A close-up photograph of a person's hand and forearm reaching out towards the right. The hand is open, with fingers slightly spread. On the forearm, there is a dark, triangular tattoo. A metal link watch is visible on the wrist. The background is a heavily blurred stadium with rows of seats, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall lighting is soft and natural.

WORKING WITH NORMAL PEOPLE:  
a guide for hippies

*Mark Walsh*

# Working with normal people: a guide for hippies

## How to fit in enough, and get paid more, without selling out

This e-book is a guide for anyone with a background in ‘alternative’ arts wishing to adapt their skills to help people in mainstream contexts such as business.

It's particularly aimed at ‘body people’ such as yoga teachers, martial artists, dancers, movement/body therapists, bodyworkers and theatre/improv practitioners; as well as meditation teachers and those of other spiritual disciplines, those from the arts more generally, permaculture people, and well, just overall big holistic dolphin-huggers like me. You might be reading this as a hatha yoga teacher who wants to offer corporate classes, a martial artist who wants to use embodied approaches to leadership development, or as a mindfulness teacher who wants to work with sceptical ‘at risk’ youth. When I say ‘hippie’, don't take that too seriously! I just mean people who are into things outside what's considered ‘mainstream’ (but times are changing as we'll see). By ‘normal people’, I just mean everyone else. I don't say this as a nasty, boxy division. I also include more sceptical groups (who may well be quite weird in their own ways – aren't we all weird really 😊?) Basically it's just a fun way of describing different client groups.



### Why bother?

I'm assuming you're like me – a values-driven ‘conscious’ person, into some cool stuff, that you want to share more widely with the world. If so, read on. First we might want to clarify why you'd like to work with ‘normal’ people anyway. On the next page are some reasons I do it that may also apply to you.

### @ **The love**

I really love what I do and want to get it to the world, especially to people who will suffer less as a result. I'm totally into what I do and want to share it with everyone!



### @ **The money**

Let's be honest – part of my motivation for working with corporate businesses over the years has been the money. In order to keep a roof over my head (and work for free with charity groups), getting paid £2000+ for a day's work rocks! The income also means I can do what I love professionally full time.



### @ **The challenge**

I enjoy the difficulties involved in bringing alternative work to the 'hardest' groups. I've deliberately sought-out groups I thought would be the biggest pain-in-the-arse for the challenge and to prove a point.



### @ **The world**

If the people with the money and therefore the power do not get their hearts, bodies and souls back we're all really, really screwed. A more holistic way of being has become vital to social justice, peace and the human race's survival.



### @ **We're all human**

I like to work with people. Any people. And executives, or soldiers, or whatever, are just as human as you and I. On this level I don't mind who I work with.



Being really honest about your motivations to work with 'normies' is vital to authentically connect with these groups, and to keep going when things gets difficult. If you want to earn a decent living doing what you love and helping people, I'd love to support you with this book.

## The challenge

If you're reading this, you may well have realised that it's not quite as easy as it seems. When teaching, say, Buddhist meditation in business, or dance at a community centre, all kinds of stuff can go wrong – and all kinds of stuff can be fixed to go better. So what could some of the issues be?

- 🌀 Getting through the door (getting the job in the first place)
- 🌀 Confidence (over-confidence / under-confidence)
- 🌀 Overcoming people's cynicism and getting them to try things
- 🌀 Speaking in a way that connects
- 🌀 Working with different boundaries, triggers and tolerances
- 🌀 Making what you're doing useful and relevant to people
- 🌀 Dealing with your own frustration, isolation and despair
- 🌀 Keeping aligned with your own values doing all the above

These are all addressed in this book, from my own experience over the years, and from that of colleagues (with thanks to everyone who's inputted, especially Francis Briers and Vilya Vilvovskaya from the Embodied Facilitator Course).

## Why listen to me?

I've been successfully bringing unusual 'embodied' practices into some of the most challenging mainstream environments for over ten years and in around thirty countries, working with everyone from large corporate groups (eg Unilever, Shell and L'Oreal), to the police and military units. I've also worked with other potentially 'tricky' audiences, such as with angry chefs, cheeky single mum groups, with humanitarian aid workers in war zones (eg Oxfam, Save the Children and Warchild, and in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone), with activists (eg Occupy and LGBTQ Moscow) and sceptical young people from inner cities in London and the slums of Brazil. I worked with the House of Lords and was the only guy without a tie in the room 😊 While these groups are diverse, what they have in common is that they don't suffer fools, and demand a pragmatic approach. I sometimes joke that my job is 'doing weird stuff with normal people', as I use tools from Buddhism, martial arts, yoga, dance, body therapy and more. (I'm a big fan of these things, I practice them daily and have done some of them for 20 years). However, I hold the normal/not normal thing very lightly and now, in many ways, I relate as much to the groups I teach as to the 'alternative' world that spawned me. The learning is coming full circle. For the last four years I've been teaching other hippies how to bring embodiment to mainstream groups through the freakin' awesome Embodied Facilitator Course, Embodied Yoga Principles and online through Purpose Black Belt.

