

Looking for a Consciousness Hit

by James Dillehay

What if someone from another culture, or another reality, told you to quit your present job because it was holding you back from work you would be doing later? That's what happened to the author the first time he ventured into a Sufi summer retreat.

The group was on a lunch break when Sufi master Adnan Sarhan sat next to me and delivered the startling news that I must quit my day job. I couldn't decide. Was this a suggestion or a command? As I began thinking how to explain why leaving the family business really wasn't a good idea, Adnan got up, and left me to ponder the road ahead.

Career advice hadn't made my agenda for this two-month workshop. I'd only tasted the Sufi experience in short, dazzling doses and wanted more. Tantalizing glimpses had sparked a sincere passion, but was I ready for this?

I knew that Adnan's "rapid method" workshops are designed to open minds without the use of drugs. Trance-inducing exercises like chanting, dancing, whirling, and other Sufi practices are used to expand one's capacity for higher perception by transporting one into a state of ecstasy geared to elicit pure insight.

I admit that I'd first come to the camp seeking juicy experiential stuff, what I call "a consciousness hit." But following Adnan's direction about work has led to a satisfying path of creative and financial freedom.

Without any planning on my part, more than one self-defeating habit permanently vanished as a direct result of the retreat. Eating, for example. Suddenly, I could no longer stomach junk food or alcohol. Instead of eating out two or three times a day, I found myself making salads and cooking healthy meals at home. In place of downing two sodas a day, I was drinking water, milk and juice. My favorite comfort food, chocolate, now looked and smelled disgusting.

More surprises surfaced. My mind was sharper. I seemed wiser. At work I started seeing solutions to questions almost before I knew what to ask. I was altogether faster, stronger and healthier.

Lasting Personal Change

So how did this Sufi who seems to have stepped right out of *1001 Arabian Nights* convince me to re-invent a crazy wound-up, stressed-out lifestyle within a matter of weeks? Adnan, director of The Sufi Foundation of America, has taught students across the United States and Europe, and



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knows exactly what he's doing. He knows what people need to connect with their own being—the collective being of reality—the essential condition for achieving true and lasting change.

Major life shifts are common among Adnan's campers. Earlier, medical doctor Beverly Oliphant had come to his summer workshop as an internist diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. When she arrived, she could barely open or bend her fingers. In just a few weeks, Beverly was doing push-ups with both hands. Despite an initial prognosis giving her only six months to live, the disease went into remission and she continued with her normally active life. Eventually she became the physician to U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig.

It's ironic that R.J. "Josh" Reynolds III, a member of the board of directors with R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, who also has participated in Adnan's workshops, went so far as to donate the property for the retreat center. After all, smokers regularly find themselves quitting without any intent as the result of their experience at the camp.

As attorney Ann Hopcroft said, "Suddenly, after the Sufi workshop, my body did not even feel like smoking. Aside from the unexpected benefit of discarding a dangerous habit, I continue to feel alive and energetic and more capable in my work."

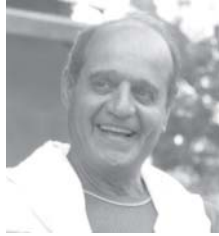
Josh Reynolds said he supports the Sufi work that has helped smokers give up the cigarettes his company sells because "Adnan's work instills greater freedom of action and a source of real meaning to existence."

Dropping self-sabotaging habits is only part of the

holistic summer camp effect. Dr. Caroline Lewis, a physicist at the University of Texas, aptly described her own Sufi experience as, “a deep concentration” that is present in Adnan and can manifest in “almost superhuman efforts.” She observed that this wave continues to spread, so that she discovered herself pleasantly shocked at new flexibilities and strengths in body and mind. But she maintains that the best part is “the fluidity, the control of the mind, body and more coming together in movement and dance.”

Camp Activity

Daily activities at the Sufi Summer Workshop in Torreon, New Mexico vary, and days fill up quickly. Movement and exercises, meditation, dancing, drumming and whirling as well as hiking the nearby national forest and meeting new friends from around the globe, are mind-expanding. The assembly is like a United Nations of consciousness seekers.



The United Nations invited Adnan to open the Earth Summit Conference in Brazil with a drumming concert.

In her own search for consciousness, Yana Petrova of *Radio Russia*, Moscow said, “I [had] started to doubt if I would ever meet a real Sufi master who will pay so much attention to music, poetry and dancing in life, in a spiritual path as Adnan, as Sufis of the past.”

Sufi work offers a fascinating opportunity to explore and master one’s self. But be aware. Side effects commonly include healing, forsaking unhealthy habits, and gaining practical insights for achievement.

In my wildest imagining, I could not have guessed that when Adnan hinted at the career path to come I would one day morph into a book author interviewed by media and speaking to groups around the country. Most recently, I’ve grown into a position as publisher of my own magazine. All along the way, I’ve continued to get the consciousness hits I started out seeking.

For information on the next Sufi Summer Workshop with Adnan Sarhan, Sufi teacher and drummer between Jul. 1–Aug. 31, call 505-384-5135, email sufisteve@mindspring.com or visit SufiFoundation.org. The Sufi Foundation Retreat Center is in Torreon, NM. The cost of \$350 per week or \$1800 for the full summer session includes organic meals, dormitory housing and workshops. See ad on page 2.

James Dillehay is author of eight books recommended in *The Chicago Tribune*, *Family Circle*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *The National Examiner* and more. His book about his Sufi experiences, *Overcoming the 7 Devils That Ruin Success*, has been published in 18 countries. He publishes *Natural Awakenings Magazine* in Denver-Boulder, CO.