

## 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

Spring/Summer  
Newsletter 2023

## Claim Your Feelings...

and then choose

## What to Do with Them!

*Beatrice Birch, Executive Director*

I am grateful. My life is enriched through the deep relationships I have had with numerous striving human beings seeking to reclaim their lives. I have learned a “particular something” from each Seeker which, in turn, has helped me become more conscious.

Numerous Seekers have had adverse and traumatic experiences while hospitalized or living in group homes, where they are not recognized as a struggling and striving human being but rather labelled and medicated with higher doses than actually necessary. There seems to be no tolerance or interest for “process”, which is a unique aspect of being human. The individual’s insights are not welcomed. No one has the time to listen to their life experiences or cares to understand what has led them to seek psychiatric support in the first place.

So perhaps you can imagine the Seekers’ incredulousness when they come to Inner Fire where we give little if any heed to labels, but rather want to know “who you are and what your aims are”. Additionally, we support Seekers in reclaiming their voice so that rather than denying or fearing their feelings, they claim them and can then choose what to do with them. There are so many options. But these steps are not easy, and, in fact, it is a threatening process for some individuals. For years, their feelings have not been acknowledged and the message has been to simply “get on with it”.

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## “My Experience at Inner Fire”

*A former Seeker*

I was at IF for 15 months and discovered so much about myself. The first day I arrived, I was filled with fear about my future. I had just kicked cigarettes a week before and was feeling the effect of caffeine withdrawal from the day before. The warmth I felt from the community members made me hopeful. The way they greeted me in the morning was so genuine.

A typical day began with breakfast at 7:00am followed by a walk outdoors or making a fire. We then would share our feelings in a circle and what we are grateful for that day. Depending on the day we would sing songs in the circle and do some type of movement. In the morning, we had outdoor activities such as working in the forest felling trees or, in the spring and summer, working in the garden. After an incredible lunch prepared by a Seeker and our amazing Chef Timmy, the Seekers would rest. The afternoon was always filled with therapies. IF has an array of amazing therapies such as spatial dynamics, Hauschka artistic therapy, speech, creative writing, psychosynthesis, breath work, and talk therapy with Beatrice.

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# Welcoming Change Within Inner Fire



*Cont'd from page 1*

Just think and do. Bypass your feelings. Could this state of Soul be what's referred to as "bi-polar"?

Animals have feelings too, but no choice as to how to respond. For them, response to emotions is instinctual or conditioned. A part of us aligns with the animal kingdom, however as human beings we have choices. We may have all felt like a victim at times, but the fact is that we DO have a choice about how to handle our emotions! To kindle an awareness of this choice and of the empowering connection with our Divine Creative Self is our goal at Inner Fire. Everyone here is respected as a Creator. But after having been demeaned for so long and having had one's integrity taken advantage of, the transition to trusting and accepting the Love and Recognition at IF is really challenging.

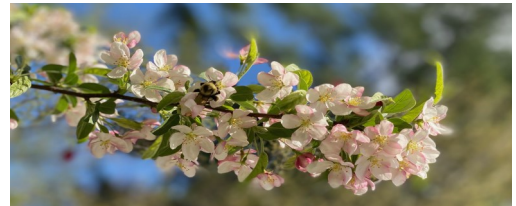
For countless years, too many individuals have survived the trauma in group homes and hospitals by not feeling, by disconnecting and therefore becoming less human. Rather than calling upon the resilience of the human being, the medication is dished out with very little understanding of the dangers of long-term use. So, when a Seeker once looked me straight in the eye and stated, "You mean it is up to me?!?", my inner voice said, "Yes, of course!", but simultaneously I wondered how someone could have thought otherwise. Minimal reflection led me to the understanding that those in the system who are struggling with 'mental health' issues, which at Inner Fire we refer to as "soul health" issues, are gradually conditioned to believe that "the pill will fix them", yet their experience is quite the opposite. How have we become a society where a struggling individual is expected to be passive and yet still heal?!



