

Healing the Self, Restoring the Earth

Sunday 19th April 2015 2 - 5.30pm GCH, London

REPORT

'We live in a technological age in which we are increasingly out of touch with our environment and the consequences of this are damaging for our spiritual, mental and emotional health and our relationship of care with our environment and the world as a whole'.

With 50 present, a fascinating afternoon seminar took place looking at pathways back to our inner and outer harmony with the world around us.

Ian Siddons Heginworth, is a leading practitioner, innovator and teacher of environmental arts therapy and author of *Environmental Arts Therapy* and *The Tree of Life*. He opened with the words 'It is all about love and loss'. In environmental arts therapy both masculine and feminine energies are brought into play. *It is a fact that in the cultural paradigm that we are all steeped in is about the masculine - achievement, status and qualifications and the inner 'feeling' feminine side of our nature is perceived as irrational and best avoided. We tend therefore to stay out of our heart and inside our busy chattering minds and in so doing the tendency is to neglect the inner feminine and lose connection with our heart.* Ian shared very poetically and passionately how he uses the natural world to support a return to emotional wellbeing. Here are a few points:

- Therapeutic use of natural materials, locations, themes and the connection to the cycle of the natural year are used to seek the metaphors, at every part of the year, for what is happening within us.
- Nature offers us the most startling synchronicities and astounding metaphors.
- In all the therapeutic work we are moving towards feeling, to welcome and not to avoid it.
- Nature provides a natural container to hold all that we don't want....Grief for example, is not just sadness, it is conflicting feelings that make little sense....and we can find a place for all these feelings in nature, in her wildness.
- Fear always sits on top like ice and when this melts then all our feelings can rise.....yet we often feel that we will never recover from this sorrow. .
- We all have a lot of 'dead wood' within our subconscious and this needs to be burnt.....so we can return to a place of love.
- Nature offers an ever changing canvas, an incredible palate of colour and texture; form and shape, in which to express what we are feeling.
- We move through feeling in the same way that water moves through the world...in a cycle. Sometimes we are laughing streams, sometimes we are great powerful rivers, sometimes ambient estuaries; a stagnant bog, a whirlpool, rapids.....as long as we keep moving we are ok.
- It is when we try and stop the flow that we become unwell.in different ways.
- As long as we move towards feeling and allow it to move through us we can stay well.
- The quality of April is the quality of the egg...we are born but not yet hatched....we have not quite arrived yet. It is time to do the tasks of clearing the dead wood within so we can allow the inner wedding of the head and heartso our creative joyful self can rise.
- If we wish to transform this wounded earth we must remember to begin within our own hearts.

- We have always had an intuitive relationship with nature.....involved in the cycle of the turning year both inside and out.
- Do we still believe we are part of that? No...can we close the door and pull down the blinds and shut it out?.....We are part of nature.
- We are human beings not human doings. We need our natural habitat...we are souls of unimaginable courage and it is time to feel who we really are for our own sake and our beautiful earth as well.

Dr Joanna Kitto, lecturer in psychology and Brahma Kumaris representative for the environment in the UK, shared how she started on the inner journey towards the heart when she started to meditate. With a background in academia she was firmly in a 'head space' and it has taken time to come into the 'heart space'. Points from her talk:

- Nature listens to the rhythms and cycles and temperatures
- Nature always knows the best time and the right time to do things
- Animals have a heightened ability to listen to the signals of nature and act on them.
- Human beings are disconnected from this because we don't listen to our hearts.
- We tend to find ways also of being in denial to what is going on in our minds and bodies.
- Are we really listening and reading the signals. Am we really acting on them?
- We get caught up in the belief that we are somehow 'not enough'. Consumerism and consumption is driven by a great feeling of inner emptiness...so there is always the search outside for 'treasures'
- Exhaustion is a signal we are not listening to the self.
- We need to regularly listen to ourselves throughout the day so we can pick up the signals and then take the right action.
- Going out into nature and connecting with myself then 'meeting' nature in my fullness is very powerful.
- We can go out to nature very depleted and use nature to bring us into the present moment, but often then we go back to the same state.
- When we get physically desynchronized...through shift work, or technology.....the one way we can reset is with physical light.
- Spiritually the thing that resets us is our own inner light and also the external source of light helps us come back to ourselves....

After a tea break, Ian led everyone into a therapeutic workshop, inviting us to make a tree from pieces gathered from nature. Having done this we explored in pairs the significance of our trees. And then using drama we looked at what was the 'driftwood within' the limitations keeping us in the 'egg state' and we acted out hatching from these old beliefs, or self-limiting habits by pushing against them...to burst out into new life, new ideas, new vision.

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