

Mindfulness at the center of woman's journey to Peace and Pear

Company provides wellness training through workshops on meditation and more

By NICOLE SHELDON

Sometimes it is the darkest time in one's life that brings the most clarity. Christine Porter was going through a harrowing divorce when she challenged herself to 30 days of meditation. She was tired, anxious, stressed and felt ready to re-center herself and give meditation a shot.

It was through this month of daily meditation that she came up with Soulful Connections—a deck of 120 cards with a life question on each. Many are deep like “What do I believe in?” and “What makes me unique?” while others are simpler: “Which movie character am I most like?”

Porter says that those were the questions she pondered during her meditations. By writing them down in the form of a deck of cards she encourages others to explore them. The cards allow people to engage in deeper conversations with others, but they are also useful as prompts for journaling.

Porter created a companion journal to accompany the Soulful Connections deck that contains inspirational quotes to aid others on an introspective journey. With the world becoming increasingly frenetic amid new technology and social media that draws us to stare at our phones day in and day out, Porter is determined to remind people of the importance of human connections and to look inside themselves in order to figure out their place in the world.

Porter became a certified health and wellness coach in 2015 after graduating from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, based in New York City. She went on to start her own wellness company, called Peace and Pear.

“Peace and Pear was a clever play on words,” explains Porter. “What I focused on in nutrition school was the mind/body connection. So it was very holistic, and it was about primary and secondary foods.”

Primary foods are how a person views the world, how they view their career, their spirituality and everything that makes a person an individual. Primary foods feed the soul. Secondary foods are the physical foods people eat to feed their bodies.

“So ‘peace’ is about how we feel about ourselves and our world, and ‘pear’ represents the food we put in our mouth,” says Porter.

Before becoming a wellness coach, Porter spent most of her career in graphic design. Born and raised in Rochester, she earned a bachelor's degree in graphic design from Michigan State University. She then spent most of her 20s living in San Diego, Calif.,



Christine Porter

Photo by Kate Melton

working for advertising agencies as well as doing freelance design work.

She decided to move back to Rochester in 1999; she longed for a home to call her own and to be back with family and friends. She moved into a house on Park Avenue for a year before moving into her Fairport home in 2000.

Porter worked at a couple local ad agencies when she first moved back to Rochester before branching out and starting her own freelance graphic design business, C. Porter Design. Her company flourished for 16 years, but when she was offered a job as senior creative manager at Rochester Regional Health in 2016 it was hard to refuse. She ceased her freelance business to work for a large corporation, but she soon found that the corporate lifestyle did not suit her.

“I had two other businesses when I was in California and I had my freelance graphic design business for 16 years, so I've always had that entrepreneurial spirit,” says Porter. “I like working independently, but I also like collaborating with other businesses on things. But I'm not your typical nine-to-five kind of person.”

Now she pursues Peace and Pear full

time out of her Fairport home, and her business is rapidly growing. In addition to her introspective products, Porter also hosts corporate workshops and programs. She began offering workshops when she opened Peace and Pear, focusing on topics such as, “How to feel better about your body.” But the workshops have evolved to have a greater emphasis on wellness and she now offers a meditation and stress reduction workshop, a workshop aimed at creating your life's masterpiece, an intuitive weight loss and whole foods workshop, a workshop on creating balance with mindfulness practices, a journaling and vision board class and a wheel of life workshop.

“All of these topics and workshops are designed to help HR managers in corporations start to look at what are some other areas that they need to guide employees to make healthier decisions,” says Porter. “I also have an ‘ask the coach’ program. So if companies wanted to have me on site or via web or phone, I'm available. They buy certain amount of hours every week or each month and they open it up to their employees.”

Porter has six team members—“vir-

tual assistants”—who help her on a part-time basis. Her two biggest struggles with Peace and Pear so far have been managing growth and getting people to take a moment out of their busy lives to consider the importance of mindfulness and taking care of their well-being.

“Asking people now in this economy, in this time period to think about what it is that they want and most people's initial reaction is, ‘I just want to pay my bills. What do you mean you want me to sit and meditate and you want me to figure out who I am?’” says Porter. “It sounds very out there, right? But in reality, the more we do that, the calmer we become, the better decisions we make, the more productive we are, the more connected we are.”

Porter has been focusing much of her energy on showing HR departments that she is not your average coach—promoting employees' well-being is instrumental to companies' productivity.

In the midst of her workshops and coaching work, Porter is also writing two books. One is what she refers to as “the hero's journey.” It is a memoir spanning the last five years, covering her journey through Peace and Pear, her heartbreak with her divorce and other pivotal experiences along the way. Essentially, it is about facing adversity and coming out of it finding her true calling in life.

Her second book is a guide to meditation, mindfulness and stress reduction techniques that are accessible to even the busiest people. She hopes it will be inspirational for corporations.

“The book is going to be debunking the myths and showing easy, real-life ways to incorporate all these wonderful life-affirming mindfulness practices that make us happier and healthier in an easy, digestible way for people,” says Porter.

Porter is looking forward to launching her books and bringing to market two other new products. She is aiming to do more work locally and regionally this year with rehabilitation centers, treatment centers and corporations to spread Peace and Pear's message.

As a health and wellness coach, Porter found her niche in mindfulness and well-being. She says it is pertinent for new business owners to “create a niche for yourself that resonates with you.”

“Most importantly, make sure that when you're starting your business that it's something that makes you excited and creates a fire in you because if you're just doing it to make money or for notoriety or fame, it's not going to make it,” says Porter. “People want to do business with people that have passion and purpose for what they're doing. That is so contagious.”

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