An extraordinary gift of more than \$300,000 for our Support-a-Seeker Fund has been received!

This gift leveraged another \$20,000 matching donation.

Another aspect of our mission is manifesting: Inner Fire must be available for individuals regardless of their financial situation. Please help make this a reality.



It is with deep appreciation that we can announce the acquisition of **"The Cottage"** due to the remarkable generosity of former parents.



Having the Cottage, kitty-corner to the Grace Brook Home, will help us provide housing for Guides. As many are aware, housing is a significant problem everywhere. There is much to do to the Cottage, built as a "smithy" in 1823, but it certainly has the makings of a lovely home. Such support means so much to us as we strive to meet the needs of those who aim to reclaim their lives.





# Feeding the Fire, Inner and Outer



Cont'd from page 1

are a lot of amazing hiking trails around IF. We usually went on 2 hikes per weekend, leaving time for Seekers to rest or take saunas, which I did frequently.

Diet is a big thing at IF. It is gut-friendly and there is no coffee, no sugar, lots of fresh vegetables from our garden, and locally sourced meats. Our chef makes personal connections with the farmers to ensure we are getting the best quality products. When dealing with mental health, diet is key! I lost 100 pounds over my time there because of the diet and the reduction in medications.

I started tapering 3 weeks after arriving. I remember being fearful because I was on 7 psych meds when I arrived. The tapering process is overseen by an amazing local doctor, Dr. Jesper Brickley. He tapered me little by little, 1 med at a time, very slowly; sometimes he'd have me tapering 2 medications at a time. Trazadone was the first medication that I tapered. It didn't seem difficult but when I began tapering Lithium, I stopped sleeping. No sleep can make the process of tapering very difficult. There were days when it seemed like months would go by without sleep. The theme at IF is to stay engaged, no matter what. That was the case with me. We can go for so long without sleep, be bumped around, and still keep going. With tapering, it's all about attitude, because there are days when you really aren't feeling well, but you are doing your best to stay motivated. The resilience of the human being is amazing!

I discovered a lot more about myself when losing weight and reducing the meds. I felt more energy and libido, being full of youthful stamina. Without a doubt I felt more focused. As a graduate from a Waldorf school, I found myself drawn most strongly to eurythmy. On the weekend, we took serious hikes, sometimes up to 6 miles. I read many more books, either self-help books or novels, whereas before I got to IF I could hardly read at all. My confidence in myself is higher because of Inner Fire and people notice it.

However, make no mistake - the recovery process can also be slow after being on meds for 8 years. It takes time for

the body to balance out and the mind to clear. The journey's been long. However, it seems to me that people are always recovering from something, whether it's a "rough night out on the town" or eating too much sugar. Life is never a finished product, but rather a continual work in progress.

The way the program is structured, routine is important and developing my will is an ongoing process. Playing the violin has become a part of my everyday routine, which it wasn't for over 12 years before coming to IF. Doing meditation twice a day and eurythmy is part of my routine. Also eating our meals together, always at the same time, is food for the will.

I played more music at IF than I had in over 10 years! There are a lot of opportunities to play music with Seekers, Guides, or therapists. I was able to make a connection with local musicians as well, like the world-famous violin maker, Doug Cox. I also joined the Windham Philharmonic Orchestra playing in the first violin section. Those kinds of connections were invaluable in my healing process.

