

PERSONHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

As a personhood development consultant and facilitator, I have had the opportunity to travel all over the continent to work with groups of people in many different settings. This work is the culmination of years of personal growth experience, including an extensive background in teaching yoga and meditation, stress and pain management, and bodymind therapies such as the Hakomi Method. Most recently, the focus of my work has been on exploring and developing "personhood". As the Tibetan teacher Chogyam Trungpa pointed out, the basic task of helping professionals in general, and psychotherapists in particular, is to develop what he called "full human beingness", both in themselves and in others. People from all walks of life are now discovering, through personhood development, that their greatest potential is to be found in being their own best self.

Personhood refers to the essential, authentic, and unfettered aspect of each person, the part of us that can most effectively relate to others, to the world around us, and to life itself. Long-term studies in the field of psychotherapy, for example, have shown that this is the most significant factor influencing the ultimate effectiveness of therapy. The "personhood" of the therapist is evidently at least eight times more significant than any method used. This is only one example of the fact that, when it comes to human interaction, it's not what you do but who you are that counts. One aspect of this was described in Daniel Goleman's bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence*. His book clearly makes the point that emotional intelligence, including such characteristics as self-awareness and empathy, is a far better indicator of a person's potential for success than IQ. Who you are being, much more than what you are doing, according to Goleman's research, influences your work, your relationships, and your life.

The who you are that really makes a difference is your personhood. It is not personality, although your personhood can shine through your personality. We can think of personhood as the true spirit of who we are. Personality is often a set of habitual behaviours and constructs that we created over time to help us cope with life. Personality can also be shaped by someone else, parents or older siblings, or by the circumstances of our birth (culture, birth order, economics etc.) Personality often has more to do with the person we try to present to the world than with our essential self, more a "cover story" than the real thing.

Personhood is the real thing. Personhood emerges when we relax, feel nourished and inspired, get really interested in something or someone. Personhood can be nurtured and cultivated, like a flower. The seed is already within us, but may be hidden under layers of old attitudes and habitual reactions. Developing our personhood allows us to be more creative, and more compassionate, both with ourselves and with others.

Working with people, whether individually or in groups, to develop personhood has been very satisfying and nourishing for me. It is both fun and inspiring. The approach I use is playful, experimental, almost totally experiential. We have hundreds of simple practises that are done in pairs or small groups which help to reveal the unconscious and

automatic ways we are organizing ourselves, our perceptions, our beliefs and assumptions, our thoughts and our reactions. When we become aware of some of the habits that are limiting us, the doors and windows of possibility open up and we become free to discover whole new ways of being.

In the process of exploring and developing personhood, most individuals find themselves moving from old ineffective thought patterns to newer, more creative ways of thinking and expressing themselves. Groups that work together find themselves appreciating each other at new levels, and, feeling more appreciated, functioning far better as a team. Couples often move to deeper levels of honesty and intimacy and love. Personhood development invites everyone to discover more of their own creative potential, and to find increasing ways to be nourished by work and by life.

Personhood development programs involve an exploration of:

1. who we think we are
2. personality vs personhood
3. how we see the rest of the world
4. what we imagine others want from us
5. what we typically do when we're stressed
6. relaxing our habitual reactions to life
7. creating alternative responses
8. counting our blessings

If you or your group is interested in hearing more about personhood development, or having a presentation or seminar, please email Donna, psomadonna@gmail.com