

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

May 2010

Each month *Connections* talks to a PrimeTime member to find out more about them, what they do, and their association with PrimeTime.



This month:
Eugenia Gajardo
Counsellor, Satyananda Yoga and
Meditation Teacher
Owner: KnowThySelf

Interviewed by:
Andrea Chalupova Hessmo

Personal talk...

Connections: Where are you from originally, and how long have you been in Singapore?

Eugenia: I am Chilean, from Santiago, and I have been in Singapore for over 30 years.

Connections: Have you lived in other foreign countries? If so, where?

Eugenia: I've lived in the USA, France, Switzerland and the UK. My favourite cities are Singapore, London and Paris. I like Paris because it's full of art, culture and romance, and I adore the language. I like London because it's filled with the British sense of humour that fascinates me. Singapore is my beloved physical home; though I could live anywhere as home is within.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Eugenia: Love for a Chinaman! I fell in love with the first Chinaman I met in London, got engaged to the second and married the third! As you can see, I have a weakness for Chinamen from Singapore.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living here?

Eugenia: The spirit of Singapore that hosts a population of people who want to excel and master their lives, and live in order, mutual respect and safety with themselves and their neighbours. A people who has already provided for their families and society's basic needs and who are now learning to provide for their spirits and souls. I have experienced their evolution and now, I contribute with my counselling, Satyananda yoga and meditation.

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Eugenia: My main interest in life is people and what's going in their minds and in their inner beings. My hobbies are: chatting till I turn blue, having dinner with friends, music, nature, books, Satyananda yoga, running and interior design, a hidden talent that I have not developed to its full potential!

Connections: Have you had any particularly interesting experiences you would like to share with us?

Eugenia: My goodness, my life is a whole endless series of interesting experiences! I have reinvented myself so many times and lived so many lives, that I would not know where to start! A particular one to share with you: when I was in the ashram doing my yogic studies and heard the 'guru,' the master, the grand Satyananda teacher speak for the first time, I was in awe. What strength! What power! What inner control! What intelligence! I was so impressed that the only thing I could say was: "Oh my goodness, you are sooo strong. There is only one man I know who is as strong as you are." He said nothing, but I did see one ear rise ever so slightly so I went a little closer, and said: "Lee Kwan Yew." I realised at that moment that both these men were good men, that they were in the positive side of life and existence, influencing millions of lives, because if they were bad, they would be so bad that they could destroy the world.

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Connections: What one thing would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?

Eugenia: I have accomplished the most important thing in my life: be ready to die. If I die right here, right now, I die content that I have lived a full life! On the other hand, while I have the time, I would like to: keep counselling (my deep passion) and teaching and learning. In other words, share that which has served me to find peace and inner freedom and support others in their search, while continuing to grow and expand. I would like to get married again as it would be interesting and enriching. And I would like to continue seeing the fruits of my 25-year-old daughter's young life in whichever form they come!

Professional talk...

Connections: Please tell us about your business.

Eugenia: My business is about helping people finding inner peace and happiness as a psycho spiritual counsellor, a Satyananda Yoga and meditation teacher. My value lies in my extensive experience, wisdom, compassion and deep sense of people, knowing where they are at and what they need at a particular moment. I intuitively guide my clients to find their own answers, to connect with their own power and sense of who they are, and I support them in creating a more fulfilling life.

In meditation, I use breathing and mindfulness as the mirror of life and guide. This also creates peace and balance, clarity of mind and improves confidence. It is a tool to manage temper and mood, and it contributes to better health. Meditation has enormous and powerful mind body benefits, and it is scientifically proven to help an individual to rewire their negative patterns and habits.

Satyananda Yoga is a unified system of yoga that integrates all aspects of the being, balancing body, mind and spirit. It is ideal for those who are looking for a more traditional style of yoga, and who are ready to step deeper into the more subtle body mind areas and practice asana (postures), pranayama (breathing practices) and meditation with the intention of stilling and purifying the mind, creating inner balance and peace within, better relationships with self and others.

I have a studio at home where I practice counselling, meditation and one-on-one yoga. I also have public classes. I will start two sessions of Satyananda Yoga at COMO Shambhala Urban Escape at Forum Galleria in Orchard Road (www.singapore.comoshambhala.bz). A Satyananda Yoga open class (a 75 minute drop-in class), is starting on Friday 14th of May at 10.00am and another one, a four-week course of Satyananda Yoga, is starting on Saturday, 15th of May at 1.00pm. If members are interested in taking part in any of my classes, email eugenia@knowthyself.sg.

Connections: What did you do before you started your own business?

Eugenia: About a lifetime ago, I was in advertising with Quantum: Foote, Cone & Belding, in PR counselling with Hill & Knowlton, and marketing with Lotus Arts de Vivre. Then I founded and managed my own integrated communications business, The Gajardo Firm, and in 2002 founded KnowThySelf. I started my personal growth and development 'career' about 25 years ago!

Connections: How did you get started?

Eugenia: I always wanted my business but I was rather insecure, so I had to bring myself to the edge to make a decision. Only when I got myself fired could I gather the courage to do it.

Connections: What were the toughest challenges you've faced with your business?

Eugenia: To give up security and say 'time is up,' I must do what I must do. I give myself permission to be in peace and be happy! And what I must do is not what I am doing or what I am expected to do, but what I love, where my strength is, and what I am meant to do.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about having your own business?

Eugenia: Well, for me it is no longer about 'having' anything, or the 'business' itself, but about the nature of that which I do that happens to constitute the business. I get paid to do what I love most: to facilitate others' journey towards peace and happiness, which has nothing to do with 'having' or 'business,' as both happen as by-products of doing what I love.

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Connections: Any advice for those thinking of starting their own businesses in Singapore?

Eugenia: Educate yourself about the following four things:

1. You and what you bring to the table. Who you are, what you love, your passion/s, your product/service and what you have that is different, special, and unique. Do a personal SWOT analysis for your product/service and for yourself.
2. Learn all about doing business, i.e. business structure, sole proprietorship, partnership, private limited company, and the system. Also about marketing, human resources, management and finance, in the measure that is relevant to your business size and spectrum.
3. Learn all about your competition, who, what, where, when and how.
4. Network, network, network and network some more. Find contacts and connections, sources of support, mentorship, potential clients, partners, suppliers, a link may be right where you would not even think it would be, be and stay open. With that, anyone would be just fine in business, or in whatever they choose to do, really!

PrimeTime talk...

Connections: When did you join PrimeTime and how did you find out about it?

Eugenia: I met Juanita and she invited me to join. That was maybe seven or eight years ago now. I organised PPL for a year or so, and loved it! It was really interesting when, in January this year, I gave a talk to PPL. I was on the other side of the coin, giving the talk! It was great!

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Eugenia: I go to several events, including the marketing group, arts group and small business group.

Connections: Do you volunteer at PrimeTime?

Eugenia: Not at the moment, but it will happen in time.

Connections: What do you personally feel are the benefits of being a PrimeTime member?

Eugenia: It is the most amazing and effective networking community of business and professional women in Singapore. The prime benefit is meeting like-minded women, having many resources to tap into, and the wide network in which to contribute to, giving meaning to personal and professional life.

I would like to see more local women joining PrimeTime. It is important to integrate the local perspective from professional local women. We are short of that and we are perceived as an expatriate organisation, though an excellent one at that! Maybe this is an area I may help with.

Connections: Which was the most interesting or inspiring PrimeTime event you've attended?

Eugenia: The last AGM when we said 'good bye' to Juanita, who leaves behind an amazing self-sustaining legacy: one of the best business and professional women's organisations in this country.

Thank you, Eugenia!