

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

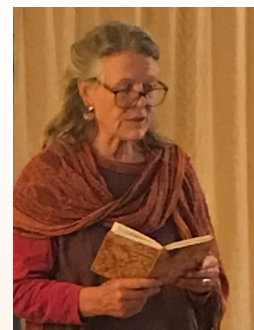
Fall 2021 Newsletter

Head-Based Intelligence

by Beatrice Birch, Founder / Executive Director

In previous newsletters, we have touched briefly on the unique soul forces of the three-fold human being: will-based and heart-based intelligence and now, we discuss head-based intelligence. Head-based intelligence goes beyond the dry intellect suggesting the possibility of a freer, creative and more dynamic thinking, catalyzed by the whole human being. We are like a symphony: each instrument is essential and serves the creative whole.

The remarkable individuals, longing to taper from their cocktail of mind-altering psychotropic medications, who engage in the comprehensive Inner Fire program which appeals to the whole human being, feel disconnected from their clarity of thinking, heartfelt feeling and ability to “do”. Many describe living a zombie type existence and when disconnected from one’s soul forces which define us as being human, the obvious question arises: “Is life worth living in this state?”



It is a joy to hear a Seeker declare in their early stages of tapering, “I can think more clearly”. “A wet blanket has been lifted!” I am beginning to feel myself again!” Many of us, whether on similar medications or not, find it difficult to sleep at night due to racing thoughts, or to carrying a thought through . . . we are bombarded by so many stimuli. Being quiet, learning mindfulness and developing boundaries are needed in our realm of thinking.

There are specific times during the week at Inner Fire when we sit together and focus on a subject either through reading and studying together, ‘sharing a question’ or writing poetry. Seekers dare to question, stretch beyond what is familiar (which is often unsatisfactory), and explore in the realm of thought, inspired also by their newly discovered and cultivated feelings. Sometimes, these new thoughts and feelings lead to inspiring action, which in turn leads to feelings of empowerment.

Helping striving individuals in their healing journey means supporting them to work consciously with their own Self: Body, Soul and Spirit and to reclaim their soul forces of free, non-habitual thinking, heart-felt feeling and intentional willing. As human beings, we have three choices; we can change habitual, body bound thinking. We are creators.

Coming ‘home’, feeling ‘whole’ . . . suggests a willingness to understand, embrace and grow from the pain, discomforts, joys and wonders of life. Being human is a process of evolving.



For more information about Inner Fire: www.innerfire.us.

Movement of My Soul

By Julie Knopf - Former Seeker

My return visit to Inner Fire, a place filled with many beautiful, painful, yet sacred memories, had been a long time coming. I was in the pioneering class of Inner Fire, which began in September 2015 and culminated in my graduation the following September. I haven't been back since, nor in contact with anyone until recently (my choosing). I will say, things had to get much darker before the seed planted at IF began to sprout and break the surface; bringing me to my current point, which feels like the early Spring of life.



Since reconnecting, Beatrice encouraged me to come visit and at last, I mustered the courage to face the past and make the trek to Vermont on a recent October Tuesday. I arrived in darkness. Before I could even turn off the engine, Beatrice emerged from the house, descending the familiar porch with her husband Tom close behind. I had been anticipating this moment with trepidation. How would it feel to see the woman who had, all those years ago, lovingly coaxed me out of hiding in Boston, welcomed my move to Vermont a year before the program was up and running, and seen me at one of the lowest points of my life, a season bound up with (ever lessening) shame and guilt? Tears came, along with feeling overwhelmed and wondering *'is this really happening?'*, as we three embraced.

Entering Grace Brook House, I was overcome by the beauty. It is as if Mother Nature herself put her skills to use constructing a nurturing space for human healing. The smell I could never forget. It was at once familiar and also new, as through the lens of the sober (in every sense of the word) and medication-free woman I am today. My soul can touch depths I haven't reached in decades. How humbling and amazing for my wizened and strengthened soul to now stand in a place where once I had felt so broken and fearful. I felt unbridled joy upon entering the breathtaking, warm-toned kitchen, a cavernous room that had brought a sense of safety and embrace on the mornings cooking with Audrie, the chef at that time, and where also I had tasted the finest food I've ever had.

