

Travel journal from International Intensive Training (IIT) Denmark 16-25 June 2017

After a very enriching mediation course with Carl Plesner in April, I had the idea that I really wanted to go “all in” with NVC. I was on a high and found it quite magical how NVC could make of a difference in the "real world", which Carl and Olena's project in Ukraine shows. I went home and tried to figure out what this IIT really was, and thought to myself that it seemed interesting from a learning point of view, even if I did not understand what an IIT *really* was about

I had some discussions with myself, and my wife, before I decided to jump into it, use my vacation and our vacation money to make it happen, and as I am writing this, I have no regrets doing so. In short, attending an IIT is a very different experience, like an intense and educational summer-camp for grown-ups. Lots of hugs, emotions and feelings (yes, there is a difference), play, good healthy food, scenic environment, exciting people from all over the world, and lots more.

[Martinus center at Klint](#)

When I arrived, it was almost midnight so I did not get to see the venue before the next morning. Martinus center at Klint on the North tip of Sjælland was the place, and it is a stunning location: Lavender bushes all over the place, beautiful rosebushes/perennials outside our cabins, huge scent shrubs and perfectly cleaned lawns. A perfect setting to withdraw from the world for ten days in order to dive into a community making. The food was also a bit unusual for me, as it was vegan food, which was new to me. However, made with love, it tasted wonderful, and I did not miss the meat as much as I thought. It was good to have the body cleansed, and after the IIT, and in consultation with my wife, we have agreed to change our diet towards vegetarian diet, inspired by the food at the IIT.

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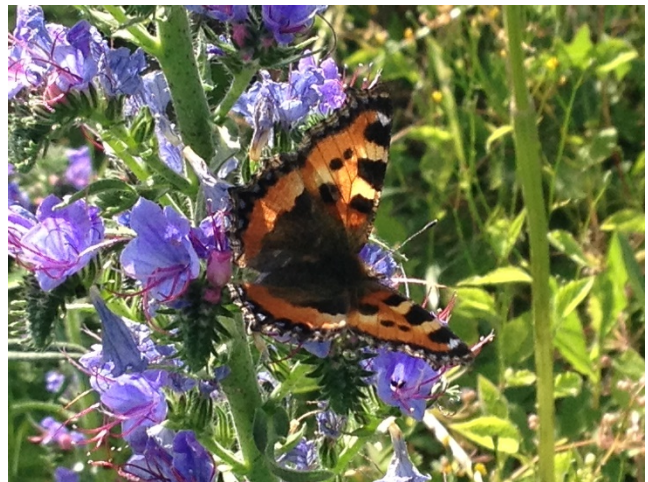
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The first day was about how to free oneself from the chains of society, and to create a connection to ourselves, which was a great start in order to start building a community with people from around the world. The coming days there were focus days with the following subjects: honest expression, dynamics of empathy, healing and transformation, mediation, sharing NVC/NVC in schools, social change and lastly gratitude. The days could start at 6-8 o'clock for those who wanted to do running, swimming, yoga etc. whereas the program started at and ended 9 o'clock, which usually meant 12 hour a day with activity for those who wanted. There was freedom to opt out of the evening session for those who needed integration time or rest. So the IIT was not a retreat to rest and relax, but loads of learning and hard choices to make. There were four sessions at the same time and we had to make a choice three times a day, about which one to attend, which was hard at times. Some sessions were set up again after popular request. Many participants also had lunch and dinner workshops, and there was a quiet table for those who needed to recover after the sessions. The picture shows the result of the roughly 70-80 sessions during the IIT. Most of them held by the trainers: Jeff, Gina, Kirsten and Kathleen, but quite a few by participants (mostly evening sessions)



"Immersion experience"

