

About Elesa Commerse: The Deep Calm & Touching Earth



Elesa believes that if you can breathe, you can meditate. She has been teaching since 1977 and has been meditating for as long as she can remember (even though she didn't call it that). Students appreciate her ability to demystify the practice and to facilitate breakthrough experiences on the journey to authenticity.

A graduate of the Temple of Kriya Yoga Meditation Teacher Training Program, Elesa holds two certificates in Advanced Yoga Studies for completing Donna Farhi's Yoga Teacher Training Program. Elesa is also a graduate of the Tibetan Bowl Sound Healing School and is certified by Dr. Mitch Nur's 9-Ways Academia as a Himalayan Singing Bowl Sound Therapist. Separately, she completed training with Dr. Richard Miller in the therapeutic application of Yoga Nidra. Through Seena Frost, she is a licensed SoulCollage® Facilitator. Academically, Elesa holds an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and an undergraduate degree in Psychology, Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude, from Smith College.

Elesa co-created the, "Befriending the Body/Befriending the Mind" workshop and meditation cards with Dr. Barbara Meyer. Elesa is the creator, director and executive producer of "Finding Your Way," the comprehensive learning system that helps alleviate suffering amongst women newly diagnosed with breast cancer. She has also produced numerous meditation and mantra meditation CDs that are used in yoga teacher training programs nationwide. The Founder of National Meditation Month, Elesa is the Founder and Co-Director of Touching Earth, the Chicago-based mindfulness learning center.

In her own words on recent years:

Both my parents were very community service oriented and my main teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, teaches a style of engagement in the world that is designed to help create peace as a resource accessible to everyone. In very pointed ways, as a human being, as a teacher and a practitioner I try to do what I can daily to help alleviate suffering - in myself and others.

At any given time, a number of realities are unfolding. Many people have no sense of this - they're so caught up in their own slice of the world. Right now, we're living in a time when the youth violence epidemic is unprecedented - claiming 13 young lives to violence every day. I live in Chicago, a city where sadly, those numbers are often much higher.

A few years ago I created a program called, "Willing to Listen." It's a free, public service program that trains people for free to become skilled, mindful listeners and speakers. Then we set up free "listening stations"

where people can come and share with someone who has received this training. The simple act of being seen, heard, and listened to is very powerful and healing for most people and can go a long way to help someone who is suffering. Over time, I hope to expand this program.

Two years ago, I completed a two-part documentary with a colleague of mine, called "All Rise in Search of Hope." It's best to watch the two segments back-to-back.

Part 1: About 20 minutes long:

<http://citiesunited.org/video/all-rise-in-search-of-hope-part-1/>

Part 2: About 10 minutes long:

<http://citiesunited.org/video/all-rise-in-search-of-hope-part-2/>

Am also in the midst of training a local police department of 55 officers, how to practice mindfulness meditation, through a program I created called, "Peace Officer Academy."

I'm piloting it here and it is going well. My hope is to expand this to other first line responders, most of whom are really good people who put their lives on the line every day for all of us. We expect so much from them but have very little sense of what they endure to do their job effectively.

A personal note from Aura: Elesa is who I credit with being my first meditation teacher. She came to the studio and taught shortly after we opened. Her insights and techniques expanded my awareness, deepened my teaching as a yoga teacher and launched my personal meditation practice. She is warm, accessible, authentic and clear. Just the sound of her voice on the phone soothes me and I am overjoyed at her return to teach a series at Aurafitness. We are honored to have her and I would love for you to share in her embodied wisdom.