

Welcome to The Possibility Fellowship 2022

A 12-week course in reimagining possibilities — for you, others and the world

Saturday, 3 September to Sunday, 27 November 2022
The Platform, Level 3, 256 Adelaide Terrace (cnr Victoria Avenue)

Is this course for you?

This course is aimed at several groups of people:

1. Individuals who have first hand experience of barriers to participation and are working towards community belonging and inclusion for themselves and people they care about.
2. People who work with, support and care for disadvantaged individuals and groups.
3. Leaders, change makers, community connectors and organisers, activists, scholars, social entrepreneurs and others who are working towards the common good, social justice and a better society for all Australians.

If you are in any of the three groups above and you have a new or reimagined idea that you would like to incubate into a living project, this course could be ideal for you.

Our focus is on you—your stories, gifts and passions—what lights your fire.

- Over 12 weeks, we invite you to imagine and develop your own project or undertaking, collaborating with one or more of your fellow participants, or working solo alongside your fellows, sharing inspiration and learnings.
- Finally, we invite you to share a window into your project at your graduation celebration.

A radically different approach to living systems

This course is a story-filled exploration of what's possible for you, your group and your communities. It's theoretically and creatively rich as well as highly practical. Some of your presumptions might be challenged, and you might be stretched. The course is personal, interactive, and a little wild. There's a danger you could become more cheerful, exuberant and want to dance.

Whatever gives your life meaning and purpose, however you are contributing to the world, whatever new endeavours may be incubating

in your mind, this course aims to give you more clarity, energy and joy—so you can make a difference that makes a difference. Join us on a journey to light up your creativity and, through the surprising perspectives that this course offers, discover new aspects of who and how you are. This work, both profound and playful, kindles renewed vigour and well-grounded hope.

The course offers a different approach to systemic change that is rooted in the meeting of ancient wisdom and modern science. The name, *The Possibility Fellowship*, is significant. Recent anthropological and brain research has unearthed an expanded range of possibilities for humanity. These insights echo the wisdom of our First Peoples, which colonialism has largely obscured. The course is offered in a spirit of fellowship—meaning respect, appreciation, personal sharing and mutual learning.

Whether you think of yourself as a leader, emerging leader, change maker, grass roots activist, or as an ordinary citizen who longs to make a meaningful contribution, this course may open or develop delightful pathways for you and others you relate with.

Our intention is to create a genuinely inclusive space for a diverse range of ‘possibility enthusiasts’ to romp in. If you are uncertain whether this course is for you, or have special needs for accessibility, please reach out to Peter or Nicola for a chat. If finances are a barrier, we have a range of discounts, bursaries and even the possibility of offering some other in-kind contribution that reflects your deep commitment and passion to make the most of this opportunity to grow your own project.

Themes explored in this course

Big questions: Who are we and why are we here? We think it’s important to ask these questions because the meaning of everything we think, feel and do flows from how we answer them. Although this is not a philosophy course, we do invite you to reflect on such questions.

Human origin stories and brain research: Every culture learns and passes on stories about human beginnings, how civilization developed, and why we are the way we are. Living systems—including you, me, families, institutions, nations—do whatever they can to survive. Dominant stories or myths tend to perpetuate the *status quo*. Recent scholarship in archaeology, anthropology and neurology reveals new stories and vastly expanded possibilities for humanity and other life forms. In this course we briefly consider new origin stories and brain discoveries and their implications for a better world.

A different approach to systems thinking: All living forms, from the tiniest bacteria to the giant Antarctic blue whale, are not just interconnected like the parts of a motor car, they are interdependent, like the organs,

tissues and microbiome of our bodies. We live in a world of relationships, not things. “The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature works and the way people think” (Gregory Bateson). What does that mean, and, if it’s true, can we learn to think differently?

Embracing story and storytelling: People remember stories and forget abstract ideas. Shaping meaningful experiences from your life, and/or from folk tales and ancient myths, into stories to inspire, connect and transform is magical and real. Throughout the course you will get practice in developing and telling your own stories. Experience how improvisation, ritual, movement, music, games, creative writing, art and craft, and connecting with nature can enhance your performance and your life.