Entering Grace Brook House, I was overcome by the beauty. It is as if Mother Nature herself put her skills to use constructing a nurturing space for human healing. The smell I could never forget. It was at once familiar and also new, as through the lens of the sober (in every sense of the word) and medication-free woman I am today. My soul can touch depths I haven't reached in decades. How humbling and amazing for my wizened and strengthened soul to now stand in a place where once I had felt so broken and fearful. I felt unbridled joy upon entering the breathtaking, warm-toned kitchen, a cavernous room that had brought a sense of safety and embrace on the mornings cooking with Audrie, the chef at that time, and where also I had tasted the finest food I've ever had.

It was extraordinary to move to and be in the living room, filled with books that store answers to many of life's questions and mysteries and see what has changed and what remains the same. My heart sang, being able to fall asleep that night in the *'Blue Room'*, where I had stayed during the Summer 2014 9-Day Sanctuary, my first taste of what could be. With the window open, the refreshingly sharp Vermont air and the music wafting from babbling Grace Brook outside, whispered to me in the delicious blackness that I was home again.



I awoke before dawn the next morning, excitedly taking the opportunity to do a bit more exploring of the farm house. I examined the art room, which still holds clay sculptures molded by me and a Seeker from my year here. The work of this year's Seekers was on display and I felt a strong sense of kinship with their remarkable soul striving. I twirled with delight in the Eurythmy room, a room I associate fondly with a Seeker who, like me,



was one of the first to commit to IF. There, I remembered my first lesson with Vadim and his enthusiasm at my performance, which I'd say was my most uninhibited mainly due to shock over what I was being asked to do!

The foyer at the bottom of the stairs was strung with drying herbs, planted and harvested at IF, and I felt a yearning to be a part of that process. It brought a smile to my face to see the glass jars in the kitchen cupboards filled with tea leaves collected from the land, my favorite having been the comforting, earthy blend of yarrow and nettle. And the bountiful spice cabinet! Turmeric has remained a magical spice to me since those days. What an odd sense of bliss to find two large mason jars of raw cow milk in the fridge.

I dressed and stepped outside as the first light touched the landscape. A fog blanketed the land, and as the world around me became illuminated, my jaw dropped in disbelief as my senses flooded with the familiar sights. I wrapped my arms around our friend Maple whom had gifted us her nutritious, life-giving sap to drink in the early Spring. I reacquainted myself with my favorite tree who affectionately reminds me of a Dr. Seuss character, and introduced myself to the gorgeous chickens, feeling the urge to squeeze them all and thank them for coming. I learned later that the coop construction had been led by Zach, a kind-hearted Guide who started at IF in the latter half of the first year. Then up the stone steps toward the stupa, and delight in discovering the addition of a badminton net and tetherball pole.

As I descended the hill to return to the house for breakfast, memories of moments past, images of Guides and Seekers alike, arose within like ghosts. Even the ones fraught with pain or conflict resonated as precious and nostalgic, part of the process we were in. Beatrice welcomed me back inside with a hug, tears of remembering and relief (and, yes, grief) streaming down my cheeks.

To Be Continued in Spring 2022 newsletter....

Former Seekers

If you would like to share about your journey at Inner Fire, your experience since, and your life now, we invite you to reach out. To remain anonymous, you may send a letter by snail mail to the attention of: Tomasz Jankowski at 26 Parker Rd Brookline, VT 05345 or email at Tomasz@innerfire.us

An Opportunity to Enable Choice

By Tomasz Jankowski, Chief Operating Office

What is choice? One would say, a “choice” is the range of different options from which one can choose, or an act of making a selection. We have gotten used to using this word and believing that this is, in fact, true. But, is it?

The last eighteen months, driven by several Covid-19 variants, have placed enormous pressure on the economy and healthcare and have contributed to the scarcity of the workforce. This may have been especially felt in the mental health domain as well as among those who live with the challenges of dependency on psychotropic medication. As those numbers continue to climb, we should finally recognize that the traditional system of mental healthcare delivery, based on hospitalization or over prescription of psychotropic drugs, may no longer be sufficient in addressing the issue of choice.

Fortunately, a choice does exist for those who see living medication-free as the only way to survive. Unfortunately, that choice comes at a high price and is unreachable for most. As a result, those who would otherwise thrive and succeed in an environment of safety and caring while tapering, frequently find themselves in despair, and some, unfortunately, decide to take their own lives. It does not have to be that way, as thousands of people would immediately benefit from the federal and state overhaul of the mental health and drug addiction outdated funding policies and mechanisms. Until that happens, organizations such as Inner Fire, must rely on fundraising support to develop a financial infrastructure that offers a true choice for those who want to break the shackles of dependency on prescribed medication.

