

DEN VÅGNE SØVN: Den amerikanske kunstner Carolyn Speranza fik et bedre liv, da hun begyndte at meditere, og står nu bag et omfattende projekt for at udbrede kendskabet til meditation i USA

Den største forvandling

AF ANNE WESTH

skriver fra USA

- Jeg sad i kapellet, og pludselig skete det. Jeg mærkede en umådelig følelse af kærlighed strømme igennem mig. Det var større end noget andet, jeg nogensinde havde oplevet, større end Jesus Kristus og større end nogen filosofier, der har eksisteret igennem tiderne. Det var bare mig og denne enorme kærlighed, der fyldte mig. Jeg tænkte, at det måtte være lige præcis det, alle andre søgte efter. Det måtte være Guds kærlighed, der strømmede igennem mig.

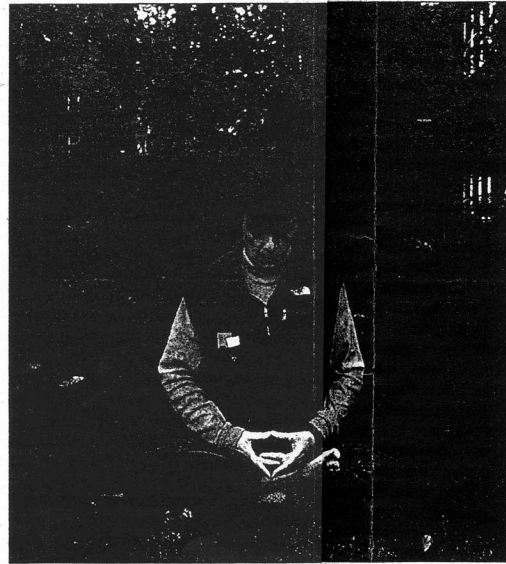
Susan Veraldi åbner øjnene og misser mod lyset. Hun mindes den første gang, hun havde en stor oplevelse med meditation. Det var i begyndelsen af 1990'erne, og hun sad på en kirkebænk i et kapel i Californien. Den oplevelse ændrede hendes liv. Hun havde ellers prøvet alt, hvad hun mente var værd at prøve i tilværelsen: sex, stoffer, alkohol og rock'n'roll. Men alligevel var der et eller andet, der manglede. Og det fandt hun gennem meditationen. I dag mediterer Susan Veraldi, der driver en travl frisørsalon i Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania i USA, en time hver morgen og aften. Og hun

føler en indre fred og ro, som hun ikke kendte til tidligere.

Susan Veraldi er en af deltagere i et større meditationsprojekt i Pittsburgh, som i høj grad har inddraget lokalbefolkningen. Initiativtager til projektet er kunstneren Carolyn Speranza, som i mange år havde lidt af psoriasis, allergi og vinterdepressioner. I 1997 var hun kommet til et punkt, hvor hun ikke længere kunne holde ud at være i sin egen krop. En ven henviste hende til en kiropraktor, som anbefalede hende at omlægge sin kost og begynde at dyrke yoga og meditation.

Carolyn Speranza var ellers ikke meget for alternativ behandling. Hun kom ud af en familie, der var ateistisk og plejede at stole blindt på den traditionelle lægevidenskab. Men Carolyn havde ikke noget valg, så hun lyttede til kiropraktorens råd. Efter et par måneder begyndte hun at mærke resultater. Hun fik ikke længere de voldsomme udsving i sit blodsukker, som hun ellers havde døjet med. Hendes humør blev også bedre, og for første gang i 20 år blev hun ikke vinterdeprimeret. Og ikke mindst begyndte hudsygdommen at blive bedre.

- Jeg følte det, som om jeg



- Jeg håber på at kunne gøre en forskel i verdens sundhedstilstand ved at lære folk om meditation. Jeg vil gerne omdefinere, hvad vi forstår ved global sundhed og sætte fokus på sammenhængen mellem krop og sjæl, fortæller Carolyn Speranza, der mediterer hver dag. (Foto: Anne Westh)

havde fået livet tilbage. Det er den største forvandling, jeg har

oplevet i mit liv, fortæller Carolyn Speranza.

Men for Carolyn Speranza var det ikke nok, at hun selv havde fået det bedre. Oplevelsen havde været så stærk, at hun ville bringe den ud til andre mennesker. Og fordi hun er kunstner, valgte hun at bruge kunsten som udtryksmiddel. Hun ansøgte om at få penge til at lave en film, hvor forskellige mennesker fortalte om deres oplevelser med meditation.

- For mig var det meget vigtigt at få formidlet oplevelsen ved meditation gennem helt almindelige mennesker, så andre også fik lyst til at prøve.

I 2001 fik hun bevilget penge og gik i gang med at realisere projektet sammen med det lokale filmstudie. Hun byggede det op som en serie af workshops, hvor lokalbefolkningen i Pittsburgh kunne møde op og prøve meditation. Til hver workshop inviterede hun en ekspert, som kom og demonstrerede sin særlige form for meditation: kristen meditation, meditativ yoga og åndedræsteknikker. I løbet af hver workshop prøvede deltagere at meditere, og bagefter havde de en åben dialog om, hvad de havde oplevet under meditationen.

- I alt mødte 750 interesserede op. Og de var meget forskellige.

Der var hvide, sorte, gamle, unge, muslimer, bøsser, transsexuelle og folk fra Indien. Vi formåede at få folk ind med alle mulige baggrunde.

