

ॐ spotlight on

OM meets... Tara Lee

Leading pregnancy yoga instructor, Tara Lee, talks to OM

How and when did you first get into yoga?

I discovered yoga while I was at university aged 18. A friend took me along to a class at the Osho centre in Bristol while I was studying for a degree in Psychology and I found the yoga helped to keep me sane while I was studying.

How long were you practising before you became a teacher?

I was practising for about 10 years before I became a teacher. I never intended on teaching, I just loved practising yoga and wanted to share what I'd learnt with others. I used to drive an hour each way to my mother's house in the countryside to teach her and her friends once a week.

Who did you train with and why?

My first training to teach yoga was an Ashtanga course in Cornwall with David Swenson. I decided to fully immerse myself in yoga for a week, to improve my own practice and to see what it would be like. It was the beginning of a long journey although I didn't realise it at the time. I came home and wanted to practise all the adjustments I had learnt on my friends. I then decided to take a six month British Wheel of Yoga foundation course and this led to an 18 month Life Centre teacher training course to get full certification. I have also specialised in teaching pregnancy yoga, taking many intensive pregnancy courses and have just started running my own teacher training days. I am a senior registered teacher with Yoga Alliance UK.

Tell us about the particular style of yoga you teach?

The yoga I teach is a mixture of quite a few different styles. I couldn't really put a label to it, but I have been influenced by the systems of Ashtanga, Sivananda and Jivamukti along with teachers such as Liz Lark, Shiva Rea and Rod Stryker. I use uplifting music and teach a dynamic, flowing style of yoga incorporating pranayama, visualisations and meditation techniques. I also love to find inspiring and thought-provoking quotes to read to my students.

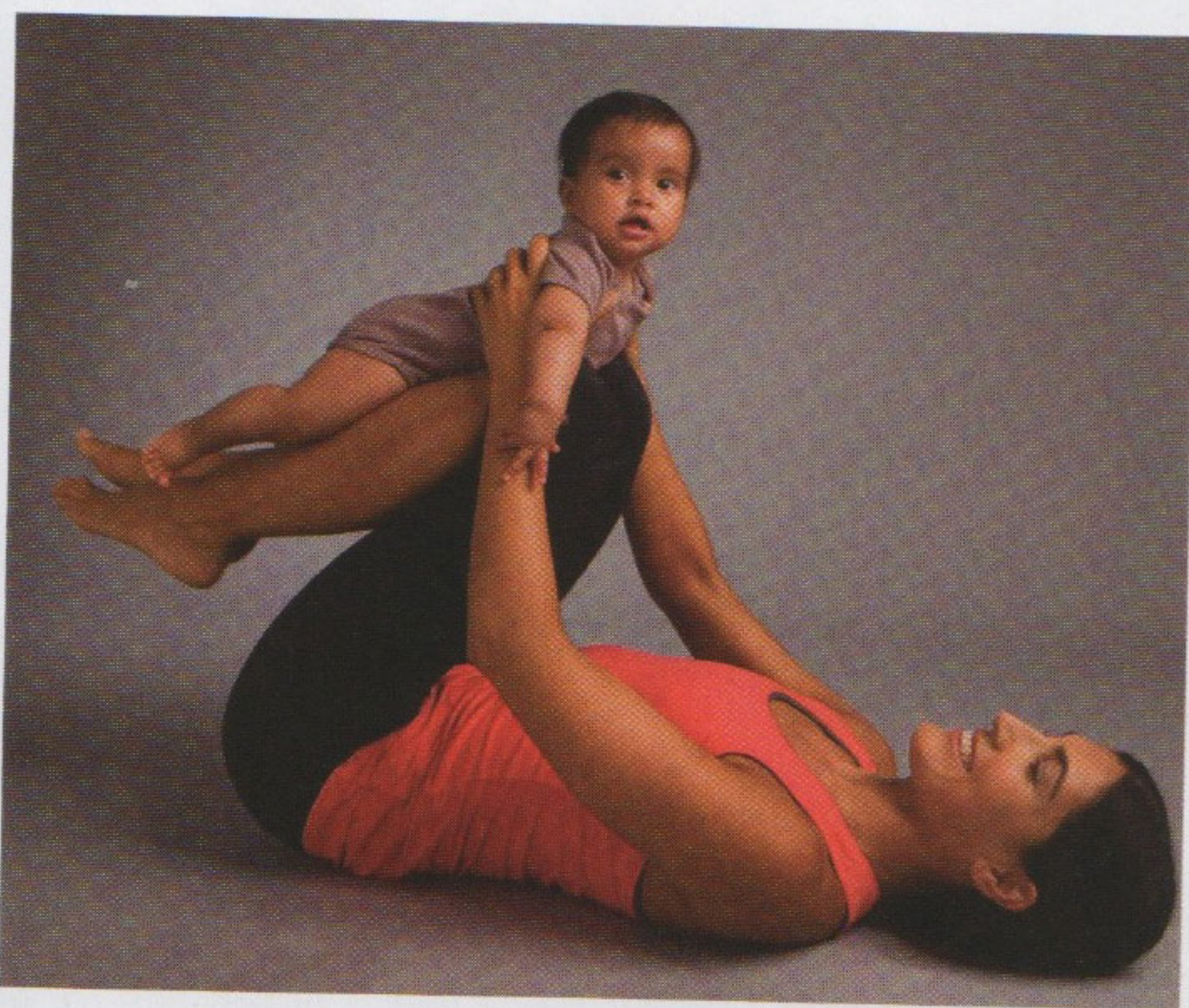
What do you enjoy most about teaching yoga?