Inner Fire’s mission is to be able to accept every eligible individual regardless of their ability to pay. Nearly every week Inner Fire is forced to turn away individuals who struggle with severe mental health and addiction challenges who would otherwise, greatly benefit from this program. The demand for our services is very high and continues to climb. We receive daily inquiries and requests from desperate individuals or their families about coming to Inner Fire. While we would like to accommodate them all, Inner Fire is only accessible, with few exceptions, to those with the financial means to cover the tuition. Over the past seven years, however, Inner Fire has been diligently building a team of big-hearted financial supporters who have shared their wealth in support of such an important cause. As we commence our eighth year, we are profoundly grateful to all those who

have supported Inner Fire and its Seekers in the past with their invaluable financial contributions and to those who will support us in the future.

New and Current Staff Update



Ami Ji Schmid joined us this summer offering Psychosynthesis. Her years of experience reassures and enables Seekers to dare to safely explore and embrace their life riddles and challenges as their self confidence grows.

David Naughton has enthusiastically taken up the gardening reins with weekly advisory support from John Donovan, our former biodynamic gardener who inspired all who gardened with him and significantly expended, beautified and broadened our crops. Thank you, David for your care and keen interest!



Katherine Stewart joined us this summer as our Eurythmist and Festivals coordinator. She guides the music evening which is full of beauty and joy, supports the weekly study, the evening programs and is even a relief chef!

Timmy Richard joined us in September as Whole Foods Chef and Guide. Being a professional chef, he manages the kitchen skillfully and inspires all of us with his creativity and enthusiasm. He empowers!



Tomasz Jankowski, DPT, MHA, MBA - In addition to his responsibilities as COO, Tomasz is responsible for managing the guide staff. We are grateful for his experience in health care administration and leadership which is helping guide Inner Fire to another level of development, strategic planning and growth.



Victoria Moyer joined us in August as Seeker Care Manager and Guide. We are delighted how Victoria gracefully, conscientiously and with initiative, navigates her responsibilities. Her love for gardening and movement is also deeply appreciated.



Support a Seeker Fund

We currently have three Seekers who would like to come to Inner Fire, and are on our wait list for a scholarship to partially fund the \$192,000 yearly tuition needed for them to join Inner Fire.

If you would like to donate to this fund, please complete the enclosed envelope and make your designated gift to this fund today!

October 2020 through September 2021 Giving

We extend our deep gratitude to each of you whose donations support our capacity to serve and help those with financial need engage in our program and reclaim their lives. We value you and are honored you are part of our team. In the last twelve months, financial donations totaled over \$160,000. Your generosity has enabled the following:



Clowning Workshop

\$25,000 for staff development

\$21,000 from Subaru Share the Love Fundraising event

\$10,000 Rudolf Steiner Grant - Expansion of our garden and purchase of garden tools and balance of the Wood-mizer, partially donated by **Mr. John Smith, CEO of Wood-mizer**. We are using the Wood-mizer to board our own pine trees with the goal of building a goat barn, picnic tables and Adirondack chairs to help finance our Support a Seeker Fund.

\$108,388 from individual gifts and donations has helped:

- * Upgrade of facilities for expanded office and other uses
- * Repair of Grace Brook Farm hearth room ceiling
- * Upgrade phone and IT system
- * Install Heat Pumps

We are deeply appreciative to the donor who provided a gift enabling our sponsorship of the important upcoming PBS documentary, *Medicating Normal*, which will air for 3 years starting January 2022. Don't miss it!

Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital donated an Elliptical Trainer, now in the East Wing basement being used by Guides and Seekers.

Amazon Smile - Any purchases we make using Amazon are done through Amazon Smile with Inner Fire as our designated non-profit. We invite you to make any Amazon purchases this way and designate Inner Fire as your supported non-profit. Funds raised this year through Amazon Smile purchases totaled \$88.85.

Countryside Alarms donated time and labor to put guards on our sprinklers in the East Wing.

Chip Greenberg and Linda Rubenstein for donating a hearty amount of apples for us to prepare apple products for the winter months.

