

This interview was published in Yoga International Magazine in The Netherlands.

A Texan yoga celeb - in our chilly country

Adriene Mishler (32) is an actress and a yoga teacher. Her YouTube channel 'Yoga with Adriene' will soon reach two million subscribers. With her Texan 'Howdy folks!', good sense of humour and easily accessible yoga classes, she manages to attract yogis from all over the world. Recently she toured Europe and this time, she was not teaching in a room with just a camera, but in large sports venues with hundreds of students attending.

By: Charlot Spoorenberg

Adriene taught two workshops in Amsterdam in Sporthallen Zuid. Hundreds of yogi enthusiasts - mainly yoginis in their early twenties - came pouring in to finally take a live yoga class by their favourite online teacher. In the flesh, Adriene was just as charming and disarming as in her videos. Her class was interlaced with jokes ('and now we take off our clothes'), but also with many gentle moments in which she brought her students back to themselves, to their bodies and to the breath. The theme of the tour - and her yoga channel - is Find what feels Good. A day after the class we spoke to a positively radiating Adriene about her childhood, yoga, and what feels good.

Connection

'Both my parents are actors in the theatre. Being raised in a creative community was weird, funny and inspiring, but also frustrating at times. I would blame my mother for not being like other mums, for not teaching me normal things like how to handle money. As I grew older, I started to realise that she had taught me powerful things. Such as the unity of body and mind, something that I reconnected with in yoga. Acting is about the connection between body and mind. Just like yoga.'

Kundalini

'Following my parents, I decided to go into acting and I joined SITI Company in New York. There, a lot of attention was paid to moving from your core, from your breath. It was all about moving consciously and to give a deeper meaning to your movements. To move like the best version of yourself. That is what we also aim for in yoga. In those days, I took my first yoga classes which were in the kundalini tradition. As an eighteen year old newbie who wanted to become a respected actress, I was a bohemian, I read poetry and drank a lot of wine with my friends in the acting world. However, I would also go to my kundalini classes at 5 AM. We would practice fire breath and do other strong exercises, and we would get homework like taking cold showers. At such a young age, these things were quite tough for me but I kept doing them. Because my god, did they feel GOOD!'

Truth

'When I think back of those kundalini classes I am so grateful that they were my first experience with yoga. If I had taken hatha classes twice a week, I probably would have benefited too, but also I might have found excuses for not doing the practice and quit. Because I had to do my kundalini classes every morning and because they were so intense, I kept going and this transformed me. My teacher was very inspired by Byron Katie and as it happens, so was my mother. She gave my recordings of The Work. So there I was, driving to campus and back in my old Volvo, smoking cigarettes and listening to Byron Katie. The Work is about questioning your thoughts. You think that you are overweight, but is that really true? Asking that same question about all of your thoughts teaches you that many of your thoughts are not true. This is something I use a lot in my classes nowadays. Feeling good is all about what you think of yourself, and whether or not you believe your - often negative - thoughts.'

Side job

'I had started taking yoga classes and then I decided to do a teacher training. Initially I wanted to do kundalini, but eventually settled for hatha. To be honest, this was not inspired by some grand epiphany but by the idea that it would get me more work, haha! I thought it would make a good side job next to acting. In the same old Volvo in which I listened to Katie, I would drive to the other side of Austin for my classes. After getting my diploma I managed to make a modest living by teaching yoga to adults and children in a number of studios. My good friend Chris Sharpe was the one to come up with the idea of starting an online yoga channel. The first videos were absolutely terrible! I really came across as acting to be a yoga teacher. Chris suggested that I should think I was just teaching a friend, which worked well. I found my authentic teaching voice more and more and have been able to stay close to it ever since. Sometimes it can be a real challenge to stay true to yourself, even in the world of yoga. But I do think that this is why I have been so successful with Yoga with Adriene.'

Eight toes

'There are so many different bodies, moods, weather conditions and ways in which to get people on their yoga mats. I invite people to take my class. Sometimes this will be a playful invitation; the next time it will be more serious, rock 'n' roll or philosophical. I want to appeal to as many people as possible and to get them to join in. A while ago I was teaching. I was in down dog and I heard myself say 'Stretch all your ten toes'. And then: 'Oh no, not everybody has ten toes. Stretch your toes.' After that a girl emailed me that she was so happy I had said that. During the tour in London she came up to me and gave me a hug. 'I am the girl with the eight toes!' she cried out. I do not see my students. I can only try to imagine who they are and where they are. That is why I am really conscious of what I say and how I say it during my videos.'

Yummie

'You can come up with a thousand excuses for not going to class. It's cold outside, my bike is broken, there is a hole in my yoga pants, the cat is in heat... With Yoga with Adriene I try to take away those excuses. You can take my classes in the comfort of your own home. You can take a break when you need to, you can take the class in your comfy but tattered outfit and it does not matter that you are not very flexible. I really see it as an advantage that when you take a class by yourself, you can really turn inward and focus on only yourself. During my online classes I talk a lot more than in regular classes, so that students do not have to look at the screen all the time. In a yoga class you can experience resistance or other unpleasant feelings. So I always try to

comfort my students ('I got you!') and to motivate them to keep at it. Once you break through that resistance it feels so good.... Yummie!

Connection

'Because of all our modern technology we have less real contact with other people. There are so many external stimulants and everything moves so quickly. I think that is why more and more people feel the need to do yoga. To quiet down, to get back in touch with themselves and to find balance again. It is quite funny that we are using that same technology to reach out to people and to help them to find that quietness and balance. It is absolutely not my intention to have people only take online classes. On the contrary: I am trying to get them to the studios. I recommend online home practice as an extra next to taking regular classes in a studio, where you can get support and adjustments from a teacher. Where you are part of a community of yogis. I believe that with Yoga with Adriene I can take away obstacles that stop people from stepping on the mat for the first time.'

Feeling

'Yoga with Adriene is not about learning to do asanas perfectly, even though I do have uploads that focus on that. Every video is an event, an experience in itself. It is about people discovering their bodies and finding out what feels good for them. They are in control and can always decide to stop the video and start another. I try to support and guide them in the most conscious way I can and more than anything else, to make them feel enthusiastic. About yoga, about their bodies and about life itself.'

Did you know...

- Adriene's YouTube channel Yoga with Adriene currently has 1.729.273 subscribers? *
- her class Yoga for Anxiety has had 334.551 views? *
- there were around 400 enthusiastic participants in her workshops in the Netherlands?
- her Thirty Day Yoga Challenge, in which she posts a video each day, will start again in January?
- Adriene is inspired by teachers like Shiva Rea and Rodney Yee?
- Yoga with Adriene has its own website, www.yogawithadriene.com?