[www.embodiedfacilitator.com](http://www.embodiedfacilitator.com)

[www.embodiedyogaprinciples.com](http://www.embodiedyogaprinciples.com)

[www.purposeblackbelt.com](http://www.purposeblackbelt.com)

## It's not the 60s!

This book is part of a wider cultural trend: that of **integrating** alternative movements concerning emotions, body and spirituality into the mainstream. In the 60s and 70s there was a cultural trend of **differentiating** – where hippie counter culture developed and rejected mainstream values. After a swing back in the Regan and Thatcher 80s, the 90s children of the hippies (and more leading edge now-aged-hippies) started taking the work back into daily life: first into the arts, then business, then to public sectors like education. The likes of Richard Strozzi-Heckler doing embodied work with business and military, Jon Kabat-Zinn and the mindfulness revolution, emotional intelligence work from Daniel Goleman and the entire mainstream yoga renaissance are examples of this. Just in the decade since I've started teaching embodiment it's become MUCH easier to present in businesses. While this is partly because I've learnt what I'm now teaching in this book, it's also because the world has changed. Britain's most right-wing newspaper had a 10-page article on meditation; the US military has used ideas from mindfulness and martial arts; Google regularly sponsor spiritual events (see Wisdom 2.0). Times have really changed and in some ways, the hippie/normal distinction is now pretty outdated.

Of course, all this reintegration is not without risk. It's possible to become a capitalist sell-out, or to present oneself with a spiritual veneer whilst using yoga to propagate body-shame (look up 'yoga whoring' for more examples). One risk is that the really serious practitioners are left behind. Recently I was at a coaching conference where someone who'd meditated for less than three months was teaching a workshop on mindfulness. At one time, all the embodied leadership teachers worldwide had martial arts black belts; now many have just done a few weekend workshops. It's my hope that with things like this book and EFC (our trainer course), people with real depth of practice can continue the integration so we can avoid watering down. In generally, though, the integration trend is positive and evolutionary.



## So... how to work with 'normies'

While your own background is unique, and every group you work with different, there are some general principles that help hippies work with normies. These principles will need to be adapted to your context, and many of the skills need to be practiced. The exercises I've included will help you reflect more deeply on how the principles relate to you specifically.

### Clean up your frame

Let's start with your overall perspective, as it's more fundamental than any tricks and tips. Often I see people from more alternative backgrounds bring a lot of baggage to working with mainstream groups which is quickly (consciously or unconsciously) picked up. This psychological baggage creates a disconnect and can also lead to self sabotage. Here are my tips for unfucking yourself so you can really serve people:

#### ☉ Deal with your shadow

Often mainstream groups can represent disowned parts of ourselves. This is why they can seem so 'other'. For example, people project their disowned greed and power urges onto business folk. Even the urge for success can be made 'bad' and repressed in alternative communities. If we, as alternative practitioners, don't do the necessary internal work (especially therapy) to renounce in ourselves the parts of mainstream culture we've moved away from, it can come out in all kinds of unhealthy ways – from aggression to infatuation. The journey this book concerns can be form of shadow work itself; it was for me and many others I know.



#### ☉ See what you have in common

While it's easy to go into 'us and them' mode (this book's title is a parody of that) I try to notice what I have in common with the group I'm working with. Yes, they may be executives or whatever – and we're all human. Even really unlikely people share at least some of your values and life experiences, if you see past the 'packaging'. This is helpful for connecting with groups of all kinds and also helps you relax as a facilitator.

### @ **Let go of your arrogance**

Pity or contempt will kill any connection with people you'd like to serve. Sadly many of us in alternative communities, myself included, are prone to arrogance. There's often a kind of hubris that comes with the spiritual path, and hey, if we don't think it makes us better people why bother?! I find seeing things in terms of differing skill-sets and types of intelligence more helpful than the spiritual/not spiritual frame. I will be explicit about this, for example, "You guys are much better than me with numbers and I would never tell you how to do your job. What I'm good at is managing stress and I'd like to teach you about that." It's also worth acknowledging that you'll never really know what it's like to be the people you're teaching, and that's ok. Often fake humility can become a habit in spiritual paths, so it's worth observing how this plays out for you.

### @ **Let go of your insecurity**

The opposite of arrogance is insecurity. If you're working with, say, a bank, you're there for a reason and your skills are valued. Why would they get you in if not?! Knowing 'what you bring to the party' and taking pride in this is very helpful. It will also stop you over-compensating with fake superiority. You have a skill that's not common. Own that and share the love. If you're struggling with this, keep a folder with all the positive feedback you've received and look at it when needed. I'll come back to this topic at the end of the book. Being in a good place on the scale between arrogance and insecurity is called 'right-sized' in twelve-step addiction recovery work. And be aware that it's possible to have both a big ego and low self-esteem!

