

Phoenix Rising is the best thing that's happened to me

Aileen talks about Phoenix Rising and developmental trauma

“What stopped me wanting to quit was the kindness, patience and unconditional acceptance I received in a safe and forgiving therapeutic space ... After my sessions I feel optimistic, warm and light ... Phoenix Rising has saved me at a time when I had little hope for a brighter future.”

I had my first Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy session with Jess about nine months ago. The process is still ongoing, and one of the many crucial things it has taught me is dedication. Dedication and commitment to my own personal journey of growth and healing.

Before my first session, I found myself preparing for the unknown. I had spent years with different counsellors trying to make sense of the somewhat distorted world I had built on a foundation of childhood trauma and the seemingly unshakable burden of feeling isolated and unconnected to myself and the world around me. It seemed to me that I had done a lot of talk in a conventional, predominantly cognitive therapeutic environment without actually being able to break the cycle of repetitive and harmful patterns. I remained stuck both physically and mentally. It felt to

me like feeding on stagnant water with dis-ease constantly spreading.

I began my Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy with Jess highly armoured, completely detached from my body and sensations, and with my head ready to be in charge, as usual. The minute I entered the therapeutic space, I knew this would be very different. This was a body-centred approach and the realisation caused panic and the all-familiar urge to run. **This was about finding my body's voice and the ability to listen to memories stored in my body and not the well-structured, analytical realms of my brain.**

In the beginning I did not have any access to what was stored in various parts of my body. I seemed unable to make a connection between movement or touch and where I felt what. Neither did I seem to have the vocabulary to describe my body's reactions. The walls around me were so rigid that nothing seemed to penetrate the top layer and I was not ready to release anything either. As I was being moved into a number of different postures, dissociation set in. I let it all happen, but in truth, I had long left the room. When I was asked, 'What's happening now?', there was nothing valid to say in terms of sensations. I could only hear my head, and I felt a strong sense of failure and frustration. My body appeared to be an entirely different

entity that I was not familiar with. It felt cold and uninhabited.

I kept rejecting the whole process, finding excuses, cancelling sessions and tried to quit several times. What I did not know at the time was that all of this was part of my own personal progress. PRYT brings to the surface everything that no longer works, and the old patterns begin to become uncomfortable and almost nonsensical. Quitting used to be my thing. I would do anything as long as I did not have to address my trauma and self-sabotage.

What stopped me wanting to quit was the kindness, patience and unconditional acceptance I received in a safe and forgiving therapeutic space. This preceded my own awareness of patterns and of fear that had kept me very much in the past and were not useful to me any more.

Now the sessions are something I look forward to all week. Jess offers a place of complete acceptance and non-judgement, which makes me feel very much at ease. Her presence and gentle nature are always reassuring and calming. Being on the mat as 'work in progress' is now a process that I have come to love and appreciate. Instead of being trapped in a tight, unbreakable mould, I now more often seem to hit the mat in many meaningful fragments that complete the picture of who I am. The lid has come off the container and for the first time I experience every minute step I take as an achievement. Instead of needing transformation to happen instantly, I increasingly consider time an ally that is on my side.

The introduction of therapeutic touch opened up the space around my heart. I have moved away from not knowing whether I actually liked touch to understanding that the real issue was that I didn't know how to receive it. I had no concept of safe touch and what to do with it. PRYT has helped me to gently tackle my fear and shame around longing for touch, contact and connection. Whenever Jess's hand holds mine or rests on my belly, I can feel light and warmth spreading throughout my body like electricity. I am able to follow it reaching in very deeply and it sparks connectivity in places that seemed lifeless before.

The tuning into the churning of my stomach, the raw and bubbling mass of unexpressed anger and the tightness of my throat provide pathways into the origins of these sensations without reliving what had initially caused them. PRYT enables me to stay in the present moment with sensations and emotions that are current. Although my body bridges what was with what is now, it only considers resources that are available and real now, whereas my mind can be preoccupied with the past, filters out reliable signals my body sends me, and encourages regression. The therapeutic space has room for all of that and it has given me room for tears, grief and silence when I could not speak. With guidance, I can now come back into the present without having been re-traumatised. After my sessions I feel optimistic, warm and light. It is often the best thing that has happened to me that day.

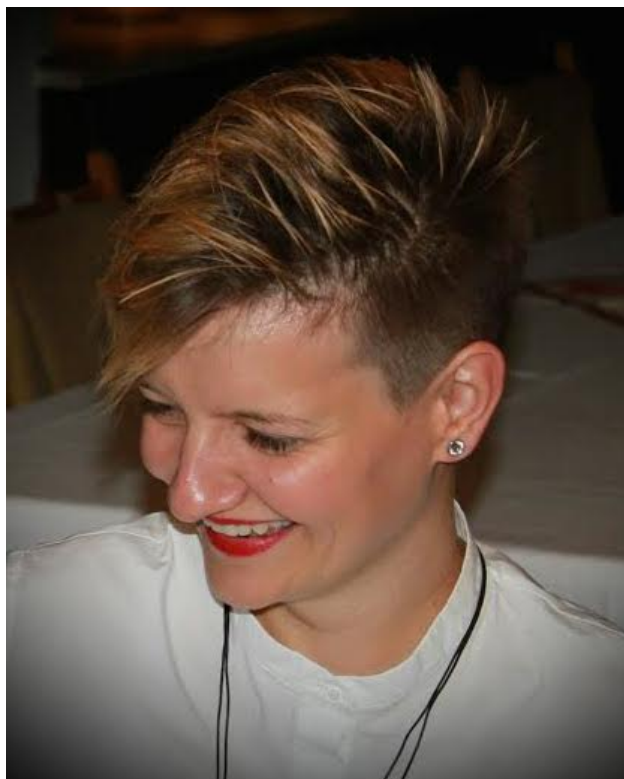
I used to be terrified of exploring and admitting the truths my body has been holding. Now I am on the mat with more forgiveness of myself, with greater momentum towards becoming unstuck, and I am more relaxed. I do not contort myself with every breath, instead I give in to a more natural flow and begin to nurture the soft, untouched essence of myself.

Being in the present has enabled me to open up elsewhere as well, and I am more willing to come out of hiding. I can now be a member of a group and genuinely feel that I belong. I can stay with affection and closeness for much longer and there is now more room for new experiences. The more I am able to listen to my body and allow myself to ask for what I really want, the more I want to own it and be heard.

PRYT for me has been a gradual process of growth and maturity that takes place deep in the core of my body. It feels more honest and authentic than trying to make sense of it all with my rational mind. I still have a long way to go in order to trust my body already to know everything it needs to know, but I feel supported in establishing a space in the world that is truly mine and the necessary courage that comes with living in it.

Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy has saved me at a time when I had little hope for a brighter future. It already has been life-changing, with the burden I have been carrying getting increasingly lighter. It makes me appreciate the hard work my body has been doing for a very long time and the need to be gentle with myself. This type of

therapy is helping me to connect with who I really am and with the gratitude inside me that attracts abundance on so many levels. It continues to be the best thing that's happened to me.



"Growing up in East Germany in the 1980s, I was born with wanderlust and a curious mind for the unknown and unconventional. I studied languages and art, always find myself reading about something, and have now turned my love of animals into a profession. I have had many stops and starts trying to break free from what once shaped me as a child. I was diagnosed with autism last year and have since felt that I was given a second chance at life and the opportunity to grow into the person I truly am."