

Ending among the Stars

Connie. I met her for the first time the day before the Rutle Conference where I would speak the next day. About stigma and how people with a psychiatric label can turn away from that brand. There should be nothing special about that; she could be Dutch carrying that name, but the fact is that the Conference took place in Stord, Norway. Connie lives in Norway and she also lived in Canada. Earlier. She has two passports. In Viking Land that is not peculiar. Therefore she speaks fluently English. Connie has been depressed for a period of five years. She has experienced misery up close and her recovery is actually still in its early stages. She was pleasantly surprised and amazed that I had asked her to work with me. A few hours before we had to go on stage, we discussed our performance. To be honest, I was not completely reassured. Connie's breathing sounded like the breathing of a marathon runner after the 30 km limit. Despite a Mindfulness course she followed.

Many American organizations, run by clients, read out an empowering message at the beginning of the day. With this they want to provide people with the power to turn the day into a memorable day. Providence made me take one of these stories to Norway.

"Ending among the Stars." Connie wanted to read out that message during our performance.

- * *I love and accept myself and I am worthy of love.*
- * *I am a unique, peaceful and free being.*
- * *I am safe and protected.*
- * *I am joyful...grateful, ...loving...*
- * *I am a forgiving person.*
- * *It is safe for me to give and receive love.*
- * *I am talented and successful in all that I do.*

Some people say affirmations before each meal. Some start their day with a new affirmation. Others end their day with a positive thought. The more we use affirmations; the more we'll find ourselves in a positive place

that will support us, especially as we find ourselves 'among the stars'.

The proverbial needle. You could hear that needle falling during Connie's presentation. I will leave the people out of consideration who felt like crying. I was one of them. She took the opportunity to explain the audience how she, at a moment in her life, felt like drowning in a mental marshland. And how much effort it takes people, with an imaginary sticker on the forehead, to think of something positive about them selves. I could have stepped off the stage and leave the stage to Connie. Her story gave us goose bumps. The day I got back home to the Lowlands, Connie sent me the news that she had opted for a job at a local Outreach Team as a peer worker. And she probably will get that job too. The audience treated her again and again to an ovation. And Connie, she had the feeling she went to the moon and back. "You made me feel like I was on top of the world, somewhere among the Stars!" In fact I had nothing to do with that. Connie was the Star. And that is the way it should be.

