

Mini course nature based coaching

WHAT: This free mini-course offers a comprehensive introduction to nature based coaching according to the working methods and vision of Innersteps.

Innersteps has been an expert in nature based coaching for over 20 years and stands out in this rapidly growing market thanks to its in depth content and spiritual approach of how humans are related to nature. 'We are not separate from nature, we are nature', says founder Nanette Kant. "Being aware of this will largely influence the way you guide others and how you respond to any dilemmas you might encounter in your daily life."

WHO: The course is intended for those who (want to) work with people and would like to discover whether nature based coaching could be an appealing methodology to include in their practice. The course can also serve as a valuable preparation for those who have enrolled in the online nature based coaching course.

CONTENT: The content of this course consists of two parts. The first part provides substantial information on nature based coaching and elaborates on the underlying spiritual vision that it is built on. In the second part you will find practical exercises that allow you to go outside and train yourself in a new way of reflecting in and with nature.

PART ONE

The added value of coaching in nature

Coaching in nature offers a powerful added value compared to coaching within four walls:

- Walking in nature helps you to quiet the mind. Nature is calming, and therefore you will be able to listen better to your inner feelings.
- As you walk, you are in a moving state, all that is stuck in your head, will then also easily come into motion.
- A conversation that takes place during a walk, offers space for moments of silence and reflection. Eye contact is not always a necessity, and the client will find it easier to express issues that are sensitive or painful.
- In nature you are walking in a place that is not familiar. This allows you to literally and figuratively set foot on new paths, which makes you more receptive towards new experiences, insights and ideas.
- Due to the calming effect of nature it is easier to have more extensive sessions, without it being too overwhelming. In a two-hour session, you achieve more than two sessions of an hour, because you don't lose time in setting up and closing off. Coaching in nature therefore provides the opportunity to achieve a very profound outcome in a short period of time.

We are not separated from nature

Within the vision of Innersteps we assume that humans are not separated from nature but are part of it. **Nature has her own natural laws. Her own pace of moving, growing and changing.** It is an intelligent and complex ecosystem, driven by an enormously vital life force. He who neglects the laws of nature, breaks the connection with the wonderful rhythm of life. It then no longer “flows.” This may result in feelings of loneliness, incompetence, frustration or hopelessness. People then tend to act from a place of needing to control. They act from the mind instead of their spirit or heart. But this way, life will not flow, in fact, we are only stagnating things more.

If you want to live and work from a natural flow, you must respect the laws of nature, of your nature and that of the nature as a greater whole. That requires letting go, trusting, and trying to do nothing. The strange thing is that this is often experienced as unnatural. We are (also in coaching) very much used to action, doing and solving.

The best leader is the follower

“The best leader is the follower” wrote the Chinese philosopher Lao Tse already in the 6th century before Christ. **Follow the intelligence of nature,** let yourself be led by the universal, transpersonal principles of nature. That is true leadership. That is the path that leads to an inspiring workflow and a happy life.

And how do you learn these laws of nature? By observing them, again and again. Consciously observing your own actions, your tendencies and the effect you have on your environment. This is what we do when we coach our clients. We ask questions like: What do you feel? What do you experience? When does it flow, when does it not? What is holding you back? According to Innersteps, **awareness is the key to change**. That which is seen and brought to light, will automatically change, at its own natural pace, without pressure. Providing that the time is exactly ripe.

Coaching in a state of flow

When we coach in an open state of being, we create a loving environment in which awareness and change can take place in a natural way.

How do we do that? By being entirely in the here and now. By observing with an open and alert eye. Curious, but neutral. And above all, by **trusting that the answers will unfold naturally**. It is a way of coaching that is effortless, an organic process, in which you as a coach are merely the spectator rather than the creator. Your strength is that you are completely in tune with yourself. You are in total acceptance of yourself, the environment and the process of the client.

