

Perspective Weekends

Summary

A Perspective Weekend is a residential course with around 10 participants that takes place in a rural cottage. The aim of the weekend is to help people to stand back from the fuss and involvement of their normal day to day lives and put their lives in some perspective.

The weekend contains a variety of interesting components, from stimulating courses to simple pleasures, all intended to achieve the above aim. And, of course, to enable people to relax, socialise and enjoy themselves!

Key Components of the Weekend

Learning

Over the weekend, we will run 4 short courses on a set of topics that will help us to put our lives in context and also make us think about some bigger questions. The topics are as follows:

- **Our Reality** – What is the reality we live within? What is our starting point for our knowledge of the external world? Can we ever be certain in our explanation of reality? What are the different ways of responding to this uncertainty (philosophical and religious)? Should some be chosen over others? *Why? Discipline – philosophy;*
- **Our Universe** – its parameters - age, origins, size and scale, the place of our planet within it – all delivered in a way that will produce wonder. *Disciplines – astronomy, physics and other sciences;*
- **Our Planet and the Life on it** - the planet's terrain, the origin of life, what biological life consists of, the diversity and extent of nature – for example, the distribution of species. *Disciplines – biology and other natural sciences;*
- **Human Beings** - 1. Our makeup as creatures - including topics such as our biological and genetic makeup, our abilities and factors that influence our thinking and behaviour. 2. Our situation – the variations in our situations across the planet – location, population levels, wealth etc. *Disciplines – biology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, politics and others;*

Reflection

After each course, people will be given time to think, chat with each other or simply reflect on their own. A major part of the weekend will be about each person sharing their thoughts on bigger things with other people in the group in a relaxed, informal way. The 4 courses are intended just to start things off.

Participants will be given the opportunity to spend their reflection time after each course in a facilitated group if they wish. If they decide not to take part in these groups, they will spend 10 minutes within the group after each course to consider its consequences and what it makes us think of – just to get the ball rolling.

Nature

An important part of the weekend for participants will be the chance to spend time in and around nature. Not simply to spend the weekend in a peaceful place, but to really take the time to experience nature and be within it.

Aside from spending time in nature, the weekend will aim to reconnect people with the natural sources of their food, as participants will be encouraged to source the ingredients for their Saturday night dinner from local suppliers and find out more from them about their processes. Additionally, participants will be encouraged to take part in the pleasurable and process of preparing the meal for the Saturday night, accompanied and gently tutored by an experienced chef.

Creativity

Aside from the creative process of cooking, participants will have time to bring and take part in other creative activities of their choosing – painting, writing, reading – whatever people feel for, if they feel for it.

Space

Everyone will have as much time as they wish for reflection and peace.

Socialising

Although people will be encouraged to seek as much time for themselves as they wish, a key theme of the weekend will be the idea of sharing experiences, pleasures and ideas with others. This may include reflecting on the courses together, discussing other, cooking, walking, sharing things you have brought from home such as music and books or simply chatting.

Fun

And of course simply having fun!

Other Notes

Summary notes will be provided for each course. These will include some basic ideas for participants on how to use the learning from the weekend once they get back into the real world.

A website will be set up to support the course, including downloadable summary notes, forums and places where participants can tell each other about the insights they have had and how they are changing their lives. Simply, encouraging a the development of community of participants. At a later point in our development of this initiative, we may provide facilities on the web to enable people to run their own perspective course with each other over a weekend or a series of evenings over 4 weeks.

RD

27th November 2006