#### **Exercise**

Discuss with two friends (one hippie and one normie) which of these you may need to look at further. Remember we can be blind to our own shadow (and our brilliance).

Play this game too:

**Who's the most spiritual?**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AchiEHRgHA&t=19s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AchiEHRgHA&t=19s)

## A special note on 'money shadow'

Once I had a really good massage at a yoga festival. After receiving it, the masseuse started panicking as she hadn't agreed a price with me first (schoolgirl error). She started 'bartering', suggesting lower and lower prices before I could say a word. It was an awkward end to a massage, and I was happy to pay her a much higher rate than what she asked.

I've also had yoga teachers show up to workshops with no money and try to trade / say they'll pay me later; and people on by-donation trainings say they loved it but not leave a penny (despite coming with the expensive smoothies, coffee and snacks for themselves).

I've seen greed in meditation and anti-capitalist communities to match anything on Wall Street, and poverty mindsets keeping people poor despite having the skills to make serious money. After years of taking broke hippie friends for coffee and teaching them the basics of ethical marketing and money shadow work, I've invented an online course to help people with this. It's called Purpose Black Belt and includes free YouTube videos on money and marketing (see link at the end of this book).



## Ethics

In order to be fully committed to working with people, it's important to know where you draw the line with clients. For example, many of us are concerned by the excesses and amorality of the corporate world – and we also recognise that people in businesses are not all evil. So what kinds of businesses do we want to work with? Are major energy companies or banks too far gone... or is it a case of 'a sick man that requires a doctor'? Does it depend on the type of work you'll do with them? (I have a distinction between efficiency-raising and truly transformative work.) What are your guiding ethical principles – do you have a spiritual or professional ethical code (I follow a Buddhist one)? Would a key orientating question help? (For example: 'Is it kind?' 'How will this effect five generations?' 'Who wins most?') Do you have a community of peers to guide you? Do you have any 'hard lines' about industries you won't work in? (I won't work with organisations like tobacco and arms manufacturers whose core business is unlikely to change.) Are any countries like Israel or Saudi Arabia off your client list?

How will you stay ethical when tempted? As you make more and more money in business, you might find yourself tempted to take work you wouldn't have considered at the outset. What are your checks, balances, communities of challenge, mentors? Get this clear before you go into a sales meeting with BP, Barclays or whoever. Being a good person alone is not good enough.



### Exercise

What are your guiding ethical principles and hard lines? Get these clear, write them on a piece of paper and put it on a wall. Add what your procedure is when you hit an ethical dilemma. Mine is 'pause, breathe, call Francis Briers and Paul Linden' (a trusted colleague and my mentor).

## So what? – Addressing your client's concerns

Let's cut to the chase. Nobody gives a shit about your favourite thing. Sorry. Your AcroYoga, 5 Rhythms, chakra-reiki or whatever, isn't in itself interesting to people (at least not yet). But what *is* interesting is what it can do for them. Find out people's concerns, and help them apply what you're doing to their actual lives. **Make it relevant and practical.**

To sell any kind of course you'll need to relate to the client's interests. They want real results for their real lives. What is the benefit of what you do? How will you improve their lives? What problem do you solve? Similarly, when leading a course, have a clear aim that matters to people for each exercise. People will try all kinds of weird shit if they have a good reason that links to their values. I 'got away with' teaching police to meditate because I gave them compelling reasons linked to their work and families. To state a clear aim, you need to be ultra clear about the point of what you do. If you're used to just being in the love and flow of it, it might be unfamiliar to frame it in terms of goal and outcome focus. It's worth being able to shift into this mode. For example, yoga classes can be different things to different people (avoid this cop out phrase, please) – so what are you trying to achieve with a 30 minute de-stress class after work? Most likely it's relaxation and letting go of work for a better family life, rather than athleticism, right? Ask yourself why someone is giving you their time and money. Note that for busy corporate types, their time may be the real investment, not the money. They won't easily forgive you for wasting it with self-indulgent waffle, superstition and irrelevant activities you happen to like.

This awareness of the value of what you do for customers is the essence of marketing. (If that made you gag, do more shadow work 😊). Pay full attention to this part and talk it over with friends. Ask clients what they get from your work (it's sometimes surprising). Make a list of the key benefits. To get a booking with a major business you need to be clear about the benefits – and what these are for different people in the organisation (eg how will it serve the HR manager who books you? How will it benefit the Managing Director he reports too? What about the participants in the workshop who have different priorities?) Think about how you'll come into contact with your potential customers – online, at conferences, via introductions, etc. If you have a clear offer and are meeting the right people you will have a viable business – simple.

