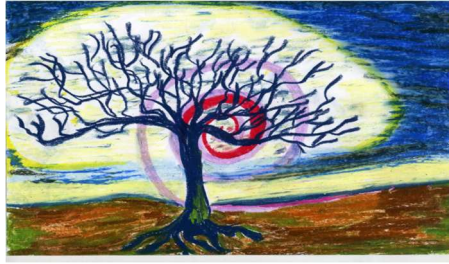


**The Norwich Centre**



**THE NORWICH CENTRE COURSE  
IN SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT**

**January 2025 – December 2025**



## **A Journey to Spiritual Accompaniment**

**The Norwich Centre for Personal, Professional and Spiritual Development**

**To run from January - December 2025**

Spiritual accompaniment can be described as the art of providing the optimum conditions and personal qualities for the deepest form of spiritual exploration with another person, whatever form their spirituality takes. The purpose of this course is to explore those conditions and qualities, drawing on insights and inspiration from ancient and contemporary world spiritualities, together with psychological understandings and environmental mindfulness.

### **Introduction:**

At a time when many people are feeling 'lost', uncertain or disconnected from a sense of meaning or purpose in life, especially in this fragmented world, there are those who, without being fixed in one tradition, know themselves to be on a 'spiritual path'. Equally, there are many who are struggling with membership of Institutional Churches, - feeling alienated or constrained by doctrine or dogma. We offer a training approach to Spiritual Accompaniment which is both 'interspiritual' and 'integrated', underpinned by the Person-Centred Approach to counselling, and informed by teachings from major traditional faiths and philosophies from both East and West - an approach which represents a preparedness to 'meet' in that rich place where both differences and commonalities of belief can be allowed and embraced.

An important facet of our approach is the recognition of the spiritual nourishment that is all around and available to everyone, if they can open to the wisdom and mystery of the Earth and of Life itself. We will explore our deep connection to earth and nature in the quest to manifest what poet David Whyte calls: ***'the truth at the centre of the image you were born with'***.

This course may appeal to people from a diverse range of backgrounds and faith traditions or spiritualities. Previous participants have included teachers, health practitioners, therapists, counsellors, healers, poets, and ministers.

### **Course Philosophy:**

Pre-supposing that our 'spiritual' life is not separate from the rest of life, a model of Spiritual Accompaniment is proposed which draws on all levels of human functioning (mental/intellectual, physical, emotional, sensual, aesthetic, intuitive and creative) in the

expression of the spiritual; one that fosters self-awareness and a preparedness to look closely at ourselves as 'embodied spiritual beings'.

Inspired by spiritual teachings and traditions from both East and West, as well as the Earth or Nature-based belief systems, from which so many traditional faiths evolved. From this, each person can, in their own way, and in their own time, deepen their own spiritual practice, enhance their sense of the sacred and their understanding of their own place in the 'web of life'; what they uniquely can offer the world and anyone seeking Spiritual Accompaniment.

This approach not only advocates a willingness to open to the 'Mystery' of the Inner Life (of 'Soul', 'Spirit' and Imagination), but also places 'Relationship' and 'Interconnection' at its core, so that Spirituality is experienced and accessed relationally, with regards to other people, community, Nature and the other than human world, as well as in relationship to whatever we might mean by 'God', the 'Other', 'Great Spirit' or the 'Source' or 'Ground of Being', - in short, to that which gives meaning and a sense of 'Belonging' in Life.

Added richness will come from an exploration of Secular spirituality, especially as expressed through an individual's creativity or creative response to life, through their experience of deep connection, or as manifested through the arts, in particular poetry, music and the visual arts, and through writings which investigate the realms where science and spirituality seem to meet.

Whatever the spiritual orientation and practice of the participant a fundamental characteristic of the Integrated approach is a friendliness and openness towards other spiritualities. The course leaders and contributors have been informed by or inspired by the following traditions:

- The Earth Mysteries and Spiritual Ecology.
- Christian Spirituality and Mysticism – East and West.
- Eastern Spirituality/Mystical teachings.
- Secular Spiritualities.
- Spirituality, Creativity and the Imagination.

Many people who struggle with traditional religion have found a home within the humanistic philosophies. Our training is underpinned by the Person-Centred Approach of Carl Rogers to Counselling and Psychotherapy, which offers a 'Way of Being' which is acceptant of the 'whole person' and non-judgemental of differences, and which is also 'hopeful' and trusting of the capacity of the person to 'self-actualise', that is, to become most fully themselves. This approach is at the heart of our philosophy of relationship, and forms the core of our Spiritual Accompaniment practice.

