

## COMING BACK TO LIFE

The paradigm we're currently living in makes assumptions that most of us consciously and unconsciously live from. Some of these are beliefs in scarcity and lack, that someone needs to lose for us to win, that we have to use coercion, convincing, manipulation or people pleasing to meet our needs and feel happy and fulfilled. These largely unconscious ways of seeing and living in the world inform every aspect of our lives and how we are interacting with ourselves, our families & friends and the larger systems that we are embedded in.

I want to use my energy to transform my own self, of course, and that work gives me the energy to want to share my inner freedom with others and the systems we interact with and pay for everyday. In my experience, the support of a group of like-minded individuals or a whole community is a precious asset in going about transforming our automatic responses to responses based on choice and inner wisdom. Learning to have real authentic dialogues based on mutual needs, rather than using my power unconsciously to try and meet needs, is a whole other way of living that creates clarity and deeper understanding between people.

In the practice of NVC, dialogues based on needs is one of the ways that we transform our relationship with unconscious relating patterns and move more fully into what serves us and the world more directly. We also work with core belief inquiry and transformation to help us look at the root cause of our suffering which is often in our thinking and stems from unconscious assumptions or beliefs. There are different ways to go about this: one approach is transformative role-plays to access parts of ourselves that are holding pain in relation to a specific relationship or event in the past.

The healing and movement forward that takes place is not only for my benefit, it is obviously inter connected with my presence in the family, community and society as a whole. So we engage in conscious dialogue about making clear agreements that serve the relationship, community, group of any kind, in order to meet more human needs in that system. I have found within my own life that I naturally gravitate towards community, instead of isolation, because of my natural impulse to celebrate and interact with others has come back to life.

The practice of Nonviolent Communication has helped me to look at my relationships and the conflicts I am having as sources of precious information about my beliefs and thinking that is based in win/lose scarcity and fear based mentality.

Using this as a guide to show me where there is wounding, confusion and projection, I have transformed many of my relationships through taking full responsibility for the impact of this way of being on others....The two wings of NVC to me are total self responsibility and the practice of being in loving-kindness and acceptance of myself and others..... Only by taking full responsibility for our conflicts and using them to go deeper into the cause of our suffering do we really have the power to transform chunks of our

thinking that are contributing to inner and outer shame, depression rage and helplessness.

In NVC, one of the ways we use our power is by taking action to meet needs. Being able to take effective action entails having the belief that we can transform our lives and have access to that transformation. That is why looking deeply at our belief systems and our unconscious thinking (which also entails looking at needs) will often offer us insights into our current limited strategies and provide us the opportunity to stretch into what we envision. We also often hold grief, fear or other emotions somewhere inside of ourselves that are blocking us from taking full effective action.

Miriam Greenspan, from her book *Healing Through The Dark Emotions* says :  
"As much as it has taught us about our feelings, conventional psychology bears a large share of responsibility for what keeps the dark emotions pathologized, privatized and disempowered. With the increasingly popularization of a post-Freudian view of the psyche, the inner child,

whose sorrow, fear, and despair can be cured psychiatrically has become an accepted idea in the culture. Emotional pain is increasingly seen as a disorder that can and should be treated, if not through traditional talk therapy, then by swallowing a pill. This orientation has made it difficult, if not impossible, to see how the dark emotions we feel are shared throughout the human family, what they tell us about our relationship with the world, and how to heal ourselves through more collective means. Most of the therapist I know have worked for many years with the victims of terrible injustices such as incest, child abuse, and domestic violence are aware that many seemingly private wounds are rooted in a damaged and damaging social environment. This is true for all of our emotional wounds, but not always in obvious ways. Therapy alone is not enough for those most damaged by the world. Being heard and held in community is something even the best therapist cannot offer. Yet the lack of such community is a source of wounding to us all. In the deep structure of emotion, there is an inescapable link between the self and the world."

In living and applying Nonviolent Communication, Focusing, Circle Work and other practices for coming back to life, we can experience what is naturally ours – an intimate relationship with the natural world, our bodies wisdom, our psyche, and with the many aspects of being human.

Taking a deep dive into RELATIONSHIPS in all of its forms (interpersonal, group relationships, family relationships, and how we relate to systems in the world), we may learn to source our leadership from a new depth of connection with our own deep wisdom and intuitive knowing, staying attuned to the patterns in our lives, creating a new level of effectiveness and awareness in all of our relationships - coming together in community to co create how we want to live in the world, on the Earth and with each other.

