

5th International Healthcare Dialogue & Retreat (European region)
STILL POINT ~ *turning world* ~ deepening the dialogue
Thursday 2nd - Sunday 5th October 2014

The fifth meeting of the Spirit and Health dialogues (European Region) was held at the Global Retreat Centre (GRC), in Oxford, UK. A total of 56 guests attended from 7 countries.

Thursday 2nd October

Sarah welcomed new participants and those who had been to previous Still Point retreats. In a brief background to the Still Point retreats, she shared that the idea came from a group of healthcare professionals who have been practising meditation. The idea further grew from the Values in Healthcare: a spiritual approach (VIHASA) programme (the module on spirituality in healthcare). The purpose of the retreat was a sense of creating a learning community and which would give people a sense of connection and deepening that connection with the self and the Divine. She then gave an overview of weekend: a short feedback of previous retreats; why are we here?; what do we hope to accomplish by end of weekend?; and asked the group if they would like to do the one minute silence every hour as is the custom of the GRC.

The theme for this retreat is how so we deepen our connection to the self, others and the Divine through self discovery using meditation and reflection. During the retreat, there is a balance of activity and quiet time to deepen that sense of connection and to experience with the self and the Divine. And the opportunity for silence each day during lunch until afternoon tea.

Rosemary outlined some practical issues and encouraged participant to get creative in colouring the mandala. Sis. Bridgitte welcomed all on behalf of the team of the GRC and shared some of the activities/events that happen at the house and requested participants to read the GRC welcome leaflet in their packs. Sis. Arti welcome all with Om Shanti (greetings of peace) and shared a bit about the Brahma Kumaris organisation - the practice of raja yoga meditation (open-eye) which connects one with your community.

There was then a group audio-visual slideshow meditation to unwind and relax with beautiful images, accompanied by soothing music. After dinner, Sarah welcomed back the group and those who had arrived and introduced the team to the group. This was followed by a two warm up exercises by Jan and Masana, accompanied with music by Anne Malone with the Tibetan Bowl. Firstly the group was asked to get up and move around and when the music stopped, to share with someone what attracted them to the picture postcard that each brought to the room which they had chosen prior, from a display of postcards. The second time around they were to share what inspire them to come to the retreat. Jan got the group to self-group in silence by each of the horoscope signs.

Chrissie and Richard introduced the group to journaling and in setting the tone and the theme for the week-end, ask the group to focus on the following reflective questions: How do I deepen my connection to the self, others and the Divine? What, if anything, seems to be missing? What could help me to deepen my connection at work, or at home, or with my friends and community?

The day ended with Sis Arti giving a short goodnight meditation commentary on relaxation and peace.

Friday 3rd October

The day began with creative movement by Pearl, followed by spiritual wisdom and meditation by Sis. Arti. The topic explored was introduction of soul and guided meditation of going within, being still and experience peace. After breakfast, the group was welcome back to the first session with music by Anne.

Session 1: Primary Awareness

Workshop by Sarah and Margaret on 'Connection with self and divine' – and experiential session based on the 'Inner core'.

Aim: to be aware of our primary core and what takes us away from our connection with self and the Divine.

Sarah started the session with a minute of silence. She shared that there is a lot of pain in healthcare and

asked how do we sit with our pain and others pain? Why do I get distracted away from my core being? She then took the group through a visualisation by a river/stream to experience the core being of stillness and peace. Participants were asked to records their experience in their journal and share with another. Margaret then asked the group to reflect on what draws one in the self (to one's core) and what draws one away from one's core. Sometimes there is a belief system we tend to hold in place that leads to our mindset and conditioning of the mind e.g. I have to do everything. Participants' feedback other belief systems:

I am responsible
I have to work for other people's happiness
I have to care
I have to help others
I am not good enough
I have to keep professional boundaries
I have to please parent's view of a good life
I believe that uncertainty is the enemy of contempt
I have to be perfect
I am responsible to other people's happiness

A handout was distributed on 'What draws me away from my primary awareness?' Participants discussed two beliefs in small groups and feedback to the group. A reflection followed on 'which of these beliefs influences my awareness and pulls me away from my core' after which, participants recorded their thoughts in the journal. Sarah ended the session with a reflection on experiencing 'returning to my core'.

