

THE PINK ISSUE

heart&soul

EDUCATE, INFORM & INSPIRE

GOAPELE
COMING FULL CIRCLE

**THE CANCER
PREVENTION
DIET**

**SAVING OUR
GIRLS**

**HEALING
YOGA**

**THE
SUPERHERO
SYNDROME**

**GET OUT OF
DEBT
WITH DIGNITY**



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DISPLAY UNTIL END OF NOVEMBER

**HEALTHY
THANKSGIVING
RECIPES**

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015

No Place Like Ohm



By Sherry Sidoti
Photos by Siobhan Beasley
Wardrobe by Lululemon Athletica
Martha's Vineyard

HEALING YOGA...

In September 2009, at the young age of 46, Sue Larsen was diagnosed with breast cancer. The cancer cells were found in multiple areas and, because she had a family history of breast cancer, Sue was advised that a mastectomy on the left breast was the best treatment for survival.



The surgery was scheduled a month later, and went without incident. Her left breast was removed and after learning that it would take multiple surgeries and more time in recovery, Sue opted out from reconstructive surgery. Where her left breast used to be, was now a ten inch scar from sternum to armpit.

Sue had already been practicing yoga for five years, so it was only natural that she turned to yoga as part of her post-operative care. "Intuitively," she says, "I knew that yoga would help me heal."

The yoga practice gives us tools for self awareness, and a way of living and thinking for continuously acting in ways that clear our mind body and spirit, and help us to be free from patterning. Once we can create space from our patterns, healing occurs. It does not demand that we understand this healing intellectually, but it works on the subtler pathway. It is why we often can not explain why yoga helps us, but we can feel it.

As for Sue, yoga can be instrumental in healing from any illness; not only in body, but in spirit. Yoga offers us to connect, to slow down, deepen our awareness, and open space inside to reflect, we realize we are not our problems, nor our illnesses, but instead are faced with them to see deeper sides of ourselves that could not have been shown to us without the hardship. This realization allows us to best honor our life experiences and find a sense of harmony with them, learning that our life experiences are opportunities happening FOR us, not TO us. When we can interpret our lives through this larger lens of growth, we are directed towards a greater purpose, called dharma, of why we are here on planet earth.

As Sue reflects, "during my struggle with breast cancer, my focus was on recovery and maintaining a sense of normalcy in my life, for the sake of myself and my family. There was no time to dwell on my circumstances. What I did begin to experience was a profound feeling of gratitude. Two women that I was acquainted with were diagnosed with cancer after me and died within a year or two. I couldn't help but question why did I survive and not them?"

This question prompted Sue to participate in the Avon Breast Cancer Walk in Boston in Spring 2010, and continued for three additional years. She was able to raise over \$44,000 from her community, becoming an advocate for other breast cancer survivors. The involvement, dedication and commitment to the Avon Foundation for Women gave her purpose,

the courage and tenacity to cope with bigger challenges of her own health.

According to the ancient teachings, each of us come into this lifetime with a soul contract of a greater purpose beyond the happenings of our own life. Some of us are born knowing what we are meant to do here on the planet, others, like Sue stumble upon it. We find our calling by going deeper into the life experiences that are the most difficult. With the compassion and skill set obtained through yoga, we learn to see, feel, and actualize from them, naturally leading us on our soul journey.

As Sue puts it, "today, I understand my entire journey through breast cancer was not a random act. I was meant to take this road, to live through the experience by helping myself, and then helping others. When reflecting back on my life, I can see that the teachings of yoga have always been inside me. The Avon Walk was my service to other men and women battling breast cancer. Hundreds of hours of walking and training were my meditation. Everything makes sense to me now."

For those currently battling cancer, or other illnesses, I urge you to take up yoga. When we choose to respond to the demands offered to us through this experience—with the strength of a warrior and heart of a mother/father—we may, like Sue, find our purpose there waiting like a pot of gold.

A short yoga practice of Sue's favorite healing poses:

Seated Sukasana with Vira Mudra: Empowering and grounding

Find a comfortable cross legged seat, feel free to place your bum on a blanket or block to remove any tension from the hips. Stretch arms out and fold all fingers except thumb into palm of hand. Send the thumbs upward.

Camel pose/Ustrasana: Mood lifter

Sit up on knees with your toes tucked under and heels toward sky. Reach arms back to catch the heels, making sure to stay light in the low back and open across the chest. Send hips forward and if it works, drop your head back behind you.

Celebratory Splits: Brightens Attitude

If your body allows, take your legs into a wide split straddle. If not, you can go into a lunge and as you slowly walk legs apart, use blocks under the thighs to prop



your legs to stretch forwards and back as far as you can safely go, moving towards splits. If you feel safe and stable, reach arms over head.

Playlist:

Healing by India Arie
The Heart Sutra By Baird Hersey & Prana
All Farewells are Sudden by A Winged Victory For the Sullen
Eastern Slide by Dub Sutra
Giving Up Everything by Natalie Merchant
Gratitude by India Arie
The Heart Sutra by Sister Chan Khong and Thich Nhat Hhan
Spirit Rap by Astarius

Sherry Sidoti
The Director and Lead teacher of FLY Yoga School on Martha's Vineyard, a Yoga Alliance Teacher Training Program. Through the fierce and loving devotion of the yoga teachings, Sherry urges us to walk into the fire for our own healing, and then openly share it with others. Already Whole and Everyone the Guru. To learn more: www.flyyogamv.com

