Meeting Sydney Banks

How a road trip to a five-day seminar on Salt Spring Island led Valda to see, for the first time, that her feelings came from thought in the moment.

By Valda Monroe

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IN BRIEF

- Valda went along mainly because she didn't want to be without the car for nine days.
- As Sydney spoke, a voice inside her kept saying "that's true", until she wondered, "Who are you?"
- On the drive home she noticed she had been repeating an angry story from ten years earlier.
- Seeing thought and feeling as inseparable moved her from blaming the past to being responsible.

Drafted with AI and checked by The Hidden Cause. The article itself is as it was written.

We lived in California. Sydney was going to be speaking at a 5-day seminar on Salt Spring Island in Canada. Keith and some of his colleagues were driving there to hear Sydney teach. Keith asked me if I wanted to go but I was not at all interested. At that point, I had no idea how much I could learn from a teacher like Sydney. I didn't know it, but I had actually been waiting all my life to hear what he was teaching.

Altogether they were going to be gone for nine days and Keith would be needing the car. I didn't want to be left without a car for nine days so I asked Keith to get a ride with someone else. He told me he had tried but everyone else's cars were full. So then I tried and I found out everyone's cars were full. I had a decision to make, stay home without the car or go to the seminar with Keith. It was not a hard decision to make, I began to get excited about going as it would be a "road trip" and Keith and I really enjoyed being together. I would have some extra time with Keith and friends. It was nowhere on my list that I would get to learn from Sydney Banks. Sometimes in life you are in the right place at the right time and I was. Once again, not one thought about Sydney Banks.

The very first row

We arrived just in time for the seminar to begin. We walked into the room and it was full except for two seats right at the front of the room directly across from where Syd was going

to be speaking. Keith had taken my hand into his big hand and lead me to the seat. I had a brief moment of, “I’ll just stand up in the back please”, but given the hold he had on my hand it would have been a wrestling match on the sidelines and it was a seminar, not a sporting event, so there I sat on the very first row. As it turned out I ended up almost knee-to-knee with Sydney, which was a little bit much for a person who had just showed up because she didn’t want to be without a car for nine days.

Sydney came in and sat quietly until the room had settled down and then he began to talk. He was the exact opposite of an aggressive motivational speaker. He was quiet spoken and full of deep impactful feeling. I loved his feeling and the feeling in the room. The closest I would usually get to something that felt like this was late at night when everyone was too tired for bravado or pretense and some meaningful things would get said. If you were to multiply that feeling by an unthinkably large number, that was where Sydney was speaking from. There is a commercial on TV for music speakers and the person sitting across from the speaker is in an armchair holding onto the arms and he, his hair, and the chair are being blown backward by the power of the speaker. I felt like I was being blown back by the power of Sydney Banks. Not because he was loud but because he had a powerful presence and an impactful message.

“Who are you?”

As he talked he would say true things that would resonate as true inside me. He would say it, and a voice inside me, one that had been with me all my life, would say “that’s true” in a distinct and measured way. He would talk more and here it would come again “oh, that is true too”. He would talk more and “that’s true” would resonate within me. After this happened about five or six times I thought, “Who are you?”

It was a rhetorical thought, I didn’t actually spend any time thinking about it. But it stood out on the pages of my life in that moment that I was in the presence of and experiencing something I did not previously know was possible. A person speaking of things I only halfway knew and of others I knew nothing about. This was so much better than school I wanted to jump out of my skin. It was as if I finally encountered a language that I could understand that had meaning for me. And I could tell that many other people felt similarly. We were all learning insightfully and we were not used to learning that way. We were not used to learning the types of things we were learning about.

We were learning about human psychological functioning. We were learning things at an impersonal level that included all people. It was many years later that I began to have insight about how deep and fast we were learning from Sydney. It was like his heart was talking directly to my heart or insight directly to insight. I was so fortunate to find myself there listening to him.

On our way home

On our way home from the five-day seminar I was quiet for a longer time than usual. Keith asked me how I was doing. I answered, “not very good” and he asked what was up. I told him what I had been thinking about. It was a story he knew very well. It was my sad story about how a man in my life had treated me poorly. Nothing physical, just selfish and disrespectful. I knew that it had happened ten years before and I was just as judgmental, critical, and mad as I had been when it happened. I was no longer with this fellow and had not been for ten years. I was in a wonderful relationship with Keith why would I possibly still be upset and feel as mad as I did ten years before? I told Keith all the different things I was thinking about plus that I was very disappointed in myself for not having better thinking on my mind. I thought I was psychologically healthier than to have such stupid thinking on my mind. Somehow it had not been obvious to me that I had repetitive thinking about this incident in my life. At this moment I saw it clearly why had I not seen it clearly before.

Keith then asked if he could ask me a question. I said sure. He asked, “Have you ever seen your thinking this deeply before?” It was obvious to me that I had not and I said “No”. That was of great interest to me. Time kind of warped on me in that moment. I felt like I had all the time in the world to reflect on this thing of interest that I had come across in my thinking. I was no longer disappointed in myself. I was interested in this new thinking that had come to me. How was it that I had been repetitively thinking about something for ten years and not knowingly noticed?

A coin with two sides

The next thing that popped into my mind was Sydney Banks. I had the thought, “I wonder if this has something to do with ‘that Syd guy’?” And I immediately insightfully knew that it did. Oh my gosh, I am seeing my thinking at a deeper level than I had ever seen it. Maybe this was part of the insight that Sydney had told us we would be having. I was seeing the principle of thought in the moment as the other side of feeling in the moment. It was like a coin with two sides, but it was one thing. Thought and the feeling of that thought were inseparable. This was news to me. I had always thought of thought and the feeling of thought as two separate things. I was seeing them as inseparable. This meant that my feeling was not coming from a circumstance or person. It was coming from my thought in the moment. This was a different system than I knew. This would mean that my feeling was not coming from the incident that had happened to me years earlier. It was coming to me from my thinking in the moment.

Sydney would talk about how we would carry thought through time and have the same feeling we had years ago and we would then attach the feeling to the incident rather than the thinking in the moment. This is why I could have such an emotional response to my

memory although it was impossible for it to have any power over me because it was no longer happening to me.

A new target

I had a new target. Rather than what had happened to me, it was my thought in the moment that I was experiencing. This may not seem like much but it is a paradigm difference. The difference between a victim mentality and the mentality of easily being responsible. Not analytically learning, but insightfully learning, from and about oneself, and all of humanity. This became a life of change and growth, rather than a life of fear and blaming everything and everyone else.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Valda Monroe. Valda Monroe met Sydney Banks with Keith Blevens in 1977, and they taught the Three Principles together from then on. She brought no degrees to the work, but a love of logic and order, and created a way of teaching Syd's understanding as a paradigm that has been used in hospital systems, leadership training, coaching and counselling. Valda retired in 2022.

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