

Giving Back: The gift of Meditation

by Alicia Weil, Certified Instructor

I grew up in Bogota, Colombia.

One of my earliest memories is reading the biography of Florence Nightingale and dreaming of becoming a nurse just like her to help others. This did not happen.

I was kidnapped in Colombia and held captive for eight and a half months, or, to be precise, 259 days. I was in solitary confinement. I saw my kidnappers once a day when one of them came to chat with me. My food was passed to me on a tray through an opening.

During this time, in the solitude of my confinement, I soon realized and understood what witnessing awareness is all about. Me, and my Self, (as I shall call it) were always together, observing, listening and keeping each other company.

I became used to the stillness and to the quietness. I became used to just being. There was no place to go and nothing to do. Without goals, aspirations, or plans, there was just this moment. I never knew when I would be killed, and I did not dream of the day I might be free again.

Regaining my freedom was like being born again. I did a quantum leap. I became very interested in Vedanta and in Ayurveda and decided to attend Chopra Center Events, leading up to my accomplishment of becoming a Vedic Master in the teachings of Primordial Sound Meditation, the Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga, and Perfect Health: Ayurvedic Lifestyle. I now live by these teachings.

In one of my trips to Colombia, some acquaintances asked me if I would like to be a part of the Defense Department pilot program for soldiers who have been wounded. I was delighted. The moment had come for me to give back to serve and help others, and I had the tools.

During my team working with wounded soldiers, I met Coronel Luis Arteaga. His story is one of resilience and rebirth. As Commander of the Health Battalion, he has 1000 soldiers of different ages who have been harmed by either stepping on mines, gunshots or grenades. Under his care, he also has some soldiers who have, like me, been held captive by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)/ The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army. These veterans of war have all come face to face with death. They have returned but have lost an arm, an eye, both legs and, at times, experienced deep post traumatic stress.

Coronel Luis' second opportunity to be alive, has enabled him to give back by helping these young men recognize that their life is not finished and that we were reborn for a reason. We cannot give them back their physical faculties; we cannot give them back a missing leg or a missing eye, but we can give them back their spirit, making them feel useful and needed. We can teach them how and in what different ways they can serve their communities and families to be an example for others.

Working alongside Luis, I have taught meditation, adapting myself to their levels of consciousness. By sharing my story with the soldiers, I am capable to create a level of relatedness and connection to bridge all distances. I am one of them as we compare our experiences, and I show them the different tools I use for healing. For instance, I nearly lost an eye. I can see with it, but I cannot see to read with it. I share with them how through visualization I have been able to heal, even though the doctors told me I would never see enough to drive with this eye.

I feel honored, happy, and very blessed to be able to be in Colombia and give back. When I see how attendance to the workshops grow day by day, the familiar faces that keep coming back, the calm and ease of the soldiers meditating, and when they share how much they feel centered and at peace, I am nourished with happiness and joy.

I did not fulfill my dream of becoming a nurse, but my purpose in life of serving others has been fulfilled to an extent that I never dared dream.

About the Author



Alicia Weil is a Vedic Master and a Certified Ayurvedic Consultant. Alicia attended Seduction of Spirit in Whistler B.C on July 2007. After attending, her curiosity and thirst for more knowledge were aroused. In order to learn more she became certified as a Primordial Sound Meditation, Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga, and Ayurvedic Lifestyle: Perfect Health Instructor .

As a fluent speaker of four languages, this knowledge has allowed her to live her Dharma and to share her enthusiasm for the teachings to make a difference around the world. Alicia is retired and continues to make these teachings an integral part of her life.