

THE EVOLUTION OF SPiRiT

BY SAMANTHA EDDY

THE SUN SETS BEHIND
MT. MORAN, GTNP.

PHOTO BY SARGENT SCHUTT

IN THE FALL OF 2011, I WAS HIT BY A BOOKSTORE. Struck. It's the only way I can explain it. In hindsight, I will say it felt like a divine act, some greater spirit flowing through me to implant a metaphysical shop in Jackson Hole at a precise moment in time. I didn't understand it, but I knew I had to do it.

Prior to October 2011, I had been pursuing my own spiritual path and also working with others to help them on their journey. In a quiet office on the backside of the Fish Creek Center in Wilson, I worked with clients, facilitating the release of emotional blocks and limiting belief systems using guided meditation and intuition. My part-time business was referral based and mellow. The idea of opening a store had never crossed my mind.

Two days prior to my departure for a silent retreat with my favorite spiritual teacher, Adyashanti, I was working with a client in my office when I began to hear hammering and other loud construction sounds. I finished the session and then wandered up front to find a handyman remodeling the street side office space that had been dark and dormant for at least two years.

"What's going on?" I asked my landlord. He replied that he was closing the space off from the realty office to make it more rentable. "Do you have an idea?" he inquired. I promptly replied, "No way, I'm not doing anything until my youngest is in kindergarten." She had yet to turn three at the time.

I flew to California not giving the space another thought. It was three days of deep contemplation and my first experience of conscious silence. At retreat's end, silence broken, I wandered the campus of Mount Madonna, a beautiful retreat center in the redwood-covered hills overlooking Monterey Bay. I stumbled into the small bookstore and sighed thinking, "I love these places, they meet everyone just where they are."

The next evening I caught up with a friend who had formerly lived in Jackson Hole. Out of my mouth fell the words, "Katie, when are you coming back to Jackson, so you can run my bookstore for me?" Katie didn't skip a beat. "You don't need me," she replied. "You just need someone to help you execute your vision. I was dumbstruck. What had I just said? Had days of not talking made me crazy? I didn't have a vision of a bookstore—or did I?"

I flew home and was greeted at the airport by my favorite

things: the Tetons, the fresh Wyoming air, my husband and my three beautiful daughters. That evening, after the girls were asleep, I told my husband, Cam, "I think I want to open a metaphysical book shop in that empty space in front of my office." "Okay," he replied. "No really," I said. "This cannot be a crazy thing that pulls us apart. If I am going to do this, I need you and the girls to be on board." "Okay," he said again. "I think it's a good idea."

The next day I got to work assessing if I was insane. "Who the heck opens a bookstore in this day and age?" I wondered. I met with an old friend who once owned a bookstore in Driggs, explained my desire to have a metaphysical store with books and gifts that felt like a community center, to host educational programs and workshops on spirituality. "The books you want to sell," he said, "those are the type people like to hold in their hand before they buy, besides you want to offer much more than just books."

"Could I open by December 15th?" I asked. "With a lot of work, it's not impossible," he replied. "I can't help, but my wife, Jeanne, who really ran our store is looking for a project right now, she'd be thrilled," he added.

That was Thursday. By Sunday when we reconvened, they had a 100+ item list of everything that needed to be done to start a business and open a store. At the time I had never heard of an EIN nor had I the slightest clue where to buy the books or other wholesale items I wanted to sell. The date was November 6.

"Am I really going to do this?"

I stood in my kitchen asking my husband. The pieces were falling into place so quickly that it was difficult to pull back and fully contemplate the reality of it. The start up money had already been taken care of late September when my father's financial advisor informed me that I had some cash that had emerged as a result of a business sale related to my late grandmother's estate. It had just showed up and I was being encouraged to invest it. Skeptical of the stock market and not enough for real estate, I hadn't made any decision; it was sitting there waiting.

The next piece was my children, ages eight, six, and just three. If I was going to do this, the store was going to be open over Christmas break and my husband would be working every day on the Jackson Hole Ski Patrol. How would I manage? The telephone rang. Our favorite babysitter



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was on the line. “My circumstances have just changed, I am back in town, totally available and excited to babysit if you need it.” I almost dropped the phone.

