



AlumniProfile

Carly Cummings, '05

Hip to Yoga and Hypnosis



BY SARAH BAKER, '01

COURTESY PHOTO

Carly Halleen Cummings, who started Omaha's newest fitness craze, Hyp-Yoga, likes to share her students' success stories.

There's the "Reese's Pieces" lady: The yoga student ate them every day, Cummings said, and had a reputation at work for simply loving the peanut butter cups: her desk was littered with them thanks to well-meaning co-workers. Cummings and the student worked together, using hypnosis, to replace the desire for the taste of peanut butter and chocolate with the repulsive taste of dirty socks. The student hasn't eaten a cup since, and thanks to yoga, has lost a good deal of weight, too.

There's also the salter: another student simply loved salt. Cummings said the woman would go as far as salting pizza that got delivered to her door. The student's blood pressure, dangerously high, began to fall soon after she enrolled in Hyp-Yoga; now she's lowered it to the point where her doctor said medication isn't necessary any more.

"They're shedding years off their appearance, and possibly adding years to their lives," Cummings said.

Hypnosis and yoga – Cummings' passions – are at the heart of Hyp-Yoga, and she also gets to help people through teaching, something that's become a third passion. She agrees that at first, hypnosis and yoga seem an unlikely combination, but after her experiences in both practices, she said it only made sense to bring them together.

The 2005 UNL graduate has been teaching yoga since her days on the Lincoln campus, when she was an instructor at the Rec Center and a collegiate member of the alumni association's Cather Circle. After graduation, she began to work with a hypnotherapy trainer and decided to become certified in the practice herself. She said once she overcame some of the silly myths associated with hypnosis, she realized its strength, and then it clicked: why not combine the power of hypnosis with the power of yoga?

Cummings is the president and CEO of Hyp-Yoga (<http://www.hyp-yoga.com/>), which recently acquired the Omaha Yoga School; it's the home base for her classes. Already, she's endured hundreds of hours of training and taught hundreds of students in Omaha and many more around the country through a DVD she sells online. She's also expanded the business into the celebrity market – she taught country musician Taylor Swift – and into the national speaking circuit, where she, along with her two founding partners, work to spread the word.

Her education at UNL prepared her to be her own boss: she opened her first business on camps during her undergraduate years. The Daily Drip coffee shop was a project she undertook as part of the College of Business Administration's Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship Program; the coffee stop in the CBA building taught Cummings the ropes of self-employment and the rules that make successful businesses succeed.

After her experience – she said the coffee shop business "basically took over her life in college," opening another business was a natural progression. Now she spends her days meeting with women who want to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

"It's so exciting for me to see the changes that happen to my students," Cummings said. "It's not just about staying fit, it's about staying young and vibrant, too."

Her main clients – women between the ages of 50 and 60 – often first come to a class because they're interested in weight loss, and Hyp-Yoga's main sales pitch does make mention of slimming down. But it doesn't embrace strict dieting or heavy exercise, instead, Cummings said the hypnosis portion of the practice focuses on changing bad habits, while the yoga portion calms the mind and senses while also tightening and strengthening the body.

She said many students come to her with a plethora of problems: acid reflux, a high resting pulse, anxiety, depression and, most of the time, with a few pounds they could stand to shed.

The process is pretty straightforward. Cummings meets with each new student, one on one, to discuss the changes they want to make. She uses hypnosis to change the patient's bad habits, and then the patient follows up the hypnosis session with a 45-minute restorative yoga session. Outside of classes, students learn how to apply the class techniques to everyday life, and do "homework" and reading during the six-week program.

Hyp-Yoga students work closely with medical professionals, monitoring health and wellness, and making sure their practice is a safe one. One of her founding partners in the company is a nurse.

Right now, Cummings and her partners and teachers are the only ones teaching Hyp-Yoga, and she said she thinks there's a good chance Omaha could be the home base for the next worldwide fitness craze if things keep going like they are.

"We've had such incredible success in the past few months," she said. "As far as we know, the program is unique to us." ■