

Recovering the Forgotten Body

BY CHRISTINE TOTH (MFAIA '07)

When following Elissa Cobb's path in life, *integration* is the word that keeps coming up: life experience, education, research, professional work and deep personal exploration have come together in her day-to-day existence.

It was when Elissa (IBA '02, IMA '04) hiked Vermont's Long Trail from Massachusetts to the Canadian border that she decided to pursue a college degree.

"This tipped the scales in my body, being alone in the wilderness," she says. "It helped clarify why I'm here and what I'm here to do. I thought, okay, it's time to do this." So she enrolled in Goddard's Individualized Bachelor of Arts Program in embodiment studies.

"I was in my forties when I came to Goddard, and I was intrigued by its history," she says. "I fell in love with the school – the atmosphere, the faculty, the program – and I felt like it was the place to go. I love learning that way, to have extended support and yet work independently."

Elissa says going into the Individualized Master of Arts Program was a natural progression of her Goddard experience. "Once you're there, you just have to keep going," she says.

She came to yoga through her work as a personal trainer.

"For years I worked as a fitness instructor and personal trainer, where I taught stretching classes that were very yoga-like," she says. "I began to look for a modality that would bring the worlds of yoga and Western therapy together."

She first went to Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy (PRYT) in the summer between her bachelor's and master's programs.

"I realized that level-three training at PRYT was identical to Goddard's structure," she says. "It was a natural fit."

Finding PRYT was like coming home for Elissa.

After working as a personal trainer and fitness instructor, Elissa Cobb turned to yoga and mind-body psychology to help her clients heal.



"I use yoga as access to the body," she says. "One's personal history, experiences and beliefs are recorded by the body-self." The program combines yoga techniques and contemporary mind-body psychology.

"The way I lived my life changed because I was able to recognize how my body held information," she says.

Before this awakening, she wasn't able to recognize or identify certain emotions, such as shame. Through yoga and mind-body psychology, she was able to identify and deal with embedded, deep material.

"I was able to get close enough to it so that I could begin to reveal its identity and sources," she says. "This awareness is a process of growth and change."

After graduation, Elissa was offered the co-directorship at Phoenix Rising. At about the same time, and at the encouragement

of her advisors, she pursued publishing her master's thesis. After many revisions and rewritings, her book – *The Forgotten Body: A Way of Knowing and Understanding Self* – was published in April 2008.

The book integrates her personal journey with yoga and the mind-body connection.

"I feel really blessed," she says. "I can't imagine that I'd ever be doing what I'm doing with the confidence I have now if it hadn't been for the Goddard program. It allows you to put yourself in the world in a bigger way."

A native Vermonter, Elissa is proud to have done it all and to have stayed in her hometown of Bristol.

"I travel the world teaching programs for PRYT, and I get to come back home," she says. "It's the best of both worlds." CW