

Macrobiotics From The Heart



FINAL VERSION 30TH OCTOBER 2013

When writing a concise, summary of our meeting, the words on paper lose some of the emotions and feelings that went into creating the ideas that follow. If you were not able to be with us, I can describe that the meetings were conducted with love, understanding and listening, by a warm, harmonious group. We remained open to each others ideas and experiences, whilst participating with respect, inclusion and grace. Our time together was treasured and celebrated through a growing connection to each other. This was nourished through dance, meditation, yoga, chanting, music and exercise.

We were served deeply satisfying meals, prepared by a team of joyful cooks who created an energetic intention for each meal.

The meetings fostered friendships, laughter, sharing, empathy and our heartfelt expression of macrobiotics. The intention is that we will carry this way of being together, into the next meeting. I have tried to honour, cherish and respect all the wonderful ideas that came together in our meeting and everyone's contribution, through this report.

To make this report easier to read I have picked out various topics and given them simple headings and written notes to describe our discussions below.

THE HEART IN MACROBIOTICS



Macrobiotics is a spiritual journey and an expression of love.

The heart chakra is a balancing point in the centre and influenced by the other chakras – sex / intimacy, exercise, food, emotions, communication, thinking and spiritual practices. Food shares its influence on emotions with the other aspects of life.

In Classical Chinese Medicine, practitioners consider the fire quality of the heart to be in everything and this gives us a spiritual connection with the earth and universe. (Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies – Leon Hammer)

We can approach our clients and students as brothers and sisters, and have the opportunity to enjoy teaching and cooking as an expression of love.

We can experiment and develop exercises and practices that help people develop more harmony between the heart and mind (intellect).



HUMBLENESS



We explored how humility is a part of our philosophy and how we bring it into our teaching.

Do we want our students to think like we do, or encourage them to enjoy the freedom to think for themselves?

Ultimately when we die we will engage in a process of surrender. We have the opportunity to explore the power of surrender in our current lives and experience a deep humility.

SELF DISCOVERY

We can explore change from the inside out.

We might ask ourselves whether we transfer patterns of thinking and behaviour into our macrobiotic practice or whether we can embrace a deeper transformation by changing the patterns themselves?

The more we develop ourselves the more we develop our counselling and teaching.

Be aware of our own emotional patterns and balance between spiritual practices, time for ourselves and being in nature, with work, friends and families.

Engaging in macrobiotics may be one step that leads to furthering our self-development through other means. Try to keep the process of self-development open. Be flexible and open to the unexpected twists and turns of our own evolution.

LOVE AND JUDGEMENT



A repeating theme during our meetings was the relationship between love and judgement. We can play with this relationship and it may be that to feel greater love between us, we can free ourselves from judging each other.

We have the choice to be less judgemental when doing things with people, offer a positive message and enjoy the simplicity of life. An exercise is to consciously be more descriptive and less judgemental.

GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION



George Ohsawa gave 55 points out of 100 to appreciation in his 7 levels of health, suggesting appreciation has greater influence on our health than all the other levels combined.

We can learn to appreciate the simple things in life and develop our appreciation through simple objects like a leaf, pencil or stone. Encouraging our students to develop their appreciation of life is a key part of macrobiotic education. Every time we eat we can feel gratitude for the food and all the processes that brought it to our plate.

ATTITUDE TO LIFE



The life we create starts in the mind. Focus on what we want and pursue it with constructive intentions. Seek to bring greater lightness and pleasure into our practice of macrobiotics. Enjoy what we do, have fun and play. There is no need to take ourselves too seriously or get caught up in obligations. Remember to give ourselves the freedom to experiment and be creative.

Ultimately we can benefit from a common sense approach to life.

Try to explore taking more of a 'yes' attitude to life. Yes, is open, no is closed.

Come back to the now regularly and practice being present. Explore all the ways we can be nourished by life, including being in nature, communicating with others, having an active social life, enjoying our work. Learn from abundance in nature.

Be an example and walk the talk. Be honest about our practice of macrobiotics, share our own challenges and talk from experience. Our own vulnerability can be attractive and human.

EMOTIONS

Emotions can be stored physically and part of healing is to release stored emotions.

Sharing emotions can be scary. We may feel vulnerable and exposed when expressing our emotions but honesty about how we are feeling and authenticity creates deeper connection with self, others and the universe. We felt that acknowledging and working with emotions in counselling and teaching is important for health and wellbeing.

