



{relying on} *instinct*

*dr. nicole whitehead | advanced spinal fitness*

Many of us may seek a chiropractor when we have a specific back pain or if our general practitioner recommends it. But we probably haven't considered chiropractic as preventive medicine, like teeth cleanings or well-checks. But in college, Dr. Nicole, of Advanced Spinal Fitness in Mooresville, realized that many medical conditions she was studying could be prevented with earlier and specific care.

"I knew if I could treat young people, they could avoid potential and painful conditions later. And if I can do that, why wouldn't I," Dr. Nicole recalls. This passion led to her special certification in the care of pregnant women and certification in pediatric chiropractics.

Though her college advisor reminded Nicole she could get into Harvard Medical School—and gave a little nudge in that direction—Nicole's instincts led her to pursue what she calls her duty:

to help patients prevent conditions we all readily believe come with age. “Considering that most adult conditions I see have either an arthritic or a disc component,” Dr. Nicole says, “we really can minimize most adult spine issues with good life-long care.”

She explains that even though a child doesn't break any bones in a serious fall, some bones could have shifted or become misaligned. Untreated, the spine will distort as the child ages into adulthood, leading to unequal pressure on the bones and discs, and ultimately to arthritic degeneration.

Trusting her instincts has propelled Dr. Nicole in all aspects of her life. She turned down her acceptance to MIT, to the chagrin of her father, to attend the reputable Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in NY. “I followed my gut,” Dr. Nicole said. “I visited both schools and just knew that RPI was the best fit for me personally.”

Still, at her MIT visit Nicole unknowingly met her future husband. The two dated long distance, even after graduating from college—Scott headed to Detroit to become an engineer for Ford Motor Company, and Nicole went home to California to start chiropractic school. When she graduated as valedictorian, she began her chiropractic work in Michigan.

The weather and her husband's new job at NASCAR drew the couple to the Lake Norman area, where Dr. Nicole opened her own practice. While Scott finished work in Michigan, Dr. Nicole built her practice literally from the ground up, designing the office's layout and determining the best way to develop a clientele from scratch. Dr. Nicole insists her instincts guided her. Instead of fretting or second-guessing herself, Dr. Nicole once again looked within. “Seeing your goal materialize gives you the gumption to keep moving forward,” she says. “Your goal is balance, but the first couple years are out of balance.”

Still Dr. Nicole points out, “Starting a business is work!” Though some women may be attracted to the flexibility and independence, Dr. Nicole points out, “at any given time there is something you could be doing. You must surround yourself with people who understand and appreciate that you need to work. They can't always try to distract you. Find that balance.”

Nicole attributes her confidence to her mother's role modeling. “My mom never let me win at checkers. The day I could beat her would be the day I had earned it. That philosophy was how she ran her own business for 21 years, and it's been a great inspiration for me.”