

connect

MY STORY, MY CALLING

A hundred years ago, a wise Sufi mystic, poet and scholar, Rumi, said, "The wound is the place where light enters you." I never knew what this meant until I reflected upon my own personal life experience and realized that it is through one's own suffering and adversity that we learn and redefine ourselves.

The year 2000 was a significant and life-changing time of my life. It was during this time that I separated from my former husband, gave up my work with the Singapore government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then the Monetary Authority of Singapore) in Europe (Geneva and London), and also moved back to Singapore. They say that moving house is stressful—but to combine that with an impending divorce, moving country and changing jobs with a lack of family support was even harder.

Back then I was unhappy, lost and broken. As a middle child and the first-born daughter, I was brought up in a strict and traditional Chinese family. I was shy, lacked confidence and all I ever wanted to do was please my parents and do the 'right' thing. Everything I did was to try and gain their approval. Alas, all hell broke loose following my divorce. My parents were really upset with me for "losing face" while I was struggling to find my own feet again. Thankfully, I had the love and support of a wonderful girlfriend who shared her family home with me and continues to remain my best friend even today.

In late 2000, I decided to take myself away for a short break and stayed at a Thai beach resort next to the beautiful Andaman Sea. It was then that I took my first yoga class with a lovely Thai yoga teacher next to the beach. What transpired during those yoga classes changed my life forever.

During one of the sessions, where I was in the triangle pose (Trikonasana), I felt a complete sense of peace, serenity and oneness with the universe that I had never experienced before. That moment sparked a deep sense of curiosity and interest in yoga. When I returned to Singapore, I found a yoga teacher who inspired me to learn, and practice with, for the next few years.

In the early years of my practice, I enjoyed the physical results of practicing yoga—a toner and fitter physique, increased strength and flexibility.

Rediscovering Myself

By YVETTE TEE



ART DIRECTION: ANUJA BAGAOE

However deep down inside, I always knew that the benefits of yoga were beyond the physical. For instance, while learning the philosophy of yoga, I discovered that Trikonasana not only had physical benefits, but could also instill a sense of stability, expansiveness and centeredness within oneself. These were some of the core pillars of hatha yoga. I became hooked. After a few years of practicing yoga regularly and consistently, I discovered a passion that I never knew before—to teach yoga and to share the benefits of yoga with others.

In 2004, before yoga became a craze like it is today, I qualified to become a yoga teacher. Back then, I had a full time job working at the Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts in Singapore and was teaching yoga part-time in the evenings and over the weekends. I did this for over two years, and finally, I realized that I must follow my heart and hence left the corporate rat race to teach yoga full time.

It was not easy to begin with. I had to overcome the fear of standing in front of a room while conducting a class, as well as face issues of insecurity and lack of confidence that had haunted me since childhood. Fortunately, yoga had helped me to develop more self-confidence and I had a group of patient and supportive friends and students that still come and attend my classes today. More significantly, I also met a wonderful and loving man who is now my husband and my greatest friend, mentor and supporter. Without him, I would not be who I am today.

Even during my early days as a yoga teacher, I always knew that yoga was more than skin deep. It was one of the best roads to self-development, enabling one to become more self-aware and conscious as a human being. I studied meditation from several teachers, and in 2012, I qualified to become a certified meditation teacher. I have since been running meditation classes and workshops to individuals and global companies, including Apple, Facebook, Aviva, Uber and many international banks.

Having taught more than 10,000 classes over the last 14 years, I am fortunate to still be doing what I love, and continue to learn and develop myself through yoga programs, workshops and regular yoga trips to India. I am privileged to have met and studied with great masters from around the world, including Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, Founder



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of the Isha Foundation, HH the 14th Dalai Lama, Swami Veda Bharati, Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati and many others. These great teachers have dedicated their entire lives to serving humanity and remained humble, loving and compassionate. They are fine living examples of what they teach.

Looking back, I am thankful for the dark period that I went through in 2000. Because of it, while I did experience difficulties, I also found yoga, true friends, a wonderful husband and my true calling. More importantly, I found myself again. Through the divine grace of the universe, I am able to do what I love most. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to touch and inspire others to lead healthier, happier and more conscious lives.

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