



As I look out at a room of pregnant women with their beautiful round bellies, I understand where the concept of Mother Earth was born. The roundness of the belly, reminiscent of the Earth herself, creates a cocoon within the mother's body and provides a life-sustaining environment for the baby. As Mother Earth sustains all life, so do expectant mothers, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Yoga can benefit us at all stages of our lives, but there is a special connection that can happen when a mother-to-be practices yoga. The physical benefits are numerous and obvious. Yoga helps relieve back pain, sciatica, swelling in the hands and feet (though not the belly!) and can alleviate general exhaustion. It aids in digestion and helps mom bring more oxygen to herself and the baby. It helps her relax and aids in a happy and healthy pregnancy.

More subtle, though, are the psychological and spiritual benefits that come from making a solid spiritual connection between mother and child as part of the birth process. Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa, Kundalini Yoga teacher and author of *Bountiful, Beautiful, Blissful*, said, "A mother's prayer holds the sacred space for her child, a mother's prayer holds the world."

Establishing this connection can help the mother-to-be prepare for birth.

Pregnancy can be stressful. It is an awesome duty to be responsible for a life growing inside of you; with every step, every move and every thought the baby is affected. The mother-to-be is directly tied to the health and well-being of her unborn child. She is the support, the life-line and the entire environment.

Prenatal yoga classes, in turn, create a supportive environment for mothers-to-be, and help nurture the nurturer. Like in all other times in life, yoga can aid in pregnancy by giving the mother-to-be more energy. It can help her develop a connection with the life growing inside of

her, allowing her mind, body and spirit to connect with the autonomous spirit that is her baby.

Prenatal yoga classes also can serve as a forum for mothers-to-be to express concerns, fears, and hopes, and to share ideas and solutions with other expectant mothers. Prenatal yoga calms the nerves, relieves bodily aches and pains and gives the mother-to-be not only the energy, but the courage and presence of mind to prepare for the miracle of birth.

If you're expecting, find a doula, a support system and a prenatal yoga class. When armed with information, a woman can develop a birth plan, prepare for deviations, and know her options. With knowledge comes power.

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