

Inner Fire Mission

Inner Fire, a healing community, offers a *choice* for adults to recover from debilitating and traumatic life challenges with minimal or no use of psychotropic medications. We believe in the power of choice.



inner  fire

Summer 2022 Newsletter

My Story

by Seeker, BS

The anxiety, panic and intrusive thoughts were taking over—incapacitating me like never before. I knew it was a product of the aggressive taper prescribed by my well-meaning psychiatrist. Following my most recent hospitalization my psychiatrist desired to decrease as quickly as possible the obscene levels of antipsychotic the hospital had put me on. It was August 2019, a day before I was to fly to Inner Fire in Vermont for my three-day visit. I wanted to make my flight but the withdrawal's impact on my mind and body induced a catastrophic level of fear with which I was incapable of dealing. This prevented me from going on my flight by severely compounding my previously manageable fear of flying.

I continued to taper at home during the next year and half, during which time I experienced much growth and learning. I discovered a different story about “mental illness,” partly inspired by learning about Inner Fire. I also did research with such materials as Kelly Brogan’s [A Mind of Your Own](#) and Robert Whitaker’s [Anatomy of An Epidemic](#). These sources opened my eyes to a new paradigm that was hidden from me by mainstream psychiatry. I learned that my brain chemistry was not necessarily unbalanced and I likely did not require psychotropic drugs for the rest of my life. Immediately, I went to work on my lifestyle. I quit cigarettes, alcohol, caffeine, and other such unwholesome substances. I changed my diet, giving up gluten and dairy (to which I was sensitive) and avoided processed foods. I started walking, meditating and doing yoga. I tapped into a wellspring of hope to serve as motivation to change my life, knowing that proactivity is the key to my healing. I started to believe that healing is my birthright. I would never again allow doctors to tell me otherwise.

But these changes weren’t enough. The taper at home was challenging, full of myriad withdrawal symptoms. At one point I was hearing voices portending my immediate death, as I walked for hours lost in an unfamiliar city. It was this incident that led me back to Inner Fire. The lead up to this trip was filled with anxiety and panic. My logical brain told me that the previous tapering had been difficult, so the prospect of too much tapering at Inner Fire was daunting. I assumed it would have to be more aggressive given the time constraints, which meant that the withdrawal symptoms would be worse. These thoughts plagued me. What if the voices returned? What if I got lost again, this time in the woods of Vermont? What if I ended up in the hospital again? And my big

A Gut Friendly Diet

By Timmy Richards

Inner Fire Chef and Culinary Guide

Being at Inner Fire has allowed me to express my cooking in a much more healthy and gut friendly way. The approach has been to eliminate any and all processed foods that can cause a multitude of both physical and mental health issues. Eliminating sugar and wheat and the use of more lacto fermentation. I have found, in my little time here, the results to be immensely effective. In the past decade or so I have had to be very mindful of my stomach and what exactly I am putting in it. Being diagnosed with IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), undergoing many surgeries, having raised concerns about possible crohns disease, gluten intolerant and ulcerative colitis, and also being a chef for a living; I had to start considering how I was going to manage all this. In the beginning, it was probably the most difficult thing I have experienced when it came to my health...I have spent many years trying to eat healthy.

I have been doing a lot of research regarding a healthy, gut friendly diet being here at Inner Fire. I have the pleasure of seeing the benefits. I feel its my duty to promote this as a whole to the seekers while being able to empower them through cooking and developing new techniques which they will be able to bring home with them. Its truly a gift to be able to be part of something that I am truly passionate about besides cooking.



Engaging Creativity to Tune in to our Hearts



My Story Continued...

gest fear: What if it all becomes just too much and I want to commit suicide? While these thoughts and feelings could be overwhelming, I was stable enough to make the flight.

Finally, close to two years after first planning to come to Inner Fire, I arrived in Vermont. The idyllic location (nestled in the mountains of Southern Vermont) was heavenly. I also appreciated how little time there was for me to stew in unhelpful thoughts. The days were very full and active. But there were hesitations. Fears persisted in the back of my mind, but a question posed by Beatrice penetrated my soul. Was I ready to say yes to myself? I responded with a resounding “yes” as I joined Inner Fire the following week as a Seeker.