For a week in mid-March, I went to Camphill Village Copake to experience their program, particularly the music therapy. Having my phone with me for the first time in over a year was triggering. I felt as though I was being drawn into something that was very scary and, frankly, addictive. I would use my phone for a few minutes and then go to the bathroom, come back to my room, and feel a strong need



to check my phone again. This is why IF's mission is to have as little exposure to technology as possible while in the program. I see the

*Final artistic therapy project*

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

*Inner Fire 26 Parker Road, Brookline, VT 05345*



# Expression Within the Seasonal Changes



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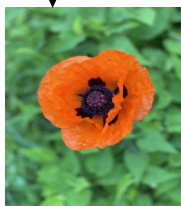
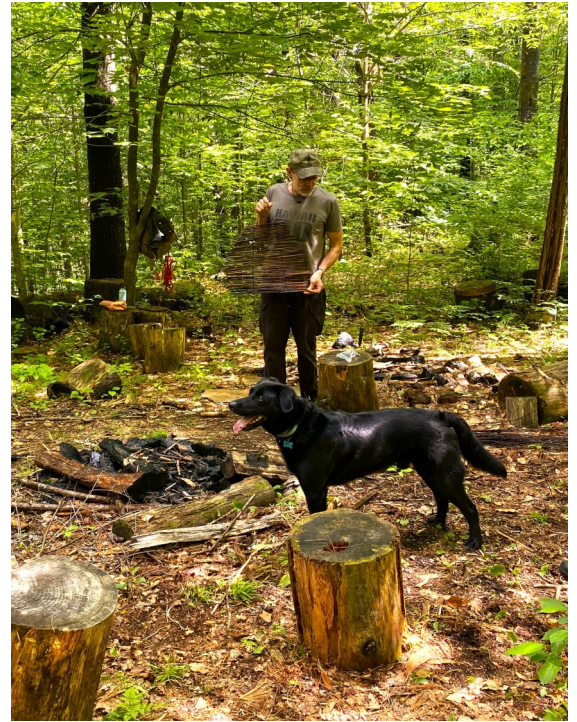
benefits of that and am thinking seriously about **ceasing** my use of technology.

Eating sugar and gluten during my stay at Camphill was also very stressful. I noticed having less energy and, definitely, less focus. Being in a new environment is hard enough, but eating different foods and using technology made it even more challenging. In a way I felt that it was a setback. It takes a lot of bravery to go out into the world again after being in a secluded and sheltered environment for over a year.

Going forward, I hope to apply the 'tools' I've learned at IF in my life and my 'toolbox' is getting very full. I came to IF heavily medicated. It was hard to speak up for myself because I was in such a weak state. Gradually, over time, I began to reclaim my voice and to not be afraid to speak my mind.

The beautiful thing about IF is that if you have an issue with someone in the community, it is more than ok to confront the person in a considerate but forthright manner. If the issue is not settled, we have a meeting and resolve it as a community. This approach was very helpful for me. In my past experience, if you got angry or spoke out of line, the facility would often just medicate you. Because of feeling liberated, in a sense, I became more determined, and my 'inner fire' is coming out more.

Looking ahead, I will go to Holland in September to study music therapy for 3 months. In the meantime, I will be working at Sam's, a local outdoor sporting goods store in Brattleboro. I plan to return to IF in the future as a music therapist. This program really worked for me, and I will continue to advocate for mental health patients who want to choose a different path than medication.



## 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](mailto:info@innerfire.us)

We are currently seeking exceptional human beings to join our community as Overnight Guides and Guides.



# Thoughts From a Donor

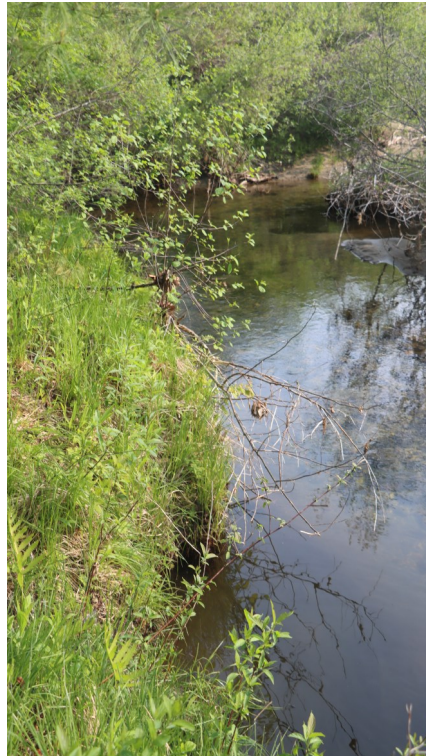
In navigating my way through the world of “planned giving” with some sort of true-to-my-own-values compass, my ever increasing passion for organically grown food as medicine, holistic healing modalities, and the Hippocratic Oath to *First Do No Harm* has been my philanthropical focus. During the past four decades, I’ve been deeply discouraged and dismayed to witness so much injury, suffering, and even three suicides caused by the harsh side-effects of prescription drugs taken by family members, friends, and acquaintances.

