

Love to Love You Baby

Imagine yourself helpless, unable to ask for what you need. Perhaps you don't feel well, or you are afraid, or tired because you can't sleep. Enter the person you love most in the world, whom you most depend upon. And that person gently cradles your head, looks into your eyes, and asks if they can help you feel better. If they can give you a massage, even! Imagine your relief, your delight, the love that moves between you and this fabulous person who is here to care for just you.

Ahhhhh . . . sound amazing? Delightful?

This tender asking for permission is the beginning of an infant massage session, and the initiation of a deep level of contact and in-tunement with your child (or child in your care). And the beautiful truth is, anyone can learn the techniques of massaging an infant for health and well being.

Marie Meiffren, LMT, brings her knowledge, training, and compassion to a three-day training on the gentle, ancient techniques of infant massage. Drawn from Indian, Chinese, and European massage traditions, the techniques build in three hour-long sessions with your baby. Meiffren took her training from the Loving Touch Foundation, an international training organization based in Portland.

"I feel like I have an opportunity to help mothers," Meiffren smiles. "I didn't know anything as a young mom! The massage offers a deep way to be in contact with your baby. You learn to read your baby's cues; what does it mean when your baby's face starts screwing up? They don't like what you are doing! You adjust . . . there is a trust that happens when you are correct in really reading your baby's cues."

Meiffren has four children herself, and in fact her career as a massage therapist began with her first colicky baby and a book on infant massage. She taught herself the techniques and worked on subsequent children and foster children—until she realized the hunger in herself to know more. She desired be more helpful to the children in her life—especially the medically and developmentally challenged foster kids she and her family looked after. She was licensed in the mid-90s and had a thriving practice in Arizona until relocating with her husband and youngest daughter to Astoria in 2006. Now Moon Lotus massage is housed at 1410 Marine Drive in Astoria in a shared office with a local acupuncturist.

"My practice is changing as I myself get older," Meiffren muses. "While I still do deep Swedish massage, I find myself drawn to gentler work; the infant massage class is really like coming full circle for me."

Meiffren offered a County sponsored class in winter of last year that was successful and well attended. Not only did moms (and dads) learn to be confident with the

massage techniques, but also there was networking and sharing among the parents. Attending the class is a way for parents to meet each other, and help mitigate the isolation that new parents especially can sometimes feel. Meiffren's next class, offered in June, is economically accessible—a feature which is of paramount importance to her. “The class is just \$25 for all three sessions, and an optional \$10 for the book and oils. If someone really feels they can't pay, they should contact me.”

Students learn a set sequence of techniques that begins by asking the infant for permission, massaging the whole body, and ending with gentle stretching. There are easy and effective sequences that soothe common ailments, alleviate fussy crying (from colic or teething), and promote general well being.

The class is perfect for moms, dads, caregivers, or grandparents. Pregnant women can come too, as Meiffren has life-size dolls to work with. Infants of any age are welcome—the techniques are applicable to toddlers and older children—but age 0 to 9 months are ideal for this class setting. Even children with disabilities or other health problems are welcome, but Meiffren asks that parents contact her first if there is a significant health challenge. The class will accommodate 10 students and pre-registration is required. She hopes to offer the class three times a year, and a Spanish language class may be in the offing.

“It's so great to watch the moms with their babies—totally focused, totally in tune—seriously, there would be world peace if every mom was like this with her baby.”

World peace and happy babies? What's not to love?

Sidebar/box with class details

When: June 2, 9, & 16, 2011. From 10-11am

Where: Lotus Yoga Studio, 1230 Marine Drive, Astoria

Who: Marie Meiffren, LMT

Cost: \$25 for the three sessions, \$10 optional for oils and booklet

Contact: Pre-registration and information: 503-338-8106;
moonlotus.wm@gmail.com; www.moonlotusmassage.com

Additional Resources: www.LovingTouch.com