

Keynote Speaker: Anthony Dissen

Keynote 1: Mindfulness As a Tool for Liberation and Self-Discovery

We live in a world that often misunderstands, marginalizes, and denies the lives, identities, and value of LGBTQ+ people. This can result in us feeling disconnected from our bodies, our authentic selves, and each other. The practice and incorporation of mindfulness into our daily lives can be a powerful tool for healing, liberation, and inner peace. Additionally, mindfulness is a portal into discovering who we are, what we are here to do, and how to access our innate power, strength, and wisdom. This keynote will explore how intentional presence and compassionate awareness can dismantle feelings of internalized shame, soothe and calm our nervous system, and create the inner space needed to develop and strengthen our capacity for authentic self-expression and discovery. Drawing from contemplative traditions and modern psychological insights, we will explore and uncover how mindfulness can empower us to live with greater freedom, dignity, and joy. Through the sharing of personal stories, guided meditations and reflections, and practical strategies, this session will invite participants to view mindfulness not just as a generic wellness technique, but rather as an act of revolutionary and radical self-acceptance, self-love, and resistance. Together, we will explore how turning inward with kindness and love can build a strong and powerful foundation for stronger communities and deeper relationships. Whether you are new to these techniques or a long-term practitioner, this session will support your ongoing journey towards liberation and freedom.

Keynote 2: Living the Path of Loving-Kindness: The Life-Changing Practice of Metta

In the Pali language, metta is often translated to mean loving-kindness. Metta is more than just a state of emotion or a feeling – it is a cultivated state of being that is focused on the well-being, kindness, and happiness of ourselves and others. Metta is the practice of connecting, and reconnecting, with our inherent worth, of transforming self-criticism into compassion, and fostering a deeper acceptance within and beyond ourselves. Metta breaks down illusions of separation and distance and reminds us that we live in a rich, sensual, and profoundly interconnected web of being. Drawing from Buddhist traditions surrounding metta, this keynote will examine how the intentional practice of sending love to ourselves and to others can dismantle internalized oppression and open pathways for joyful living. Together, we will practice the core components of metta meditation. We will then combine these practices with sharing personal narrative and reflections on what collective healing looks like in our community. We will share how the communal cultivation of metta can provide a deeper and richer spiritual refuge and catalyst for social change and healing. Participants will leave with the practical techniques and knowledge to integrate metta into their daily lives and build resilience against external negativity and strengthen our capacity for self-acceptance. We will also focus on tantric applications of metta to see how our desires, sensuality, sexuality, and kinks can be portals to spiritual growth and evolution. Additionally, we will engage in a group chanting and toning

exercise to build a container that raises the well-being, vibration, and energy of all who are present.

Workshop: Chanting and Singing Our Way to Freedom

Most, if not essentially all, spiritual paths and practices use sound, music, the voice, and the breath to free us from illusion, raise our energy, and elevate us into ecstatic states of joy and connection. And we, as LGBTQ+ people, too often are told to keep our voices down, to stifle our joy and creativity, to play it straight, and to not make a scene, often in an effort to not “make other people uncomfortable.” In this workshop, we are throwing that away and getting loud! This workshop will introduce participants to the practice of devotional chanting and singing, what is yogic traditions is often called Kirtan. We will come together to learn different beautiful devotional chants and mantras, and set them to music to chant, sing, clap, and create a sonic container to generate powerful fields of love, spiritual energy, and connection.