Session 2: Boundaries and discerning

Sarah and Margaret continued the session with building resilience by strengthening the core through a reflection on touching base with the core. The next exercise included discerning boundaries, use of silence, creating a circle of protection and an appreciative awareness and approach. Participants were give two similar words to discuss with a partner on the following:

What is the difference of the two words to you?

How do you know which word you are experiencing?

What are the indicators that you are in favour of one word as oppose to the other in terms of your thoughts, feelings and actions?

What does knowing these distinctions form?

How can it benefit me?

How would discerning these words enable me to fell less strain?

Each pair was asked to join another pair and explore developing the practice of connecting with one's primary awareness/core and whether there is the awareness of the presence of the Divine energy. The session ended with a meditation on returning to one's inner core.

Session 3: Preparing for silence

Building from the morning session, Chrissie and Richard led the group into preparing for silence by reflection on since I arrived here:

- What has come up for me that I would like to focus on during the silence?
- What questions would I like to explore about this?
- Is there any message from nature that could help me?

Anne Malone play music on her instruments as participant went to lunch. Each participant was asked to take a coloured pebble as an anchor during the afternoon's silence. The aim was to begin to create a focus for the afternoon's silence to raise issues for exploration during the silence. Various options were available for the afternoon - rest, journaling, walk, meditating, walking the labyrinth. Participants observed silence during their lunch.

Session 4: Coming out of silence

This creative session with Chrissie and Richard, aimed to reflect on the process, any personal discoveries and the difference participants could make during there quiet time. Participants were given a handout with 3 circles

within each other. At core, first circle, participants were to record their thoughts and feelings about the process of being in silence. The next circle, a record of their reflections – what came up for me? The outer circle was for thoughts on how this might help to heal myself, others and the Divine/Universe. There was sharing in small groups.

Session 5: Releasing the energy:

Craig Brown then led the group through a very enjoyable shepherd dance.

Session 6: Group Reflection

Masana led the group through a feedback session using the talking stick. The aim of the session was to give an opportunity to hear one another's personal insights of the day. The purpose of the feedback was not necessary to answer questions that somebody may voice but to help the group become more cohesive by an exchange of sharing from truth and listening with appreciation. Participants were led through reflective questions to focus the contributions and were asked to take a moment to reflect on:

- What you had hoped you would gain from this weekend and wrote in your journal since the start of the retreat.
- Reflect on what has happened so far in your groups and what you've experienced. Has what you've experienced moved you towards what you came for?
- Based on what you have heard so far, discussed in group dialogues and explored in the creative sessions what deeper discoveries or questions are you holding?
- What you would like to happen next – what direction you would like the dialogue to take now?

Participants who wanted to share were given two minutes while holding the talking stick to feedback from an open and deeper space.

Some participants sharing:

