

Talking with One Kind Voice – A founder update



Photo taken by Elena Richard

Few weeks back in February when winter suddenly enveloped the spring flowers once again in Bucharest

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INTRODUCTION

I thought it is a good occasion to know each other better – Hello again, I am Maggie, the creator of One Kind Voice platform for mindfulness and meditation.

I would like to open my own insights with the question, what hopes stirred in me creating “**One Kind Voice**”?

This platform stands as a commitment, as a vow to myself to keep creating **meaningful work** in the areas of personal development, teaching mindfulness and meditation. Above all, my drive to support people on their journeys has been the little spark that started it all.

We rarely know when would be the perfect time to do anything, we spend years debating if or even worse, **why NOT start things**, be it projects or chasing our dearest dreams.

I felt therefore the strong call to record in a multitude of forms, meditations, insights, sharing writers who inspire me and audio interview as part of my own becoming, my own awakening to a supportive and resourceful life, **with one key focus - to be kind to each other**. Make it a goal in our lives, to be kinder by the day.

This reintroduction to One Kind Voice is prompted by quietly celebrating one year of creation and being out in the world hopefully for your delight. Rest assured, our small team of two, strives always for the best with the resources at hand and all content is original.

A SHORT BACKGROUND

Let me offer you a short background

I arrived in Hong Kong almost twenty five years ago. Who would have known at that time? Some of my friends did tell me - a decade and then two decades might pass in a blink of an eye in your new home Hong Kong. I remember asking "Seriously? Wait and see." I have always wondered ever since what is the hook of this town, what keeps it so appealing.

My journey has taken me places around the globe, with intense travelling at times – mostly prior to pandemic years, and one thing I could always say - anytime I land in Hong Kong, I feel home and I relax. This is a feeling I have been recording endlessly.

There are only two places in the world so far, offering me this warmth sensation of belonging, my hometowns back in Romania and Hong Kong. Hong Kong is the city where you can discover something new every day. Just naming my most recent example from yesterday, I decided to take a short cut on my way back home. I imagined, at least, it would be a shortcut! The buildings I knew ahead of me, the church at the corner of my street, seemed so close.

The path ahead me became more entangled with every turn I took, I have then discovered a new park, I have managed to avoid a series of nasty stairs to climb, and I have rejoiced in some wonderful art graffiti. It is true, I am a "returner" to this neighbourhood in Central Hong Kong and my neural pathways are still processing a lot of information to settle.

Good news is that anytime we take a new path, we allow our brain to change a habit. We allow our brain to be revitalised, to adapt fast enough, to be alert and active. One of my favourite and very simple practice when walking around the city, is to surprise myself with taking a new turn. I seem to follow the same pattern in life too.

FUN FACTS

Let's move on to a couple of fun facts

Disclaimer - In order for me to reintroduce myself to my lovely subscribers and "One Kind Voice" intimate community, I had to sit down formally, in front of a computer and imagine I am interviewing myself. Here I am, still typing, correcting my first draft and asking out loud questions that I hope to unravel something new about my path so far and what is really "One Kind Voice."

(I can be funny this way, as I have a long history of talking to myself at home.)

Since we started with the places I call home ,I would like to go back in time for a second, to my upbringing first.

My parents are builders, and spent all their life taking part in building industrial sites in Romania, or building home projects after their retirement. I cherish more than ever today my chats with my mother recollecting memories of an era that is now left behind, as many objectives sadly have perished. I loved school as much as I loved playing outdoors, nearby our blocks of flats, with a huge group of kids. I adored taking part in any activity, maybe not so much in mathematics regional competitions - but I did love to volunteer and be ready for any tasks. Name a sport - adored all of them. Foreign languages – adored and I kept dabbling with English, Russian, French, Italian, Spanish....whatever would be available to listen too in my time at school. Languages carry a mystic attraction for me. One does feel good when can communicate or understand his surroundings.