Have a look at Tad Hargrave's awesome and super-useful videos and website 'Marketing for Hippies' (who partly inspired this book's title), Julia Chanteray's 'The Joy of Business' and Seth Godin's blog for more on ethical marketing. Remember: **make it relevant and practical.**

[www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk](http://www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk)

[www.marketingforhippies.com](http://www.marketingforhippies.com)

[www.sethgodin.com](http://www.sethgodin.com)

### Exercise

How can your work benefit normal people? What is the aim of your work? Be clear and concise. What problem do you solve for people? Which people in particular? This is your target audience.

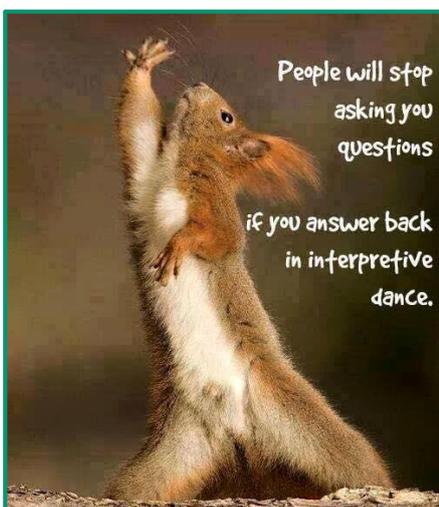
## Non-attachment and the empathy shift

As hippies we can be really into our favourite thing. The shift in working with anyone effectively – from other kinds of hippies to more mainstream folks – is putting their needs at the centre of the work, not our beloved whatever. Now, if you're a geek like me (I started as a very big aikido geek) that can be hard. We're all a little bit autistic around our obsession. And it really pays to do this. I think of this empathy shift as a spiritual practice in and of itself, as well as the essence of good business. There's a significant perspective shift here that I'll come back to later: taking your work to normies need not be a compromise of depth practices like empathy, but a way to enhance them.

Similarly, it's helpful to have a range of tools you can work with. For example, a client might not take to visualisation (this is often a corporate turn-off). So not being attached to your usual method or props is helpful. Can you do yoga without mats and on chairs? Can you do martial arts techniques without special clothes? Can you give a shiatsu massage in ten minutes instead of your preferred hour? This flexibility to let go of our practice provincialism is a profound practice itself, and requires we know our art deeply to separate form from essence. Much of what follows, for example in regards to language, is about this practice of non-attachment. Hey, we're hippies, we're great at that right? 😊 Again, the normie-adaptation becomes a depth path itself.

### Exercise

What are you a total geek about?  
What might you be a little too attached to? In what ways do you get uptight about your thing?



### **The '20% weirder' rule**

I'm giving you some helpful ways to work in mainstream environments... and most likely, you won't ever totally fit in. In fact, trying to fit in 100% will just make you seem inauthentic. You're there to be (a bit) different. As a rule of thumb, you can be 20% weirder than whoever you're working with (this actual figure is of course, made up... you get the idea). You can be stranger in how you dress, speak, behave – that's fine – just not too much. Thanks to my wonderfully weird EFC colleague Francis Briers for this one: he's a real master at fitting in without selling out.

### **'Time' rant**

NEVER SAY YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME. It's common in corporate environments for things to be more rushed than you're used to, and it's tempting to complain about this. Don't. It makes you, and the person who commissioned you, look bad. It's a pet hate of mine; sometimes trainers on courses I run do this and I then don't rebook them. Similarly, if you are being asked to do something in a time frame you can't deliver on, SAY NO. There's dignity and integrity in this and you'll be respected for it.

### **Hippie ninjutsu**

When I first started my embodied training business, I literally had no idea how people spoke in companies, what they were interested in, what their concerns were... I knew nothing about the weird world I wanted to sell to! I'd just never really had a normal job or cared about that stuff. I lived in Brighton, FFS (it's a bit like Boulder, or Bryon Bay, or Ubudd). So I went undercover to study my clients. I got a desk in my mate's company and listened. I subscribed to HR Magazine and I learnt about such mysteries as 'KPIs', 'ROIs' and 'employee engagement'. I collared my conservative cousin at family get-togethers. And I learnt. This is the way of the hippie ninja. To teach the normal, you must become the normal... ok, not fully, don't worry, but study them at least.

## Making your chakras palatable

Here are a few more general tips for presenting what you do in a way that won't generate a normie 'immune response'

### 🕒 Use familiar formats

A lot of this book is about encouraging you to be as familiar as possible to clients where it doesn't matter, so you can be different where it does. An example is beginning a talk on, say, quantum crystal healing with PowerPoint. A spoonful of bland helps the rainbow go down.

### 🕒 Champions

If you've got in the door it's probably because someone in the organisation believes in you. Look after this champion; they're most likely taking a risk on you; thank them. Learn from them about company culture and language; get them to make your work accessible by giving examples, since they're expert in the group you're working with and the best bridge to your work. My champions are often visionary CEOs or beleaguered HR managers who secretly do yoga and are worn down by being more emotionally intelligent than people around them.

