

## Looking for a Consciousness Hit

By James Dillehay

How would you react if someone from another culture, make that another reality, told you to quit your job – that it was holding you back from the work you would be doing later? The first year I went to a Sufi summer retreat that's what happened.

We were on a lunch break when Adnan Sarhan, the Sufi teacher, sat down next to me and delivered this startling message that I couldn't quite decide was a suggestion or a command. As I began thinking of how to explain why leaving my family business really wasn't a good idea, he got up and left me sitting there to ponder the road ahead.

I had not gone to the two-month workshop for career advice. I went because I had previously tasted the Sufi experience in shorter, dazzling doses which sparked a passion to experience more.

Adnan's workshops are mind opening, without drugs. His "rapid method" expands one's capacity for higher perception. Trance-inducing exercises like chanting, dancing, whirling, and other Sufi practices transport one to ecstasy – ecstasy that elicits pure insight.

I had come to this first summer camp seeking juicy experiential stuff, a consciousness hit. Getting told what to do after the workshop was not what I had in mind. But as an important side note, I later followed his suggestion about work, which led to a path that set me creatively and financially free.

Without planning it, several self-defeating habits vanished as a result of the summer camp. I could no longer stomach junk food or alcohol. Instead of eating out two or three times a day, I was making salads and cooking healthy meals at home. In place of downing two cokes a day, I was drinking water, milk or juice. Chocolate, such a comfort before, now looked and smelled outright disgusting.

Another surprise – the mind got sharper. Back at work, I started seeing solutions to questions almost before I even knew what to ask. I was faster,

stronger, healthier, and dare I say it – wiser.

How did this Sufi, who seemed to have stepped right out of *1001 Arabian Nights*, get me to re-invent my wound-up, stressed-out, lifestyle within a matter of weeks? Adnan seemed to know exactly what was needed to get all of us to connect with our own being – the collective being of reality, a primal condition for real and lasting change.

I was not alone in experiencing major shifts.

Dr. Beverly Oliphant M.D., an internist who sat near me during the exercises, had come to the summer camp diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. When she first arrived, her fingers could barely open or bend. After a few weeks, Beverly was doing push-ups with both hands. Despite an initial prognosis of six months to live, her M.S. went into remission and she continued to have an active life. She became physician to U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig.

People who smoked found themselves quitting without having that intention. Attorney, Ann Hopcroft said, "Suddenly, after the Sufi workshop, my body did not even feel like smoking. Aside from the unexpected benefit of discarding a dangerous habit, I continue to feel alive and energetic and more capable in my work."

It's ironic that R.J. "Josh" Reynolds, III, board of directors, RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company, participated in summer workshops and donated the property for the retreat center. Josh supported the Sufi work which helped smokers give up the cigarettes. He reasoned, "Adnan's work instills greater freedom of action and a source of real meaning to existence."

Dropping self-sabotaging habits is only part of the holistic summer camp effect. Caroline Lewis, Ph.D., physicist at the University of Texas described her Sufi experience as, "a deep concentration present in Adnan which can manifest in almost superhuman efforts. This wave spreads so that one finds oneself pleasantly shocked at the new flexibilities and strengths of the body and mind. The best part is the

fluidity, the control of the mind, body and more coming together in movement and dance."

Daily activities at the retreat in New Mexico fill up with a variety of movement and exercises, meditation, dancing, drumming, whirling, hiking in the next-door national forest and meeting new friends from countries all around the globe. The assembly is like a United Nations of consciousness seekers.

The other United Nations, the one more often in the news, invited Adnan to open the Earth Summit Conference in Brazil with a drumming concert.

In her search for consciousness, Yana Petrova of Radio Russia, Moscow said, "I started to doubt if I would ever meet a real Sufi master who will pay so much attention to music, poetry and dancing in life, in a spiritual path as Adnan, as Sufis of the past."

Sufi work offers a fascinating opportunity to explore and master the self. However, be aware: side effects may include healing, quitting habits, and gaining practical insights for achievement.

I could not have guessed back when Adnan hinted at the work I would later be doing that I would one day find myself author of several books, traveling and speaking to groups around the country, being interviewed in the media, and most recently, publishing a magazine – all the while getting my consciousness hits.

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