

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.



Spring/Summer Newsletter 2024

New Initiatives

Beatrice Birch, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we approach our 10th year, having supported close to sixty Seekers on their soul healing journey, many other aims have been or are being met. We have started welcoming the public into our community by offering workshops: "Bread Baking: Bread and the Evolution of Consciousness" with Koen Van der Meer and "Towards Saving the Honeybee" with Gunther Hauk.

Most important, however, we will soon be working with psychiatrists and other health care professionals also caught in the inhumane system of having only ten minutes to diagnose and medicate, or they do not get paid. They too often feel trapped as they watch their patients disassociate and slip into other states of consciousness resulting in an even greater cocktail of medications. It is frightening and traumatizing for the practitioners themselves! Many doctors and other medical professionals have now seen in their patients (or themselves) the extensive harm that over-prescription can wreak.

This has given rise to a growing movement to "de-prescribe and "de-diagnose." Inner Fire is in the process of becoming accredited as an ACGME-sanctioned continuing education venue for doctors and other medical professionals focusing on topics such as "de-prescription practices" (tapering).

Within the ethos of our proactive program, the Inner Fire doctors and other therapists will host these trainings.

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Nature Poem

*by Seeker WL,
Future hip hop star*

There was a leaf
The chickens are in grief
Chillin' by the brook
The nature got me hooked

Deers vibing in the dark
their heads turning
Eyes shining bright
like phosphorus burning

Its still warm unless its morning
Vermont November plus global warming



New Initiatives

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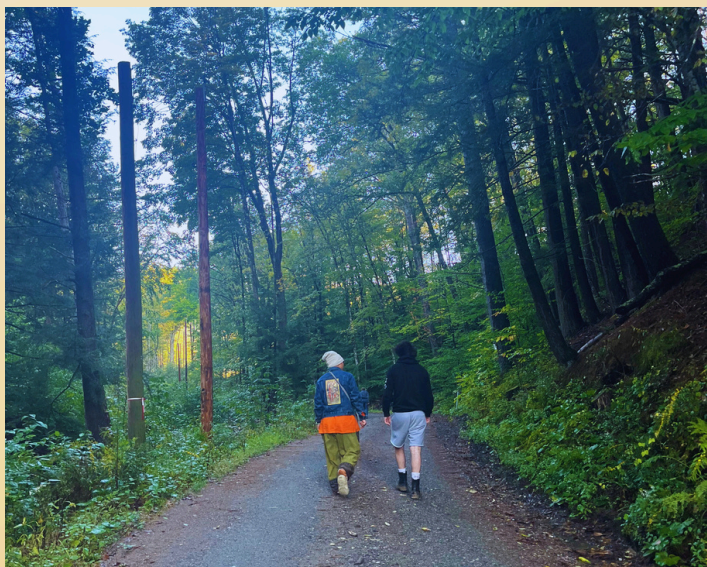
Our therapists will guide the doctors in artistic therapies which will offer them soul nourishment. Our training will ensure that “best practice” protocols for ‘de prescription’ and ‘de-diagnosing’ are shared among medical professionals who seek support and reassurance to also follow their hearts with insights and heart-warmed wisdom.

Tapering, which serves soul health, is an initial step in the journey to recovery. Indeed, the ability to do major soul work is really only possible with a consciousness uninhibited by psychotropic medications or other substances. As I have previously emphasized, the re-balancing and soul breathing work needs to continue after tapering ends due to the serious degree of indoctrination and manipulation which individuals are exposed to while in group homes and hospitals.

The Seekers’ journey is admirable, and like any worthwhile aim, takes time and perseverance. Removing medications from the mix allows for “Soul Health” to develop, which in my experience is at the root of most mental health challenges.

More steps in the broader healing journey for us all!
Thank you for your continued support.

Beatrice, (Founder, Executive Director, Artistic Therapist)



Health Forum at Inner Fire

Katie Finnegan, Holistic Health Coach

I first met Beatrice at the Youth Mental Health Crisis town meeting that Bernie Sanders hosted last year in Barre, VT. A question was posed by an audience member on the topic of nutrition and the role that it plays in mental health. Bernie tossed the question over to a panel of experts and what a leading state psychiatrist had to say on the topic broke my heart. She said that when working with her clients, nutrition is the last thing on her mind. I was dismayed.



On one hand, I understood. The system is overburdened and broken, and pills seem to provide an easy solution. On the other hand, there is mounting evidence in the field of nutritional psychiatry showing the impact of diet on mental health, and ignoring the fundamentals of physical and mental health, as well as their interconnectedness, is the absolute wrong approach.

Equipping Seekers with the self knowledge and life skills to holistically manage their physical and mental health long after their completion of the program is a main goal at Inner Fire. Our gardening and cooking programs provide the foundation for this. The new addition of our weekly health forum also addresses this goal head on through education and group coaching specifically relevant to mental health and holistic well-being.

In our last health forum block, we spent time exploring these fundamentals and developing life skills around the physical, nutritional, social, emotional, spiritual, financial, intellectual and environmental aspects of health and well-being. Currently, we are covering topics from herbalism and natural medicine that support mental health. Holistic health is multifaceted and we address the whole human being at Inner Fire.

