

Bio of the spiritual counselor

My name is Jaap van Manen. I am born in the Netherlands in 1954 and trained as a theologian, teacher of creative dance and life coach. These three studies reflect my personal and spiritual development.

Born in a reformed calvinistic family and much involved in the local church community, it was a logical step to study theology. I wanted to become a pastor to help other people in distress. As a student I had a great interest in Buddhism and did Zenmeditation twice a day for more than 2 years. Through books of Krishnamurti, Nisargadatta, Bhagwan and New Age literature I got another and wider perspective on spirituality than I learned at my university.

At the end of my study I discovered that dance was a way of exploring and expressing myself in a new way. Through my academic studies my head had become big, compared to the rest of my body, which felt quite small. To become more balanced I decided to study dance at the Theater School. Creative dance showed me another dimension of spirituality, wherein body and mind are one. After this 4 year parttime study I combined my two studies and became part of an organisation, called: workshop for biblical spirituality and creativity. I worked as a dancer, choreographer and teacher with people from several protestant and (old)catholic churches all over the Netherlands and sometimes in Germany. The focus in my work was on the people, so they could discover themselves through movement, whether it strengthens or weakened their belief.

After 7 years I realised that the Christian setting of this work did not suit me anymore and I had to leave. I guess I moved myself out of the church and the Christian religion. But also the spiritual books, especially those of Krishnamurti, supported me in taking this decision. Over the years I had realised that spirituality did not need a specific form; it could find form at every moment in whatever situation: on your own, with others, on a bicycle, in a dance studio, looking at a tree, in a conversation, even in a church.

Now this awareness is part of me and might shine through my live and work. So since then – nearly 15 years ago - I have been teaching dance, which changed and deepened itself by becoming counseling and coaching through dance. For my work is not so much about dance, but more about a human being, who wants to develop him/herself with help of the medium of dance. I have taught in the Netherlands, in Europe and several times in India to groups and individuals with a focus on being aware in movement. And depending on their interpretation, the participants of my courses label their experiences as physical, therapeutic, spiritual or as a mixture of these three.

To refine my skill of coaching I did a international training in life coaching, which has made my dance work more structured and focussed. On top of this dance counseling I offer now as well coaching sessions.

So now - 35 years on - I am supporting people in distress, though the form is quite different from what I as a 19 year old student imagined it would be.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personalia

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Studies

1966 – 1973: Grammarschool, Veenendaal
1973 – 1974: Social Geography, Free University, Amsterdam
1974 – 1983: Theology, Free University
1982 – 1986: Advanced Training Teacher Creative Dance, Theatre School, Amsterdam
2003 – 2004: Intensive Coaching Training, ResultsCoachingSystems, London
since 1986 : further studies in Yoga, T'ai Chi, Contact Improvisation,
Alignment, Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering,
Breath Therapy, Mensendieck

Work

1983 – 1984: Teacher Religion/Ehtics, Social Academy De Cicsa, Amsterdam
1984 – 1986: Dancer/Actor/Teacher in children theatre Jojo, Amsterdam
1986 – 1993: Teacher/Dancer/Choreographer/Member of Staff, De Santenkraam, Institute
for Biblical Spirituality and Creativity, the Netherlands
1986 – 1991: Teacher in various educational dance projects for children, the Netherlands
1988 – 1991: Teacher in self-organsied dance courses for adults, Amsterdam
1988 – 1993: Organizer/Teacher dance courses for teachers Creative Dance
1990 – 1991: Teacher Creative Dance, Theatre School
1994 – 1998: free lance Teacher Creative Dance in the Netherlands, France and India
since 1998 : Director MOBILE – Institute for Dance and Coaching
1998 – 2001: Co-director VODD, a private postgraduate school for becoming Teacher of
Creative Dance
2006 : Founder of VO Dance Coaching, a private postgraduate school for becoming
Dance Coach