I love that I can pass on this practice that makes people feel alive, strong and inspired, improving their health. It will always leave them feeling better than when they started the class and will help to rid them of stress and tension to cope better with living a balanced and fulfilled life. I love the fact that anyone can start yoga at any time in their lives and continue it to the end.

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What do you think makes a great yoga teacher?

I think great teachers are those that have a thirst for knowledge, always striving to improve and progress both in their own yoga practice and in their teaching. Great yoga teachers are humble and sensitive to the needs of their students. A great yoga teacher can teach a room full of mixed level students and everyone will leave the class satisfied that they have been both nurtured and challenged. I think good yoga teachers also teach a mixture of asana, pranayama and meditation techniques in their classes as the asana practice is just one small component of yoga.



How do you fit your own practice around your teaching work?

It gets harder and harder to fit my own practice around my teaching work as I take on more projects and my children's schedules are pretty full but I try and fit some yoga in whenever I can. I prioritise slots of time for my own yoga in my timetable and won't let anything get in the way if I can help it.

Do you have any favourite or memorable moments from your time on the mat?

I recently went on a girl's yoga retreat to Hawaii with some great friends. We did yoga in the morning and surfed in the afternoon and it was amazing how the surfing mirrored the yoga. Surfing is basically like cobra to warrior 2.

Where is your favourite place to practise?

My favourite place to practice is anywhere outdoors with the warmth of the gentle sun on my body. It doesn't happen so often in London although one of my students loves to do her classes with me on her terrace in the sunshine.

What do you do when you're not teaching or practising yoga?

