

Sylvie Jacobs Bio

I was the daughter of parents deeply affected by the great Depression and World War II. I grew up in Toledo, Ohio and my first encounter identifying the 'haves' from the 'have-nots' came when my parents and older brother moved from an upper middle class area near the University to a blue collar working class neighborhood near the Chevy plant. This move was designed to help my father who was challenged by multiple sclerosis to continue to be independent for as long as possible. My mother, a Jewish Viennese immigrant, met each challenge with courage, but they took their toll. She struggled with ulcerative colitis and cancer and so I became familiar with illness and hospitals. After graduating from Whitmer High School, I set aside dreams of writing and enrolled in a BSN program in the University of Toledo/ Medical College of Ohio. In college I was still able to explore classes in creative writing and yoga while learning how to train my mind in the Nursing Process and develop nursing skills in my clinicals and my job as a nursing assistant in Darlington House, an old-age home as they used to be called.

After graduation I followed my then boyfriend, now husband back to his home town of Brooklyn and began orientation at Mount Sinai Hospital. We moved nearby the hospital where I saw a more defined divide between the Upper East Side haves and the East Harlem have-nots. It was clear to me that money, youth and health were not sources of happiness. I continued searching and revisited yoga where I found a peace and calm that would dissipate once class ended. This prompted me to read all that I could find on the subject of peace and enlightenment and I found that Buddhist teachings resonated with me in a way that my traditional Jewish roots never did. I came across an article in Tricycle, a Buddhist magazine which featured Peace on the Street directed by Stan Koehler. Since I was in the neighborhood, I dropped in to ask about learning meditation. Jonathan Figueroa greeted me and invited me to attend psychic self-defense workshop which launched my daily mediation practice. Stan encouraged me to delve into some martial arts training to embody some of these teachings. Through a year of martial arts study with Sifu Richard Garcia, I was able to practice seeing clearly, being prepared and knowing how to use skillful means to deflect and defend when necessary. My daily practice and continuing studies with Stan and his group has transformed my view of the world and my place in it. I became more engaged at work and with support and encouragement created and became editor of the Mount Sinai Magnet Nursing Newsletter. My sons, now ages 25 and 21 and husband of 34 years have roller-coasted along on this ride with me as I find that the more I help others the more I help myself and the more I help myself, the more I help others. It has helped me to see that we are truly one. Today I have practiced nursing for 35 years, yoga for 17 years and meditation for 5 years and I clearly see that practice never ends.