### 🕒 Demos (experiential evidence)

I often start workshops by saying, "Don't believe a word I say". Clients like this as I'm not asking them to join a religion – simply to have the minimal trust to try things. Similarly I may say, "Be sceptical but not cynical. What's the difference?" – to encourage them to try things and get 'buy in'. The 'sale' doesn't stop once you're in the door; you need to keep it up throughout.

### The foreign culture viewpoint

One way of looking at working in a mainstream context is to think of it as visiting another country. You're learning and adapting to a new culture, while keeping your own core beliefs and knowing that you're a visitor. I like this frame as I've travelled a lot, and it helps me be non-judgemental of the differences I see, and readily adaptable without too much ego. When in Rome... and all that.

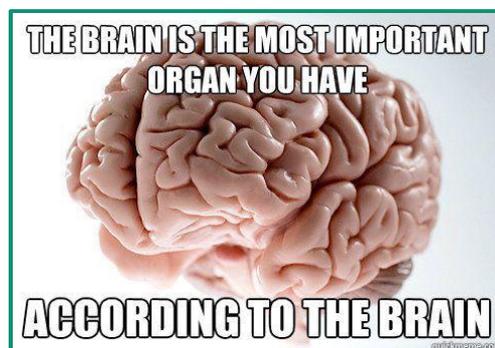
## @ Make it safe

If a normie is trying your crazy hippie shit they're being brave. It's actually a very vulnerable thing for someone to try something new, where there's a possibility they might make a fool of themselves or get upset.

Acknowledge that emotions, the body and spirituality can be scary for those new to these areas. This can be particularly the case in the workplace where people's livelihoods are on the line and bosses may be present. Making sure people have choice to be there (I make it clear this is essential when I have initial conversations about the booking). Give permission for people to choose whether they participate in particular exercises. Check everyone in the workshop agrees to confidentiality – and think about whether you might need to cover any windows in the training room so people can't see in from outside. Make things as emotionally safe as possible for people.

## @ Science

Normies love a bit of science. First up, stop talking new-age bollocks: fact-check what your yoga teacher told you about twists 'detoxifying' your liver or whatever (read the book *Exposing Yoga Myths*). Get to grips with the relevant research on your topic – for example, there's loads of good stuff on mindfulness now. And be careful: presenting a slide with a coloured blob on a brain while mentioning the great new god of neuroscience may look good, but be humble and acknowledge you're not an expert (if there's a real expert in the room you'll look a muppet: blaggers are easy to spot). You can also simply 'lean into' this way of looking at the world, for example by stressing anatomy in a yoga class or mentioning police self defence data as a martial artist.



### Videos

The science of embodiment:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qx0mrAqgh1s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qx0mrAqgh1s)

## Language

Unless you can speak to the normies in a way that makes sense to them, it doesn't matter how good you are at what you do. I've made a living for the last 10 years as a 'translator' of embodied work into a business setting. The current mindfulness movement is a successful translation of Buddhism (or 'Buddhism-lite') into workplaces and schools. It's often the best translator, not the best meditator or yogi, who is most successful ('Head Space' apps are a great example of this). So speak normal, freak!

### @ **Relate to people's concerns; have a clear aim for what you do**

As discussed earlier, say what the point of your work is as it relates to your client's needs. Keep re-establishing commitment by linking your work to what matters to them. I do this with each new exercise I introduce. You can also get them to make the link, eg, "Where do you experience stress in your life? ... You say with your suppliers? Here's a tool that could help with that" This last technique is called a 'hook'. After teaching something, I ask people where they could apply it – I call this the 'catch'. Remind people whatever weird thing they just did has real life value.

### @ **Kill your unicorns**

'Unicorns' are hippie jargon words not used in mainstream culture that are at best incomprehensible to most people and at worst a real turn-off. Even one such word can turn a whole audience from open, interested people to closed doors. Alternative subcultures have developed their own jargon and ways of speaking, which can be unintelligible or even repulsive to people outside that subculture. On the other hand, jargon can be used to make alternative teachers seem more special – while creating a barrier to actual learning. My students hunt and kill phrases like: 'energy', 'drop into', and 'holding space'. We playfully call these 'unicorns'. If in doubt, ask yourself: would this phrase appear in a conservative newspaper? Would my right-wing uncle use it? Sometimes these words can be a useful shorthand for real things; other times you get the added benefit of realising you're actually talking bollocks when you cut them out 😊 I can be guilty of this too. I was coaching someone on the phone and I said, "What kind of space are you in today, man?" (Like a big hippie.) He replied, "In a room, Mark" – obviously not knowing I was referring to his emotional state!

#### **Exercise**

What are some of your unicorns? It's possible to be really blind to them, so get someone normal look through your website or flyer, or hear your 'elevator pitch', to spot them.