Establishing learning communities is an invitation to remember our natural inheritance as an intricate part of the larger unfolding web of life. The opportunity is to begin to shift our center of gravity: out of what is conditioned and separate into what is ever becoming and connected to all life. Through intimate and conscious encounters – with each other, our own depth of body wisdom, the known and unknown aspects of ourselves and with the larger earth community that awaits – we will learn to listen and respond to the way life continually evokes us forward. By re-remembering our place within the unfolding fabric, we support our ability to live in a more conscious and mutually enhancing way with all life.

Realizing and having direct experiences with our own INNER TRUE NATURE through commitment to practicing the INNER RELATIONSHIP, we will come to know in our bodies, hearts and minds that we are not separate from nature but are beings in process, evolving side by side with the rhythms and cycles of the rest of life. Weaving group process, inner transformation practices and nature immersion, each experience will inform and guide the next step, supporting us in staying attuned to the unique movement that seeks to express through each of us.

We also lean into building communities of PRACTICE in learning new ways of being together by engaging in social transformation projects that resonate in our body heart and soul (for example : a group that works to clean up rivers, to provide empathic listening to children, to create opportunities for circle work to enter a system, to create a practice group for Restorative Circles, Nonviolent Communication and/or Focusing, to create a support group for people or a café for conversations).

Here are some of the ways we have learned to come back to life together, as parents, life partners, friends, and colleagues :

### **Nature Connection**

Enjoyment, like praise, is one of the most beneficially healing and naturally occurring states. You only have to watch a child or an animal to find that out! Having relationships with non- human beings is an important part of life. Being in tune with all the aspects of the life around us is deeply nourishing and invigorating. All of the basic life healing practices in wisdom traditions, such as Native American life practice and Traditional Chinese Medicine, have a solid link and grounded practice in nature connection. Nature is always present and we have an easy way of being present and relaxed and happy if we tune into it! This is a way of being and doing that pervades everyday life. Enjoyment, like praise, is one of the most beneficially healing and naturally occurring states. We aim to come back to more aliveness in nature, experiencing the present moment alone and in group settings outside, beside a brook or a fire. It has been a huge part of our personal healing.

### **Mentoring and Communities of Practice**

In healthy, traditional cultures, mentoring is the primary method of facilitating learning and connection - everyone is a mentor, everyone has many mentors - for the length of life's journey. The mentoring model is a universal heritage; we respond quickly to its

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loving touch. This wing of the program provides you with opportunities for individual mentoring and communities of practice mentoring.

Communities of people who learn together from engaging in shared inquiries into issues of their shared practice is as old as humanity itself. It is just that now we are becoming conscious of it. Developing new individual and collective capabilities together, we also develop friendships that, in turn, provide the emotional energy of sustained and generous attention to one another. When that attention is there, the joy of shared discovery and understanding flows freely among friends and through the community.

### **Group Life Practices**

begins with the exploration of the benefits of being in circle with other human beings. From there we explore different ways of relating together in groups, participatory leadership models, and using NVC consciousness and skills to aim towards living as fully in consideration of everyone as we can while still meeting needs for effectiveness and prioritizing of energy. Some of the practices we have been exploring for some years now are: Open space, world cafés, NVC group decision making, consensus and transformational conflict practices such as Restorative Circles, Empathy circles, etc.

### **Inner Life Practices**

To really transform our selves and society, I believe personal inner work and work towards societal change go hand in hand. If I am learning to embrace and transform my inner wounds, and transforming my thinking into a more life serving one, I naturally have more energy and motivation to contribute that energy to the structures that I live within. If I am looking at myself as disconnected from the whole, with my own unique brand of personal dysfunction instead of looking at the bigger picture of myself as part of the whole and as my individual symptoms as a sign of a much larger societal dysfunction, then I believe I have more inquiry and empathy to discover and experience. My experience is that when I look deeply at my thinking and my actions, I can see where I am still living from the cultural beliefs that I was raised with, and then have a choice whether those beliefs are still serving me and the world. Some of them are based on fear, shame and scarcity and don't seem to serve anymore. When I notice myself justifying my actions or words, when I see myself abandoning my inner integrity to distract myself from suffering, when I see myself drift into my old habits of seeking comfort and security, I now know to inquire deeply into what I am assuming in the moment and feel grateful to move into a closer intimacy with the parts of my experience that I am fencing off. In exploring, defining and developing our relationship with our inner world - the conscious and especially the unconscious - we have been surprised at how many unquestioned beliefs about being a human being in this world are lying beneath all of the choices we are making. We have been practicing every day Focusing, Insight Meditation and other inner life practices and really value the deep insight and change from living from the inside out. We believe that change is only possible by being the change.

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