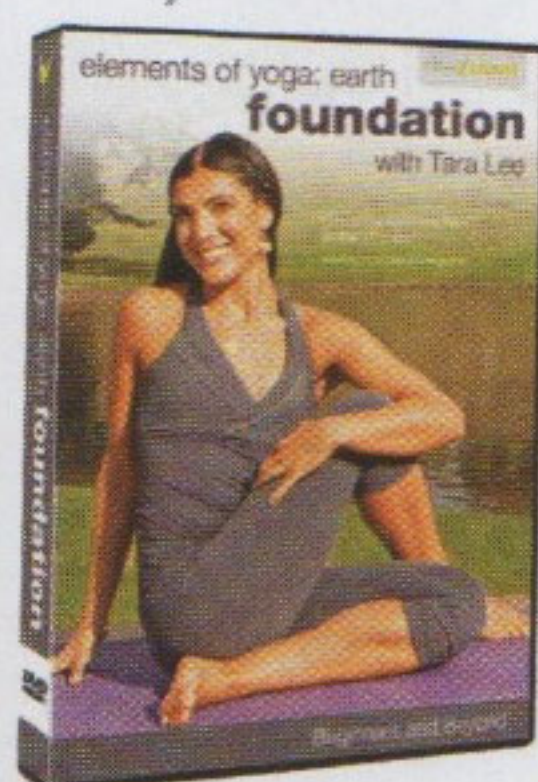
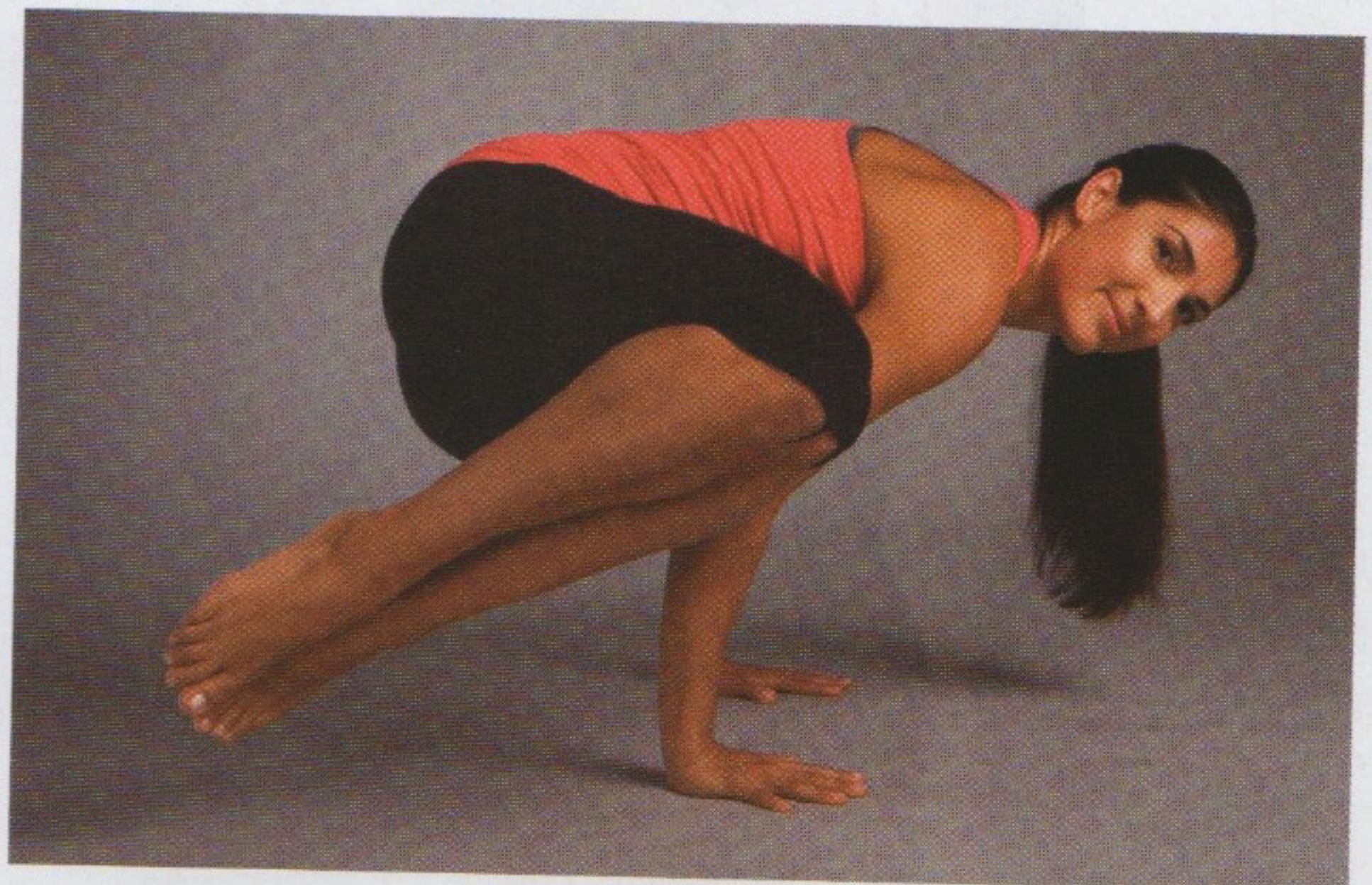
I'm a mother of two young children, which is very demanding. I am writing a book on yoga and I am busy completing three general yoga DVD's (based on the elements) which will be released this year. I also love to dance and do photography.

What would you say to those that have never tried yoga before to encourage them to take their first steps?

Just give it a go and you will be amazed at how it will make you feel, not only in your body but also in your mind. Don't worry that you can't even touch your toes as this will come over time, you don't need to be flexible to reap the benefits. There are many very different styles of yoga and you need to find the right style and the right teacher. You may not immediately love it but try a few different classes to experience the difference until you find a class that suits you. Many people who are new to yoga tell me that yoga is too slow or boring for them and they prefer to do other more dynamic exercise. I would say look for a dynamic style of yoga as many classes are physically demanding and you will leave feeling calmer and more in-tune with yourself.

Any words of wisdom for your fellow yogis?

Be aware of the different seasons and elements relating to the seasons and how you feel when deciding what sort of yoga to practise. It can be really helpful to modify your practice according to what it is you need each day relating to the different elements. For example, if there is a lot of heat in the summer or you are feeling 'hot headed' it is better not to do a fire practice but to focus more on connecting to other elements such as water to cool and balance you. If you are feeling 'ungrounded' and busy in your head you should focus on an Earth type practice and if you are feeling sluggish and uninspired try and bring elements of 'fire' into your yoga. My new DVD series is based on this system of thought. Above all enjoy yourself and don't take it too seriously.



Elements of Yoga: Earth Foundation

Creator of the best-selling Bump, Birth and Beyond yoga series, Tara Lee's latest DVD offering brings a new yoga flow based on the Earth Element. The DVD is designed to build the foundations of a practice suitable for all levels.

Elements of Yoga: Earth Foundation with Tara Lee is available from:

thelondonyogacompany.co.uk & taraleeyoga.com