ACCEPTANCE

To accept that life is a mystery. We do not know very much and it is honest to say, "I don't know".

We can train ourselves to be more accepting in every situation, including with our clients and students.

We have the opportunity to accept our past, be in the present and enjoy creating our future.

EDUCATION

Bring warmth and a big heart into our classes. Consider how we can make macrobiotics more of an expression of love. Seek to inspire rather than induce fear.

Respect that we teach from our own journey in life and that where we are on that journey is reflected in our teaching. It is all in transition.

Try to learn what our students and clients like and adapt our expression of macrobiotics to meet them. Communicate with a simple language and be aware of when we are using more complicated language.

Appreciate that within macrobiotic literature there is a wealth of ideas about appreciation, freedom, a love of life, humbleness and being responsible. Educate students in these principles and let them use them as they wish. Help them be free. Enjoy and study the harmony of life.

We can teach and explore emotions through the chakras, five elements / five transformations, biology, society and invisible factors.

Accept that learning something new takes time and commitment. Sometimes less is more and we can be aware that we may overwhelm people with too much information. Try passing on knowledge bit by bit.

Be sensitive to how to use the word macrobiotics and when. Use the etymology of the word Macrobiotics – long life, large life, great life, big life... to show it is more than a diet. Adapt to each situation.

Focus on what we recommend rather than what not to eat. When encouraging change provide simple and easy alternatives. For example fish instead of meat, replacing sugar with syrups... Adelbert has an attractive food pyramid.

Set up student exchange programmes and look at ways to raise funds for scholarships. Encourage students to contribute to the local communities as part of their training. Look at ways to bring macrobiotics to schools.

SUCCESS AND GROWING OUR BUSINESSES



Try to work to our strengths and seek help from people in the areas we need to be more successful. Promote each other and help each other be more successful. To promote each other through publishing each other's recipes and articles and providing links to each other's websites. Create a worldwide association that embraces all styles of macrobiotics. Publish an up to date address list of macrobiotic teachers, cooks, activists on our websites. Find ways of working with macrobiotic businesses to our mutual benefit.

Consider whether we expect the market to come to us, or whether we are going to the market. Going to the market may require us to be more flexible and adapt to people's needs.

To learn from other movements, such as yoga or meditation, where they respond to people's needs. An example of this would be providing a solution for stress or care of the environment.

Look at ways to encourage start up programmes and create more jobs in our community. As an example of creating new businesses and project we learnt how Milan invested in new equipment for producing macrobiotics foods and how Bob Carr is creating a new centre based on natural agriculture.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

We explored various ways we can support each other and help through challenging times. We felt it was helpful for teachers and activists to be closer as a worldwide community and that we could share and support each other with empathy. Use our intuition, sensitivity and empathy to feel when someone is having difficulties, and be sensitive to when to offer help. We can prioritise communicating honestly and with love for each other.

Sometimes we might feel that we are the only ones to have a particular challenge, whilst it may be an issue for many people. Sharing an issue can be therapeutic in itself. We can look at setting up a Facebook Group that is a safe place to share and support each other. Sharing our own healing and what helped is helpful for our whole community. Seek to connect on other levels. This might include discussing enjoyable / interesting / inspiring books, films, websites, events, music, exhibitions, art...

Consider our individual responsibilities and communal responsibilities. Communal responsibilities include the way we treat each other, our students and clients. To what extent can we accept each other without judgements?

Send birthday wishes to each other. Use a variety of mediums to keep in touch, including, cards, telephone, sending presents, meeting up... Explore ways to meet up physically when travelling. This might simply be meeting up for a cup of tea, sharing a meal, or visiting an art exhibition together. Try organising pot luck dinners in our local areas.

Be open to having a colleague over to stay for a day or two and if appropriate support them in having a rest.

Celebrate George Ohsawa's birthday (18th October) and passing (24th April) together.

FAMILIES

Remain neutral when couples split up and offer help to both. Try not to get involved in judgement and blame. Remember men have feelings too, even if they do not show them. Men need time to heal and refresh.

WOMEN

To create relationships where women can have more rest and more time to regenerate. Working, cooking, cleaning and bringing up children can be too exhausting. Women need time to heal and refresh.