- Holding the talking stick makes me happy. I am very grateful to be here at this beautiful place for reflection. And grateful my daughter is also here with me. In the process of letting go, I reflected on what will I live for and the word 'joy' that is, joy beyond any concept.
- It was wonderful to acknowledge the circle of wisdom and to appreciate the wisdom of all here at the retreat. I am touched, I work with energy healing and there is a vision and mission in the healing profession for a longing for healers to work with healthcare practitioners. Being here, it makes my belief that this is possible. I feel very privileged to be here with all of you.
- I am really moved by the gift of this day – a wonderful summer's day and to see everyone enjoying being outside. So thanks to the universe. I feel we are blessed.
- I have never touched a TS before. When I was invited to this retreat, I did not know what to expect. Within a few hours of being here, I am very happy to be here. My conversations with others have been very uplifting, inspiring and thank you for the invitation.
- It is a wonderful experience to be here. What I found impressive was that the programme is rich and to communicate with others. In healthcare, that intrinsic motivation can be draining but being here gives one the opportunity to be open and to receive love.
- Thank you for the opportunity to share. For me sincerity is very important. Our concern is not just to care for patients on a physical level but how important it is to be motivated to create a spiritual connection.
- Before coming here, my stepdaughter who very rarely speaks to me has been struggling to make friends at school due to being shy and fear of being embarrassed and what others think of her. The theme of the retreat could not be more relevant. It is amazing how not connecting is non-beneficial than in connecting.
- I would like to share a poem and it has been truly an amazing day. The poem is called 'Into the Light':
How can I have the courage to show myself?
As I peep behind the overgrown tangle of disappointment and expectations, fears of being judged, of being disliked, of being found wanting.
Kept in this shady place of constraint, restraint, failure and forgetting.
Going into silence I reconnect with the essence of who I really am and step out for a moment...
Blinking in the light, warmed by the sun, I open my heart to love for myself.
I pick up the sword of integrity, the shield of determination, and clear away the undergrowth that has

kept me hidden for so long and I shine my brightness again.

- I want to share a little miracle that happened. From exploring the grounds, I settled in a quiet place. I settled at a Yew tree and at the base there was a similar bead like the one I picked up as I left the room before lunch. I felt I was searching and nothing happened but when I let go and sat with the fairies, all my answers came.
- I like to invite you to smile for us to connect. I would like to thank for all that I have learnt and thank you.
- The silence between waiting for others to share is so beautiful. It reminds me of the quote "It's the space between the notes that creates the melody/music".

After a stretch break, the group met for evening meditation. The meditation started with Craig sharing a poem on 'Blessed Idleness'. Arti continued the meditation with guided a commentary.

After dinner, there was a musical concert by Anne Malone on 'Water and Resonance' where Anne used the following instruments – the Hang (steel drum); the Sansula (African thumb drum); the Bodhran (Celtic drum), the Rain stick, and the Tibetan bowl.

Saturday 4th October

The day began with creative movement by Pearl, followed by spiritual wisdom and meditation by Sis. Arti. After breakfast, Sarah reviewed the schedule for the day and shared her thoughts on key aspects that emerged from the retreat so far.

Session 7: Dialogue Pairs

Arnold acted as moderator and timekeeper for this session. He described that the session would consist of three pairs of content resource people who will dialogue about their topic as a way of introducing some thoughts to the group. Each pair will share their thoughts on the theme of connection with self/others/divine. The question of focus is: "At work, with my family / my partner, with my friends / in my community how I deepen my connection to the Divine, the Self, Others?"

The aim of the session is to create an opportunity to hear how others deepen the connection in different situations. Participants in the audience were asked to individually reflect on their reaction to the conversation between the pair and journal their thoughts after each conversation. The following is a summary of the dialogues:

Justin Haroun and Mike Gartland: This weekend is a re-emergence of things which is a reminder to top up myself. I am reminded how that authentic connection fills me and unauthentic connections drains/tires me. There is great desire of authenticity in the NHS. I am privileged to occupy a sacred space in spiritual care. One thing that I have used and has helped is to view people with appreciation. It is so easy to get fixated on what is broken, but when I use the notion of loving presence, I do feel fuller. The absolute requirement is of meditation as a start of the day and to return to practice which helps us to remember our purpose. When I remember how important my practice is, it reminds me on why I am here. The practice of mindfulness allows me to slow down and to be in the present. The process of slowing down and acting in an appropriate way is useful. The connectedness is a given and the operating system is there so despite ticking the boxes, we need to remember the true purpose of the work we do in healthcare.