It means that you no longer long for things to be different from what they are in that moment. Or that your client needs to change more rapidly, because you can already identify the problem. **You follow the pace that unfolds itself, patiently, lovingly and trustfully.**

The environment is your loyal companion

If you coach out of a state of being, the questions will unravel automatically. The environment is your loyal companion. **You are present, you observe, and nature will provide you with the right questions naturally.** You essentially coach in a state of flow.

However, this does not mean that the coach is passive and simply lets anything happen. On the contrary. **Ears**

and eyes are sharply tuned to everything that is said and done. The coach will actively and consciously mirror, give back what they see and hear, and summarize the stories in a structured manner and thus bringing clarity to the client's (often chaotic) story.

The coach will help the client identify all the feelings that can be felt and will subtly tune into the mood and disposition of the client. **They will invite the client to explore many different perspectives and help them feel where their own truth lies.** In that sense, the coach is indeed guiding. They guide the client through a number of clear steps.

First to be explored is the desire, then the question is clarified, after which the obstacles are exposed, and the client's own strength enhanced. Eventually a very clear step-by-step plan is made on which the client can advance. **And because we follow the natural flow of this process, it is achieved somewhat effortlessly.** Essentially, we do set out a route, but the client is the one leading the way and you are the one that follows.

Every step begins with standing still

Even though coaching is directed to mobilize people, Innersteps's vision is that every step begins with standing still. **That which blocks your life stream can only start moving if it's fully and lovingly embraced.** All resistance present in your clients' current situation needs to be discharged, before continuing onward.

This means that coaching from the perspective of Innersteps isn't as much a search for solutions, but more a reflection on what is already right there. Seeing it, feeling it and embracing it.

The task of the coach is primarily to ask questions directed to bringing awareness and to offer a safe environment in which all the processes inhabiting the client can be felt. If this process is carefully guided, then progress will follow naturally. Therefore, in our school, **a lot of emphasis will be put on observing, feeling and acknowledging of what is.**

Basic coaching skills

In our school, with nature as your loyal companion, you will learn the following basic coaching skills:

- To observe neutrally
- To fathom and identify the essence of a story.
- To ask the right (open) questions
- Gain insight on pitfalls such as: wanting to advise, thinking along, helping, consoling
- Creating a safe environment
- Clarifying a goal (making the client aware of what he/she really wants to achieve)
- Associating (continuously making a link between the symbolic elements outside with what is felt inside)
- Paraphrasing (repeating and letting the client repeat back to anchor what is being learnt)
- Specifying (what does this mean practically)
- Acts of symbolism (to anchor insights and confirm that which is true)

Working with symbolism

A characteristic of Innersteps's methodology is the use of metaphors and symbols. Symbols can help you think outside your own framework. **A symbol places a situation outside of yourself, making it easier for you to reflect on it from a distance.** By then carefully studying the symbol and asking questions about it, the connection to the client's inner feelings and insights is restored.

You will notice that working with symbols almost immediately accelerates the process of insight. By working with symbols, you also make the insights visual, which offers a deep anchoring of what has been learned.

PART TWO

Nature based coaching in practice

In this section you will be offered four walks with set assignments. The goal is to introduce you to the methodology of Innersteps by allowing you to practice with a new way of looking and to let you experience what it's like to coach in and with nature.

Walk 1: Connecting with nature

Walk 2: Conscious observing

Walk 3: Learning to associate

Walk 4: Working with a still life

Preparations

Choose an properly outlined walk of about 3 km each time, so you don't have to worry about finding your way around.

Make sure you are warmly dressed if necessary, wear comfortable walking shoes and don't forget your rain gear.

Take about 2 hours for each walk.

For the third walk, bring an empty toilet roll (the inside cardboard tube)

Switch off your phone!

First Walk: Connect with nature

Exercise 1: Walking meditation

[You can download a recorded walking meditation here](#) and listen to it when you do your first walk.

Exercise 2: Making contact with nature

Gather three organic pieces of nature and bring them along with you on your walk (in good weather you can find a nice place to sit). E.g. a twig, a leaf, a flower...

