

SUFI WAY INTERNATIONAL

The Open Path

———— 2010-2011 ————



Ten-Month Trainings in Nondual Awareness

with Pir Elias Amidon

Location of 2010-11 Seminars:
Whidbey Institute, Whidbey Island, Washington



What is the Open Path?

The Open Path is a non-sectarian approach to spiritual realization. It is a path dedicated to the direct experience of our natural state - a state known as Pure Awareness, Selflessness, Nonduality, Oneness, Original Spirit, and by many other names. It is a process of natural enlightenment that belongs to everyone.

To travel the open path does not require following a belief system or a specific set of esoteric practices or ritual forms. What is required is that we relax into the awake openness of our original nature, free from assumptions about who we are or conclusions about what is real. What is required is that we relax from compulsive doing and mental commenting and recognize the immanence of the here-and-now for what it naturally is.

With this unadorned recognition we experience release from our insecurities, self-doubt, and judgments of others. As a result we are able to respond spontaneously to whatever comes up for us with equanimity, creativity, and with a kind heart.

The Open Path Training

The intention of the ten-month Open Path Training is to introduce you to the direct experience of pure awareness, free from religious interpretations and obligations. Usually this experience begins with short glimpses of its lucid clarity. As these glimpses are pointed out, you learn to open to them again and again. The natural ease they reveal becomes increasingly familiar. This familiarity gradually allows you to sustain and integrate the realization of the natural state in your daily life.

A central aspect of the Open Path Training involves noticing the stream of assumptions that accompany our moment-to-moment experience of life, and that obscure recognition of the natural state. These assumptions range

from ideas about the nature of reality to the requirements for happiness. Most of these assumptions involve the sense of our being an identifiable entity – a self – who is the agent of choice and action, and whose well-being is dependent on getting the phenomenal world to line up in a certain way.

In the training we directly inquire into the truth of these assumptions, looking for the evidence upon which they are based. This deconstructive inquiry, or *unlearning* as the Sufis call it, becomes a natural part of our everyday experience as we proceed on this path of opening. In the process we may experience moments of bewilderment or disorientation as our assumptions about what is real and true are seen through.

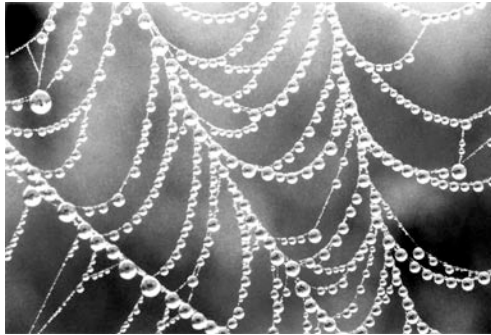
There is nothing aggressive about this process, and everyone is encouraged to follow his or her own pace of inquiry. Gradually the mental and emotional constructions that we have taken for granted lose their substantiality. They become transparent. In that transparency we are able to welcome and rest in the stillness and openness that is our original nature.

Direct Experience

In the Open Path Training we are committed to direct experience of – rather than studying *about* – the recognition of the natural state. We acknowledge that the mind’s tendency is to make up stories and interpretations about what is real, and that these interpretations give us a measure of security. We try to be gentle with ourselves here, neither blaming ourselves for objectifying our experience with concepts nor exerting tremendous effort in attempts to stop our habits of thinking and conceptualizing.

The key to our “work” in the Open Path is to allow ourselves to relax from the need to figure out what is true. This relaxation – often called *unknowing*– is not laziness or dreaminess. It is an openness to direct experience of the present moment in all its spontaneity and mystery. While we do explore many exercises and practices, and share many “pointing out” conversations and written material, the heart of this Path is not didactic. Our explorations are primarily devoted to evoking each person’s direct experience of the natural state – timeless awareness – without relying upon belief or cognitive understanding to convince ourselves of its presence.





