

The Yamas & Niyamas for Perinatal Teachers

'You cannot transmit wisdom or insight to someone else- the seed is already there. A good teacher is someone who touches that seed so it can wake up, sprout and grow.'

Thich Nhat Hanh

Guiding principles for teachers...what can you add to these ideas..?

Yamas

Ahimsa: find and maintain balance in my own body, teaching and demonstrating pregnancy may mean that my own body needs practices to re-stabilize, realign. If I am pregnant how can I honour my body's and baby's needs by demonstrating less or using my regular students to demo. Likewise in the Postnatal year-teaching pregnancy yoga classes will be the opposite to what my Postnatal body needs- how can I keep the balance for myself?

Satya: be honest about experience and expertise, refer to colleagues and support networks for advice. Be clear about your boundaries as a yoga teacher- you may also be a doula or a midwife, a massage therapist, or a reiki master- be clear about which role you take in class and only give advice that you are qualified to give, be clear in your class descriptions and in your biography.

Acknowledge the source of your teachings & hand-outs.

Asteya: not stealing the credit for a woman's 'good' birth, like the pregnant women we need to learn to expect without expecting, non-attachment without indifference, not stealing the student's personal discovery and experience of the asanas and practices- we all experience things differently – create opportunities for them to discover their own truths about the practice and validate them, this will help them develop their own awareness and intuition and helps them practice independently.

Brahmacharya: Be true to 'Self', develop deep listening to self as a teacher, our affinity with this work grows and develops in different directions of expertise

Aparigraha: cultivate awareness of what underlies teaching tendencies and comfort zones! Gain support to reflect and develop- What are my teaching addictions/aversions? What are my training addictions/aversions?

Niyamas

Saucha: Take care of own health and equilibrium, develop personal cyclic practices and rituals e.g. before and after class

Provide a clean sattvic mind to meet your students, and a clean sattvic place in which to practice.

Santosha: meet women wherever they are at, accept where you are at with kindness. Smile, we are all connected in our common humanity.

Tapas: Study, practice, observe and embody practices so can teach & demonstrate fluently.

Swadaya: investigate own birth story and triggers; reflect on your personal prenatal and early experiences and how you were parented. What experiences have shaped you and your beliefs?

Pratyahara: not being ruled by our own senses, what we are feeling in our body is not the same for others, what is pleasant to us is not necessarily so for others.

Dharana: Let go of the intellect. There is also a bigger wisdom at work through us and in spite of us! We are not the 'doer'.

Dhyana: Develop the skills of focus and concentration, discover and frequent your inner source of calm, this helps others to find theirs too.

Samadhi: it is a privilege to accompany women and babies through pregnancy and beyond. It gives back to our deeper self, the circle of life, the primordial mother spirit and the mysteries of spirit embodying.

The Yamas & Niyamas for Pregnant Women

Yamas

Ahimsa: No forcing, listening to and honouring one's and one's baby's deeper needs, honouring the life force manifesting within, Prana as the divine guest within.

Satya: Ownership of own feelings and desires, differentiation for baby

Asteya: not grasping, 'expecting without expecting', not fixating on an idealized birth or baby

Brahmacharya: being true to "Self", acknowledgement of connection to the universal forces at work, the lineage of mothers everywhere, Earth Mother

Aparigraha: use positive discrimination to avoid and change personal addictions, habits tendencies, mindful consumption through food, the senses and company

Niyamas

Saucha: conscious consumption, dwelling in 'good space', positive thoughts, avoiding all pollutants of womb ecology. Good bowel movements, prevent constipation.

Santosh: enjoying pregnancy, taking time to dwell in the present moment, communicate with baby on a being to being level

Tapas: 'entrainment' regular practice over the months of pregnancy will develop a body memory of self nurture, self help and healing, this can be accessed unconsciously during labour and birth. Develop independent practice. Slow, steady transformation to motherhood.

Swadaya: identifying positive and negative habits: postural, mental, lifestyle...Examining own past- birth, childhood, what kind of mother will I be? Do I want to be? What's in my history/culture that I resonate with?

Pratyahara: not being ruled by the senses, trust in a bigger wisdom at work rather than the intellect

Dharana: Letting go of the intellect- preparation for birth

Dhyana: sustained one-pointed awareness, breath/sound/gaze/love

Samadhi: bliss holding new born, or may fall in love later, bonding is an on-going process