### **Course Delivery:**

The course programme will be delivered in a variety of ways including semi-formal presentations followed by discussion, experiential exercises using the philosophies of Person-Centred Expressive therapy and Bill Plotkin's '*Soulcraft*'. Different meditation practices and the use of art, music and poetry will be incorporated. We anticipate having a number of visiting contributors either offering talks or short workshops or speaking about their own lives and practices.

During the course participants will be encouraged to keep a personal journal to record their experiences and their learning in whatever way feels right for them. Different approaches to journal writing may be explored – including incorporating their own creative work as well as poems, pictures and quotations that have inspired them. The journal has two functions: firstly, it can provide material for Spiritual Accompaniment practice sessions, and secondly, it can inform and enhance the final extended essay/creative piece.

When we meet, space will be allotted for the practice of Spiritual Accompaniment in a variety of configurations, followed by a ‘debriefing’ discussion, so that our training intent is kept as a central focus.

Before each weekend we hope to send out by email small broadsheets which will introduce participants to the themes we hope to be exploring next, and prompt them to consider the part these themes may have played in their own lives and development.

Between some sessions, ‘homework’ may be set, encouraging participants to work together in small groups on particular themes, possibly with a view to presenting their thoughts and feelings to the whole group, or to form a basis for Spiritual Accompaniment.

### **Course Aims:**

- To develop the qualities, skills and knowledge needed to engage with another person who wants to explore and deepen their spirituality, and alongside this.
- To discover, develop or deepen your own approach to spirituality and your spiritual practice whilst remaining open to and inclusive of the learning and development of each individual.
- To develop a clearer sense of your own spiritual learnings and to be able to respond more readily to your own inner longing and the promptings of your soul.
- To develop a broad understanding of contemporary spiritual interests, developments and issues. This can lead to a more rounded practitioner, able to respond to a broader range of people.
- To discover who you are as a Spiritual Accompanist, - what you have to offer, and how you want to work, and even who you want to work with. To look at the Ethics of Spiritual Accompaniment and the usefulness of Supervision. Or, more broadly, to consider how you want to use what you learn on the course – its relevance to your life.
- This approach to Spiritual Accompaniment advocates an openness to the other person in their spiritual search and a willingness to be alongside and fully present to the other whilst, at the same time, knowing their own commitment to the deepening of their own spiritual experiencing and connection to the world. Within this model everything is dependent on the quality of relationship.

## Course Programme:

### MAIN THEMES FOR WEEKENDS AND RESIDENTIAL

**Weekend 1:** 31 January - 2 February 2025. 'CALL TO ADVENTURE: Being In the Darkness ~ Pain and Suffering'

*Around the time of Imbolc in the Celtic calendar, which celebrates the first signs of the re-awakening Earth, even though we are still deep in the dark months of Winter. It is often a time of waiting, a time of difficulty and uncertainty.*

Main Themes:

- Setting the Scene: including group agreements, brief introductions, and attention to the theoretical framework and how we intend to work.
- Introduction of Core Threads: which will run through all sessions:
  - The Concept of the Spiritual 'Journey' or 'Quest' including the importance of myth, story, image, creativity and imagination, as well as its importance to Spiritual Accompaniment.
  - Nature as Teacher and the universe as home.
  - Spiritual Practice.
  - The theory and practice of Spiritual Accompaniment.
- The Subjective Nature of Spiritual Experience: and how this impacts Spiritual Accompaniment.
- The Centrality of the Person-Centred Approach.
- What is Spiritual Accompaniment? What might prompt someone to seek out S.A.; qualities of the accompanist; how might it differ from counselling; hopes and expectations; theory and practice.
- Connecting with the Season; Being in the Darkness ~ The Mystery and Transformational Qualities of Pain and Suffering: darkness and despair, 'Dark night of the Soul', being in the 'Wilderness', the Christian concept of purgatory. The 'slough of despond'.

