

Noelle Austin – *Interview was conducted by Willard Watson in Noelle's home studio.*

Q1 – Who are you, When and where were you born?

I am Noelle Austin, I was born on Nov. 22, 1989 at 3 p.m. at the Watauga Medical Center

Q2 – What did your parents do for a living? Did you contribute to the family income or help parents in their work in any way?

My mom was a teacher until I was born. She ran a pre-school and then taught kindergarten, but when I was born she was a stay at home mom. My Dad was a waiter and a barber downtown. I used to sweep hair at the barber shop when I was a little girl.

Q3 – What do you do for a living?

I teach yoga. I started teaching in 2009, during my first teacher training. I was in college and always kinda knew I wanted to be a teacher. So I started teaching small groups of people from my home.

Q4 – How did you decide on your career?

When I was a little girl my dad took me to a yoga class, and I remember seeing all the adults like hanging upside down and thinking, "Oh my god, they are having so much fun." And then, I was 7 and I used to cry every night when the sun went down and my Dad taught me this mantra by Thich Naht Hanh and it was, "breathing in I relax my body, breathing out I smile, living in this present moment, this is a wonderful moment." I remember repeating that 10 times and realizing that all of our worries are in a different moment than now.

Then I started doing asana yoga classes weekly in high school after my Mom and brother passed away. It was a way of me coping with that. I just found that I would be a lot more clear

minded after yoga class. I sort of knew I wanted to be a yoga teacher around that time, at one point, some day, I didn't know I would do it so soon.

Q5 – How would you say the work has changed since you started?

When I first started it was really basic beginner classes, I still teach beginner level classes but I now also teach privates and I do one-on-one yoga therapy. I am an internationally associated yoga therapist. That means now I take information about what the person is dealing with both emotionally and physically and we find a routine, usually a really short routine they can do within about 10 or 20 minutes every day that might relieve pain and create more ease in their life.

Q6 – Describe a typical work day.

A typical work day, I wake up early and I prepare myself, I breathe and do a little bit of asana myself. Then I go to teach a class, an hour or an hour and a half long class. Then I usually have a lunch break and I might do some computer work unless I have a private, that day, scheduled. If not, it's about networking and communicating with people who have been reaching out about classes or privates or getting ready for workshops in the future.

Q7 – What type of people do you work with?

I work with all kinds of people. My most common clientele are middle-aged people who have started to feel some wear and tear of just aging, and they want to do something about it, they kind of want to reverse that, or create ease as they go into this part of their life as they're not

really used to feeling that kind of pain. But I also really love working with young people who want to maintain health in their body. So it's really a mix, but that's the majority.

Q8 – When do you work? time? (day/night) (weekdays/weekends)

I try to work in the morning, I have classes most mornings. And then privates are usually mid-day. It's like a usual week day, but a little bit more flexibility. I usually have some free time in the middle of the day and then in the evening and then I might have a class later in the evening, 5:30 or 7. Sometimes I work on the weekends. I have Saturday workshops at least once a month, but sometimes a couple times a month. Saturday or Sunday classes or workshops.

Q9 – What do you do with downtime at work?

With downtime, I practice myself a lot. I love to play music, and sing. I love to dance. And then the usual stuff like cleaning and avoiding my laundry.

Q10 – Does your occupation have any special sayings or expressions? What are they? How did they come about?

We say namaste which means the light within me bows to the light within you. We usually say this at the end of every class. We also chant ohm, that is a universal vibration. I think of it in three parts like: ah, oo, and mm. It is inclusive of - the beginning in the auspicious sound of "ah," and then "oo" is our growth period, and "mm" is the closing, the mother's "mm" hug at the end of the day. That sound is a good one.

Asana is a term that means posture, and in the west Asana class is thought of as yoga class. But really yoga is a lot more than just the postures it is an eight-fold path so anytime that

you are focusing on something intently or creating union in your brain or your body or taking a deep breath you are practicing yoga. I think all life is yoga. Every person practices some kind of yoga whether they know it or not. The postures have names, they are either named after body parts, or animals, or things in nature like flowers, but asana means posture. So a lot of times you'll hear like, adho mukha shvanasana, and that's Downward facing dog pose.

