

## From BabyGym® attendee to BabyGym Instructor

Kerry Kruise

We were thrilled to find out that we had conceived our first child in 2013. Thrilled and terrified! Besides a first trimester that included a lot of nausea, I had a wonderful pregnancy with no issues or concerns. Our little girl, Charlotte, was welcomed into the world in April 2014. In those first few days and weeks, I was feeding on demand, dealing with sleep deprivation and was completely overwhelmed by our new responsibilities.

When I felt confident enough to leave home with my daughter, I enrolled in a massage course. It was wonderful to learn the benefits of massage, gain confidence in handling my baby and meet other moms. This led to me signing up for a programme called BabyGym. I knew nothing about it but was happy to continue my weekly outings with my baby and learn more.

Charlotte was around 3 months old when we started BabyGym. I remember wondering what I was supposed to do with her between her meals and naps and BabyGym provided those answers.

The first week of the course reinforced just how important massage and touch is for a baby and that the foundation to all other sensory development lies here. I was reminded of ALL the benefits associated with massage and encouraged to continue with it every day. Learning how to stimulate her near senses, her nose, mouth, ears and eyes was a real education. It was so rewarding to see immediate reactions as well, like her little nose flaring when I brought a Rooibos teabag towards it, or her head turning towards the sound of the rattle or her eyes following the BabyGym ribbon glove. It was incredible to understand how the brain works at that stage of their development. Tummy-time and rug time was encouraged, stories were told and the activities were not only fun but easy, too. It was easy enough to teach my hubby what I learnt in class, too. He then took up doing massage with our baby and together we would swing her in a towel to activate her near senses, perform the Swiss-roll and somersault, which are activities she still loves to do.

BabyGym helped me feel more confident and better equipped to handle my baby. I mostly loved the fact that I didn't have to find extra time in the day or extra money to do BabyGym with her. All the activities could be 'built-in' to her daily activities and routine, like nappy changes and tummy-time and we could use things around the house like our washing basket and our towels.

I felt so passionately about the BabyGym programme that I decided to leave the school classroom behind and become an Instructor. It is such a privilege to be on this journey with parents and babies. It is wonderful to be a parent, to have done the course as a mom and now to be teaching others parents!

My daughter is now 21 months young and I can honestly say that she receives a full-body massage every evening after her bath time. She has reached all the major milestones: rolling, grasping, sitting, crawling, cruising and walking, in that sequence. She is now on the run and keeping me very, very busy.

We are currently expecting our second child and I cannot wait to start all over again and have Charlotte be a part of all our activities.