Julia Ronder Liz McCormick: Having a daily mindful practice helps to clear a space and being centred. It is also being in connection to everyone. The idea of stepping inside a space with others who are practicing loving kindness feeds that connectedness. It is important to tune in to the self and to get to know myself. IT is not a fixed journey but there are changes along the way – experiences of God, Spirit, Buddha, and nature. Love to self and to others is what is required to fit in meditation practice.

Pieter Sluis and Lotte Sluis: Connectedness is so important since we came from a sort of Oneness and we are alone, we have to do something about that. I feel I have always had a sense of connection with soul, and to go beyond. To not focus on the clouds or negatives, which drains us. To use silence. When it gets rough, I can be on my own because I can be connected. I am happy we can live our connection here. I do not need to change the world, it is a perfect learning space. You have to come out of the closet with your spirituality.

Session 8: Reflecting Groups

Arnold and Jan moderated this session where groups of four persons shared reflections on what has had an impact on them from the dialogue pair's conversations. The aim of the session was to connect with others and

to explore together how to deepen the connection in different situations. Participants were asked to explore: How does it relate to your own life and deepening the connection to the Self, Others and the Divine?

Feedback: We discussed how to stay connected to ourselves and our patients in difficult situations. Noticing 'heart sink', loss of energy, anxiety and tension; going blank and then taking a few moments to go into what we feel, give it some space and speak out of this space of the patients distress/anger, etc. Practice self compassion – give ourselves the choice to either continue or suggest a referral to another practitioner. "I have not been able to look after you in the way that you would like, I encourage you to choose one of my colleagues who can assist you better".

Session 9: Being with another

Jan and Masana facilitated this session where the aim was to deepen listening by practicing compassionate listening. As the listener, be very still and hold a positive appreciation of the other person so they can feel totally free to express themselves. Participants were asked to find someone they feel comfortable with and decided who would be first be the talker and the listener. Then starting with a minute of silence, practice listening to your partner share: How are you feeling at this time? And what does the Divine mean to you? After five minutes, participants reversed their roles.

Session 10: Preparation for silence in nature

Chrissie and Richard facilitated the session and explained that we are connecting all the time but we forget to connect from that place where we are safe, we are love, what we really are. The aim of the session was to create a focus for the afternoon's silence - to become mindful of my experiences of connection (or lack of connection) during the morning. Participants were given slips of paper with the following questions to reflect on:

- What was my experience of being connected with people this morning – what were my thoughts, feelings, behaviour
- "What was my experience of being connected to Self?"
- "What was my experience of being connected to the Divine?"
- How does each experience affect the other experiences?
- What questions do I now want to explore in the silence?

Session 11: Journey into Silence

A creative meditation with Joy assisted by Anne Malone with music bowls. The aim of the session was to take participants gently into silence. Participants were asked to bring back something suitable from their afternoon walk something from nature that symbolizes compassion or love or The Divine for them. Participants observed silence during their lunch and were encouraged to continue with Journaling, Rest and Reflection in developing a theme of connection during their personal time.

Session 12: Coming out of silence

The aim of this session was to reflect on the experience of silence in nature, personal discoveries, and how participants might be healing. Participants entered the room with background music played by Anne and placed their symbol of compassion or love (which they have collected during their silent walk) in the centre of the circle and took a seat for five minutes of silence together in the group. Each was given a handout with three concentric circles to write their reflections on what it was like to connect in silence with nature. Their thoughts and feeling about the process of being in silence (core circle), what came up for them in the second circle, and how might this help to heal myself, others, the Divine/the Universe in the outer circle. Participants then shared their reflections with a partner.

Session 13: Experiencing Music

This session encouraged participants to experiment with the experience of music, sound and movement. These forms have an impact on our energy and the session explored how to use these conscientiously with others we care for. Anne explained the musical instruments she had been playing and demonstrated the vibrations each has. She then played a musical instrument, sang a song and participants reflected on the effect of each sound. Participants then shared and discussed their reflections, and how music, singing and dance can be used to deepen the connection to the Divine, self and others.