**Residential Week:** 21 – 25 March 2025. 'AWAKENINGS; Light in Darkness: The Mystery of Birth, New Life and Growth'

*This is the time of the Spring Equinox (Ostara) when dark and light hang for a moment in balance. Signs of Spring, ~ new life, new growth is all around.*

Main Themes:

- 'Lux in Tenebris': The intimations/rumblings of new life, light, birth, emergence, the confusion of the shock of the new, and the concept of the 'Treasure' or 'Pearl of great Price', the 'key'. Creativity out of darkness and chaos.
- The Mystery of Birth, New Life: The joys, struggles and pain of new life. Tenderness and vulnerability.
- Awakenings of the Spirit and Soul: what is Spirit and What is Soul?
- Balance and Paradox.
- The Importance of Symbol, Story, Ritual & Ceremony; for marking key events, stages on the spiritual path, different times of the year or day; as part of a spiritual practice; as ways of making sense or giving meaning.
- Ongoing Threads:
  - Spiritual Journey - Despair and darkness and the 'tasks' or 'tests' of spiritual exploration. Personal experience of stuckness and being in the wilderness.
  - Nature as Teacher - the changing seasons – what is happening during the winter months? The downward path, introspection, dream, reflection; Incubation. The concept of the seed, the acorn, the egg.
  - Spiritual Practice - Acknowledging/accepting the dark and the light in our lives.
  - Spiritual Accompaniment - on the theme of awakening from the darkness, from suffering and despair.

**Weekend 2:** 9 - 11 May 2025. 'WILDNESS AND ABUNDANCE: The Mystery of Love and Relationship'

*In the Celtic calendar Beltane heralds the Spring burgeoning into Summer. It is a time of rampant energy, growth, fertility, and of attraction and 'allurement'. Many themes emerge from this time of intense relationship.*

Main Themes:

- Chaos and Creativity
- The Mystery of Love & Relationship: Exploring all aspects of Love: generative or nurturing love, love as compassion, sensual/erotic love, romantic/soul love. Love for ourselves, for the other, for 'God', for the world. Yin and Yang.
- Celebrating our own Wildness; our instinctual selves.

- Belonging: What does it mean to have a sense of Belonging?
- Gratitude: Praise and Prayer.
- Ongoing Threads:
  - The Spiritual Journey. Awakenings of the spirit; what is 'enlightenment'?
  - What constitutes a Spiritual Practice? What is the purpose of your practice? Finding congruence between your way of life, your philosophy and value system, your psychology, your physicality, your creativity and your spiritual practice. Exploring balance and integration and the discipline of self-love.
  - Nature as Teacher – Interconnectedness and interdependence, the divine in all things. This refers to ways in which we find 'Belonging', for example, in our relationship with Earth's cycles and rhythms and with 'All Our Relations' as the Native Americans referred to the other than human world.
  - Spiritual Accompaniment on the theme of love and relationship. Exploring different modes of accompaniment and different settings.
  - Spiritual Practice. What constitutes a Spiritual Practice? What is the purpose of your practice? Finding congruence between your way of life, your philosophy and value system, your psychology, your physicality, your creativity and your spiritual practice. Exploring balance and integration and the discipline of self-love.

**Weekend 3:** 1-3 August 2025. 'HARVEST AND RIPENING: The Mystery of Individuation and the 'Soul''

*It is high summer - around the time of Lammass or Lughnasadh which heralds the ripening of the crops and the beginning of the harvest in the Celtic wheel of the year. A time for celebrating the gifts of the sun and of water.*

Main Themes:

- Ripening and Harvesting: looking at all our learnings, insights and work; beginning to gather in the first fruits of our own harvest.
- Individuation: The work of the second half of life?
- Our 'Soul's' Code: What is my gift? What might each one of us have to offer the world as a person, and as a spiritual accompanist. How do I want to express or manifest what I have learned. Plans for the future: dreams and visions.

- Care of the Soul: What do I need to nurture and nourish the Soul?
- Ongoing Threads:
  - Spiritual Journey: Looking again at the thread of our own story, and the contribution from different sources. What has fed and sustained us.
  - Nature as Teacher: What can be learnt from looking at the cycles of life in Nature.
  - Spiritual Practice. The place of creativity in spiritual practice.
  - Spiritual Accompaniment. Exploring creative and spontaneous approaches.

**Weekend 4:** 19-21 September 2025. 'THANKSGIVING. The Mystery of restored balance and the integration of the Shadow.'

*This is the time of the Autumn Equinox when day and night are once again in balance. We invite you to be open to change in focus or direction in life, as we prepare to face again the dark. A time of restored balance and integration, for giving thanks for the harvest, for opening the heart through gratitude, and being mindful of what we can give back to the world.*

Main Themes:

- Celebrating all of Earth's Gifts: including all our teachers ~ human and other than human.
- Balancing Past, Present, and Future.
- Balance of 'Male' and 'Female': looking at 'animus' and 'anima' and the 'feminine principle'.
- Welcoming the Shadow/Daimon: Getting in touch with all aspects of our selves, that which is often hidden or lost or denied. The concepts of sin, guilt and redemption.
- Ongoing Threads:
  - Spiritual Journey. Looking at our time of life; what still needs to be integrated from the past.
  - Nature as Teacher, - the changing seasons – what is this time of balance about?
  - Spiritual Accompaniment on whatever is emerging from the themes of the weekend. Where am I now?