“I can’t get out of this, can I?” teary-eyed, I asked Cam. “How would you feel if you didn’t do it, Samantha?” he asked. What was happening felt so magical and aligned, that if I didn’t embrace the opportunity I would regret it. I could feel my mind’s arguments against it, but my heart was leading me. I took a deep breath and leaped onto this metaphorical surfboard called Spirit. Two days later, after many prior attempts to pin each other down, my landlord and I signed the lease for the space. It was November, 11, 2011. (Yes, 11.11.11 Master day.)

Jeanne and I worked nonstop from this point. My formerly mellow existence was now on overdrive. I sent emails out to friends whose spiritual paths I admired requesting titles for books; I contacted friends who made intentional jewelry and imported sacred objects from Asia. The walls were painted; bookshelves were under construction. It was happening.

As December 15th came and went, Jeanne and I both sighed. “It’s okay, I just know it needs to be open by December 21,” I told her. “Hmm?” Jeanne inquired. “I don’t know, but I feel that it needs to be in place and up

and running before the beginning of the Astrological year of 2012,” I answered. Try as we might, we couldn’t pull it together. The store opened December 21, 2011—according to the Ancient Mayan Calendar, the dawn of the last year of a 5,126-year-long cycle on earth.

In April of 2013, the next wave of Spirit started to surge. Teton Spirit Connection rolled in as a result of the constant requests we were getting in the store from customers wanting to find holistic healers and spiritual events and programs in the area. This time I had a clear vision, a magazine and website to connect and promote body, mind and spirit offerings. I hired Kristen Joy, graphic designer for the local magazine Dishing, to help me bring it all into reality. I began a Kickstarter campaign, raised \$11,000 in a month, and with the help of the community sent the first magazine to press the day we reached the Kickstarter goal.

Everything was happening so fast, it was propelling itself. If I took a moment to consider the magnitude of all that I had started in such a short time, I felt myself wobble. My rational mind couldn’t fathom how on earth I could be pulling off two new businesses, my spiritual consultation business as well as my family, much less my own spiritual process and wellbeing. I really felt like I was on a surfboard—if I didn’t

look down or hesitate, I managed to keep everything humming along, but if I questioned it, something seemed to fall apart. For example, when I started to worry about being enough of a presence for my children, one of my employees would get ill or give notice. The curiosity of it all was that it didn’t feel like it was my agenda. I truly felt as though everything I was doing was part of a bigger plan that I didn’t understand. I just had to trust.

Within the year some other really cool spiritually inspired offerings and businesses were popping up in the valley alongside those that have quietly existed here for years. This gave me confirmation that body, mind and spirit connection was becoming a full-time and public presence in Jackson Hole. Both Medicine Wheel Wellness and Intencions (now known as Lotus Vibes) were also hosting classes, workshops, and group meditations. The yoga studios began to expand their programming offering classes on the benefits of mindfulness, kundalini, essential oils, and more. A holistic-minded identity was emerging in Jackson Hole.

One spring day in 2015, I was walking the hills in the National Forest behind my house looking at the valley spreading out before me. The air was fresh and the neon green of new growth was everywhere. Suddenly I recalled a past-life reading I had received back in 2006 from local intuitive Carol Mann. I’d been familiar with the idea of reincarnation—that individual souls return to earth time and time again to experience different incarnations and thus experiences and lessons on the path toward enlightenment. Always curious and wanting to know more about Carol’s intuition, I had signed up for a

session. Carol’s focus was past lives that were coming forward because they were relevant to my lifetime now.

“In one, you were a young woman here in America. You and your family had a store on the Oregon Trail. You were selling provisions to the pioneers making their way West. In another, you were a man. You were also on the Oregon trail. You were one of the pioneer leaders guiding people, showing them the way to the New Frontier.”

At the time of the reading, I didn’t know what to make of what Carol told me. Intuitive myself, I had had plenty of past-life recollections that seemed far more exciting—especially when visiting places in Europe or Asia. These lives she spoke of didn’t seem to tell me anything about myself other than that I had chosen to move and settle in the West after growing up on the East coast.

But eight years after that meeting with Carol, I looked toward the snow capped Tetons and a chill ran up my spine as the thought rang through my head: “That’s what I am doing! I *am* selling provisions to help people along their way into unexplored territory. I *am* forging the path and helping others find their way into the “New Frontier,” that unexplored place inside ourselves that leads us toward our truth.

Now, I finally recognize my inspiration. I opened my shop to establish a friendly non-denominational place that prioritized spiritual seeking and curiosity. I started Teton Spirit to create a presence and voice for the holistic community that exists here. The time has come to make it known that indeed this beautiful valley connects us to our heart centers.

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