

Inner Fire Mission

Inner Fire,
a healing community,
offers a *choice* for adults to re-
cover from debilitating and trau-
matic life challenges with mini-
mal or no use
of psychotropic medications.
We believe
in the power of choice.



inner  fire

Fall/Winter
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A Concerning Silence

Beatrice Birch, Executive Director

The theme at a recent Vermont Town Hall meeting was Teens and Mental Health. Our two US Senators and our US Representative were to be present. It was appropriate that I carve out the time to travel two hours north at the end of my day at Inner Fire to attend. For nearly 3 hours, citizens, and health care professionals shared their questions and concerns which also included gun violence by youth. The thread connecting all these concerns was missing.

Toward the end of the evening my opening statement was "My greatest concern is the overmedication of our youth." I was the only person in the hundreds present to even mention the effects of medications! I went on to address the link between the side effects of the medications and gun violence. (For example, one possible side effect of Prozac that has been documented is the development of suicidal feelings and thoughts.) Of course HIPPA, which is supposed to protect consumers, also extends protection to big pharma, so that the results of the autopsy of the youth(s) who killed so many innocent people remain top secret. There is little doubt that such horrendous actions could only be committed if someone was out of soul balance and therefore not in their right mind.

Psychotropic medications disconnect us from our ability to think clearly, from our heartfelt feelings and our intentional willing - that is, from our essential Self. Suicide is also a potential and real risk for people not prepared to live a zombie type existence on a cocktail of medications which they are directed to take for the rest of their lives.

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Inner Fire

A poem by Seeker CL

Hands in the earth
Feet planted on the ground
Mouths eating good, healthy food
Voices calm and singing

Eyes seeing each other
Heads pondering the simple and deep
Hearts learning to be open
Spirits soar

Souls unfurl
The inner fire emerges



A Concerning Silence

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I was puzzled by the silence that followed...my concerns seemed to fall on deaf ears. Could it be that the mind-altering medications, typically dished out so randomly, have become an accepted part of life? Best practice? Have people really come to believe that the human being is a victim and like a machine can be fixed with pills? Do they really see the brain as a computer and not the flexible and forgiving organ it is, like the heart, which is so far from merely being a pump? Have we lost sight of the resilience of the human spirit even though daily we have examples of extraordinary people who rise above challenges by tapping into and drawing upon their creative Self? Why doesn't the rise in suicides, echoing the rise in the use of psychotropic medications, stir us to wake-up?

Suicides are catalysts for change. Trying to prevent them without understanding why they are on the increase is not going to decrease them. They are symptoms of our times and the inhumane way we are treating each other. Time and again at Inner Fire, we have a heartwarming experience when a Seeker, in their tapering process, states: "I am beginning to feel my old Self again." Those drawn to engage in the Inner Fire Community Program are indeed seekers. Somehow, they have faithfully remained connected to their inner fire and to that soft voice which questions, knowing that indeed there is another lifegiving and creative way to rebalance their soul, heal their physical body and thereby reclaim their lives.

Beatrice



The Poetry and Possibility of the World's Smallest Mask

Nettie Lane

The term 'clown' has been thrown around in all sorts of situations - from describing politicians and their antics to horror film characters.



Clowning at Inner Fire

But what is the real essence of the Clown? And how can the world's smallest mask - the red nose - be a force of healing and poetry in our lives and the world?

My colleague and mentor, Italian Maestro Giovanni Fusetti describes the Clown as:

A character who brings humor and comedy to the community by playing with the fragility, imperfection and stupidity of the human condition. 'Stupidus' is a Latin word that means 'stupefied.' And what is more stupefying than life itself ?

As human beings, we all share this sense of stupidity in front of the mysteries of life

and the human journey - with its joys, pains, wonders and unpredictability. The capacity to laugh at oneself, to let go of control, to play with the unexpected, to accept the fall and maybe make a joke while falling, are the gifts of clowns.

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Finding the inner clown at Inner Fire

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From circus to theaters, from hospitals, refugee camps, recreational classes, to residential healing programs, clowns bring humor and laughter where it is needed.

They affirm the power of community to hold each other in joy, unleash the freedom of being vulnerable, and cultivate compassion. Clown is a beautiful, poetic, generous and challenging art form. It asks us to peel away the layers and protections we've accumulated in life and hearken back to the Innocent One - the One with no past to regret and no future to fret. The One that lives purely in the moment with an open heart and willingness to play. The clown work goes beyond the intellectualizing of the mind and straight to the heart. It is something to be experienced first, with understanding coming after.



The Seekers and I are right at the beginning of the somatic Clowning process. We've spent time in the late summer priming the soil, so to speak, through play and circus arts. Now the work is the discovery of their own particular clown. Each is unique, and yet, universal - an archetype, a slice of humanity. We're on a colorful journey filled with fun, beauty, terror, laughter, emotion and vulnerability. As a former clown student shared:

I think people are vocally bothered by clowns so they can avoid being vulnerable. Vulnerability is about showing up and being seen. If courage is a value that we hold, vulnerability is a consequence. You can't avoid it.

I think people are indeed distanced from their true-selves much of the time, and the emotional 'over-expression' of clowns is disturbing to their ordinary way of emotionally 'shut-down' functioning. Clowns seem to be trying to bring out the aliveness in what Marshall Rosenberg, author of Nonviolent Communication, would call, "nice, dead people."