## 📍 **Get operational**

When you give instructions for an exercise, state the method, not a metaphor or a potential result. Tell people exactly **how** to do what you're asking. For example, say, "Bring your attention to the physical sensation of breath entering the nose", rather than, "Empty your mind". Do not tell people to, "Extend their energy to the corners of the universe" or whatever, even if this makes sense to you. If in doubt, check your instructions with a 10-year-old who isn't afraid to tell you when you make no sense. This sounds simple – and is surprisingly hard to do. Just taking this tip fully on board will make your work massively more accessible. And, half-jokingly – knowing this will now ruin your enjoyment of 9 out of 10 yoga classes 😞

## 📍 **Use familiar metaphors and examples**

Connect the weird thing you're doing to familiar examples people can relate to – for example, "I'm going to teach you what's called a centring technique. It's from martial arts. You'll also see sports people do similar things. You could use this when you're in a stressful meeting." Or perhaps, "It's like driving: you have to practice, not just talk about it". Before running a course, remember to do your homework to find examples that immediately make sense to them (or get your 'champions' inside the organisation to help).

## 📍 **Stop swearing, you bastard**

This is my Achilles heel. In many mainstream environments people really don't like swearing. In some workplaces you can just about get away with '15 certificate movie' stuff, so the odd 'bullshit' is fine – even welcomed – but some things you just don't say. I rarely go full C-bomb unless I really want to upset people. More generally, manners can be much more important in some environments than you may be used to; expect to be more formal.

### **Exercise**

Record yourself teach a class, give a consultation, or whatever, then go through it with a friend and spot all the non-operational language. Do it a second time a month later after practicing and pay your friend £10 for every time you slip up on the second time around.

### **'Just' rant**

This one is a plague. I've seen multiple EFC exams where students used this word literally dozens of times in 30 minutes. It's a hippie verbal tic, and I regularly go nuts in yoga classes because of this. "Just breath." "Just extend your energy." "Just do a one-armed handstand." It's annoying because it suggests something is easy, when (for your normies especially) things might not be. It can also sound passive aggressive because it comes across as "I'm only asking a small thing and you'd be unreasonable not to do it". So JUST stop it, please, for the love of your non-existent yoga gods.

## Pricing

Given that mainstream environments have loads of money... ok, careful with that shadow, some companies do, some don't... how much do you charge? The basic answer is AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, this is capitalism baby! You can, of course, then decide to make things more accessible.

The key here is to establish perceived value – making sure people know the awesome benefits your work brings, and linking this to things such as their key organisational results and 'return on investment' (ROI – this means what financial benefit they get further down the line as a result of the initial outlay). For example, to build the perceived ROI of a stress workshop I'll discuss employee engagement and discretionary effort (extra shit happy people do free), reduced error rate (happy people screw up less) and increased staff retention (fewer people quit). Check out my business jargon, I had to learn all that!



Note that whoever wants to book you may just love your stuff and want to help people, but they still need to 'sell' the idea internally, and if they have shareholders, they can't legally do something just because it's nice. Another answer to the pricing question is to look at competitors and similar services for comparison. Other tips:

- 🕒 Get them to suggest a price first (basic rule of bartering).
- 🕒 Say what sounds like quite a lot. If they say yes immediately without wincing, ask for more with the next client.
- 🕒 Price depends on who you're working with (with very senior people it can be crazy high) and who is holding the purse strings. Make sure you know who this is, plus any other factors like if they have a budget they have to spend this quarter.
- 🕒 See this video on pricing coaching as there's often internal work around this.  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R6OcmWcolU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R6OcmWcolU)

## Your embodiment

Stop floating and flowing hippie! It's not just what you do and say, but how you do it that matters. A facilitator's embodiment (bodily way of being and moving) can undermine their message. Let's use the 'four elements' model to illustrate (earth, water, air, fire): it's a simple model people can usually get their head around quickly. To generalise, I see people from 'alternative' contexts demonstrating too much water and air (soft, flowy, floaty) – and not enough earth and fire (not being firm, organised or direct enough). This can prevent them connecting with mainstream groups. You don't need to know much about embodiment to get the idea; just think of the biggest new-age flake you know – that's what *not* to do! Martial artists and yoga people have an advantage of over freeform dancers and improv folks in this regard, as their embodiments may well be closer to mainstream ones. Being relaxed yet firm is good, and not as expressive as you would on a Burning Man dance floor.

## Exercise

Get a friend to copy your walk and stance. Pick someone you trust – and explain it's about self awareness, not mocking. Take a good look at 'yourself'. Would you buy from this person? Would you trust this person, if you were a normie? What do you think of them more generally?

