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Questions for Adele Kieras about Teaching Yoga to Kids

Bill Zirinsky: Adele, you told me that you have “a passion for bringing yoga to kids”. Say more.

Adele Kieras: Every individual has unlimited potential within. When children engage in this ancient practice of yoga, they readily connect with their inner strengths and see themselves as worthy beings. They fully enjoy being themselves and being with others. To share in this is truly gratifying.

BZ: I know you have a background as an educator. How did you get into teaching yoga to kids?

Adele Kieras: Working with children, I have long been aware of how health and nutrition affect their ability to acquire knowledge, optimal health for the brain and body to fully develop. I discovered yoga when I returned to college for a master’s degree in nutrition. The first time I moved my body in the space on my yoga mat, I felt how this practice is a natural fit with children. Children are strong kinesthetic learners. They learn by doing. They gain self-knowledge while having fun practicing yoga.

What is most remarkable about teaching yoga to 3-6 year olds? And what is most worthy to note about teaching yoga to 6-10 year olds?

Kieras: Yoga for the 3 –6 year old is playful and energetic; however, the relaxation portion of a yoga class with 3 –6 year olds is amazing. It is so comforting to view a group of three and four-year-olds lying relaxed and still. Yes, I said *still*, on their mats, with peaceful expressions on their faces. More than that, they love the experience even more than I do.

Students in the 6 – 10 year old class often come in feeling a bit unsure, lacking confidence and even slightly scared. Over the 6 to 8 weeks of a class session there is a dramatic shift in their sense of well being. They become comfortable in their own skins, feel good about keeping themselves physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, and enjoy expressing themselves, fully being who they are. They courageously move into backbends and powerfully lift themselves up into

Adele Kieras



handstands, then use their breath to calm themselves into relaxation. They are amazing.

Girl Scouts can get a yoga patch nowadays?

Kieras: The Girl Scout program now includes a “Be Healthy, Be Fit” unit where Girl Scouts have the opportunity



Photo courtesy of Inward Bound

Tess Dombrowski and Eleanor Niman

“Through practicing yoga, children develop the life long practice of listening to their bodies and making healthy choices to keep their bodies and minds feeling.”

to earn badges for engaging in healthy lifestyle choices and activities. Included in this program is a Yoga Patch that Junior Girl Scouts earn by attending yoga classes. For Brownie Girl Scouts there is a My Body Try-it, which promotes healthy movement and yoga practices.

Children are so enthusiastic when they come to yoga class I am often bombarded by requests to do this pose, that pose, rainbow breathing, yogi bender game, partner poses, etc!

What’s most challenging about working with kids doing yoga?

Kieras: Children are so enthusiastic when they come to yoga class I am often bombarded by requests to do this pose, that pose, rainbow breathing, yogi bender game, partner poses, etc! It is a challenge to move them (and myself, I get caught in their buoyant energy) into a more calm receptive state in order to move through poses in a beneficial sequence. Then we develop patience to wait until the next week to get to poses that we could not fit into the one-hour class.

Please tell us about partner poses?

Kieras: Once students have a basic understanding of foundational poses and breathing techniques, I introduce them to partner poses. Working together is so much fun for all of us. Practicing yoga with others develops self-control, social awareness and spatial dynamics. It teaches children how to respectfully and supportively interact and connect with others. It also teaches how to appreciate differences and have fun as they build community.

What are the possible longer-term benefits for starting kids into yoga at an early age?

Kieras: The American Medical Association has identified two key factors for maintaining good health (physically and emotionally). They are: self-awareness and self-care. Through practicing yoga, children develop the life long practice of listening to their bodies and making healthy choices to keep their bodies and minds feeling well.

Where in the Ann Arbor region will you be doing Kids Yoga classes this spring?

Kieras: This spring I am offering yoga classes for children at Inward Bound Yoga Studio and at the Ann Arbor Jewish Community Center. I also offer classes at Rasa Yoga in Novi, and look forward to developing a kids yoga program at the Ann Arbor YMCA in the near future. www.ibyoga.com for Inward Bound Yoga, www.jccann Arbor.org for the



Photo courtesy of Inward Bound

(Shown from bottom right, clockwise) Paolo Barcelata, Marisol Barcelata, Lily Carteu, Olivia Carteu, Cate Dombrowski, Tess Dombrowski, Eleanor Niman, Lael Tazer, Adin Tanzer, Nathan Lublin, Tyler Kieras, and Adele Kieras

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Jewish Community Center, www.rasa-yoga.com for Rasa Yoga, or contact me, Adele Kieras, at kyogaoftheheart@aol.com or 248-931-0773.

You moved to this area from San Diego a year and a half ago. What are your strongest impressions of life here in southeastern Michigan?

Kieras: I really enjoy the outdoors and spend as much time as possible in nature. It has been a true pleasure to breathe in the fresh air of Michigan woods, and to enjoy being around and in the waters of lakes and rivers. I appreciate being able to live in a community that is progressive in its commitment to the environment.

What are you most looking forward to this spring?

Kieras: I look forward to sharing in the abundance that nature and all life has to offer. For me this is the best time to bring the practice of yoga outdoors. Not only do I hold classes outdoors, we extend the classes into planting gardens and cleaning up areas for the animals.

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Photo courtesy of Inward Bound

Adin Tanzer and Lael Tanzer

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