After a month of acclimating to the new environment and schedule, the imminent tapering loomed over me. Thoughts haunted me as I approached the day I was to begin to taper - similar to the thoughts and fears I had previously harbored. In the past these thoughts and feelings would trigger me, sending me into panic. My coping mechanism prior to Inner Fire was to try to ignore these fears, hoping they would go away, then getting angry when they reappeared. The day came to talk to the doctor about tapering off Risperidone, the antipsychotic. He suggested a taper that was more aggressive than I liked. I spoke up and advocated for a more gradual taper. At Inner Fire, we work on claiming our voice. Partnering with the doctor on the tapering process is a true collaboration. He doesn't dictate an approach but wants input from us, the Seekers. Inner Fire is truly about giving people choice: especially choice on whether or not to be on psychotropic drugs. If one chooses to stay on psychotropic drugs, the Seeker can choose a level that works for him/her. Empowerment of the individual is key. I felt empowered when I expressed a desire to have a more gradual initial taper. This collaborative relationship with the doctor was a refreshing change from doctor-patient relationships I had experienced in the past.

As I began to taper, I continued to adjust to the program. The day at Inner Fire is very ordered and rhythmic. In the beginning, it was grueling. We wake up at 6:15 a.m. Then there's only an hour of rest until the Seekers are finished with the day at 8 p.m. In the morning we are outdoors giving to the broader Inner Fire community through garden work, splitting wood, or felling trees. In the afternoons, we turn inward, focusing on therapies such as breathwork, eurythmy, spatial dynamics, speech arts, massage, and Haushka Artistic therapy. The days are very full. To

say there's an adjustment period is an understatement. The pace and diversity of activities called upon different faculties than I previously exercised, challenging my mind, body and soul. After many months of this structure and order, the logic and benefit became clear. Much like the rhythm and order of nature with the seasons and the daily rise and fall of the sun and moon, I naturally yearned for this structure. I feel it serves as the foundation of healing. After a period of time, my resistance to the schedule faded away and acceptance built. This structure also helped me during moments when I was not feeling well during the taper. Being engaged in activities such as outdoor work helped make these moments more manageable, and made them pass more easily. It helped ground me even when fear and anxiety were present.

However, it wasn't until the work I did with our psycho-synthesis therapist, Ami Ji, that I was able to transform the fear that arose as I tapered. Ignoring, distracting, and numbing myself used to be my norm. But with Ami Ji, I began to look at the fear, and view it as part of me—a part that was telling me something important about myself. It was telling me to be conscious of the taper, how it was progressing, and to be mindful of any changes that I experienced during this process. The more I looked at the fear as a loving part of myself instead of something I didn't like and something to be afraid of, the more this fearful part of me was integrated into my larger sense of Self. Then I could look at it with curiosity when it would appear. I would ask: *What's your message today? How are you trying to help me? As I did this work with Ami Ji, the fear steadily diminished. It all but vanished after a few months. There were, however, other tools I learned at Inner Fire to help me taper.*

Breathwork with Kailama also taught me skills and gave me tools to successfully weather emotional storms such as these fear attacks. I learned to breathe into my sacrum to help emotions flow through me. The key for me was learning to relax and trust the breath, instead of resorting to my pattern in the past where I forced the breath in and out of my abdomen. I would rest on my back and wait for my body to naturally inhale and then exhale with weight on my lower abdomen. This process has proven to be powerful. I can sit and breathe through intense emotions, knowing that I will be ok and the breath will be there to help me process these emotions. Over many months of breathwork therapy, I am breathing in a patient and trustful manner—an approach that has spilled over into other aspects of my life.

Engaging the program and therapies abated my fear during my time at Inner Fire. In fact, working with emotions and feel

Employment Opportunities

As our Seeker numbers increase, our staffing needs grow. We invite you to consider being part of our healing community! For current opportunities and more information, contact us at info@innerfire.us

Giving is Receiving Joy! Why I Created A Fundraiser For Inner Fire by Mitzy Sky

Looking forward to my birthday on March 21st, I decided to create a birthday fundraiser for Inner Fire on Facebook. I've been tuned in for a while about "giving back," and the joy and gratitude it brings into one's life. Feeling joy isn't just about getting things or about what I have. Giving is receiving joy, and it warmed my heart space to have the opportunity to give to a worthy cause!

The thought of Inner Fire and its work is not the first thing in peoples' minds regarding mental health and addiction care. But, It needs to be. Change needs to happen now. The mainstream media and most people in our society advocate the "disease illness" model for emotional distress and people's behavior. I knew that and saw that it would be challenging to get

support for what I was asking to raise money on a social media platform.

I wanted the fundraiser to do its best, so I called on some reliable friends. I know it's a naïve attitude, but I don't understand how insurance companies, and our governments could pay for programs where people cycle in and out rather than paying for a program that offers people a way to build their life from the inside out. Inner Fire would be where I would seek support if I were in emotional distress.

