

## HOLLIE B

Cosmic woman, sacred space weaver, mama and R.E.b.E.L.

# Being a Woman of the Red Tent

Hollie has been facilitating Women's Circles for twelve years.

Can you imagine a world where women feel comfortable to discuss the issues closest to their hearts? Can you imagine what it would be like for our daughters to grow up in a society that does not shun the big, common, beautiful and traumatic situations that we all experience as we grow? This is the world we aim to create with the Red Tent.

Circles of women have been coming together since pre-history to support each other as mothers, sisters, and elders. Once a sacred part of cultural practice, shifting later to smaller non-formal gatherings, and recently returning to organised events, popularised by the Red Tent Movement.

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Always, throughout time the Women's Circle has been a place where the women of a community would come together to empower one another in shared space.

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Together in Circle, we acknowledge that we are all equal, although the journeys that led us here may be very different. We create a supportive space to share and grow, initiating ourselves into the deeper meaning of connection; individually, environmentally, emotionally and politically.

The Circle provides us with an authentic, intentional space to share our stories, or witness the stories of others. It reminds us that we are not alone.

Each woman present is honoured for the part she plays in the co-creation of the space, either through speaking or listening. This is why women's circles have been called Secret Women's Business, for it is a place where

women find nourishment through integrity and trust.

A carefully facilitated space for women allows us to speak to topics we may not have the opportunity to be present with in everyday life. Everyone's life is busy: caring, nurturing, working, creating ... in the Circle you are allowed to simply Be.

And here's the really cool thing. When women share stories in facilitated space, it opens up pathways outside of the Circle. Women return home, to work, to wherever they belong in the community and the authenticity ripples outward. So that it is not only the women in Circle positively impacted, but everyone she touches.

Some people might feel confronted with all this talk of authenticity and sharing. Sharing yourself so fully is outside the box of common society. We've been taught, "if you don't have something nice to say, say nothing at all" and "don't air your dirty laundry in public..." Yet, throughout my years as a facilitator and circle goer, I have seen that it is the most empowering experience of all. To connect with others in a space of non-judgement and acceptance is liberating.

In everyday life, often we keep our feelings inward for the fear of being told to "toughen up", or "it's about time you moved on" or whatever well-meaning advice others will give. In a Red Tent, we don't give advice. We listen. Our reality shifts. We learn things about the world we could never imagine.

In my years of facilitating, no two Circles have ever looked the same. It's simply a safe space created by caring people with a commitment to empathy and compassion. Being in the Red Tent allows questions and concerns to surface, and puts things into perspective.

When individuals experience this kind of personal healing, we have greater power in our own lives. The healed



individual takes their healing out to the world and is an active part of healing entire communities.

My Red Tent spaces are not happy, hippie, self-help circles. We don't sing Kumbaya. I facilitate spaces for women to Be, and to feel supported in that Being. In these spaces it doesn't matter who we are at home, what we do at work, what we have to do tomorrow. We just get to Be exactly as we are — in that moment — without apologies. And we get to do it in a supported space.

The essence of the Red Tent is the commonality of Being Woman. In one woman's story of pain, or hope, or joy, or loss, we find something of our self. And we grow. That is true healing. That is how we fill our cup. Whether you are the Story-teller or the Witness. There is something for every woman in the Red Tent.

I hope you understand now, what it is to be a Woman of the Red Tent. We are empowered, wise women of great strength, even through vulnerability. I invite you to join us.



Hollie B. has been facilitating Women's Circles for twelve years. She has been a significant supporter of the world-wide Red Tent Movement, and is well known in Australia as a presenter on the Women's Mysteries.

Find Hollie B. at: [instituteformselfcrafting.com](http://instituteformselfcrafting.com) or [facebook.com/redtentinthewood](https://facebook.com/redtentinthewood)

## SUE LYONS

Retired teacher, yoga instructor

# Teaching passion

Susie Edmonds caught up with Sue and ended up recording her life story starting from childhood

I was born in Chester in the UK in a very small nursing home right in the middle of the city where a lot of my family and friends were also born. I had what I thought were very elderly parents, my mother was forty when I was born and my father was fifty-seven. I thought I was brought up quite strictly; in that era we all were. I had lots of friends in the neighbourhood, so we used to go out and play games all the time and we didn't have any restrictions on what we did.

I went on a lot of bike rides, things you would not be allowed to do at that age now. I used to walk to school when I was seven, three miles through the city and around the city walls and nobody ever thought anything about it.

*[SE] Which of your parents would you say was the stronger influence?*

*[SL]* I think I'm more like my father in the sense that I followed a career, which is not the same but similar, that I have always been very interested in analysing things and planning — that type of thing. My father was in the army and ended up working with

Winston Churchill in the war office. He liked working in teams.

It's difficult because my mother was also extremely good at sport and wanted to train as a PE teacher but had appendicitis and wasn't allowed to go. She played cricket for the south of England, she was very sporty, and really they both were. I suppose it was natural for me to be sporty as well. I had a half brother and sister, quite a bit older than me, who weren't particularly sporty, so I think a lot of that influence came from my father.

*What in your life has been a major part of shaping the person you are now?*

Well, my father died when I was twenty-two and my mother when I was twenty-three, so I had an amazingly tough ten years after that, trying to find out who I was without them being around.

I would say my mother for her kindness, and I have always felt the most important thing in life is to always be kind to people. So that's something I

don't find difficult to do. I was brought up that way and I thank my mother for that. And my father for the direction he took and the way his brain worked, I suppose.

*Your profession is as a teacher?*

Yes. Always. I trained as a teacher of physical education and art and specialised in dance. Taught for six years and then went back to study dance in more depth and then went into lecturing and university training teachers to teach dance. Wrote a book on dance, wrote a book on women's lacrosse, coached the England and Wales women's lacrosse teams.

*What fuels the fire of your passion for teaching?*

I think it's treating people differently, learning how to treat people as individuals, seeing those individuals make progress.

Working against the system as well as with it because that's not always the way teaching has gone. Trying to stand up for a different way of teaching because I did actually spend my early years at a school that was very child centred. I was at a Froebel school, where we didn't sit at desks, we did a bit of writing but not much, we built African huts, we did gardening, cooking, and painting.

It was all about children learning at their own pace and learning through different media. So when I was eleven I got quite a shock having to go sit at a desk and it's only now that I realise I was probably quite dyslexic so I did find school, apart from the practical

SUE (AT BACK CENTRE) WITH HER WOMEN'S YOGA GROUP AT BRAG.

