A few years ago, while going through a particularly unpleasant divorce, to say I felt stressed would be a drastic understatement. During that time, I found my balance in yoga. A girlfriend of mine suggested that I come try a class with her one Saturday morning. This sounded a little too “hippy-ish” to me, but after I exhausted all of my excuses, I gave in and finally met her there. After just the first class I was hooked. It was when my mind could be still, I could be in harmony with my body and find contentment in my heart. It was a euphoric high that I knew I needed more of. How could something as simple as essentially conscious breathing and stretching make me feel so great? Soon I realized that during that time I was not thinking about what I have to do later or what happened earlier in the day...I had no worries or stress, I was living completely in the exact moment that I found myself in, solely focused on pushing myself to be better...and that felt fantastic.

I started practicing yoga as much as possible and it was making me feel fabulous. With my busy ever changing life, I was not always able to make it to a yoga class, so on those days I would try it at home, even if only for a few minutes. I was in no way an expert and sometimes found myself just improvising, but always concentrated on my breathing technique. My three year old daughter saw me doing it once and asked me to show her how to do it as well. I gave her a few poses to try with her favorite being downward dog. Beaming with pride, she only wanted to talk about this new fantastic word called “yoga” for the rest of the week. Since that time I have showed her a few more moves and of course her form is not perfect, but that’s okay, she’s just three years old. I thought it was wonderful that she enjoyed it, so soon we started doing yoga together at home.
Introducing yoga to my three year old has helped in other ways as well. I find it useful to remind her to breathe when she is on the verge of hyperventilating from a crying fit. One day during a random ‘everything deserves a meltdown’ kind of day when she was sobbing for the one-millionth time and I could not get through to her, suddenly, a light bulb went off. I calmly unrolled my yoga mat onto the living room floor. I invited her to sit down with me, cross legged and I told her that I wanted to show her something new. It was as if I magically turned off the crying switch. She quickly sat down, wiping away tears from her cheeks, eager to see what I could show her. I started with some simple yoga breaths, hands laying relaxed in our laps, eyes closed and breathing - in through the nose and out through our mouths.... slowly. Then with her eyes closed I asked her to imagine flying through the air, another time we were swimming in the ocean. I would describe what we were seeing in a quiet voice, always coming back to our breathing and spending the entire time not only bonding but calming our minds. I have found this to be a life saver on some of those trying days. I can only imagine how great it will be for her to grow up knowing how to breath, meditate and be still. I only wish that I had that kind of knowledge much earlier in my own life.

Of course I have had some parents look at me strangely (my own parents included here) when I bring up the fact that my daughter enjoys yoga. It works for us to help center and calm our hectic days. I believe that as more people in this chaotic and stressful world realize just how fantastic it is to be still it will only become more of a social norm for our children.

We teach our children best in leading by example. It is my sincere hope to show my daughter how to find balance between the stillness and the stress in her life by fueling her body with wholesomeness, always being kind and compassionate, finding the positive in every situation and when all else fails...breathe.

Jess is a single mother to a wonderful 3 year old daughter and lives in Clayton, Delaware. She loves to be creative & crafty and share her ‘out of the box’ thinking with her little girl.