

A CLASS ACT

New to parenthood? Take the anxiety out of those early days by taking one of these super-useful classes. By **Kate Farr**

ANTENATAL

Looking for an antenatal class “made and led by people who know their stuff”? Your first stop after that little blue line appears should be **Annerley**, a Hong Kong institution that has gently steered baffled parents-to-be through the process of pregnancy and birth for well over 20 years. Founded by midwife and mum-of-four Hilda Thorey, whatever questions you have, you can be sure that the team at Annerley will have heard them before.

When asked how best expectant parents can prepare themselves for what’s to come, Hilda suggests that the one-size-fits-all approach taken by many hospitals is rarely the best option. “Have positive, professional and ethical healthcare. Mix different professionals and make informed choices. Take antenatal classes that are personalised and don’t assume everyone wants the same!” In that spirit, Annerley’s 11-hour Babies and Beyond course (\$4,450) offers traditional antenatal prep covering all the essential information that can be adapted to your needs, while the Hypnobirthing sessions (\$5,340 for 13 hours) encourage expectant mums to tap into their innate instincts to assist with delivery.

**17/F, Tak Woo House,
17-19 D’Aguiar St., Central,
2983-1558,
www.annerley.com.hk.**

FIRST AID

We all hope we’ll never have to use it, but acquiring infant and child CPR skills should be right at the top of every parent’s list of essentials. Founded by UK-registered nurse and health visitor Yvonne Heavyside, **The Family Zone** offers regular paediatric first aid and CPR classes for parents, along with dedicated sessions for helpers that also include more general baby care. The CPR sessions focus on what to do in a crisis, tackling choking, poisoning and broken bones, amongst other scenarios that we tend to mentally file away under “too horrible to contemplate” but should definitely be prepared for.

www.thefamilyzone.hk.

FITNESS

Speaking of delivery, we’re sorry to say that it’s not called “labour” for nothing. Being in decent shape before you give birth will not only help you deal with the rigours of the delivery room, but may also help to stave off back problems as your bump grows. **Flex** offers pre- and post-natal Pilates classes that are designed to help mums-to-be maintain peak physical condition throughout pregnancy and beyond. And if you’re concerned about the safety of continuing to work out while pregnant, co-founder Heather Thomas Shalabi reassures mums, saying, “Because Pilates is based on controlled motion, there is little risk of overstretching the ligaments and joints. Furthermore, Pilates exercises have modifications for each trimester, enabling practitioners to continue working out right up to their delivery date”. If your bub has already made an appearance but you’re not yet feeling the love for your old skinny jeans, a post-natal class will help you get your body back without fear of injury.

3/F, Man Cheung Building, 15-17 Wyndham St., Central, 2813-2399, www.flexhk.com.

MASSAGE

Being a parent can be challenging, but let’s be fair, being a newborn baby bombarded with sensations is probably no picnic either. With all these sights, sounds and new skills to acquire, is it any wonder that most little ones succumb

to a full-blown screaming tantrum every now and then? Help them to relieve their tension in a gentler way with an infant massage class. **Matilda International Hospital** holds regular courses led by a certified instructor from the International Association of Infant Massage. The classes teach parents the correct techniques to help calm and soothe their bubs, offering a bonding experience that also comes with knock-on health benefits, including reduced colic and constipation and - the holy grail for all parents - improved sleep.

www.matilda.org.

INFANT SIGN LANGUAGE

You can’t truly call yourself a seasoned parent until your little darling has pitched an epic hissy fit in the middle of a supermarket/doctor’s surgery/church service, leaving those around you rolling their eyes. **Baby Signs Hong Kong** teaches infant sign language, meaning that your bub can more clearly communicate, hopefully avoiding (or at least diminishing) fully-fledged tantrums in the process. Teaching your little ones to sign their basic needs, such as “hungry”, “full” or “sleepy” can cut down frustrations on both sides, and may even help to speed up language acquisition later on. An introductory course plus class materials for at home practice is \$900-\$1,000 per family, depending on the location.

babysignshongkong.com.

