

Healing Trauma with Ilene Smith MS, RD

Renée Calitz

Earlier this year Prince Albert was immensely fortunate to have Ilene Smith, a somatic therapist from Phoenix, USA, presenting a groundbreaking 2-day experiential workshop on handling and healing from trauma at The Showroom Theatre.

Somatic therapy is a form of body-centred therapy that uses both psychotherapy and

physical therapies for holistic healing. Mind-body exercises and other physical techniques help release pent-up tension that negatively affects physical and emotional wellbeing.

Trauma, said Ilene, is not the event itself, but the unresolved sensory energy locked inside the body after the event... it's **not** locked inside the mind. "People often try to move 'around' emotional pain but, it can only be resolved by moving 'through' it," she said.

Signs of unresolved trauma include loss of confidence, depression, addictions, eating disorders, self-harming, irritability, loss of hope and excessive feelings of guilt. Sleeping disorders, along with simmering anger, tension in the body, lack of motivation and bouncing between extremes all indicate that our bodily systems are overwhelmed and out of balance.

It's the body that needs comforting - try putting one hand on your heart and the other on your forehead - not rehashing and reliving the traumatic event.

Merely telling our stories of trauma, and even being able to 'understand' everything, may still leave us unconsciously reacting to the anxiety locked in our bodies. And it is that tension/anxiety that needs to be organically resolved. Which is why Ilene (after being in unsuccessful 'talk therapy' for 20 years) started her body-based therapy and the SOAR workshop.

Editor's note:

Ilene Smith is flown in by corporates around the world - McDonald's, Frito-Lay, Tropicana, Quaker, Kellogg, Pfizer, etc - to help employees heal from trauma. But how did she come to fly in to Prince Albert to counsel an entire community?

It came about through a chance meeting with Ingrid Wolfaardt who was in Arizona for her brother's wedding. They chatted for about 15 minutes, the upshot being that Ilene felt a need to come to PA. And what delighted Ingrid even more was that Ilene was prepared to come at her own cost and to give the workshop to anyone and everyone in the community absolutely free of charge.

They swapped e-mail addresses, made some plans and then rushed off in different directions to catch their separate flights. Two months later Ilene opened her workshop to a packed audience at the Showroom Theatre: "How to build a safe and caring community." And what a life-changing workshop it was.



Ilene Smith MS, RD presenting her workshop on trauma healing. Photo: Ingrid Wolfaardt

PRINCE ALBERT



PLUMBING & HOME SERVICES

LANCE 072 289 5623

SOAR is the acronym for:

- Safety and support in self and with others
- Own your own story and take charge of it
- Attending to self so you can attune to others
- Resourcing to build relationships and resilience

These were the four principles that Ilene unpacked for a spellbound audience. Communities share collective trauma, she explained, and need collective healing, both of which are contagious. Releasing trauma from the body only happens in safe and trustworthy spaces, which we have to create for ourselves and others.

We can be in the world differently. The choice is ours. And if you are keen to learn more, Ilene will be returning to Prince Albert in March and April next year. ■

December 2018