Leader Name: Cassandra Vieten & Michael Sapiro

Workshop Title: Living Deeply: The Art and Science of Transformation

Workshop Description:

We are each always changing, always growing. But sometimes we encounter moments or periods of life that are so potent, and so full of potential, that they transform our consciousness, fundamentally shifting our worldview, our motives and priorities, and how we relate to ourselves, others, and the world. Where we have been limited, we expand. We become more open, balanced, and aligned with our true values. Compassion for self and others arises more naturally.

For more than a decade, research at the Institute of Noetic Sciences has examined how these transformations happen and how they can lead to greater meaning, joy, and purpose. No matter who you are, where you come from, or what your current transformative path is—whether you seek to transform your life completely or simply make adjustments to add richness and depth—learning more about the terrain of consciousness transformation can not only give you a map, but also can help you become the cartographer of your own journey. Using lecture, video, discussion, creative process, and deeply embodied experiential play, we will weave scientific findings together with wisdom from the world’s spiritual traditions and your own authoritative wisdom to explore deep shifts in consciousness, and how they can be integrated into everyday life.

APA Topic: Spirituality, Mindfulness, and Religion (7)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Identify factors and conditions that catalyze positive transformations in consciousness
- Describe stages in the process of transformation, and pitfalls associated with each stage
- Discuss specific practices that support adult development and how they can be integrated into everyday life
• Describe several elements of human flourishing or “living deeply” that represent stages of development beyond what is currently understood to be psychological health or quality of life
• Explain what factors catalyze transformation, and what distinguishes whether difficult experiences will be traumatic or transformative
• Describe how we are hard-wired to resist new information that contradicts current meaning systems and some ways to overcome this wiring
• List the four elements of transformative practice
• Discuss how transformative practices can be integrated into everyday life
• Discuss the role of self-transcendence and loosening ego identification in psychological well-being
• Describe how quality of life and psychological health is being redefined
• Explain how these insights can be used in service to easing suffering of others and promoting collective transformation.

COURSE OUTLINE

Sessions are two hours each and will contain a combination of experiential exercises and practices, discussion of theory and research, and creative process.

Session 1: The Emerging Science of Transformation: Research on Transformation and IONS Living Deeply Model of Transformation
  - review empirical research on spiritual and worldview transformation
Session 2: Setting the Stage: Catalysts and Conditions Predicting Transformation
  - discuss factors leading up to transformation
  - identify conditions that make it more likely transformation will occur
Session 3: Peak Experiences, Aha! Moments, Awe and Wonder
  - review theory and research on peak experiences and awe
Session 4: The Transformative Potential of Pain, Hitting Bottom, and Post-Traumatic Growth
  - identify factors that predict whether an experience will be traumatic or transformative
  - review research and theory on post-traumatic growth
Session 5: Inattentional Blindness and Denial
  - review cognitive science of being “hard-wired” to resist change
  - discuss ways to overcome these biases/defenses
Session 6: The Four Elements of Transformative Practice
  - discuss the role of intention, attention, repetition and guidance
  - review types of transformative practices
- discuss top-down/bottom-up forms of learning and growth

Session 7: “I to We”: Self-Transcendence and Well-Being
- review research on self-transcendence and well-being
- engage in experiential practices of nonduality and self-transcendence

Session 8: “We to Me”: Self-Care, Self Compassion
- discuss compassion, empathy, and fatigue/burnout
- learn practices for balancing service with self-care
- review research on and learn practices for self-compassion

Session 9: Indigenous and Ancient Models of Transformation
- review of early transformative stories, models, and practices

Session 10: Stories, Symbols, and Metaphors of Transformation
- learn how stories and symbols can shed light on one’s own personal transformative journey
- explore how modern myths in film, video, and books can inform transformational work

Session 11: Transformative Life Mapping
- participants will learn a process for telling the story of their own transformative life journey that they can use for themselves and others

Session 12: Redefining Happiness
- review science of happiness
- discuss movement from acquisition, achievement, and accolades to meaning, purpose, and service as keys to happiness
- learn practices for acceptance-based coping

Session 13: Integration
- discuss how to integrate learning from this workshop and the science of transformation in participants’ daily lives and in their work with others
- engage in “treasure mapping” exercise to find factors conducive to growth and well-being in one’s life
- identify daily routines that can be infused with transformative practices
Course Content Citations


This course meets the qualifications for 26 hours of continuing education credit for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences. Esalen is an approved provider of continuing education by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and the APA.

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