Exploring your “core gift”: Your core gift is your unique offering to share with others. It is a key to a fulfilling and meaningful life. Your core gift is strengthened by your life experiences, including challenges you’ve lived through. Knowing your core gift focuses your sense of purpose and wellbeing and guides your decision making, enabling you to help others in ways that nourish and inspire both you and them. You may like to book a [Core Gift Interview](#) with Nicola or another certified Master Facilitator (not included in course fees).

Social entrepreneurship and redefining success: We explore how to do good, and not just well, in a commercial, industrialised world. According to Emerson, the famous American essayist, success is “to laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded!”

Bringing forth your creative project: This course aims to nourish your project, whether it be a seed, seedling or established plant—either revitalising an undertaking you are already engaged with or starting afresh with something you want to explore and incubate. The course is a crucible in which, supported by your experiences and by the group, something uniquely yours can be invented or developed. The crucible fire of creation can also be a place or occasion of test or trial.

Background and Context

There’s an old French saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” This statement is a paradoxical truth whenever change is adaptation that enables the *status quo* to continue. Do you find it alarming that despite dazzling advances in science and technology, together with massively increased government spending in education,

health, law, and many other areas, the quality of life is worsening for many people?

Fraud and corruption, a widening gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, an increasing struggle to make ends meet, are just some of the markers of decreasing wellbeing and happiness for many citizens of the Western world including Australia. All this despite increasing economic growth and consumption. While our political and corporate leaders talk about progress with much optimism, humanity seems to be heading towards more suffering, crisis upon crisis and system collapse. Even major disruptive changes, such as the Global Financial Crisis, the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine, may not affect reality on a deeper level other than to reinforce the prevailing global culture.

On the other hand, as cracks emerge in everything and “that’s how the light gets in” (Leonard Cohen), we see signs of renewal everywhere. This course confronts the challenge of navigating towards freedom and caring, for ourselves and each other, in a world that is ‘in chains’ and cruel.

Dark nights of the soul

If at times you have, like us, felt depressed and overwhelmed about yourself and the world, be reminded that in spiritual traditions our descent into darkness often precedes enlightenment. Both Peter and Nicola resonate with the feeling of being “lost and found in our brave new world”, and the sentiments expressed here by Margaret Wheatley:

Like all living systems, we first have to fall apart before we can figure out how to reorganize ourselves to fit the new environment...We need to feel despair that we cannot change the world. It is appropriate and essential that we do so...I know that energy, strength and confidence become available on the other side of despair. Having personally made this journey many times, abandoning my savior tendencies, I am eager for you to discover this place as well. It saddens me to see how many are still locked down by the belief that if they just work a little harder, if they just collaborate better or build a better network, if they just develop a new approach, they’ll turn the world around...

Let’s fully face the brave new world that has emerged and put down our boulder [referring to The Myth of Sisyphus]—the energy-destroying belief that we can change the world. Let us walk away from that mountain of despair-inducing failures and focus instead on the people in front of us, our colleagues, communities and families. Let us work together to embody the values that we treasure, and not worry about creating successful models that will transform other people. Let us focus on transforming ourselves to be little islands of good caring people, doing right work, assisting where we can, maintaining peace and sanity, people who have learned how to be gentle, decent, and brave as the dark ocean that has emerged continues to storm around us.

— from Margaret Wheatley’s *So Far From Home: Lost and Found in Our Brave New World*, and bestselling author of *Leadership and the New Science*

Course Leaders

The Possibility Fellowship is offered through Befriend and co-led by Peter and Nicola-Jane le Breton with other guest contributors. Both Nicola and Peter are Warm Data Lab hosts certified by the [International Bateson Institute](#) in Sweden.

The Possibility Fellowship is offered through [Befriend](#) and co-led by Peter and Nicola-Jane le Breton. Peter has experience in business, government and academia. He is passionate about social justice, freedom and human potential. He has a PhD in Transformative Studies from [California Institute of Integral Studies](#) and awards from Murdoch University and the Australian Government for outstanding contributions to student learning.