Indeed, as vulnerability researcher Brene Brown has affirmed, you cannot selectively numb emotion. If you numb one, you numb them all. "Vulnerability is at the core of fear, shame, and anxiety...and...it is also the birthplace of joy, love, belonging, and creativity." The beauty of the Clown resides in the ability and willingness to embrace whatever the moment is offering. There is nothing to hide. There is nothing to 'do.' The clown lives in the place of be-ing. Part of the foundational technique is to stay in contact with the audience, breathe to get in touch with what you are feeling, and then generously give it all to the audience. In doing so, we (clown + audience) engage with life in the moment, and the next moment, and the next. We travel this road together creating a more profound relationship with ourselves and one another. Humor is softening and laughter is healing. As a 2016 study on the effects of clowning in hospitals stated:

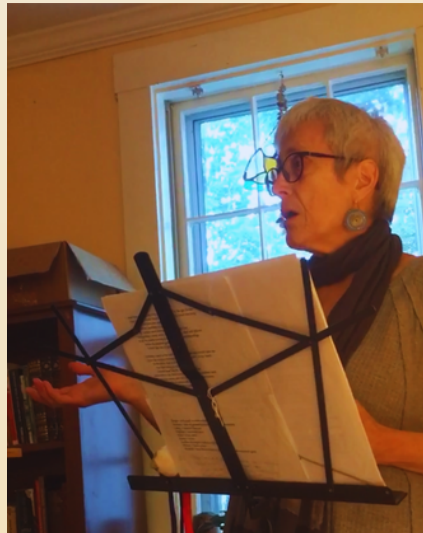
"Laughter is a vital resistance mechanism and provides release of repressed feelings for coping with stress, suffering, or pain. It has the ability to reduce the harmful effects caused by stress in the body, because when a person laughs the parasympathetic system, through the enkephalins, acts on the immune system, increases the concentration of antibodies, and relieves the pain triggered by the sympathetic system."

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Inner Fire 26 Parker Road, Brookline, VT 05345

Expression as a catalyst for change



A Place for Speech Arts at Inner Fire

Christa Macbeth

Over the course of the years I have done my share of experiencing, exploring, and teaching the art of the spoken word.

But nowadays I find myself part of the Inner Fire team, and doing something new and important. Seekers here are, in essence, rescuing themselves from the grip of addictive psychotropic drugs. They are taking on one of the hardest of all challenges: changing oneself.

In the process, speech arts opens a way for them to venture out of their dampened down emotions and let their imaginations colorfully loose; loose to explore different (maybe dangerous or foreign) experiences in a safe way. And to find their own voice.

And when this happens, the therapist can only stand back and listen and marvel.



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

Finding the Inner Clown at Inner Fire

In a space of openness and curiosity, clowning can be a path of self knowledge. There is a liberation in playing with the parts we may feel more comfortable hiding, for 'what you don't play, plays you.' Sometimes a person will say to me, "I don't like my clown." It's a bit of a déjà vu moment as I felt the same way when my own clown emerged. She was not what I was wanting or expecting. Yet, through the body-based process, my own body-based process, that's what surfaced. I'll never forget what Giovanni said to me. "Well Nettie, if you don't like your clown, you don't like a part of yourself." He was right. How can we be whole if we are rejecting a part of ourself? The clown accepts, the ego (or protective/performing/pleasing personality) rejects, deflects, projects. This aspect of the Clown invites us to truly consider acceptance on a grand scale and across the board. What if we weren't trying to rid ourselves of those unwanted emotions, as if they were 'bad?' What if we welcomed them home with tenderness and compassion? So, instead of giving your 'unwanted' clown (ie: that cast aside part of yourself) a cold-shoulder, the clown way is to enthusiastically 'run toward.' To really play the form - for in this work when you are in form, you will be informed.

Inner Fire calls the complementary and alternative therapies and practices the "Soul Gym." Truly, the Soul speaks through the body and the body speaks to the mind.....but the mind isn't listening or is embroiled in its stories. So we soften and reassure the mind by coming home to the body. Inner Fire states that "the structure of the Inner Fire program is built on the concept that "out of form, comes freedom." This is true of Clown as well!

There is something about wearing a clown nose that gives just enough distance to honestly express. And in that spaciousness, there is more room for possibility, perspective, patience and Providence. It's not a cakewalk though. I remember a few years back witnessing a Seeker working through the resistance of going up solo on stage for an exercise. Standing there alone, grappling with the flowing tears, breathing through it, and ultimately allowing herself to be truly seen. Then, in a tender moment of transmutation, the tears morphed into laughter, and joy bubbled forth. That threshold, the bridge between tears and laughter, was not only a moment of transformation for the Seeker, but also as witnesses, a tremendous gift for the community. As Inner Fire writes, "in community there is joy, laughter, and tears - healing tears. These are key ingredients to healing."

There is a technique involved in Clowning. Yet, it is an art, not a science. In alignment with Inner Fire's own words, it "encourages soul/spiritual growth and a reverence for life." And I would add, it does so in an experiential, curious, loving, playful and humorous playground. Fritz Perls said, "Fear is excitement without breathing." So, we breathe a lot, laugh, make eye contact, breathe, feel, breathe some more, generously give, and participate in a range of expression, all while wearing the world's smallest mask, the Red Nose. And along the way we share and celebrate all the 'Ahas' and the 'Aha-ha-ha's!'

Nettie Lane firmly believes in the power, presence and humanity of the Sacred Fool as a way of excavating inner wisdom. Teaching locally and afar, she has had the honor of midwifing over 180 clowns.



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".



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RECLAIMING THE FIRE WITHIN