

BEND AND STRETCH WITH *Yoga* FOR TOTS

LITTLE BODIES BEND STRETCH WRIGGLE AND MOVE AT YOGA SPROUTS



*By Joanna Lewis*

Pudgy arms stretch up high to the ceiling before folding over to reach little toes. Tiny bodies wriggle their way into downward dog pose before leaping up into a standing position. They may not be able to talk yet, but these little ones are starting to master some simple yoga moves.

I'm at Yoga Sprouts Cayman, a company that offers yoga classes aimed at little ones from three months to eight years. Regular classes are held in a dedicated studio space in Industrial Park, George Town, in addition to a wide range of mobile classes, including for birthday parties and special events.

I've brought my 15-month old daughter Ella to join in the fun at Tots Yoga, a class designed for those aged one to two-and-a-half years old. At this age the focus is more about having fun and socialising with other little ones than pure yoga.

The sessions combine a heady mix of play, yoga, music, and movement, all designed to help the development of cognitive, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

Sarah Burton leads the classes at Yoga Sprouts and is a passionate believer in the benefits that yoga offers little ones.





A certified yoga and elementary teacher Sarah has more than 15 years' experience working with children of all ages in both traditional and Montessori classroom settings, as well as in environmental educational programmes.

A full-time children's yoga instructor, Sarah currently teaches some 20 classes a week, with her schedule including six different schools.

"The benefits of yoga for children are so far reaching, both for bodies and minds," Sarah explains. "I receive feedback from families nearly every day about how their children are incorporating yoga into their daily lives.

"Physically, Yoga Sprouts classes support the development of children's strength, flexibility, gross and fine motor coordination, and balance. We also emphasise supporting the development of rapidly developing sensory systems, which include not only sight, touch, smell, and hearing, but also the vestibular and proprioceptive system, which involve spatial awareness and body positioning in space. Our classes also support the development of compassion, empathy, and self-esteem."

Sarah describes little ones as "natural yogis." "If you've ever watched a sleeping newborn's belly and chest rise and fall with their inhales and exhales, you've experienced just how full, deep, and even their breaths are," Sarah says. "Toddlers naturally find their way into so many experimental yoga poses throughout their days as they learn to navigate the use of their growing bodies. Our classes support these natural processes, which often tend to taper as children age."

Ella's a little shy at first, but it isn't long before she is swept up in the fun and starts bopping along to the nursery rhymes that encourage little ones to bend, twist, and stretch their bodies into adapted yoga poses. I gently encourage her to follow the movements that Sarah enthusiastically performs, and Ella starts to mimic the rest of the class.

Half way through the class there is a free play time session and Sarah brings out a range of fun items for everyone to play with, from yoga blocks to tunnels to climb through and explore. Ella seems more interested in examining her reflection in the floor-to-ceiling mirrors that line the studio, but it doesn't matter; this class is all about having fun.



Sarah says that children of all ages are often drawn to certain aspects in each class.

"Some children really connect with the breathing exercises that we incorporate into every class," she explains. "Taking deep breaths is one of the most effective ways to self-regulate emotions. Other children love the more energetic components of the class, such as jumping, twisting, and of course, yoga poses."

She adds: "With our Peace Baby and Tot classes, the children really enjoy spending uninterrupted quality time with their parents and caregivers, having so much fun and ending with a terrific head-to-toe relaxation. Overall, however, I think what children enjoy most is the opportunity to slow down in their day and be given the opportunity to feel what it's like to be who they are as individuals, from the inside out."

As the class wraps up Sarah dims the lights and encourages everyone to stretch out and relax on one of the yoga mats. It's no surprise given the age group that there is little relaxation going on, except among the adults who are only too happy to enjoy a moment of calm before busy day-to-day lives resume.

To find out more about Yoga Sprouts visit [yogasproutscayman.com](http://yogasproutscayman.com)



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## Here at Bounce we love these simple yoga principles which form the bases of Yoga Sprouts.

### Practice peace

Surround yourself with love and kindness. Be gentle and peaceful in your thoughts and actions, be respectful, show kindness, and do not harm anyone or anything.

### Be honest

Be truthful in your actions, thoughts, and speech.

### Be generous

Be generous and share. Don't take what isn't yours.

### Be clean

Take care of yourself, your body, and your mind. Take care of your surroundings too.

### Work hard

Be disciplined and always try your best. Establish good habits, finish what you start, and never give up.

### Be content

Be content with yourself. Take time to celebrate your uniqueness and maintain a positive outlook. Have an internal sense of peacefulness and be sure to practice gratefulness.

### Have alone time

Be reflective. Spend time with yourself and get to know yourself. Find time to be still.