

How have you been empowered by Newkind 2019 to increase the Gross Domestic Happiness of your local or regional community?

In 1000 words or less

Deadline 31 March 2019

Send to: operations@newkindfestival.com and matt@happyspaces.com.au

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Newkind 2019 was a week like no other in my life so far.

My engagement with it started with some scepticism, assumptions or fears, and maybe a little arrogance. It ended with deep appreciation, gratitude, humility.

Erfan contacted me offering \$500 payment to present, plus return airfares, plus a free ticket and tent provided. It seemed to align in a general sense with things I valued; it was going to cost me little – some lost wages and child care arrangements; I have a lot of respect for Erfan; so, I thought, why not?

By the midpoint of Newkind I was, metaphorically speaking, on the ground before Erfan, struggling to find the words I needed to express the profundity of my experience, and advising that we would not be accepting payment for presenting or airfares.

Every break, every meal time I found myself engaged in life-changing conversation, where diverse views were shared and heard with deep respect. I was witness to humble, sincere, loving people seeking constantly to learn and find new and better ways of contributing to the wellbeing of all creation. Not once did a conversation remain, or even start, at the level of social niceties, the weather, the sporting scores, what Marjorie did, what Ralph failed to do. Not once. Rather our conversations wandered through the lush landscape of what is the nature of a human being? What is the relationship between spirituality and social action? Is there a Creator? How do we raise peaceful boys within the dominant paradigms of masculinities? On and on, higher and higher, deeper and deeper. Every day. Every free moment.

And these conversations were taking place in an environment that was quite unique. How often do we as women, spend a week surrounded by hundreds of men we don't know, separated at night from all of them only by a tent zipper, feeling completely safe?

A sense of safety permeated Newkind that pertained to

- our belongings –thousands of dollars' worth of smart phones plugged in and unsupervised at all times;
- our bodies –feeling confident that we were safer from sexual harassment and sexual assault than any other place we had been
- our hearts – witnessing the deep respect and loving kindness offered to ourselves and others, consistently and indiscriminately.

The level of both trust and trustworthiness was truly remarkable.

The formal and informal spaces were also characterised by a taking of the middle path. An environment was created carefully and consciously that encouraged all of us to walk the path between romantic naïve idealism, and aggressive, vitriolic, self-righteous criticism of 'the other'. There were constant reminders – in formal and informal interactions - that to achieve the goal of a better world for all of creation, we must draw on the tools of love, unity, investigation of truth, consultation, humility, self-reflection, education, and truth.

Another outstanding feature was the spirit of encouragement. The interactions between panel members, and the interactions between participants in general was characterized by support and encouragement, rather than manifesting personal ambition and arrogance. In the midst of a society characterized by a culture of contest, this was a truly remarkable characteristic.

Informed by all of the above, Newkind was a space where individuals could hold, express, and exchange very different perspectives in direct but peaceful ways, with a genuine humble posture of learning and respect for diverse views.

Then, place this social environment in a setting where 400 people are accommodated for a week off the grid, with almost zero waste, animal-cruelty free, and entirely free of mind-altering substances, and we all learn through lived experience that The Impossible is indeed possible.

Foundational to all individual and collective efforts to contribute to the betterment of the world, is hope. If we have no hope, our sails have no wind. With wind in our sails, we can then focus on how to steer the rudder, identify our goals, and head toward them. Newkind 2019 fostered hope and challenged despair. It allowed us all to acknowledge that moments of despair in any long hard journey are natural, but it reminded us that hope and confidence that we can achieve a world characterised by justice, peace, and unity are justified, are rational, are aligned with Reality. World peace is indeed, not only possible, it is inevitable. And Newkind 2019 made a valuable contribution to the centuries-long process toward its attainment.