Deeply connect to the items in your hand, by looking at all the details carefully. The color, the form, the structure.

Consider how these pieces of nature once came to life, starting as a small seed, grown in the right surroundings, with the right nutrition from the earth, sunlight, rain, etc.

Consider how the life force has been able to manifest itself in this unique form, how it has moved through it and how, it can now, now that it has become detached from its roots, take on a new form, serving as nourishment to yet another life form.

Think about how this unbelievably intelligent process of living, dying, changing, continues forever. Effortlessly.

Consider how we too are just a form where life is moving through us. We don't have to do much more than allow

space for that divine energy, which keeps finding its own way, like water flowing from the mountains to the sea.

Be silent and let this notion penetrate into the depths of your cells.

Can you feel that the source of this life stream, this life force, is pure love? Can you feel how you're being supported this way?

Walk back to the starting point in silence.

Second Walk: Conscious observation

Why is conscious observation important?

The basis of professional coaching is observing in a non judgmental manner. By observing with an open and curious mind, you become aware what is true in your client's life right now. Is there frustration, anger, sadness, fear? Is there destructive behavior? Is there a desire? Is there a tendency to flee or escape?

Once you see something you become aware of it. Through being aware you can see what wants to change naturally. Together you can discover how to pave the way for this change.

In nature based coaching, we use the surroundings to become aware of what's happening within. Images have the ability to communicate powerfully with our subconscious. In nature we are surrounded by an abundance of images. Giving us numerous possibilities to reflect on our inner world.

Today you will play with various ways of observing. Be curious and let nature surprise you.

Exercise 1: Consciously observing, smelling, hearing and feeling

Start the walk with a 20-minute walking meditation. Then stand still and look around you quietly.

What do you see?

A fence? Is it open or closed? Are there any footsteps leading to the fence? Is it an old fence? Or new? What more details do you notice regarding the fence?

A tree? Is it big or small? Is it alone or are there more trees that surround it? Is it thin or large? Straight or crooked? The bark smooth or shaved? What else do you notice about the tree?

A path? Is it wide or narrow? Can you see where it leads? How's the ground? Soft / hard? What material it is made of? And how is it enclosed. Through a ditch, and fence, a row of trees?

What do you hear?

- A picking woodpecker? A whistling bird? Footsteps? A barking dog?
- Is the sound far or nearby?
- Is it pleasant, exciting, annoying, soothing?

What do you feel?

- The wind on your skin? The warmth of the sun? Icy cold? Wet rain?
- Tension in your stomach? Tingling hands?
- How does this make you feel?

What do you smell?

- Flowers, pine forest, dog poo, autumn scents, your wet coat...

Walk 15 min in silence and repeat the exercise at another spot.

Exercise 2: New perspectives

As humans, we tend to stick to what we know. It's mostly our experiences from the past that affect our perception. We have certain ideas how things should be. This can hold us back tremendously in our personal lives, but of course also in our attitude as a coach. How do we keep a fresh outlook?

I invite you to look at your surroundings from a different perspective over and over again. Such as:

- Look with the eye of a beetle
- Or that of an eagle
- What do you see when you only look at shapes
- Or just colors?
- Only look for light and shadow
- Look up
- Look mainly in the distance
- Keep your gaze close

For each perspective, take 5 minutes and write down what you found remarkable.

Exercise 3: Tube perspective

Keep the toilet tube in front of one eye and close your other eye. View the surroundings from this tube perspective and discover surprising details as you keep the tube close to all kinds of natural elements. Write down your observations.

Third Walk: Associating

Why is associating important?

By associating images, you make a link between what you see outside and feel inside. You move past the thinking and address the subconscious directly. Earlier I wrote: “Images have the ability to communicate powerfully with our subconscious”¹. This offers a powerful added value on more traditional coaching where people search for insights merely through conversation.