HEALTH

We discussed the the illness's that have taken many of our much loved colleagues over the years and considered, without judgement, what we could learn from this and how to evolve our expression, understanding and practice of macrobiotics.

The general consensus was that many people had become too yang. We considered that people can be more yang through yang foods, emotional suppression and lifestyle, but also that living in a way that is considered balanced, centred and clean can also be yang in itself. Simply put, restriction is a form of yang. It seemed to us that more health issues among the macrobiotic community are through becoming too yang rather than too yin. The counterpoint is to add more polarity, richness, variety and abundance into our eating.

Just as important as what we eat, is how we release. If we are too yang we risk not being able to release, resulting in a build up of deposits and unresolved emotions. If we are too yin we risk not having enough vitality to release. We need to find ways to keep our energy flowing.

We suggest focussing on what we want to eat, rather than what we do not want to eat. To create more of a 'Yes' attitude to food and health. For example saying 'yes' to natural whole foods and focus on enjoying these, rather than being distracted by feeling we have to stop particular foods. Yes is open, no is closed.

To accept our past and focus on health and vitality, so we do not bring previous health issues into the present. Develop a positive language to describe ourselves and life.

To create daily practices that help us reflect on our physical, mental and emotional health and make adjustments.

That excessive stress contributes to poor health and that part of our macrobiotic practice and teaching would include daily activities that help us reduce stress. This could be; meditation, yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, laughter...

Overly focussing on sickness can be unhealthy in itself. Better to focus on health and enjoying life, than a fear of disease. What you resist persists. Enjoy the bigger perspective of life with wholeness and unity.

Be kind and loving to ourselves, accepting that common problems from modern living effect us all. There is no need to feel guilt or shame when facing a health issue, much better to share it.

Sometimes illness creates an opportunity to discover something new about ourself and a more healthy lifestyle for our particular situation. This applies to macrobiotic teachers and it may be helpful to seek other practices to bring about a healing.

It is fine to use canned beans, frozen vegetables and convenience foods to save time.

FOOD

Our general recommendations are;

Restrictive diets can lack polarity leading to more static rather than dynamic energy.

Eat less grains and more vegetables.

Enjoy a wide variety of grains, without too much emphasis on brown rice. Include cracked grains.

Consume a great variety of vegetable, bean and grain soups without relying on miso soups.

Try a variety of raw, lightly cooked and longer cooked vegetables every day.

Use a variety of naturally processed oils, including nuts and seeds. Include raw oil as appropriate. Organic and cold pressed whenever possible.

Explore wok style frying where vegetables are sautéed in oil, and water is added as soon as the vegetables sizzle.

Be mindful about the amount of salt we use, including in pressed salads.

Consider more protein rich foods, including beans, tofu, tempeh, natto, seitan and fu. This can make the overall diet more relaxing, enjoyable and satisfying.

Traditionally cultures cooked fish and beans or bean products together, and we also recommend this.

Include a wide variety of short and long term pickles, along with unpasteurised fermented foods.

Experiment with herbs, seasonings and mild spices to suit your taste.

Eat fresh and cooked local fruits.

Include a wide range of teas and herbal infusions. Include plain water daily.

Consider food choices in terms of daily, weekly and monthly foods. We may have a range of natural foods we feel good with when eaten daily. We can include foods that we eat weekly for greater flexibility, variety and nourishment. In addition we might eat anything occasionally, to be social and feel free. We felt that food proportions presented on a plate (pie chart style) is most understandable.

Make the plate colourful and attractive. Digestion starts with the eyes. Ensure the food is tasty and consider introducing more cooking styles with fire energy, from the five elements.

Any initial dietary guidelines are to start with but need to be adjusted for our own situation and condition through our own (and our students / clients) self reflection.

PROJECT - NEW WEBSITE

To set up a new international macrobiotic website where a variety of teachers can contribute articles, recipes and promote courses. Simon to write a specification. We will then look for quotes and set it up. The site will initially represent those from the 2013 meeting who choose to be a part of creating the site and participate in its ongoing growth. The aim is that it is financially nourishing for those involved and who put time or money into it. Once the site is successful we will invite more people to participate.

NEXT MEETING LOCATION AND DATES

The next meeting will be in Lisbon 13th to 15th October. The intention is to co-ordinate the meeting with Green Fest in Estoril (9th to 12th October), near Lisbon so that teachers can teach at that event if they wish.

