

21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

## **Reflections from SOEL in considering the Covid pandemic and on-line exchange**

Dear Friends and colleagues

I pen this letter (later to be typed) outside at SOEL. It is unseasonably hot and dry here but we did have a little rain last night. We all feel freshened by it on the farm. My sheep have been so hot they think it is summer and in trying to rub off their woolly fleeces they have felted themselves!

I have been waiting, contemplating and feeling the time to write this letter.

Initially at the beginning of lockdown we had just started lambing which is in and of itself a form of self isolation. I felt in myself a buzz of activity arising in the country as many extraordinary people spoke up for those in need and engaged with offers of help, support and kindness and we sellotaped rainbows to our windows.

At present my partner and I are self isolating, he has underlying health conditions so my time is divided between our farm, life together at home, and my work here at SOEL. We daily feel very grateful to live here.

Weekly I meet my own dis-ease, my own fears; in the middle of the night, going shopping, fears of being out and about, of touching, of passing on covid to my partner... Recently we lost a dear friend to this virus who was living with his partner in similar circumstances to ours...

I often hear this disease described as "a great leveller", but in reality that is not the case. What are our personal and individual experiences? How are they similar and different from one another? By grounds of our behaviour, our mind, our ancestry, our diets, our age, our finances, our soul, our home and place in the world each of our experiences are emerging as something quite different and unique; some more tragic, challenging, some more joyful... I am dreaming into the possibility that we can deepen our understanding and knowledge through acknowledging this diversity; diversity as a guiding principle of unity, resiliency and change; just like the cells in each and every organism on earth perhaps...?

Early on in this pandemic I found support in a short statement from Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen from the School Of Body-Mind Centering®. I share it here:

*" When facing difficult challenges,  
I always say to myself  
'Don't go to fear'  
And  
'What are the blessing hidden in the shadows?' "*

It is quiet here at SOEL; the space feels very empty, missing the buzz of shared activities and the energy of the many unaccountable exchanges between group, self, other. I can sincerely say I miss you all, I miss those I have yet to meet, I miss being in community which is at the heart of this work and I miss sharing a cuppa. I am still growing herbs and drying teas :- ) I would welcome your news – How are you, How are you functioning, processing, responding, changing? Please feel free to write, to email, text or call.

So what now for SOEL? (“what are you doing?”, my partner keeps asking me, daily...) What indeed...In BMC we say that if you do not know what to do, do nothing...just for a moment...step back, pause, let go...and in this way we learn something too...*sitting in the synapse*...

Firstly I can say that I have been working on zoom remotely with colleagues and my supervisor (in the states) for a couple of years now, so making exchanges, exploring and research in this medium already has a place in my work. This previous experience and some requests from clients to continue our sessions has led to my offering some of SOELs activities on-line. (Possibly some of you reading this letter have joined me. I have been encouraged and excited by this.)

Remote video call is not a fully integrated sensory human exchange for sure. We learn from each other to feel how we are, we learn from nature, (our own nature - native intelligence) essentially by being together and having sensitive connections.

Remote video call is as the genre perhaps suggests - remote and therefore, it is not sustainable as an enduring, holistic medium for human interaction in the longer term. There is a plethora of research and books that I am aware of detailing how continuous screen based media disrupts and disorients our basic sense of self, other and place. However, in this current extreme climate of remote distancing, connections through online platforms perhaps feel more welcome offering a bridge of sorts to post Covid. As many of us can appreciate, we can practice embodiment and a somatics approach in anything and everything we do, embodiment being essentially a waie of being, a quality of attention that we bring to how we experience each moment as we live it on zoom, facebook, in a meadow, a que to a shop.

So for now, in our current context I am exploring somatics online as a means to keep sharing practice during this time of self isolation, distancing and lockdown.

I invite you to share some of SOELs somatics practices via zoom if it feels of interest to you, if it feels comfortable.

As we await new government guidelines I will update you of SOELs activities by letter, email groups and our website but for now I conclude this letter by confirming that our programme of work at Cholwell, in the studio, is suspended for the time being.

I hope to see some of you on-line and again in the future, in the flesh :-) In the meantime do feel free to be in touch :-)

Be well and easefully you

With heartfelt wishes  
Rosalyn