## Your word really matters

Be reliable, FFS. Do what you say. Simple eh? Really, 100%, **do what you say you will**. Particularly, be on time (and that means a few minutes early) and be impeccable with your promises. This is a big deal in many mainstream subcultures. Personal responsibility, taken to what may seem like uptight extremes, will go a long way. Make no excuses, ever: they don't care about your childcare, the traffic and certainly not Mercury being in bloody retrograde. Did I mention be on time? Be on time. Be on time. One more thing... be the fuck on time 😊

## Videos

Introduction to embodiment: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3yuDEihmE0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3yuDEihmE0)

Four elements model: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UN5Fnwucso](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UN5Fnwucso)

Personal responsibility: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyfe2SViihA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyfe2SViihA)

## Boundaries

Depending on where you stand, hippies tend to have overly loose boundaries, or normies tend to have overly tight boundaries. Whatever... the boundaries are different, so be aware of them.

### @ Touch

After spending some time studying aikido and meditation in California I once got in trouble with a British company for hugging people. Many mainstream environments are FAR less touchy than alternative ones. Some businesses literally have zero-touch rules after legal cases. Handshakes are usually fine; make sure yours isn't too floppy or prolonged, and stop making so much eye contact, you weirdo! As with all these areas, do what people there do...

### @ Hierarchy

Many businesses and government organisations are far more hierarchical than you may be used to. This can be subtle (and even denied), but do watch how you relate to the CEO or someone in a similar role. She's not your mate even if she's friendly! Norms such as who speaks first, where people sit etc can be related to hierarchy and you must respect these if you want to get invited back.

### @ Politics

All depth work is political, but you don't have to be explicit about this or try to make everyone subscribe to your views.

### @ Feelings

In mainstream contexts, people tend to be less comfortable talking about their emotions. They may even fear emotional expression as dangerous. If you tend to cry a lot or want to talk about your feelings, know this may not be welcome. Saying this, a good manager or sales person is often an excellent 'people-person'.

### @ Over-sharing

Your clients may have more 'work / life' boundaries than you're used to and not want to hear about your health issues, kids (though this can be a nice point of connection), spiritual dilemmas, sex life, etc. Follow your client's lead.

### @ Sex

Talking about sex is still very taboo in many businesses. If it's important to bring up the topic of sex in your workshop, do so with great care.

### @ Equality & diversity

Especially in the USA, Scandinavia and some others places, know that gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc can be hyper sensitive areas in organisations.

### Exercise

Hang out with some normies who aren't your clients. See if you can make them mildly uncomfortable. Notice when you accidentally do this. Have fun.

## Dress the part

When in Rome, chuck on a toga. You can still be you (in fact, being 20% weirder than your clients is a plus), but don't wear tie-dye. As the saying goes, sticking feathers up your butt does not make you a chicken (see the film *Fight Club* if you're wondering...) But it will help you blend in enough to open people's ears. Buy a half decent, well-fitting suit or similar, and some quality shoes. People will judge you on your shoes. One set of good, corporate-friendly clothes doesn't have to cost the earth and will last (I wore one suit and pair of shoes for six years). Get a conservative friend to take you shopping. If you live in the UK, clothes from M&S are fine and reasonably ethical. When you're really well known, you can get away with non-conformity as a sign of status, but don't push this unless you're a really big deal or being billed as exotic. These days I enjoy wearing my suit, and I like taking it off after work to shifts modes (hippie chicks dig it too, but that's another e-book).



Ok, maybe not quite like that...

## Remember what you bring to the party

With all this 'trying to blend in', sometimes people forget that they've been brought into such places precisely because they're different or have different skills. Yes, adapt and accommodate, but not when it comes to key values. Own the 'awesome' you have that they need. If you didn't have unusual skills you wouldn't be invited in. If mainstream society has it all figured out, why are so many alternative things catching on?

### Exercise

List ten things you can contribute to the mainstream world. Mention general attributes, eg 'kindness', and specific skills like 'I can teach deep breathing for relaxation'.

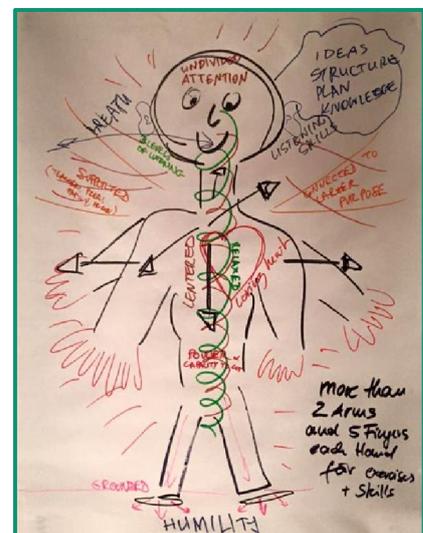
## Dealing with frustration, isolation and despair

If you're successful in getting a lot of work in mainstream environments you're going to get some new problems... yeah! One of the main ones I've experienced is a sense of loneliness and isolation. Being the only freak in the room can be draining, no matter how much you can see shared humanity. It's really important that as well as doing this work you make time for being in communities where you don't have to 'manage appearances', to hang out with your tribe and people that just get you without translation. If you don't do this you will become drained and may suffer cynicism, burnout and despair. When I find myself thinking, "I just told you this, dumb arse, what's wrong with these people!" It's time for a retreat, festival, dinner with old friends, or other community recharge.