The Structure of the Open Path Training

The training occurs over a period of ten months. There are three 4-day residential seminars scheduled at the beginning, middle, and end of the course. These are held at Whidbey Institute on Whidbey Island, Washington. During the course you receive by email a series of essays and exercises, approximately one essay every three weeks. These essays and practices focus our work together.

In addition, we connect with each other by telephone on a regular basis. This telephone work is a central aspect of the training. There are group conference calls with Elias every three weeks (approximately 10 participants per group), smaller group calls facilitated by second-year students every week, and individual calls with Elias once (or more if requested) each semester. In addition, each student chooses one or more “partners” to work with by telephone or in person on exercises and inquiry work.

During the course you are also encouraged to maintain a contemplative practice – a period of about twenty minutes (or more) each day during which you follow both specific practices as well as periods of “non-doing” – simply resting in the natural state.

How Much Time is Involved?

In addition to the three 4-day seminars, the Open Path Training involves a minimum of 20 minutes each day in a contemplative practice over the ten months of the course. You will also spend about one hour (or more as you wish) each week in reading and in exercises done independently or shared with other participants. In addition, you should be prepared to spend two to three hours each month on the group and individual telephone calls. You may also wish to do readings from the bibliography outside of the course work. If you are not sure you can devote this amount of time to this work over the ten months of the course, we recommend that you wait until your life schedule will allow it.

Who Is This Training For?

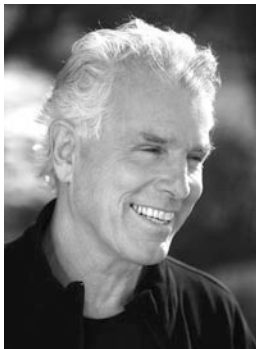
The Open Path Training is appropriate for people who are psychologically stable, emotionally resilient, and who are invested with a deep spiritual calling for realization. Of course, everyone experiences ups and downs in his or her life – the stability and resilience mentioned here is the capacity you have to deal with these natural ups and downs honestly and wholeheartedly. In engaging with this course it is also helpful to be someone who has a strong love for life and who has a natural generosity – these qualities serve to support your commitment to the learning involved, as well as deepen the contribution this work can make to the well being of your family, friends and community.

While it is often beneficial to have had a background in meditation practice or in a spiritual tradition, it is not necessary. Most important is a steadiness of commitment over time and an honest curiosity to explore your direct experience of being.

The Lineage of the Open Path

The Open Path is a contemporary and non-sectarian approach to the journey of awakening that is at the heart of nearly all mystical traditions. The particular style of the Open Path emerges from the lineage of western universal Sufism expressed by the Sufi Way International.

This “style” is inclusive in its methods, non-dogmatic in its view, and dedicated to direct experience. The methods we make use of in the trainings are drawn from many sources: classical and modern Sufi practices, contemporary psychological methods for releasing mental and emotional fixations, Buddhist meditation practices, forms of inquiry from Zen, Advaita Vedanta, and Tibetan Dzogchen and Mahamudra traditions, and from the inspiration of many historic and contemporary Western nondual teachers.



Pir Elias Amidon

Elias is the spiritual director (Pir) of the Sufi Way International (www.sufiway.org), an inner school in the direct lineage of the Indian mystic Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. He teaches and holds retreats on nondual spirituality and Sufism throughout Europe and the United States, and is known for his direct and experiential approach to spiritual realization. He has worked for many years in the field of peace and environmental activism in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and with indigenous tribes on land-rights issues. Currently he is working with the Abraham Path Initiative (www.abrahampath.org) to open a 1500 kilometer walking trail through the Middle East.

————— **REGISTRATION INFORMATION** —————

- Seminar I:** 7 PM **June 9** to 4 PM **June 13, 2010**
Seminar II: 7 PM **Nov. 17** to 4 PM **Nov. 21, 2010**
Seminar III: 7 PM **March 16** to 4 PM **March 20, 2011**



The Open Path seminars will take place at **Whidbey Institute** (www.whidbeyinstitute.org) on Whidbey Island, Washington. Whidbey Institute is a beautiful and spacious home for our seminars and is about 1 ½ hours drive from Seattle, Washington.