I wondered what this expression really meant when I read about the IIT, and I understood it, at a mental level, as going deep into the matter. As I am relatively new with the NVC community, I was preparing myself to learn a lot and be vulnerable. We started about talking about "the beauty of needs", and this was to be the recurring theme of the stay: Identify own and other's needs, which are



hidden behind feelings or jackal language. I would like to add that this is somewhat harder than it sounds, and when one is constantly looking for needs, one can get a tiny bit "crazy". I think it was day four many of us reached a level of saturation, and we were "thrown out" of our heads, because our heads were full due to learning. It was at this stage our hearts began to open, and the experience became more authentic. Day four was day we got time after lunch to integrate. They called it integration time, and we were invited to ascend from the water to come up and breathe some air, before descending to the depths of NVC the next day. However, this afternoon the trainers asked us to find a quiet place in nature in silence for a few hours, and contemplate about our intentions for being at this IIT. I found a flowery meadow and watched the bees and the butterfly gather nectar from the flowers. These hours of peace and quiet was rejuvenating because it is easy to forget that it is important to integrate what we understand intellectually, in order to let it sink into the heart.

IVK- consciousness

Even if NVC has a form with its observations-feelings-needs and request for example, it is the NVC-consciousness we are searching for. It is easy to get fixated about the technical execution of how do say and do the NVC, but how to get the NVC consciousness is more elusive for newcomers (or even the more experienced ones). NVC is about connection with the heart, your own and other's heart, and it is this connection between two hearts that we call empathy. To me, NVC is therefore about being vulnerable, and daring to put your heart on the line, quite literally. I decided already the first day that my strategy was going to be vulnerability, in order to follow my intention of creating solid connections. This is however, not as easy as it sounds. We

have all some twisted core-values that we fight almost every day, our inner demons you might call them. Whether it is "I'm not good/interesting enough"/"The world is a dangerous place" / "There are limited resources in the world". One of my twisted core-values was that I am not interesting, and not worthy of connection, I should not take up too much space, and what I said in the community gatherings were not as interesting as what others shared. After a lovely workshop on core beliefs with our community's guitar virtuoso, Rich, I was able to work on these beliefs and we made my new core belief into a song with Rich playing the guitar. Overcoming

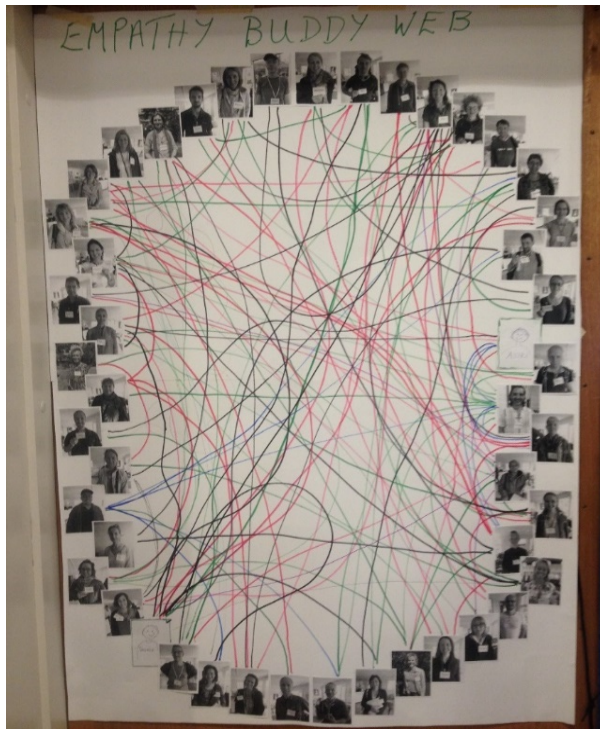


these limitations, allowing me to be more authentic, I started sharing more from the heart. I got some nice feedback from the others that they really appreciated my sharing, and they felt it in their hearts. After ten days of NVC on the agenda more or less 24/7, I realized that NVC is not a technique, but a lifestyle: it is about opening the heart and daring to be vulnerable and show a sincere interest for people around us. I think NVC is a bit like golf: It is hard to master the technique, but once you get the hang of it, you can easily play a good play without much thinking. As in golf, one is never finished learning, and one

can always become better at the game, more accurate and more focused. In the same way, a person with a NVC-mindset can always be more accurate and focused when listening and expressing oneself. Moreover, in both cases: if one does not master the technique properly, one will stagnate at a certain level, and struggle to advance in the game. In golf, this could be not being able to swing the club, whereas in NVC it is most likely the case of not being able to open your heart.