Session 14: Group Reflection

Masana facilitated the group through a feedback session using the talking stick. The aim of the session was to give an opportunity to hear one another's personal insights of the day and to help the group become more cohesive. Participants shared in the group insights from their time in silence, their reflections and thoughts. She asked the group to reflect on:

- What are we learning?
- What key insights floated up for you, during your time spent reflecting on the topic so far?
- What are the questions you are still holding that you would like to bring to the Dialogue now?
- What needs to be added to the Dialogue?
- Where am I now in my thinking and feeling?

Some feedback were:

- Soul connection is a profound experience.
- Non-verbal communication through music, song and movement can be done in silence. There is a different sense of unity – to become one.
- Community is Com-unity.
- The invitation here was like a gift.

Each participant was asked to share one word of his or her experience in the retreat so far. The following words emerged: Togetherness, Family, Love (3), Serenity, Silence, Honouring, Gratitude, Acceptance, Creation, Healing, Friendship (2), Beyond, Space, Harmony, Oneness, Openness, Renewal, Transformation, Freedom, Awareness, Unlimited, Blessed, Being, Content, Sharing, Connecting with pain, Joy, Pure intention, Sincerity, Peace, Awakening, Remembrance, Empathy, Surrender, Wholeness, Growth, Community, Clarity, Transparency, Miracle, Loss and gain, Interest, Allowing, Ubuntu (I am because of you).

After a stretch break, Arti led the group into meditation with a guided commentary followed with silence. Dinner was followed by an evening of entertainment entitled 'Your Showtime' where participants were encouraged to bring out their talents through music, song, dance, poetry and readings. Arnold was the entertainment's MC with Nirmala assisting.

Sunday 5th October

Pearl, again offered a vibrant, creative movement session to start the day. This was followed by spiritual wisdom and meditation by Arti. After breakfast, Sarah shared that all are her spiritual friends and are deeply love and cherished. She asked the group for any feedback on being on the retreat. The following were given:

- I could really feel the silence through the time here. This time, I have a good buffer and feel very safe to go back and face whatever I am to face.
- Thank you for a very frustrating retreat (said in a light manner). There are so much knowledge and wisdom here with everyone.
- Thank you for the generosity, for new spiritual connections, spiritual friends. For a beautiful, organised retreat and a feeling of being looked after.
- A new experience for me and I am still processing the effect it will have on me. Thank you.
- I was really honoured to be invited. It is a contribution to my own journey. Lovely to see the power of all together and to realise my dream of improving healthcare. Thanks for the experiences, and strength, the organisation, the opportunities to connect with the self and others.
- Nowadays in the dark night where in hospital where human beings are diagnose by skin and bone, this retreat is like a lighthouse in the dark sea. I am happy to see you all as lighthouses. This retreat gives me big hopes for the future and to awaken more energy within me.

Sarah asked the group to reflect on: 'What we have taken from the retreat and how are we going to use that in our personal lives and workplaces?'

Session 15: Using and expressing my connection to self, others and the Divine through using Virtues.

Margaret facilitated this session where the aim was to use a creative process to integrate spirituality into our work, so that we can transform situations by consciously connecting to qualities and using our skills to demonstrate them. Virtues were pinned onto chair backs and in the circle of the room there were three chairs with the following words pinned on them: Unsupported, Exhausted, Unappreciated. Participants were asked to sit on a seat and to go into the energy of the word and experience of the virtue pinned on the chair. Then share

from that space to the person who was sitting on a seat with a negative word. Feedback from one participant who sat on a seat with the word 'Unsupported' was: feeling alienated, complete alone, without and strings attached to anyone. There is no one here for me in this world. There is hopelessness, despair and depression. Support from the group to that individual were:

Positivity – look at the brighter side of things, let's go on a journey, and look at the flowers and how beautiful things are.

Courage – when you feel courage, you will not be alone and know that you have the support and you are not alone.

Gratitude – Thank you for your contribution and give thanks to what you have in your life.