For example, a good friend of mine in his early sixties, whom I’ve known for over twenty years, was diagnosed in his twenties as “schizophrenic”. He became a client of the county’s local counseling service, with its staff of psychiatrists, social workers, and support workers, and its primary “therapy” of multiple prescription drugs. He managed to live independently on his monthly disability check in his own various apartments for about thirty years, food shopping and cooking for himself, frequenting AA meeting and church services, reading voraciously, (especially anything to do with spirituality), walking everywhere, and being well-liked and respected in his local community, despite his “disability”.

He became conditioned, hearing from the counseling services that he’d have to be “on meds” for the rest of his life. But during the most recent decade, he began to question that conditioning, and started seeking out alternative therapies such as nutritional supplements, meditation, therapists outside the counseling service, and even eliminating a drug here and there when he could get his psychiatrist’s go-ahead. Knowing I supported a more holistic approach, he’d proudly let me know when he’d successfully stopped taking one of his “meds”.

A few years ago, he was evicted from his Section 8 Housing apartment — why I don’t know — and ended up in a group home tied in with the same counseling service. He hated it there; his “meds” were more strictly supervised than when he was on his own, and he didn’t want to take them all. As of July 2020, his list of prescriptions was *ten* long, all to be taken daily! My guess is that his increasingly vocal and angry resistance to taking all the obligatory “meds” is what landed him a few months ago in the psych ward of a hospital, and then a few weeks later in a locked residential facility. Watch-

ing his mental state become so chaotic so rapidly, as he’s gone from living independently to being confined in supervised facilities with obligatory “meds”, prompted me to search on Robert Whitaker’s website, *Mad In America*, for some kind of alternative facility. There I found a lengthy “Provider Directory”. Narrowing my search to “Vermont,” I found Inner Fire, and after several conversations with the director, Beatrice Birch, we agreed my friend might be a fit. Sadly, however, I don’t see him getting to Inner Fire any time soon. His ability to communicate clearly has deteriorated so much since his apartment days that it’s difficult to make out what’s going on, and it’s also difficult to get information about him from the staff there. **In the meantime, I’ve learned about Inner Fire’s *Support a Seeker Fund*.**



I am so deeply grateful to discover that there are places like Inner Fire helping those who want to taper off their “meds”, and using alternative holistic approaches to do so. I’ve decided to help with tuition fees even though I don’t know who it is I’ll be helping. Just knowing that someone out there, who, like my friend, wants an alternative to prescription drugs, and knowing there’s a place like Inner Fire where

they can go for help, is such good news to me, after witnessing so much, drug-related suffering.

**I want to help create a ripple effect that will spread this good news far and wide, about how folks with so-called mental illness can be helped with organic and nutrient-dense foods, wholesome daily activities in a safe and natural environment, and therapies that *First Do No Harm*. I’m excited and proud to be a donor to the *Support a Seeker Fund*, and I remain ever hopeful for my friend’s peace of mind.**



# Moving Through the Seasonal Changes

## “The Ensouled Movement of Eurythmy”

by Katherine Stewart, Therapeutic Eurythmist at Inner Fire

One of the therapeutic activities offered at Inner Fire is Eurythmy, an art form inaugurated by Rudolf Steiner and friends in the first quarter of the 20th century. The name “Eurythmy” comes from Greek words meaning “true rhythm,” so as you might expect, Eurythmy is about finding and deepening healthy rhythms of movement, with the help and example of a trained Eurythmist. The rhythms and movements *what we hear* and sometimes *what we feel* in language and in music can become a deeply personal healing inspiration for developing our own movement.

