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A VOICE FOR THE YOGA COMMUNITY OF ASIA

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Karma

Emotional Balance

Swara Yoga

Rainbow Kids Yoga Teacher Training - Going Beyond Yourself

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Who could have thought children have inspired me the most in my journey of personal growth? For the past three years, I've been working with them. Children have pure souls. They're not afraid to express themselves through their body language. They tell you what's going on in their little brain, without filtering anything out. Somehow they motivated me to join Rainbow Kids Yoga this past April. It was a three-day "Yoga for Kids and Families" teacher training in Hong Kong.

I felt the energetic vibe the moment I stepped into the studio. The class was welcomed by Lei, our trainer who is based in Japan and is the Asian ambassador for Rainbow Kids Yoga. She is definitely one of the craziest yoga teachers I've ever met. She laughs like thunder, screams like a mad woman, moves like a monkey and has a strong voice that commands attention instantly. She showed us how to open a class through "Human Mandala". We sat in a circle with our knees touching, rubbing our hands together and then placing our heated palms on each other's cheeks. This was followed by group shoulder and foot massage. This exercise broke the ice amongst the group in no time.

Our first group Surya Namaskar – "The Sun Dance" began with Lei. First, the leader, struck a pose. Then the person on the right followed and so that pose flowed around the circle until it reached back to Lei, where the second pose began and continued in the circle like a wave. It was definitely a challenge as we needed pure focus. The moment your mind wandered, the cycle of the wave would be disrupted. Just when I thought "The Sun Dance" was mind blowing, Lei wowed us with even more innovative yoga practices with the use of props.

For kids yoga, props are the core of each class. The selection can be anything from the most common yoga cards, storybooks and animal soft toys to outrageous choices like pirate kits to create themed yoga classes. Sticks ranging from chopsticks to drumsticks are also clever props to form bonds and trust between two people. Each pair balances two sticks by pushing them against each other to walk around the room or even to strike a pose – all without dropping the sticks. All these alternative



Learning a lot from acting like a kid, June and the other trainees at the Rainbow Kids TTC

ways to practice yoga opened my eyes and pushed me out of my comfort zone. I had to get wild to be present to enjoy the training to the fullest. We had a crazy morning that slowed down with seated lectures in the afternoon. We learned which types of sequences are good for different age groups and of course how to organise and manage a class of up to 20 active kids who can't wait to do yoga with props.

On day two, we kicked off the morning with acrobat yoga. We learned to work with a partner as well as in a group. The acrobat yoga led to "Yoga Gym", which was a series of sweaty workouts from training the core to thighs. In Rainbow Kids Yoga, all their poses and flows have creative names. At the training, we were encouraged to come up with our own sets of lesson plans, which pushed us to think outside the box. After the morning training had zoomed past, we had hands-on experience working with the kids and families in the afternoon through a public community yoga class. We got to observe and help Lei organise, prepare and assist the group class.

More practical skills were introduced to us on the last day. Ending a children's yoga class doesn't necessarily need to be still and in silence. "Quiet Time" can still be achieved with breathing exercises, listening to stories or massaging each other before they go to *Savasana*, which is usually guided

imagination to take them onto a magical journey within themselves.

My experience from this training was unexpected. It inspired me, in more ways than one, to apply the things I learned even to adult yoga classes. Yoga practice can be a beautiful story in itself. As a teacher, I can take my students on yoga journeys to give them room for imagination, while combining yoga to assist each person to reach their destination. The unity involved in kids yoga allows me to truly experience "yoke" – the Sanskrit word for yoga, meaning to join and to unite.

It always takes time for a person to warm up and feel confident in a group. Yet in kids yoga, the second you walk into the studio, you've leapt out of your comfort zone. My biggest weakness is breaking the ice with strangers. Learning to go beyond myself is a continuous test. With this training, I'm proud to say I'm one step closer.



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