Serenity – I encourage you to connect with your inner peace and calm and when you are in connection with your higher self you will feel that connection with the Divine and you will get all your support.

Humility – I have to take responsibility for myself and others may not support me but I can support myself by focusing on my strengths.

Faith – say with me 'You got to have faith'

Understanding – understand that your peace and tranquillity is a source of wealth you have.

Delight – I am delight and we are going to a picnic and everything can wait.

Creativity – I am creative and let's get creative, what can you bring into your life.

Generous – I am generous, be generous to your life and enjoy your picnic.

Balance – I am balance so look at your balances – physical, spiritual, diet, mental and emotional.

Strength – I am strength so be strong.

Intuitive – I am intuitive, because you are exhausted you may not see what your needs are so be intuitive and realise your own personal needs.

Session 16: Putting into practice

The aim of this session was to capture the essence of the retreat and choose what to put into practice. Jan asked participants to reflect on their personal journals:

- What new friends, ideas and gifts are you taking away
- How are you going to use those gifts in your life
- What do I choose to put into practice
- What support do I need and
- How can I strengthen my connections?

She then took the group through a visualisation on:

- What Do We Do With What We've Learned?
- How do you put into practice what you would like to what's possible?
- What would you like to see happen next?
- Do we want to connect in a blog or web?
- Do we bring others in to provide such a space?

Participants were then given a postcard to write or draw what they were taking away from the retreat.

Session 17: Closure

There was a dance and song by Craig and Anne. Participants were encouraged to get their feedback on the evaluation forms in their packs. Craig shared that our hearts are open with everyone and going back to the world, we could be affected by negative energy. He suggested we each visualise ourselves within a bubble and keep connected to the self and the Divine. The session ended with each receiving gifts, blessings cards and *toli* (sweet) from the organisers.

Annex 1: Some feedback received from participants

- There is a lot of love felt in the group.
- The younger generation see you all in this gathering as masters of knowledge, wisdom and there is much appreciation for the new paradigm. We are all creating from change in the world.
- Pieter Sluis, Netherlands - Before I return again to my home, I want to express my feelings of deep gratitude for having been invited to this unique coming together of people that I share my profession with. A true community came into being with love, smiles, laughter from the bottom of our hearts and toes. A healing experience for all. And very special for me was that my daughter decided to join me on this journey. At home our connectedness is a feeling that we seldom give many words to, here we shared it in an open dialogue, in dance, in singing, in being silent together. There were so many 'moments' that touched me deeply. So many connections that became visible and got words. Souls meeting souls. Free. Without any ties. Thank you Global Retreat Centre, thank you Brahma Kumaris, Thank you dear colleagues.
- Poem by Prof Alex Gardner

I shall be happy when you are happy
I shall be glad when you are content
In your settled mind I find myself
And I shall be content in your existence
May you never be troubled in your spirit
May your heart never be heavy
May your soul soar and rise again and again
My blessing is in sharing this with you
I give my blessing to you, to always feel
The strengths to know your strength
God can help you in all this

•Piet Leguit

The once powerful man was no more. All contact had ceased for more than a week. Several surgical procedures couldn't cure his cancer and had resulted in multiple complications. He was incubated and on artificial ventilation, had renal support and received all sorts of medicine. Nevertheless his condition went downhill.

I explained the hopeless situation to the family and it was decided to discontinue all further treatment. During my conversation with the family I asked whether they would favour the idea if I invited an experienced musician to come along with her harp and play specially attuned music to assist their husband and father in letting go and die peacefully. They consented.

I contacted the musician who agreed to play and subsequently obtained permission of the head nurse to bring a harpist into the Intensive Care Unit. A few hours later the artist together with a huge harp measuring well over six feet came into the ICU and walked along all other patients most of them on ventilation into the separate room of my patient.