Reading books - great love, memorizing poems - not talented at all!
Memorizing history milestones, not that great either. Math – I would say I carry to quick wit, but let's be frank, not genius level. My mum would help me on harder stuff. Hence mathematics Olympics dreams were eliminated early on.

I do remember as I take these notes though - that I kept volunteering and I was so enthusiastic about many activities. (I guess that meant I learnt to fail early on too.)

ON ENTHUSIASM

Just going through some of the earlier memories from school, I can sense this call I get when I resonate with something - even without knowing well to expect. Many times, this curiosity meant I would like to know more.

I would not understand why a health related issue might persist - putting on weight for example - I deep dived into everything nutrition, diet types, **only to understand years and years later that all body-mind-heart issues were interconnected and we cannot solve one without each other.**

I would say I still have the same “volunteer” spirit from early childhood.

However, when we start losing someone or accepting that my life took a serious turn towards a very uncertain terrain, raised a ton of questions. I have felt along the years that there was a fraction happening. I felt that I started to know fear. To know deep sadness.

At times I would feel overwhelmed by my own creative energy and enthusiasm, while at times, I really was just seeking for something more.

I liked this paragraph from **“We’ve got this”**, a book written by Ritu Bhasin, a DEI consultant and author. A fascinating story of grit and determination to be herself.

“Whatever our cultural backgrounds are, many of us can remember great times and loving moments during our upbringings. For all of this, we can express gratitude and take in the feelings of love and warmth and joy that come up for us. It’s healing.

But at the same time, we can also confess that we went through a lot of hard times, stress and heaviness.”

GONG- Let us sit for a moment and take a pause. Let this sit in.

So, one of the questions I kept having was “what do we do now?” , when people are suffering. Be it myself, or others around me.

I could see then there were many temporary Band-Aids trying to fix some parts, some aspects, one area over another, time and space collapsing.

The bigger call into picking up learning again, in a new, more systematic approach towards wellbeing, has occurred to me many years later, perhaps enhanced by the pandemic and the collective emotional field that made us question everything.

I came to see clearer, up and personal that some of my experiences, were reflecting many patterns I could not shed off, and some of them, did not make any sense either. Despite my self-taught attitude towards “let me see how I can fix this?”, and my years of accumulated efforts to read experts on all matters, I couldnot change or transform at the pace I would have envisioned for myself. ***I was somehow reading by example, not leading my life by.***

Yes, one kind doctor did ask this: “Are you often harsh on yourself?” – “Yes, I said shyly. I still did not achieve much by the society norms. “ Fair question, fair answer was the food for thought I perhaps needed.

What follows was a challenge to myself: What do I do about it? Can I really change?

I accepted then step by step that I am a seeker. I seekmany answers. I generate new questions. And I generate a lot of dreams. I seek new discoveries and new perspectives. I seek diverse points of view. I seek learning from the “human library” around us or elsewhere in the world.

I seek stories - life stories, that carry meaning, carry hope, carry the spirit of “I am still standing and keeping at it”. That is the key, over and over, I seek hope and life affirming patterns all around me.

That keeps my enthusiasm uncurbed. I came to know that no matter which low point we might hit on our journeys, there is a way to raise and to feel good again about life. We do have to work at it and develop flourishing skills, that might be unique for each and every one of us.

So, I remain in essence a big enthusiast. That is a chosen path.

I seek happiness in all the very little moments. The sunny day, flowers blooming, a cute doggie saying hello with its big round eyes, the breeze on the alley I walk every day, the friendly call, you get the gist.

I bet that sounds too positive at times. **I would like to take a deep breath here, a moment of pause. We may sit with the story so far as it is. Let us take three deep breaths in and out gently. Return to the present moment.**

You might ask to more real stories, connected to life rather than all around a positive - attitude and philosophy of living.

I would say this instead - this enthusiasm streak, has opened lots of opportunities, which by default would also imply loads of trials and errors and hence, the opportunity to fail. I love a challenge, I open myself towards an ocean of unknown and I embrace it fully hearted.

