

# WATER COLORING: GIVING THE EARTH AN IMPULSE – GETTING AN IMPULSE FROM BIODYNAMICS

By Simone Helmle, Germany

In my work with conversion farmers, I encounter a longing to work with the earth. People often tell me that they are rediscovering the joy of agricultural work. Interrupting habitual thought patterns and routines is one of the challenges of conversion. I like to do an exercise on letting go and trusting on the first day of conversion courses.

The **GOAL** of the exercise is to accept that we set impulses with our agricultural work, but then entrust them to nature. We can continue to accompany the unfolding of the impulse, but we have to realize that we cannot control everything. The exercise helps to get in touch with nature and to get involved with each other. Receiving and giving is not a barter transaction, but the beginning of a relationship whose quality only reveals itself in time. In the exercise, we put a few blobs of color into a very wet piece of paper. The impulse of the color mixes with the water. Since a lot of water is used, the drying takes so long that we can watch it happen.

## THE EXERCISE

The exercise is at the beginning of a course, so maybe we've gotten to know a farm beforehand and there has been a round of introductions of the participants. The questions "Who am I?", "Where do I come from?", "What do I hope for?" are in the room.

Introduce what biodynamic means to you personally. At this point I like to tell how I had to learn to understand what I had completely forgotten in my time as a scientist.

I had seen the earth as a thing. But now I have gained the experience that the earth is something alive, that I am allowed to be part of it and that we can try to be together. This brings me to the question of what suggestions I give to the earth through my agricultural activity and in what attitude I approach the earth.

Transferred to the exercise, this means that I give the water on the sheet of paper an impulse with the color that is here in front of me. Since the paper is flooded and the brushes are coarse, I cannot paint. Everything is blurred. But if I entrust the paint to the water, I can watch the paths it takes. I can add a little more color and so this becomes an encounter between color and water, between earth and me.

### MATERIALS:

- Small glasses for red, yellow and blue watercolor paint; Two brushes for each color; Water, sponges and pads; Watercolor paper
- Prepare the tables so that four participants at a time can use brushes and paint together.



Simone lives with her family in Stuttgart, Germany. She teaches the subjects Leadership, Socio-culture and Anthroposophy. She developed the master's programme for resilient entrepreneurship in biodynamics at the Freie Landbauschule Bodensee e.V. in Überlingen, Germany and she led the educational programmes of the Demeter Academy of the Demeter Association in Germany for several years. She designed many exercises for working with biodynamic farmers in conversion. Originally, she is scientifically qualified in methods of adult education and client-centred counselling work. She has a doctorate in agricultural sociology. It is a matter close to her heart to accompany people in the development of their individual potential.

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## 12 EXPERIENCING BIODYNAMICS

### STAGE I: EXPERIENCING THE MATERIAL

Two pictures will be painted by each participant. Firstly, invite the participants to familiarize themselves with the paper, water, brushes and then paint freely. Most of the time they will try to paint.

### STAGE II: ENCOUNTERS, PATIENCE AND TRUST

- Each participant gets a new sheet, now the exercise takes place with guidance:
- Ask the participants to do the exercise in silence and follow your guidance. You yourself hold the space through your presence and your voice.
- With small sponges or cloths, wet both sides of the white paper. The surface may shine, the water may be seen.
- Now look at the three colors. Choose the color that appeals to you in the moment.
- Now take a brush, fill it up with paint and let the paint drip onto the wet paper. The brush does not touch the paper. Try it. If you shake it a little, small or large drops will fall onto the paper.
- Look at the drops of paint.
- If you would like a little more of the color, just let more paint drop onto the paper.
- Now take a second color. Also drip this from the brush.
- Where is the space for the second color? How do the colors meet and mingle? Look at the play of colors.
- A third color is not used, it remains with two colors.
- The exercise can be closed with a small gong, a poem or with the words from Rudolf Steiner's Sould Calendar.



### STAGE III: COMING TO ONESELF, ENGAGING WITH EACH OTHER

As the pictures are very wet, simply let them dry on the tables. Invite the participants to talk in pairs. The guiding questions can be:

- How was it for you?
- What experience have you just had?
- What does this exercise tell you about your work in agriculture?

In the past, I often did a round in the plenary after the talks in pairs. Today, I tend to pause after the two-to-one talks and take what people want to share from the exercise into the day's review. It is also touching what participants report from this exercise when the next day begins, following a night review.

Try it out on a small scale so that your own experience can grow. I especially like it when the pictures are dry and we then hang them on the wall. This way, the colors from the initial exercise accompany us throughout. On the last day of the course, we take the pictures off the wall and whoever would like to can write a letter to themselves on the back of the sheet before we have a closing discussion in plenary.

