



Funders of Mindfulness & Spirituality Virtual Gathering

November 2021 Meeting Report

Background

The Gathering for Funders of Mindfulness and Spirituality is an initiative of Synergos' Global Philanthropists Circle (GPC) Spiritual Civilization Group, in partnership with The Fetzer Institute and The Lunt Foundation. The intent is to create an inclusive, global community of funders working to shape a movement to shift consciousness and accelerate impact.

This was the fourth of such gatherings, four years after the first one took place in Scotts Valley, California. Members of this community are funders and investors supporting mindfulness, consciousness, mind science, wellness, spirituality, and/or faith from around the world. The gathering was designed to promote the sharing of projects and learnings, explore and support collaborations, and provide a space for members to engage in contemplative and reflective practices while shaping a new movement. Just as last year's gathering, this year's event took place virtually on November 9th and 10th. A total of 32 people attended the meeting, which was facilitated by several community members leading sessions on presence and trust, connecting to purpose, and others.

Event activities included introduction exercises, break-out sessions, and experiential activities such as indigenous healing practices, embodied social presencing practice, and meditation. Attendees shared photos of their surroundings during a short movement break, which reflected their environment at that given moment.

“Working to Shape a New Movement to Shift Consciousness and Accelerate Impact”



Coming Together

Attendees gathered virtually from locations around the world. The two days were filled with holistic, reflective, and experiential activities as well as space for inner-work, connection, and co-creation.

Day One: Cultivate a Shared Sense of Purpose; Deepening & Strengthening Relationships

The Tuesday session began with a short check-in exercise led by one of the participants which explored our degree of presence and connection to others and how to enhance the same. Attendees candidly shared their level of trust and presence using the “Relational Compass”, developed by Mark Milton and Education 4 Peace, as a tool. Attendees shared their place on the “Relational Compass” and how this simple exercise impacted them and made them aware of their own presence. Participants would later refer back to this measure when reflecting on shifts in their levels of trust after different exercises were completed and at the end of Day 1 and the whole gathering.

That Intimate Feverish Night

from *Trading Armour for a Flower*

“As the night gives way to dawn
Pain settles in deep silence
Events happen outside at their own free will
I witness it from some deep place
Like a monk in a cathedral
Watching a firefighter flying above
tall buildings
It’s vulnerable still, yet safe
Safe in knowing that
It’s all vulnerable anyways.”

Read by Manish Srivastava



The next exercise was a small group sharing and co-sensing exercise “*Seeing the Emerging Whole*”, and it invited the participants to share how their mindfulness & spirituality journey has been since last year, both personally and professionally, and how can this group support such a journey. Participants were given the space to connect in small groups of four to explore these questions and later shared their experiences with the collective.

“*Love*”, “*Profound Experience*”, “*Enormous Gratitude*” and “*Deep Warmth*” were some of the ways the members described their experience and feelings after connecting to

others during the breakout sessions. Some acknowledged the power that comes with connecting and how one can do so deeply, even in a remote environment.

The next module of the gathering featured a collective guided experience on the topic: **Indigenous Health and Wellbeing - Healing Practice** led by Nancy Bordeaux, a Sicangu Lakota expert in intergenerational trauma healing. This specific practice focused on indigenous practices of healing ourselves and those close to us, traditional Lakota beliefs, using aboriginal trauma history in the US as a background. After the completion of the practice, there was a general sense of gratitude for the ancient wisdom and the personal stories that were shared.



Nancy Bordeaux

To close the day the group was guided through a journaling activity, “*Connecting Inner Experience to Outer Work*”, that asked for contemplation on the day's experience and answers to the following questions: “*What is this moment calling me to do? How is this gathering in service of my calling?*”

There was an emphasis on the importance and power of storytelling and a general appreciation for inner-work and spiritual healing practices. There also was a collective awareness of the need for global healing and the passing down of our spiritual wisdom to younger generations.

Keywords

Transforming individuals is the key to transforming systems - Presence - Connection - Love - Forgiveness - Compassion - Collaboration - Gratitude - Wisdom - Healing - Spiritual Practice

Excerpt from ***You Were Made for This***
by Clarissa

“One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these - to be fierce and to show mercy toward others; both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it.”

A poem created from the shared words from the participants in this experience, comprised by Manish Srivastava:

What Did You Hear? (Our shared emerging poetry)

This yearning for deeper meaning	With deep sense of love
Is rising in young hearts	Our shared humility and sincerity
Longing for deeper spiritual experience	Vulnerability of open hearts
We cannot logic-model our world out of current trauma	Helping without knowing
We need the power of passion and poetry	A part longing to learn and receive more
That comes from listening to our bodies	Other staying and keeping the heart sane
What creates this unusual wisdom of this group	In the welcoming space we hold together
Power of check-in	Re-examining the moments I am alone
That creates the shared mind	Gently stepping in the space
	I am not alone!

Day Two: Learning & Evolving Together; Identity and Belonging

The second and final day of the gathering began with the sharing of a short video, part of the Synergos' "One-Minute-Wisdom" series which showcases answers to the question: "*What cultivates your soul?*". These answers had been gathered in part through the Synergos' "Cultivate the Soul" podcast series and by recording them at gatherings, and in other ways, where community members had been asked this key question.