- Spiritual Practice. Acknowledging/accepting the dark and the light in our lives.

**Weekend 5:** 31 October – 2 November 2025. 'LETTING GO. The Mystery of Death in Life.'

*Coinciding with Samhain in the Celtic Year, All Souls Eve and Halloween, this is traditionally a time for remembering the dead and thinking about the afterlife or the spirit world of the ancestors - and a time of letting go into the dark time of the year.*

Main Themes:

- Letting Go – The Mystery of Death and the Celebration of Life: Exploring the creative possibilities of death in spiritual development.
- Grief, Endings, Loss: Transformation and change; shedding.
- Facing our own Mortality.
- Remembering/Honouring the Ancestors.
- Ongoing Threads:
  - Spiritual Journey: where does death feature? Looking at story and myth, and the contribution from the different mystical traditions.
  - Nature as Teacher: the cycles of life in Nature; the necessity of death.
  - Spiritual Accompaniment, using the theme of death.
  - Spiritual Practice: how important is it to be able to face our own mortality; what about preparing for our own death? Dying every day to new life; letting go/ shedding of the self.

**Weekend 6:** 12 - 14 December. 'THE SOUL, AND JOY THROUGH CREATIVITY'

*This is our final meeting at the darkest time of the year. We gather to celebrate our journey together and to look at what might be incubating 'underground', waiting for the return of the light after the Winter Solstice.*

Main Themes:

- Sacred Work: 'Creative Work as Expression of Soul.'
- Ethics and Practice of Spiritual Accompaniment.
- Rumbblings in the Dark: What next?

- Ongoing Threads:
  - Spiritual Journey; as spiral or dance.
  - Nature as Teacher: the cycles of everlasting life; Regeneration and rebirth.
  - Spiritual Accompaniment, Further insights. Where are we now?

## **CLOSING CEREMONY/CELEBRATION**

### **Course Requirements:**

- Applicants will be expected to be familiar with the theory and/or practice of Person-Centred counselling. (e.g. some of the writings of Carl Rogers and Brian Thorne) and be able to demonstrate this in their application and interview. This approach is at the heart of the teachings on the course and a good understanding is essential however we do not necessarily require a particular academic level to demonstrate this.
- Reading and study: Emphasis is placed on the importance of reading widely on the subject; a good grasp of the field is useful when working with people who want to be accompanied in their spiritual explorations.

*Please note: Throughout the course reading lists will be provided suggesting essential or core texts as well as other helpful and interesting texts. The Norwich Centre has an extensive library of books with spirituality at their core, which may be loaned out to participants, for more information please contact our admin team on [admin@norwichcentre.org](mailto:admin@norwichcentre.org).*

- A Spiritual Practice: A requirement of the course is that you have or are working towards having a spiritual practice, however that may be defined.
- Spiritual Accompaniment: During the course participants are expected to complete a minimum of 15-20 hours of practice; some of these hours may be achieved during the skills sessions on the course but in addition participants would be encouraged to also include hours from their practice outside of the course. Different modes of Spiritual Accompaniment will be explored, and practice sessions may be in pairs, triads, small groups, the whole group, inside or outdoors.
- Extended essay/creative piece: To be awarded the Norwich Centre Certificate in Spiritual Accompaniment, a 25,000 word extended essay/creative piece must be completed within one year of the end of the course. The subject matter is chosen by the participant in consultation with the tutors. It will most likely relate to their own spiritual explorations, and is expected to reflect at depth how the content of the course may have influenced (or not) their understanding of Spiritual Accompaniment, and also demonstrate their continued spiritual development and empathic awareness of themselves and

others. Should the submission fall short of expectations tutor feedback will offer encouragement for deeper thought and further exploration.

### **Attendance:**

It is anticipated that participants will attend all weekends and the residential week in order to successfully complete the course. We would hope for 100% attendance but do understand that there can be exceptional circumstances which can inhibit this, please discuss any such events which occur throughout the course with your tutors. It may be that if non-attendance is entirely unavoidable due to such exceptional circumstances that tutors will direct participants to work, readings or exercises that will avoid negative impact on an individual's journey through the course and offer tutors evidence of the learning missed.

