**Ammerdown’s new programme – Soul of Leadership 2021 – ‘the right thing at the right time’**

For many of us, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a process of reflection and re-evaluation. Some of us have been forced to slow down, others to speed up as we adapt and take on additional responsibilities. Whichever scenario we have faced, we may have found ourselves taking stock, pondering how we are living our lives, re-evaluating what is important to us, and wondering how to move forward. Questions that were at the back of our minds may have had time to come to the fore. For example, we may find ourselves reflecting about the work we are doing, how we are doing it, the leadership roles we are playing, and how we engage with our own communities. Above all, what role are we being called to play in the emerging future, in society, within our organisations, and within our families? The Soul of Leadership programme, beginning in 2021, offers a facilitated and constructive space to explore some of these questions, and more, in the beautiful environs of the Ammerdown Retreat Centre.

At a time in my life when I was ‘soul-weary’, and desperately in need of some time out to reconsider how I was working, I discovered ‘Soul of Leadership’. For me, as a participant, it was the right thing at the right time. I work in the humanitarian aid sector, as a freelance policy researcher and consultant. It is rewarding work, but it can also be quite draining. I was at a crossroads in my working life, wondering how to move forward and what role I wanted to play in the coming years. From the first residential, I began to feel nourished at a deep soul level. The reflective space and contemplative practices that Soul of Leadership offered helped me to reclaim my spiritual path and to see how I could better align my working life with that spiritual path. I gained many insights in the process, for example recognising the spiritual heritage I had come from, and the long history of public service in my family. At the end of the 18-month programme it was clearer to me when and how my leadership could be more soulful, and how to be alert to moments when my ego might be moving into the driving seat. I was also better able to resource myself in challenging humanitarian crises. This was invaluable when I was working with refugees from Sudan who had recently arrived in Europe, traumatized from their experiences and the perilous journeys they had endured.

I am now one of the tutors on the Soul of Leadership programme, with the privilege of supporting and facilitating others on their journey. In terms of the ‘right thing at the right time’, I think this programme speaks to the current moment. It is hugely relevant as we begin to emerge from a really challenging pandemic year. It offers a safe and inspiring process for exploring some of the deeper questions and issues that may have bubbled to the surface during the last year, to discern, and above all to be equipped to step into the emergent future.

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