

pose



“YOGA
IS MY
MEDICINE...
”

International yogi, author, health and wellness expert and former Nike World HQ acupuncturist, **Tiffany Cruikshank**, has come a long way since her days as a teenager studying Chinese Medicine. Now a teacher, holistic and sports medicine specialist for over 15 years, Tiffany travels the world to spread her passion for the practice. **Cheryl Parsons** finds out more about her journey and ambitions, and her campaign to remind people that yoga is more than just a physical workout

While teenage bedrooms are stereo-typically adorned with floor to ceiling posters of fresh-faced, gelled-hair boy band members, Los Angeles yoga teacher Tiffany Cruikshank has a different story to tell. Dried plants, lovingly collected, identified and labelled lined her shelves, ready to be conjured into anything from teas and tinctures to shampoos and lotions. “I was a bit of a trouble maker so when I was 14 my parents sent me away on a wilderness programme and one of my guides happened to be a herbalist,” Tiffany recalls. “He would take me out on nature walks and teach me how to use plants as medicine, and it was from this moment that I fell in love with holistic medicine and the ability to use the tools that exist all around us. I was like a mad scientist — when someone was sick I would make all sorts of potions. My friends and family all thought I was nuts!”

From then on, Tiffany’s passion for Eastern medicine really took flight. Throughout her teens she apprenticed with an herbalist and an acupuncturist, and began college at 16, studying a Pre-Med degree course while completing a herbal certification programme on the side. “I finished an acupuncture apprenticeship and a shiatsu massage training and then went straight onto Chinese Medicine School. I couldn’t get enough — I was just in love with learning about it all.” Yoga also seemed a natural progression for Tiffany and it was not long before she ventured into a studio, mat in hand, intrigued by all that the practice had to offer. “I

was very athletic growing up, with a background in competitive tennis, dance and ballet from a young age, so initially the physicality of yoga really drew me in. Over time and the more I learned about yoga, the more I grew to appreciate the depth and the subtleties of the practice.”

Tiffany’s love of yoga and her special fusion of eastern and western medicine was something that later stood out in the pool of applicants for a top job at Nike World Headquarters. For over 5 years she was the yoga teacher and acupuncturist at the sporting giant’s Portland campus, at that time, home to over 8,000 employees. »



“I was told by my boss that was one of the factors that sealed the deal and now, it still remains one of my strengths — being able to connect eastern and western medicine and apply it to yoga without losing the depth and essence of the tradition of yoga. While there is so much beauty in the heritage of yoga and Chinese Medicine, the western medical influence also really helps us to relate, so it is often a fine line to juggle. On the other hand it is so common these days for us to get so caught up in the misconceptions of ‘this teacher told me this and someone else told me that’. As a result, I rarely preach one approach, in fact, I don’t really teach a specific style. What I do is teach teachers how to

masses and making people more aware. There are lots of yoga teachers on social media out there changing so many lives and planting positive seeds in the larger yoga community. I have always felt really strongly about the importance of education and I really enjoy having a platform to tell the masses about yoga and its use as a form of medicine for the body and mind.”

Tiffany’s classes are guided by a strong anatomic focus, with an emphasis on using movement as medicine — a factor which led her to create her own style of teacher training, called Yoga Medicine

Today you can catch up in person with globetrotting Tiffany on one of her many teacher trainings, retreats or at one of the major international yoga festivals. Alternatively, flip open your laptop and you can follow her online as a teacher at www.yogaglo.com, where her playful, strong Vinyasa classes have become a huge hit with the at-home yoga community. Her training in acupuncture and Sport



think and how to see the body so that they can understand why and how things happen. They can then apply it to many scenarios in a more individual way, rather than just teaching people one style or one rigid way to do things.”

This east-meets-west philosophy, her athletic figure and glowing looks are perhaps some of the reasons why Tiffany has a social media ‘fan’ base of close to a quarter of a million people and an offline global following of many more; figures that often surprise her: “It is interesting to see the flock towards yoga ‘celebrities’ these days, although I am not sure I love that part! I never sought out or wanted that, to me the message is always the purpose. I think its great for bringing yoga to the

Medicine means that Tiffany’s classes are guided by a strong anatomic focus, with an emphasis on using movement as medicine — a factor which led her to create her own style of anatomically based teacher training, simply called ‘Yoga Medicine’.

“I created this for many reasons, firstly I saw how rapidly yoga was growing. So many people know that it is a good workout and you can see all the pretty pictures on Instagram, but I wanted to spread the word that yoga can be used like a form of medicine. About a decade ago, when I was treating patients, many of them were yoga students and I realised how quickly they responded to the treatments. One day it hit me that maybe I should try giving my non-yoga patients some yoga

TIFFANY'S HEALTHY LIFE Her fresh face and youthful looks are down to a healthy diet of mostly veggies and proteins, lots of fish and greens, a few grains. "I am definitely not in my 20's anymore but I love that! I try to avoid sugar and bread most of the time but I also think it's important to indulge and be social, so I try not to be too rigid with it."



to do as well — I noticed they got better more quickly, so I started giving my patients what I called 'yoga prescriptions'. After using this with more than 25,000 patients over the past decade I've seen just how much it works and I felt it was my duty to spread the word."

"The other side of Yoga Medicine was that I wanted to create a platform of teachers who could provide yoga at that level, to be a resource for doctors and patients who are looking for a teacher who can help. As a healthcare practitioner myself I know one of the greatest barriers to using a modality like yoga is finding a teacher to refer to. So many doctors are interested in yoga and want to use it with their patients but are intimidated by the process. Our teachers are educated in eastern and western medicine so they can interact with and understand what doctors tell them. In turn, doctors can trust that they have someone who is trained at a very high level to provide yoga to their patients in a way that is safe and effective."

In the flurry of travel, teaching, promotion and working with her holistic clients, how does

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Tiffany ever find the time to ensure she too reaps the benefits of the practice? "Yoga is my medicine! I try to practice six days a week and I usually like a good mix of moving and getting my heart pumping with some very quiet introspective work to balance out the static nature of travelling and the business of work with a balance of movement and stillness. I also have little rituals like not missing out on my morning meditation and my morning smoothie."

Ask about her future and Tiffany becomes even more animated, with a new edition of her book *Optimal Health for a Vibrant Life* due out soon and a new one under pen. She's also working on a host of fresh teacher training content, with one new *seva* (service) module due out next year, which will see part of the proceeds go towards building a sewing centre for women rescued from sex slavery in India, so that they have a way to support themselves more sustainably. "Gosh, there's so much on right now, overall I am just very excited for what is to come and where we're headed with Yoga Medicine, I can't wait to see the community get involved and embrace this movement." ✨



TIFFANY IN DUBAI

Join Tiffany in Dubai from December 5-6, 2014 for a series of inspirational workshops. For more details go to: www.thepeacefully.com/yoga/workshops or email: cheryl@thepeacefully.com. Early bird prices run until September 30.