



## Lisa Roberts YOYO Yoga Therapy

*Lisa Roberts, founder of YOYO Yoga Therapy and author of Breathe, Chill, sat down with Yoga & Spa Magazine and gave us the scoop on what she's doing in the world of pediatric yoga therapy.*

**Y&S:** How long have you been practicing yoga and what made you interested in it?

**LR:** My very first yoga class was on a retreat in Thailand at the age of 23 and I hated it! The teacher forced me into headstand, which I was not comfortable with in addition to having mild cervical scoliosis... that one headstand landed me at the chiropractor and in a lot of pain. I did not try yoga again until five years later in 2001 when I was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma. Exploring what I could contribute to the healing process in collaboration with my medical team on this journey I decided to give yoga another try. My sister — who was by my side each step of this healing journey — and I signed up for a class and were immediately hooked. In fact, we are both yoga teachers now!

**Y&S:** You have been involved in pediatric wellness since 2006, what made you decide to go that route with your practice?

**LR:** I LOVE kids and in 2006 while living in New York City the opportunity arose to offer wellness to patients, families and staff at NYU's pediatric hemac clinic. Leaving me inspired and fulfilled, my weekly clinic days offering wellness at NYU became the single most important day of my work week. When I moved to Saint Louis in 2008, I immediately volunteered at Saint Louis Children's Hospital to fill what would certainly have been a huge void in my life. Specializing in pediatric yoga I joke that my yoga classes are for kids aged 1-101, and it is true, I really do have clients of all ages. Is there really an age restriction on being a kid? I hope not!

**Y&S:** Your book, *Breathe, Chill* focuses on breathing, meditation and relaxation for children. Have you always wanted to write? What urged you to create this resource?

**LR:** I attended drama school in London and ended up becoming a freelance writer and editor, I am lucky that writing and creativity come quite naturally to me. My book is based on patient handouts I created for the pediatric oncology, hematology and neurology populations I work with — explaining breathing, meditation and relaxation techniques I have developed for kids and teens in simple, non yoga language — incredibly popular with patients, families, staff and teachers, it became clear that I needed to compile and publish them as a resource for anybody working with kids in any capacity. I've received feedback from many adults who have enjoyed practicing the techniques in the book too!

**Y&S:** Has your book been a success and have you received good feedback from parents or teachers?

**LR:** Absolutely! People love how accessible and easy to follow it is. No yoga experience required makes it less intimidating to approach working with and introducing these techniques to kids. Of course, I would love to see a copy in every classroom around the globe as these techniques provide solid foundational tools and valuable life skills that will carry our children well into adulthood.

**Y&S:** What different types of yoga do you practice and teach?

**LR:** Mixing it up is my motto — I love practicing hot yoga and vinyasa flow, slow flow is nice when I need to be mellow and a good restorative class hits the spot when my mind and body need the love. Exploring different teachers and studios is important to me as I continue to learn and grow experiencing different teachers and teaching styles. Working with a lot of first time yogis, proper breathing and alignment is very important to me, I am a bit of a stickler for both as the more my students understand and learn correct foundational asana practice, the less susceptible they will be to injury when they venture in to self practice.

**Y&S:** What are some of the benefits that kids and teens receive from practicing yoga as opposed to other physical activity?

**LR:** No different to adults — Improved Posture, Balance, Flexibility, Confidence and Ability to Focus, Relaxation, Anxiety and Stress Relief, Self-Regulation Skills and a Positive Body Image. Really valuable tools for every body, and in today's world, kids and teens especially benefit from yoga and yoga related activities such as breathing and meditation. The ability to take what they learn about themselves on the mat and incorporate it into their lives is what makes yoga really stand apart.

**Y&S:** If you had one sentence to sum up the goal or mission of YOYO Yoga Therapy, what would it be?

**LR:** Making yoga available and accessible to ALL children regardless of physical or economical circumstances.