**Facilitators:** Fiona Strodder, Kenneth Boyd Browne, and Stephen De Brett

FIONA STRODDER is a Person-Centred Counsellor, Supervisor and Expressive Therapy Trainer. Her spiritual explorations have taken her in many directions. Influenced and inspired by the writings of the Christian Mystics, by Buddhism, Deep Ecology and Native American teachings ~ she has found deepest resonance with Taoism and Bill Plotkin's work on Nature and the Human Soul, and with the practice of Qi Gong. She is particularly interested in the way in which meditation, creative expression and remembering our innate wildness, connection and interdependence with all that lives can bring a sense of aliveness and belonging. A lover of trees and birds, a keen gardener, photographer, dog walker, dancer and grandmother, she hopes to bring a light touch to the serious 'dance' of spiritual exploration.

KENNETH BOYD BROWNE has been a BACP Senior Accredited Counsellor for over 35 years, and a Spiritual Director for the last 12 years. He previously worked at the Norwich Centre, as Principal Counsellor with the Norwich Union Staff Counselling service, and staff counselling at St. Bart's Hospital, London. He was also Interim Director at the London Centre for Christian Spirituality in the Diocese of London, and a tutor on the Spiritual Direction course at the Centre. He is presently Vice Chair for The Community for Spiritual Formation (UK) and works privately in Spiritual Direction. Kenneth has a deep Faith and at the present time his own creativity has manifested with writing poetry and flower arranging, which has led him to be interested in how the creative arts can be a manifestation of the divine. Coming from Northern Ireland the spiritual aspects of the Celtic tradition help Kenneth celebrate the natural world and our connections with it.

STEPHEN DE BRETT is a trained counsellor, having received part of his training in the Person-Centred approach from Carl Rogers. Together with Tony Merry and Irene Fairhurst he was a founder member of the Institute for Person-Centred Learning, which offered a diploma in counsellor training. During the early part of his life he was a member of the Anchorhold, an experimental, interspiritual, contemplative community, run by the Cowley Fathers; an experience which continues to influence his life, and he remains an uneasy member of the institutional church. His interests include building and sailing boats and the practice of woodland and rural crafts.

**Course Consultant:** Brian Thorne, emeritus Lay Canon Professor Brian Thorne is one of the world's leading person-centred scholars and (until his retirement as a therapist in 2005) an innovative practitioner of the approach. He is the author of a much-valued study

of the life and work of Dr. Carl Rogers, co-author (with Dave Mearns) of the best-selling (and much translated) 'Person-Centred Counselling in Action' and the writer of many other books and articles in the fields of therapy, education and pastoral theology.

Brian co-founded The Norwich Centre in 1979, the only service in the world we believe, which, throughout its lengthy history, has been wholly committed to the person-centred approach to counselling, counsellor training and spiritual exploration. Whilst he has retired as a therapist, Brian continues to work regularly at The Norwich Centre offering spiritual direction and valued support and wisdom to the centre and the Centre Director.

**Award:**

Once the extended essay/creative piece has been completed, and providing that attendance requirements are met, a Certificate in Spiritual Accompaniment is awarded by self-assessment in consultation with the tutor team.

**Total Hours:**

Approximately 140 hours

**Number of Participants:**

Maximum 14.

**Dates:**

Weekend 1: January 31<sup>st</sup> - February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025. Norwich Centre.

Residential Week: March 21<sup>st</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> 2025. Othona Community, Bradwell-on-Sea.

Weekend 2: May 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> 2025. Norwich Centre.

Weekend 3: August 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025. Norwich Centre.

Weekend 4: September 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> 2025. Norwich Centre.

Weekend 5: October 31<sup>st</sup> - November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025. Norwich Centre.

Weekend 6: December 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> 2025. Norwich Centre.

**Venues:**

Norwich Centre for Personal & Professional Development, 7 Earlham Road, Norwich, NR2 3RA.

The Othona Community, Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex, CM0 7PN, taking advantage of the semi-wild grounds and rural/coastal setting.

**Fees:**

£2900. The fees cover the costs of all tuition and facilitation, and all food and accommodation during the residential week. Participants will have to meet the cost of all

other accommodation and travel expenses. Fees are due before commencement of the course and will be subject to our refund policy.

**To apply for a place:**

Please contact The Norwich Centre via email on [training@norwichcentre.org](mailto:training@norwichcentre.org), for an application pack.

You will be required to give your reasons for wanting to participate on the course and include details of your spiritual journey thus far, as well as details of your knowledge and experience of the Person-Centred Approach to Counselling and Human Relations.

You will be asked to provide the names and contact information for two people who are willing to provide a reference. Selection will be on a first come first served basis.