

## **Awakening a Corporate Soul Learning to Play your Edge ... at WORK**

One month after 9/11, with Seattle's dot-coms crashing and unemployment rapidly rising, a Human Resources administrator walked into my office and sheepishly handed me an empty cardboard box with a pink-slip. Gathering my belongings into the box, I was smiling – thrilled to be on my way. Throughout my nearly 20 years in the High-tech industry, I had experienced chronic back pain, multiple migraines, and a bout with cancer. It was time to live at a more gentle EDGE.

### **1980's - Falling OVER the EDGE...**

Up to the age of 23, I was a dancer who taught hard-core aerobics. After 6 years of urging others to go for the "Burn", my own body burnt-out. It was time to change careers. This was the early-'80s and the new field of High-Tech was open to eager young women.

My first years as a programmer were a total reversal of the physicality during my aerobic days. Sitting at a screen kept my body unmoving; my mind, however, was a hive of activity repeatedly telling me that I had to work long hours in order to be the BEST.

And so I pursued that goal; running projects typically led by men, making good money, and listening to the praise from my family all supported a belief that competing to be the BEST was my EDGE.

### **What is the EDGE?**

The EDGE is an uncomfortable, yet engaging sensation. It's that place between trying & not trying which serves as a channel to explore our self-imposed limitations. Going OVER the EDGE by trying too hard may lead to pain, illness or burn-out, while not trying at all may also lead to the pain of boredom, indifference, or lethargy.

At 24, my body gave its first warning – frequent lower back problems that were only a minor nuisance. By 25, I was laid out for days using codeine-filled pills to dull the persistent pain.

Without fully realizing it, I was living OVER THE EDGE and my body was screaming at me to change my ways. Ignoring the underlying cause, I simply called it "stress" from living in a big city and so left San Francisco for Seattle.

## **1990's - Playing at the EDGE...**

In Seattle, I began dancing again – a couple of classes each week gave some balance. The back pain calmed itself, flaring only on occasion.

But my body remembered the stress of my mind's competitive EDGE. In dance class, I pushed to get my leg higher than all the other young girls. At work, I ran big projects. Now the stiffness in my neck and the increasing migraines were merely annoying. At 29, I figured I was just getting older.

At 30, I got a call from my doctor. She simply said, "You have Cancer".

I didn't believe her. I felt fine.

As I was wheeled into the operating room, all I could feel was the weight of each instrument as they placed them one-by-one on my abdomen. My drugged body was unable to move, but my mind was still active with a million questions, "How did I get here? What kind of life have I led? Who am I?"

When my body was 'cured', and life returned to kids, work, and home, those vast questions slid quietly into the background. I didn't know it at that time, but the real healing was going to be a process that would take another long decade.

A divorce came several years after the surgery and with it another round of long work hours to cover the costs of living as a single mom. Stress was constant; still the Cancer had been a clear wake-up call. My habits had to change.

On the advice of a friend, I signed up for my first Yoga class. The focused breathing, mindful movements, and peaceful stillness initiated a new relationship between my body and mind. In nearly 20 years, they were beginning to talk to each other.

In my early classes, the postures were easy enough for an old dancer, but I soon found myself watching everyone in the room. They were, of course, doing it 'better' than I.

One day I was struggling in a head-stand trying not to fall over and hit my neighbor, who was mildly irritating in her peaceful straight-legged-upside-down posture. With knees precariously balanced on my elbows, I worked diligently lifting one toe an inch off the floor and then the other – back and forth - until, like a turn-signal flashing on & off, my neck started to throb. My body was being clear - lower my legs and rest in child's pose; simply Let Go.

It only took a moment for my body's first audible sigh, "Ahh", but just as quickly my mind snapped back, "Get up before someone sees you!"

With effort, I remained resting on the floor and witnessed the flood of body/mind dialogue unravel in the form of sensations, thoughts and feelings.

Taking this moment to **Pause, Breath & Notice**, I was **PLAYING at my EDGE**.

## **2000's - THRIVING on the EDGE...**

As my mind quieted in class, I began easing into the postures. And, as in class, so too did my posture in life begin to ease. It was time to integrate yoga into my daily work.

Wanting to find more stillness at the office, I began facilitating "Release" breaks in the lunch room. My intention was to create an open sanctuary for my colleagues by mindfully moving, sitting, and breathing for 20 minutes each day.

Over time, I and my co-workers began noticing our body's reactions to the constant stress-filled moments of big meetings, product launches, and lay-offs. We started having conversations about our edges – how it showed up in our bodies – and how it showed up in our work. We talked about what we valued in our lives. We reflected on what ignited our passion and commitment.

Ultimately, we were creating a more authentic way of Being.

So, back on that day that I was escorted out of the office with pink slip in hand, I smiled because I knew that this was just another moment to let-go and play my edge - **Pause, Breathe, and Notice.**

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### **One-Minute Mindfulness. Playing your EDGE ... at WORK.**

#### **During a moment of peak stress...**

- **PAUSE.**
- **SCAN your body** from head to feet.
- **NOTICE where you have the most/least sensation.**  
(Where do you feel your body has moved OVER your EDGE?)
- **NOTICE the quality of your breath.**
- **NOTICE any thoughts, feelings, and images.**
- **NOTICE if you want to REACT.**
- **Simply NOTICE.**

After 1 minute gently inquire,  
**"How do I choose to BE in this moment?"**

#### **BIO:**

With more than three decades of combined experience in healing, yoga, and performing arts along with 18 years in management, facilitation & coaching, **Soleil Hepner, Seattle's Yoga Coach & Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy Group Facilitator & Practitioner**, works with first-hand knowledge when helping clients balance introspection with the constant demands of everyday living. Contact her at [www.soleilRising.com/contact.htm](http://www.soleilRising.com/contact.htm) .