Knowing that I wouldn't be able to afford it, and neither would my loved ones, I decided to fundraise for the Support Seeker Fund so that maybe one person could get a three-day glimpse of the possibility of what "healing from within" could accomplish in their life experience. Mitzy Sky is a poet/writer/videographer/storyteller, who shares her work at

My Story Continued...

ings might have been the most challenging aspect of the taper. Luckily, Eurythmy with Katherine kept me grounded as a movement therapy. Artistic Therapy with Beatrice provided a safe space for me to explore my feelings as well as a space to explore creatively with such mediums as clay, pastel, and watercolor. Spacial Dynamics with Bruce explored the body's movement in space, and the healing of my emotional body could take place. Working with prepared texts in Speech Arts with Christa allowed me to access a rich range and depth of my voice that I have never experienced. After 11 months, I can sense a growing confidence, and recognize how limiting projecting the past into the future can be (as I did beforehand when assuming the taper would be severely challenging). The taper went remarkably well – the opposite of what I had expected. While I think I can point to specific aspects of the program that helped, these specifics combined together as a multiplier to accelerate the healing process. Having the space and time in this remarkably supportive community in this hilly, wooded, blissful location free from artificial and technological distractions and disturbances allowed my body, mind and soul to feel safe and at ease during the tapering process. Unexpectedly, through engagement with the program, my focus and determination increased. I am more at ease with emotions, and more patient with myself and others. I am more responsive and receptive; less reactive. I feel more able to accomplish goals if I set my mind on them. My will has grown stronger through many hands on and will-based activities at Inner Fire. And I have dramatically deepened my cooking skills, learning from our top-notch chef, Timmy, who prepares five-star meals together with the Seekers .

As I approach both the one-year mark at Inner Fire and my fortieth birthday, I look back at the past five years since I was first hospitalized and labeled bipolar. I feel gratitude. Back in 2017 I achieved my goals on paper, earning prestigious degrees and working in a white-collar job. I was earning good money in a desirable industry, but felt miserable and depressed. I longed for meaning and purpose, in a supportive, like-minded community. I found that at Inner Fire. I may not know what the future holds,

but I feel hopeful, grounded and at peace, more so than when I was on medication. I trust that not only am I capable of surviving life's challenges but I am indeed capable of thriving. That is my birthright.



Love of Glass

by Edel Byrne, Stained Glass Guide

My love for glass as a medium for expression began in Provincetown, Mass in 1990 ...walking commercial street, I happened upon an alley way stained glass studio with a stained glass ceiling. The changing colors reflected on the ground caught my eye. I stood for some time watching the design on the floor come to life as the light shifted. I was hooked. I made inquiries ,the owner was looking for a part time apprentice, and so the journey began.

I opened my own studio in 1993 developing a style I call lace lead work which allows me the opportunity to be more creative with the cut glass. For me a design evolves from a concept and grows and changes as I lay the pieces out. There are endless combinations of both shapes, colors and textures waiting to be transformed into a unique design.

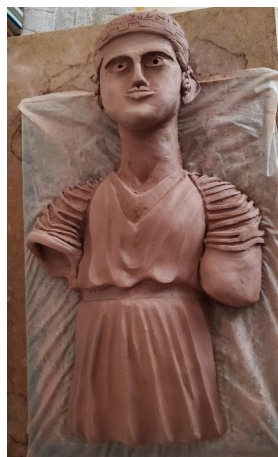
Over the past five years I have enjoyed sharing what I have learned with many Seekers. We have made small works of art and large panels, each unique to the individual exploring mixed media with wire and glass looking forward to that moment when the panel is held up to natural light. There is a sense of accomplishment in looking at the window of colorful light and simply saying "I made this".

To make a tax deductible donation to Inner Fire, you may send a check to:

Inner Fire 26 Parker Road, Brookline, VT 05345



26 Parker Road
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<http://innerfire.us/>



The Resiliency of the Human Spirit

I am so grateful for the courage and generosity of our seasoned Seekers who have carved the time to share with you a glimmer of their story. Inner Fire is not a 'holiday camp' and we take the healing process very seriously. Human beings are resilient creators and given the chance, surrounded by Love and Insight while engaging in the Inner Fire program which awakens eclipsed aspects of their body and soul, it is remarkable the reclaiming and healing that follows. It is important to stress that we do not 'fix or heal', but we faithfully facilitate and support the individual's healing journey as they stretch themselves and remain engaged despite the horrendous withdrawal symptoms of the psychotropic medications. I am awed and full of admiration and joy for these remarkable, striving human beings. Thank you, readers, for the numerous ways you support the choice we are offering. As a non-profit, your support is indirectly saving lives. Sincerely, Beatrice (Founder, ED, Director of the Therapeutic Program)

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