

## The Difference

In almost every conversation about Camphill Farm Community we have to explain that we are **not** an institution looking after people with intellectual disabilities. What are we, then? We are an intentional community. Well, what do we mean by that? Let me give you a definition:

*An "intentional community" is a group of people who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values.* (quotation: [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org))

Our common purpose is to **enable** people with intellectual disabilities to lead dignified and joyful lives. I highlight 'enable' to emphasize that we see ourselves not as carers - although we do care - but as 'enablers'. We, the enablers, who join our community, come from all walks of life and have all sorts of backgrounds. Naturally we bring with us generations of social conditioning and all sorts of attitudes and behaviors prevalent in the broader society. This definitely includes the very attitudes and behavior we seek alternatives to. Living in community does not automatically mean to be equipped with the appropriate skill-set to transcend mainstream problems like greed, dishonesty, excessive ego, lack of self-esteem, poor communication skills, etc. We are familiar with them. However, we come up with these wonderful new ideas all the time, and there is nothing to stop us putting them to test in order to create a better way of community life. We learn each day and we learn a lot from our friends with intellectual disabilities. It is so exciting! It's a satisfying life full of joy, fun - and a lot of work! I must admit though, to live in community is also exhausting and tiring at times.

So why do we do it, then? We want to associate with people - and this includes our mentally disabled friends - who also work to re-integrate the ecological, social and spiritual roots of society. We share parallel interest in personal growth, co-operation and peaceful social transformation. We share a deeply felt democratic sense that eventually all legitimacy flows from structures that enable inclusive participation. Out of this common interest we pursue the work necessary to change at least our micro-cosmos in order to counter-balance the destructive attitudes in mainstream society. Here you find the explanation of why we are not an institution. We - whatever our skill-set is - see ourselves in many aspects as a show case for an alternative way of living and working. A way of living and working with people with special needs, of living and working with and in nature, and of living and working in an social structure, which can be adjusted to the needs of its members. Society is not static and urgently needs seedlings of renewal. We are one of these seedlings and **not** an institution.

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