“Many times I have visited Peter’s classroom, usually to inform the students of a change in the program. Each time Peter’s classes have been a hive of activity, engagement, trust and connection.” — Megan Jaceglav, Unit-Coordinator, OnTrack, Murdoch University

“I realized that my dreams were in fact not mine. I felt empowered by you to reassess my goals for the future...Each week delivered me a new lesson in resilience and made me aware of how important a well-balanced psychological core is in getting the most out of life.”
— Danni Newman, OnTrack student

Nicola has a passion for nurturing authentic relationships and safe spaces in which people can open their hearts and minds and reflect together on what matters. She has Diplomas in Community Services and in Conservation & Land Management and is a graduate of [Storytelling Beyond Words](#), at Emerson College in the UK. She has Master Facilitator certification in the [Core Gift Discovery™](#) process.

“You have a great gift for facilitating, Nicola. The care and compassion you have for your participants is clear. I really appreciated your gentle, patient, persistent coaching of all our expressions of ourselves. It was a very safe and comfortable environment...” — Jeff Atkinson, Lawyer (participant in a 9-month oral storytelling program)

“I have been actively involved in Nicola’s community writing classes and training programmes for the last seven years. She listens to, guides and challenges people most capably. She invites and excites a group to go deeper as she sees the processes relating to her topic maturing and developing. I have found it a delight to be part of the invitation to the possibilities inherent in her rich sense of creative community.” — Adrienne Riddell B.A. (Psych) Grad Dip Counselling and Group Work

About Befriend

[Befriend](#) is an organisation on a mission to nurture strong and connected communities in which everyone feels valued and included. Our work includes

grassroots community building events, strategic consulting, courses and training programs. There are several strands to what we do:

- We work directly with individuals who want more social connection, especially those who identify as disadvantaged.
- We leverage our effectiveness by working with people and organisations who support those who are marginalised and may be struggling.
 - We support individuals who strive to be more effective community connectors, leaders and change agents.
 - We work towards system change and new stories that serve the common good.

Course Contributors

Other people with special experience and skills will contribute to the course.

- Melissa Min Harvey – President, [Storytelling Guild of Australia \(WA\)](#) & Founder at [Circa - Storytelling Workshops for Wellbeing](#)
- Rowena Coshan- Ritual Leader, [A Safe Place for Tears](#)
- Christian Mauri - Founder, [Family Tales](#), Warm Data Lab Host, storyteller sociologist & activist

Course Structure and Times

The course includes:

- An introductory weekend intensive to deep-dive into connecting and exploring who we are and our unique callings to contribute. Includes an introduction to living systems theory, oral storytelling and gift discovery.
- 5 face-to-face gatherings with tasks and creative activities to complete in your own time between gatherings. Fortnightly gatherings are on Saturday afternoons from lunch at noon till 4 pm and will include guest contributors. Bring your own lunch.
- One extended session for a shared ritual, mid-course, possibly on Saturday 15 October (date TBC), when we will all bring a plate of food to share for dinner (and start a bit later - after lunch).
- An invitation to meet with your small group (in person or online) between sessions for mutual support, learning and creative play. We recommend allowing at least two hours between each in-person gathering for your own creative project development.
- Occasional contact with Peter or Nicola by arrangement, as needed. Option to book a 2-hour Core Gift Interview with Nicola or another certified Master Facilitator (not incl in course fees).
- The final weekend gathering is a festive, end-of-course celebration. Graduates of The Possibility Fellowship share the fruits of their explorations and discoveries through dialogues, mini-workshops, storytelling, or in other creative ways. You will offer a window into your vision for inclusive community.

Gathering Dates

Session #	Day	Time	Mode	Format
1	Saturday, 3 September, 2022	9am-4pm	In person	Introductory Weekend
2	Sunday, 4 September, 2022	9am-4pm	In person	
3	Saturday, 17 September, 2022	12-4pm	In person	Gathering
4	Saturday, 1 October, 2022	12-4pm	In person	Gathering
5	Saturday, 15 October, 2022	12-4pm	In person	Gathering
6	Saturday, 29 October, 2022	12-8pm	In person	Gathering/Dinner
7	Saturday, 12 November, 2022	12-4pm	In person	Gathering
8	Friday, 25 November, 2022	7pm-8:30pm	In person	Festive Sharing
9	Saturday, 26 November, 2022	9am-5pm	In person	
10	Sunday, 27 November, 2022	9am-5pm	In person	

Gathering Format

Although the format of gatherings will vary, and there is overlapping and revisiting of content, we will typically:

- focus on a particular theme or related themes
- include writing, storytelling, contemplation and creative arts
- include small group activities, such as dialogue and 'Appreciative Inquiry'
- include games, movement and outdoor activities
- include regular 'covaluation' and reflective feedback for mutual learning

Between Gatherings

There will be activities and tasks between sessions. These will support your learning and creating so you reap maximum benefit from meetings and the overall course. How much time you allocate to exploring and creating between meetings is entirely up to you. We recommend at least two hours in the fortnight between each in-person gathering. You will also be encouraged to catch-up with your small group online or in person between sessions.

