

True Heart/True Mind

(Dear Friend: This is a lot of information. Take your time and read it carefully.)

WHAT IS IT? *True Heart/True Mind* is a unique approach to self-awakening that integrates ancient contemplation and modern communication techniques. It is not just a workshop. It is a slice of your own life with all the routine distractions taken away. It is a time to come face to face with the essential nature of yourself and the essential nature of being. It is a greenhouse that fosters and illumines the natural processes of the self, confronting its conditioned tendencies, obstructions, distractions, and contradictions in the light of its inherent desire for freedom, love, and union.

It is an occasion for those willing to let their soul's search for truth and self-realization become their ruling passion for at least these three days.

It prompts nothing less than the transformation of the mind's paradigm: from distraction to devotion, from fixation to openness, from survival to growth. From figuring, labeling, and managing reality to the quiet opening of awareness that lets reality speak to us. And from a habitual social response to others, with all of its projections, to opening to others at the essential level of what it means to be a human being. It is the foundation of all spiritual work.

It is a wholly simple, benign, and loving process, in which each person's unfolding occurs in his or her own time. But because the schedule is rigorous, and you are left with no distraction from the moment-to-moment experience of self, it may well be one of the hardest experiences of your life.

ORIGINS. The format of *True Heart/True Mind* was first envisioned in 1969, and developed and refined over the next ten years by Charles Berner. It is widely known as the Enlightenment Intensive. It was designed to enable you to directly experience your true self – not the self that we commonly experience as separate and apart from others, caught within the walls of its own opinions and attitudes, but that self which simply and freely participates in the “true nature” of what everything is. In some traditions that has been called an enlightenment experience.

The barrier to such a direct experience of reality is our attachment to all those indirect mechanisms by which we form conclusions about reality: our projections, preconceptions, and judgments; fixed attitudes and emotional states; even our intellectual and analytical faculties. *True Heart/True Mind* provides a non-distractive, supportive, and safe environment in which you can learn to de-identify with your conditioned points of view, and open up to the full dimension of who you are.

THREE KEY ELEMENTS. There are three key elements that are conducive to the awakening of the self, whether we envision this awakening as taking place over lifetimes or in the space of a moment: 1. *Sincere Intention* to experience things as they are, without prejudice; 2. *Openness* to whatever arises in your experience, in keeping with that intention; 3. *Honesty* in communicating to another about the reality of your experience, without need to be more – or less – than you are. Communication is a crucial element that gives *True Heart/True Mind* much of its power.

As we grow in openness, we grow in our capacity to notice our own actual experience of self, without either denying or overlooking it; and in our capacity to communicate that experience to another with honesty and accuracy. This enables us to release the fixity of our identification with that experience or with our separative and self-limiting mental states. Ultimately we resume that individuality which is already simply free, and in relationship to things (and others) as they are.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTENSIVE. The *True Heart/True Mind* Intensive begins with individual interviews late Thursday afternoon and an orientation talk later that evening. It concludes with an informal sharing and integration session on Monday morning. During the interim we will be in full retreat from the outside world. Even our watches will be set aside. Except for communication in the “dyads,” this is essentially a silent retreat without social interaction. The intent is to spend every waking moment learning to focus only on our contemplation.

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The heart of the Intensive format is a unique dyad process that integrates contemplation on the question “Who am I?” with communication to your partner about what is arising as a result of your contemplation. You will learn to focus more accurately on the truth of the moment and to feel confident to communicate it to others. Working together with rotating partners, from early morning to late at night, each person unfolds layers of personal identity, gradually letting go of the stories and fixations, until we have exhausted all but our openness to the essential nature of “self” and “other.” This dyad process is alternated with contemplative periods of walking, sitting, exercise, lecture, rest, and meals.

For many, this openness and intention allows for a dramatic breakthrough in experience, as by some grace we are suddenly relieved of our self-clinging and directly glimpse our true nature. But such an awakening – at whatever level it might occur – is not something apart from the ongoing maturation of our being, and the practice, or process, that supports it. And it is in this supportive practice that we are being schooled at the Intensive.

WHY IS THIS INTENSIVE HARD? The Intensive is hard because it is your real spiritual process happening in real time. It is an intensification of your life, not an avoidance of it. Whatever struggles the mind is likely to present it is likely to present here, as hour after hour you’ve told all your stories, run into all your own barriers, communicated the beliefs, the emotions, the fantasies, the self-judgments, and you’re still sitting there with no apparent way forward and no way back. The mind is being asked to function in a new way, and you may feel completely stuck. At this point you may announce to your partner with great conviction and eloquence that the process doesn’t work, that it’s certainly not for you, and that you clearly made a big mistake in coming here. Has your life ever felt like that?

WHAT THIS INTENSIVE ISN’T. If you have experienced other kinds of Intensives, know that this one may be very different. It is not intended as a “cathartic process,” although you are encouraged to freely communicate the thoughts and emotions that are arising in your contemplation. Neither is it a therapeutic or group support process; nor is it intended to problem-solve or resolve life crises. Yet the structure, the boundaries, the rich contact with others, and the careful attention of the staff will support you in doing the deepest kind of personal work. The true intent of the Intensive is to directly experience *who it is* that is living your life.

WHY AM I DOING THIS? The demands of the Intensive are balanced by the breakthroughs, the love and the openness, and by a contact with others and with yourself perhaps deeper than you have ever known. The awakening to Self is an end in itself, and at the same time an essential foundation for our continued growth. Whatever level of experiencing occurs for a participant at an Intensive, most will experience a greater integration, authenticity, and lightness of being; and an increased capacity for relationship, authentic communication of reality, spontaneity, and openness to the reality of others. The great sage Hillel said, “If I am not for me, who will be? And if I am not for you, what am I? And if not now, when?”

We encourage you to see *True Heart/True Mind* not as a “fix-it” weekend, but as one more avenue of growth in a life committed to living, loving, and speaking truly.

Paul Weiss, who leads *True Heart/True Mind*, is a teacher, poet, and multi-modal therapist who has directed The Whole Health Center in Bar Harbor, Maine since 1981. He uses the principles of the Intensive in his therapeutic work with individuals and couples. He began his practice of zen and tai chi in 1966, studying under several teachers in and out of monastic settings. Introduced to the *Enlightenment Intensive* process in 1983, Paul has been conducting Intensives under the name *True Heart, True Mind* since 1984. He first brought the Intensive to Kripalu in September, 1999. Paul’s studies of meditation and qi gong have taken him on many trips to India and to China, where he has been certified to teach by three different schools of qi gong.

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