I had asked approval to be present together with the patient's wife and his two children. The woman tuned her harp and started to play slowly adjusting herself to the condition of the patient. A peaceful atmosphere filled the tiny room otherwise full of medical equipment. Then out of a sudden a few tears dropped out of his right eye onto his cheek as to say a last farewell to his beloved family. After another half hour he passed away peacefully.

It was an experience I'll never forget. When I think of it again I am overwhelmed once more with the feeling and conviction that thanks to the music the otherwise unconscious and dying man could reach out one last time to his beloved family.

•Frans Reynders

The house and other practical things. This place is really amazing, the grounds are beautiful the atmosphere is

benevolent and quiet in a lovely way. You feel really welcome the moment you enter this little "castle". Our sleeping room was fine, modest but everything you need is there.

The organisation of this conference was excellent: nothing to criticize.

More about the content of the program: The subject was: deepening the dialogue: connecting to ourselves, the others and the Divine; or/and: thinking about spirituality and healthcare. What always interest me the most is how to connect in a practical sense spirit and daily healthcare: what spirituality means for people with illnesses, sorrows, low education, those who are poor and often in need. Do we, as healthcare professionals, have to offer something concrete in a spiritual way and what will it be? Is there any benefit for our client?

As a social worker, health professional, you are the best equipped when your own unfinished business is solved in a form of therapy or otherwise and when spirituality has become its place in your life. When you are really connected to yourself. This last aspects are considered the most this 3-4 days. Connecting to ourselves how to cope with daily threats. We did meditation, contemplation, exercises, writing, discussion about it, and silence. That was good, healing, informative etc. We are fulfilled and lightened/relieved. Care for the carers was really great and the last exercise at Sunday morning was super.

The translation of spirituality to daily work: how to connect with my clients, how to express my spiritual feelings, ideas, how to share these with them: what is the meaning of life, when you are in need, ill etc. That subject needs in my opinion more attention and time. Is it possible to pray or sing, cry, read, being in silence with your client and is it helpful? What is a respectful and dignified connection?

More about the structure of the program:

I really liked the variety of serious, deep questions and exercises and the lightness of singing, dancing and music. Makes people free and more relieved. The feeling of equivalence, safety in this big group of 60-70 people was of great value; for my daughter, first time in such a group, discussing this important life questions was it a warm bath, she felt equal and well seen and respected. It is a great quality to create that atmosphere so easy in such a group.

Talking about fathers and daughters: Marije and Lotte Sluis found it to be a great experience to follow the program with their dads. They were impressed and created a deeper connection between the elder and the child in a quite adult relationship. A rich experience in a personal way, and that is important, a younger generation getting acquainted with thinking about spirituality in daily life besides the ideas of the Brahma Kumaris movement. Very, very useful. So, when there is a next conference: I should say, more attention for inviting the two generations. I think this idea of Pieter Sluis is a good one. My daughter and I are enthusiastic and we hope to be invited that next time!

•Craig Brown

As mainly a participant and not involved in the planning, I felt the retreat went well at many levels. There was plenty of opportunity for sharing and silence with the right mixture of movement and music. Anne Malone brought a lightness of spirit and gave it continuity. I particularly liked Margaret's values exercise as it got to the essence of using values in a deep, yet fun way. Asking, 'What do you mean by the Divine,' as one of the questions when we were sharing in pairs addressed an issue that I felt was not clear enough before. Margaret's simple meditation I think was something for everyone including myself. Well done Arnold again for an enjoyable evening. Everyone's contribution in the team was appreciated.

I am a stickler for action planning but on this occasion, as it was a retreat, I wonder if the last session could have been more of take away what you need rather setting up tasks. Overall it was the planning and sensitivity that contributed to the weekend's success. As for the next one I am attracted to 'End of life... beginning of something new' as the next retreat if there is to be one. I know 'self compassion' was another suggestion but it may be more around self-care. From the weekend I added that we cannot possess love but are able to draw on the universal love and share it with others. This for me is the essence of spirituality in action - the engine driver for care and compassion spirituality may exist existentially but we see it and respect it in action and interaction.