

EVERYDAY NON- VIOLENCE

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"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing, and right-doing,
there is a field. I will meet you there."

- Rumi

Have you ever wished you could stay calm in the heat of the moment? Have you wished that you could communicate clearly and honestly with those around you? Maybe you are feeling the need to give others as well as yourself more compassion and love but are unsure of how to do that?

Ten weeks ago, I started a course that has changed my life. My psychologist put me onto it saying only, "I think you'd really like the course 'Ongo'. I'll send you the link." It was through Zoom and I thought it would be a two hour thing. Within minutes of starting the course, I was overwhelmed – it was in fact a 12 week course. With homework! To put this into perspective, I gave birth to my third child 5 months ago and I am currently learning to live in a totally new environment – on an isolated farm 25 min from town. In a nutshell, life is beautiful and tender as well as extremely busy, unrelenting and fairly exhausting. I am slightly (highly?!) emotional and very time-poor.

Even though I was overwhelmed by the time commitment, I was hooked. I knew within half an hour that I needed this course. There we were, 20 or so people from all over the world and our wonderful facilitator, Wendy Haynes, who pulled us together and created this instant community. I no longer felt alone with my struggles. I felt such empathy and compassion from all these strangers. I felt the way I feel within the church; loved, unconditionally. I felt my heart open and I wanted to offer back my love and compassion to all these people. What a strange thing to experience in a (virtual) room full of strangers!

Why did I feel called to continue with this course? A few months ago, I had an earth-shattering experience of intense anger and hurt with a person I love dearly. The event was so powerful, I couldn't sleep and I couldn't escape thinking about it during the day for quite a long time, which was particularly frustrating as our baby had started to sleep better. I was beating

myself up and drowning in shame and anxiety. I felt extremely angry after the event and deeply sad, trapped by my thoughts and feelings. I knew I must face these feelings somehow, these feelings of intense anger and hurt because they have been a recurring theme in my life. In short, Ongo has been my way out.

The course is called Ongo because it is short for 'ongoing'; the skills we learn in the course are things that need ongoing practice throughout our lives. It was developed by Catherine Cadden and Jesse Wiens and was born out of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), an approach to communication that teaches us to listen deeply to the needs and feelings of those around us as well as ourselves. It weaves together mindfulness, meditation and practical activities that encourage us to delve deeply into our self so that we can examine and process what is truly at the heart of our feelings and behaviour. It is spiritual without pushing any religion. It has given me something to hold onto, knowledge and exercises that enable me to practice living in a more peaceful, compassionate and loving way. What do we have, if not each other? For me, relationships are paramount. My friends and family, my connection to a stranger on the street - relationships are places where I can make a connection and we can meet there, out in the field where there is no wrong or right. This is God for me. How we communicate matters, with ourselves and others, and I want to be able to communicate without violence – no fear, blame or shame.

I am coming up to week 11 of my course and I am already mourning the end but celebrating all that I've learnt and the new friends I have made. I am hungry to learn more and I feel my mind and heart transforming, rewiring to find new solutions to old patterns of negative thought and speech. I'm not 'fixed', for there is no such thing. I am human and I will continue to make mistakes and improve. And while I had to pass through my fiery emotions to get here, I am eternally grateful that I found Ongo and that it found me, out here in the field.

<https://zenvc.org/ongobook/>
<https://wendyhaynes.com/>