



what i know about men ...

I've had a number of wonderful men in my life, especially my father, Martin, a man of real integrity. Since I was six, Dad has also been my coach in taekwondo, which has become a huge part of my life. But what Dad taught me was not just techniques; he taught me about the inner life of an athlete, about strength and endurance, as well as something deeper. Taekwondo is more than just a sport; it's a body, mind, spirit approach to life, and its tenets are about appreciating your own body and respecting yourself and others. These tenets have extended into my life outside sport, into my studies and relationships. All that came to me from Dad.

I also admire my father's passion for life, and his sense of fun. Older men have a tendency sometimes to withdraw a little but, at 56, Dad is the opposite, which is awesome for an older guy. He has a number of hobbies and he surfs twice a week. And he's a successful businessman, too. Since the '80s he's taken a largely unknown product like taekwondo and played a big part in turning it into a mainstream product. He was an Olympic taekwondo coach, training Lauren Burns to gold in Sydney 2000, and he opened the first full-time taekwondo facility in Australia. Now he has six centres. Dad has taught me the most important thing in life: to use your passion as a compass and do what you love.

Another major male influence has been my year 5 English teacher – and prolific author – John Marsden. When John first walked into my classroom,

**TIFFINY HALL, 27
AUTHOR, FITNESS GURU
IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR 3½ YEARS**

Interview
PAUL CONNOLLY



WHEN IT COMES TO FITNESS, THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF MEN: THOSE WHO TRAIN FOR FUNCTIONALITY, AND THOSE WHO TRAIN JUST FOR LOOKS.

I couldn't believe it. In year 5, I was reading his book *Staying Alive in Year 5* and the *Tomorrow, When the War Began* series. Those books were hot back then. It was so exciting to see a real-life author in action.

John inspired me, teaching me to ask questions, to see the world differently, to have confidence in my voice, to play with words and language. He's my hero and one of my greatest mentors. I developed a passion for writing; it was my dream to have my fiction published, and now I have a four-book deal.

Dad and John are opposites. Dad's got that "Get stuck in, suck it up" attitude to life; John is more about exploring the interior life. John would sometimes take us up on the roof of the classroom to write outside. I went to a strict all-girls school where you'd never disrespect any of the conventions, but he'd disrupt those routines. He'd take a risk and I took that from him. I've been working in the fitness industry for years, but as much as I've a passion for it, it's always been a means to support my writing. Some people don't believe I'm a writer, especially after doing *Gladiators* [Hall's Gladiator name was Angel] – but it beat waiting tables!

John also gave me a sense of what I wanted in a man. One of the greatest things I have with my boyfriend, Ed [Kavalee] – besides him being so funny, which brings an important lightness and sense of fun to our life – is that we're both writers.

I've had a lot to do with athletes and sporty guys, but what was missing in my relationships with them was that I couldn't talk about my writing. With Ed – who's working on film scripts – I can talk about character, story and conflict, and we can motivate each other. It's important to me to have someone who's sensitive and creative but also strong and physically fit, which complements my lifestyle.

Ed and I met 3½ years ago. He was a breakfast radio presenter, and interviewed me after I was on *Gladiators*. He kept calling me back for more interviews and finally I'm, like, "Dude, do you want to go out for dinner?" We've been inseparable since.

When it comes to health and fitness, there are two types of men: those who train for fitness and functionality, and those who train just for looks – their diets are all about protein and supplements and getting bigger. I'm more surrounded by the former type of man, and my approach to health and weight loss is always in terms of fitness and functionality. It's about longevity, not looks.

Generally speaking, I reckon men are better than women at getting off the couch [to exercise]. They are very goal-orientated. They set their mind to it, then just do it. There's no emotion connected to it. Women deliberate, the weather comes into it; so too do feelings of insecurity.

I'm trying to adopt more of a masculine attitude. Ed can pop out the door for a swim at 8pm. I deliberate whether to go or not: "It's so cold, I'll have to dry my hair after." Men take emotion out of exercise. Men are less emotional with food, too, and, unlike women, don't tend to eat their feelings. That's something women can learn from men.

Tiffany Hall's latest book, Weightloss Warrior (\$35, Hardie Grant), is out now.