Tadasana is mountain pose. So it could be, "tah-da!" Which is nice because when you stand in a nice strong tadasana you're like "tah-da!" it's like this, you know, superwoman or superman pose. And that is sort of how I think of postures, is when you practice just letting your body look happier and express itself more fully, spreading it, you feel better. That language is Sanskrit, which is a very, very old language, it predates 3,000 BC and it is the language that most Hindu texts were written in.

Q11 – What special knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed? What techniques and methods?

A basic understanding of anatomy is really crucial for the work I do. As well as an understanding of what yoga is, the things I've just shared with you, and language skills are really crucial, being able to communicate a point and direct people in a way they'll understand. I think friendliness is important. I was a performer before, and still like to perform, so I think that helps me a lot because it allows me to be more comfortable standing in front of people and telling them all about this pose I love to do and helping them find it. Everything else is just a cherry on top.

Q12 – What are things about your work outsiders would not expect?

That we sing, and that yoga is for everyone and simply that yoga is not just about the postures.

Maybe you are an outsider but you are already practicing it without even knowing, when you take your walk, or when you play your guitar, or when you make dinner, you create some focused energy and you put some intention into your life you are already doing it.

So I think a lot of people feel like they aren't flexible enough or they can't do yoga, but I like to think of that as someone saying, "I'm really thirsty and I can't drink water." So I'm really inflexible - then drink the water, then do the yoga because that's what it is for.

Q13 – What were originally the most difficult aspect or your job?

The language, definitely the language. Going through training we practiced teaching each other a lot. Yeah, getting up in front of people and trying to tell them, press down into your heel and lift up through your chest and being able to just word it in a way that wasn't too complicated and confusing was really difficult at first, it took a lot of practice. I would practice doing the poses and saying it in my head, what did I just do to feel that. And that was how I started to get more comfortable speaking what my body was doing.

Q14 – What is/was the most satisfying?

Seeing people's bodies align and then their feedback about how good it feels to them.

Q15 – What advice would you give someone beginning this line of work?

Find a teacher that you resonate with. That speaks truth to you. That your heart says yes when they speak. If you find a teacher like that, then learn as much as you can from that teacher. I couldn't be more grateful for the teacher I have found. Her name is Mila Schwarz, that's my teacher.

Q16 – Describe a memorable moment from work.

A really memorable moment was when I held my first back class at Neighborhood Yoga, it was a back-care basics class and I was kind of nervous about it because I wasn't even quite a certified yoga therapist yet, but I had been studying it for a while. I wasn't sure if many people would show up, I was just like let's put this out here and see what happens and it was one of the biggest classes I've ever had there was over 25 people there. I got so much positive reinforcement that evening, it really filled me up, it was the community that made me realize I am on the right path, I can keep doing this, and it is actually helping people. So many people came to me and were grateful, I just remember being so nervous and then so relieved. Now others are popping into my head, good moments.

One other memorable moment, it was the first time I taught at Neighborhood Yoga, when it was my class, so the woman who gave me her class, when I just gotten out of teacher training for my second time, I went into this class, she had a really dedicated following, so I was again really nervous like, "Oh my goodness hopefully I can fill these shoes." And they gave me a standing ovation after the class. I remember being overwhelmed with joy, tears, and happiness.

Q17 – Is there anything we didn't talk about that you would like to add?

I can sing a mantra if you want. This is the gayatri mantra, so it is an invocation of light and it predates 3000 BC. It is one of the oldest mantras recorded and known to people now, and I've added my own little melody to it, you'll hear it sung a lot of different ways. (plays Tibetan Bell)

Om, Om, Om
bhūrbhuvah svaḥ
Tatsaviturvareṇyaṃ
Bhargodevasya dhīmahi
Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

Om, Om, Om
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