2021 to 2021 Wishlist

- * **Support a Seeker Fund** - We have three Seekers on our waiting list who need partial support for their \$192,000 tuition to enable them to come to Inner Fire next year.
- * Complete attic and wall renovation of Grace Brook Farm House ensuring energy efficiency - \$40,000
- * 7 Bicycles for Staff and Seeker use - \$2000
- * 7 Pair of Snowshoes - \$1000
- * 7 Sets of x-country skis - \$2500

Poetry Night

by Ted Tronsen, Evening, Overnight and Weekend Guide

Each Tuesday the Seekers and I gather in the Hearth Room at Grace Brook Farm to read, write, and recite poetry. I provide a unique theme each week to inspire the Seekers to write a poem. Themes we have explored include: the sea, rain, mountains, the floating world, love, memories, friendship, the soul, Inner Fire, nature, the four seasons and the beach. We've also engaged in various writing styles, such as free verse, haikus, sonnets, and various rhyme schemes, some of which the Seekers have never tried before. My favorite creative writing style is free verse as it allows for the free expression of thoughts spontaneously. I encourage Seekers to use stream of consciousness, writing whatever comes to mind on the page in real time, impromptu. This has led to some very interesting poems and Seekers are always surprised to read what they've written at the end of the evening. Writing poetry builds confidence and promotes self-esteem as Seekers realize they are poets. Poets we have read include Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, Thomas Merton, Keats, Yeats, P.B. Shelley, Rilke, Roethke, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, Emily Dickinson. We review a biographical sketch of one poet each night to give the Seekers a better idea of what that poet's life was like. Seekers each select a poem to read to the group and we discuss each poem after it is read. I bring in new books every week so that the Seekers can be exposed to as many different poets as possible. The more poetry they read, the better poetry they write. They've come to love reading and writing poetry and it's truly been a pleasure to be a part of this group!



Employment Opportunities

As our Seeker numbers increase, our staffing needs grow. We invite you to consider being part of a healing community! For current opportunities and more information, visit innerfire.us or email laura.innerfire@gmail.com

Speech Arts as a Healing Therapy

by Christa Macbeth, Speech Therapist



There is a wide spectrum of artistic and healing therapies offered at Inner Fire, and among them is *speech arts*. *What are the Seekers being offered when we meet to spend almost an hour together, one on one?*

We don't need a lot of space for speaking, but we do need a sense of being able to reach into the distance (presently a long hall does a fine job this way). And there are few physical signs of what we do - maybe a small ball to throw or a scarf to flutter in the air ... Air is really our medium, and we use it as we work on tongue twisters, poems, stories, riddles and such. There will be nothing to see or hold when we are done.

But what does happen is that we stretch ourselves in such a way that we enter into the inner experience of whatever piece we choose. And this is perhaps one of

the most important aspects of what we do: focusing on the soul colors waiting to be uncovered in the written words. Uncovered, and given life through our breath. Practicing this means bending our psyche to a shape different from our own, expanding. It means stepping out of wherever we ourselves may be at a given time and surrendering to something different. It calls up flexibility, changeability. And that is the gift that this art can give us to help us steer our own soul's biography through the turbulence of life.



Michaelmas and Inner Fire's Seventh Birthday Celebration

September 29th was a festive day at Inner Fire when Seekers, Staff, family and friends gathered in the Hearth Room to observe a double celebration. The 29th of September has long been celebrated as the day of Michaelmas, when communities acknowledge human courage, creativity and initiative, as well as the spiritual light and presence which supports our work and our striving. James Pewtherer, our Board Chair, shared wise words on this topic and we also enjoyed artistic presentations of Poetry and Speech by Christa Macbeth, Singing by David Naughton, a Polish legend - read by Beatrice Birch, and Eurythmy by Katherine Stewart. Everyone participated in the swinging and ringing of iron bars at the end, our "community music!"



Next, Beatrice shared a heartwarming account of the beginning days of Inner Fire. How far we have come . . . With the support and guidance of so many friends! These stories inspired a quiet mood of warm appreciation for our many blessings.

A deliciously social potluck supper followed, and when darkness fell, we trekked up the hill to an impressive birthday bonfire constructed by the Seekers in the firepit near the East Wing. Seven years! As the flames crackled and sparked, and we celebrated our community and togetherness with singing. Such a gift, to sing together under the stars next to a warming fire. It was a moment for reflection, and to wonder: what will the next seven years bring?

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

Inner Fire 26 Parker Road, Brookline, VT 05345



“When I engaged in the 9 Day Sanctuary in February of 2015, I experienced a vibrancy and empowering energy that lifted my heart and soul. Upon visiting this fall, I find it is still here! I felt and still feel seen and deeply cared for by all Seekers and Guides. The fresh Vermont air and autumn colors enliven and feed me. I am deeply grateful for Inner Fire”. A Seeker

Inner Fire Newsletter

Fall 2021

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FIVE MAPLES

 inner fire
26 Parker Road
Brookline, VT 05345
<http://innerfire.us/>