Images can trigger many questions. When you direct those questions to yourself, there is surprisingly much to discover. What was previously unconscious can become conscious by associating. And that brings you much further in a coaching process.

Exercise 1: Discover opportunities

Start this walk again with a 20 min walking meditation. Then come to a stand still and look around you. What do you see?

Imagine standing by a ditch. First, observe precisely. Is it a wide ditch? A stinking ditch? A dry ditch? And then you look at what questions arise from that ditch for you. Is it posing a blockage? Do you want to fish in it? Jump over it? Sail in it? What's here and what's across the ditch? Where do you want to be? How does this make you feel?

Exercise 2: Feelings are perceived

Imagine you stand by a tree again. What does that tree evoke in you? Awe, perhaps? Or emotion? Powerlessness or a sense of strength? And what if that tree was much smaller? What happens then? Does it feel different? What if you bring your attention to the roots? Does anything change? And if there were a lot of these trees. How would that feel?

Exercise 3: Discovering new perspectives

Imagine standing at that fence again. What does the gate evoke? What meaning does it have for you? Is it a door that shuts something? Or an opening to something new? Does it stop you or is it going to encourage you? And what happens when you look at the fence from the other side? What if you look at it from afar? And what if you look at it very closely?

Now you have experienced that an image can raise a lot of questions. Suddenly, a lot more appears to be discovered in a tree, a fence or a ditch than you would initially think. This is what happens when you literally stand still and take the time to look at what is, before you continue walking out of habit. Questions trigger feelings, offer new perspectives and open the way to many new possibilities.

Of course you can endlessly stand next to a tree, associating and discovering many things and what it does to you. However, it doesn't really serve a purpose,

unless you connect your insights to your life or a situation you're struggling with. Discover this difference in the next exercise.

Exercise 4: From image to reality

Imagine standing by a tree again. You look at the tree closely and write down the characteristics of that tree. Is the tree large or small, straight or crooked? What kind of associations do you get? Stately, pathetic, powerful, sick. Alone, together, etc

Then you ask yourself the question: What does this tree tell me about my life? Or about an aspect of my life? What do you see mirrored here?

Don't draw any conclusions, don't judge, simply find out which parallels you see here. Is there anything in you that's very powerful right now? Or feels insecure? Is something in you about to bloom? Or are you about to let things go? What kind of things would you let go of exactly?

You'll probably come to surprising insights. Write down your findings.

If you are going out together with a colleague or friend, you can take turns taking the role of coach and coachee. The coach will be the one who asks the questions. Make sure you ask open questions!

Fourth Walk: Working with a still life

You can do this walk by yourself, but if you like to try out how it would be to coach somebody else, it would be great if you could bring a friend.

Exercise 1: Creating a still life

After your walking meditation, you ask yourself or your friend, what is currently going on in your life, what is it that requires attention, clarification or change?

Then look for small symbols in nature (loose lying ones, we won't pick or break anything from the surrounding nature) that represent aspects of this situation.

Reconstruct the symbols into a still life.

Exercise 2: Investigating the still life

When investigating the still life you start with describing what you see. Literally. *A branch, two stones, some leaves...*gathering facts.

Then ask yourself/each other questions like:

- What do all these materials represent?
- What does this say about your situation?
- Is there a reason for placing this here or in this particular way?
- Do the surroundings play a role?

- What do you notice if you look at it from a different perspective? (closer or perhaps even further away)

Do not forget to include the process of feeling

What do you feel when you look at your situation in this manner?

Exercise 3: Exploring a possible change

Only when enough time has been spent on the previous steps, you can look at what kind of change is wanted. Questions that are suitable here are:

- Is the still life in balance?
- Should something be removed, or added?
- How would this action translate itself in reality?
- How does that make you feel?

Finalise by summarizing the most important insights of this session.

Want more of this?

We hope you enjoyed the exercises we offered you. If you would like to know more about this beautiful and rewarding work, please visit our website at innersteps.com to learn more about our inspiring programs .