Such work taps into the healing archetypes of nature, too, which offer us our most familiar experiences of rhythm: day and night, seasons of the year, light and dark, expansion and contraction, etc. Can you feel rhythm in the following poem: expanding into the boundless light of the Sun, followed by a contraction into the nurturing warmth of the Earth?

***Into my heart streams the light of the Sun,  
In my soul is working the warmth of the World.  
I will breathe the power of the Sun,  
I will feel the warmth of the World.  
The power of the Sun streams into me,  
The warmth of the World permeates me.***

**Rudolf Steiner**

As we become more conscious of how these rhythms shape us, and our trust grows in them, we can access their grounding power.

A special care of the Eurythmist is to engage the movement of the inner human being (the soul) first, in order to invite the body to come along naturally and trust the soul’s direction. For example, if someone asks us to “Extend your arm!” this is a very different experience than if we are asked to “Reach for the light!” Following both of these commands results in an extended arm, but “reaching for the light” is warmer and more inwardly active, as well as more inclusive of the whole person. It connects the soul to something outside of itself, and therefore to its environment. Engaging the soul with pictures, colors, moods, etc. is enlivening and empowering, and helps body and soul develop creativity and confidence together.



While we have goals for our own foundational success, we are realizing the importance of sharing the lifesaving paradigm we are creating.

***Helping to educate others is crucial as we face the future of the “mental/soul health epidemic”.***



Eurythmy has been in use for decades to help people work on their constitutions when dealing with specific health challenges of body and soul. I have worked therapeutically with people struggling with osteoarthritis, EMF sensitivity, learning difficulties, undiagnosed problems standing and walking, mold exposure, anxiety, liver and kidney problems, inability to concentrate, eye problems, migraines, cancer, teeth malformation, and many more. In all cases, engaging the interest and will is paramount. When we repeat the same exercise (sometimes with modifications) several times, we have a choice: do I choose to activate the part of myself which is tempted to be bored by repetition, or do I choose to activate the part of myself which looks for an opportunity to deepen my experience?

Dedication to deepening one's experience, with continued and observant attention, is a powerful tool for changing habits. We are changing our habits of movement (both inner and outer) when we engage in Eurythmy. We are Creators!

In addition to Eurythmy's healing potential in individual cases, it is joyfully practiced worldwide in groups, as a way for people to experience movement in a social and artistic way. Imagine a small group of colleagues or friends...perhaps wearing brightly colored, flowing silk costumes... experiencing and creating the choreographed forms and gestures of a poem or music piece together. Each letter or note has a gesture, and the process of deciding how to combine them is the artistic process. They are making the spoken word or music visible, and moveable, with all its moods and undercurrents and rhythms, large and small. The emphasis is not on how "perfect" or schooled one's movement is, but on how the space changes and becomes alive in between the movers. How do we, together, find the *gesture* of this phrase, or that word? How does the individual's movement flow together with everyone else's?

As you can see from the above, Eurythmy is a kind of "inner fire." It challenges us to connect with our environment in a wholehearted, ensouled way. It lights the spark of creativity. And it offers us the chance to share our movement with others, and together find the way forward.



Offering retreats to suicidal psychiatrists and health care professionals, where they can learn how to help someone taper, and informing fellow medical therapeutic professionals and visionaries is more important now than ever before.





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Online at: [innerfire.us](http://innerfire.us)

# Inner Fire Newsletter Spring/Summer 2023



RECLAIMING THE FIRE WITHIN