OM meets...
Elena Brower
Yoga teacher, author and entrepreneur, Elena Brower says it’s essential that pranayama and meditation form a part of our practice if we are to grow within ourselves.

By David Holzer

Elena Brower is a mama, teacher, author and speaker. She started teaching yoga and meditation in 1999. Her first book, Art of Attention, has been translated into seven languages, and her second, Practice You, published by Sounds True, is a bestseller. It’s also a podcast. Sounds True kindly sent me a copy of Practice You. It’s beautifully produced and looks like the result of an enormous amount of hard work. Being You, in the same format, will be published later this year.

You seem to be very driven. Would you agree and why is that? As a kid, I watched my mama go from one job to the next, wearing so many hats, and she was always inspired. She did the accounts for a bookstore, had her own jewellery line, took a landscape architecture course and was obsessed with gardening. Those impressions are strong in my being, and I’m moved by each type of work that I do. They enrich each other.

Could you tell me when, where, how and why you got into yoga? After graduating university, my boyfriend’s mum took me to my first class in New York City. I was smitten from moment one. I was used to ballet and this environment was far more generous and supportive.

What style of yoga did you practice first? How would you describe your practice now? Hatha yoga, as taught by Alan Finger. This was at his first studio on 56th Street on the East Side of Manhattan. Since then, I’ve trained in various traditions and non-traditions, but it’s always been a form of Hatha. My practice now spans yoga, weight training with yoga principles and Tai Chi.

How did you become a yoga teacher? I was training to teach art to children at The New School. During that year, I found a teacher training with Cyndi Lee that shifted my focus toward yoga teaching.

Why has your life in yoga progressed the way it has? Partially due to timing, partially due to necessity. Without yoga I’d be in rehab, for sure. This work and practice kept me from destroying myself entirely and I’ve given myself to it as an act of gratitude for my life.

You describe yourself as ‘mama, teacher, author speaker and Double Diamond leader with doTERRA’. What proportion does each of these take up of your time? Mama first. Morning, noon, night, unless I’m travelling, about once a month, I’m on call for that guy. He’s 13 now, and he’s still first.

Teacher. I mainly focus on my work on Glo.com. I film a few times a year and I’m always prepping for those classes in my home practice in the morning. A few times a year I lead retreats and immersive trainings, and usually a local class quarterly or so.

Author. Every morning I’m up writing or painting my next book. Right now, it’s Being You which will be published by Sounds True. They’ve been a lovely creative partner for me.

Double Diamond leader with doTERRA. About four days a week, this is my main daytime focus. I’m leading almost 40,000 families, comprised of both customers and those building businesses of their own, in how to use essential oils as complements and in some cases, replacements for their wellness modalities and practices. I’m proud of how far I’ve come as a leader, as the founder of my own company, to create this opening for myself and for the team to learn how to surf mount our self-imposed limitations and preconceptions.

How has yoga changed since you got into it? It’s much more externally centred now. Social media has a lot to do with that, and it’s both wonderful and not. Many more people are finding yoga as a credible form of exercise. On the other hand, it’s often missing the internal and most vital aspect of the practice.

What are the big challenges yoga faces in 2020? Bringing the work within ourselves is everything. Ensuring a connection to the underpinnings of yoga, the philosophy.

How do you think we can collectively overcome these challenges? We can teach comprehensively: including asana, pranayama, and meditation. So often the asana is there but the breathing and sitting aren’t. Make sure you’re not sitting in the same narrative and use practice to craft new pathways of thinking and creating for yourself and your community. Be more of a creator, less of a consumer.

It seems like yoga will continue to grow in the immediate future. What do you think we need to do to make sure that growth is as healthy as possible? Again, the internal work. Connecting the sequencing with the states we wish to cultivate in our bodies and minds.

What are the issues that concern you generally in the world today and how do you contribute to making them better? In everything I do I try to help women feel stronger in their femininity. How can I help women lead, find self-respect, self-worth? Because that will be what’s fed to the children and the men, both energetically and actually.

Why do you continue to practice yoga? My organs need the hydraulic overhaul, the cleanse and release each morning. My mind needs the new visions and vistas the postures provide. My heart needs to have time to be heard.
What would be your advice to someone beginning in yoga?
Go to as many different teachers as you can and find the ones that light you up. Try Glo.com because there you’ve a wealth of experienced, expert teachers and lecturers who can offer you several disciplines in the comfort of your own space. Stay close to the teachers and practices that take you out of your comfort zone, into new ways of seeing and being in your body.

How about advice for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?
When I began, I certainly wasn’t aiming at this. I was just hoping to make ends meet doing what I loved. Simply keep teaching, and more importantly, keep practicing so you have an enriching dialogue to share in your classes.

What’s your go-to asana and why?
Savasana. Yoga Nidra. Because that’s all my system needs these days.

AN INSIGHT INTO ELENA BROWER
I spoke to Swiss yoga teacher Mirjam Haymann, public speaker on yoga, spirituality, motherhood and beyond, and a mother of three, about her relationship with Elena Brower. I was excited when, at the beginning of our phone conversation, Haymann said: “I’m about authenticity. You can ask me anything.”

Haymann is from Zurich. She teaches at Air Yoga, one of the biggest studios in that city. She first met Brower at a workshop she taught in Zurich three or four years ago.

“At the end,” Haymann told me, “Elena asked how she could support our yoga community. I raised my hand and spoke about a programme I was offering. She told me to email her about it and she’d feature it in her monthly email letter where she shares what different teachers offer. I emailed her and we went from there.”

Since then, Brower has been a mentor to Haymann. The mentoring began with yoga and evolved when Haymann became part of doTERRA. Now, Haymann says, “I can call her any time about anything.”

What issues does Brower help with? “In my view, yoga teachers can say yes to so many things and to not ask for payment for the many hours of work we put our hearts and souls into. She’s taught me and other women that our work and time are very valuable and that it’s fine to be asked to be paid enough,” Haymann explained. “She taught that really well and it’s led to a big shift in my work life. I don’t say yes to everything anymore. I’ve also learned to check in with myself, so I don’t get burnt out.”

Multi-level marketing (MLM) initiatives like doTERRA don’t always have a great reputation. But, for Haymann, “What I see in my everyday life with doTERRA is really beautiful sisterhood and support, which I don’t always see in the wider yoga community. Rather than the pushiness and greediness often associated with MLM, I see a company that helps me and other women get paid for caring for and helping others.”

Why did Haymann think Brower is so successful? “She works hard. She creates so much content for yoga and doTERRA it’s unbelievable, and it’s always beautiful and magic and special. The other thing is she’s very happy to share. She created this platform where yoga teachers can promote their own projects. Every month she shares upcoming events offered by other teachers. That’s very rare in our community. But at the same time as she’s giving a lot, I see and feel and know that she takes very good care of herself. This is a big thing that me and many other people are learning from her: in order to be giving you must take good care of yourself. When I meet her she’s also super-generous with everyone.”

Elena Brower’s latest online mentoring programme is SIMPLIFY: designed to lead you toward the visionary you’re meant to be, both personally and professionally. Find out more at: elenabrower.com You can also practice with her at Glo.com