



authentic journey

As a dancer growing up in South Africa, Judy Krupp's first experience with yoga was physical. Now 61 and living in Sydney, Krupp is in demand as a yoga teacher and teacher trainer. Influenced by numerous international teachers, including Rodney Yee, Erich Schiffmann and Donna Farhi, she has students who have studied with her for almost 20 years. She makes regular trips across Australia and South-East Asia to teach at conferences and run yoga therapy intensives, and hosts the occasional retreat in Bali or Bhutan. Despite all this movement, Krupp's roots are in Sydney where she runs her studio, The Yoga Room. [Interview by Sue White](#)

You grew up in South Africa. Can you tell us about that? It was a beautiful childhood, but we always knew we wouldn't stay. My father brought us up saying: "You'll never live out your lifetime in Africa, you'll leave." He felt we lived in an unrealistic situation. South Africa was ruled by the minority; it was just a matter of time. We left in 1986. I was pregnant with my third child and I knew he was a boy. I told my husband we needed to emigrate, because there was an army in South Africa... and there was no way I was going to let my son go to an army I didn't believe in.

How did you first come to yoga? I danced till I was 16, and when I was about 26 somebody suggested I'd love yoga. The first class I went to reminded me of dance. After having my second child [at age 29], someone suggested trying Iyengar yoga; it was huge in South Africa. That's where I stayed. We didn't have much of a choice—the main good teachers in Capetown were Iyengar. It was discipline; I'm a Gemini and a complete rebel, so it challenged every part of me that was a rebel. But I loved the anatomy, and that it could be therapeutic.

You practised Iyengar for almost eight years, and even began teaching it. But now you take a different approach. What changed? I started teaching [Iyengar] in South Africa. When I emigrated I realised there was so much else [in yoga] going on. I realised I couldn't teach the way I was practising. We used to do quite a strong practice, and for mothers or students coming in after work it didn't feel right. So I started a journey of many other styles. Ex-Iyengar trained teacher Angela Farmer came out and did a workshop—that was the first time I found "wow". I then did Ashtanga. That taught me the fluid movement I appreciated for a while. Then I went to Donna Farhi, who took me into a completely different journey of the inner workings of the body.

We were saddened to hear that your yoga studio burned down in a fire at the end of last year. How did you move through that? You move on. Like doing a practice, you don't go home and analyse it. The studio was a dream for a long time. It was successful and very good, and then it burned down. There are days I wanted to crawl up and put a blanket over my head... but you can't stay like that. Yoga gives you the tool to get up and move on. The space I'm working in now is in a cerebral palsy unit, across the road from my old studio. I've always told students that it's not by chance we were there opposite that space. They have a beautiful hall behind that I never knew existed for 13 years.

You're a big believer in the power of humour. Why? Besides my yoga mat, humour has got me through everything. I try to bring that into the class. A lot of people are having very serious lives at the moment. I think it's important to find lightness in a class, otherwise they are adding to the seriousness of their day. ❖