2014 THEME

Macrobiotic Education from the Heart

We will explore;
Our own on-going education.
How we educate with feeling, emotion and from our heart.
Education for children, teenagers and young people.

NEW ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Chico, Geninha, Simon, Hans, Sandy, Sandra, Teresa M

The intention is to continue the approach of being encouraging, respectful, kind, appreciative, open, non judgemental, inviting and inclusive.

Part of their preparation will be to write a document to give next year's participants as a guide to help each of us be responsible for and play our part in creating a successful meeting in terms of enjoyment, constructive discussion, inclusiveness, connection, harmony and creativity.

NEXT HOST

If you wish to put forward a format to hold a future Meeting and Event in your country please prepare it and bring a presentation to the 2014 Meeting. This needs to include size of team, location of rooms, accommodation, accessible travel, food and catering arrangements.

TRANSLATION

The hosts will not provide translation. People are welcome to bring a translator, however, this person will pay for their meals. One long term intention is to start up regional groups where we can have meetings in the common language of the area.

INVITATION

We warmly invite you to join us at next years meeting. Our meetings are open to anyone who is active with macrobiotics. This includes teachers, cooks, counsellors, organisers, promoters, food producers, bloggers and authors. Meanwhile be well and enjoy life.

AUTHOR

This report was written by Simon Brown with help from Anna, Chico, Sandra, Rik, Denny and Hans. The report has been approved by the whole group before being published. A huge thanks to Rosalina who kept such wonderful notes during our meetings.

ATTENDEES AND CONTACT

| | BIRTHDAY | E-MAIL |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--|
| ANNA Mackenzie | Aug. 2nd. 1947 | anna@annamackenzie.co.uk |
| CARMEN Santos | August 16th. 1970 | cravos301@gmail.com |
| Chistiane Manz | August 4th. 1949 | christianemanz@bluewin.ch |
| DENNY Waxman | May 16th. 1949 | dennywaxman@dennywaxman.com |
| EMMA Cunis | June 26th. | emmacunis@hotmail.com |
| FEDERICO Marro | Sept. 2nd. 1985 | federace@hotmail.com |
| FRANCISCO V. | Nov. 13th. 1960 | fvaratojo@gmail.com |
| FRANÇOIS Gisel | June 2nd. 1949 | gisel@graindevie.org |
| GENINHA V. | March 30th. 1958 | genavaratojo@gmail.com |
| HANS Schmid | Sept. 16th. 1948 | hans.arthur.schmid@t-online.de |
| Jean Jac. Manz | June 17th. 1940 | jjmanz33@gmail.com |
| ISABEL Estanislau | Dec. 4Th. 1961 | isabel.estanislau3@gmail.com |
| ISABEL Moreno | August 2nd. 1967 | kalyana1967@gmail.com |
| Maria Casal | Dec. 1st. 1977 | maria@escueladevida.es |
| MARY Nino | May 10th 1958 | mary.nino@wanadoo.fr |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Mieke Verdecken | March 9th. 1952 | info@issshiatsu.be |
| NICOLE Demer | August 31st. 1973 | info@makrobiotik-erleben.de |
| PAULA Azevedo | Nov. 21st | p.narciso.azevedo@gmail.com |
| RIK Vermuyten | June 19th. 1951 | rvermuyten@gmail.com |
| ROLAND Schneider | Nov. 30th. 1944 | info@makrobiotik-erleben.de |
| M^o ROSA Casal | Jan 17th. 1943 | info@escueladevida.es |
| ROSALINA Silva | July 22nd. 1960 | rosalinatsilva@gmail.com |
| SANDRA Mesquita | Sept. 29th. 1979 | macroinandyoung@gmail.com |
| SANDY Pukel | Sept. 10th. 1945 | oakfeedi@aol.com |
| SIMON Brown | July 1st. 1957 | simon@chienergy.co.uk |
| TERESA Mizon | June 16th. 1960 | teresamizon@gmail.com |
| TERESA Ribeiro | August 13th. 1956 | teresaribeiro08@gmail.com |
| TOMOKO Lillrank | March 26th. 1956 | tomoko.ogawa326@gmail.com |
| VITORIO Calogero | June 14th. 1934 | vittocal@gmail.com |
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