More mundanely perhaps, a lack of good vegetarian food, being worn down by soulless corporate hotels, ugly strip-lighting in offices etc are all factors that – to some extent – can be mediated by good planning and creativity (for example, a rolled up hotel towel makes a good meditation cushion). And these things can also take their toll. Knowing what you give up to, say, stay in a five star hotel on a business trip may not be immediately obvious, but believe me, it can be a lot and you'll have to ask yourself if the price is worth it. Personally, I really like a certain amount of corporate work and have cut down on international business travel because of these factors.

## What you can learn from the normies

Any good cultural exchange goes both ways. One thing I dramatically underestimated was how much I'd learn from my work in business. Many of the things discussed, such as firming up a sense of personal responsibility and the empathic basis of good marketing, have fed back into my practices and changed me positively as a person. What started off as a translation has become a deeply satisfying conversation, and a profound practice itself. What was initially a way to help more people and make more money, has become a core spiritual practice, and I invite you to look for this possibility.



## Taking your learning further

For a much fuller training in working with the body in business, take a look at the Embodied Facilitator Course. We've been successfully teaching alternative people to work in mainstream settings for some years in London and Moscow. There are lots of free videos and another e-book on the website if you'd like a taste – see the link opposite. We also have a course on finding and making a living from your purpose for a wider audience: Purpose Black Belt.

### Further learning

Embodied Facilitator Course:  
[www.embodiedfacilitator.com](http://www.embodiedfacilitator.com)

Making a living from your purpose:  
[www.purposeblackbelt.com](http://www.purposeblackbelt.com)

My business website:  
[www.integrationtraining.co.uk](http://www.integrationtraining.co.uk)

### Video resources

Our YouTube channel (Integration Training & Embodied Facilitator Course) has about 10 million hits and many videos on themes related to this book: do subscribe if you find the videos helpful.

**Mistakes to avoid:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqyWtNnXRyo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqyWtNnXRyo)

**Are you a spiritual wanker?** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbF6k9iQj2c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbF6k9iQj2c)

**Why money is spiritual:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuWU6n1Tdlw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuWU6n1Tdlw)

**Money mindfulness:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFQtUuokYCO](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFQtUuokYCO)

**Top marketing tips:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhluHmxH9KY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhluHmxH9KY)

**Actual business presentation:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FocbzSag7gg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FocbzSag7gg)

**Embodied work with organisations:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeP7Bo9R5q4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeP7Bo9R5q4)

**Business jargon piss take:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MFUE0KgoEQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MFUE0KgoEQ)

**Business meditation:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz-Lfpcefu4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz-Lfpcefu4)

**Critical look at 'spiritual' culture:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgjUa5bVHKA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgjUa5bVHKA)

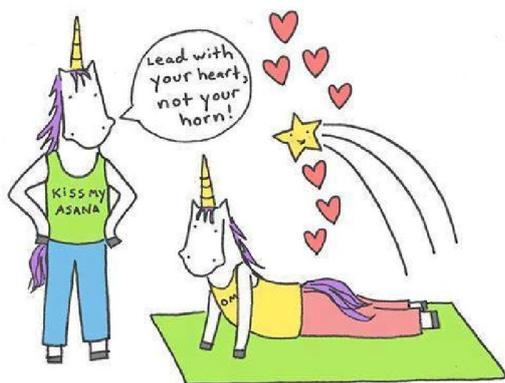
**Slideshow for HR managers:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ2B46PGsGc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQ2B46PGsGc)

## Conclusion

The world really needs to get its heart, body and soul back, and the alternative arts can really help. So let's not let our attachments get in the way of that message – it's too late in the day. Let's also not get in the way of earning a decent living doing this.

I hope this introduction saves you some time and tears, so you don't need to work it out the hard way as I did. If I've been overly harsh at times forgive me – I really care about this work. It's also an ongoing conversation, so track me down on social media to dialogue. Much of the areas spoken about involve practice and can take some time, like learning a new language, so don't worry if you don't get it spot on straight away. Make mistakes, be human, learn, repeat, grow, play, serve, enjoy.

All the best from hippie Brighton,  
Mark



## Note of thanks

So I didn't just pull all this out of my butt. Business mentors Tom Hume, Julia Chanteray and Lynne Sedgmore have been critical to my professional learning. The whole EFC community, especially Francis Briers and Alexandra Vilvovskaya, have been vital. Paul Linden taught me to be lovingly rational; Richard Strozzi-Heckler and Wendy Palmer, who lead the way with embodied business, inspired me to be successful. My thanks to Lance Giroux for sitting me in front of Joseph Campbell when I was lost, to Facebook and YouTube for helping me reach out, and to Don Levine and my mother for believing in me when common-sense was counter-indicatory many times. Thank you all.

