanced Pregnancy Massage training course educates and empowers therapists on the benefits, safety and vital role they play during a woman's pregnancy. Pregnancy Health's intensive training is midwife approved, accredited by the CThA and carries 5 CPD points for therapists. The course has been developed with acclaimed massage therapist Pippa Day.

One of the most unique aspects of the training is that pregnant women are massaged lying face down on specialist cushions. This provides instant relief in all the areas of compression such as the lower back, knees, hips, upper back and shoulders and means that the client can benefit from full relaxation. She does not have to be moved from one side to another. The cushions support the weight of the baby from every angle unlike pregnancy massage couches which merely provide a space for the bump and don't necessarily support the lower abdomen.

### Pregnancy Health Yoga DVD

At the end of 2007, Pregnancy Health joined forces with leading pregnancy Yoga teacher, Tara Lee, and created the Pregnancy Health Yoga DVD with a 20 minute visualisation by obstetrician, Dr Gowri Motha.

Pregnancy Health Yoga aims to offer a contemporary looking and stylish DVD which helps women feel attractive and proud of their bodies during pregnancy while also preparing them for labour and birth, no matter what the outcome. As Tara says "There is no such thing as an ideal birth. The breathing techniques and visualisations are equally useful to use in the event of a C- section and practicing the Yoga exercises whilst pregnant will help ensure a rapid recovery no matter what kind of birth you have. It is important to try to stay as open minded as possible in your desires to have the perfect birth as your baby will ultimately decide!"

The DVD contains over 190 minutes of footage with easy to use 8 menu options, allowing anyone to use it whether they are familiar with Yoga or not. Research has shown that 80% of women attending pregnancy Yoga have never done any Yoga before. When a woman is pregnant, her attention is naturally turned more to her inner thoughts and feelings. Sometimes pregnancy Yoga can be taught with an unawareness of the fact that there is a new life growing inside you. Students are still keen to do their normal practice (if they had a practice before) and modify it slightly to accommodate a growing bump. Or, at the other end of the scale, some pregnancy Yoga classes are too gentle: the pregnant student is encouraged to circle wrists and ankles and not much else. Tara's style of teaching aims to find a balance between these two extremes.

The DVD was shot in a clean, contemporary and simple style with clear, easy to follow instructions. Music by Wahl has been used as a backdrop to Tara's vocal instruction in most of the practices. Music was used to help free the mind and loosen inhibitions. Throughout the DVD there are reminders of the creative, imaginative side of Yoga which can be found not just in relaxation and visualisation but in the active poses too.

Tara's Pregnancy Health Yoga encourages you to develop physical strength and stamina in a safe way. This not only helps during labour and in the recovery period afterwards but also helps to keep the body in optimal health and fitness as well as that of one's baby. From personal experience with my first child, this is a key part of pregnancy. Pregnancy requires a lot of strength and energy, so it is necessary to keep oneself in good health. And it feels very empowering to find strength within that one didn't think one had.

It is interesting that many women who have never practised Yoga before find themselves attracted to Yoga during pregnancy. Their motivations are varied, but during pregnancy attention tends to be turned inwards. Traditional yogic principles such as non-judgment, freedom, self respect, trusting one's inner wisdom, honesty and a light-hearted approach are eloquently woven throughout Tara's teaching, helping to provide a sense of spiritual sustenance to support a woman during pregnancy. After all there are few things we do in life that are more important than bringing a new life into the world.



Tara Lee will be launching a Pregnancy Health Yoga Teacher Training programme towards the end of 2009 and a post natal Yoga DVD is planned for the New Year (2009). Details from: www.\*\*\*\*