

Inner journey

Beloved person,

Of all living things, humans rely on others the longest before they can make their own way. This is because of our vulnerability at birth, the slow growth of our brains and the richness *and* challenge of the impressive web of social and cultural connections that we are part of. Often this development goes almost unnoticed and sometimes it becomes crystal clear. As a father, I vividly remember our children's phase in which a lot was accompanied by the proud cry: 'Me do it myself!' With a smile I observed how their desire for independence blended with their still so tender dependence. It is a paradox that deeply marks our humanity: we want *to be ourselves* and *live in connection*. But how do you find that balance?

In the search for yourself, sooner or later, universal questions arise, such as: Who am I? Who do I want to be? And how do *I* fit in *together*? Such questions do not exclusively come knocking gently, but sometimes they storm in at moments when you are least prepared for them. They can challenge, move and even unsettle you. Do you recognise those moments in your own life?

Finding answers to these existential questions is a personal responsibility. At the same time, other's stories can inspire and encourage us. By sharing experiences, we make each other stronger and perhaps find the courage to discover our own answers. For this reason, I would like to refer to the article 'My place' from *VANDAAG Magazine*¹. In it, Johanna Hoogendam shares her inner journey with the reader and what it has brought her. Her story led me to some reflections:

In a world that is often so hectic and demanding, we sometimes tend to overlook the importance of standing still and turning inward. Sometimes life 'forces' you into such a moment, but it also takes courage and wisdom not to just let it happen to you. What would happen if you allow yourself to pause every now and then? To seek that peace before life forces you to?

Such moments of self-reflection require a safe environment. A place where you are allowed to come home, let go of your worries and catch your breath. This can be a physical place, such as in the community or a place in nature, but also an inner space where we allow ourselves to come to rest and to listen to our inner voice.

Self-examination requires honesty as well as courage. Acknowledging your limitations without judgement, letting go of the familiar and embracing the uncertain is not easy, but it can open up space for new perspectives and possibilities. It gives the opportunity to see not only your vulnerability, but also the strength that can emerge from it.

When images unfold about what is of deep value to you, the question is whether you are willing and able to heed those new insights. Letting go of the familiar is already not easy, but facing the unknown - with all its uncertainties - requires incredible courage. And yet...

And yet, when you dare to question yourself courageously and honestly, to listen to your inner voice and take on the unknown, something amazing might happen. It might just happen that *being yourself and living in connection* coincide. That your place in the big picture suddenly falls into place. And what does that look like? Take a careful look at the photo accompanying the article.

With a warm-hearted greeting,

brother Marten van der Wal



Attention for all peaceworkers