

A Hanna Somatic Practitioner Profile: Gloria Hester

Soma Times: Where are you from and what do you like about your city/area?

I grew up on a horse farm in Alabama, on the banks of the Tennessee River. It was lush and beautiful, so green. I was swimming the horses everyday, as soon as it got warm enough. I suppose everything needs balance, including me, so I moved to the desert. I now consider Tucson, AZ to be my home. If you have never seen the Sonoran Desert, please make the trip. It is indeed worth the effort.

Soma Times: What is your background? (Education, professional experience etc.)

My background is in Yoga and Design. Some have called me a "well-being designer". As early as the age of four or five, I began creating mandalas, a circular form of meditative art or sacred geometry. I also remember using makeup to paint my horses as Native American war ponies. Now I use my hands to help educate them about their somas.

By eight, I was teaching self-sensing, guided relaxation and body awareness techniques to my ailing great-grandfather. He didn't know what to call it at the time, but he would ask me to "do that for him", and as he said, "it helped him so much with his arthritis and pain".

Eventually, as an adult, people began to ask me to use my natural talent in design and self-expression to help them with the design of their homes. This led me to study design, eventually delving into feng shui and vashtu, the yogic form of feng shui.

Immediately after completing my interior design program, an injury led me back to the art and science of Yoga as a healing modality. I loved Yoga so much that it was contagious. Those around me began asking me to teach them, so I began teacher trainings and studying the therapeutic benefits incessantly, traveling to learn and certify with many well-known and respected teachers in various disciplines over the years. I also began to apply my knowledge of supporting the body therapeutically to encourage healing for my white dog, Nikki.

One of my first teachers often said, "Always is always wrong, and never is never right." When I first began to work with Nikki, I repeated these words often as a way to remember that she was unique and that she would benefit most from a unique approach to her situation, challenges, and tendencies. I studied the work of Weston A. Price and certified as a Body Ecologist. I then applied those principles along with the therapeutic benefits of Yoga to Nikki's well-being regime. I did so with the blessings of my veterinarian.

Shortly thereafter, my Yoga teachers in California told me that Eleanor Criswell Hanna had adapted Hanna Somatics to horses. After a few serendipitous nudges by the fates, I contacted her to inquire about learning somatic education for horses. The rest is history!

My programs *Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human™* and *Restoring the Wisdom of the Body™* integrate my passion for sharing the benefits of somatic education and yoga for all vertebrate animals. I continue to work with canines, equines and humans, incorporating these modalities where they are appropriate for clients' and students' needs. My outer life's work is a true reflection of my inner life's work.

Soma Times: How did you discover Somatics and when did you train?

I found Thomas Hanna's book on a friend's bookshelf in Alabama. It immediately caught my attention in a way that was unusual. I couldn't for the life of me figure out why this information was not common knowledge!

I began studying the practice of Equine Hanna Somatics in 2006 and have since certified in both branches.

Soma Times: Tell us about your practice? Do you have a healing room? How do you attract new clients?

My practice attracts new clients predominantly by word of mouth. I tend to teach mostly in retreat environments. I do not currently have a healing room. I create the space wherever I go.

Soma Times: Tell us about your big events you have planned this Summer.

I will be at the Prama Institute, located in beautiful Asheville, NC in July 2014. I'll be sharing the principles and benefits of Yoga and Somatics, and demonstrating how working with horses somatically builds awareness and new neuronal connections that allow you to work more effectively with your clients. If you would like more information, please go here: <http://gloriahesteryoga.com/events/>

Soma Times: What are your hopes and plans for the future with Somatics?

That is a big question! I have so many plans and hopes for the future with Somatics! I am continually dedicated to bringing horses and humans together in a way that benefits both, and to continuing my one on one work with canines as well. I hope to bring Hanna Somatics into schools the world over.

My passion lies in working with animals and educating healers and teachers. I particularly want to educate those who are looking for relief of their physical pain or limitations. I am currently writing in order to share broader bodies of my knowledge base and how I work, with the intent of giving people deeper access to holistic ways of working with themselves, their clients, and their students.

Soma Times: What do you do in your free time?

I lead a pretty contemplative life when I can. I enjoy writing and I am an avid student of developing the full potential of the self. I love to eat raw honey with bee pollen, drink jasmine green tea, and make green juices! If you find me, you will find these nearby!