Arawana Hayashi

What followed was an **Awareness and Embodiment** practice to help participants open up their bodies, minds, and will. This practice was led by Arawana Hayashi, a "social presencing" pioneer, and co-founder of the Social Presencing Theater, which combines art, mediation, and social justice to foster creativity and healing. The feedback from this practice was overwhelmingly positive and words like "powerful learning", "revealing" and "meaningful" were used to describe it. One participant shared that he felt more engaged and open to others while another one expressed the feeling that there was a "story in his body yearning to be told."

The following segment in the program involved the sharing of the work that has been taking place under different collaborative areas, listed below, by the community members who are active in the space:

Science & Spirituality

Christian Krueger and Julianne Lee have been hosting the yearly Science and Spirituality Forum, now in its fourth year, in collaboration with the Fetzer Institute and Synergos. A small number are invited to attend the forum, to meet and hear from the scientists who are conducting research in the area of spirituality.

Mindfulness in Marginalized Communities

Community members shared their work on the collective healing of minority groups, their efforts to alleviate systemic racism and social injustice and the need, as funding entities, to move resources to groups led by indigenous people and people of color. Chris Olin from the Kataly Foundation, Rodney McKenzie from the Fetzer Institute, and Suzanne Koeplinger from the Catalyst Initiative were the sharing members for this area.

Overarching Structure & Language

GPC Member Daniel Kropf, with his work on the Learning for Wellbeing Foundation, and Tomas Bjorkman, with his work on the Inner Development Goals, have both been working on initiatives that support this space, with Synergos giving voice to their efforts in order to shift systems more broadly in society.

Storytelling

Storytelling can take individuals in different directions and get us to understand each other better just by knowing our personal narratives. To this end, Synergos has developed ways to facilitate the telling of stories, like the “Cultivate the Soul” podcast series and the “One-Minute Wisdoms” video series.



At another member's request, Jason Yotopoulos gave a brief overview of the research work of his organization, *Emerald Gate Foundation*, partnered with top research universities around the world. He covered their research on consciousness, as it is the foundation of everything we do, as they explore the efficacy of subtle energy healing practices. So far, the results of this ongoing inquiry have shown great progress and tangible healing on cancer patients. This has led to the creation of a funding collective, now with eight members, to fund additional research and breed a new generation of inquisitors.

The members then joined the last breakout sessions of the event, which were divided by themes. As in previous gatherings, participants chose the area of interest which they wished to delve into with other group members.

Science & Spirituality

This group discussed their work and interest in the space and interesting questions and thoughts were raised. They covered the information theory presented by one of the members and pondered upon whether spirituality leads to behavioral transformation. They explored the idea that a change in values could lead to behavioral transformation and considered how spirituality gets integrated into everyday lives and how we can measure it. *"Can we objectively measure such a subjective experience?"* They also contemplated the question of how to welcome more people into practice, what actions can we take to bring more people along with us on this journey.

Mindfulness in Marginalized Communities

This group discussed the different work they lead in the space of mindfulness and healing practices in marginalized communities who are "suffering greatly". The theme that was prevalent was how the member's own internal work leads their philanthropic shift and transformation. They know that understanding themselves, their privileges and biases help them better assist these communities. Also examining how and who they are funding and how accessible they make those funds to those who need it and do not always have sophisticated fundraisers to obtain it. They considered what else is important and available for these communities besides funds. The members shared examples of healing and transformation initiatives with which they are involved.

They agreed that it is crucial to understand their role in supporting what these communities determine are their needs.

Overarching Language & Structure

This group's most pressing observation was that language is restrictive to the work done in this space and that language can diminish the spiritual experience. They covered results from a study carried out by the Fetzer Institute, in which subjects were asked to use language and art to define their spirituality arriving at the conclusion stated above. Those who defined themselves using art were able to do so more creatively and limitlessly. A member shared a new project in the works on *Grounding Spirituality in Nature*, using a new platform, media and nature.



Open Space

This group discussed the beauty of living into question, more specifically the question around service and identity and the absence of the former on discussions about spirituality. They discussed Buddha's Diamond sutra, among others, and mentioned how there is a form of service that strengthens identity and separation and another form of service that does not. *"There is no person who is serving and there is no person who is served, that's why we call it service"*.

The participants, as a collective, offered their feedback and reflection on the event. There was a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to engage in open and honest dialogue, and for the sharing of knowledge and additional sources of relevant information. There were also expressions of inquisitive wonder on the subject of "onboarding" others onto the spiritual journey.

Conclusion

The event concluded with an invitation to make a commitment in love that will allow the participants to be a disciple of what they have learned during this experience. This commitment call asked members to voice their pledges while others celebrated with cheers. The community responded with commitments to keep on learning, to reach out to others, to stay in touch, to explore new practices, to continue to grow spiritually, and follow up on the teachings and healing practices from this gathering, among others.

Keywords

Love - Commitment - Trust - Discipline - Release - Inquiry - Acceptance - Presence - Bridging - Connection - Dialogue - Belonging - Communities - Gaps