Venue

The Platform, Level 3, 256 Adelaide Terrace (cnr Victoria Avenue).
Easy access via public transport, plentiful weekend parking, close to amenities and parks.
Wheelchair accessible.

Expressions of Interest

If you are feeling called to The Fellowship, we invite you to...

- Register via our Humanitix event site for this program. You will receive an email with a link to an online Expression of Interest form.
- Submit The Possibility Fellowship 2022 online Expression of Interest form

by midnight Saturday 6 August.

- We may contact short-listed applicants to arrange a personal chat by Zoom or by phone to confirm our program is what you're looking for.
- Once you are invited to join The Fellowship, you can pay your nominated course fee, which will secure your place in the course.

About your Expression of Interest (EOI)

- We are also happy to receive verbal registrations by phone or by Zoom, during which we'll complete the form on your behalf.
- Or you can ask someone else to help you if writing and/or filling out online forms are not your gig.
- We suggest you keep your answers short and simple. Your EOI is just an opportunity for us to get to know you a little better.
- Your EOI is also an invitation for you to reflect on what matters to you and how this course might help you.
- Please feel free to include the name and contact details of a referee (someone who knows you well) if you would like us to chat with them about your passion to contribute to inclusive communities. Or you might like to invite them to join you for a chat with us to discover if this course is for you.

Invitations to join The Possibility Fellowship

We'd like to maintain an upper limit of 18 people in this Fellowship. Should we receive more EOIs than we have places available, we may take into consideration:

- the date we receive your application
- your passion to contribute to more inclusive communities
- how best we can support you with the Fellowship program
- the diversity of participants' backgrounds and project ideas

We are considering running another program in March-May 2023.

Course Fees - Sliding Scale

The full value (at cost) of the course is \$2,500 per participant. There are over 52 hours of group contact time spread over ten sessions. Four of the gatherings are all day sessions; five are half day sessions (with one possible extended session for a shared ritual); one is an evening session.

Occasional contact time with the course leaders is also available to participants between gatherings.

As this project is supported by Befriend and our funding partners, and as we are committed to being inclusive, we are able to offer subsidised fees and generous bursaries to enable community connectors and emerging leaders to attend who might not otherwise be able to do so (due to financial or other forms of disadvantage). A 90% bursary, for example, would equate to \$25 per session (for 4 full days, 5 half days and 1 evening).

In your Fellowship Expression of Interest, we ask you to offer an amount that is affordable, given your personal circumstances, and which also reflects the value you hope to receive from participating. We understand that making a financial (or in kind) commitment that feels significant for you is likely to correspond to your level of commitment and active participation in the program.

- \$2,500 - Full Fee
- \$1,750 - 30% discount
- \$1,000 - 60% discount
- \$500 - 80% bursary
- \$250 - 90% bursary

Please be assured that your fellowship application will *not* be affected by the amount you offer. We are looking for Possibility Fellows who are deeply committed to discovering and realising their own creative potential with a group of equally committed peers, so they can make a meaningful contribution towards more inclusive communities for the groups of people they most care about and feel connected to or identified with.

Enquiries

Peter le Breton | peter@befriend.org.au | 0427 483 113 (please text first)

Nicola-Jane le Breton | nicola@befriend.org.au | 0421 633 124 (please text first)

A little more about your course leaders...

Peter

- Working with the Australian Government in Port Moresby Peter showed that most indigenous Papua New Guineans were being socially disadvantaged by economic development.
- Peter wrote the Department of Urban and Regional Development submission to Professor Henderson's Poverty Inquiry in the 1970s, in which he argued that 'blaming the victim' and piecemeal reforms function to perpetuate poverty in Australia.