Community

One of the benefits of being at "international summer camp" for adults is the same as for children: getting the opportunity to meet people from all over the world. With more than 50 people from over 20 countries, it was a colorful community. Some rookies, some experienced, some under 30, some over 70. IN brief: a rather diverse group, which towards the end became a rather close community. Everyone being open and inclusive, we all did our share to make the community work as a living organism. We sang together, we played on the lawn building human pyramids, we went for night swimming, we celebrated midsummer night, we hugged a lot, had



morning yoga, we had an evening of sharing our work with the local community, and we did even have our own "non-talent talent show", which actually was full of talent. When we were all heading home, we had made connections across the world with people whom we could seek empathy or support. The picture shows the Empathy buddy web, which was made to have a sense of encouragement to support each other when we left the "bubble" and back to the real world, as we jokingly called it. My understanding is that NVC focuses on building lasting relations that can become friendship with time.

My Norwegian community

Within a community, there can also be smaller communities. NVC Norway was so lucky to have three out of five in the board present at the IIT, and three members of NVC Norway, and also one "independent" Norwegian in this sub-community. Being at this IIT was an eye-opener, and answered many questions, which led to the result that now six of us are going to opt for being CNVC certified trainers. Bonds were made, and the outcome will hopefully be that Norway will get a handful new trainers in the near future, creating a stronger NVC community in Norway as a whole. Today we only have one certified trainer, and we hope that we soon can be a NVC country that will be able to hold an IIT within a five-year period. Having this group now wanting to be certified will most likely generate more activity, regarding events and trainings. There is a good vibe in NVC Norway these days and as you read this we will already had the first meeting to kick-off the certifications group's plan for the road ahead. Therefore, I do urge anyone who has been thinking about certification to contact your NVC country and ask if others are planning certification, so you can walk the road together. The picture is four out of seven Norwegians at the IIT.



Can it be recommended to attend an IIT?

Yes! I was not prepared for what an IIT was or could be, so my expectations were not too high, which is a good base for getting content in the end. I hope to learn much about NVC, which I have, but I was surprised about how much of a revelation it has been. Attending this IIT has been like puzzling your own puzzle, and each morning we were given ten or more pieces we needed for our puzzle. Even if all pieces are equally important to complete a puzzle, some are more important to have an understanding where the other pieces are going. Occasionally a two-hour session seemed to be adequate in order for an important piece to fall into place, and I am happy to say that I found some important pieces in my puzzle. To me it seems obvious that attending an IIT is for people who really want to understand themselves, but we are all at different paths in our lives, so I believe that it is valuable to everyone. Many of us made a choice at this IIT about going for certification, and if one has this wish, I do urge you to attend an IIT to understand more in-depth about what NVC is all about.

I am glad I went, so is my wife, and hopefully friends and acquaintances. For my own assessment of this event is that I changed somewhat for the better. Before I came, I thought I knew what empathy was, now I know what it is not... And there is a difference between the two, because sometimes our good intentions are "overruled" by choosing the less useful strategies. I left the IIT with a thought in my head that ***NVC is to look for the strategy that serves the most needs for most people.*** In this respect, pain and sorrow are no longer my enemies, but hidden treasures that I can harvest and transform to something beautiful. Lastly, I want to wrap things up with a sentence I made for myself, and it summarizes my experience at the IIT Denmark 2017

"The beauty of allowing pain is that when we step outside the comfort-zone, we allow ourselves to become something greater and more whole than we thought we could become."

Summer greetings

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Øyvind Sandve', written in a cursive style.

Øyvind Sandve