Let me get back to my mum and recall some of her true principles she lives by:

“When you do a thing, you should give your 1000%”.

“You should pour your heart/ soul into it- the task at hand be it little, big, no matter what it is, nothing works without your soul in it. “

This is the spirit that paves my way forward.

We are coming closer to the next question to this insightful self-interview - **Why adding new directions and learning new things, (maybe unrelated to a current career?).**

One year ago, my reply would have been different. Nowadays, all talk about how AI takes over, the only question remains **“why not?”**

The question to me is in fact why do we have to keep static, in a pre-definer parameter. We all change constantly. I do enjoy having that flexibility in spirit, in the search of all around balance.

The beauty is now I understand that being mindful, being kind, being generous and compassionate is a day by day practice that I vow to improve and to develop diligently.

Seeking balance brought me closer to finding new teachings, finding new avenues to become resourceful for myself. Resourceful to thrive. (and as a sweet reminder, all these positive bombastic words do not mean that I do not fail at many trials. I just keep trying.)

MISSION

Getting closer to One Kind Voice's mission: **Have I always been interested in mindfulness and meditation?**

- No and Yes -
- No - at first sight - for mindfulness. I would say that mindfulness became a buzz word for me in the context of corporate life, while new practices were introduced to bring teams together and attend workshops; my first experience in bringing mindfulness workshops at work, did not seem genuine. This is all I can say. The personal, bottom up endeavors to maintain mindfulness remain isolated should it not become a general practice across teams and levels. At least in my humble experience.
- Luckily, doing also a lot of work in consumer insights and trends ,I kept seeing the mindfulness trend picking up, mental health practices growing and being therefore sought after. My curiosity increased in time. I did what I always do - found books and tried to understand, from self-help, psychology, neuroscience and contemplative practices . The first book bringing me closer to these practices was by **Daniel Goleman - “Destructive Emotions”** - I knew so little about everything in this book the first time I read it most probably 20 years ago!.
 - I read this book at a crossroad in my life and I still remember how surprised I have been by the depth of the topic and how little I know about my own emotions ;The fascinating part was that we can do something to transform our lives. This is one of the books I am planning to revisit soon - I do wonder how I can interpret the entire concept anew today, after so many transformative challenges of this precious life
 - I then read Paul Ekman's book on emotions and facial expressions. Mesmerizing. Little did I know I would take a course by his daughter, Eve Ekman, on Cultivating Emotional Balance - a combination of psychology and contemplative practices. Eve Ekman is herself the co-author of The Atlas of Emotions ! 20 years later, 2025 more precisely.
- Coming back to the first question. - Yes- for contemplative practices. I might simply say - I am wired this way, observant, watchful, silent at times as a kid. I need my time to simmer down from my dreams early in the morning. I need my time to find quiet moments to regroup or distance from a particular moment. I have performed one or another way of meditation way before this settled as a wellbeing practice or I knew what meditation means.

I mentioned this little story before while interviewing my yoga teacher. I have rediscovered the power of meditative practice and yoga practices while having a full revelation during one of Friday evening classes. After a long week, head exploding at zillions of things I still had pending to accomplish and tasks overdue, I entered the magic space of yoga. In my attempt to get the asanas right (the positions, and not lose my balance or become impatient), I came to see that one hour made all my thoughts vanish. By the end of the class, my stress was not stressing me anymore. ! Sure enough, it did not completely vanished, it was the intensity that just became normal and amenable. This realization, the breathing exercises with each class, 5-8 minutes of meditation to start the class with, **all had this major impact to almost raise a curtain, between what was and what is. What is remained yoga practice, The focus on that “present moment.”**

Seeing the impact of **a steady practice**, taking real action and a positive turn to work diligently on my overall balance and wellbeing, made me gear my enthusiasm towards more discoveries in this direction.

