

Sport & Outdoor



Finding the calm within

Yoga is empowering children all over Abu Dhabi. We popped along to Bodytree studio to find out more.

By **Emer O'Doherty**

Laura-Helene Kopinski, owner of Inner Seed, is in her own words "a free spirit who wants to make a difference in this world".

She runs yoga classes at Bodytree Studio, a holistic space for the entire family. Kopinski has been practising yoga for six years and is now using her expertise to help children become more tuned into themselves, as well as encourage them to grow into self-aware and responsible adults. We sat with her to find out a little about these classes.

Tell us about the yoga classes for children that you offer.

During each class, children learn that losing their balance during a yoga pose is both



The classes are structured to be positive and relaxing

acceptable and encouraged. I work to help each child experience what they want, rather than trying to find ways to change or fit in with their peers. My aim is that, off the mat, these children will see that life is flexible and adaptable. The greatest reward during my class is seeing how curious kids are about their physical and mental exercises. We always start the class by sharing something positive that happened during our day, focusing on the present moment. We also talk about a negative experience, if applicable, and how we can turn it into a positive one.

Yoga is said to be a great way to relieve stress. Does this work the same for children as for adults?

Society has the idea that kids do not feel stress, which is incorrect. Kids feel and understand their parents' energy. They get to mimic their behaviours and pile up emotions that we as adults could possibly ignore. If unattended, these emotions get to the surface and cause undue harm, both physically and emotionally. Therefore, during meditation, we develop a process of lightening up. The classes are structured to be calming and relaxing, leaving the kids more collected at the end of the session.

How do children initially express an interest in the yoga classes? Is it something that is usually parent-led?

Yoga has become very popular today. It is no surprise that kids seem to have a desire to be involved. Of course, yogi parents do play a big role in encouraging their kids to join yoga. Starting this non-competitive activity from a very young age offers children a solid foundation for a life based on self-awareness and confidence. Bodytree Studio has been very supportive in welcoming kids with special needs to my classes, too. As a certified special needs instructor, I have developed a recent campaign called "Yoga is for Everyone", to encourage and educate parents about the benefits of yoga for those with special needs.

Bodytree Studio, Mubarak bin Mohammed Street, Al Zaab, www.bodytreestudio.com (02 443 4448).