Inner Fire - The place I needed in 2012

By David Whittaker

Guest speaker to Seekers and Guides

In February of 2012, things started going terribly wrong for me. I was 36 years old and married, with one son and another on the way. My parents had begun medicating me in the first grade when the nuns at the parochial school I attended informed them I wasn't "living up to expectations." What that meant: I cried nonstop when my parents would drop me off at school. I realize now that I had an attachment disorder due to my mother having had an aversion to holding me when I was a baby (I wouldn't find this out until after psychiatric drug tapering - the drugs kept all of these insights suppressed). The nuns told my parents that pharmaceuticals were the answer. Many of the drugs that were put into my childhood body are currently considered barbaric in standard medical practice.

After a long line of medications, I was put on 7.5mg of Mirtazapine and .5mg of Ativan. I'd stay on these medications from the early 1990s until 2012. In late 2011, the Ativan wasn't working anymore. The doctors threw in some Xanax and bumped the Ativan dose. It helped a little. In early 2012, I noticed a profound dizziness - like I was walking on a swaying ship. I had actually been experiencing this for a year or more. Doctors could find no pathology to explain it. But it was getting worse. I suspected it was the Mirtazapine. My doctor said, "Well, stop taking it." So, I ditched the 7.5mg of Mirtazapine cold turkey - YAHOOOOO! and my system went nuts. I could not eat; I could not sleep. I began losing weight - lots. In hindsight, I realize I was in full Benzodiazepine tolerance withdrawal and Mirtazapine withdrawal. My doctors said it was "just the anxiety getting worse." They were just about ready to throw some Klonopin into the mix, but I decided to stop seeing the PCP who had been prescribing me those meds - and the hell of withdrawal took full hold.

Between the months of April 2012 and June 2012, I went from being a solidly built 162lb marathon runner to a 129lb human who could not lift his head off the pillow, barely acknowledged his wife and children, was confused as to who the president was and what month it was, and finally, began having intrusive thoughts which were intensely violent - both suicidal and outwardly directed. I was so scared that I checked myself into a hospital. I figured that was the thing I needed to do in order to get 'fixed'. As soon as I got into the hospital they tried to get me to reinstate the drugs. I mentioned that I believed that benzo and antidepressant withdrawal were the cause of my problems, and even cited the esteemed Ashton Manual about benzodiazepine withdrawal. But the doctors were dismissive of my insights, feeling their authority was threatened.



David at his lowest weight in withdrawal



David speaking at Inner Fire

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Inner Fire - The place I needed con't.

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This culminated in a "treatment team" meeting where the head psychiatrist slammed his fist on the table and said, "We are the doctors, you are the patient, and we will NOT be told how to treat you!" I left the hospital and never returned. Due to the way I withdrew from the medications, I entered into a protracted withdrawal syndrome that took the better part of 2 years of gradual improvement to survive.

After leaving the hospital, I looked for an alternative to the psychiatric hospital setting - a place where I could go through what I was going through, channeling my mind and body into something other than the intrusive thoughts that tortured me in every moment. I was looking for a place to heal - and to learn who I was in my essential nature, beneath the drugs that had been in my body almost for my entire life. I'd call different hospitals and try to explain what I was going through but they were unwilling to treat the damage caused by long-term use of psychiatric medications. The only withdrawal they seemed willing to treat was that which was due to drug addiction. I was alone.

12 years after going through that brutal withdrawal syndrome, my naturopath told me about Inner Fire. At first I didn't believe that the place I needed so badly all those years ago - had even dreamt about - actually existed. He said he could put me in touch with Beatrice and that maybe we would find something interesting to talk about. I had the opportunity to travel to Inner Fire and meet with Beatrice. I quickly realized that had Inner Fire had been an option for me during my own withdrawal, it would have likely kept me out of the hospital. It is a lovely setting and Beatrice and her team are kind, compassionate people. I spoke with many of them at great length. They were curious about my own withdrawal and asked insightful questions. They are deeply interested in how withdrawal uniquely impacts individuals who go through it and are sensitive to the fact that the mainstream medical community treats many withdrawal sufferers as fakers, exaggerators, or mentally ill. I really could have used a place like Inner Fire when I was going through my process.



For me, "safety" was a huge part of my withdrawal experience. When I had intrusive thoughts, it caused me to be concerned for the safety of others as well as myself. The need for that assurance of "safety" was what drove me to check myself into the psychiatric hospital twice, only to be bombarded with more medications. Inner Fire offers that safety without the requirement of signing on for more medications.

Inner Fire has a beautiful, calming atmosphere and its program aligns with my own ideas of how psychiatric medication withdrawal should proceed, having suffered a most brutal experience myself. I feel there is a lot of forward vision at Inner Fire - and from that forward vision, an exponential capacity for healing.

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.

Meet our new Guides



Elise Wilder

Guide

Elise was drawn to this work because she believes Inner Fire offers people a unique opportunity to safely discover who they are at their highest potential, free from the mind and body-numbing effects of psychotropic drugs.



Cliff Steinberg

Naturopathic Doctor, Guide

Clif joins Inner Fire as a return to his roots with Anthroposophical Medicine as well as organic and biodynamic farming. He trusts that the miracle of healing happens when fostered in the many ways that Inner Fire has established.



Katie Finnegan

Holistic Health Coach, Massage Therapist, Guide

Katie was drawn to Inner Fire because she sees that the combination of modalities used at Inner Fire is powerfully conducive to growth and healing.



Sebastian Rojas

Lead Gardener, Guide

Sebastian comes from a background of holistic healing in Ecuador. He has seen all his life how it is through these modalities that people are able to heal. He relishes being able to combine his background in holistic healing and biodynamic gardening in the therapeutic environment of Inner Fire.



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RECLAIMING THE FIRE WITHIN