Born and raised in Los Angeles, Brooke West moved to San Luis Obispo to attend Cal Poly, and graduated in 1997 with a B.Sc. in Ornamental Horticulture. Already battling with Bipolar Disorder and depression, the tragic suicide of her sister in 1999 left Brooke struggling to support herself emotionally and financially.

While attending a Bikram yoga class in 2002, Brooke says she had an overwhelming feeling, telling her, “This is the thing!” In 2005, she became a certified instructor for Ananda Yoga®, a meditation and relaxation-based practice. She began to do intensive research on how Therapeutic and Restorative Yoga and meditation can affect an individual’s mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. Brooke focuses her practice on helping others coping with mental health and addiction disorders. She has helped her clients with issues such as grief, cancer, weight issues, chronic pain, anxiety and other mental and physical disorders. She believes that, “Yoga therapy can improve the quality of life, augment the efficacy of clinical treatment and draw upon other curative dimensions of the human experience and spirit.”

As Brooke’s message and reach began to expand, she realized she needed some professional support concerning the day-to-day operations of running a business. She reached out to Mission Community Services Corporation, who introduced her to Lorna Whiteaker, an MCSC consultant. Lorna helped Brooke evaluate where she was in terms of her finances, showed her the path to financial stability, and encouraged her to have a broad vision for her business. “She seemed to know just what I needed right when I needed it. She helped steer me in the direction of my big goals – one movement, one breath at a time.” Brooke says.

In addition to helping her see the big picture, Brooke’s consultant gave her a specific path to follow to realize her goals. She helped Brooke create an Income and Expense Report, improve her time-management skills, and create a three-month “safe path” for Brooke to steadily increase her income. She also helped Brooke define programs for her private Yoga Therapy practice. “Lorna and MCSC helped me in ways I never expected!”

“Brooke has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve through her business.” Says Lorna, “She is committed, proactive and does her homework. She does not let the obstacles and the unknown stop her but instead seeks out guidance and support to keep her on track.”

In April of 2015, Brooke was certified at Ananda Yoga® Therapist level. She now consults, teaches locally, creates therapeutic programming for clients and governmental agencies, and travels around the state holding “training the trainer” workshops. She purchased a new car, and has regained control of her financial life. The best thing about her business now is how seamlessly it fits into her lifestyle. “I think the hardest thing about running a business is self-care,” she says. “Yoga and lifestyle management have all but arrested my symptoms, and I know that it can do the same for others.” She sees herself as an advocate for mental health and Yoga Therapy, a researcher and educator sharing her knowledge and gifts through her thriving business to help others overcome their disabilities. And she encourages others to seek out the support and resources they need to reach their own goals.

“Whether you are starting a business or pursuing wellness, you have to be willing to do what it takes. Willingness brings awareness, and awareness brings action!” Well said, Brooke!