De forskellige workshops tiltrak både folk, som havde erfaring med meditation, og folk, som aldrig havde prøvet det før. Carolyn Speranza fik nogle forfriskende bud på, hvad folk følte ved meditation.

- Generelt oplevede folk en ro, en fredfyldthed og en klarhed, som de ellers ikke kendte til i hverdagen. Det var meget forskelligt, hvad folk konkret så, når de mediterede. Nogle fortalte, at de kunne se et blåt lys eller en stjerne. Andre havde en fornemmelse af, at de blev ét med naturen, med Jorden, at de oplevede en forbindelse mellem alting og kunne kommunikere med noget, der var større end dem selv.

Global sundhed

Da de forskellige workshops var gennemført, udvalgte Carolyn Speranza de mennesker, der skulle medvirke i filmen, og gik i gang med optagelserne. Filmen havde premiere i marts 2003, og i den forbindelse blev der arrangeret et symposium, hvor der

deltog flere forskere, der videnskabeligt har arbejdet med at undersøge virkningen af meditation.

- Nogle mennesker lytter kun til læger og forskere og ikke til en kunstner som mig. Derfor var det meget vigtigt for mig også at få den videnskabelige vinkel med.

I dag har Carolyn Speranza gjort meditation til sit livsprojekt. Hun mediterer selv 20-30 minutter dagligt og har besluttet, at hendes fremtidige arbejde som kunstner også skal centrere sig omkring meditation.

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Ansøgninger om støtte til det næste filmprojekt er allerede afsendt. Det skal beskrive den forvandling, som folk oplever, når de mediterer. Akkurat som kunstneren selv oplevede, da hun gik i gang med meditation. Og selvfølgelig vil det nye projekt igen inddrage lokalbefolkningen.

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Translation: The Biggest Transformation Christian Newspaper Denmark

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The Conscious Awakening: The American artist Carolyn Speranza got a better life when she began meditating and is now at the beginning of a big project to make meditation known in the USA

I sat in the chapel, and suddenly it happened. I became aware of a great feeling of love streaming through me. That was bigger than everything and anything I had ever experienced, bigger than Jesus Christ, bigger than any philosopher that has ever existed. It was only me and that enormous love that filled me. I thought, it must be, what everybody talks about. It must be God's love that was streaming through me.

Susan Veraldi remembers the first time when she had a big experience with meditation. It was in the beginning of 1990's, when she sat on a church bench of a chapel in California. This experience changed her life. She had tried everything, anything that was worth to try: sex, drugs, alcohol and rock and roll. But there was still something missing. And that she found in meditation. Today, the meditating Susan Veraldi operates a hair salon in Pittsburgh, PA, USA. She meditates one hour every morning and evening and she feels the inner peace and tranquility than she has never felt before.

Susan Veraldi is one of the participants of the big meditation project in Pittsburgh that has attracted the local people at a higher degree. The project was initiated by the artist Carolyn Speranza, who over many years suffered from Psoriasis, allergies and winter depression. In 1997 she came to the point when she could not bear/stand/ her own body anymore. A friend directed her to a chiropractor, who instructed her to change her diet, and to begin with yoga and meditation. Carolyn Speranza was not really believing in alternative medicine, she comes from a family which is atheistic and believes only in traditional medicine. But Carolyn had no other choice and therefore followed the chiropractor's guidance. After a few months, she began to notice results. She no longer had blood sugar swings which she had before. Her humor began to improve and for the first time in 20 years, she had no winter depression. Her skin disease Psoriasis also improved.

I felt as if I had received life back again. This was the biggest change/transformation of my life, said Carolyn Speranza. But for Carolyn Speranza that was not enough, having the experience only for herself. The experience was so overwhelming, that she wanted to share it with other people. And because she is an artist, she wanted to transmit this experience through her artistic work. She applied for grants to make a film, in which different people would talk about their experiences with meditation. It was important to me, to show everyday peoples' experiences with meditation, so that others also get to want to try to do it.

In 2002, she received a grant and got together with a local film studio to realize her project. She introduced a series of workshops, where local Pittsburgh people could come and try out meditation. She invited experts who came and demonstrated different kinds of meditation: Christian meditation, meditative yoga and breathing techniques. They tried these difference types of meditation and after each workshop; participants shared what they had experienced in an open dialogue. All in all, 750 interested people showed up. And they were all different: old ones, young ones, Muslims, transsexuals and people from India. We accomplished getting people in, from very diverse backgrounds.

The different workshops were available for people who already had experience with meditation and for those who had no experience. Carolyn Speranza got messages about how people felt with meditation. In general they experienced inner calmness, an inner peace, and clarity like they never felt before. Some said that they saw blue light or a star, others experienced that they became one with nature and the earth, that they felt a connection between everything and they could communicate with everything that was bigger than themselves.

As the different workshops came an end, Carolyn Speranza chose the people who were to contribute to the film and began the task. The film premiered in March 2003 and in connection with it, she organized a symposium in which participated several scientific experts who have examined the effects of meditation on health. Some people trust researchers but not artists like me. Therefore it was important to bring in a scientific point of view, said Speranza. Today Carolyn Speranza made meditation her life project. She herself meditates 20 to 30 minutes every day and she decided that her future work as an artist should revolve around meditation.

She hopes to make a progress in the world health by teaching the people to meditate. She would like to redefine what one understands as "global health" and she wants to put the emphasis on the connection between body and soul. The search for grants for a new film project has already been started. This will describe the transformation that people who meditate, experience. Accurately, like the artist experienced it herself, when she began meditating. And of course, the new project will involve the local population, again.