(Note: the ten-month Open Path Training is also held in Europe (in the U.K., Netherlands, and Germany.) In 2010-11 it will be held in Somerset, England. For information about the English training visit www.sufiway.org.)

Fee for Ten-Month Open Path Training

The Open Path Trainings are partially subsidized by the Sufi Way International—this makes it possible for us to offer the training on a sliding scale.

The fee scale in the United States is from **\$1,500** to **\$2,000**. We ask that you determine the amount that is appropriate for your life situation.

There are also a limited number of partial scholarships available. To apply for a scholarship write to openpath@sufiway.org with your contact information and a description of your financial circumstances and what amount you are able to pay. Our goal is that no one be prohibited from taking the Open Path Training for financial reasons. If you can contribute toward the scholarship fund we would be most grateful.

Your course fee pays for the following:

- Three 4-day seminars
- 11 Open Path Essays sent every 3 weeks, plus sets of “Contemplative Readings”
- Open Path individual practices and shared exercises
- 2 telephone conference calls with Elias every 3 weeks with groups of ten participants
- Weekly calls with a practice partner
- Small group calls facilitated by senior students every week
- Individual calls with Elias every semester

Costs for Room and Board at Whidbey Institute

The costs for **room and board at Whidbey Institute** for each of the seminars are as follows (we pass these costs directly on to you without additional charges):

Double-occupancy room per person per night	\$ 45
<i>Single-occupancy room (limited availability) per night: \$60</i>	
Facilities charge per person per day	\$ 25
3 meals, snacks, tea/coffee, per day	\$ 40
Daily room and board cost	\$ 110 x 4 days
Total room and board cost for 4-day seminar	\$ 440

There are rooms at Whidbey Institute for approximately 25 people. If the Institute’s rooms are full at the time of your registration there are several bed-



and-breakfasts as well as another retreat center very nearby where you can stay. The Institute will connect you with these places if required.

For those **not staying at the Institute**, costs are as follows:

Facilities charge per person per day	\$	25
3 meals, snacks, tea/coffee, per day	\$	40
Daily room and board cost	\$	65 x 4 days
Total cost for 4-day seminar	\$	260

To Apply

To apply for this training, send brief responses to the seven questions below, along with your contact information, to openpath@sufiway.org.

Name • Address • Phone • Email Address • Occupation

1. Why do you want to participate in this Open Path Training?
2. What is your previous experience with meditation and spiritual practice?
3. Do you have any current medical or mental health issues we should know about?
4. Is there any major issue going on in your personal life at this time which might affect your ability to engage whole-heartedly with the work of this training?
5. Please re-read the section in this brochure under “How Much Time is Involved?” Do you feel you have the time during the coming year to commit to this amount of work?
6. Do you have any special food needs? Other needs?
7. The sliding fee scale for the training is \$1,500 to \$2,000. Please determine the amount appropriate to your life situation. What amount do you plan to pay?

We will let you know as soon as your application is accepted. You will then receive registration information from Whidbey Institute. **The Whidbey Institute is handling all registrations and payment for both the course and for accommodation/meals at the seminars.** A \$150 deposit is required with your registration; the balance is due two weeks before the first seminar. (Cancellations received less than 60 days prior to the first seminar forfeit the deposit.) We recommend that you apply early as there are a limited number of places available. If you have any questions about the training or Whidbey Institute, call the Institute at 360-341-1884, or write to openpath@sufiway.org.



*This we have now
is not imagination.*

*This is not
grief or joy.*

*Not a judging state,
or an elation,
or sadness.*

*Those come
and go.*

*This is the presence
that doesn't.*

– Rumi



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