And here I was, one day, listening fascinated to a podcast by Tami Simons(the founder of Sounds True) in a conversation with Tara Brach, the founder of Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training Program. I have not heard a call that strong in a very long time. Ever since embarking on this program led by Tara Brach, Jack Kornfield and all the teachers I met ever since , left such a remarkable imprint on my becoming, on my spiritual awakening, on my renewed desire that I would both continue to learn and help other people find their own balance.

These practices opened the wide horizon of a clear understanding for me that we can change, we can transform and heal ourselves one step at a time and we can share these teachings so that others can also benefit.

Here we are, one year after graduating from MMTCP ,celebrating quietly the creation One Kind Voice platform, one step at a time, creating both room and time for this to bloom further. A reminder that no matter when we start, we keep adding value to whatever we do. We pour our hearts into it 1000% and more.

This is a new born project out of my commitment to change myself for the better. What I aim to teach are practices that can calm our nervous system, can soothe, can guide us to insightful meditation or just walking quietly, practices that connect our body, minds and hearts and help with increased clarity, concentration and focus. All verified and applicable methods in our day to day experience.

With more calm and self-compassion, with more clarity and focus, we can stronger rely on our inner compass, we can become reliant on finding our own stability inwards. These are all practices that I have seen improving my own life.

I would like to end with two short poems by Zen professor Paula Arai.

“Invisible threads

weave us together with love.

Touch, see, taste, smell.”

“Warm glowing haven,

Harbor for daily healing.

Compassion lives here.”

Dear friends - watch closely the “One Kind Voice” space for a new creative year ahead.

Thank you so much for listening. Please do reach out to me should you have questions, I would be so very happy to answer.

RECOMMENDED AUDIBLE TITLE

I would like to share with you one of my most recent Audible titles - "Like a Wave We Break" - by Jane Marie Chen - a memoir of falling apart and finding myself Narrated by the author. It is described as a courageous memoir of one woman's journey of unraveling and awakening, breaking free of the narratives that once defined her and confronting the long-buried truths of a traumatic past- by the former CEO and co-founder of Embrace.(a company that developed a groundbreaking incubator helping to save hundreds of thousands of newborns in the world's most vulnerable communities.

This is a riveting story of success, failure, understanding the waves that make and break us, a relentless search for "becoming better", for "healing", and culminating in making peace with her past and embracing her whole family as it is, while embracing bravery to accept herself too. The title also refers to her new found life long passion - surfing and embracing the ocean whole heartedly too.

One thing I would love to add- I am so grateful for all women facing their own inside battles and pursuing all avenues to cope, to thrive, to be better, to be love, to find purpose in making peace with ourselves and with our pain.

I bow to them and their stories just add fuel to my enthusiasm to foster kindness, generosity and compassion in all my endeavours. Thank you to all the wonderful trail blazers I met myself or I read about.

This might not always be a smooth reading or listening. It is at times challenging to see how the author falls in some behaviour patterns and to understand and go through these motions with her, as we are doing exactly the same. I always find this so daunting about our experience, we do hope we learn from our falls and then here we are once again, facing similar issues. It is so much related to how deep we aspire to look inwards and see the real emotions we have kept bottled inside, unattended to for years and years or maturing.

I loved her honesty and vulnerability to talk about her relationship with her father and mother, and the memories stirred up at times, stronger and stronger, unresolved.

I loved Jane's commitment to persevere and try all healing approaches - pranayama(to the extent that she has tattooed the word on her arm), yoga ashrams in India, vipassana retreats. The Tony Robbins workshop and "The body keeps the score" approach and the lengths that she has gone to attend the workshops with Dr. Bessel van der Kolk and his wife, IFS system, Internal Family Systems approach.

I think a lot of us try to learn so much from these online courses and their books. I loved her tenacity of not leaving any stone unturned in order to heal and generate a healthy relationship of acceptance with her family. It takes a lot of courage. Thank you!