- Peter participated in [Down to Earth Confests](#) in Canberra, SA and WA, convened by Australia's maverick Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Jim Cairns. The purpose of these gatherings was to "shape alternatives" and "to be the self which one truly is".
- Peter was founder and Managing Director of Down to Earth Bookshop, a leading New Age bookstore in Australia, promoting mind food for the future.
- Peter managed a team of trainers in the ATO in WA, and he designed and facilitated training for tax officers across the nation on presentation skills and GST tax law.
- In Albany, WA, Peter trained and mentored small business owners under the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS). He also created and delivered *Joy of Business*, a popular program for designing, starting and developing small businesses.
- Peter completed an Ironman Triathlon at 61, and he earned his PhD at 70. His doctoral dissertation explored the farther reaches of human learning—the mindset and processes conducive to the pursuit of excellence and outstanding performance.
- Peter designed curricula and taught in Murdoch University's popular OnTrack program for six years where he is an Adjunct Associate Lecturer. He has wide-ranging [intellectual interests and publications](#), and he is a Warm Data Lab Host certified by the [International Bateson Institute](#) in Sweden.
- Currently, he is employed as a Thinking Partner and 'free range elder' with [Befriend](#), a non-profit organisation in service of social inclusion and community transformation.

"I appreciate your sense of humour and warm, gentle nature. I appreciate all your input and perspective during tutorials, and your unanal look at the curriculum, so that we could choose what we spent more time learning. All your emails and extra links were helpful, and the environment you created for us was wonderful to be a part of...But most of all, I want to thank you for having such faith in me and helping me believe in me too."

— Rachel Laing, OnTrack student

"Peter is a teacher who listens actively, and thus I believe is one of few educators who truly practice what they preach regarding listening and communicative behaviour. He is genuinely interested in the thoughts of his students...He uses these opinions to challenge his own. We were all equal in his class."

— Emily Williamson, OnTrack student

Nicola

- Since 2008, Nicola has created and facilitated dozens of community writing, spoken word and oral storytelling projects, nurturing creatives to connect and thrive.
- She has helped facilitate, script and deliver a variety of multi-arts performances in the south-west, exploring significant themes, such as indigenous (dis)connections.

- Nicola has been a project leader with [Green Skills](#) in Denmark, designing and delivering community education programs and supporting grass-roots initiatives.
- She has diverse professional experience in administration, creative writing, publishing, sustainable education, storytelling and community development.
- In 2019, Nicola co-designed, co-facilitated and participated in a 9-month oral storyteller development program, *The Spindle of Spoken Story*, for a diverse cohort of creatives and change-makers in Denmark WA — combining writing, storytelling, co-created ritual, indigenous culture, personal growth, and connection to nature.
- In 2020, Nicola completed [Storytelling Beyond Words](#) - a 13 week intensive with Emerson College in the UK “for humanity’s shifters and shapers”, developing her own applied storytelling project for nurturing more connected communities.
- Nicola is a qualified 350 hour yoga teacher with a dedicated personal practice, including daily meditation. A life-long learner, she is currently working towards practitioner training in [Focusing](#) - an embodied approach to deep listening and companioning that respects the integrity, wisdom and pace of each journey.
- In her role as Community Story Weaver with Befriend, Nicola supports a variety of emerging and active community leaders with individual mentoring, core gift discovery and learning circles. She also facilitates community story sharing circles.
- Like Peter, Nicola is a certified host of [Warm Data Labs](#), a group process that reveals how relationships are “integral and woven in the complex fabric of the issues” that we care about, and that enables innovative, intelligent responses to complexity.
- She is currently working with a team at Befriend to develop a nurturing and empowering approach to ‘covaluation’ — helping individuals and communities to discover what matters together and supporting living systems to thrive.

“My community has been enriched by both finding our own stories and learning to listen to old old tales in new ways. I think Nicola-Jane has re-awakened and unleashed the storyteller and deep listener in us all, for which I will always remain grateful.”

— Linda Bradbury, Spoken Word Artist

“You are sharing with us a great joy. Your style says, ‘Come play with me.’ Never dry or stuffy or dictatorial, but inspirational and encouraging... and there is something powerful at play in the sharing—emphasising our uniqueness in our stories, but also recognizing our common humanity.”

— Catherine Mercer, Support Worker